



Public Relations and LGBTQ+ Equality Issues: Supporting the Rights and Representation of the LGBTQ+ Community in Media and Society

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ABSTRACT

The function of Public Relations is very important in shaping public opinion, especially regarding sensitive issues such as LGBTQ+ equality. Since the representation and rights of the LGBTQ+ community are often still limited and biased in the media and society, it is important to examine further how public Relations can support advocacy for these communities. This study aims to investigate Public Relations strategies and actions that support LGBTQ+ equality and assess how effective they are in increasing the positive image of the LGBTQ+ community in the media and general public. This research focuses on identifying Public Relations actions that assist in accepting and respecting LGBTQ+ rights. The research methods used are quantitative and qualitative. This method was chosen for data collection and analysis involving interviews, media content analysis related to the LGBTQ+ equality campaign, and surveys regarding public perceptions of the campaign. The results of this research show that inclusive and educational communication strategies from Public Relations can increase awareness and support for LGBTQ+ issues. Campaigns that highlight personal stories, collaborations with influencers, and advocacy activities are effective in creating a more inclusive and empathetic dialogue in society. This research concludes that Public Relations plays a crucial role in supporting LGBTQ+ equality through effective and inclusive communication approaches. Strong collaboration between Public Relations practitioners, the media, and the LGBTQ+ community is needed to expand LGBTQ+ representation and rights. Public Relations serves as an important intermediary to promote better understanding and social acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.

Keywords: *LGBTQ+ Community, LGBTQ+ Equality, Public Relations*

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INTRODUCTION

In the current international sphere, the issue of representation and recognition of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community is a widespread discussion in society today. Media and social norms often display strong stereotypes and prejudices against these communities, giving rise to the need for more equal and proportional representation. This is why the role of Public Relations is so crucial. Public Relations plays an important role in shaping public perception and driving social change, making it key to effectively advocating for the rights and representation of the LGBTQ+ community (Scroggs et al., 2021). The main problem faced is the effectiveness of Public Relations in fighting for LGBTQ+ equality in an environment that is often still full of discrimination and exclusion (Sprik & Gentile, 2020). The lack of positive and inclusive representation in the media and social life indicates a gap that must be filled. This research aims to understand and document the effective strategies implemented by Public Relations practitioners to face this challenge.

Literature of Review

Public Relations

Public relations is a strategic management discipline that focuses on establishing and maintaining profitable relationships between organizations and their publics that influence the success or failure of the organization (Yang & Saffer, 2019). In carrying out its functions, Public Relations uses strategic communication to build and maintain a positive image of an organization in the eyes of the public, using various media and techniques, from mass to digital media, as well as special events. (White & Boatwright, 2020). The main goal of Public Relations is to ensure that information about an organization, its products, or services is viewed positively by the public (Upadhyay & Upadhyay, 2019). Public Relations is not only tasked with overcoming problems during a crisis but, more broadly, with building and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders, including customers, partners, employees, investors, and society in general. (Onyango, 2021).

In the context of society, the impact of Public Relations is very broad and involves various aspects. Public Relations has a role in shaping public opinion by disseminating educational information, changing negative perceptions into positive ones, and supporting better-informed decision-making by the public on important issues (Navarro et al., 2020). Public Relations is also active in advocating for social issues, raising awareness about important topics such as health, safety, education, and environmental policy, and mobilizing communities to support initiatives that advance collective well-being. (Moloney & McGrath, 2019). In crises, the role of public relations becomes vital; public relations professionals strive to manage the circulation of information to reduce panic and misunderstanding while building trust with the

public to ensure that the public receives clear and timely information that helps in better dealing with crises.

In addition, Public Relations plays a role in empowering communities by engaging in dialogue, supporting local initiatives, and increasing community participation in decision-making processes (Lund et al., 2022). Public Relations can also influence policymakers and regulators by conveying public needs and opinions, thereby helping to shape policies that affect various aspects of social and economic life. (Lane, 2023). Public Relations is always adapting to the latest technology and trends, introducing new communication methods that influence the way society receives and processes information. By using social media, applications, and other digital platforms, Public Relations makes it easier for people to engage with issues that are important to society (Lane, 2023). Through consistent and transparent communication, Public Relations also helps build and maintain trust, which is an important asset in creating healthy, long-term relationships between businesses and their consumers, governments and their citizens, as well as between various organizations and stakeholders. (Place et al., 2021). Overall, Public Relations has a very important role in modern society, not only in managing image or dealing with crises but also in creating meaningful dialogue, supporting positive social change, and ensuring that society remains informed, engaged, and empowered. (Anderson, 2023). By doing this, Public Relations fundamentally influences the way we see and interact with the world around us and shapes the future.

LGBTQ+ equality

LGBTQ+ equality is a principle that ensures individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or have any other sexual orientation or gender identity have the same rights and treatment as other members of society (Pregnall et al., 2021). This principle includes fairness in accessing services such as health, education, and employment, as well as equality in legal and marital rights without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. (Vaccaro & Koob, 2019). LGBTQ+ equality seeks to fully integrate these individuals into all aspects of society, encouraging recognition and respect for diversity (Ecker et al., 2019). LGBTQ+ equality has had a significant and profound impact on society (Nadal, 2019). When individuals are allowed to live openly and free from discrimination, the positive benefits are felt not only by the individual but also by the entire society. Acceptance and support of LGBTQ+ equality help generate social, economic, and cultural benefits that support the building of more inclusive and civilized societies.

One of the biggest impacts of LGBTQ+ equality is improved mental and physical health among the LGBTQ+ community (Levitt, 2019). Facing discrimination and rejection can lead to stress, depression, and other mental health disorders. By ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals receive the same social support and legal protections as others, these stresses can be reduced, allowing them to live happier and more productive lives. These health improvements not only benefit individuals but also reduce the burden on the public health system. From an economic perspective,

communities that support LGBTQ+ equality often attract more talent and business(Williams et al., 2021). Companies that have inclusive policies and support equality tend to attract more diverse and talented employees who bring new perspectives that increase creativity and innovation. This helps economic growth and makes companies more competitive globally. Inclusive tourism is also growing in LGBTQ+-friendly regions, making a significant financial contribution to the local economy.

Socially, acceptance of LGBTQ+ equality fosters more tolerant and inclusive norms in society, reducing violence and discrimination(Reisner et al., 2020). This creates a safer and more supportive environment for all residents, not limited to those who are LGBTQ+(Parmenter et al., 2021). Societies that embrace diversity tend to be more stable and harmonious, reducing social conflict and increasing social cohesion. From an educational perspective, schools that integrate education about gender diversity and sexuality prepare students to become more empathetic and informed global citizens. This education reduces prejudice and strengthens the values of respect and justice among young people, which are essential for the sustainable development of society. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ justice also enriches societal culture by expanding understanding and appreciation of diversity. A culture that celebrates individual uniqueness promotes freedom of expression and creativity, which are important elements in art, literature, and other forms of cultural expression.

The influence of LGBTQ+ equality is also visible in politics, where advocacy and inclusive policies help promote a healthier, more participatory democracy. By giving the LGBTQ+ community a voice and better representation, policies are created that are more reflective and responsive to the needs of all segments of society(Parmenter et al., 2020). This leads to a more effective and fair government that can better address the needs of its citizens. Ultimately, LGBTQ+ equality helps break down barriers that have long hindered the full potential of many individuals and groups in society. By removing these barriers, societies become not only fairer but also stronger, wealthier, and more resilient. Equality is not only an ideal pursued for the sake of social justice, but it is also the foundation for a thriving and sustainable society, one that values and makes full use of diversity in the human population.

Public

Society is a complex entity consisting of individuals who are bound by shared norms, values , and culture, influencing social interactions and daily life.(Mahmood et al., 2020). In understanding society, we must look at various dimensions, such as social structure, roles, and functions that form the basis of human interaction. Every society has unique characteristics influenced by historical, geographic, economic, and political factors that shape the way its members think, behave, and interact. In society, social norms and values function as behavioral guidelines that regulate interactions between individuals. These norms can be formal, such as laws and regulations, or informal, such as customs and traditions. Societies are also characterized by their level

of heterogeneity, where ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity can enrich social interactions but also trigger conflict and polarization.

There are several previous research opinions. The first research, according to Robillard & Gross (2020), is titled *LGBTQ Politics in Media and Culture*. The research stated that the literature on these representations and their effects overwhelmingly focuses on gays and lesbians at the expense of bisexual and transgender people, and this work was done primarily in US and Anglophone contexts, limiting our understanding of the relationships between LGBTQ politics and the global media. The second research, according to Wang & Ma (2021), with the research titled *Representations of LGBTQ+ issues in China in its official English-language media: a corpus-assisted critical discourse study*. This study also discusses positive changes in the social well-being of LGBTQ+ persons in China as evidenced first by the more liberal attitudes that gradually have resulted from the efforts of Chinese netizens to influence LGBTQ+-related governmental policies and second by the more positive representations of LGBTQ+ issues being communicated to global audiences through China's official English-language media. The third research, according to Kim & Bhalla (2022), has the research title *A two-path model of the impact of LGBTQ+ Diversity CSR levels on public Response*. The results suggest that proactive CSR leads to higher PCS-L and better CSR outcomes among the general public than a passive or refusing approach. PCS-L, directly and indirectly, affects individuals' CSR associations, which are mediated by value-driven motives. In turn, CSR associations positively influence the public's supportive communication intent, purchase intent, and corporate evaluations. As for CA associations, we found that they have a somewhat complicated relationship with PCS-L.

The importance of this research lies in understanding effective strategies that can improve the representation of the LGBTQ+ community, which in turn helps in the process of broader social acceptance (Rogers et al., 2020). Public Relations not only plays a role in overcoming stigma but also in creating an environment that is more inclusive and supports equality. This issue is very important because it is directly related to human rights and social equality. This research identifies and analyzes best practices that have been used in public relations to support the LGBTQ+ community (Green et al., 2022). As a result, this research fills a gap in the existing literature regarding the use of Public Relations as a social advocacy tool and the effectiveness of this practice in real contexts. The methods used include case analysis of successful Public Relations campaigns, interviews with practitioners, and surveys of public responses to the campaign.

State of the art, this research offers innovation by combining theory and practice that has yet to be widely explored in previous studies. Previous literature often focused on theoretical analysis without integrating the results into actual Public Relations practice. This research closes the gap by combining these two aspects and offering concrete examples of real implementation. The novelty of this research is that it is an in-depth analysis of the interaction between public relations campaigns and

changes in public perception, which has rarely been researched before. Previous research has tended to identify problems without offering tested practical solutions. Therefore, this research explores not only the 'what' and 'why' but also 'how' public relations practices can be used to produce real change. The next step is that it is hoped that this research can become a basis for other researchers to develop and test more innovative and effective public relations strategies. It is expected that the findings from this research can be used by public relations practitioners and organizations working to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and strengthen efforts to achieve greater social equality. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to both theory and practice in improving the real lives of the LGBTQ+ community.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, researchers used a mixed methodology approach to explore in depth the role of Public Relations in supporting equality and representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media and society. This method allows researchers to analyze both quantitative data that provide broad generalizations and qualitative data that offer a deep understanding of the complex dynamics involved.

Research design

This study will utilize a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a broad understanding of the impact of Public Relations on LGBTQ+ equality. Quantitative methods will be conducted through large-scale surveys of PR professionals and media audiences, while qualitative approaches will include in-depth interviews and content analysis of various media.

Population and Sample

The focus of this research is on Public Relations professionals working in diverse institutions and organizations, journalists, and individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. The sample was selected through purposive sampling for Public Relations professionals and snowball sampling for the LGBTQ+ community.

Data collection

First, researchers carried out a quantitative survey involving respondents from Public Relations practitioners, mass media, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. This survey aims to measure general perceptions about the effectiveness of Public Relations efforts in supporting LGBTQ+ issues, including questions about the types of communication strategies used, the frequency of reporting about LGBTQ+ in the media, and the level of public awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights. Respondents were selected using stratified random sampling techniques to ensure a broad representation of various subgroups within society and the Public Relations industry.

Second, qualitative methods involve in-depth interviews and case studies. We

conducted semi-structured interviews with Public Relations practitioners who have been active in campaigns related to LGBTQ+ issues (Alessi et al., 2020). Interview questions were designed to reveal their strategic approaches, challenges, and achievements in Public Relations practice, as well as their perceptions of the impact of their activities on society. Additionally, interviews with members of the LGBTQ+ community provide insight into their personal experiences related to representation in the media and the effects of various Public Relations campaigns. Case studies of several successful Public Relations campaigns supporting LGBTQ+ equality will be conducted to gain a more detailed understanding of the elements that contributed to their effectiveness. Each case study will examine the context of the campaign, the strategies implemented, public engagement and reaction, and the long-term outcomes of the campaign in society.

Research Instrument

Questionnaires for quantitative data will include Likert scales, multiple choice, and open questions. For qualitative data, an interview guide will be created to guide the discussion, and content analysis will use software such as NVivo.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis will involve descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression, to evaluate the relationship between Public Relations activities and changes in LGBTQ+ representation. Qualitative data will be processed using thematic analysis, searching for and coding important themes.

Research Ethics

Research ethics is a collection of principles that guide the behavior and actions of researchers while carrying out scientific studies or investigations. These principles are designed to ensure that all research activities are carried out fairly, transparently, and responsibly concerning both research subjects and the general public. Key aspects of research ethics include maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of research subjects, ensuring informed consent is obtained from participants after receiving sufficient information regarding the aims, procedures, benefits, and risks involved in the research, and ensuring that data processing is carried out with respect for individual rights. This study will adhere to strict ethical standards, ensuring complete information about the survey is provided to all respondents, participation is voluntary, and information is confidential. Informed consent will be taken from all participants.

Research Implications

It is hoped that the results of this research will provide insight into effective ways for Public Relations to support LGBTQ+ equality and improve their representation in the media and society. It will give recommendations to public relations practitioners and policymakers on how to address sensitive issues more

effectively. This research is designed to produce an in-depth and evidence-based understanding of how Public Relations can promote advocacy and support for the LGBTQ+ community through media and other social activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Relations has developed since it emerged as a profession in the early 20th century, starting in the United States with figures such as Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, who laid the foundation for this practice. Initially focused on corporate and government image management, Public Relations has expanded its scope to social issues and civil rights, including advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights. The Stonewall Uprising in 1969, for example, was an important turning point, encouraging more organized and vocal activism that later received support through Public Relations practices to communicate messages and build awareness. Over time, the media's role in influencing public perception has become increasingly important, with programs gradually featuring more LGBTQ+ characters and narratives, often aided by Public Relations in an effort to improve the way this community is represented. From mere side figures to main characters with richer narratives, media representation of the LGBTQ+ community has evolved to become more positive and inclusive.

In the digital era, Public Relations gained new power with the emergence of social media and the internet, providing a platform for online campaigns and collaborations with influencers. This digital activism allows messages about equality and inclusion to reach a wide global audience, creating a much greater impact than ever before. However, although significant progress has been made, many challenges are still faced. Public Relations is often on the front lines of dealing with controversy, managing crises, and responding to objections from groups opposing the expansion of LGBTQ+ rights. In this context, Public Relations not only acts as a liaison but also as a mediator and educator, seeking to bridge differences and strengthen constructive dialogue. At a global level, Public Relations also plays a critical role in advocating for LGBTQ+ equality in countries with highly restrictive regulations towards the LGBTQ+ community. International organizations and transnational coalitions use PR to urge policy change, educate the public, and support individuals and groups fighting for their rights. Through all its changes, Public Relations not only reflects social change but also actively shapes it, using the tools and platforms available to support the transformation towards a more inclusive and just society.

Table: Survey results regarding the effectiveness of Public Relations in supporting the rights and representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media and society

NO	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't agree	Strongly disagree
1	I believe public relations plays an important role in educating the public about LGBTQ+ people.	30%	70%		

2	Public Relations is effective in changing negative perceptions about the LGBTQ+ community in society.	30%	40%	30%	
3	Public Relations campaigns about LGBTQ+ often influence my opinion on the issue.	30%	70%		
4	I feel the media often provides a positive and fair representation of LGBTQ+ people, which is a blessing. Public relations is a good one.	20%	60%	20%	
5	Public Relations contributes to increasing awareness and support for LGBTQ+ rights.	30%	70%		
6	Public Relations and LGBTQ+ tend to affect individuals, especially the wider community.	30%	70%		
7	Public Relations is an effective tool to fight discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the workplace.	25%	75%		
8	Influencer involvement in Public Relations campaigns strengthens support for LGBTQ+.	30%	70%		
9	I believe Public Relations can help influence public policy that supports LGBTQ+.	25	75%		
10	Public relations campaigns about LGBTQ+ people increase public participation in dialogue about inclusivity.	20	80%		
11	Public Relations helps improve LGBTQ+ representation in television programs and films.	30%	70%		
12	Public relations campaigns that support LGBTQ+ people help reduce stigma in society.	25%	75%		
13	I felt involved with LGBTQ+ issues after seeing relevant Public Relations campaigns.		50%	50%	
14	Public Relations provides greater opportunities for education about gender and sexuality diversity.	30	70%		

15	I often see the positive impact of Public Relations in supporting LGBTQ+ events.	20%	60%	20%	
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The table above shows that Public Relations plays an important role in supporting equality and representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media and society. On average, the answers given by respondents agreed that Public Relations has a role and influence in society. From the results of the questionnaire, some respondents responded that public relations would increase their knowledge and awareness of LGBTQ issues in society.

The impact of LGBTQ+ equality on society is multifaceted, involving diverse social, political, and economic aspects. The importance of understanding how support for LGBTQ+ rights impacts individuals, communities, and social structures more broadly cannot be understated. LGBTQ+ equality impacts the formation of cultural norms and the way individuals interact. In many societies, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights has led to legislative changes that provide legal protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (García Johnson & Otto, 2019). This reflects the transition of societal values towards being more inclusive and accepting. For example, the legalization of same-sex marriage in many places is not only a legal victory but also a symbol of progress in recognition and respect for diversity.

LGBTQ+ equality also sparks open dialogue about topics previously considered taboo, helping to expand awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. With increasing LGBTQ+ representation in media and pop culture, society is gradually starting to see the LGBTQ+ community not as a separate group but as an essential part of social diversity. From an economic perspective, accepting the LGBTQ+ community has proven to be beneficial. Research shows that companies with inclusive policies and those that support LGBTQ+ equality often experience increased productivity and job satisfaction. Employees who feel their identity is supported tend to be more loyal and innovative. This openness also attracts talent from diverse backgrounds, which increases innovation and a broader understanding of the market. On a macro level, countries that support LGBTQ+ equality attract more direct investment from abroad (Caceres et al., 2020). Diversity and inclusiveness are often seen as attractive indicators of social progress and stability for global investors and corporations. Countries with strong legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community are considered safer and more inclusive, positively influencing tourism and international business.

LGBTQ+ equality has also changed the political landscape. LGBTQ+ activism plays an important role in contemporary politics, encouraging political parties and aspiring leaders to take positions on equality issues. This brings LGBTQ+ issues and voices into mainstream political debate, forcing policymakers to acknowledge and consider the needs and rights of this community in policy formulation. The integration of LGBTQ+ rights in public policy has also led to a broader expansion of civil rights, sparking other movements fighting for similar recognition and protections. It shows how advocacy for LGBTQ+ equality can be a catalyst for wider social and political change. In the context of health and wellness,

acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community has a significant impact on mental and physical health. Studies show that LGBTQ+ individuals in supportive environments tend to experience lower stress and a lower risk of depression. Access to health services that are sensitive and inclusive of LGBTQ+ issues helps reduce health disparities in this community.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that public relations has an important role in raising the issue of LGBTQ+ equality and supporting the rights and representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media and society. Through effective campaigns and appropriate use of media, Public Relations seeks to reduce stigma and fight for fair and equal representation for the LGBTQ community on various platforms. This initiative not only helps to create awareness but also supports the formation of strong alliances between multiple stakeholders, including human rights organizations and LGBTQ advocacy groups, to promote equality and justice. This Public Relations aims to educate the public about the importance of supporting and accepting the LGBTQ+ community. This approach includes communication techniques that acknowledge diversity and promote anti-discrimination messages. Public Relations is also important in forming partnerships with human rights organizations and LGBTQ+ advocacy groups to raise awareness and initiate constructive social dialogue. With effective campaigns and media efforts, Public Relations works to change perceptions about LGBTQ+ people to be more positive, challenge stereotypes, and reduce stigma. The use of social media and digital technology by Public Relations practitioners is very effective in spreading these messages and facilitating wider participation from various groups in society.

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