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Language choice and ideology

Representations of the LGBT community in Malaysia's multilingual newspapers

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This study examines how English-, Malay-, and Chinese-language newspapers in Malaysia represent the local LGBT community. Drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach, 167 online news articles published in 2023 by *The Star Online* (English), *Harian Metro* (Malay), and *China Press* (Chinese) were analysed. *The Star Online* appears to take a relatively inclusive stance, incorporating diverse terms and occasionally quoting LGBT individuals while balancing progressive narratives with sociopolitical sensitivities. In contrast, *Harian Metro* tends to frame LGBT issues through moral and religious lenses, often portraying those who renounce their identities as examples of repentance. *China Press* presents a broader range of perspectives, offering both supportive and critical views without anchoring itself to a fixed ideological stance. Compared to *Harian Metro*, both *The Star Online* and *China Press* appear to provide more space for civil society and international voices. These distinct patterns highlight how language in news reporting operates not merely as a tool for communication but as a mechanism for negotiating ideological boundaries. Collectively, these findings shed light on how multilingual news reporting reflects differing ideological positions shaped by Malaysia's complex sociocultural and political contexts.

Keywords: LGBT, media representations, discourse-historical approach, language, ideology

1. Introduction

In media discourse, language functions as more than a means of communication. It is a tool for constructing social realities and legitimising particular ideologies (van Dijk, 1998). Ideologies in this context, refers to system of beliefs shaped by

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particular worldviews, often rooted in social, political, cultural, or religious values (van Djik, 2004). These ideologies become embedded in discourse, where they are subtly reproduced and naturalised as common sense (Eagleton, 1991). The linguistic choices made in news reporting, such as how individuals are referred to, what characteristics are emphasised and whose voices are included, shape not only public understanding but also societal hierarchies. For communities that are frequently positioned at the margins of these hierarchies, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, these discursive practices carry significant ideological weight. Media portrayals can humanise or dehumanise, normalise or marginalise, legitimise or criminalise and in doing so, shape public attitudes, institutional responses, and policy direction (Gross, 2001).

The power of media to shape representations of the LGBT community has been documented internationally, with studies showing how portrayals shift according to cultural and political contexts. In the United States, news coverage of sexuality and gender diversity has often been shaped by selective visibility. Certain groups, such as queer youth of colour and transgender adolescents, are frequently underrepresented in reports on bullying (Paceley & Flynn, 2012). In addition, transgender individuals are often presented in news coverage as ordinary citizens giving personal opinions rather than as authoritative voices, which diminishes their credibility and limits their influence in public debates (Capuzza, 2014). Research on same-sex marriage coverage further illustrates this point, showing that media frame the issue through both equality and rights-based narratives and morality or religion-oriented perspectives, with tone varying across television and print outlets (Colistra & Johnson, 2019).

Beyond Western contexts, scholarship in the Middle East and Asia reveals how news discourse frequently draws on moralising and stigmatising frames tied to religion and cultural conservatism. In Jordan, for example, Al-Abbas and Haider (2021) found that Arabic-language media primarily associated homosexuality with crime, scandal, and deviance, while in China, Chang and Ren (2017) observed portrayals that constructed gay men as socially destabilising and lesbians as closer to heteronormative ideals, thereby reinforcing damaging myths about sexual minorities. These cross-regional findings highlight how LGBT representation remains deeply contested and ideologically polarised, with media discourse emerging as a central arena in which morality, social belonging and claims to legal recognition are continuously negotiated.

Within Southeast Asia, and Malaysia in particular, scholarship has begun to document how local media discourse constructs LGBT identities in ways that both reflect and reinforce prevailing sociocultural norms. Ting et al.'s (2021) study show that coverage in four Malaysian online newspapers remains largely episodic and event-driven, centring on isolated incidents and the statements of political

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and religious authorities, while providing limited attention to broader structural issues or underlying social contexts. Xia et al. (2024) employ the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to analyse debates on Malaysian social media, demonstrating that both opponents and supporters of LGBTQ+ rights rely on similar topoi such as religion, biology, and social order, but apply them in divergent ways. Anti-LGBTQ arguments emphasise divine punishment, pathology, and disorder, while supportive perspectives highlight religious pluralism, harmlessness, and demographic balance. Recently, Yeo et al. (2025) applied DHA to analyse Malaysian mainstream newspapers and found that nomination strategies are used to label individuals as "LGBT", "gay", or "transgender". These labels are often paired with predication strategies that attach negative attributes, portraying them as deviant, abnormal, or sinful. Such representations are further reinforced through perspectivisation, which foregrounds the voices of political and religious authorities and uses their authority to legitimise exclusionary narratives.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate continuity in how negative framing is reproduced across different platforms, yet much of the existing research has focused on Malay- and English-language sources, with Chinese-language coverage receiving comparatively little attention. This imbalance is significant given Malaysia's trilingual media environment, where Malay, English, and Chinese outlets operate with distinct cultural and ideological frames. What remains underexplored, therefore, is how discursive strategies compare across these three linguistic spheres, which is essential for capturing the full complexity of LGBT representations in Malaysian media.

1.1 Contextual background of Malaysia

Malaysia offers a particularly significant site of inquiry, as media portrayals of LGBT identities are shaped by the intersection of legal frameworks, political influences, religious ideologies, sociocultural norms, and linguistic diversity. Firstly, legal frameworks constitute a central factor in shaping how the LGBT community is portrayed in Malaysian media. Same-sex relations are criminalised under Section 377A of the Penal Code, while Sharia law at the state level imposes further penalties on Muslims for offences such as cross-dressing (Singaravelu & Cheah, 2020). Moreover, Malaysia's media landscape is shaped by a stringent legal environment that restricts press freedom and limits the scope of public discourse. Key legislative instruments, such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 and the Sedition Act 1948, impose significant constraints on journalistic practices, enabling the state to regulate publications and penalise content deemed sensitive or disruptive to public order (Mia et al., 2021). These legal mechanisms have contributed to a culture of self-censorship among media practitioners, particu-

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larly when reporting on topics considered controversial, including gender, religion, and sexuality.

Secondly, political rhetoric in Malaysia has frequently positioned LGBT rights as incompatible with national values. Politicians from various parties in Malaysia have publicly denounced LGBT identities, using such statements to align themselves with dominant societal values and to assert their positions on contentious issues (Vethasalam, 2023). For instance, former Prime Minister Najib Razak stated that there is no place in Malaysia for LGBT people, reinforcing the official stance of non-acceptance towards sexual and gender minorities ("Najib: No Place in Malaysia for LGBTs", 2012). Similarly, the current Prime Minister has reiterated the government's non-acceptance of LGBT practices, reflecting a sustained political position that aligns with prevailing societal norms and reinforces dominant cultural values ("LGBT, Secularism, Communism Will Never Be Recognised in Unity Govt — PM Anwar", 2023). This political positioning is also reflected in patterns identified by previous studies on media discourse affiliated with ruling parties. For instance, Subir's (2019) study found that *Utusan Malaysia*, which was controlled by parties within the ruling coalition government, promoted anti-LGBT narratives by explicitly calling on all political parties to collectively reject any self-identified gay individual from holding political office. This form of media discourse serves to reinforce state-endorsed moral boundaries and uphold dominant cultural values.

Thirdly, Islam is constitutionally recognised as the religion of the Federation in Malaysia (Fernando, 2006). This status enables religious institutions such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) to exert significant influence over moral and social governance, particularly in shaping public narratives around sexuality and gender (Parzi, 2022). Homosexuality and gender non-conformity are consistently framed in official Islamic narratives as sinful behaviours that deviate from religious teachings (Zaharin, 2022). JAKIM-endorsed initiatives, such as mukhayyam camps, are presented as religious guidance programmes but function as informal mechanisms of conversion therapy aimed at aligning individuals with heteronormative Islamic ideals (Human Rights Watch, 2022). These interventions are frequently legitimised through state-backed religious rhetoric, which frames them as acts of moral guidance rooted in Islamic values, thereby contributing to the perception that such corrective efforts are both necessary and beneficial for spiritual and social order (See, 2019).

Next, sociocultural norms in Malaysia also contribute to the perception of LGBT identities as incompatible with national cultural values, a framing reinforced by both media and political discourse. Subir's (2019) study of Malay-language newspapers found that homosexuality was often associated with external influence, with *Utusan Malaysia* explicitly asserting that Western coun-

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tries were a major source of homosexual behaviour in Malaysia. This discursive construction establishes a symbolic boundary between "us", the moral Malay-Muslim majority safeguarding religious and cultural integrity, and "them", the West, depicted as morally permissive and diversion from local traditions. Political leaders have echoed such framings: former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad stated in 2019 that Malaysia "cannot accept anything that contradicts our culture, our traditions, and our religion" and is therefore "free to reject" Western-promoted LGBT rights (Bernama, 2019). Together, these findings demonstrate how Malaysian media and political elites construct LGBT visibility as a foreign intrusion that threatens communal cohesion, thereby reinforcing sociocultural discourses of objections to perceived Western influence.

Finally, linguistic divisions within Malaysia's media landscape contribute to distinct ideological framings of the LGBT community. In Malaysia, newspapers are predominantly published in Malay, Chinese, and English, with a smaller number in Tamil catering to the Indian-Malaysian community (Ramli, 2019). Each language stream serves a distinct ethnolinguistic audience: Malay-language newspapers are oriented towards the Malay-Muslim majority; Chinese-language outlets cater to Chinese-Malaysians; English-language media target a more urban and multiethnic readership; and Tamil-language publications address Indian-Malaysians (Shaari et al., 2006). The influence of linguistic divisions on media framing is evident in Ting et al.'s (2021) study, which found significant differences in the ways English- and Malay-language news platforms represent LGBT issues. Among the four outlets studied, *The Star Online*, the only platform publishing exclusively in English, tended to adopt legal and constitutional framings. In contrast, *Malaysiakini*, *Astro Awani*, and *Free Malaysia Today*, which featured a mix of English and Malay content, relied more heavily on moral framings, particularly in Malay-language coverage.

Given these intersecting influences, there is a need to examine how LGBT-related issues are constructed across different language-based media in Malaysia. In particular, the ways in which linguistic choices vary across different language streams and how these choices reflect or reinforce dominant ideologies remain underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to examine how LGBT individuals are represented in English-, Malay-, and Chinese newspapers in Malaysia, with a focus on the discursive strategies employed in each linguistic context. This study sheds light on the ideological functions of language in news discourse and contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic practices shape public perception and sociopolitical narratives surrounding the LGBT community in a multilingual society.

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2. Theoretical framework

The DHA is a distinctive methodology within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), pioneered by Ruth Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2011). What makes DHA distinctive is its integration of linguistic analysis with historical and socio-political context, allowing researchers to examine how discourse both reflects and shapes power relations over time. According to Reisigl (2017), the primary aim of DHA is to "'demystify' the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance" (p. 88). To achieve this, DHA focuses on three key dimensions of analysis: the content of discourse, the discursive strategies employed, and the specific linguistic features used. Central to DHA are five discursive strategies: nomination (*How are people named or referred to?*), predication (*How are people described or characterised?*), argumentation (*What arguments are employed in discourse?*), perspectivisation (*from what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments expressed?*) and mitigation/intensification (*Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?*). These strategies help reveal how discourse constructs social identities, marks boundaries between groups, promotes particular ideologies, and reinforces or challenges existing power structures.

DHA offers a powerful lens for analysing ideologically charged topics such as sexuality and minority identities, as it systematically links language use to historical, political, and institutional contexts. Previous research has demonstrated the value of this approach in uncovering the subtle ways marginalised groups are positioned in media discourse. For example, Zhang et al. (2023) used DHA, combined with corpus linguistics methods, to examine how LGBT individuals were represented in China's English-language newspapers. Their analysis revealed competing discourses of nationalism, morality, and public order that often marginalised LGBT identities, casting them simultaneously as victims, social deviants, and symbols of progress. Sexual minorities were framed through both conservative and liberal lenses, reflecting an ideological balancing act aligned with state narratives. Their study demonstrates the usefulness of DHA in uncovering how media language operates as a tool for ideological positioning, revealing how social groups are legitimised or marginalised depending on political context and editorial stance.

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3. Method

To examine how LGBT individuals are represented in Malaysian mainstream newspapers published in English, Malay, and Chinese, this study conducts a qualitative analysis using the DHA on news articles related to LGBT issues published in 2023. The year 2023 was selected as it represented the first full year of Anwar Ibrahim's Unity Government, established after the 2022 general election, a period characterised by heightened debates over morality, culture, and governance that shaped the tone of public and media discourse (East Asia Forum, 2024).

The news articles were selected from *The Star Online* (English), *Harian Metro* (Malay), and *China Press* (Chinese). These outlets were selected for analysis as they represent Malaysia's three main linguistic groups and rank among the country's most widely accessed online newspapers, with website traffic data reported by SimilarWeb (Mediapod, 2023). Besides, these outlets are mainstream, nationally distributed and hold established influence within their respective language communities (Ong et al., 2020).

The Star Online, owned by Star Media Group and historically tied to the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) of the former Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, caters to an urban, English-speaking audience and reflects centrist, establishment-oriented perspectives. *Harian Metro*, published under Media Prima Berhad and linked to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) through its association with the New Straits Times Press (NSTP), is one of the most widely read Malay-language newspapers, appealing to a broad Malay-Muslim readership. *China Press (*中国报*)*, owned by Media Chinese International Limited (MCIL), serves the Chinese-speaking community and remains among the leading Chinese dailies in Malaysia.

This is the same dataset as that analysed by Yeo et al. (2025) but takes a different analytic lens. Whereas the earlier article assessed overall trends in LGBT representations, the present analysis disaggregates the corpus by language and newspaper to compare how discursive strategies vary across *Harian Metro*, *China Press*, and *The Star Online*. This comparative design is significant, as it highlights both convergence and divergence across linguistic streams, offering insights into how Malaysia's multilingual media landscape shapes the framing of sexuality. The analysis thereby extends the contribution of the DHA by showing how it can be applied to cross-linguistic comparisons within a single national context.

To collect LGBT-related news articles, a preliminary test was carried out by selecting terms from institutional and scholarly sources (e.g., Human Rights Watch, 2022; LGBTIQA+ Multilingual Terminology, n.d.) and entering them individually into the search bars of the three newspaper websites. Terms that did not yield relevant results were excluded, and the final keyword list was based on

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those that consistently retrieved articles with LGBT-related content. Examples of search terms included "LGBT", "gay", and "transgender" in English, which are often adopted across different linguistic contexts to express sexual and gender identities (Rowlett & Chhim, 2023). Malay phrase "*mak nyah*" (Malay male-to-female transsexuals), which frames gender transition as a sexualised practice within moral-religious discourses, often positioning it as a practice requiring repentance; and the Chinese term "同性恋" (*tongxinglian*, same-sex love), which is widely used in the media but often carries clinical or pathologising connotations (Huang, 2018). While these terms are broadly translatable, they also embody distinct cultural and political connotations. For instance, in the Chinese excerpt, "确实，以前一些国家和组织曾将同性恋列为精神疾病"" (Indeed, in the past, some countries and organisations classified homosexuality as a mental disorder), the term "同性恋" appears within a discourse that references its former status as a diagnosable condition, reflecting how the term can be situated in medicalised or institutional narratives. Similarly, in the English excerpt "Gay marriage was legalised in Britain in 2013", the term "gay" is used as a straightforward identity label within a neutral legal context. In the Malay excerpt "*selain warga tempatan terdapat juga mak nyah dari Thailand dan Indonesia yang turut sama mengikuti kelas al-Quran dan fardu*" (in addition to local residents, there were also mak nyah from Thailand and Indonesia who likewise attended Quranic and religious obligation classes), "*mak nyah*" is embedded in a redemptive religious narrative, reflecting how Malay-language reporting commonly situates such subjects through moral and religious perspectives.

Despite these contextual differences, all instances of LGBT-related terms were consistently coded as "LGBT-linked referents" under the nomination strategy (see codebook). Articles were included if they mentioned LGBT individuals or communities, reported on events such as Pride Month, examined policy or legal developments or engaged with broader public debates on sexuality. Articles that did not contain such mentions were excluded from the analysis.

In this study, topoi were identified when a segment functioned as a warrant that linked an argument to its conclusion. For instance, the topos of law was applied when legal status or enforcement served as the justification, as in statement such as "同性恋是非法且可被判刑" (homosexuality is illegal and punishable). The topos of morality/religion was identified when arguments relied on religious or moral norms, for example claims that "the lifestyles of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders threaten the values of religion and Eastern society". The topos of rights/equality was applied when arguments invoked principles of fairness or legal protection, as in references to groups such as Human Rights Watch urging the Prime Minister to strengthen legal reforms to protect minority

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groups, including the rights of the LGBT community". These examples demonstrate how topoi were identified and applied consistently across the dataset.

In addition, the articles were categorised by newspapers and by origin (local or foreign based). Foreign-based reports, such as *The Star Online*'s coverage of Nepal's same-sex marriage, were examined not for the foreign events themselves but for how these developments were framed within the Malaysian context. Articles were further classified into three categories: hard news (fact-driven, event-based reporting), features (longer or human-interest pieces providing background or narrative depth), and opinion pieces (columns or commentaries where explicit viewpoints were expressed). Word counts were recorded to capture the overall volume of coverage.

As the dataset is drawn from *Harian Metro*, *China Press*, and *The Star Online*, the discursive practices identified in this study should be understood as specific to these outlets. Their differing publication volumes and sourcing profiles (see Table 1) provide essential context for interpreting the discursive strategies examined.

Table 1. Distribution of articles by newspapers

Newspaper (Language)	Local	Foreign	Total Word Count	Hard News	Features	Opinion	Total Articles
Harian Metro (Malay)	17	2	7,894	19	0	0	**19**
The Star Online (English)	11	81	37,377	79	12	0	**92**
China Press (Chinese)	48	8	25,697	49	4	3	**56**
Total	**76**	**91**	**70,968**	**147**	**16**	**3**	**167**

In total, 167 articles were included in the dataset, comprising 92 from *The Star Online*, 56 from *China Press*, and 19 from *Harian Metro*. The majority were hard news reports (147), with 16 features and 3 opinion pieces. In terms of origin, 76 articles reported on local developments, while 91 were foreign-based news items.

All articles were imported into NVivo for systematic coding, and a qualitative analysis was conducted using the DHA framework. A codebook was developed on the basis of DHA framework (see Appendix A). The categories were operationalised using examples drawn directly from the dataset. For instance, under predication strategies, evaluative descriptors such as "deviant", "abnormal", or "mentally ill" were coded, reflecting how LGBT individuals were portrayed in certain news reports. It has to be noted that when quotations from political or

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religious leaders appeared in the articles, they were analysed as part of the newspaper's discursive construction rather than as independent accounts of the actors' own discourse.

Given the multilingual nature of the dataset, coding reliability was prioritised to ensure consistency across Malay, English, and Chinese sources. Initial coding was carried out by the first researcher, who is fluent in all three languages. The coded articles were subsequently reviewed by a second researcher to verify accuracy and consistency. Any discrepancies or uncertainties were resolved through discussion until agreement was reached. For example, the Chinese phrase "不被承认" (bù bèi chéngrèn), meaning "not recognised", appeared in articles stating that LGBT groups are not recognised in Malaysia. In Malay reporting, similar ideas were expressed with the phrase "*tak iktiraf*", while in English articles the wording "not recognised under the law" was used. One coder initially treated the Chinese phrase as political framing, whereas another coded the Malay and English equivalents as legal argumentation. After discussion, coders agreed to align all three under legal argumentation, ensuring consistency in cross-language comparison.

4. Results

This section presents how the LGBT community is represented through five discursive strategies in three Malaysian newspapers: *Harian Metro* (Malay), *China Press* (Chinese), and *The Star Online* (English).

4.1 Harian Metro

The incompatibility of LGBT identities with societal and religious norms is the main topic of argumentation in *Harian Metro*, as reflected in 16 out of 19 news articles. Of these, 14 explicitly or implicitly construct LGBT individuals as moral and social deviations requiring reformation, whether through repentance, legal action, rehabilitation, or censorship. This notion of correction is frequently reinforced through references to "*insaf*" (repentance), "*hijrah*" (spiritual migration), and state-led religious education initiatives. One measure that appears to receive particular emphasis is rehabilitation and conversion therapy programmes, which are legitimised through legal, religious, and institutional discourses. These programmes are portrayed not merely as voluntary support systems but as necessary interventions to restore individuals to accepted societal norms. For instance, the Johor government's reported allocation of RM400,000 to establish a rehabilita-

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tion centre, serves as evidence of the state's commitment to institutionalising such approaches, as shown in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1. *Kerajaan Johor memperuntukkan sebanyak RM400,000 bagi mewujudkan pusat pemulihan … Tujuan penubuhan pusat pemulihan ini bukan sahaja bagi membimbing dan memulihkan golongan yang ingin bertaubat malah sebagai platform memupuk kesedaran kembali ke jalan yang benar.*
The Johor government has allocated RM400,000 to establish the rehabilitation centre … The purpose of establishing this rehabilitation centre is not only to guide and restore those who wish to repent but also as a platform to foster awareness to return to the right path".
(*Harian Metro*, 29 November 2023)

Excerpt 1 shows how *Harian Metro* employed argumentation strategies to construct the perception that rehabilitation and conversion therapy programmes are legitimate and necessary responses to same-sex relationships. These narratives rely on intensification strategies, particularly the strategic use of numbers, to lend an impression of credibility and institutional authority. The emphasis on a substantial financial allocation of RM400,000 by the state is used to signify official endorsement, framing the initiative as a serious and state-sanctioned effort to address perceived moral and social concerns. Similarly, another article highlights that "over 30 transgender individuals" are participating in religious classes at the Pahang Insaf Association (PIP), presenting this figure as evidence of the programme's success and growing acceptance (Mamat, 2023a). Generalisations such as "most (LGBT individuals) are satisfied" with the Quran and Fardu Ain guidance classes (Mamat, 2023b) amplifies the perceived success of these initiatives, even though no independent assessments are provided. The language used aligns with broader religious and cultural expectations that emphasise repentance and conformity, presenting transformation as both desirable and attainable.

However, the rationale behind these programmes appears to be grounded more in ideologically driven assumptions than in empirical evidence. The notion that religious instruction can "correct" or "cure" LGBT identities seem to reflect a false cause fallacy, where a causal link is assumed without scientific justification. In addition, such arguments often rely on an appeal to tradition, using long-standing religious and cultural norms to legitimise conversion practices despite the lack of psychological validity. Contemporary research has shown that conversion therapy can cause serious psychological harm and violate basic human rights, leading international organisations such as the United Nations to condemn it as an abhorrent practice that inflicts both mental and physical harm and to call for its global ban (United Nations Human Rights, 2020).

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In addition to citing government authorities, such as the Johor State Government in Excerpt 1, *Harian Metro* also employs nomination strategies by highlighting former LGBT individuals. In six out of the 19 analysed articles, these individuals are portrayed as success stories of transformation, with their journeys framed as aligning with religious values and socially accepted norms. Rather than focusing on a single recurring individual, *Harian Metro* presents several different former LGBT individuals, each portrayed as having renounced their past identities and embraced socially sanctioned roles. For instance, in an article titled "*Bekas mak nyah antarabangsa insaf*!" ("Former International Transgender Individuals Repents!"), *Harian Metro* features several reformed LGBT individuals as moral exemplars. Among those featured are the Chairperson of the Pahang Insaf Association, Cik Nor, and her friend Kak Jun, who recounts their experiences after 25 years of involvement in what is labelled as "deviant activities". Another individual, Kak Lier (a pseudonym), is portrayed as not only participating in Quran and Islamic knowledge classes but also helping others who are hesitant to learn directly from religious teachers. These narratives rely on the perspectivisation strategy of direct speech, which foregrounds the voices of former LGBT individuals, as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. I am determined to repent and attend Quran and obligatory Islamic knowledge classes at various places, and now with Muip's program…
(*Harian Metro*, 22 January 2023)

The inclusion of such first-person testimonies may enhance the emotional appeal and perceived authenticity of the coverage, presenting personal transformation as both achievable and commendable. The use of direct speech, particularly through first-person pronouns, appears to legitimise these individuals' voices while aligning their experiences with normative expectations. Collectively, these discursive choices seem to contribute to a binary framing, whereby the Malay-Muslim majority and affiliated moral institutions are constructed as the morally upright in-group ("us"), and LGBT individuals, especially those who remain outside of heteronormative structures, are positioned as the deviant out-group ("them"). This process of out-group construction serves to reinforce dominant cultural and religious ideologies that depict non-normative sexual and gender identities as incompatible with accepted social norms and national values.

4.2 China Press

China Press often grounds its argumentation in local and high-profile incidents that have sparked public and political attention, with such events seemingly serving as discursive anchors to engage readers and frame broader ideological con-

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cerns. Out of the 56 news articles, 22 highlight high-profile cases, such as the controversy involving British band "The 1975", the confiscation of Swatch's rainbow-themed watches and public rallies related to LGBT issues. These stories serve not only as news events but also as entry points into broader debates on legality, morality, and national identity. One case is the Swatch controversy, where the confiscation of rainbow-themed merchandise symbolising LGBT rights sparked a public debate. *China Press* reported both the government's justification and the criticism raised by human rights advocates, as illustrated in Excerpts 3 and 4.

Excerpt 3. 内政部长拿督斯里赛夫丁再次重申，遭到内政部充公的斯沃琪（Swatch）彩虹主题系列手表，确实印有"LGBTQ"（男女同性恋、双性恋和变性者性少数群体）字眼，这对以伊斯兰为官方宗教的国家而言，非常敏感。
Interior Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin reiterated that the Swatch rainbow-themed watches confiscated by the Ministry of Home Affairs indeed bear the words "LGBTQ" (referring to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community), which is highly sensitive for a country where Islam is the official religion. (*China Press*, 23 July 2023)

Excerpt 4. 人权律师西蒂卡欣抨击内政部充公彩虹主题系列手表的行为十分愚蠢，这导致我国失去外来投资！
Human rights lawyer Siti Kassim criticised the Ministry of Home Affairs' seizure of the rainbow-themed watch series as utterly foolish, leading to the loss of foreign investment in our country! (*China Press*, 25 May 2023)

These excerpts illustrate the use of argumentation strategies through the juxtaposition of contrasting rationales. In Excerpt 3, from a religious and cultural standpoint, the justification for the seizure is framed as necessary to safeguard Islamic and societal values, potentially appealing to readers who prioritise moral conformity. The intensification strategy is reflected in the use of strong evaluative language, such as "再次重申" (reiterated), which conveys institutional authority and reinforces the legitimacy of the state's position. The state's reasoning is presented as self-evidently right, positioning its action as an unquestionable defence of public morality. However, this portrayal may also involve fallacious reasoning, particularly when symbolic acts are exaggerated as existential threats to cultural integrity, suggesting a form of moral panic or slippery slope logic. Conversely, in Excerpt 4, Siti Kassim's response employs the intensifying phrase "十分愚蠢" (utterly foolish) to sharply criticise the seizure, arguing that such measures are not only excessive but also damaging to Malaysia's international reputation. Her counter-argument appeals to practical reasoning and questions the proportionality of the state's response. These opposing expressions construct competing truth

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claims, one grounded in moral legitimacy and the other in pragmatic critique, prompting readers to assess the justification and consequences of state intervention from multiple ideological standpoints.

In addition to these government official and human rights advocates featured in Excerpts 3 and 4, *China Press* appears to incorporate a wider range of social actors in its coverage of LGBT-related issues, a feature evident through its use of nomination strategies that explicitly identify individuals such as religious leaders, experts, members of the public, and LGBT individuals. For instance, religious leaders such as Pope Francis are quoted in reference to his stance that "homosexuality is not a crime" (Pullella, 2023). This inclusion may indicate an attempt to represent more progressive global religious perspectives, even within a local context that is generally conservative. Moreover, expert perspectives are also included. In one article, a counselling psychologist argued that LGBT individuals should not be classified as mentally ill, referencing the International Classification of Diseases, which no longer lists homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder ("专家：LGBT不能列精神病患 国际疾病分类不承认", 2023) ("Expert: LGBT Cannot Be Classified as Mental Patients — International Disease Classification Does Not Recognize", 2023). Through this diverse range of voices, LGBT individuals are portrayed in both affirmative and unfavourable ways. While some perspectives frame them as misunderstood or wrongly pathologised, others depict them as sources of moral tension or public discomfort.

While the newspaper features a range of external perspectives on LGBT issues, the direct representation from LGBT individuals themselves is minimal. Only one article includes a reference to an openly LGBT individual. In this instance, *China Press* refers to Thilaga, a well-known non-binary activist and co-founder of Justice for Sisters, a local advocacy group supporting transgender rights as shown in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5. 网络媒体"自由今日大马"引述蒂拉嘉的谈话报导，有关LGBT有精神问题且可以康复的错误资讯，在公共机构（包括司法和卫生系统）中造成恐惧和不信任。因此她促请通讯及多媒体委员会，通过纠正错误的资讯，来消除对LGBT群体的歧视。

The online media outlet "Free Malaysia Today" quoted Thilaga as saying that the misinformation suggesting LGBT individuals have mental disorders that can be cured has created fear and distrust within public institutions, including the judicial and health systems. Therefore, she urged the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission to eliminate discrimination against the LGBT community by correcting such misinformation. (*China Press*, 27 March 2023)

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In this excerpt, perspectivisation is realised through the use of indirect quotation, as the *China Press* attributes Thilaga's statement to a third-party source, *Free Malaysia Today*. This approach may reflect an editorial strategy to include marginalised perspectives while maintaining some narrative distance. Within the statement, the use of the verb "促请" (urged) serves as an intensification strategy, highlighting the Thilaga's strong stance and sense of urgency in addressing misinformation. This lexical choice may also contribute to the construction of positive self-presentation (Reisigl, 2017), as Thilaga is portrayed as a proactive and informed advocate who challenges misinformation about the LGBT community. Her response is framed as rational and socially responsible, which contributes to her credibility and aligns her with broader public interest concerns. While the indirect quotation of Thilaga's statement allows *China Press* to include marginalised perspectives with some degree of editorial distance, the newspaper also employs more distancing strategies in other instances. In particular, it makes use of depersonalisation, a mitigation strategy that downplays individual agency by withholding the speaker's identity and instead foregrounding the opinion itself (Rezaei et al., 1999). These views are often attributed to unnamed "experts" and presented without direct attribution, thereby generalising personal opinions and creating an impression of neutrality (Igwebuike, 2018). For example, in reporting a rally following "The 1975 incident", the phrase "据了解" (It is understood) was used to introduce details without attributing them to a specific source, creating an impression of neutrality while distancing the publication from potential controversy.

4.3 The Star Online

The legalisation of same-sex marriage emerges as a salient and recurrent theme in *The Star Online*, particularly through its coverage of international developments. Of the 81 foreign-based articles analysed, 60 either explicitly address or make reference to this issue. Same-sex marriage is frequently framed as both a moral and legal debate, with reporting that draws on argumentation strategies to legitimise a range of perspectives, from progressive to conservative. On the one hand, the legalisation of same-sex marriage is framed as a positive step toward equality and human dignity. For instance, *The Star Online* reported Nepal's historic recognition of its first same-sex marriage as a major victory for the LGBT community:

Excerpt 6. Local authorities in a village in Nepal registered the Himalayan nation's first same-sex marriage on Wednesday, officials and activists said, five months after the Supreme Court issued an interim order clearing the way for such marriages in the largely conservative country … it was a

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> victory for sexual and gender minorities who have long demanded equal rights, including recognition of their marriages.
>
> (*The Star Online*, 30 November 2023)

Excerpt 6 presents the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Nepal as a justified development grounded in a human rights perspective, suggesting that the decision is a response to long-standing appeals for equality and recognition. This framing is constructed through a range of intensification strategies, which serve to elevate the significance, legitimacy and moral force of the reform. By describing Nepal as a "largely conservative" society, the article highlights the cultural and ideological barriers that make the reform appear particularly significant. The inclusion of various actors such as local authorities, officials, activists, and sexual and gender minorities can be interpreted as an effort to construct a broad social consensus, reinforcing the truth claim that the legal shift is not only procedurally valid but also widely accepted. The phrase "have long demanded equal rights" performs an augmentative function, stressing the persistence of LGBT individuals' advocacy and positioning them as morally principled actors whose claims are aligned with global human rights discourses.

On the other hand, *The Star Online* also includes perspectives that oppose the legalisation of same-sex marriage, particularly when such developments are positioned as conflicting with national identity, religious values, and cultural continuity. In Excerpt 7, which reports on India's resistance to legal reform, the news article highlights the government's stance as firmly rooted in traditional conceptions of marriage.

Excerpt 7. India's government has opposed giving legal recognition to same-sex marriages in a landmark hearing as the nation's Supreme Court is set to deliberate on various petitions seeking equality for the LGBTQ community in proceedings starting Monday. In its court filing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration has said that marriage is accepted 'statutorily, religiously and socially' only between a biological man and a biological woman. (*The Star Online*, 30 November 2023)

In Excerpt 7, the legalisation of same-sex marriage is argued against from a perspective that appears to prioritise cultural, religious, and legal continuity. Through the nomination of institutional actors such as India's government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the article foregrounds authoritative voices, positioning them as legitimate defenders of national values. The government's position is reinforced through intensifying language, particularly the categorical phrase "only between a biological man and a biological woman", which functions to restrictively define marriage and exclude any alternative. The repeated emphasis that marriage is accepted "statutorily, religiously and socially" serves an aug-

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mentative function, amplifying the impression that this definition is not only comprehensive but also firmly embedded in Indian society. However, the narrative may also rely on fallacious reasoning, particularly the assumption that any deviation from traditional norms would inherently destabilise social cohesion. This type of logic reflects what Cohen (2011) describes as moral panic, where minority groups are depicted as existential threats to the moral fabric of society. In such portrayals, LGBT individuals are discursively constructed as the "other", positioned in opposition to a culturally defined in-group that upholds heteronormative family values. As van Dijk (1998) noted, dominant discourses often construct the out-group as a danger to the in-group, frequently invoking common-sense appeals to social order to legitimise exclusion.

While the legalisation of same-sex marriage is frequently debated through religious, cultural, legal, and human rights lenses, *The Star Online* also highlights the lived experiences of those directly impacted. A total of 34 articles in *The Star Online* explicitly mention the names of LGBT-identified individuals or include their personal testimonies. These individuals include activists advocating for policy change, students navigating identity in conservative environments, religious believers reconciling faith and sexuality, and those facing discrimination. In Excerpt 8, for example, a Hungarian gay man shares his personal reflections on faith and identity.

Excerpt 8. Akos Marco Modolo, 28, a human rights and LGBT activist who is gay and has been a practicing Catholic all his life … "Luckily, I have never felt that myself. I have always felt God loves me and has no problem with me being gay … (*The Star Online*, 20 April 2023)

Excerpt 8 shows that Modolo is introduced by his full name and described as "a human rights and LGBT activist" and "a practicing Catholic", a nomination strategy that constructs him as a socially recognisable and credible actor within both secular and religious spheres. The repeated use of the first-person pronoun "I" functions as a perspectivisation strategy, enabling him to articulate a personal viewpoint grounded in lived experiences. By presenting his voice through a direct speech, the article foregrounds an LGBT perspective, granting visibility and discursive agency to a group frequently marginalised in mainstream reporting. Through the augmentative use of the past participle tense "have never felt" and "have always felt", Modolo conveys a sustained and emotionally anchored conviction, contributing to an overall intensification of his spiritual stance. This is further reinforced by the declaration "God loves me and has no problem with me being gay", which directly challenges narratives that position LGBT identity as incompatible with religious faith. By aligning his sexuality with divine acceptance, Modolo engages in a form of positive self-presentation that portrays him

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as both spiritually grounded and emotionally assured. This act of discursive self-affirmation parallels what Ting et al. (2023) observe, namely, that LGBTQ individuals navigate their identities through self-supportive discourse, using affirming language to consolidate their sense of self and strengthen their emotional grounding.

In addition to referring to LGBT-identified individuals by their real names, as shown in Excerpt 6, *The Star Online* also employs nomination strategies through the use of diverse terminologies to describe identities within the community. In all 92 articles analysed from *The Star Online*, references to LGBT identities are consistently present, with each article using at least one term related to the community. These terms vary considerably across the coverage, reflecting a deliberate use of diverse and inclusive language to represent identity categories. The terms are such as "LGBTQI+" ("Embassies Urge Hungary to Protect LGBT Rights Ahead of Pride March," 2023; Muvija, 2023), "queer people", "asexual individuals" (Yim, 2023), "same-sex partnership" (Sytas & Laizans, 2023), "LGBTQ+" (Wohlleben, 2023), "gay partner" (Karakas, 2023), "trans woman" (Ewing, 2023), and "trans kids" (Jabri-Pickett, 2023). The use of varied and inclusive terminologies in *The Star Online* may reflect deliberate lexical choices aimed at acknowledging and legitimising a broad spectrum of sexual and gender identities. Such language use appears to enhance the visibility of marginalised groups within the LGBT spectrum and may suggest an effort to engage readers in a more respectful and affirming manner.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Reisigl's (2017) DHA has been instrumental in this study for uncovering how discursive strategies contribute to the construction and reinforcement of ideological boundaries between in-groups and out-groups within Malaysian media discourse on LGBT issues. The comparative analysis of English-, Malay-, and Chinese newspapers reveals that discursive strategies are central to how LGBT individuals are located within shifting hierarchies of morality, normativity, and social legitimacy. These hierarchies are discursively shaped in distinct ways across the three newspapers, revealing important differences in how the LGBT community is represented. The newspapers differ in terms of (1) the construction of "us" versus "them" boundaries, (2) the level of voice attribution and the diversity of represented perspectives, and (3) the ideological openness to identity plurality.

First, the newspapers vary in the extent to which they construct discursive boundaries between "us" and "them". Among the three newspapers, *Harian Metro* is the most distinctive in this regard, as it draws clear and explicit boundaries

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between the moral in-group, typically represented by the Malay-Muslim majority and religious institutions, and the deviant out-group, often portrayed as LGBT individuals who require correction or repentance. Such portrayal reflects Subir's (2019) findings on the ideological conformity of Malay-language media and reinforces an "us" versus "them" dynamic, positioning the Malay-Muslim public and its institutional gatekeepers as the moral in-group, and LGBT individuals as a deviant out-group. *Harian Metro*'s representation of LGBT issues affirms the prevailing ideological values of its core audience, reinforcing sociocultural hegemony while resisting pluralistic or rights-based discourses, consistent with Rahman's (2014) analysis of conservative media environments. However, *The Star Online* and *China Press* differ in how they construct "us" versus "them" boundaries, as they at times portray LGBT individuals positively. This may suggest a greater openness to positioning them within the social in-group, rather than consistently framing them as outsiders, thereby potentially narrowing the ideological divide between "us" and "them".

Second, the newspapers differ in how inclusively they attribute voice and represent diverse perspectives, which in turn shapes how discursive legitimacy and authority are constructed. *China Press*, for instance, may be seen to adopt a more ambivalent and negotiated stance, characterised not by explicit ideological alignment but by the careful orchestration of competing voices. Official and institutional narratives are often presented alongside critical perspectives, such as activist responses or expressions of public concern, thereby reflecting both positive and negative portrayals of LGBT individuals. This is in contrast to Chang and Ren's (2017) findings on Chinese-language newspapers in mainland China. Their study showed that LGBT individuals are largely silenced and seldom interviewed, while homosexuality is frequently portrayed as a form of criminality, often linked to behaviours such as substance abuse, prostitution, and extortion. Likewise, *The Star Online* appears to exhibit a similar pattern by incorporating a relatively broad range of voices, which may help foster a more inclusive and dialogic discursive space. In contrast, *Harian Metro* tends to limit voice attribution to institutional and religious figures, resulting in a more one-dimensional representation that reinforces dominant moral discourses and constrains alternative perspectives.

Third, the newspapers differ in their degree of ideological openness to identity plurality, reflecting broader editorial orientations toward social diversity. *The Star Online*, in particular, appears to demonstrate a relatively higher level of discursive accommodation by incorporating diverse and inclusive terminologies, such as "LGBTQI+", "queer" and "trans woman", and by including several personal stories of LGBT-identified individuals, which are largely absent from *Harian Metro* and *China Press*. These lexical choices and narrative inclusions may function as strategies of positive self-presentation, portraying LGBT individuals

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as emotionally reflective, socially engaged, and morally coherent. By emphasising these attributes, the discourse challenges the traditional othering of LGBT individuals and symbolically aligns them with the moral in-group. This study is aligned with Ting et al.'s (2021) findings, which show that *The Star Online* adopts a comparatively liberal stance, as reflected in its publication of articles supporting LGBT rights. This orientation appears to be shaped by its greater reliance on international coverage, which enables the framing of LGBT issues through broader, multi-dimensional perspectives that are often absent in domestically focused reporting.

The differences in how LGBT community is represented reflect the ideological leanings and sociocultural positioning of each language-based media outlet in Malaysia. The comparatively conservative framing in *Harian Metro* may be shaped by its alignment with dominant Malay-Muslim norms and national moral discourses, as Malay newspapers have traditionally catered to Malay-majority readerships (Subir, 2019). In contrast, *The Star Online* and *China Press*, though not entirely free from ideological constraint, tend to feature more inclusive language and a greater diversity of perspectives. This tendency may reflect their engagement with more audiences who are attuned to global discourses, as well as a growing international readership ("Star Online Gaining Global Traction", 2020), which likely contributes to a relatively wider spectrum of permissible viewpoints. This openness to a broader range of perspectives may, in part, be influenced by increasing awareness of international human rights principles, which appear to be gradually integrated into local civil society advocacy efforts in Malaysia. Organisations such as Justice for Sisters (JFS) have reportedly challenged discriminatory laws, highlighted abuses against LGBT individuals and advocated for more inclusive policies through sustained engagement with both the media and public institutions (Justice for Sisters, n.d.).

Apart from that, recent developments in Malaysia further reflect a shifting discursive landscape concerning LGBT representations. For instance, in November 2024, the Kuala Lumpur High Court reportedly deemed the Home Ministry's seizure of Swatch's Pride Collection watches unlawful. The court ordered their return within 14 days, a decision that many interpreted as a legal rebuke of symbolic censorship targeting LGBT visibility (Lim, 2024). In a separate event in June 2025, when Selangor police initiated an inquiry into a private LGBTQ sexual health workshop under laws prohibiting "disharmony" or perceived offence to religious norms, civil society groups criticised the move as an overreach that threatened public health and individual rights (Azmi, 2025). These events, as represented in mainstream and independent media, may reflect increasing sensitivity to global human rights norms and a growing reluctance among segments of the public and judiciary to accept moralistic state intervention without scrutiny.

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At its core, the present study shows that media discourse does not simply reflect societal values but actively shapes them through language that reinforces, negotiates, or challenges ideological boundaries. As Wodak and Meyer (2009) explained, media texts are not isolated representations but part of wider social practices through which power and ideology are reproduced. In Malaysia, where questions of sexuality intersect with religion, law, and national identity, how LGBT individuals are represented in the media is inseparable from how their legitimacy is constructed in public discourse. The increasing appearance of terms associated with rights and identity suggests that the media is becoming more responsive to pressures from civil society, international human rights norms, and legal contestations. However, as Fowler (1991) asserted, language is never neutral; it serves to construct, legitimise, or challenge relations of power and dominance (van Dijk, 2006). In this context, each lexical choice, attributed voice, and discursive boundary between "us" and "them" reflects decisions about who is included within the moral and national community and who is excluded. The emergence of more inclusive language in outlets such as *The Star Online* should not be mistaken for ideological agreement, but rather seen as part of a continuing struggle over whose narratives gain legitimacy. Ultimately, media discourse not only informs the public but also participates in defining the terms under which LGBT individuals may be recognised, accepted, or excluded from the broader framework of Malaysian society.

This study, however, is limited to a selected set of online news articles within a specific timeframe and does not account for potential variations in regional publications, editorial shifts over time, or how readers interpret these representations. Multilingual readers who access more than one of these newspapers may exercise agency in selecting sources that align with or diverge from their views, and future research could explore how such choices interact with media discourse in multilingual contexts. Moreover, the analysis is grounded in textual discourse and does not include the perspectives of journalists, editors, or readers who contribute to the production and reception of media narratives. Future research can build on these findings by adopting a longitudinal approach to track discursive changes over time, conducting interviews with media practitioners to understand editorial decision-making or analysing audience responses across different platforms. Expanding the scope to include additional newspapers, alternative outlets, social media, or television would also provide a more comprehensive picture of how language and ideology intersect in shaping public understandings of LGBT individuals in Malaysia.

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Appendix A

Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
Nomination Generic referents	Non-specific, collective terms used to describe	A1	People, the group

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Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
	LGBT people as a broad group		
Gender related referents	References to LGBT people through gendered terms	A2	Male, female, woman
LGBT-linked referents	Labels that directly identify LGBT identities or communities	A3	LGBT, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, LGBTIQ+, queer, LGBTQ, trans, same sex couples, same sex partners, *mak nyah*
LGBT-identified referents	Self-identification as LGBT, sometimes accompanied by their real name	A4	Matt Healy, Ross MacDonald, Sajat, Thilaga, Kim Kyu Jin, Kim Saeyeon, Nicole Kim, Pinky Gurung, Maya Gurung, Surendra Pandey, Thabsie Mabezane, Sasha Misra, Kevin Mwachiro, Biefang, Louis Lee, Jimmy Sham, Kosuke, Masahiro, Edwin Chiloba
Predication			
Positive predication	Attributes or descriptions that frame LGBT individuals favourably	B1/ positive sentiment	Biefang, who made headlines as the first trans person to serve as a commander in the German military.
Negative predication	Attributes or descriptions that frame LGBT individuals unfavourably	B2/ negative sentiment	...政府内竟没人劝告该名高官停止这种畸形的行为 (but even more surprising is that no one within the government has advised the said official to stop this abnormal behaviour)
Argumentation			
Legal (Truth)	Appeals to legality or judicial fact	C1	乌干达总统穆塞韦尼，在周一批准反同性恋的法律生效，处罚将更严厉，包括死刑和终身监禁。 (Ugandan President Museveni has approved the enforcement of a law against homosexuality on Monday, with harsher penalties including death and life imprisonment.)
Political (Truth)	Appeals to political facts, institutions or authority	C2	In power since 2010, Orban passed a law in 2021 banning the use of materials seen as promoting homosexuality and gender change at schools, citing the need to protect children from "LGBTQ

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Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
			propaganda" and thereby escalating a row with the EU.
Traditional and cultural value (Truth)	Appeals to cultural heritage or customs as established facts	C3	Homosexuality is a taboo subject in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, even though it is not illegal except in the sharia- ruled Aceh province.
Legal (Rightness)	Appeals to what the law ought to do or protect	C4	当被询及是否同意出售和佩戴该物品的人处以3年监禁时，首相表示不赞同此行动，并认为该举已过分，但首相表明尊重法律和不接受LGBT人民的共识。 (When asked if he agreed with imposing a three-year imprisonment on those who sold or wore these items, the Prime Minister disagreed, calling the measure excessive, but he stated his respect for the law and the consensus of not accepting LGBT individuals.)
Religious (Rightness)	Appeals to faith-based moral standards	C5	"Warga Malaysia beragama Islam, sudah-sudahlah jadi pengikut kepada golongan LGBT dengan mempromosikan video-video Sajat walau terhibur sekalipun". (Malaysian Muslims, stop being supporters of the LGBT community by promoting Sajat's videos even if you are entertained.)
Political (Rightness)	Appeals grounded in political ideals of fairness, stability or leadership responsibility	C6	他指出，惩罚主办方或要求海外艺人表演与电影播放中心委员会更严厉执行指南，只会为举办演唱会的程序带来更多的繁文缛节、规则和成本，让艺人和演艺业者对大马却步，令我国娱乐业蒙受经济损失。 (She stated in a press release today that if Fahmi insists on demanding compensation from the organisers, it will raise suspicions that this is a political move to appease the conservative faction in the country, attempting to gain political advantage in the upcoming state elections. However, such actions will damage Malaysia's international image and the local entertainment industry.)
Human rights (Rightness)	Appeals to universal rights and freedoms	C7	The British government said in 2021 it would introduce a ban on conversion therapy for LGBT people to prevent "abhorrent practices which can cause mental and physical harm".

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Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
Traditional and cultural value (Rightness)	Appeals to tradition and cultural morality	C8	The Indian government has opposed these appeals, calling them "urban elitist views" and stating that the parliament is the right platform to debate the matter. It has also said that such marriages are not "comparable with the Indian family unit concept of a husband, a wife and children".
Economic (Rightness)	Appeals to economic consequences	C9	政府真的不知道自己做了什么，竟然允许这些混蛋行为继续发生。那谁会愿意来我国投资? (The government really doesn't know what they are doing, allowing such foolish behavior to continue. Who would want to invest in our country?)
Perspectivisation			
Direct speech	Quotations attributed directly to a speaker	D1	"These claims have not materialised, and by the grace of God, under the government I lead, these things will never happen under my leadership".
Indirect speech	Reported statements without quotation marks	D2	Separately, Britain said on Monday it would block a bill passed by Scotland's devolved parliament that makes it easier for people to change their legal gender.
Scare quotes	Use of quotation marks to mark distance or skepticism	D3	Erdogan often labels LGBTQ community members as "perverts".
First person pronoun (I)	Reference to self to foreground personal stance, feelings, opinions or experiences	D4	Selain bekerja, saya juga berpeluang buat amal ibadat dengan tenang dan itu salah satu nikmat saya dapat rasakan selepas berubah. (Besides working, I also have the opportunity to perform acts of worship peacefully, and that is one of the blessings I feel after changing.)
Second person pronoun (You)	Reference to audience, which may be LGBT individuals or anti-LGBT groups	D5	The problem is that, yes, you are disoriented. You have got a problem to yourself…
Third person pronoun (We)	Reference to in-groups, either including LGBT	D6	Queer people don't owe anyone anything, but we also deserve to live just like everyone else.

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Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
	as part of a wider community or uniting an anti-LGBT group against them		
Mitigation			
Modal verbs (would, may, can)	Language to soften statements to allow for a cautious approach to sensitive LGBT issues	E1	What is considered good and free in other countries may not be good and free in ours.
Depersonalisation	Language to suppress the identities of speakers while emphasising their opinions	E2	One of the suspects in the death last week of prominent Kenyan LGBTQ right campaigner Edwin Chiloba is his roommate with whom he is "believed to have been in (a) close relationship", the police said on Monday.
Intensification			
Augmentatives	Language to emphasise large numbers and amplify the sense of scale	F1	Many campaigners have long called for a ban on conversion therapy, but others have argued that any ban should not outlaw conversations with clinicians or therapists helping people with gender issues.
Number games	Language to reinforce certain narratives by providing numerical support	F2	Menurutnya, terdapat lebih 200 ahli Persatuan Insaf Pahang membabitkan komuniti LGBT (lesbian, gay, biseksual dan transgender) namun kira-kira 30 sahaja yang tampil mengikuti program keagamaan yang diadakan oleh Muip. (She mentioned that there are over 200 members of the Pahang Insaf Association involved in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community, but only about 30 actively participate in the religious programs organised by Muip.)
Modal verbs (Should, must, have to, need to)	Language to defend established norms (e.g., traditional values) or to advocate for change (e.g., promoting legal	F3	Islam does not prohibit any entertainment activities, but our words and deeds, including entertainment activities, should be based on Islamic teachings and moral values to maintain national harmony.

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Discursive strategies	Definition	Code	Examples
	and social inclusion).		
Active verbs	Language to emphasise deliberate and forceful actions through dynamic verbs, highlighting impact, influence, or resistance.	F4	menegaskan/ 强调/ emphasised, melaporkan/ 报导/ reported/, percaya/ 相信 /believed, menyokong/ 支持 / supported), mengulas / 评论 / commented), 反对/ opposed/ disagreed, agreed, explained, 促请/urged, assured, rejected, 指出/ pointed out, 警告 /warned
Evidentiality	Firsthand statements from authorities or quote recognised organisations to lend credibility and weight to specific perspectives	F5	首相署（宗教事务）部长拿督莫哈末纳因说，以首相拿督斯里安华为首的团结政府不曾承认同性恋、双性恋及跨性别者（LGBT）群体。 (Datuk Mohd Na'im, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs), stated that the unity government led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim does not recognise the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community.)

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