**Abstract**

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**An interrogation of the term ‘gay friendly’ organisation: Gay men and women’s perceptions and its impact on gay identity management in the workplace. A case study of a H.E institution in UK.**

This paper explores and questions the term ‘gay friendly’ organisations. Although the term ‘gay friendly’, a term that originated in the US, has become a phrase in common usage in the English language there has been no common consensus on its definition amongst academics. Probably because the term is so broad, it lends itself to many interpretations. Correia and Kleiner (2001:95) define a gay friendly organisation as one that fosters an atmosphere considered hospitable to LGB employees. whereas Williams, Giuffre and Dellinger (2009:29) describe it as ‘work settings that attempt to eradicate homophobia and heterosexism.’ Rumens (2015:185) finds the concept ‘gay friendly’ a troubling term with multiple meanings, definition and uses.

The study was conducted in the UK using a case study, a Higher Education institution. in 2017 with self-defined gay men and women working at the university as either an academic or as academic support staff. Previous research (Rumens, 2016) has explored LGBT experiences in UK Business Schools, but there has been a paucity of studies in Higher Education establishments.

The study utilised Stonewall’s Workforce Equality Index as a tool to explore the degree to which an organisation might be deemed ‘gay friendly’. This included whether the institution had visible LGBT staff in senior roles, the existence of an LGBT network, diversity training on sexual orientation and a supportive and inclusive culture. Through using a Queer theory lens this paper problematizes and interrogates the term ‘gay friendly’ organisations. This paper explores how heteronormative discourses regulated and constrained how gay men and women managed their gay identity in the workplace. This paper reveals how participants would attempt to normalise their gay identity in the workplace in order not to offend others. Research data revealed that the vast majority of respondents would play down their differences and emphasise their similarities in order to be accepted in their organisations.

References

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