



Greek High School Teachers' Homonegative Attitudes Towards Same-Sex Parent Families

Iraklis Grigoropoulos¹

Accepted: 12 December 2021 / Published online: 5 January 2022

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2022

Abstract

The current cross-sectional study examined Greek teachers' attitudes towards marriage equality and beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex parent families. A total of 183 teachers participated in this study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Convenience sampling through teachers' social networks was utilised. This study's data were collected using two standardised instruments, attitudes toward same-sex marriage and children's adjustment in same-sex families. Correlation analysis was used to analyze the associations between the variables of this research. Hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was utilised to analyze the relationship between predictor variables and the children's adjustment in same-sex families' instrument. A negative stance toward same-sex marriage was a significant predictor of negative attitudes towards children's adjustment in same-sex parent families. The role of personal and contextual factors in determining teachers' beliefs about same-sex parenting was partially supported. This study fills an important gap by examining attitudes towards same-sex parenting in a context that directly influences high school students.

Keywords Marriage equality · Same-sex parenting · Attitudes · Homonegativity · Sexual prejudice

Introduction

Research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and ally (LGBTQ+) issues in education has primarily emphasised pre-service teachers' attitudes and students' beliefs and perceptions. There is scarce research on teachers' attitudes toward marriage equality and teachers' beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex-headed families (Baiocco et al., 2020; De Simone et al.,

✉ Iraklis Grigoropoulos
griraklis@gmail.com

¹ Department of Psychology, Panteion University, Athens, Greece

2020; Hall & Rodgers, 2018). Therefore, this study focuses on high school teachers' attitudes toward same-sex parent families. Issues of opposition to same-sex parent families and negative beliefs about children raised by same-sex parents have already been addressed by Frias-Navaro et al. (2014) using the Scale on Beliefs about Children's Adjustment in Same-Sex Families (SBCASSF).

Although, scholarly literature reports no differences for children raised by same-sex parents compared with those raised by heterosexual parents (e.g. Carone et al., 2018; Patterson, 2017) negative attitudes towards same-sex parents persevere in public discourse, and public institutions (Battista et al., 2020; Ioverno et al., 2018). In a 2008 research conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in the United States it was reported that 53% of LBGQTQ+ parents questioned experienced several types of discrimination from their children's school settings (Kosciw et al., 2009a, b). Hence, regardless of the common positive views on the well-being of children of same-sex parents, research data show that the educational context is a social institution in which same-sex-headed families and their children may experience stigmatisation (McDonald & Morgan, 2019).

Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parents

Same-sex couples represent one of the most debated cases from exclusion from the family concept as in many cases they are still vetoed access to kinship due to their non-compliance with the heteronormative model of family formation (Lasio et al., 2020). Same-sex parents signify a deviation from the anticipated division of paternal-maternal roles (De Simone et al., 2020) undermining the concept of heterosexual complementarity in which any model of family beyond the heterosexual one is overlooked and/or disregarded (Lasio et al., 2020). Thus, same-sex couples' requests to take part in the generative procedure may be considered as a threat to dominant heteronormativity and the traditional concept of family (Battista et al., 2020).

Maiò and Haddock (2015) note that attitudes play a significant role in the manifestation of prejudice and discrimination as they represent an individual's evaluative judgment of people, events, and issues. Thus, based on previous studies (e.g. Battista et al., 2020) we use the term negative attitudes toward same-sex parents as synonymous with the terms, homonegativity (Lingiardi et al., 2016), and sexual prejudice (Pistella et al., 2017). Expressions of rejection of sexual minorities and a most frequent lack of confidence regarding same-sex-headed families' parenting skills still remain in several contexts, such as the social institutions of religion and education (Baiocco et al., 2020). Schools may be the first social context in which same-sex parents are challenged to describe their family formation. Taking into account that teachers may exhibit strong prejudice to the parenting skills of sexual-minority parents (De Simone et al., 2020) teachers' attitudes toward marriage equality and same-sex parent families may be most important in ensuring a safe school environment (Nappa et al., 2018). However, there is scarce research on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about same-sex parent families (Baiocco et al., 2020; De Simone et al., 2020; Hall & Rodgers, 2018). Most importantly, homonegativity may operate in

different ways depending on the cultural and sociopolitical context (Farr & Vazquez, 2020).

Although sexual minority individuals have become more open with their sexuality this visibility comes with an increased risk of victimization (Costa et al., 2018). Male gender (Costa et al., 2018; Pistella et al., 2017), higher level of political conservatism (Webb et al., 2017), high level of religiosity (Webb et al., 2017), and poor interpersonal contact with sexual minority individuals (Costa et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2015) emerged as main predictors of negative attitudes toward same-sex parents. Uncovering the causes of homonegativity is crucial in preventing its effect on sexual minority individuals and their families.

The Greek Context

As Lipka (2019) suggests, the older generation in Greece, by remaining entrenched in more stereotyped and traditional values seem to move opposite to other European countries where the acceptance of sexual minorities and same-sex parenting has grown (Ioverno et al., 2018). Previous research findings regarding attitudes towards same-sex marriage in Greece show personal and contextual characteristics, namely religiosity, contact experiences, older age, and male gender as significant predictors of homonegative and intolerant attitudes towards same-sex marriage (Grigoropoulos, 2018; Grigoropoulos & Kordoutis, 2015). Greek society is traditionally conservative. In addition, Orthodox religion in Greece strongly affects societal attitudes and beliefs while Greek cultural values overemphasize the importance of heterosexual marriage (Voultsos et al., 2018).

According to the European Social Survey (2017), 56% of Greeks support same-sex marriage while 30% were in favor of same-sex couples adopting a child. Also, more recent data in Greece report that 50% of Greeks were in favor of same-sex marriage, while 26% supported same-sex couples adopting a child (diaNEOsis, 2017). This may mean that a minority of teachers, approximately 40% (but still a large number of education professionals), oppose same-sex marriage.

Greece has allowed same-sex couples to enter into cohabitation agreements since 24 December 2015 (Voultsos et al., 2018). Even though same-sex marriage and joint adoption by same-sex couples were legitimized in Europe in 2001 (Takács et al., 2016) up to the present time joint adoption, IVF access for lesbians and same-sex marriage has not been legalized in Greece (Voultsos et al., 2018).

Most importantly, recent research findings concerning the Greek early childhood educational settings show that although positive shifts in attitudes towards marriage equality and civil rights for sexual minorities have been achieved educators still hold homonegative attitudes (Iraklis, 2020). In addition, research data show that Greek lesbian mothers avoid disclosure of their family form in school settings because of the heteronormativity of the school context (Iraklis, 2021).

Overall, the Greek cultural context attributes significant value to heterosexual parenthood, considering it as a prerequisite for personal fulfillment. Heterosexual marriage and parenthood are strongly interconnected in Greece and this possibly

explains the limited cultural tolerance to same-sex parents (Kantsa, 2014). As Kantsa and Chalkidou (2014) note, being a single mother is more easily accepted.

Teachers' Attitudes

Past research findings underline the need for school settings and teachers to support and ensure that diverse family structures are visible and, most importantly, welcomed in the school environment. After all, positive relationships between parents and teachers can ensure the best educational results for children (Burt et al., 2010; Fox, 2007; Jeltova & Fish, 2005). However, little research has emphasized teachers' views and beliefs towards same-sex-headed families (McDonald & Morgan, 2019). Previous research data show that although teachers had in general positive attitudes towards sexual minority individuals, and willingness to understand issues related to sexual orientation they were less likely to open discussions and create a secure environment for same-sex parented families in school settings. They also mentioned discomfort when interacting with same-sex parents in school settings (De Simone et al., 2020). Hegde et al. (2014) showed that although school professionals had positive attitudes towards homosexuality they felt discomfort interacting with same-sex parents. Educators' stance may explain why different family formations are frequently overlooked in educational settings (Beren, 2013; Bliss & Harris, 1999). In addition, teachers stated their worries about the possibility of their students being bullied after the disclosure of their parent's sexual orientation (Averett & Hegde, 2012). In their study, Baiocco et al. (2020) reported that sexual bias, religious engagement, political orientation, and negative views about two-father couples emerged as significant predictors of teachers' opposition to same-sex parenting. Yet, the issues of sexual orientation and different family formations, including teachers' attitudes towards these topics, have scarcely been examined in school settings (Baiocco et al., 2020; De Simone et al., 2020).

Not only are sexual minority issues scarcely ever discussed in Greek school settings but it is also rather ambiguous whether teachers actually recognize the negative impact of this invisibility for some students and their families (Burt et al., 2010). Taking into account the teachers' critical role in creating and maintaining an inclusive school environment for all children and their families, the examination of their attitudes should be a major concern (Church et al., 2016). Also, their views about children's adjustment in same-sex parent families are essential in understanding the level of homonegativity in schools (Fedewa & Clark, 2009; Fox, 2007).

Scope of the Current Study

This study examined high school teachers' views about marriage equality and their opinions about negative impacts on children raised in same-sex parent families. Little research attention has been afforded to teachers' views regarding same-sex parent families and children raised by same-sex parents (Averett et al., 2015; Baiocco et al., 2020; De Simone et al., 2020). Taking into account that previous research findings in the Greek context reported religiosity, contact experiences, older age, and

male gender as important predictors of negative attitudes towards marriage equality (Grigoropoulos, 2018; Grigoropoulos & Kordoutis, 2015), the researchers hypothesized that the same personal and contextual characteristics, along with negative attitudes toward marriage equality, would also predict negative beliefs about children raised in same-sex parent families.

Given the teachers' significant role in the school's atmosphere and in the children's wellbeing, the current study tried to cast some light on the issue of how same-sex parented families are perceived by Greek teachers. This study addresses two main issues: (a) the scarce research data regarding teachers' beliefs about children raised by same-sex parents in general and in Greece in particular; and (b) the impact of certain personal and contextual characteristics on teachers' attitudes.

Method

Participants

Convenience sampling through teachers' social networks was utilised. In particular, an electronic web survey using Google forms was conducted. Potential respondents were recruited via publications of posts promoting the study on teachers' forums and support groups and teachers' media pages. In addition, participants were asked to email the study link to other possible respondents.

The study involved 195 participants. However, twelve participants partially completed the questionnaire, and therefore they were excluded from the sample. Hence, this study included 183 high school teachers working in the northern part of Greece. Secondary education in Greece consists of two stages: *Gymnasio* (junior high school), a three-year school, after which students can go to *Lykeion* (high school) for three years. Of the 183 educators, 124 were female and 59 were male. Most of the participants (54.6%) had a bachelor's degree, 38.8% had a master's degree, and 6.6% had a doctoral degree (Table 1). Regarding, sexual orientation, all participants self-identified as heterosexual. All participants described their nationality as Greek.

Procedure

The online survey was completely voluntary and anonymous and participants indicated their consent by ticking the consent checkbox at the beginning of the survey.

The process lasted approximately 10–15 min. All data were collected from September to November 2019. This study followed all principles of the Declaration of Helsinki on Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. Ethical approval was granted by the researcher's institution.

Measures

The background questionnaire consisted of questions on gender (male, female, transgender, other-with specification required), age, educational level (high school

Table 1 Demographic characteristics presented as frequencies (%)

	N= 183
<i>Age</i>	
Up to 30 years old	14 (7.7)
31 to 40 years old	54 (29.5)
41 to 50 years old	80 (43.7)
51 to 60 years old	27 (27)
More than 61 years old	6 (4.4)
<i>Education</i>	
Bachelor's degree	100 (54.6)
Master's degree	38 (38.8)
PhD	12 (6.6)
<i>Type of school (participants' workplace)</i>	
Junior high school	90 (49.2)
High school	93 (50.8)
<i>Contact with LGBTQ people</i>	
Yes	53 (26.5)
No	147 (73.5)

diploma, university degree, postgraduate degree, Ph.D.), nationality (please state your nationality), and sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, other-please indicate). Respondents evaluated their regularity of attendance at religious services on a scale extending from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*frequently*) (e.g., Costa et al., 2018; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Olson et al., 2006). Respondents also expressed whether they have ever had any close acquaintances that identified themselves as LGBTQ+ individuals (1 = *No*, 2 = *Yes*) (see Costa et al., 2018; Herek, 2002). Previous studies have shown that attitudes towards same-sex parenting were associated with participants' interpersonal contact with LGBTQ+ persons (Costa et al., 2018; Frias-Navarro et al., 2014). Specifically, this contact reduced teachers' prejudice and feelings of discomfort when interacting with same-sex parents (De Simone et al., 2020).

Attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSSM) were assessed using the Greek version of ATSSM, an adaptation of the Pearl and Galupo scale (Iraklis & Kordoutis, 2015). This questionnaire comprises 17 items (e.g., "same-sex marriage will strengthen the morals of society by supporting equality") that are measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with answer options extending from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Probable scores ranged from 17 (highly negative attitudes) to 85 (highly positive attitudes). As Pearl and Galupo (2007) suggest the attitudes toward same-sex marriage is a psychometrically sound measure of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The scale obtained a Cronbach reliability estimate of $\alpha=0.82$, 95% CI [0.82, 0.83] in this study.

The Children's Adjustment in Same-Sex Families (SBCASSF instrument; Frias-Navarro & Monterde-i-Bort, 2012) developed in Spain was used to evaluate the participants' beliefs about negative effects on children raised in same-sex parent families. The Children's Adjustment in Same-Sex Families scale is a 14-item instrument

divided into two subscales: (1) individual opposition subscale (IO: seven items), referring to the beliefs about the impacts of same-sex parenting on the psychological adjustment of children (e.g., "a boy raised by lesbian mothers will be an effeminate child"); and (2) normative opposition subscale (NO: seven items), comprising of arguments justifying discrimination against same-sex parents conceiving them as the cause of the child's maladjustment (e.g. "a child who is raised by a gay/lesbian couple will be teased by their classmates"). The items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *completely disagree* to 5 = *completely agree*). The range of the score in each subscale of the instrument varies from 7 to 32. A higher score indicates negative beliefs about the impacts of same-sex couples' parenting practices on children's development. Accuracy for the Greek context has been verified through back-translation. Specifically, the SBCASSF was translated from English into Greek by the researcher and back-translated into English by another colleague researcher holding a Ph.D. in English literature. The two versions of the questionnaire were compared. There were not any major discrepancies between the original and the back-translated versions and the minor ones were revised (van Widenfelt et al., 2005). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the IO scale was $\alpha = 0.91$ and for the NO $\alpha = 0.90$, 95% CI [0.90, 0.91] and [0.90, 0.92], respectively.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) was used in the current study. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the association between the variables of the research. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to examine whether the variables of the researchers' interest could predict a significant amount of variance in teachers' beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex parent families.

Results

Data screening techniques were applied prior to the main statistical analysis. The normal range for skewness and kurtosis is considered to be between +2 and -2 for normal distribution according to the criteria by George and Mallory (2010), and that assumption was satisfied. Also, the Mahalanobis distance test identified no multivariate outliers.

Correlations Between Variables

Eight Pearson correlation tests between individual opposition, normative opposition, attitudes toward same-sex marriage, gender, age, contact with LGBTQ+ individuals, religiosity, and education were carried out and tested against a Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level of 0.00625 (0.05/8) (see Noble, 2009).

The subscale of individual opposition was negatively associated with attitudes toward same-sex marriage ($r(183) = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$), religiosity ($r(183) = -0.35$,

$p < 0.001$), and positively with age ($r(183) = 0.53, p < 0.001$). The subscale of normative opposition was negatively associated with attitudes toward same-sex marriage ($r(183) = -0.78, p < 0.001$), and positively associated with age ($r(183) = 0.25, p < 0.001$). Gender was negatively correlated with religiosity ($r(183) = -0.24, p < 0.001$),

Also, age was positively correlated with attitudes toward same-sex marriage ($r(183) = 0.24, p < 0.001$), and negatively correlated with religiosity ($r(183) = -0.50, p < 0.001$; Table 2).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the association between predictor variables and the Children's Adjustment in Same-Sex Families instrument. The assumptions of regression analysis were tested and were not violated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Specifically, tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (LGBTQ+ contact = 0.97, VIF = 1.02; Religiosity = 0.71, VIF = 1.43; Education level = 0.95, VIF = 1.05; Age = 0.72, VIF = 1.38; Gender = 0.95, VIF = 1.07; ATSSM = 0.91, VIF = 1.08).

Predictors of Normative Opposition to Lesbians and Gay Men Parenting

A two-stage hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted with normative opposition as the dependent variable. The data met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.23). LGBTQ+ contact, religiosity, education level, age, and gender were entered at stage one of the regression to control for personal and contextual characteristics. The attitudes toward same-sex marriage scale was entered at stage two.

The results (see Table 3) showed that after controlling for contact with LGBTQ+ individuals, religiosity, age, and gender, attitudes toward same-sex marriage were an important predictor of normative opposition (Step 2). In the final model ($R^2 = 0.637, F(6,176) = 51.57, p < 0.001$), positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSSM) ($\beta = -0.75, p < 0.001$) and contact with LGBTQ+ individuals ($\beta = -0.12, p < 0.01$) contributed to decreased levels of normative opposition. The adjusted R^2 for the entire model was 0.50.

Predictors of Individual Opposition to Lesbians and Gay Parenting

A two-stage hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with individual opposition as the dependent variable. LGBTQ+ contact, religiosity, education level, age, and gender were entered at stage one of the regression to control for personal and contextual characteristics. The data met the assumption of independent errors (Durbin-Watson value = 1.47). The attitudes toward same-sex marriage scale was entered at stage two.

Table 2 Correlations among variables (N = 183)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M(SD)	Range
1 Individual opposition									24.78(6.4)	7–35
2 Normative opposition	.674*								16.44(7.7)	7–35
3 Attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSSM)	-.582*	-.782*							50.1(13.2)	17–85
4 Gender	.081	.130	.087							
5 Age	.536*	.258*	.249*	.155						
6 Contact with LGBTQ+ individuals	-.155	-.174	-.065	.075	-.081					
7 Religiosity	-.350*	-.194	-.132	-.241*	-.501*	.092				
8 Educational level	.046	-.032	-.062	.088	.210	-.009	-.107			

* $p < .00$, 625; Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level

Table 3 Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting normative opposition (N= 183)

	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	95%CI	R ²	ΔR^2
<i>Step 1</i>					.112**	.112
Gender	1.709	1.215	.103	-0.68,4.10		
Age	1.830	.687	.222*	0.47,3.186		
LGBTQ + contact	-2.722	1.228	-.160*	-5.12,-.031		
Religiosity	-.378	.595	-.053	-1.55, 0.79		
Education level	-1.19	.90	-.09	-2.98, 0.60		
<i>Step2</i>					.637***	.525
Gender	.927	.780	.056	-0.61, 2.46		
Age	.182	.452	.022	-0.71, 1.07		
LGBTQ + contact	-2.079	.782	-.122*	-3.62, -0.53		
Religiosity	-.416	.381	-.059	-1.16, 0.33		
Education level	-.033	.586	-.003	-1.19, 1.12		
Attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSSM)	-.327	.020	-.757***	-0.36, -0.28		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The results (see Table 4) showed that after controlling for contact with LGBTQ+ individuals, religiosity, age, and gender, attitudes toward same-sex marriage were a significant predictor of individual opposition (Step 2). In the final model

Table 4 Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting individual opposition (N= 183)

	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	95%CI	R ²	ΔR^2
<i>Step 1</i>					.312***	.312
Gender	-.087	1.023	-.005	-2.10, 1.92		
Age	3.872	.578	.491***	2.73, 5.01		
LGBTQ + contact	-1.736	1.026	-.107	-3.75, 0.29		
Religiosity	-.698	.501	-.103	-1.68, 0.29		
Education level	-.825	.764	-.069	-2.33, 0.68		
<i>Step2</i>					.519***	.207
Gender	-.567	.856	-.036	-2.25, 1.14		
Age	2.883	.498	.366***	1.90, 3.86		
LGBTQ + contact	-1.349	.861	-.083	-3.04, 0.35		
Religiosity	.721	.420	-.106	-1.55, 0.10		
Education level	-.131	.646	-.011	-1.40, 1.14		
Attitudes toward same-sex marriage (ATSSM)	-.196	.023	-.474***	-0.24, -0.15		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

($R^2=0.519$, $F(6,176)=31.60$, $p<0.001$), negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage ($\beta=-0.47$, $p<0.01$) and older age ($\beta=0.36$, $p<0.01$) contributed to higher levels of individual opposition. The adjusted R^2 for the entire model was 0.62.

Discussion

This study examined Greek high school teachers' homonegative attitudes and beliefs about children raised in same-sex parent families. The instruments used in this study measured subtle sexual prejudice currently surrounding same-sex parenting (Frias-Navarro et al., 2014). Heterosexism and sexual prejudice can be displayed and reproduced in school settings (Baiocco et al., 2020). Therefore, focusing on teachers' homonegative attitudes and beliefs about same-sex parenting can shed light on how same-sex parent families are perceived by social institutions and ensure actions towards a safer and more inclusive school environment.

As Greek cultural values still attribute high value to heterosexual couples, marriage, and parent equality profoundly challenge the heteronormative dominant discourse about the family. Hence, family formations that contrast this dominant discourse about the family may face stigmatization and discrimination (Iraklis, 2021; Kantsa, 2014).

The findings of this study support researchers' expectations that negative attitudes toward marriage equality will be associated with negative beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex parent families. Opposition to marriage equality is associated with opposition to parent equality, casting out a sexual minority population. Polemics over same-sex marriage echo the manifestation of a continuous opposition to sexual minority rights, which has included battles over LGBTQ+ rights to adopt, marry, rear children, and have recognized relationships (Cahill, 2007). The most important negative impact of this opposition is underlined by the fact that same-sex couples felt safer about starting a family once they had legal relationship rights (Rothblum et al., 2011). According to Badgett (2011), marriage is regarded as the fundamental legal status validating equality of same-sex relationships.

The findings of this study only partially supported the role of personal and contextual factors in determining teachers' beliefs about same-sex parenting. Concerning the normative opposition subscale, contact with LGBTQ+ individuals was strongly associated with teachers' beliefs. This finding coincides with previous studies showing that contact with LGBTQ+ individuals was associated with more positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues in Greece (Grigoropoulos, 2018; Grigoropoulos & Kordoutis, 2015). This result is also consistent with the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), meaning that interacting with dissimilar people may lead to more appreciation and respect for them and their rights. One possible explanation for the absence of any other background significant predictor may be that the normative opposition subscale assesses a more subtle form of prejudice that can be easily internalized (Baiocco et al., 2020).

Also, the individual opposition subscale was associated only with age, indicating consistency with past studies that found increased homonegativity in older people (Baiocco et al., 2013, 2020). The absence of religiosity and contact with

LGBTQ+ individuals as important predictors of negative attitudes may be due to the fact that they were measured with a single item. In the future, it may be necessary to use more variables related to religious attendance and contact with LGBTQ+ individuals. In addition, research data show that those with high education are most likely to report lower levels of religiosity (Costa et al., 2018).

Also, the fact that this study's sample was mainly composed of women may indicate the insignificant predictive role of gender. The absence of education as a significant predictor of attitudes toward same-sex parenting may be due to the fact that in Greece most of the degree programs for teachers do not offer training on these issues. Overall, this study's results show that opposition to same-sex marriage increases individual opposition and normative opposition to same-sex parents. Also, contact with LGBTQ+ individuals may reduce participants' normative opposition whereas older age may increase individual opposition.

Schools like other institutions may reproduce heterosexism and more subtle negative stereotypes towards same-sex parent families. University courses for pre-service teachers and training interventions for in-service teachers on the topics of sexuality, same-sex relationships, and parenting could alleviate the homonegativity in teachers and increase their comfort when interacting with sexual minority individuals (De Simone, 2020). Sexual minority organizations such as the Rainbow Families could be involved in this training offering their perspectives and sharing their own experiences. Through this training especially older teachers may be encouraged to explore and acknowledge their personal and professional beliefs and practices. De Simone et al. (2020) argue that teachers can be encouraged to show personal responsibility and become agents of social change avoiding the reproduction of homonegativity and heterosexism in school settings. Furthermore, identifying explicit and implicit homonegative attitudes at an institutional and a societal level is critical in developing programs and policies that counteract negative attitudes toward sexual minority people and same-sex parenting.

All in all, the results of this study highlight Greek teachers' beliefs about same-sex parenting. Knowing the opinions and attitudes of teachers is most important since they are a key element in transmitting values to children. Furthermore, it is of critical importance to confirm the existence of different types of homonegativity and sexual prejudice in different societies and cultures and to make this reality known.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is that it relied strictly on high school teachers. This restriction limits the generalizability and the understanding of this study's results. Future research should focus on teachers of younger students as well.

Also, the sample consisted mainly of highly educated women, therefore potential gender differences that may be of interest were not apparent. The fact also that religiosity and contact with LGBTQ+ individuals were measured with a single item is another weakness of this study. The significance of the quality of relationships with LGBTQ+ friends and acquaintances may also be examined in further studies.

Conclusions

This study fills an important gap by examining attitudes toward same-sex parenting in a setting that directly influences young generations. This study can enlighten new studies regarding same-sex parent experiences and involvement in educational contexts. As same-sex parent families violate the heteronormative family ideals they may be significantly more vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. Further studies could also examine the ability of teachers to access resources that address sexuality differences and their use of these resources. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical to guarantee a school environment free of prejudice and stigma towards sexual orientation issues.

Funding This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Availability of Data and Material Data are available on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflict of interest to report.

Ethical statement This research adheres to the ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct.

References

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Averett, P. E., & Hegde, A. (2012). School social work and early childhood student's attitudes toward gay and lesbian families. *Teaching in Higher Education, 17*(5), 537–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.658564>
- Averett, P., Hegde, A., & Smith, J. (2015). Lesbian and gay parents in early childhood settings: A systematic review of the existing research literature. *Journal of Early Childhood Research. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X15570959*
- Badgett, M. V. L. (2011). Social inclusion and the value of marriage equality in Massachusetts and the Netherlands. *Journal of Social Issues, 67*, 316–334. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01700.x>
- Baiocco, R., Nardelli, N., Pezzuti, L., & Lingiardi, V. (2013). Attitudes of Italian heterosexual older adults towards lesbian and gay parenting. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 10*(4), 285–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-013-0129-2>
- Baiocco, R., Rosati, F., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Carone, N., Ioverno, S., & Laghi, F. (2020). Attitudes and beliefs of Italian educators and teachers regarding children raised by same-sex parents. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 17*(2), 229–238. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-019-00386>
- Battista, S., Pivetti, M., Paolini, D., & Poliandri, M. (2020). Dehumanization of same-sex parents in Italy: An exploratory Study. *Psicologia Sociale, 1*, 81–104. <https://doi.org/10.1482/96296>
- Beren, M. (2013). Gay and lesbian families in the early childhood classroom: Evaluation of an online professional development course. *Learning Landscapes, 7*(1), 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v7i1.630>

- Bliss, G. K., & Harris, M. B. (1999). Teachers' views of students with gay or lesbian parents. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 4, 149–171. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:10232359320>
- Burt, T., Gelnaw, A., & Lesser, L. (2010). Creating welcoming and inclusive environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families in early childhood settings. *Young Children*, 65(1), 97–102.
- Cahill, S. (2007). The anti-gay marriage movement. In C. A. Rimmerman & C. Wilcox (Eds.), *The politics of same-sex marriage* (pp. 155–192). University of Chicago Press.
- Carone, N., Lingiardi, V., Chirumbolo, A., & Baiocco, R. (2018). Italian gay father families formed by surrogacy: Parenting, stigmatization, and children's psychological adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 54(10), 1904–1916. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000571>
- Church, J., Hegde, A. V., Averett, P., & Ballard, S. M. (2016). Early childhood administrators' attitudes and experiences in working with gay- and lesbian-parented families. *Early Child Development and Care*, 188(3), 264–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1213725>
- Costa, P. A., Pereira, H., & Leal, I. (2018). Through the lens of sexual stigma: Attitudes toward lesbian and gay parenting. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15(1), 58–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2017.141347>
- De Simone, S., Serri, F., Lampis, J., Pileri, J., & Lasio, D. (2020). Italian primary school teachers' comfort and training needs regarding same-sex parenting. *Psychology and Sexuality*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2020.1820557>
- DiaNEOsis Survey. (2017). What Greeks Believe in 2017. *DiaNEOsis*. <https://www.dianeosis.org/en/2017/04/greeks-believe-in-2017/>
- European Social Survey (2017). *Exploring Public Attitudes, Informing Public Policy*. https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS1_5_select_findings.pdf
- Farr, R. H., & Vázquez, C. P. (2020). Stigma experiences, mental health, perceived parenting competence, and parent-child relationships among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents in the United States. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 445. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00445>
- Fedewa, A. L., & Clark, T. P. (2009). Parent practices and home-school partnerships: A differential effect for children with same-sex coupled parents? *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 5, 312–339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504280903263736>
- Fox, R. K. (2007). One of the hidden diversities in schools: Families with parents who are lesbian or gay. *Childhood Education*, 83(5), 227–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2007.10522932>
- Frias-Navarro, D., & Monterde-i-Bort, H. (2012). A scale on beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex families: Reliability and validity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59(9), 1273–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2012.720505>
- Frias-Navarro, D., Monterde-i-Bort, H., Barrientos-Delgado, J., Badenes-Ribera, L., & Cardenas-Castro, M. (2014). Beliefs about children's adjustment in same-sex families: Spanish and Chilean university students. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 17, E5. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sjp.2014.5>
- Grigoropoulos, I. (2018). Attitudes toward same-sex marriage in a Greek sample. *Sexuality and Culture*, 23, 415–424. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-018-9565-8>
- Grigoropoulos, I., & Kordoutis, P. (2015). Social factors affecting antitransgender sentiment in a sample of Greek undergraduate students. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 27(3), 276–285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317611.2014.974792>
- Hall, W. J., & Rodgers, G. K. (2018). Teachers' attitudes toward homosexuality and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer community in the United States. *Social Psychology of Education*, 22, 23–41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9463-9>
- Hegde, A. V., Averett, P., Parker White, C., & Deese, S. (2014). Examining preschool teachers' attitudes, comfort, action orientation and preparation to work with children reared by gay and lesbian Parents. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(7), 963–976. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.845563>
- Herek, G. M. (2002). Gender gaps in public opinion about lesbians and gay men. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(1), 40–66. <https://doi.org/10.1086/338409>
- Hinrichs, D. W., & Rosenberg, P. J. (2002). Attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons among heterosexual liberal arts college students. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 43(1), 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1300/j082v43n0104>
- Ioverno, S., Carone, N., Lingiardi, V., Nardelli, N., Pagone, P., Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Simonelli, A., & Baiocco, R. (2018). Assessing prejudice toward two-father parenting and two-mother

- parenting: The beliefs on same-sex parenting Scale. *Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4–5), 654–665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1348460>
- Iraklis, G. (2020). Subtle forms of prejudice in Greek day-care centres. Early childhood educators' attitudes towards same-sex marriage and children's adjustment in same-sex families. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 18(5), 711–730. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2020.1835636>
- Iraklis, G. (2021). Lesbian mothers' perceptions and experiences of their school involvement. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2537>
- Iraklis, G., & Kordoutis, P. (2015). Reliability and validity of the greek translation of the same-sex marriage Scale. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 12(4), 335–345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428x.2015.108013>
- Jeltova, I., & Fish, M. C. (2005). Creating school environments responsive to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender families: Traditional and systemic approaches for consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 16(1–2), 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2005.9669525>
- Kantsa, V. (2014). The price of marriage: Same-sex sexualities and citizenship in Greece. *Sexualities*, 17(7), 818–836. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460714544807>
- Kantsa, V., & Chalkidou, A. (2014). Same-sex mothers': A contradiction in terms? Sexuality and reproduction from an anthropological perspective. In M. Kaifa-Gbanti, E. Kounougeri-Manoledaki, & E. Symeonidou-Kastanidou (Eds.), *Assisted Reproduction and Alternative Family Forms* (pp. 180–205). Athens-Thessaloniki: Sakkoulas. [in Greek].
- Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2009). *2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512338.pdf>
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., & Diaz, E. M. (2009). Who, what, where, when, and why: Demographic and ecological factors contributing to hostile school climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(7), 976–988. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9412-1>
- Lasio, D., Lampis, J., Spiga, R., & Serri, F. (2020). Lesbian and gay individual parenting desires in heteronormative contexts. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 16(2), 210–228. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v16i2.1808>
- Lingiardi, V., Nardelli, N., Ioverno, S., Falanga, S., Di Chiacchio, C., Tanzilli, A., & Baiocco, R. (2016). Homonegativity in Italy: Cultural issues, personality characteristics, and demographic correlates with negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 13(2), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-015-0197-6>
- Lipka, M. (2019). *Greek attitudes toward religion, minorities align more with Central and Eastern Europe than West*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/22/greek-attitudes-toward-religion-minorities-align-more-with-central-and-eastern-europe-than-west/>
- Maio, G. R., & Haddock, G. (2015). *The psychology of attitudes and attitude change* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- McDonald, I., & Morgan, G. (2019). Same-sex parents' experiences of schools in England. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15(5), 486–500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2019.1568336>
- Nappa, M. R., Palladino, B. E., Menesini, E., & Baiocco, R. (2018). Teachers' reaction in homophobic bullying incidents: The role of self-efficacy and homophobic attitudes. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(2), 208–218. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0306-9>
- Noble, W. S. (2009). How does multiple testing correction work? *Nature Biotechnology*, 27(12), 1135–1137. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt1209-1135>
- Olson, L., Cadge, W., & Harrison, J. (2006). Religion and public opinion about same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly*, 87, 340–358. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00384.x>
- Patterson, C. J. (2017). Parents' sexual orientation and children's development. *Child Development Perspectives*, 11(1), 45–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12207>
- Pearl, M. L., & Galupo, M. P. (2007). Development and validation of the attitudes toward same-sex marriage scale. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 53(3), 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1300/j082v53n0307>
- Pistella, J., Tanzilli, A., Ioverno, S., Lingiardi, V., & Baiocco, R. (2017). Sexism and attitudes toward same-sex parenting in a sample of heterosexual and sexual minorities: The mediation effect of sexual stigma. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(2), 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0284-y>

- Rothblum, E. D., Balsam, K. F., & Solomon, S. E. (2011). The longest “legal” US Same-sex couples reflect on their relationships. *Journal of Social Issues, 67*(2), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01699.x>
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2001). *Using multivariate statistics* (4th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.
- Takács, J., Szalma, I., & Bartus, T. (2016). Social attitudes toward adoption by same-sex couples in Europe. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 45*(7), 1787–1798. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0691-9>
- van Widenfelt, B. M., Treffers, P. D., de Beurs, E., Siebelink, B. M., & Koudijs, E. (2005). Translation and cross-cultural adaptation of assessment instruments used in psychological research with children and families. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 8*(2), 135–147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-005-4752-1>
- Voultsov, P., Zymvragou, C.-E., Raikos, N., & Spiliopoulou, C. C. (2018). Lesbians' experiences and attitudes towards parenthood in Greece. *Culture, Health and Sexuality. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1442021*
- Webb, S. N., Chonody, J. M., & Kavanagh, P. S. (2017). Attitudes toward same-sex parenting: An effect of gender. *Journal of Homosexuality, 64*(11), 1583–1595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1247540>

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.