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by Jacque Konoffsky

AI Ethics in Public Relations: A Literature-Based Examination of Bias, Privacy & Accountability in Scholarly Discourse

Dzul Affandi MatNoor*

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: dzulaffandi.matnoor@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper investigates ethical issues of artificial intelligence (AI) within the field of Public Relations (PR), focusing on three interconnected dilemmas: algorithmic bias, data privacy, and professional responsibility. Based on a structured review of peer-reviewed literature, regulatory frameworks, and policy discussions, it offers a qualitative, interpretive analysis of how scholars and regulatory bodies perceive the ethical implications of AI adoption in strategic communication. The review pays particular attention to the Malaysian context, referencing the statutory frameworks such as the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) and the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709), and critically assesses aspects of the National AI Governance and Ethics (AIGE) Code, including its reliance on a voluntary framework. Results show increased awareness of AI's advantages in PR work, especially its use in media monitoring, which will be more effective and efficient in creating and curating content, as well as enhancing crisis communication. However, these benefits are offset by ethical risks. The literature consistently highlights issues like biased algorithmic behaviour, lack of transparency in decision-making, loss of human control, and weak protection of personal data. There is a notable gap between technological advancements and enforceable ethical principles, which is concerning regarding responsibility and transparency in AI-supported communication. Another weakness of the study is that it relies on secondary sources, which may be inadequate for forming a comprehensive picture of PR practitioners and the latest developments in the industry. Nonetheless, the analysis offers a valuable critique of how AI ethics are conceptualised in academia and regulatory discourse. Ultimately, the paper calls for more robust and context-specific regulatory frameworks and additional empirical research to explore how PR professionals encounter ethical dilemmas posed by AI in real-world practice. These insights aim to enrich academic debate and influence policymaking towards promoting responsible and accountable AI applications within the field of PR.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Public Relations, AI Regulations, Malaysian Media Laws.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformational catalyst in many sectors, profoundly impacting both the development of professional practice and traditional approaches across various industries. In Public Relations (PR), a key practice characterised by such factors as strategic communications, media relations and reputation management, AI integration has introduced new dimensions to professional practice. AI-powered tools, such as media monitoring software, computer-generated content platforms and predictive analysis, have enhanced operational efficiency, accuracy and velocity, particularly in times of crisis. As such, AI is becoming an integral part of modern PR practice.

The use of AI in PR, however, comes with its fair share of complications. While AI tools offer numerous benefits, they also pose ethical concerns and legal complications. Practitioners face issues related to transparency, accountability and bias in AI-powered decision-making platforms. Automated critical processes in PR can undermine accountability structures, raising questions about the human role in key decision-making settings. Additionally, AI-powered practices often operate in parallel with existing laws and

legislation, creating potential conflicts with current legal frameworks and moral codes of conduct. These challenges highlight two key aspects of AI integration in PR: it opens unprecedented avenues for innovation while simultaneously necessitating careful governance to mitigate its complexities in practice.

This study presents an in-depth analysis of AI's transformational impact on practice, particularly concerning ethics and compliance with legal requirements in media interactions in Malaysia. Examining AI's role in reshaping traditional practice and fostering accountability, current studies explore both the potential and the complications of AI integration, shedding light on the intersections between technological development, ethics and legislation in shaping AI's emerging role in PR practice.

Focusing on these concerns strengthens the growing body of research investigating the impact of technological development on the field of PR in Malaysia, this study provides valuable insights into AI and its evolving role in practice, as well as its broader implications for the field. As a result, this research aims to address current gaps in awareness and underscores the importance of equipping professionals with key competencies and ethical awareness to navigate an increasingly complex digital environment effectively.

Research Objective
To guide this study, the following research objectives have been established:

RO1: To examine the scholarly discourse surrounding algorithmic bias and its ethical implications for the application of artificial intelligence within Public Relations.

RO2: To analyse the challenges related to data privacy that arise from AI in public relations, focusing on relevant legal and regulatory frameworks in Malaysia.

RO3: To evaluate the adequacy of current ethical and governance mechanisms concerning the use of AI-powered tools in Public Relations practice and decision-making.

The Transformative Role of AI in Public Relations
Technological advancements over the past decade have profoundly reshaped PR profession, redefining how practitioners engage with stakeholders and manage communication strategies. Among these innovations, AI has emerged as a transformative force, revolutionising various PR functions, from content creation and media monitoring to crisis management and client-agency relations. Although AI is still in its early stages, its integration into PR practices is expanding rapidly. Many AI-powered tools already assist practitioners by automating routine tasks such as scheduling social media posts, monitoring online conversations and generating analytical reports.

A study by the Public Relations Association of the Slovak Republic (2023) revealed that 88.9% of PR agencies perceive AI as an opportunity rather than a threat, with 11 out of 18 agencies actively employing AI for media monitoring and summarisation. Similarly, Prowly's State of PR Technology (2023) highlights that PR professionals utilise AI for idea generation (77.8%), content creation (72.4%), research (53%) and reporting (10%). These findings underscore the growing reliance on AI-driven tools to enhance PR operations.

Despite AI's increasing role, human expertise remains indispensable. While AI can generate content efficiently, it requires human oversight to ensure accuracy, contextual relevance and strategic coherence. PR professionals play a crucial role in shaping narratives, refining messaging frameworks and interpreting data-driven insights. Moreover, AI's capacity to analyse large datasets enables real-time sentiment analysis, allowing PR teams to track emerging trends, assess campaign effectiveness and anticipate potential crisis before they escalate.

As AI continues to evolve, its integration into PR is expected to become even more sophisticated, offering advanced automation and data-driven insights. However, ethical considerations, transparency and the irreplaceable human element will remain central to maintaining effective communication strategies. This literature review examines AI's transformative impact on PR, exploring its benefits, challenges and broader implications for the future of the industry.

The Ethics, Regulation and Legal Implications of AI in PR

Ethics in AI within public relations show a lot of importance, specifically when it comes to handling personal data, AI transparency and using the technology appropriately. The first ethical concern is how to make the AI technology respect privacy and adhere to established benchmarks of safeguarding information at an individual level. Considerations of how AI has been employed in personalised marketing approaches and creating bespoke PR strategies create major concerns issues with regards to consent, transparency and data security. As larger datasets are used, PR professionals must become an essential component in the gathering and evaluation of information in a way that progressively reflects individual rights and minimises abuse (Smith, 2019).

Another ethical issue would be the fact that the AI technology has the potential to enhance the biases of society. Most AI algorithms are based on past datasets, making them a potential to increase and broaden existing biases and disparities in the society. As an example, where the analysis of feelings is done using AI, such tools to measure the feelings of people in the absence of appropriate controls may lead to misdiagnosis, where the biases are exacerbated passively and with malicious effects. It is therefore essential that PR professionals critically evaluate the accuracy and fairness of the output produced by AI with the aim of producing transparency and fairness of AI-created output (Wu & Du, 2019). The issue between ethics and AI in PR is also seen through AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants. Although such technology brings significant value in connecting with stakeholders, it raises concerns about impersonality and transparency of AI use. It is important that information is communicated in a manner in which participants can understand that such entities are machines and not humans and therefore, transparency and trust must be sustained in PR practice.

The Artificial Intelligence Governance and Ethics Guidelines (AIGE) was introduced by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Malaysia in September 2024 as a policy to encourage the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies. The guidelines are based on seven principles of responsible AI and divide the stakeholders into three groups: end users (the general population), policymakers and the developers'/technology providers. With the implementation of such a regulatory framework, AIGE will be able to increase the understanding of the need to adhere to ethical practice by engaging and informing society about it, such as the principle of adherence to AI of Malaysia, AI of AII (MOSTI, 2024). This initiative is in line with the increasing fears over the potential harms of AI, including algorithmic bias, loss of privacy and loss of employment as a result of automation. MOSTI indicates that AI governance entails regulations, policies and standards intending to influence the continued AI development and deployment in a manner which will avoid ethical misgivings. The guidelines also emphasise AI ethics, which means that AI technologies stand to respect human rights, the common good and prevent causing harm to people and the community.

The AIGE guidelines complement Malaysia's broader AI governance framework, particularly the Malaysia National AI Roadmap 2021–2025. Their objectives include promoting responsible AI adoption, enhancing public trust in AI-enabled technologies, mitigating risks and maximising AI's benefits to drive national productivity, economic growth and competitiveness. The guidelines also provide a regulatory playbook tailored to three stakeholder groups. For end users, they clarify rights and obligations, enabling informed decision-making. Policymakers in government agencies and organisations receive guidance on balancing AI innovation with accountability and risk management, extending beyond the public sector to industries influencing AI policies across supply chains. Developers, designers and technology providers are encouraged to adhere to ethical AI practices to foster public trust. Additionally, the AIGE guidelines supplement existing regulatory frameworks, such as the Cyber Security Act 2024 (Act 854) and recent amendments to the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709). Together, these initiatives aim to create a robust and ethical AI ecosystem in Malaysia, ensuring that technological advancements are aligned with legal and ethical standards.

The recent policy changes also indicate that Malaysia is trying to become a regional leader in ethical AI communication. The Communications Minister confirmed in July 2025 that the Guidelines of Responsible AI Communication would soon materialise to supplement the AIGE guidelines with an aim to establish a framework of ethical, transparent and trustworthy AI principles that will be applied in media and PR and

associated with the creation of digital content (The Star, 2025). The Minister emphasised that "human ethics and judgment must be in the front seat," implying a human-focused use of AI. Such an initiative echoes with international standards like the Venice Pledge, supported by the Global Alliance of Public Relations and bears the larger vision of Malaysia to influence the voice of ASEAN when it comes to AI governance policies. Nonetheless, it is still unclear whether the directives will have any regulatory impact or form the basis of voluntary principles guiding the PR industry. This conflict indicates the ongoing disconnect, which has been observed in literature between the rapid development of humanity in technological terms and the enforceable ethical regulation (Floridi & Cowls, 2019; Martin, 2019; Rahim & Osman, 2022).

Regulation of AI in PR

Due to the growing usage of AI in PR, more solid regulatory frameworks are needed. The regulatory framework of AI and big data in PR has not grown sufficiently in most of the areas in the world. The main dilemma is the ability to create a balance between innovation and the individual rights. For example, South Africa and Kenya have done much to enhance legislation regarding data protection by enacting laws, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and the Data Protection Act, respectively. This legislation is to some extent inspired by the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Nevertheless, there are considerable challenges to enforcement and implementation, such as budgetary limitations and the lack of standard technology infrastructure (Oumer, 2020).

On the other hand, developed countries have come up with more robust regulatory frameworks on AI in PR, but not without their own set of issues. Regulators are having difficulty catching up with the developments in AI. In one example, predictive analysis and machine learning are applied to determining audience segmentation and forecasting trends, which causes certain ethical issues that include the possibility of manipulation and the strengthening of biases in society. The guidelines to overcome these concerns should include regulatory structures that offer clear guidelines on ethical applications of AI, and the key principles are transparency, accountability and safeguarding personal privacy.

Legal Implications of AI in Public Relations

The legal framework of AI implementation within PR is wide-spaced and complicated, including areas of data privacy, intellectual property and liability. The copyright infringement is the most burning question, especially in the cases of AI creation. The fact that advertisements, news articles or social media posts are created with the help of AI begs the question of ownership when the AI models learn on publicly available data. The examples are legal cases, e.g. Getty Images v. Stability AI in questions over copyright of AI imaging, further illustrate the intense contrast between technological innovation and intellectual property rights (Noble, 2018).

The second major legal issue can be seen in using AI as a tool for spreading dis/misinformation. A particular danger, especially in political communication and elections, is the speed and magnitude with which AI is capable of generating and sharing created content. Regulatory systems have to be developed to take care of the responsibility and liability of spreading of false or harmful information. Gregory (2020) encouraged PR professionals to become the centre of debates about the so-called fourth industrial revolution that is based on informed discussions in society.

Likewise, AI technologies give rise to labor rights issues, especially regarding AI training and data labeling. Data labeling is necessary to train machine learning algorithms, and because of the cheap labor required to perform the task, these activities have been compared to exploitative practices like child labor in the fashion business (Crawford, 2024). Such ethical dilemmas of AI need to be addressed by the legal frameworks, so that development of AIs does not threaten the rights and dignity of workers.

Methodology

In this study, a systematic review of articles published in the period between 2018 until 2024 concerning the interconnection of artificial intelligence, public relations, ethics, regulations, and laws were used. The purpose of the review is to summarise available knowledge and also define gaps in the literature as well as the context of the Malaysian setting.

Search Strategy

Articles were sourced primarily from Google Scholar, using a combination of relevant keywords such as "artificial intelligence," "public relations," "ethics," "regulations," and "laws." The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English. The timeframe of 2018–2024 was selected to capture the most recent developments in AI and PR, given the rapid evolution of the field.

Screening Process
The screening process involved three stages:

1. Title Screening: Initially, titles of the retrieved articles were screened to ensure alignment with the research topic. Records meeting the study's criteria were included for further review.

2. Abstract Review: The abstracts of the identified articles were assessed to determine their relevance. Articles were excluded if their abstracts did not address the study's focus on AI's influence on PR, ethical considerations, or regulatory frameworks.

3. Full-Text Assessment: The full texts of the selected articles were evaluated for eligibility. Articles were included only if they met the following criteria:
   - Directly addressed AI, PR, ethics and regulations.
   - Provided insights applicable to the Malaysian media law context.
   - Were peer-reviewed and published in English between 2018 and 2024.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the included articles were extracted and categorised based on key themes, such as ethical challenges, regulatory frameworks and the impact of AI on PR practices. Meta-analysis and review articles were also included if they contributed valuable insights to the research area. References from the selected articles were reviewed to identify additional relevant publications, ensuring a comprehensive scope.

Ethical Considerations

This study was carried out in full conformity with the accepted ethics and registered by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Universiti Teknologi MARA. The research participants were given information leaflet and were asked to sign informed consent form before conducting the interviews. The research proceeded under a factor of confidentiality as well as the participants were guaranteed of being able to withdraw any time without any repercussions.

Limitations

Despite efforts to ensure a comprehensive review, this study is constrained by several limitations. First, the review is limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2018 and 2024. Articles inaccessible through the selected online databases or published outside the specified timeframe were excluded, which may have resulted in the omission of relevant studies. Second, the focus on English-language publications may have excluded valuable research conducted in other languages, potentially limiting the study's ability to capture diverse perspectives, particularly from non-English-speaking regions.

Additionally, the reliance on Google Scholar as the primary database, while comprehensive, may not have captured all relevant publications available in other specialized databases. Finally, the study may be subject to publication bias, as peer-reviewed journals often favor studies with significant or positive findings, potentially overlooking negative or null results. These limitations highlight the need for caution when generalising the study's findings and suggest avenues for future research to address these gaps.

A total of 39 articles seemed to correspond to the criteria according to the titles and abstracts. Among these articles, 29 were excluded after reading the content, in several cases because the articles are not particularly similar to the topic. The 10 journal for final choice where the study discusses ethics on AI in PR:

Ömer Faruk ZARARSIZ (2024), Ümmü Özlem ÇERÇİ (2024), Jeyoung Oh a & Eyun-Jung K (2024), Eke, Chigozi. Adeyemi, Muideen Opeyemi (2024), JiYeon Jeong & Nohil Park (2023), Richard Pinto, Abhirup Bhadra (2024), Michael James (2023), Shannon A. Bowen (2024), Chris Galloway & Lukasz Swiatek (2018) and Nikhil Kumar Gouda, Santosh Kumar Biswal and Binish Parveen (2020).

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Table 1: Academic Journal on Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations from 2018 to 2024

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
1.	Ömer Faruk ZARARSIZ (2024)	Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations: Potential Benefits and Drawbacks	Literature Review Analysis	This study addresses the aspects of ethics, regulations and law concerning the use of AI in PR. Most fundamental ethical issues are data privacy, bias in the algorithms and transparency. AI systems also retain and use huge quantities of personal data without user consent, which is a serious issue of privacy violation. Ethical frameworks emphasise greater transparency in data collection practices and adherence to user privacy rights. Similarly, AI systems may replicate the biases in the input data, thus causing discriminatory acts. To overcome this, ethical principles emphasise the need to ensure AI is fair and has minimal bias, and decision-making is equitable. It is also important to be transparent and accountable when using AI in decision making processes, within PR, stakeholders have to be able to	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Laws: • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				comprehend the influence or role AI plays in the decision. Regulatory wise, it is crucial to build a system that enforces regulations in place when it comes to data protection, like the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). According to the GDPR, user consent, data minimisation and user rights protection have to be clear in data processing with the use of AI. AI is a very limited subject matter and therefore the idea of pseudoscientific themes is done away within PR as professional organisations like the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) promote responsible AI activities, which ensure an ethical use of AI. Although legal systems related to AI in the PR industry are not quite developed yet, this research provides an indication that regulatory solutions also need to be introduced to resolve the issues of AI in the realm of public communication. Such mechanisms are the promotion of adherence to data protection legislation and a reduction in the effects of misinformation and	• Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) • Penal Code Sections 499 (Defamation) and Section 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief) • Copyright Act 1987 (Act 332) • Consumer Protection Act 1999 (Act 599) • Sedition Act 1948 (Act 15) • Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 (Act 711) • Employment Act 1955 & Industrial Relations Act 1967 (Act 265) Digital Signature Act 1997 (Act 562)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				disinformation, especially in the case of AI-based PR campaigns. Together, these ethical, regulatory and legal issues seek to protect the rights of users and, at the same time, encourage the ethical and transparent application of AI in PR.	
2.	Ümmü Özlem ÇERÇİ (2024)	An Innovative Communication Paradigm for the Future of Public Relations: Artificial Intelligence	Content Analysis	This study discusses the revolutionary impact of AI in changing PR and the positive effects seen in the areas of efficiency, automation and enhancement of the decision-making process. The study also picks out the most important ethical, regulative and legal issues regarding the integration of AI into PR. The ethical issues are there might be bias, misinformation and effects of automation on human judgement. The study also outlines an urgent need of certain guidelines to manage the use of AI in PR, namely, safeguarding information, monitoring and responsible deployment of AI in mass communications. The legal aspects further complicate the process of AI integration into the PR sphere, specifically through the legal framework of data protection, copyright and responsibility concerning the AI-	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				produced work.	• Article 8 (Equality) of the Federal Constitution • Employment Act 1955 (Act 265) • Copyright Acts 1987 (Act 332)
3.	Jeyoung Oh a & Eyun-Jung K (2024)	Can we build a relationship through artificial intelligence (AI)? - Understanding the impact of AI on organization-public relationships	A Between-Subjects Experimental Design	The study highlights the consideration of ethical aspects of public communication integration with AI and focuses on the accountability of responsible engagement in organisations. One of the major issue to consider is transparency and trust, especially when communication is no longer based on humans, but rather some form of AI interaction. To maintain public confidence, organisations will have to disclosed the role played by AI to avoid the perception of manipulation and deception. Moreover, the study also touches upon the problem of accountability and asserts that AI interactions must not look deceptive or free of human control. The lack of governance might leave AI-driven communication that destroys trust and adversely affects the perception of stakeholders.	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Communications and Multimedia Act

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				Consequently, organisations need to work out ethical standards defining balance between AI automation and human control and ensure responsible, transparent interaction of organisations with the public.	1998 (Act 588) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286)
4.	Eke, Chigozi. Adeyemi, Muideen Opeyemi (2024)	Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Enhancement of Public Relations Strategies in Nigerian Economic Recovery in 21st Century.	Qualitative research approach and the in-depth (intensive) interview method	The study discusses how AI can enhance PR strategies to help Nigeria recover its economy. It singles out AI-based instruments such as sentiment analysis, chatbots and predictive analytics as key to improving stakeholder relations, media surveillance and crisis management. Despite the increasing use of AI in Nigerian PR, a number of challenges remain, such as a lack of adequate infrastructure, affordability, lack of talent and resistance to change due to fear of losing their jobs and lack of data privacy concerns. The study also raises ethical and regulatory issues, specifically whether data privacy, algorithm bias, and an absence of defining governance of AI is an issue. The uncertainties as to compliance and ethical implications of	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				AI make many PR agencies hesitant to commit to the full AI adoption. The study suggests that the stakeholders in the government and the industry collaborate to establish laws encouraging the responsible use of AI in PR.	• Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Employment Act 1955 (Act 265)
5.	JiYeon Jeong & Nohil Park (2023)	Examining the Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Public Relations: Insights from the Organization-Situation-Public-Communication (OSPC) Model	Comprehensive Literature Review	The study discusses the effect of AI on PR based on the Organisation-Situation-Public-Communication (OSPC) model, how tools that incorporate AI can increase the efficiency, personalise a message, enable adaptation to the changing circumstances, improve relationships with the others. Although such developments boost automation and strategic communication, they also present ethical problems, especially of transparency and the loss of the value of human expertise. The authors emphasise that PR professionals have to balance between the automation of the AI-based system and the human decision, promoting the never-ending improvement of skills involved in AI and data analytics to unite ethical and successful communication. Along with these considerations, there	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Communications and Multimedia Act

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				are some crucial ethical, legal and regulatory issues that are raised in the study, such as data privacy, transparency and accountability. With AI continuing to influence PR practice, upholding the trust of the masses is one of the most important factor. The authors note the dangers of AI reaching autonomous decisions without obvious responsibility, which may destroy the principles of morality in the corporate communication process. To overcome these obstacles, the study recommends the implementation of stricter ethical standards to outline the accountability of AI-induced acts, so that the balance of human and AI remains well-balanced in professional activity.	1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) • Penal Code Sections 499 (Defamation) and Section 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief)
6.	Richard Pinto, Abhirup Bhadra (2024)	Smarter Public Relations with Artificial Intelligence: Leveraging Technology for Effective Communication Strategies and Reputation Management- A	Qualitative Method	The study discusses how AI has changed the aspects of PR by looking at how the third party has affected content development and automation, sentiment analysis and audience connection. AI tools increase efficiency, provide real-time data insights, or help in managing reputations. The findings reflect that PR professionals should learn to keep up with these technological evolutions in order to remain competitive. Although	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
		Qualitative Analysis		AI allows personalisation of communication and well-informed decision-making, the matter arises regarding laying off workers, ethical concerns, and the problem of misinformation. The study stresses that PR professionals need to develop digital competencies and ensure that the communications have ethical background in AI-driven communications. The study identifies ethical dilemmas and concerns relating to the use of AI in PR: Bias and Discrimination, Transparency and Accountability, Data Privacy and Security, Manipulation and Deception and Job Displacement and Human Oversight. The study recommends implementing ethical framework and regulatory exposure to tackle these potential pitfalls and use AI intelligently in PR.	• US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) • Penal Code Sections 499 (Defamation) and Section 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief) • Article 8 (Equality) of the Federal Constitution • Employment Act 1955 (Act 265)
7.	Michael James (2023)	The Ethical and Legal Implications of Using Big Data and Artificial Intelligence for	Desk Methodology / Secondary Data Collection	In this study, the author examines ethical and legal concerns that are associated with the utilisation of big data and AI in PR communication campaigns in the US. It highlights the ways these	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
		Public Relations Campaigns in the United States		technologies will truly transform the game by enhancing the way we reach out to the audience, monitor the campaign successes and make message personal. Nevertheless, it also prompts some grave ethical concerns, such as invasion of privacy, discrimination in AI-produced content, requirement of transparency in the data gathering process, and the possibility to misinform. Rightfully, the study identified the ad-hoc system of regulations within the U.S. pertaining to data protection. The U.S. does however lack a unified, all-encompassing state-wide law to protect data security, unlike the GDPR in the European Union. Rather, they have regulations such as the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the CLSA. This disjointed system presents a challenging dilemma to PR practitioners, to be both compliant and still take the advantages of AI big data. The author relies on several ethical frameworks namely: the theory of	Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) • Penal Code Sections 499 (Defamation) and Section 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief) • Copyright Act 1987(Act 332) • Penal Code (Act 574) • Computer Crime Act 1997 (Act 563)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				utilitarianism, the right-based ethics, and deontological ethics to determine how AI and big data will affect PR. It implies that ethics training should be compulsory to new PR practitioners; they must maximise transparency and guarantee routine audit of AI systems to mitigate bias and discrimination.	• Sedition Act 1948 (Act 15) • Consumer Protection Act 1999 (Act 599) • Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) (Act 747) • Competition Act 2010 (Act 712)
8.	Shannon A. Bowen (2024)	"If it can be done, it will be done:" AI Ethical Standards and a dual role for public relations	Longitudinal Study	This 5-year study examines closely the ethical, regulatory and legal issues that revolve around the use of AI in PR. It highlights the fact that PR professionals enjoy a certain role: both apply AI to manage the communication, and also in need to explain and defend the actions based on AI, particularly in case the ethical concerns arise. Initially, ethics did not appear to be a major issue to AI developers as well as PR professionals. But when the issues of AI failure and ethical concerns began to take center stage there was palpable swing in realising just how critical it becomes to ensure ethical use of AI. The research identifies a number of significant ethical concerns: • Misinformation disinformation • Invasion of privacy	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				• Bias and Discrimination • Accountability and Transparency The study further contends that PR professionals should advocate transparency in AI, ethical governance and human oversight as a way of tackling these risks. It is also critical of the existing systems of AI ethics since, by its own admission, most corporate ethics boards actively involve themselves in ethics-washing, in which they look good by keeping up the pretense of ethical responsibility without actually implementing it. Considering the ethical, regulatory and legal implications, the study emphasizes transparency in ethical rules and regulatory frameworks of AI in PR. It implies adopting such fundamental ethical values as doing good, fairness, respect of the individual and transparency as part of corporate AI strategies by PR professionals. In doing so, they can guide organisations to handle the ethical issues associated with the adoption of AI without losing the trust of people.	• Article 8 (Equality) of the Federal Constitution • Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
9.	Chris Galloway & Lukasz Swiatek (2018)	Public relations and artificial intelligence: It's not (just) about robots.	Conceptual and Literature based Research	The study examines the evolving relationship between AI and PR in which its authors note that most discourses have focused excessively on the possibility of AI automating work yet its broader technological, financial and social impact on PR practices has been overlooked. Although it is true that AI is indeed used to streamline a few PR processes, its application definitely goes beyond simple automation into reputation management and stakeholder interaction, which has ethical concerns. AI is also becoming a common tool across data analysis to media monitoring and content generation as well as audience engagement. The study criticises the limited perception of AI as a mere means of automation in work which implies that PR professionals ought to consider its finer implications as well. AI does not only substitute human positions: it aids in decision-making quality, measures the mood of the population and even predicts possible crises. The authors claimed that although PR professionals are not supposed to be AI	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making Law • Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) • Employment Act 1955 (Act 265)

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				experts, some level of knowledge would provide them with better suggestions to clients or employers. Either way, education, as well as training, will have much to make up as the new technology is applied responsibly and productively. The study recommends further investigation of the issue of AI application to PR to harmonise with ethics and professional practice.	
10.	Nikhil Kumar Gouda, Santosh Kumar Biswal and Binish Parveen (2020)	Application of Artificial Intelligence in Advertising & Public Relations and Emerging Ethical Issues in the Ecosystem	Literature Review Methodology	This study examines at the ethical, regulatory and legal consequences of AI in PR and advertising, placing emphasis on the disruptive implications of AI in PR and advertising. It sheds light on how AI has transformed marketing communication, PR campaigns, and consumer behavior analysis using platforms such as chatbots, sentiment analysis and automation. Nevertheless, the study also poses serious ethical challenges such as Privacy Issues, Filter Bubbles, the loss of control over content, and further entrenchment of biases, workforce redundancy, algorithmic transparency, discrimination and misuse of AI.	Ethics: • Code of Athens • IPRM Code of Conduct • National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (MOSTI) • ASEAN Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics Regulations: • China's Generative AI Measures • US' Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government • EU's GDPR • Canada's Directive on Automated Decision-Making

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Methodology	Past Year Findings	Laws/ Regulations/ Ethics Related
				This study also underscores the importance of ethical AI practices such as accountability, building trust and reskilling workforce.	Law • Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) • Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) • Employment Act 1955 (Act 265) • Computer Crimes Act 1997 (Act 563) • Consumer Protection Act 1999 (Act 599) • Copyright Act 1987 (Act 332) • Patents Act 1983 (Act 291)

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The Findings

The growing application of AI in PR has produced substantial ethical, legislative and legal issues. A review of existing literature (see Table 1) indicates that, as the activities of PR become more efficient thanks to automation and data-informed decision-making, AI, at the same time, presents significant concerns related to transparency, bias and data privacy, disinformation and accountability. Addressing these challenges will be characterised by the growth of clear ethical norms, robust regulating guidelines and comprehensive legislative guidelines to enable purposeful and functional application of AI in the PR field.

A detailed analysis of these factors, located within the context of existing legislation and assessed concerning the compatibility with existing laws in Malaysia and international standards, including the Code of Athens and Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM) Code of Professional Conduct. Moreover, examples and comparative analysis, along with future practice recommendations and an analysis of future trends, inform discussion and findings are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Findings on Ethical, Regulatory and Legal Considerations in AI and PR.

Theme	Key Issues Identified	Relevant Codes & Regulations
Ethical Concerns	Transparency, bias, misinformation, accountability	Code of Athens, IPRM Code of Conduct, AIGE Guidelines
Regulatory Issues	Data privacy, AI governance, and compliance with ethical AI usage	GDPR, China's Generative AI Measures, Malaysia's PDPA
Legal Implications	Copyright infringement, defamation, misinformation laws	Copyright Act 1987 (Act 332), Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286), Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588)
Labour Considerations	Workforce displacement, ethical labour practices	Employment Act 1955 (Act 265), Industrial Relations Act 1967 (Act 177)

AI and Public Relations: Ethical Challenges

Several important ethical issues exist concerning the application of AI in the PR practice, with the concerns of transparency, accountability, privacy of data, and disinformation and bias being the most important ones. According to several studies listed in Table 1, there are critical risks to AI generating messages, sentiment analysis, and allowing communications planning automation. Since there is a significant efficiency advantage of the application of AI, its analyses of large datasets will inevitably create a tendency to increase existing social biases and infringe upon the privacy rights of individuals and groups.

Another one of the basic ethical concerns is transparency. For example, PR professionals must take care of notifying stakeholders adequately about the lack of the human quality of the communication when using AI-powered chatbots. According to Zararsiz (2024), transparency is important to sustain trust, especially when it is employed in full. Similarly, the Code of Athens echoes the need of integrity and transparency in messaging, so transparency is an essential element of the ethical practice of AI.

Furthermore, AI algorithm bias remains a problematic concern. Unless carefully watched, AI algorithms can replicate bias and isolate groups of people. The key way to overcome this kind of problem is to do regular audits and use multiple sets of data (Çerçi, 2024). Such values are supported by IPRM Code of

Professional Conduct in its position on embracing fairness and accountability in the whole practice of public relations.

Regulatory Frameworks and AI in PR

The literature reviewed reveals a dire need for a well-designed regulatory framework. Prominent examples are the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Chinese Generative AI Measures and the Malaysian National Guidelines on AI Governance and Ethics (AIGE).

AIGE model is in synergy with the Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (Act 709) which regulates gathering, handling and sharing of personal information. This is exemplified when AI-based PR campaigns must ensure that its practice or management of information aligns with PDPA regulations in protecting personal privacy. The latter is seen as opposed to a relatively less solidified data protection system in the United States, where a large variety of laws (e.g., California Consumer Privacy Act) regulate individual sectors and thus demonstrate the advantages of and challenges to data protection regulation.

The possibility of AI being used to create misinformation, which has been compounded by the skyrocketing deepfakes, highlights the need to have robust regulatory measures. In Malaysia, the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) addresses these issues by way of regulation of the transmission of such information via the cyberspace. PR professionals are required to have thorough verification processes, according to such legislation.

Legal Consequences of AI in PR

Some of the laws that AI-assisted PR are raising more concern, including the areas of copyright infringement, defamation and disinformation. The existing study shows instances when AI-generated content has interfered with copyright protection as opposed to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1987 (Act 332) in Malaysia. The lack of a definite legal status of content created by AI requires PR professionals to look deeply at the adherence to copyright laws.

Similarly, defamation is a legal issue of concern. For example, AI-created content with manipulative distortions in factuality may breach any of the provisions of the Defamation Act 1957 (Act 286) in Malaysia, as well as the specific sections of the Penal Code (Sections 499 and 505). Compliance with such legal constructs needs due diligence checking on contents, which is indeed advocated in the IPRM Code of Professional Conduct.

In addition, the possibility of AI-automated performance poses questions concerning practice among workers. As per the Employment Act 1955 (Act 265) and the Industrial Relations Act 1967 (Act 177) of Malaysia, employees should not be adversely affected by automation. Thus, AI applications should be aimed at supplementing rather than replacing capabilities.

Emerging Trends, Comparative Analysis and Recommendations for Practice

Future AI development will involve more complex natural language processing abilities, greater predictive analysis and more automation in PR activities. Such technological changes are likely to strengthen existing concerns regarding ethics, regulations, and laws. According to Oh and Ki (2024), proactive adaptation and continual monitoring of AI technology will gain significance as these tools become more developed.

The comparative assessment of global regulatory systems demonstrates that there is a great disparity in scope and usage. For example, the scope of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) adopted by the European Union starkly contrasts with the tighter, industry-specific regulatory models that are employed in the United States. The same can be said of the role of localised environments in establishing ethical and legal demands. The creation of the AIGE model in Malaysia marks an important step in the process of achieving a harmonised regulatory setting. However, the rapid rate of technological development requires further revisions and amendments to such frameworks.

To address complex concerns surrounding integration of AI in PR, the following recommendations are proposed;

- **Transparency Protocols:** PR professionals need to come up with and execute transparent disclosure protocols that inform stakeholders that AI-based communications have been deployed.
- **Routine Audit:** AI technology should be audited, including by organisations on a routine basis, to determine its bias, a practice that is intended to keep the systems reviewed and on the same rhythm to avoid discriminatory results. 55
- **Data Protection:** The need to comply with data protection legislation, like the Personal Data Protection Act (Act 709), in cases like Malaysia, can and should be enhanced by the deployment of proper data protection and management strategies.
- **Verification Systems:** Deep verification procedures should be performed as a move to identify and thwart the spread of disinformation created through the use of AI technology.
- **Hybrid Models:** AI use must be viewed as a supplement to the expertise of humans and not a replacement, and consequently uphold its position as an indispensable component in human judgment matters.
- **Ongoing Training:** The ongoing education and training of PR professionals on the topic of new AI technology and its ethical issues must be included in freely available educational services.

The discussion of AI in PR can also be enriched by framing it within broader philosophical perspectives on communications ethics and technology governance. Utilitarian viewpoints aim to maximise overall social benefit and reduce social issues, while deontological frameworks emphasise moral principles such as fairness and honesty. Combining these theoretical approaches enables a harmonious and ethically sound integration of AI into PR practice.

Conclusion

The growing use of AI in PR is both promising and challenging, particularly regarding ethical, regulatory, and legal issues. As AI technology evolves, PR professionals must not only become experts in its applications but also advise organisations on how to minimise reputational risks. Their responsibilities extend beyond communication strategies; they must also ensure that AI deployment does not undermine institutional values or the expectations of wider society.

One of the most notable examples of such concerns is Google's decision to delay the launch of its AI-based chatbot, LaMDA, citing potential reputational risks. This highlights the importance of implementing transparency, fairness, and accountability in AI deployment. By supporting organisations with these aspects, PR professionals can help develop AI strategies that boost stakeholder confidence by integrating ethical responsibility with innovation.

Although AI can drive efficiency in operations and decision-making at the strategic level, it also poses intricate ethical and governance issues. These will demand a holistic solution that will involve ethical best practices, and governance and oversight regulations. Future studies therefore ought to concentrate on advancing novel governance systems, which not merely become more impactful to the advantages of AI in PR but be able to assure the general as well as the individual rights in an increasingly digital domain.

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