



Thailand's Journey to LGBTQ+ Equality in Asia: A Systematic Review of Progress, Challenges, and the Dawn of Marriage Equality

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Abstract

This systematic review (January 2011-April 2024) traces Thailand's path toward LGBTQIA+ equality, synthesizing social, legal, and health evidence and culminating in the 2024 marriage-equality law (including adoption provisions). While cultural acceptance of gender and sexual diversity is broad and public support is strong, formal legal protections have historically lagged. The 2024 law now positions Thailand as a leader in Asia. Nonetheless, critical gaps remain-most notably the absence of comprehensive Legal Gender Recognition (LGR) and nationwide anti-discrimination legislation. These gaps contribute to disproportionate harms, especially for transgender people. A Thai national survey of LGBTQIA+ adults (N = 1,290) reported 16.8% lifetime suicide attempts and 50.7% lifetime *suicidal* ideation, with both perceived and enacted sexual- and gender-based stigma associated with higher odds of ideation (AOR \approx 1.30) and attempts (AOR \approx 1.25-1.34) (Moallem et al., 2022). Popular media (e.g., Boys' Love series) appears to bolster social visibility and acceptance, though direct, causal links to specific legal reforms are less certain. Civil society advocacy has been central to agenda-setting-fostering marriage equality and mobilizing for remaining rights. Looking ahead, progress hinges on inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), strategic public communication, and enactment of LGR and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. Thailand's experience shows that legal breakthroughs can catalyze change, but durable equality requires sustained, multi-sector efforts to dismantle deep-seated social and structural barriers.

Keywords

LGBTQ+ Rights, Marriage Equality, Legal Reforms, Social Acceptance, LGBTQ+ Advocacy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Global recognition of LGBTQIA+ rights has accelerated, alongside rising self-identification and visibility. A 30-country survey reports about 9% of adults identify as LGBTQ+, with higher self-identification among Generation Z (Ipsos, 2023). Country estimates likewise suggest sizeable LGBTQ+ populations; for example, Thailand ~8% (World Population Review, 2024). These patterns show both expanding visibility and persistent cross-national variation, motivating country-focused analyses of trajectories, challenges, and drivers relevant to Thailand. By 2023, 31.3% of countries recognized same-sex unions/marriages and 42.1% recognized diverse gender identities—progressive yet uneven (Gayther, 2023). Asia’s legal landscape varies: Taiwan legalized same-sex marriage in 2019, Vietnam’s framework remains ambiguous (Phuong, 2022), and Israel shows comparatively high societal acceptance (World Population Review, 2024).

1.2 Regional Context and Thailand’s Prominent Progress

Across Asia, acceptance remains uneven. India, for instance, shows policy movement but workplace inclusion gaps persist (Bhattacharjee, A., & K, H., 2022). Thailand, by contrast, has cultivated a visible LGBTQ+ culture; its Boys’ Love (BL) media industry amplifies visibility and debates on gender and sexuality, operating as a cultural space that can both reinforce and contest norms (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). Legally, Thailand made a landmark advance with the 2024 marriage-equality law (including adoption), yet gaps remain—most notably the absence of comprehensive Legal Gender Recognition (LGR) and nationwide anti-discrimination legislation. Together, high cultural visibility, major legal progress, and outstanding structural reforms make Thailand a critical Asian case for how social forces, advocacy, and law interact in the pursuit of substantive equality.

Against this backdrop, Thailand has distinguished itself with a vibrant, historically visible LGBTQ+ culture. Its Boys’ Love (BL) TV series have also reportedly fostered social acceptance (Liu et al., 2023; Zhang & Dedman, 2021). Critically, in 2024, Thailand passed a marriage equality law, becoming Southeast Asia’s first and Asia’s third country (after Taiwan and Nepal) to legalize same-sex marriage, effective early 2025. This positions Thailand as a notable example of progressive LGBTQ+ rights. Public support is high: 73% back legal protections, 81% gender-affirming care access, and 82% facility access by gender identity (Equaldex, 2024). Thailand’s LGBTQ+ population is estimated at 8-9% (Ipsos, 2023; World Population Review, 2024), up from earlier ~3.0% estimates (Chen et al., 2018).

Despite this progress, challenges persist. Thailand lacks comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and legal gender recognition (LGR) (Equaldex, 2024; Moallem et al., 2022). Transgender individuals face systemic difficulties, including LGR barriers and healthcare discrimination, sometimes leading to self-medication (Boonyapisompan et al., 2023; Equaldex, 2024). Issues like limited fertility-preservation access (Mattawanon et al., 2022) and high rates of suicidal ideation (50.7%) and suicide attempts (16.8%) linked to stigma (Moallem et al., 2022) remain. Persistent institutional hurdles also highlight gaps in unconditional LGBTQIA+ rights recognition (Khaikham, 2022).

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

This systematic review evaluates Thailand's evolving progress in LGBTQ+ rights by addressing six key Research Questions (RQs), reframed from original hypotheses. It analyzes historical context, legal frameworks (including the 2024 marriage equality law), social norms, obstacles, and advocacy impact, with comparisons to Taiwan and Israel where relevant.

For analyzing the BL industry's influence (RQ4), aspects of the PICO framework (Richardson et al., 1995) are used to structure this sub-analysis, guiding question formulation, literature search, inclusion criteria, and synthesis of outcomes regarding social acceptance and legal reform. This enhances rigor in assessing the BL industry's specific societal impact.

The guiding Research Questions are:

- RQ1: How does Thailand's cultural acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals compare with other Asian nations, and how does this contrast with its gaps in legal reforms beyond marriage equality?
- RQ2: How have Thailand's LGBTQ+ legal protections evolved, especially with the 2024 marriage equality law, compared to Taiwan and Israel, and what challenges remain, particularly for transgender legal gender recognition?
- RQ3: How might the past absence of legal acknowledgment for same-sex relationships and lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws have intensified LGBTQ+ individuals' social and economic hardships in Thailand, affecting discrimination and mental health?
- RQ4: What role have Boys' Love (BL) TV series played in increasing LGBTQ+ visibility and social acceptance in Thailand, and to what extent might this cultural impact have contributed to the climate for legal protections like marriage equality?
- RQ5: How have advocacy groups influenced policy discourse and public health outcomes in Thailand, such as in HIV prevention, and what societal and systemic challenges do they face?

- RQ6: What further legal reforms (e.g., anti-discrimination statutes, gender recognition laws), comprehensive sexuality education, and public campaigns are essential to consolidate Thailand's progress, considering public support for safeguards and that legal changes alone may not erase well-being disparities (Hank et al., 2023)?

1.4 Research Gaps and Study Significance

Despite Thailand's 2024 marriage-equality law, important questions remain about ongoing challenges and the dynamics that enabled reform. The role of media-particularly Boys' Love (BL)-in shaping a conducive climate for legal change warrants deeper, context-specific analysis (Boonyapisomparn et al., 2023; Phuong, 2022; Zhang & Dedman, 2021). In parallel, the evolving impact of civil-society advocacy merits closer examination, given that regional Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) movements often operate under resource constraints (Nepon, 2022; Scamell & Tanhchareun, n.d.). This review addresses these gaps by analyzing Thailand's cultural and reformed LGBTQ+ legal landscape, media influences on acceptance, and advocacy effectiveness. In light of marriage equality, we offer timely, evidence-based recommendations for advocacy and policy and outline a potential progress model for other Asian contexts (Equaldex, 2024).

2. Methodology

This systematic review adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 Statement (*Page et al., 2021*) and builds on the original PRISMA guidance (*Moher et al., 2009*) to ensure transparent and comprehensive reporting. We follow the PRISMA-2020 checklist and present a PRISMA-2020 flow diagram of study selection.

2.1 Literature Search Strategy and Study Selection

A thorough literature search, conducted from January 1 to April 30, 2024, identified studies published between January 2011 and April 2024. The 2011 start date provides a contemporary review of over a decade of significant socio-legal developments preceding Thailand's recent marriage equality legislation. The search encompassed PubMed, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus, supplemented by manual searches of organizational websites (e.g., UNDP, APCOM) and news archives for grey literature.

Search terms, aligned with the six RQs, included PICO elements where applicable (particularly for media influence analysis detailed in the Introduction). Terms included "LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand," "gender identity Thailand," "Boys' Love culture," "same-sex marriage Thailand," and related phrases.

The search yielded 603 records (583 from databases, 20 from other sources). After removing 150 duplicates, 453 unique records were screened by title/abstract by two independent reviewers, with discrepancies resolved through discussion; 303 records were excluded. Out of the 150 records sought for full-text retrieval, 140 were obtained. These were assessed for eligibility against predefined criteria, resulting in the exclusion of 58 (e.g., irrelevant focus, wrong context, non-empirical opinion pieces, scope deviation; see Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram). Ultimately, 82 studies were included.

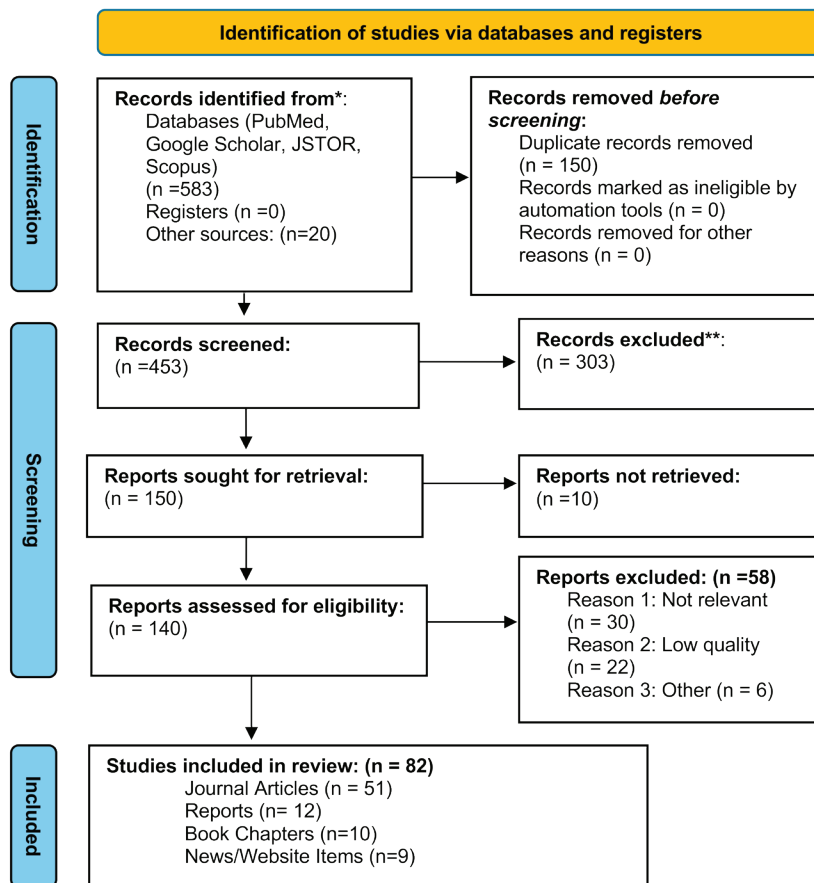


Figure 1 PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of study selection for the systematic review on LGBTQ+ rights in Thailand.

Source: Prepared by the author.

* Records identified: 583 from databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus) and 20 from reputable websites.

** All records were manually screened; 150 duplicates were removed; no automation tools were used.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Specific criteria ensured the relevance and quality of the literature. Peer-reviewed journal articles were prioritized for rigor (Higgins et al., 2019), but book chapters, authoritative NGO/governmental reports (e.g., Thailand Foundation, 2015), and pertinent news/website publications (e.g., The Pride Shop, 2021) were included for comprehensive context and recent developments.

Publications from January 2011-April 2024 focusing on LGBTQ+ issues in Thailand, or relevant Asian comparisons, were selected. The review primarily included English-language studies due to resource and linguistic constraints. However, one critical Bahasa Indonesia journal article on Boys' Love culture in Thailand-identified via citation tracking-was translated and included for its unique RQ4 insights (Habibah et al., 2021). This language restriction is acknowledged as a potential limitation (discussed further). Studies only tangentially related or not focused on human LGBTQ+ populations were excluded.

2.3 Data Extraction and Analysis

A standardized form collected author, year, publication type, objectives, methodology, key findings, and conclusions. AI tools (e.g., Scispace) assisted in the initial literature organization and thematic identification, but two reviewers manually verified all extracted data and interpretations for accuracy and context.

The PICO framework, mentioned in the Introduction for the BL media analysis, also broadly informed data extraction (focusing on LGBTQ+ populations, legal/social interventions, comparisons, and outcomes like acceptance or disparities).

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases (familiarization, initial coding, theme searching, reviewing, defining/naming, reporting), identified data patterns. This iterative process combined inductive theme development with deductive analysis guided by RQs. The 82 sources included 51 peer-reviewed articles (43 empirical: 24 qualitative, 16 quantitative, 3 mixed-methods; 8 reviews/theoretical), 12 reports, 10 book chapters, and 9 news/website items.

2.4 Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of the included peer-reviewed empirical studies was assessed using the relevant Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2024) checklists (e.g., Qualitative, Cohort, Cross-Sectional) by two independent reviewers. The evaluation focused on the appropriateness of research design, sampling, data collection/analysis rigor, ethics, and reporting clarity. Disagreements were resolved through discussion.

The credibility of non-peer-reviewed sources (reports, news) was appraised by evaluating origin, purpose, potential bias, and objectivity. Their findings primarily provided context or were triangulated with peer-reviewed evidence where possible, acknowledging methodological limitations (cf. Shea et al., 2007). Quality assessment results informed evidence synthesis, weighing studies by robustness.

2.5 Systematic Literature Review Process

The 82 diverse sources (51 journal articles, 12 reports, 10 book chapters, and 9 news/website items) were synthesized narratively. These integrated findings across types and methodologies formed a holistic understanding of Thailand's LGBTQ+ rights evolution, identifying themes, evidence patterns, and discrepancies. Findings were cross-referenced for reliability. Table 1 (Results/Appendix) outlines the thematic distribution of sources against each RQ, quantifying the evidence base.

Table 1 Grouped Themes for Research Questions (RQs) and Hypotheses (Hs) on LGBTQ Rights, Legal Protections, and Social Acceptance in Thailand (82 sources; 3 repetitions indicated)

Research Question (RQ) / Exploratory Statement (H)	In-text Citations, Years, and Indexed Databases	Number of Citations
RQ1 / H1 - RQ1: How have historical and cultural attitudes influenced legal reforms and social acceptance of LGBTQ rights in Thailand compared to other Asian countries with less cultural acceptance? - H1 : Cultural acceptance in Thailand has led to greater social acceptance but has not resulted in adequate legal reforms.	1. (Capell & Elgebeily, 2019) - Scopus, SpringerLink;2. (Ehambaranathan et al., 2023) - Google Scholar, Crossref;3. (Equaldex, 2024) - Equaldex;4. (Kon & Chong, 2022) - N/A;5. (Saejang, 2023) - ESCI (ISI, WoS), Scopus;6. (Liu et al., 2023) - Clarivate Analytics SSCI, Scopus;7. (Ocha, 2023) - Scopus, UGC CARE, SCI;8. (Phuong, 2022) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SSCI, DOAJ;9. (Shrestha et al., 2019) - CABI, CAS, DOAJ, EmCare, Google Scholar, PubMed Central, Scopus;10. (Sinsomboonthong, 2021) - SpringerLink;11. (Sizemore-Barber, 2016) - Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedias in Social Sciences, Google Scholar;12. (Tan, 2015) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SSCI, JSTOR;13. (Thongprasop & Pechnil, 2023) - ISSN Portal (Online: 2774-0560; Print: 2774-0552), ThaiJO;14. (Tyas, 2019) - PKP Index, GARUDA, Dimensions, Google Scholar, SINTA (S3);15. (UNDP Thailand, 2019) - UNDP Repository, Official Government and UN Databases;16. (Yue, 2011) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SSCI;17. (Yue & Leung, 2016) - Scopus;18. (Zhang et al., 2022) - SSCI.	18
RQ2 / H2 - RQ2: How do legal protections and anti-discrimination laws for LGBTQ individuals in Thailand compare to those in Taiwan and Israel? - H2 : Taiwan and Israel provide stronger legal recognition and anti-discrimination laws for LGBTQ individuals compared to Thailand.	1. (Atipiboonsin, 2023) - Scopus, Google Scholar;2. (Dumas, 2023) - N/A;3. (Equaldex, 2024) - Equaldex;4. (Friedman & Chen, 2022) - JSTOR, Resurichify, Exaly, SCImago Journal & CountryRank;5. (Mangkud, 2021) - Web of Science (WoS) Core Citation Indexes: ESCI, Scopus, IBZ Online, DIALNET, Communication Source, Index Islamicus, Law Journal Library, Legal Source, Linguistic Bibliography, Philosopher's Index;6. (Newman et al., 2021) - PubMed, MEDLINE, CAS, EMBASE, Scopus, Current Contents, FSTA, Thomson Reuters (ISI), Google Scholar;7. (Phoruean & Pienkhuntod, 2022) - TCI, JSTOR;8. (Pravattiyagul, 2022) - Emerald Insight;9. (Tosakoon, 2024) - Not specified;10. (Smith & Smith, 2022) - CABI, CAS, DOAJ, EmCare, Google Scholar, PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus;11. (The Economist, 2024) - The Economist (website).	11

Table 1 Grouped Themes for Research Questions (RQs) and Hypotheses (Hs) on LGBTQ Rights, Legal Protections, and Social Acceptance in Thailand (82 sources; 3 repetitions indicated) (Cont.)

Research Question (RQ) / Exploratory Statement (H)	In-text Citations, Years, and Indexed Databases	Number of Citations
<p>RQ3 / H3 - RQ3: How does the lack of legal recognition for same-sex marriages and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws affect the social and economic hardships of LGBTQ individuals in Thailand compared to other progressive countries? - H3: The absence of such legal recognition exacerbates social and economic hardships, including discrimination and mental health issues.</p>	<p>1. (Bhattacharjee, A., & K. H. .2022) - Scopus;2. (Boonyapisompam et al., 2023) - Scopus, PubMed;3. (Bruss et al., 2024) - Scopus, PubMed;4. (Chautrakarn et al., 2023) - Scopus;5. (Desmonde et al., 2022) - Scopus;6. (Dhiman, 2023) - Not specified;7. (Duangwiset & Jackson, 2021) - TCI, Google Scholar, ThaiJO, ISSN, Crossref;8. (Encina et al., 2023) - PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar;9. (Fehling, 2024) - Psychology Today (website article);10. (Hafidz, 2023) - Google Scholar, Crossref, Figshare, Zenodo, DOI, JGate, NIScPR (ROAD);11. (Hasnah & Alang, 2019) - SINTA, Google Scholar, One Search, Garuda;12. (Hoy-Ellis, 2021) - SSCI, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed;13. (Johns et al., 2019) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SCIE, PubMed;14. (Kittiteerasack et al., 2020) - Gale Engage, TUBITAK Turkish Medical Index, Turkish National Citation Index, EBSCO, Turkish Psychiatric Index, WoS ESCI, DOAJ, Scopus, ProQuest;15. (Kosciw et al., 2012) - UGC CARE, Scopus, WoS (SSCI);16. (Liu et al., 2023) - Clarivate Analytics SSCI, Scopus;17. (Lujintanon et al., 2023) - PubMed Central, PubMed/MEDLINE, Science Citation Index Expanded, Chemical Abstracts Service, CINAHL, EMBASE, Scopus;18. (Moallef et al., 2022) - ANVUR, Baidu, CAB Abstracts, CNKI, CNPIEC, Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences, Dimensions, EBSCO, EmCare, Google Scholar, JST, Medline, Naver, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series, OCLC WorldCat Discovery Service;19. (Newman et al., 2023) - ESCI, PMC, MEDLINE, Scopus;20. (Ninpanit, 2024) - Scopus, TCI (Tier 1), ACI;21. (Homla-or, 2023) - TCI, JSTOR;22. (Ojanen et al., 2014) - UGC CARE, Scopus, PubMed;23. (Ojanen et al., 2020) - Scopus;24. (Robinson & Espelage, 2011) - Google Scholar, Crossref, WorldCat, ScienceOpen, ERIC, JSTOR;25. (Srikummoon et al., 2022) - Scopus, PubMed (MEDLINE), Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science);26. (Suriyasam, 2016) - EBSCO Business Source,</p>	33

Table 1 Grouped Themes for Research Questions (RQs) and Hypotheses (Hs) on LGBTQ Rights, Legal Protections, and Social Acceptance in Thailand (82 sources; 3 repetitions indicated) (Cont.)

Research Question (RQ) / Exploratory Statement (H)	In-text Citations, Years, and Indexed Databases	Number of Citations
RQ4 / H4 - RQ4: How does exposure to BL TV series influence social acceptance and legal protection for LGBTQ individuals in Thailand compared to other cultural products or lack of such media representation? - H4 : While exposure to BL TV series has improved social acceptance, it has not translated into sufficient legal protection.	Google Scholar;27. (Thunn, 2024) - Thaiger (website article);28. (UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014) - UNESCO Database, Official Government and UN Databases;29. (Wang et al., 2020) - PubMed, MEDLINE, CAS, EMBASE, Scopus, Current Contents, FSTA, Thomson Reuters (ISI), Google Scholar;30. (Wichaidit et al., 2021) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SCIE, DOAJ, PubMed;31. (Wichaidit et al., 2023) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SCIE, DOAJ, PubMed;32. (Wong et al., 2017) - Web of Science;33. (Yasami et al., 2023) - ANVUR, BFI List, Baidu, CAB Abstracts, CLOCKSS, CNKI, CNPIEC, Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences, Dimensions, EBSCO, Google Scholar, JST, Naver, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals and Series, OCLC WorldCat Discovery Service, Portico, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Psynindex, SCImago, Scopus, Social Science Citation Index, TD Net Discovery Service, UGC-CARE List (India), Wanfang. 1. (Baudinette, 2021) - DOAB, OAPEN Library;2. (Equaldex, 2024) - Equaldex;3. (Habibah et al., 2021) - Google Scholar, GARUDA, Dimensions, Crossref;4. (Jiang & Wei, 2023) - Taylor & Francis Ltd.;5. (Liu et al., 2023) - Clarivate Analytics SSCI, Scopus;6. (Mdnroy & Craig, 2016) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SSCI;7. (Zhang & Dedman, 2021) - UGC CARE, Scopus, SSCI;8. (Zhang, 2023) - Project MUSE, Scopus;9. (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017) - Scopus, SSCI.	9

Table 1 Grouped Themes for Research Questions (RQs) and Hypotheses (Hs) on LGBTQ Rights, Legal Protections, and Social Acceptance in Thailand (82 sources; 3 repetitions indicated) (Cont.)

Research Question (RQ) / Exploratory Statement (H)	In-text Citations, Years, and Indexed Databases	Number of Citations
RQ5 / H5 - RQ5: How do the activities and campaigns of LGBTQ advocacy and support groups in Thailand influence public awareness, policy changes, and legal recognition compared to those in countries with stronger LGBTQ rights? - H5 : These groups are crucial in raising awareness and influencing policies but face significant barriers that limit their effectiveness.	1. (Billard & Gross, 2020) - Indiana University Libraries;2. (Coetzee, 2023) - Scopus;3. (Equaldex, 2024) - Equaldex;4. (Saksornchai, 2024) - N/A;5. (Lynne & Enteen, 2021) - UGC CARE, Scopus, PubMed;6. (Randev, 2022) - Google Scholar, Crossref, WorldCat, ScienceOpen, UPD, SCD, EBSCO, Gale;7. (Thailand Foundation, 2015) - Thailand Foundation (website);8. (ThaiTGA, 2018) - Grassroots Justice Network (website);9. (The Pride Shop, 2021) - The Pride Shop (website).	9
RQ6 / H6 - RQ6: What future prospects and recommendations are essential for enhancing social acceptance and legal protections for LGBTQ individuals in Thailand? - H6 : Implementing legal reforms, comprehensive sexuality education, and public campaigns will significantly enhance social acceptance and legal protections.	1. (Chiba, 2021) - Scopus;2. (Ehambarathan et al., 2023) - Google Scholar, Crossref;3. (Gayther, 2023) - Website article;4. (Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024) - Website article;5. (World Population Review, 2024) - Website article.	5

Note. Adapted from "Appendix_Grouped Themes for RQs and Hs." Repetitions:

1) RQ3/H3 - (Liu et al., 2023); 2) RQ4/H4 - (Liu et al., 2023); 3) RQ6/H6 - (Ehambarathan et al., 2023).

Source: Prepared by the author.

3. Results

3.1 RQ1: Influence of Historical and Cultural Attitudes on LGBTQ+ Rights in Thailand

Findings regarding historical and cultural attitudes (RQ1) are presented below.

3.1.1 Deep-Rooted Historical Acceptance and Cultural Narratives

Thailand's societal recognition of diverse sexual and gender expressions has historical precedents (Ocha, 2023; Tyas, 2019). Historical accounts and cultural expressions indicate early awareness and some tolerance of gender variance (Tyas, 2019). A distinct aspect is the long-standing recognition of kathoey, often understood as a third gender, with roles intertwined with traditional beliefs and Buddhist interpretations (Ocha, 2023). Analysis of queer spiritualities shows Buddhist tenets as both sources of normative pressure and spaces for affirming diverse gender identities (Ocha, 2023). This historical cultural space for gender fluidity shaped Thailand's societal predisposition towards some inclusivity, though this did not consistently translate into formal rights or prevent discrimination as socio-political structures evolved (Ocha, 2023; Tyas, 2019).

3.1.2 Contemporary Social Acceptance: Progress and Persistent Complexities

Contemporary Thailand exhibits high social visibility and notable acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. A 2019 UNDP Thailand nationwide study (N = 2,210) found 69% of non-LGBT Thais reported positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people (UNDP Thailand, 2019). Public events like annual Pride Day celebrations foster community cohesion and visibility (Sizemore-Barber, 2016). Online, the #LoveWins hashtag gained prominence during Civil Partnership Draft Bill debates (late-2018 to mid-2019), challenging heteronormativity and amplifying advocacy messaging (Sinsomboonthong, 2021). Advocacy groups also link gender equality with broader social-justice movements, adapting international discourses (Saejang, 2023).

However, the UNDP (2019) study also found 50% of LGBT respondents experienced verbal harassment, 16% sexual assault, and 42% felt compelled to feign heterosexuality; 49% had contemplated suicide, and 17% attempted it. Transgender women faced high rates of verbal harassment (61%) and sexual assault (22%).

In education, a 2019 study of 1,088 LGBT students in Thai public secondary schools reported negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Factors independently associated with homonegative attitudes included identifying as transgender (adjusted odds ratio [aOR] 2.5), having low academic performance (GPA 2-3: aOR 2.6; GPA < 2: aOR 2.1), and attending sexuality-education classes that covered LGBT bullying (aOR 1.9) or "safe homosexual practices" (aOR 2.1)-suggesting curricular shortcomings (Shrestha et al., 2019).

Religiosity also shapes lived experience. Drawing on interviews with 65 Thai transgender sex workers in Pattaya and Bangkok, Ocha (2023) identifies three patterned negotiations of Buddhism: “Buddhist dequeering” (reinforcing heteronormativity), “queering Buddhism amidst multiple oppressions” (identity/empowerment), and “queering Buddhism as enlightenment.” These findings illustrate how marginalized Theravada Buddhists navigate gendered religious spaces through practice, charity, and kin/community relations (Ocha, 2023).

3.1.3 The Historical Disparity Between Social Acceptance and Legal Recognition

For years, a disparity existed in Thailand between relatively visible societal/cultural acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals and lagging comprehensive legal reforms. Thongprasop and Pechnil (2023) found Thai Constitutional Court decisions (e.g., Nos. 19/2564, 20/2564) often reflected and reinforced heteronormative and royalist-nationalist ideologies, marginalizing queer voices and impeding legal progress. Thus, while Thailand compared favorably with some Asian nations in social tolerance (Yue, 2011; Yue & Leung, 2016), its formal LGBTQ+ legal architecture remained underdeveloped. Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs), including Anjaree Foundation and Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, used strategies like information politics and leveraging international norms to promote LGBT rights (Tyas, 2019). These efforts contributed to the Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (2015), a step against discrimination, with advocates sometimes highlighting compatibility with tolerant Buddhist interpretations (Tyas, 2019). However, this Act excluded marriage rights. The 2024 same-sex marriage law was enacted against this backdrop of long-standing disparity between social acceptance and legal recognition.

3.2 RQ2: Comparative Analysis of LGBTQ+ Legal Protections: Thailand and Taiwan

Findings regarding the comparative analysis of LGBTQ+ legal protections (RQ2) are presented below.

3.2.1 Legal Frameworks for Partnership and Family Recognition

Thailand passed a comprehensive same-sex marriage law in mid-2024, expected to be effective by early 2025, positioning it as a leader in Southeast Asia. However, ancillary rights like full joint adoption and comprehensive regulations for LGBTQ+ families beyond spousal recognition may require further legislative attention under this new framework.

In Taiwan, Act No. 748 legalized same-sex marriage in 2019. Friedman and Chen (2022) reported that this Act restricts joint adoption for many same-sex couples, typically allowing adoption only of a spouse’s biological children. They concluded this limitation reinforces stigmas and devalues diverse LGBT parenthood, illustrating how specific legal stipulations, even with marriage legalization, can perpetuate discrimination (Friedman & Chen, 2022).

3.2.2 Gender Identity Recognition, Non-Discrimination, and Healthcare Access in Thailand

Despite marriage equality, Thailand lacks a formal legal gender recognition (LGR) procedure, preventing individuals from changing the gender marker on official documents (Equaldex, 2024; Newman et al., 2021; Tosakoon, 2024). As of early 2024, this regulatory gap persists and impacts healthcare access, employment, and protection from discrimination, causing distress (Pravattiyagul, 2022; Tosakoon, 2024). Transgender prisoners in Thailand face vulnerabilities including violence and denial of necessary health services, exacerbated by inconsistent gendered housing policies (Pravattiyagul, 2022).

While 2024 public opinion showed high support for LGBT rights (73%), gender-affirming care access (81%), and facility access matching gender identity (82%) (Equaldex, 2024), systemic healthcare barriers persist. Many transgender individuals struggle to obtain adequate gender-affirming care-particularly under Universal Health Coverage-and although specialized services such as the Tangerine Clinic exist, disparities continue (Tosakoon, 2024). Phoruean and Pienkhuntod (2022) identified six types of social protection provided by CSOs in Isan: counselling, health/STD check-ups, coordination, information dissemination, charitable donations, and employment assistance. Newman et al. (2021) further found that 81% of relevant Thai studies (to August 2020) were urban-focused (Bangkok/Chiang Mai), indicating limited rural research.

Regarding anti-discrimination, Newman et al. (2021) noted an absence of generalized anti-discrimination legislation at that time. Equaldex (2024) data indicates employment and housing discrimination are now “illegal,” suggesting some specific protections, though a comprehensive law is still needed. Dumas (2023) called for consistent SOGI questions in national surveys to identify inequities.

3.2.3 Judicial Influence and Broader Legislative Dynamics in Thailand

The Thai Constitutional Court has increasingly engaged with rights-based issues, including same-sex marriage considerations before its 2024 legislative passage (Atipiboonsin, 2023). Atipiboonsin (2023) noted such judicial activism can spur progress but can also be influenced by political climate and perceived as strategic judicial power expansions. The 2024 marriage law was a legislative achievement.

Penal Code reforms concerning sexual offenses (2007, 2019) showed an interplay of feminist and traditional “naturalness” interpretations (Mangkud, 2021). Thailand’s human rights legislation, like the 2022 law on torture and enforced disappearances (Smith & Smith, 2022), occurs amidst political instability impacting implementation. Remaining gaps needing legislative attention include clear LGR policies, full equality in family/adoption rights under the new marriage

law, and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, as identified by Newman et al. (2021) and Pravattiyagul (2022), and informed by challenges reported in Taiwan (Friedman & Chen, 2022).

3.3 RQ3: Social and Economic Challenges Faced by LGBTQ+ Individuals in Thailand

Findings related to social and economic challenges (RQ3) are presented below, largely drawing from studies conducted before the full impact assessment of the 2024 marriage equality law.

3.3.1 Social Hardships: Stigma, Discrimination, Violence, and Mental Health

LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand report significant social stigma and discrimination. Srikummoon et al. (2022) found Thai transgender women (TGWs) with intersectional identities reported discrimination across education, workplaces, daily life, and healthcare: 63% experienced harsh speech/physical abuse, 79% occupational/social inequality, 58% legal inequality, and 68% healthcare disparities. Ninpanit (2024) found Thai news headlines depicted transgender individuals as perpetrators (75%) or victims (65%) more frequently than international websites (80% positive portrayals), contrasting with Dhiman's (2023) observations of evolving positive media trends. Kijratanakoson (2022) noted Thai Boys' Love (BL) media reflects real-life LGBTQ+ issues, shaping perceptions.

Thai LGBTQ+ youth-especially transgender students-are particularly vulnerable. In a nationally representative survey of 31,898 secondary students (~2.5% transgender), transgender boys had higher past-year suicidal ideation (APR = 2.97 vs cisgender boys; 2.29 vs cisgender girls) and transgender girls reported much higher past-year exposure to sexual violence (APR = 2.74 vs cisgender boys; 4.93 vs cisgender girls) (Wichaidit et al., 2021). A UNESCO Office Bangkok (2014) report across five Thai provinces found 31% of LGBT students reported bullying; bullied youth were twice as likely to miss school, four times more likely to be depressed, and seven times more likely to attempt suicide. Although 68% sought help, 63% felt reporting was ineffective. These data underscore the need for inclusive, protective school policies (Johns et al., 2019; Thunn, 2024).

Mental health burdens are substantial, a finding consistent with established minority stress theory (Hoy-Ellis, 2021). Moallef et al. (2022) (N=1,290 LGBTQI+ individuals) found 16.8% lifetime suicide attempt prevalence and 50.7% suicide ideation prevalence, associated with perceived (AOR 1.30 for ideation) and enacted stigma. Encina et al. (2023) (N=1,468 young Thai GBM) reported >50% depression prevalence, lowest among those fully disclosed.

3.3.2 Economic Hardships: Employment, Healthcare Access, and Systemic Barriers

Limited employment protections and discrimination have undermined economic stability. Suriyasarn (2016) reported 70% of LGBT workers faced hiring discrimination, 80% hostile work environments, and 65% of transgender workers were excluded from mainstream jobs or marginalized. The Thai Civil and Commercial Code's historical design for heterosexual families created economic impediments; Nitibhat Homla-or (2023) noted the 2024 marriage equality law aims to address these financial/inheritance disparities.

Discrimination impedes access to care. In a cross-sectional online survey of transgender adults (N = 186), transgender women were more likely than transgender men to obtain hormones from non-traditional sources, and provider discrimination was associated with higher self-medication and avoidance of counselling (Boonyapisompan et al., 2023). PrEP access barriers for young gay men and transgender women included limited provider communication (70%), service fragmentation (65%), and a scarcity of PrEP-competent providers (60%); conversely, 85% viewed inclusion of PrEP in UHC as a facilitator (Newman et al., 2023). Regional disparities persist—for example, constrained sexual and reproductive health access in Isan (Hafidz, 2023). While overall youth HIV infections are projected to decline, men who have sex with men accounted for an estimated 83% of new infections by 2020 in one model (Desmonde et al., 2022). To address mental-health needs alongside medical care, integration of LGBTQ-inclusive content into nursing education is recommended (Kittiteerasack et al., 2020).

3.3.3 Impact of Legal Frameworks on Socio-Economic Challenges: A Comparative Context

Thai findings indicate that historical absence of comprehensive legal protections (including LGR and broad anti-discrimination laws) contributes to socio-economic vulnerabilities. Comparatively, Wang et al. (2020) (N>29,000 in China) found that while LGBT self-perceived discrimination was notable (mean 49.9/100), higher provincial economic development correlated with lower reported discrimination (6.4% decrease in discriminatory events per 100,000 RMB GDP increase), suggesting economic factors and supportive legal/social environments are influential. The severe mental health outcomes in Thailand, including a 16.8% lifetime suicide attempt rate (Moallef et al., 2022) and high school bullying rates (UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014), were reported in contexts of then-insufficient legal protections. Reviewed literature suggests inclusive laws are linked to better social acceptance, economic stability, and healthcare access.

3.4 RQ4: Influence of Boys' Love (BL) TV Series on LGBTQ+ Social Acceptance and Legal Protection in Thailand

Findings regarding the influence of Boys' Love (BL) TV series (RQ4) are presented below.

3.4.1 Shaping Social Acceptance and Public Perception through BL Narratives

Thai BL TV series, a significant cultural phenomenon, reportedly challenge traditional views on gender/sexuality and promote broader LGBTQ+ social acceptance, reshaping queer representation in Asia (Habibah et al., 2021; Jiang & Wei, 2023). Evolving from Japanese BL manga and Thai BL novels, they adapt tropes, balancing queer romance with heteronormative elements for wide appeal (Baudinette, 2021). Unlike traditional media's often stereotypical LGBTQ+ portrayals (McInroy & Craig, 2016: 75% of participants noted stereotypes), BL series are often lauded for narratives resonating with authenticity. Kijratanakoson (2022) identified BL's appeal themes as "strong affection," "determinant of audience participation," and "connection with reality," reflecting real-life LGBTQ+ issues.

The primary audience is young women (18-35 years, 60-70% of fans in some studies), with LGBTQ+ fans also constituting 10-15% (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). For many, particularly young women, the genre offers a space to explore romantic fantasies and challenge restrictive societal norms (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). For many, particularly young women, the genre offers a space to explore romantic fantasies and challenge restrictive societal norms (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). Zhang and Dedman (2021) describe Thai BL as "a contested sexual and political space" (p. 1039), simultaneously reinforcing and contesting dominant discourses on homosexuality and military politics.

3.4.2 Cultural Impact, Community Building, and Economic Contributions

Thai BL series' cultural impact extends internationally, reportedly influencing public perceptions and fostering greater LGBTQ+ acceptance, particularly in other ASEAN countries, challenging conservative norms (Habibah et al., 2021). For LGBTQ+ youth, such media can provide validation, community, and positive identity affirmation (McInroy & Craig, 2016). The international reach promotes discussion and inclusivity by bringing queer narratives to mainstream consumption (Kijratanakoson, 2022).

Economically, the Thai BL industry shows significant growth; series like "2gether: The Series" gained millions of domestic and international views, contributing to the local economy (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). This is linked to a BL celebrity system and fan engagement, amplifying cultural reach (Baudinette, 2021).

3.4.3 Urban Transformations, Tourism, and the Limits of BL's Influence on Legal Protection

BL TV series have reshaped urban space and tourism in Bangkok. Drawing on fieldwork, Zhang (2023) argues that BL-cultivated “fantasized homoromanticism” “spatializes the urbanity of Bangkok” (p. 165) and attracts international fans, yet these scenes “plaster a pristine image of Thai urbanity while tucking away escalating confrontations” (p. 165). He further observes a bifurcation between spaces for international fans/tourists and the city’s struggling subaltern residents (p. 169).

The reviewed literature indicates BL series influence social acceptance, cultural discourse, and economic activity. However, a direct impact on formal legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand was not clearly substantiated as a primary finding in these studies. Sources highlighted changes in perception, increased visibility, and community fostering (Habibah et al., 2021). While an enhanced social acceptance and a media landscape “advocating queer rights” (Jiang & Wei, 2023, characterizing Baudinette, 2021) may create a favorable environment for legal reforms, a direct causal link from BL consumption to specific legislative changes was not explicitly detailed in the literature reviewed.

3.5 RQ5: Role and Impact of LGBTQ+ Advocacy and Support Groups in Thailand

Findings regarding the role and impact of LGBTQ+ advocacy and support groups (RQ5) are presented below.

3.5.1 Raising Public Awareness and Fostering Social Acceptance

LGBTQ+ advocacy and community-led initiatives in Thailand reportedly boost public awareness and social acceptance. Small-scale LGBTQIA+ festivals and public events like pride parades provide transformative experiences promoting social/self-acceptance and platforms to resist discrimination, strengthening community cohesion (Coetzee, 2023; The Pride Shop, 2021). Coetzee (2023) noted these events can offer attendees “existential moments” reshaping understanding of sexual identity. Billard & Gross (2020) identified media’s role in legitimizing minority groups and influencing public opinion towards inclusivity, with analyses showing shifts from negative to more legitimizing LGBTQ+ portrayals.

3.5.2 Driving Service Delivery, Policy Dialogue, and Legal Recognition Efforts

Thai LGBTQ+ groups actively provide services and engage in policy dialogue. In health care, Lynne and Enteen (2021) document two community-based clinics led by Thai trans women that design trans-specific HIV-care models, helping to destigmatize services and correct the long-standing subsumption of trans women under the MSM category; following the 2016

UNAIDS report, national programmes began expanding trans-specific services (Lynne & Enteen, 2021; UNAIDS, 2016).

Organizations like the Thai Transgender Alliance (ThaiTGA) have campaigned for transgender rights, focusing on legal gender recognition and improved quality of life (ThaiTGA, 2018). While broader legal reform historically had “mixed success” before recent major changes, these groups kept critical issues on the agenda. The Thailand Foundation (2015) highlighted integrating Buddhist teachings, psychology, and meditation to foster LGBTQ+ self-esteem and resilience against stigma.

3.5.3 Overcoming Challenges in Advocacy and Measuring Impact

LGBTQ+ advocacy groups face challenges. Coetzee (2023) noted issues of inclusivity, accessibility, and representation within community events. Billard & Gross (2020) reported research on media’s role in LGBTQ+ politics often shows U.S./Anglophone bias, with limited focus on bisexual/transgender people, causing data scarcity for advocacy elsewhere.

Assessing advocacy impact is difficult; descriptive organizational materials (e.g., ThaiTGA, 2018) indicate a need for more empirical data for comprehensive impact quantification. Billard & Gross (2020) and Coetzee (2023) identified research needs on digital media beyond Western contexts and on measuring long-term impacts of community events. Lynne and Enteen’s (2021) work on trans-led HIV clinics highlighted concrete service delivery impacts but also the focused nature of such assessments.

3.6 RQ6: Future Prospects and Recommendations for Enhancing LGBTQIA+ Rights in Thailand

Findings related to future prospects and recommendations (RQ6) identified in the literature are presented below.

3.6.1 Implementing and Strengthening Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) was identified as key for fostering LGBTQIA+ understanding and acceptance from an early age (Chiba, 2021). Chiba (2021) found that effective CSE delivery in selected Thai schools is contingent upon enhanced teacher training and resources. That study concluded that building broad CSE support requires highlighting its positive outcomes for student health and development, alongside school-teacher-parent collaboration (Chiba, 2021).

3.6.2 Learning from Public Campaigns to Promote Inclusion

Public campaigns were identified as a potential means to shape public opinion and promote LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Ehambaranathan et al. (2023), studying Thailand’s subcultures,

observed that Thailand's progressive stances (e.g., on cannabis law reform, and by extension, LGBTQ+ rights) could influence regional perceptions. Their study implicitly suggested that mechanisms from successful domestic public campaigns might offer insights for strategies to enhance LGBTQIA+ inclusion and address misconceptions within Thailand (Ehambaranathan et al., 2023).

3.6.3 Prioritizing Ongoing Legal Reforms and Sustained Advocacy Efforts

Reviewed literature underscored that continued legal reforms and advocacy are essential post-2024 marriage equality. The Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand's (RSAT) strategic plan (2023-2027) includes continued focus on improving human rights, LGBTQIA+ community capacity building, sustaining health services, fostering partnerships, and strengthening its organization (Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024). RSAT's goals indicate advocacy aims for a comprehensively inclusive society with equal rights and no discrimination for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024).

3.6.4 Leveraging Demographic Insights for Inclusive Policy Development

Understanding demographics was presented as important for policy. Gayther (2023) estimated ~212.3 million LGBTQIA+ individuals globally in 2023, with 31.3% of countries recognizing same-sex unions/marriages and 42.1% legally recognizing diverse gender identities. World Population Review (2024) estimated ~8% global LGBTQIA+ population, similarly ~8% for Thailand, with younger generations more likely to identify openly. These demographic findings were reported as underscoring the significant LGBTQIA+ presence, reinforcing the need for social acceptance and comprehensive legal rights. The reviewed literature collectively suggested that promoting these in Thailand involves multifaceted approaches including continued CSE, further legal reforms (e.g., LGR, anti-discrimination laws), Thai-specific demographic research, and targeted awareness campaigns for inclusive policy (Chiba, 2021; Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024; Gayther, 2023; World Population Review, 2024).

4. Discussion

4.1 Broader Implications of Historical and Cultural Attitudes on LGBTQ+ Rights in Thailand (RQ1)

This review indicates Thailand's historical-cultural landscape fostered notable LGBTQ+ social visibility (addressing RQ1), yet this coexisted with delayed comprehensive legal protections until recently (reflecting H1's exploratory statement). This discussion explores these complexities and the evolving trajectory after recent legal advancements.

4.1.1 Cultural Foundations and the Paradox of Social Acceptance

Thailand's historical recognition of gender diversity (e.g., kathoey, nuanced Buddhist interpretations) (Ocha, 2023; Tyas, 2019) likely contributes to a relatively tolerant social environment, evidenced by 69% of non-LGBT Thais reporting positive attitudes (UNDP Thailand, 2019). Pride celebrations (Sizemore-Barber, 2016) and social media (#LoveWins) (Sinsomboonthong, 2021) further amplify this.

However, this social acceptance is profoundly paradoxical. The same UNDP Thailand (2019) report detailed high rates of harassment (53%), assault (16%), and suicide attempts (17%) among LGBT individuals. This suggests general tolerance doesn't eliminate deep stigma or violence. Buddhism's influence is complex, offering "queering" pathways but also reinforcing heteronormativity (Ocha, 2023). Educational settings also show challenges, with 35% of LGBT students reporting negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Shrestha et al., 2019). Thus, while a cultural foundation for acceptance exists, it is uneven. Advocacy might leverage cultural narratives (Tyas, 2019) while addressing these contemporary fissures.

4.1.2 Systemic Challenges and Catalysts for Legal Reforms

The historical acceptance-rights gap reflects systemic factors. Entrenched judicial heteronormative ideologies in constitutional interpretations marginalized queer perspectives, hindering legal reform (Thongprasop & Pechnil, 2023), showing tolerance alone is insufficient against institutional resistance.

Yet, social movements and public discourse catalyzed change. Social media activism (#LoveWins) promoted inclusivity and shaped the socio-political climate (Sinsomboonthong, 2021). Sustained advocacy by local/transnational networks, sometimes aligning LGBTQ+ rights with cultural values like Buddhist principles, led to earlier steps like the Gender Equality Act B.E. 2558 (Tyas, 2019). These efforts show mobilization can spur legal shifts. The 2024 marriage equality law attests to this long-term impact.

4.1.3 Comparative and Transnational Perspectives

Thailand's journey of social acceptance versus legal lag is clarified regionally. While Thailand reported lower "rejecting" views of homosexuality (40%) compared to Malaysia (59% homonegative) or Indonesia (66%) (Manalastas et al., 2017), indicating greater relative acceptance, considerable room for improvement remains. Malaysia faces taboos rooted in religion, culture, and family (Kon & Chong, 2022), while Vietnam's LGBTQ+ rights recognition is ambiguous, partly

due to inattention to redistributive implications (Phuong, 2022). Elsewhere in urban Asia, such as in Singapore and Hong Kong, the emergence of queer public cultures is also marked by complex interactions between global economic forces, urban development, and persistent socio-legal ambiguities, creating what some term ‘queer Asian city’ dynamics with unique forms of visibility and precarity (Yue & Leung, 2016).

Conversely, in China, modernization indicators (higher GDP, cultural openness) correlated with increased online LGBT-related searches, suggesting economic development and openness can enhance visibility (Zhang et al., 2022). These diverse trajectories show that while transnational discourses on LGBTQ+ rights and feminism are influential (Saejang, 2023; Yue, 2011), unique national contexts heavily shape equality paths.

4.1.4 Integrative Summary and Interpretation of RQ1

This review affirms Thailand’s unique historical context (Ocha, 2023) contributed to relatively high social acceptance for LGBTQ+ individuals compared to some Asian nations (Manalastas et al., 2017; UNDP Thailand, 2019). However, this acceptance is paradoxical, marked by significant stigma and discrimination, especially for vulnerable groups and in specific environments (Shrestha et al., 2019; UNDP Thailand, 2019).

The exploratory statement (H1)-cultural acceptance fostered social acceptance but not adequate legal reforms-is largely supported historically. Entrenched institutional ideologies slowed legal progress (Thongprasop & Pechnil, 2023). However, dynamic social media (Sinsomboonthong, 2021), sustained advocacy (Tyas, 2019), and supportive public opinion created fertile ground for change. The 2024 marriage equality law fundamentally alters the “lagging legal reforms” narrative, signifying a monumental step where widespread social sentiment catalyzed transformative legal recognition. This highlights the interplay between culture, evolving social norms (driven by advocacy/media), and eventual systemic change. While challenges remain in implementing rights and addressing ongoing discrimination, the Thai experience offers insights into how culturally aligned advocacy can promote LGBTQ+ rights (see Table 2). Future efforts must ensure this legal progress improves daily lives and safety for all LGBTQ+ individuals.

Table 2 Summary of Interpretations Related to RQ1: Historical and Cultural Influences on LGBTQ+ Rights in Thailand

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations from Reviewed Literature (Results 3.1)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/ discussion)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation from Discussion - 4.1)	Alignment with H1 (Exploratory Statement)
Historical & Cultural Context	Historical narratives/concepts (e.g., <i>kathoey</i> , nuanced Buddhism) indicate long-standing recognition of some gender diversity, fostering societal tolerance (Ocha, 2023; Tyas, 2019).	Enhance historical education, leveraging cultural narratives for LGBTQ+ rights advocacy, countering “Western import” narratives. (Tyas, 2019).	Acknowledging indigenous gender diversity grounds contemporary LGBTQ+ rights advocacy, countering “Western import” narratives.	Supports H1 part 1: Historical/cultural elements founded social acceptance.
Social Integration & Perception	High general LGBTQ+ social visibility (69% non-LGBT positive attitudes; UNDP Thailand, 2019). Social media (#LoveWins) amplified inclusion (Sinsomboonthong, 2021). Coexists with high harassment (53% LGBT) and negative attitudes (35% LGBT students) (Shrestha et al., 2019; UNDP Thailand, 2019).	Promote public awareness campaigns & rights-based sexuality education to address stigmas and bridge acceptance gaps (Shrestha et al., 2019; UNDP Thailand, 2019).	Coexistence of acceptance/ discrimination reveals uneven tolerance. Targeted interventions (education) are key to deepen acceptance beyond superficiality.	Supports H1 part 1, with nuance: Considerable but imperfect social acceptance, marked by gaps/discrimination (paradox).
Legal Reforms & Influences	LGBTQ+ legal rights historically lagged social visibility due to systemic factors (judicial heteronormativity) (Thongprasop & Pechnil, 2023). Activism influenced discourse for change (Sinsomboonthong, 2021; Tyas, 2019). 2024 marriage law is a major breakthrough.	Continue advocacy for comprehensive reforms beyond marriage (LGR, anti-discrimination). Address systemic biases. Ensure effective new-law implementation.	Systemic biases historically impeded legal progress despite social tolerance. The 2024 law shows sustained activism can overcome resistance, catalyzing legal shifts after prolonged effort.	Supports H1 part 2, with recent pivotal change: Legal reforms lagged historically, 2024 marriage law marks a fundamental shift in one major area.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 3 Comparative Interpretation of Legal Protections and Social Context (RQ2)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.2)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.2)	Alignment with H2 (Exploratory Statement: Historically lagging, now re-evaluated)
Partnership & Family Recognition	Thailand: Achieved marriage equality (mid-2024), incl. adoption, leading SEA (The Economist, 2024). Ancillary rights need monitoring. - Taiwan: Legalized marriage (2019) but limited joint adoption, creating stigmas (Friedman & Chen, 2022).	Thailand: Ensure non-discriminatory marriage/adoption laws; learn from Taiwan. - Taiwan: Address LGBT co-parenting/ adoption limits (Friedman & Chen, 2022).	Thailand's 2024 law is a fundamental shift, potentially more inclusive initially than SEA. Taiwan has marriage but adoption hurdles. Frameworks requiring focus on substantive equality.	Re-evaluates H2: Outdated for marriage; Thailand leads SEA. Taiwan has marriage but adoption hurdles. Compare full family-rights implementation.
Legal Gender Recognition (LGR)	Thailand: No formal LGR. Critical gap causing discrimination and barriers (Equaldex, 2024; Newman et al., 2021; Pravattiyagul, 2022; Tosakoon, 2024).	Thailand: Prioritize accessible, rights-affirming LGR. Advocate SOGI data collection for LGR policy (Dumas, 2023).	Lack of LGR in Thailand severely impedes lived equality for trans/gender-diverse people, undermining other advances. Key area where Thailand trails international best practices.	Supports H2 elements: Thailand lags in LGR, a critical area where others (not detailed for Taiwan here) may be more advanced.
Anti-Discrimination Laws & Public Opinion	Thailand: No single comprehensive anti-discrimination law (Newman et al., 2021), though some specific protections are emerging (Equaldex, 2024). High public support for LGBT rights (~73%; Equaldex, 2024) vs. lived discrimination (Moalief et al., 2022; Srikummoon et al., 2022; UNDP Thailand, 2019).	Thailand: Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination law. Use public education to bridge the gap between support and lived realities of discrimination.	Disparity between high public support and lack of comprehensive laws, plus ongoing discrimination, is critical. Positive opinion is an asset but not a substitute for robust legal protection.	Supports H2 elements: Lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws means Thailand may lag jurisdictions with such laws, despite favorable public opinion.

Table 3 Comparative Interpretation of Legal Protections and Social Context (RQ2) (Cont.)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.2)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.2)	Alignment with H2 (Exploratory Statement: Historically lagging, now re-evaluated)
Judicial & Legislative Climate	Thailand: Constitutional Court active on rights, but interpretations cautious/politically influenced (Atipiboonsin, 2023). 2024 marriage law a legislative win (advocacy/ public sentiment). Human rights laws impacted by instability (Smith & Smith, 2022).	Thailand: Continue advocacy for post-marriage reforms (LGR, anti-discrimination). Ensure effective law implementation. Foster judicial understanding.	Recent marriage progress was legislative, highlighting advocacy/ political will. Complex legal/political climate requires vigilance for effective protection.	Nuances H2: Judicial activism a factor; recent progress legislative. “Strength” depends on implementation and further reforms, subject to political/legislative climate.

Source: Prepared by the author.

4.2 Interpretation of Legal Landscapes and Social Realities for LGBTQ+ Rights (RQ2)

Findings on comparative LGBTQ+ legal protections (RQ2) reveal a dynamic, uneven terrain when examining Thailand against regional contexts like Taiwan. The exploratory statement (H2), which historically might have positioned Thailand as lagging, needs significant re-evaluation post-Thailand's 2024 marriage equality law. This discussion interprets these legal shifts, persistent social challenges despite positive public opinion, and the interplay of forces shaping LGBTQ+ rights.

4.2.1 Evolution of Legal Recognition for Partnerships and Families

Thailand's mid-2024 same-sex marriage law, reportedly including adoption rights (The Economist, 2024), fundamentally alters its comparative standing, positioning it as a Southeast Asian leader. This addresses a core equality demand, reflecting societal shifts and The Economist (2024), citing Pew Research reporting ~60% public support, potentially dismantling many prior legal-economic barriers for same-sex couples.

In contrast, Taiwan's 2019 Act No. 748, while pioneering, limited joint adoption primarily to a spouse's biological children, reinforcing stigmas (Friedman & Chen, 2022). As Thailand implements its new provisions, avoiding similar pitfalls to ensure non-discriminatory family rights will be crucial.

Despite marriage equality, Thailand's lack of comprehensive legal gender recognition (LGR) remains a profound challenge, perpetuating stigma and disparities (Newman et al., 2021; Pravattiyagul, 2022; Tosakoon, 2024), an area where advocacy is critical. This lack of legal recognition and the resulting societal invisibility can be compounded by media portrayals that, while evolving, may still perpetuate stereotypes (Ninpanit, 2024).

4.2.2 Public Support Versus Lived Realities: Healthcare and Social Disparities in Thailand

Thailand shows high public support for LGBTQ+ rights (73% general, 81% gender-affirming care access, 82% facility access by gender identity; Equaldex, 2024). Yet this contrasts sharply with persistent discrimination and healthcare disparities, especially for transgender people. The LGR absence drives these disparities, hindering appropriate healthcare access (Boonyapisompan et al., 2023; Tosakoon, 2024). Boonyapisompan et al. (2023) found Thai transgender women often used non-traditional gender-affirming-care services, with discrimination linked to self-medication. Transgender prisoners face severe neglect and violence (Pravattiyagul, 2022). Specialized services like the Tangerine Clinic (Tosakoon, 2024) and key-population-led HIV treatment models (Lujintanon et al., 2023) aim to fill these gaps, yet disparities continue, with CSOs also playing a vital role in underserved regions like Isan (Phoruean & Pienkhuntod, 2022).

These challenges contribute to severe mental-health outcomes: 50.7% lifetime suicide ideation and 16.8% attempts among LGBTQI+ Thais, linked to pervasive social stigma (Moallef et al., 2022), a factor also influencing general public attitudes toward other health conditions such as HIV (Chautrakarn et al., 2023). LGBTQA+ adolescents showed higher depressive symptoms (30% vs. 15%) and suicidality (25% vs. 12%) than cisgender heterosexual peers (Wichaidit et al., 2023). High psychological distress and suicidality were also found among gay men and transgender women sex workers in Phuket (Yasami et al., 2023), worsened by poverty. These statistics show public support does not guarantee safety or adequate mental-health support, especially for those facing intersectional discrimination (Bruss et al., 2024; Srikummoon et al., 2022).

4.2.3 The Interplay of Judicial, Legislative, and Social Forces in Advancing Rights

Thailand's Constitutional Court has increasingly engaged with rights issues (Atipiboonsin, 2023), though interpretations are viewed cautiously amidst political instability (Atipiboonsin, 2023; Smith & Smith, 2022). The 2024 marriage equality law was a legislative triumph, reflecting advocacy and shifting public sentiment overcoming political inertia, supported by broad social acceptance and political will (The Economist, 2024).

The wider legislative landscape is complex; Penal Code sexual-offense reforms show mixed influences (Mangkud, 2021). Moving forward, comprehensive LGBTQ+ protection requires further legislative action: establishing accessible LGR procedures (Dumas, 2023; Pravattiyagul, 2022), ensuring the marriage law includes non-discriminatory family rights-drawing on Taiwan's experience, where the 748 Act legalized same-sex marriage but left joint adoption largely restricted and reinforced stigmas around LGBT co-parenting (Friedman & Chen, 2022)-and enacting robust anti-discrimination laws (Newman et al., 2021).

4.2.4 Integrative Interpretation:

Navigating progress and persistent gaps (RQ2). The RQ2 analysis reveals profound transformation in Thailand's LGBTQ+ legal landscape with the 2024 same-sex marriage legalization, reportedly including adoption (The Economist, 2024). This positions Thailand ahead of many regional counterparts, potentially offering a more inclusive initial framework than Taiwan's 2019 Act regarding adoption (Friedman & Chen, 2022), making a simple "Thailand trails" notion outdated. However, this victory coexists with critical gaps. Thailand's continued absence of formal LGR (Newman et al., 2021; Tosakoon, 2024) causes severe systemic discrimination in healthcare, employment, and security, contributing to high mental distress among transgender individuals (Moallef et al., 2022; Pravattiyagul, 2022). While Thai public opinion strongly supports LGBTQ+ rights (Equaldex, 2024), this hasn't translated into comprehensive anti-discrimination laws or

eradicated societal discrimination (UNDP Thailand, 2019; Wichaidit et al., 2023). Thus, H2 (suggesting stronger overall protections in comparative nations) is re-evaluated: Thailand leaped forward in partnership recognition but critically needs LGR and comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, where comparisons with more advanced jurisdictions are pertinent. The Thai experience (see Table 3) shows domain-specific legal reform. High social acceptance, while enabling, doesn't negate the urgent need for targeted, comprehensive laws for tangible, lived equality.

4.3 Interpreting Social and Economic Hardships of LGBTQ+ Individuals in Thailand (RQ3)

Findings for RQ3 starkly illuminate significant social and economic hardships for LGBTQ+ Thais, primarily from studies predating the 2024 marriage equality law's full impact. This discussion connects these hardships to historical non-recognition of same-sex couples and, crucially, ongoing deficiencies in LGR and anti-discrimination laws. The exploratory statement (H3)-that such deficits exacerbate hardships-is strongly supported.

4.3.1 The Pervasive Impact of Social Stigma and its Profound Toll on Mental Health

Social stigma profoundly impacts LGBTQ+ Thais, especially TGWs, who report widespread discrimination (63% harsh speech/abuse; Srikummoon et al., 2022). Media portrayals are complex; while some show evolving inclusivity (Dhiman, 2023), Thai news headlines often depicted transgender individuals negatively (e.g., 75% as perpetrators), unlike more positive international portrayals (Ninpanit, 2024). BL series also shape visibility (Kijratanakoson, 2022).

Youth are particularly vulnerable. In a national survey of 31,898 Thai secondary students (~2.5% transgender), transgender boys had almost threefold higher suicidal ideation (APR = 2.97 vs. cisgender boys) and transgender girls had markedly higher past-year sexual violence (APR = 4.93 vs. cisgender girls) (Wichaidit et al., 2021). Across five provinces, 31% of bullied LGBT youth reported sexual, physical, verbal, or social abuse; bullied youth were 2× more likely to miss school, 4× more likely to be depressed, and 7× more likely to attempt suicide, while 63% believed reporting would be ineffective (UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014). These harms span online and offline spaces, with documented linkages between online harassment and offline violence among Thai youth (Ojanen et al., 2014), underscoring the need for inclusive anti-bullying policies and supports (Thunn, 2024).

This culminates in a severe mental-health crisis. Moallef et al. (2022) found 16.8% lifetime suicide attempt and 50.7% ideation prevalence among Thai LGBTQI+ individuals, linked to stigma (perceived-stigma AOR for ideation = 1.30). Over 50% of young Thai GBM experience depression (Encina et al., 2023). LGBTQA+ adolescents reported higher depressive symptoms

(30% vs. 15%) and suicidal ideation (25% vs. 12%) than cis-het peers (Wichaidit et al., 2023). High suicidality among Thai LGBT adults is linked to discrimination/stress (Kittiteerasack et al., 2020). The Minority Stress Model explains these realities, showing societal stressors impact mental health (Fehling, 2024; Hoy-Ellis, 2021), while social support and disclosure offer mitigation (Bruss et al., 2024; Encina et al., 2023).

4.3.2 Economic Instability, Employment Discrimination, and Compounded Healthcare Barriers

Economic precarity for LGBTQ+ Thais stems from employment discrimination and compounded healthcare barriers. Suriyasarn (2016) found 70% faced hiring discrimination, 65% of transgender workers were excluded from mainstream jobs, and 80% endured hostile work environments. While Thailand's 2024 marriage-equality law aims to alleviate some spousal/family economic disparities stemming from the old civil code (Homla-or, 2023), broader workplace discrimination due to societal biases often persists (cf. Bhattacharjee, A., & K, H., 2022, on India).

Healthcare discrimination constrains access at multiple levels. In an online survey of Thai transgender adults (N = 186), transgender women-citing provider discrimination and low awareness of gender-affirming services-were more likely to obtain hormones from non-traditional sources and to self-medicate (Boonyapisompan et al., 2023). For HIV prevention, young gay men and young transgender women reported PrEP barriers including poor provider communication (70%), service fragmentation (65%), and a shortage of PrEP-competent providers (60%), even as UHC inclusion was a facilitator for 85% (Newman et al., 2023). Regional inequities persist in Isan, where stigma and limited services necessitate locally tailored responses (Hafidz, 2023). At the population level, anticipated HIV stigma remains high (78.5%), deterring care-seeking (Chautrakarn et al., 2023). Modeling underscores the urgency: by 2020, MSM accounted for ~83% of new youth HIV infections (Desmonde et al., 2022). Promisingly, key-population-led services retain most clients in care across models (Lujintanon et al., 2023), and integrating LGBT mental health into nursing education is recommended to address minority-stress needs (Kittiteerasack et al., 2020).

4.3.3 The Influence of Media, Protective Environments, and Policy Imperatives

Media's influence carries policy implications. The contrast between some positive global transgender media trends (Dhiman, 2023) and negative local Thai portrayals (Ninpanit, 2024) suggests a need for media literacy and responsible representation, crucial for mitigating discrimination's effects (Fehling, 2024).

Creating protective environments, especially in schools, is paramount given bullying's severe consequences (UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014; Wichaidit et al., 2021). This requires robust anti-bullying policies, inclusive curricula, and supportive programs (Johns et al., 2019; Kosciw et al., 2012). Addressing restrictive societal norms (e.g., masculine norms; Wong et al., 2017) and fostering multi-stakeholder support (Hasnah & Alang, 2019) are also vital.

4.3.4 Beyond Marriage Equality: The Continuing Agenda for Legal Reform and Social Justice

Thailand's 2024 marriage-equality law addresses key aspects of recognition for same-sex couples (The Economist, 2024), partly rectifying historical Civil Code failings (Homla-or, 2023). However, this does not resolve all legal challenges. As in China, where economic development correlates with reduced discrimination but legal frameworks remain vital (Wang et al., 2020), comprehensive laws are essential in Thailand.

Table 4 Summary of Interpretations Related to RQ3: Social and Economic Challenges Faced by LGBTQ+ Individuals in Thailand

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.3)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.3)	Alignment with H3 (Exploratory Statement)
Social stigma, discrimination & violence	Widespread TGW discrimination (63%abuse; Srikummoon et al., 2022). Negative local media (Ninpanit, 2024). High youth bullying/violence (UNESCO Office Bangkok, 2014; Wichaidit et al., 2021); 31% bullied faced abuse, 63% lacked reporting confidence.	Enforce anti-bullying/discrimination laws (education/employment). Promote media literacy/ethical LGBTQ+ representation. Strengthen victim support.	Pervasive discrimination/negative media fuel stigma, violence, exclusion. Systemic issues affect safety/integration, especially for youth/trans people, worsened by lack of clear legal recourse (pre-comprehensive laws).	Strongly supports H3: Stigma/discrimination/violence link to absent anti-discrimination laws & insufficient LGR, exacerbating social hardships.
Mental health challenges	Severe LGBTQ+ mental-health crisis: 50.7% suicide ideation, 16.8% attempt, linked to stigma (Moallem et al., 2022). >50% depression (young GBM; Encina et al., 2023). Higher adolescent depression/suicidality (Wichaidit et al., 2023). Aligns with Minority Stress Model (Hoy-Ellis, 2021).	Foster supportive environments. Provide affirmative mental-health services. Reduce societal stigma/discrimination. Address minority stress; promote social support/ safe disclosure. Integrate LGBTQ mental health into healthcare education.	Significant mental-health disparities are direct consequences of chronic stressors from stigma, discrimination, and lack of acceptance/legal protection, as explained by the Minority Stress Model. Lack of legal affirmation contributes to these stressors.	Strongly supports H3: Profound mental-health issues (suicidality, depression) clearly link to stressors from stigma/discrimination, intensified by insufficient legal/societal support.

Table 4 Summary of Interpretations Related to RQ3: Social and Economic Challenges Faced by LGBTQ+ Individuals in Thailand (Cont.)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.3)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.3)	Alignment with H3 (Exploratory Statement)
Economic hardships & healthcare barriers	Employment: 70% LGBT hiring discrimination; 65% TGWs excluded (Suriyasarn, 2016). Healthcare: TGWs use non-traditional services/ self-medicate due to discrimination (Boonyapisompam et al., 2023). PrEP access barriers (Newman et al., 2023). Regional disparities (Hafidz, 2023).	Enforce anti-discrimination (employment/ healthcare). Train providers in affirming care. Ensure equitable healthcare access. Implement marriage equality for economic parity.	Economic instability driven by discrimination. Lack of LGR/anti-discrimination creates systemic barriers, limiting opportunities, forcing precarious situations/ unregulated care. Previous lack of marriage equality added to vulnerability.	Strongly supports H3: Economic hardships (employment discrimination, inequitable healthcare) intensified by discrimination linked to lack of LGR, anti-discrimination laws, and historically, marriage equality.
Impact of legal & broader contexts	Historical Thai Civil Code disadvantaged diverse families (Homla-or, 2023). Economic development can correlate with reduced discrimination, but legal frameworks vital (Wang et al., 2020). 2024 marriage law aims to rectify some disadvantages.	Implement inclusive laws beyond marriage (LGR, anti-discrimination). Promote socio-economic development with rights-based reforms. Address regional disparities.	Inclusive legal frameworks are fundamental. Economic development helps but doesn't replace legal protections. 2024 marriage law is a step, but other critical legal gaps (LGR, anti-discrimination) allow hardships to persist.	Strongly supports H3: Historical lack of inclusive laws contributed to problems. New marriage law addresses one part, but continued absence of other key protections means H3 remains relevant for ongoing challenges.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 5 Summary of Interpretations Regarding the Impact of Boys' Love (BL) TV Series (RQ4)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.4)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (Implied for Policy/Advocacy & Media)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - Discussion)	Alignment with H4 (Exploratory Statement)
Social Acceptance & Public Perception	Social BL challenges conservative norms, promotes progressive attitudes, offers inclusive LGBTQ+ representations (Habibah et al., 2021; McInroy & Craig, 2016). Creates “contested political space” (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). Appeals to young women (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017). Thailand new Asian queer pop culture hub (Jiang & Wei, 2023).	Leverage media for continued positive, diverse portrayals. Foster critical fan engagement. Promote narratives reflecting shifting public perception and fostering acceptance, especially among young/ female audiences.	Widespread appeal/narrative traits of BL normalize queer relationships/identities, positively shifts public perception.	Strongly supports: BL significantly enhances social acceptance and
Cultural & Economic Impact	Significant international cultural influence (Kijratana-koson, 2022). Substantial economic contributions (“2gether: The Series”), impacts tourism, Bangkok’s “queer-friendly” image (can be “fantasy space”) (Zhang & Dedman, 2021; Zhang, 2023; Baudinette, 2021).	Encourage sustainable BL development balancing commercial success with authentic representation. Explore how BL tourism can benefit local LGBTQ+ communities beyond “fantasy.”	Economic success/inter-national reach of Thai BL demonstrate cultural capital. This can be harnessed but requires critical assessment of tangible benefits for local LGBTQ+ communities vs. projected image.	Supports: BL has notable cultural/ economic impacts, increasing visibility and contributing to Thailand’s enhanced social presence.

Table 5 Summary of Interpretations Regarding the Impact of Boys' Love (BL) TV Series (RQ4) (Cont.)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.4)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (Implied for Policy/Advocacy & Media)	Justification/Reasoning (Interpretation - Discussion)	Alignment with H4 (Exploratory Statement)
Influence on Legal Protection & Policy	BL fosters social climate conducive to legal reform (visibility, normalization)(Habibah et al., 2021). Reviewed BL literature doesn't establish direct causality for specific legislative changes (e.g., 2024 marriage law). Role is climate-setting (Interpretation based on RQ4 literature; Jiang & Wei, 2023).	Utilize positive social climate from BL to support direct advocacy for remaining legal reforms (LGR, anti-discrimination). Encourage BL narratives supporting human rights. Foster media literacy.	Accepting social climate supports legal change, but BL strongly boosts social acceptance. reforms are complex, driven by political advocacy/action. BL literature focuses on cultural/social effects, less on direct legal causation. Marriage equality involved long-term advocacy.	Nuances H4 / partially supports: BL strongly boosts social acceptance. Its direct role in specific legal protections is less substantiated and appears indirect. 2024 marriage law from broader advocacy.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Persistent discrimination and severe health disparities-especially for transgender individuals (Boonyapisomparn et al., 2023; Srikummoon et al., 2022) and youth (Wichaidit et al., 2021, 2023)-are strongly linked to absent comprehensive LGR and generalized anti-discrimination laws. High suicidal-ideation rates (Kittiteerasack et al., 2020; Moallef et al., 2022; Yasami et al., 2023) reflect the prevailing socio-legal environment. The next advocacy wave must prioritize these areas. Regional disparities (e.g., Isan; Hafidz, 2023) also need targeted policy.

4.3.5 Integrative Summary and Interpretation of RQ3

Evidence compellingly shows Thai LGBTQ+ individuals face substantial social and economic hardships. H3 (hardships exacerbated by legal/societal deficits) is strongly supported. While the 2024 marriage law addresses historical non-recognition for same-sex couples, most analyzed studies highlight vulnerabilities from the broader, often persistent, lack of legal affirmation. The ongoing absence of comprehensive LGR and robust anti-discrimination laws fuels stigma, widespread employment/healthcare discrimination, and violence (Boonyapisomparn et al., 2023; Srikummoon et al., 2022; Suriyasarn, 2016). These translate to severe mental-health disparities: high depression and suicidality (Encina et al., 2023; Moallef et al., 2022; Wichaidit et al., 2023; Yasami et al., 2023). Negative media can entrench biases (Ninpanit, 2024), while positive representation and support systems buffer minority stress (Dhiman, 2023; Fehling, 2024; Hoy-Ellis, 2021). Thus, while marriage equality is profound progress, it does not eradicate all systemic barriers. Findings underscore the pivotal role of comprehensive LGR and anti-discrimination measures in fostering safer, inclusive, economically stable environments. H3 remains highly relevant. Continued policy changes-especially LGR and anti-discrimination legislation-are paramount for improving LGBTQ+ well-being and ensuring equality extends beyond marital status (see Table 4). Future research should track the marriage law's tangible impacts while monitoring and advocating for still-developing legal protections.

4.4 Interpreting the Influence of Boys' Love (BL) TV Series on LGBTQ+ Rights in Thailand (RQ4)

Findings for RQ4 affirm Thai Boys' Love (BL) TV series as a significant cultural force, profoundly influencing social acceptance and public perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals. This discussion explores this influence, distinguishing between fostering social change and directly effecting legal reforms, particularly post-Thailand's 2024 marriage equality. H4 (BL enhances social acceptance more than directly securing legal protections) finds considerable, nuanced support.

4.4.1 BL Media: Cultivating Social Acceptance and Reshaping Queer Narratives

Thai BL TV series effectively challenge conservative norms and advance LGBTQ+ social acceptance (Habibah et al., 2021), contrasting with traditional media, which 75% of LGBTQ emerging adults in McInroy and Craig (2016) described as stereotypical. Evolving from Japanese/local literary traditions and balancing queer romance with familiar cultural elements, Thai BL broadened its appeal (Baudinette, 2021). Themes like “strong affection” and a “connection with reality” resonate with its primarily young female audience (60-70%, 18-35 years), and LGBTQ+ fans (10-15%) (Kijratanakoson, 2022; Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017), offering a “supportive space” to explore romance and question norms (Zsila & Demetrovics, 2017).

Thai BL also functions as a “contested sexual and political space,” capable of reinforcing and challenging dominant Thai discourses on homosexuality (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). This complexity suggests that while BL promotes visibility and normalizes queer romance (Baudinette, 2021), its engagement with deeper queer politics varies. BL has driven a shift of Asia’s queer popular-culture center from Japan to Thailand, a notable transnational impact (Jiang & Wei, 2023).

4.4.2 BL’s Social Impact and its Indirect Relationship with Legal Change

Thai BL’s primary strength is fostering social/cultural globalization, influencing regional public acceptance of LGBTQ+ communities (Habibah et al., 2021) and providing youth validation (McInroy & Craig, 2016). This improved social climate is a clear outcome.

However, translating this cultural capital into direct legal/policy changes is complex. While a more accepting public, partly shaped by media like BL, creates a favorable environment for reforms (like the 2024 marriage law), the reviewed BL-specific literature does not show BL as a primary, direct catalyst for specific legislative enactments. The marriage-equality achievement involved sustained, direct LGBTQ+ activism. BL’s role appears more in cultivating societal readiness and empathy-an important but indirect contribution. “Advocacy for queer rights” attributed to BL (Jiang & Wei, 2023, discussing Baudinette, 2021) likely refers to this cultural advocacy rather than formal legal-political engagement.

4.4.3 Broader Socio-Economic Impacts and the Limitations of BL-Driven Visibility

The Thai BL industry generates substantial economic impact (e.g., *2gether: The Series*), contributing to tourism and the national economy (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). This affects urban landscapes, with BL media culture contributing to Bangkok’s “queer-friendly” image (Zhang, 2023), an appeal that aligns with factors such as motivation and ability that drive destination loyalty among

gay tourists to Thailand (Liu et al., 2023). However, Zhang (2023) cautions that BL-mediated urban scenes can produce a fantasy-driven queer space that “plaster a pristine image of Thai urbanity while tucking away escalating confrontations underneath mesmerizing queer sceneries” (p. 165), masking local socio-economic realities.

This highlights a limitation: BL-driven visibility does not automatically resolve systemic discrimination for all LGBTQ+ individuals (Jiang & Wei, 2023; Kijratanakoson, 2022). Commercial motivations can influence content, potentially prioritizing marketable narratives over diverse queer experiences (Zhang & Dedman, 2021). The extent BL subverts deeper gender roles remains debated (Baudinette, 2021).

4.4.4 Integrative Interpretation: BL's Significant Social Role and the Path to Full Equality (RQ4)

Findings for RQ4 confirm that Thai BL TV series function as a powerful sociocultural phenomenon, boosting LGBTQ+ social acceptance and visibility by bringing queer narratives into the mainstream and fostering empathetic public discourse (Baudinette, 2021; Habibah et al., 2021; Kijratanakoson, 2022). H4 (BL enhances social acceptance more than directly securing legal protections) is well supported. While the BL-fostered social climate likely contributed to momentum for achievements like the 2024 marriage-equality law, reviewed BL-focused studies do not primarily document direct causation of specific legislative processes. Legal reforms are multifaceted, with popular culture often playing a supportive, climate-setting role. Thai BL's power lies predominantly in shifting hearts and minds and normalizing queer existence. This social impact is invaluable. However, such visibility does not automatically resolve deep inequalities or ensure comprehensive rights (Jiang & Wei, 2023; Zhang, 2023). Full LGBTQ+ equality requires a multi-pronged approach where BL's cultural capital strategically supports ongoing direct advocacy for critical remaining reforms (LGR, anti-discrimination), ensuring culturally resonant and legally comprehensive progress (see **Table 5**). Future research should explore BL's long-term societal impacts and how its influence can be harnessed for progressive change.

4.5 Interpreting the Evolving Role and Impact of LGBTQ+ Advocacy in Thailand (RQ5)

Findings for RQ5 underscore LGBTQ+ advocacy groups' crucial role in Thailand, pivotal in elevating public awareness, fostering social acceptance, and pursuing policy/legal reforms. This discussion interprets their strategies, impacts, challenges, and evolving position post-Thailand's 2024 marriage-equality law. H5 (advocacy groups are vital yet face considerable barriers) is strongly affirmed.

4.5.1 Strategies for Enhancing Public Awareness and Cultivating Social Acceptance

Thai LGBTQ+ advocacy primarily cultivates public awareness and social acceptance. Public events like festivals and pride parades offer “transformative experiences,” bolstering social/self-acceptance, building community, and providing platforms to resist discrimination (Coetzee, 2023). The 2024 Bangkok Pride Parade, a popular and political success, reflected increased social and governmental support for marriage equality (Saksornchai, 2024). Regular awareness days likewise keep LGBTQ+ issues visible (The Pride Shop, 2021).

Strategic media engagement legitimizes minority groups and influences public opinion (Billard & Gross, 2020), promoting positive representation and reducing stigma (Randev, 2022). Culturally attuned approaches, like integrating Buddhist principles with psychology/meditation (Thailand Foundation, 2015), enhance LGBTQ+ mental health and resilience, offering models for holistic community well-being programs.

4.5.2 Driving Policy Change, Legal Recognition, and Community-Led Solutions

Advocacy groups have persistently driven LGBTQ+ legal rights. While progress on legal gender recognition (LGR)-long championed by the Thai Transgender Alliance-remains slow, the 2024 marriage-equality law dramatically shifted the landscape, reflecting decades of advocacy shaping political will (Saksornchai, 2024; Thai Transgender Alliance [ThaiTGA], 2018).

Community-led initiatives are equally significant: Thai trans women have established tailored HIV-care clinics that provide essential services and destigmatize care by centering community stakeholders (Lynne & Enteen, 2021). This model offers lessons for other LGBTQ+ health/rights solutions. However, advocacy groups must continue to address inclusivity and accessibility within their own structures (Coetzee, 2023) and adopt customized approaches (Lynne & Enteen, 2021).

4.5.3 Evaluating Advocacy Effectiveness Amidst Systemic Challenges

Rigorously evaluating advocacy effectiveness is a significant challenge. While events like festivals are qualitatively recognized (Coetzee, 2023), and awareness days are understood as important (The Pride Shop, 2021), more quantitative data are needed to comprehensively understand advocacy benefits (e.g., ThaiTGA, 2018).

Broader research informing advocacy often has U.S./Anglophone bias and limited focus on bisexual/transgender people (Billard & Gross, 2020), highlighting the need for more locally relevant research in Thailand, especially on digital media's nuanced effects on LGBTQ+ activism. Addressing these data gaps is crucial for evidence-based strategies.

Table 6 Summary of Interpretations Regarding the Role and Impact of LGBTQ+ Advocacy Groups in Thailand (RQ5)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.5)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/ Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.5)	Alignment with H5 (Exploratory Statement)
Public awareness & social acceptance	Advocacy uses public events (pride parades) for social/ self-acceptance, community (Coetzee, 2023; Saksornchai, 2024). Strategic media engagement legitimizes identities (Billard & Gross, 2020; Randev, 2022). Culturally attuned well-being approaches explored (Thailand Foundation, 2015).	Expand inclusive public events. Sustain strategic media advocacy. Integrate culturally sensitive well-being programs.	Advocacy groups primarily drive informed, accepting public narratives by creating visible platforms and using media, countering stigma. Culturally resonant strategies enhance effectiveness.	Strongly supports H5 (crucial role): Advocacy is crucial in enhancing public awareness and fostering social acceptance underpinning broader progress.
Policy influence & legal achievements	Advocacy groups (e.g., ThaiTGA) persistently campaigned for rights like LGR (ThaiTGA, 2018). Trans-led HIV clinics show service-delivery agency (Lynne & Enteen, 2021). Decades of advocacy were critical for 2024 marriage equality (Saksornchai, 2024).	Prioritize LGR & anti-discrimination for advocacy. Support/scale community-led services. Ensure advocacy monitors marriage-law implementation. Use international rights mechanisms.	Advocacy groups are key policy/legal actors. Marriage equality shows their long-term impact. Community solutions show capacity. Prolonged LGR struggle highlights complexities.	Strongly supports H5 (crucial role achieves major policy/service successes (marriage equality). Protracted efforts for other rights (LGR) underscore significant systemic barriers.

Table 6 Summary of Interpretations Regarding the Role and Impact of LGBTQ+ Advocacy Groups in Thailand (RQ5) (Cont.)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.5)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/ Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.5)	Alignment with H5 (Exploratory Statement)
Challenges & impact evaluation	Advocacy faces internal inclusivity/ accessibility challenges (Coetzee, 2023). Research informing advocacy has geographical/subgroup biases (Billard & Gross, 2020). Lack of empirical data/metrics to measure advocacy impact (Coetzee, 2023; ThaiTGA, 2018).	Address internal inclusivity. Invest in local, relevant empirical research on advocacy issues (data scarcity, research impact measurement) are standardized, culturally appropriate evaluation metrics.	Advocacy effectiveness constrained by internal/external issues (data scarcity, research impact measurement) are evaluation needed to optimize advocacy's full potential and strategies, demonstrate value, ensure accountability.	Strongly supports H5 (barriers): Challenges (inclusivity, data, measurement) are limiting barriers to advocacy's full potential and effectiveness.

Source: Prepared by the author.

4.5.4 Integrative Interpretation: The Vital and Evolving Journey of LGBTQ+ Advocacy in Thailand (RQ5)

Findings for RQ5 unequivocally affirm LGBTQ+ advocacy groups' vital role in Thailand -fostering societal understanding, building resilient communities, delivering services, and achieving landmark legal reforms such as marriage equality (Saksornchai, 2024). This success stems from multifaceted efforts, from pride parades becoming symbols of support (Coetzee, 2023; Saksornchai, 2024) to persistent rights advocacy.

However, H5-groups are crucial but face significant barriers-also holds true. Marriage equality does not negate ongoing struggles for legal gender recognition (LGR) and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws (Thai Transgender Alliance [ThaiTGA], 2018). Challenges of internal inclusivity (Coetzee, 2023) and the difficulty of empirically measuring advocacy impact in non-Western contexts (Billard & Gross, 2020) persist.

Post-marriage equality, Thai LGBTQ+ advocacy is more critical than ever: implementing new rights and campaigning for remaining legal and social changes. This requires continued public education and positive media leverage (Billard & Gross, 2020; Randev, 2022), strengthening community-led initiatives (Lynne & Enteen, 2021), and advocating for resources that address all LGBTQ+ needs, including culturally attuned mental-health support (Thailand Foundation, 2015). Addressing data and impact-evaluation gaps is key for refining strategies (see **Table 6**). The Thai experience shows legal victories are milestones in a longer journey sustained by dedicated advocacy.

4.6 Strategic Pathways for Advancing Full LGBTQIA+ Equality in Thailand (RQ6)

Findings for RQ6 indicate that despite Thailand's 2024 marriage-equality law, comprehensive LGBTQIA+ equality requires sustained, multifaceted efforts. This discussion interprets these strategies, relevant in the current Thai context. H6 (positing CSE, public campaigns, ongoing legal reforms, and data-informed policies are essential) is robustly supported by reviewed literature.

4.6.1 Mainstreaming Inclusivity through Enhanced Education and Public Awareness

Strengthening Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in Thai schools is a critical long-term strategy. Chiba (2021) highlighted that effective CSE implementation, vital for promoting early understanding and acceptance post-marriage equality, hinges on enhanced educator training/resources and school-home collaboration. This helps normalize diversity foundationally.

Strategic public campaigns also remain vital for shifting societal attitudes beyond marriage. Ehambaranathan et al. (2023) suggested Thai advocacy can draw lessons from effective domestic campaigns (e.g., cannabis law reform) to champion further LGBTQIA+ inclusion, creating a supportive social environment for all LGBTQIA+ rights.

4.6.2 Consolidating Gains and Pursuing Next-Generation Legal Protections through Advocacy

With marriage equality achieved, advocacy focus shifts to other essential protections. RSAT's strategic plan (2023-2027) emphasizes improving human rights, LGBTQIA+ community capacity, health services, and partnerships (Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024), signaling a clear roadmap. "Improving human rights" will now prioritize LGR, comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, and equitable marriage-rights implementation. Continuous, collaborative advocacy is essential to overcome barriers to these reforms.

4.6.3 Leveraging Demographic Realities for Inclusive and Evidence-Based Policy

Accurate demographic data are crucial for informed policymaking. Global and Thai estimates put the LGBTQIA+ population at ~8% (Gayther, 2023; World Population Review, 2024), with higher rates of open identification among younger cohorts (World Population Review, 2024) -underscoring the urgency for inclusive policies. While Thailand achieved marriage equality (joining 31.3% of countries in 2023; Gayther, 2023), progress is still needed on legal gender recognition, recognized in only 42.1% of countries (Gayther, 2023). Such data can help tailor Thai policies for this population segment.

4.6.4 Integrative Interpretation: Charting Thailand's Path to Full LGBTQIA+ Equality (RQ6)

Reviewed literature underscores that comprehensive LGBTQIA+ equality in Thailand, post-2024 marriage law, necessitates a continued, multi-strategy approach (RQ6). H6 (legal reforms, CSE, public campaigns are critical) is strongly validated.

Enhanced, LGBTQIA+-inclusive CSE is fundamental for fostering understanding, especially with newly recognized diverse family structures (Chiba, 2021). Strategic public campaigns, learning from other Thai reforms, are vital for inclusive narratives and addressing residual prejudices (Ehambaranathan et al., 2023). Most critically, further legal reforms for LGR and comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, championed by enduring advocacy (e.g., Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024), are paramount. These efforts must be informed by demographic data, recognizing Thailand's significant LGBTQIA+ population and visible younger generations, ensuring tailored, effective policies (Gayther, 2023; World Population Review, 2024). While Thailand has made a monumental step, sustained commitment across educational, societal, and legal fronts is required to translate legal milestones into lived equality. Synergy between advocacy, informed public discourse, and responsive policymaking is key (see **Table 7**).

Table 7 Summary of Interpretations Regarding Strategic Pathways for Enhancing LGBTQIA+ Rights in Thailand (RQ6)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.5)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/ Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.5)	Alignment with H6 (Exploratory Statement)
Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)	General support for CSE in Thai schools; effective LGBTQIA+-inclusive implementation needs enhanced teacher training, resources, and school-parent-community collaboration (Chiba, 2021).	Prioritize LGBTQIA+-inclusive CSE curricula and teacher training. Engage parents/communities for support.	Early education is fundamental for shaping long-term societal attitudes. Inclusive CSE is critical post-marriage equality to foster understanding and acceptance of diverse families from a young age.	Strongly supports H6: Identifies comprehensive, inclusive education as foundational for enhancing social acceptance and underpinning legal protections.
Public Campaigns for Inclusion	Insights from successful Thai public campaigns (e.g., cannabis law reform; Hambaranathan et al., 2023) can inform strategies for ongoing LGBTQIA+ advocacy and for shaping positive public opinion.	Develop culturally resonant public campaigns on LGR, anti-discrimination, and full LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Draw lessons from past successful Thai campaigns. Engage diverse media/ influencers.	Strategic public campaigns are vital for shifting public narratives, addressing misconceptions on remaining LGBTQIA+ issues (e.g., transgender rights), and building societal support for further reforms. Public will drives political will.	Strongly supports H6: Positions targeted public campaigns as vital for improving societal acceptance, for remaining LGBTQIA+ understanding, and support for ongoing reforms.
Ongoing Legal Reforms & Sustained Advocacy	Key advocacy groups (e.g., RSAT) have strategic plans and prioritizing human-rights advancement, community capacity, health services, and partnerships beyond marriage equality (Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, 2024).	Intensify advocacy for comprehensive -discrimination laws. Ensure equitable marriage-equality implementation. Strengthen government-NGO-community collaborations. Secure advocacy funding.	Marriage equality is a milestone, not an endpoint. Advocacy must target remaining systemic barriers (LGR, anti-discrimination). RSAT's goals provide a roadmap.	Emphasizes that continuous legal reform, driven by strong advocacy, is essential for comprehensive LGBTQIA+ rights.

Table 7 Summary of Interpretations Regarding Strategic Pathways for Enhancing LGBTQIA+ Rights in Thailand (RQ6) (Cont.)

Themes	Key Findings & Interpretations (Results 3.5)	Selected Recommendations/ Implications (from literature/discussion)	Justification/ Reasoning (Interpretation - 4.5)	Alignment with H6 (Exploratory Statement)
Demographic Insights & Evidence-Based Policy	Thailand's LGBTQIA+ population is ~8%-similar to global estimates-with younger cohorts increasingly identifying openly (World Population Review, 2024). Globally, legal gender recognition is available in 42.1% of countries, while marriage recognition stands at 31.3% (Gayther, 2023), highlighting LGR as the next frontier.	Utilize demographic data to advocate SOGIESC data collection for tailored policies (LGR, anti-discrimination, Evidence-based policymaking for effective policies promoting healthcare). Ensure policies address needs of visible younger LGBTQIA+ cohorts. Benchmark LGR progress.	Understanding LGBTQIA+ population size/trends reinforces urgency for inclusive policies. Evidence-based policymaking for effective policies promoting (local/international data) is critical for effective reforms, especially for LGR.	Strongly supports H6: Underscores leveraging demographic insights and evidence-based approaches for effective policies promoting acceptance and full legal protection.

Source: Prepared by the author.

5. Conclusion: Thailand's Evolving Journey Toward Full LGBTQIA+ Equality

This systematic review traced Thailand's complex pathway toward LGBTQIA+ equality by examining historical acceptance, social dynamics, media influences, advocacy, and the legal landscape. It culminates in the landmark 2024 marriage-equality law and considers progress, challenges, and Thailand's distinctive regional trajectory.

5.1 Key Findings (Synthesized)

Thailand's history contains strands of gender diversity (RQ1) that have supported visible-though uneven-LGBTQIA+ social acceptance and public support (RQ1-RQ2). Cultural phenomena such as Boys' Love (BL) television have shaped perceptions and visibility (RQ4). At the same time, many LGBTQIA+ people face significant social and economic hardships-stigma, discrimination, violence, and mental-health disparities-felt acutely by transgender people and youth. These harms are tied to gaps in legal protections beyond marriage, especially the absence of comprehensive legal gender recognition (LGR) and overarching anti-discrimination statutes (RQ3).

Comparatively (RQ2), the 2024 marriage-equality law positions Thailand as a Southeast Asian leader in partnership rights, potentially surpassing Taiwan's 2019 Act on initial adoption inclusivity. Yet, LGR and comprehensive anti-discrimination measures remain outstanding priorities. Advocacy groups (RQ5) have been pivotal in-service delivery, public education, and legal reform, while operating under resource and capacity constraints. Clear pathways for next steps (RQ6) include strengthening inclusive comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), strategic public campaigns, sustained advocacy on remaining rights, and the use of demographic insights for evidence-based policy.

5.2 Broader Implications

Thailand's path to equality is non-linear: legal change and social attitudes often move at different speeds. Cultural acceptance can create fertile ground, but sustained advocacy and specific legal enactments are essential to convert tolerance into enforceable rights. The 2024 marriage law illustrates this synergy but is an important step rather than an end point. Progress will depend on coupling legal reforms with efforts that address entrenched attitudes, ensure effective implementation, and protect the most vulnerable. The Thai case also shows the power-and limits-of media: BL can expand visibility and empathy but does not, on its own, deliver legal change without organized political action.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of This Review

This review provides a timely synthesis of English-language scholarship (January 2011-April 2024) on LGBTQIA+ rights in Thailand. Exclusion of Thai-language sources is a limitation. The analysis is also constrained by the scope of included primary studies, and the rights landscape continues to evolve beyond the literature's timeframe.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Future work should include: (a) longitudinal assessments of the 2024 marriage law's social, economic, and mental-health impacts; (b) policy and implementation studies on pathways to LGR in Thailand; (c) examinations of BL's influence beyond social acceptance (e.g., mobilization, policy agenda-setting); (d) rigorous evaluations of advocacy strategies and service models; and (e) research on underrepresented subgroups-especially bisexual, intersex, and rural individuals.

5.5 Concluding Statement

As of May 2025, Thailand stands at a pivotal moment. The country has achieved a historic expansion of partnership rights while charting a distinctive cultural and political path shaped by social movements, media, and advocacy. Realizing full, lived equality-comprehensive legal protections, freedom from discrimination, and meaningful social inclusion for all LGBTQIA+ people-will require continued commitment, careful implementation, and strategic action. Thailand's ongoing journey offers instructive lessons for other nations, particularly across Asia.

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