

Gendered Shadows: Media Representations of Masculinity, Trauma, and the Male Psyche behind Violence in Contemporary Television

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Violence that transcends gendered boundaries remains a persistent and complex global issue, often rooted in intersecting psychological, cultural, and historical dynamics. This study explores the relationship between mental health and violent behaviour, particularly focusing on how men's emotional and psychological vulnerabilities contribute to acts of violence against both women and other men. **Methods:** Using qualitative textual analysis of six select episodes, the study critically examines select male characters from three widely known television series: *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist*, and *You*. These case studies were chosen for their portrayal of male protagonists with evident emotional difficulties and maladaptive behaviours as represented in the narrative. The analysis was guided by Social Learning Theory, Attachment Theory, and Gender Role Theory, which together frame how masculinity and violence are constructed and carried on through media. **Results:** The analysis reveals recurring patterns of emotional repression, unresolved trauma, and narrative depictions of psychological instability in male characters, which manifest as aggression, control, and violence. In particular, *How I Met Your Mother* uses sarcasm and comedy to conceal emotional repression, *The Alienist* places aggressiveness inside historical and scientific reasoning, and *You* depicts idealized violence and compulsive control. These behaviours are often normalized within the narrative frameworks, thereby reinforcing socio-cultural norms that legitimize violence irrespective of gendered victimhood. **Discussion:** The findings suggest that men's violent behaviour is frequently symptomatic of unaddressed mental health issues. The paper argues for a multidimensional approach in preventing violence beyond gender by fostering emotional intelligence, mental health awareness, and psychological literacy among men. **Conclusion:** Addressing violence that transcends gender requires more than punitive responses, it demands cultivating men's emotional competence, mental health literacy, and psychological resilience. These elements are essential for promoting healthier relationships and dismantling cultural norms that uphold gender-neutral violence.

Keywords: Masculinity, Violence, Mental health, Emotional instability, Emotional quotient.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, especially male-perpetrated violence, is extremely embedded in social, cultural, and psychological contexts. In this paper, the psychological, social, mental and emotional factors that contribute to male aggression are explored through the lens of media narratives, particularly those seen in popular television series *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You*. The analysis of these shows questions the standard gender stereotypes and draws attention to the intricate relationships between acts of violence and aggressive behaviour, mental health, and masculinity.

This study explores how masculine characters' destructive actions are portrayed as being influenced by emotional vulnerabilities and trauma-related traits using conceptual frameworks including Attachment Theory, Gender Role Theory, and Social Learning Theory.

The study makes the case that unresolved trauma, toxic masculinity, and social pressures are the major contributors to the continuation of male aggression. In order to promote healthy relationships, reduce and prevent violence against women and men, it is important that these emotional and psychological problems be addressed and taken care of. This study explores the ways in which various media representations in *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You* either support or contradict these societal constructs of masculinity, especially its association with violence.

The study emphasizes how emotional instability, trauma, and social norms that stigmatize vulnerability are the root causes of male aggression. The study examines the negative impacts of these pressures through psychological paradigms and enables cultural and psychological treatments to deal with the underlying causes of male aggression.

This study analyzes how these television shows depict male characters and their violent actions by combining ideas and aspects from Social Learning Theory, Gender Role Theory, Attachment Theory, and other psychological frameworks. It is evident that addressing social structures and mental health is essential to minimize violence and encourage more positive manifestations of masculinity.

Finally, the study argues that violence is a behaviour influenced by various psychological, social and cultural factors rather than an innate characteristic that is within oneself. It argues that in order to end the cycle of male violence, attention must be paid to men's mental health, and cultural standards around masculinity must be re-examined.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of scholarly research has addressed and dealt with the connection between media, violence,

and masculinity. This study of literature examines how popular media portrays male psychological issues that are influenced by cultural ideas of masculinity. The study analyzes how masculine conduct, mental health, and social pressures are interconnected, particularly in the television shows *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You*, using theories such as Social Learning Theory, Gender Role Theory, and Attachment Theory.

2.1 Masculinity and Societal Expectations

The idea of "Hegemonic Masculinity", which stresses violence, emotional control, and dominance, is introduced in R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* (2005). Connell says that men are under social pressure to display power and authority while repressing their vulnerability (Connell, 2005, p. 45). This is further discussed in Michael Kimmel's book, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (2013), which highlights how men who feel cut off from certain social norms may become frustrated and resort to violence. According to Kimmel, many men are experiencing an identity crisis as a result of social and economic changes, which might cause them to feel frustrated, unhappy, angry and alienated, and act violently (Kimmel, 2013, p. 67).

Beyond Bombshells (2015), written by Jeffrey A. Brown, explores the ways in which popular culture either supports or contradicts the standard gender norms in the media. Despite his emphasis on female characters, Brown's observations shed light on how the male characters in *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You*, either adhere to or defy gender expectations. According to Brown, gender role depictions in the media have a significant impact on how men and women behave (Brown, 2015, p. 112).

2.2 Media Narratives and the Glorification of Violence

The way that power relations and gender in media represent violence as a manifestation of masculinity is covered in Sarah Projansky's *Gender, Power, and Violence in Popular Culture* (2017). This is crucial when examining characters such as Joe Goldberg in *You* (Projansky, 2017, p. 83). By normalizing violence, these media narratives frequently perpetuate toxic masculinity and the notion that male aggressiveness is a normal reaction to social demands and societal expectations.

The issue of psychological instability, which is inherent in Joe Goldberg's character, is explored in contemporary media, including gothic ideas, in Catherine Spooner's work *Contemporary Gothic* (2006). In order to let the audience, relate to and even romanticize violent characters, Spooner talks about how contemporary gothic stories frequently combine romance and horror (Spooner,

2006, p. 142). Similarly, Diane Negra's *What a Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2009), examines how romanticized media frequently obscures the negative sides of male conduct, as shown in *You*. According to Negra, postfeminist media frequently hides the destructive nature of male behaviour under the disguise of romantic love (Negra, 2009, p. 97).

Expanding on previous studies examining how violence is portrayed and romanticized in popular media, the study also incorporates concepts from media and cultural studies, which highlight how meaning is created and disseminated through representation, performance, and audience participation, in addition to psychological and gender-based frameworks. Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation emphasizes how media narratives actively create reality through language, framing, and genre conventions rather than just reflecting it. In the same way, Butler's (1990) concept of performativity illustrates how narrative frameworks consistently enact masculinity through constant behaviours. Further evidence that audiences actively negotiate and interpret meaning rather than passively consuming it comes from studies on audience response (Fiske, 2011; Morley, 1992). By placing literary depictions of male trauma and violence into the larger networks of media production and reception, these perspectives enhance the current research.

Recent empirical researches have demonstrated the impact of media narratives on audience perceptions regarding masculinity and violence. According to studies on media cultivation, continuous exposure to violent or hypermasculine depictions can influence audience perceptions of gender norms and acceptable conduct (Morgan et al., 2019; Tukachinsky et al., 2021). Studies on parasocial relationships also show that audiences frequently empathize with ethically ambiguous or violent male protagonists, promoting identification with aggressiveness disguised as passion or protection (Stever, 2017; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Also, reception evaluations of romanticized antiheroes in streaming media show that irony, nostalgia and aesthetic framing might reduce the perceived severity of violent acts (Molina-Guzmán, 2020; Click et al., 2018). These results place the study in the larger empirical conversation on how modern audiences internalize and interpret mediated violence.

The theories guiding this study, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982), and Gender Role Theory (Connell, 1995), together offer a multidimensional framework for understanding male violence. While Attachment Theory reveals how disrupted emotional bonds create vulnerability and repression, Social Learning Theory explains how these

repressed emotions can manifest through learned aggression and modeled behaviour. Connell's framework situates these psychological processes within broader cultural systems that valorize control and discourage vulnerability. Integrated together, these theories illuminate how trauma, learned behaviour, and social norms collectively construct a cycle where emotional suppression becomes both a cause and a consequence of violence.

2.3 Trauma, Mental Health and Violence

Violence caused by men are also significantly influenced by unresolved trauma. *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), by Judith Herman highlights how trauma can lead to violent behaviour, as illustrated by Willem Van Bergen in *The Alienist*, whose violent tendencies originate from abuse during childhood (Herman, 1992, p. 103). Bessel Van Der Kolk's book *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014), gives more details on the physical and mental effects of trauma, strengthening the notion that untreated trauma influences behaviours that are aggressive. According to van der Kolk, trauma affects physical health in addition to emotional stability, making it challenging for people to manage their emotions in a healthy way (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 225). These psychological realizations are essential to understand and interpret the behaviour of the male characters in *The Alienist* and *You*.

2.4 Gender and Power Dynamics

Feminist perspectives criticize the societal constraints that define masculinity and cause men to suppress their feelings. Bell Hooks criticizes how patriarchal structures drive men to act aggressively by severing their emotional bonds in his book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (2004). Hooks claims that cycles of violence and emotional alienation are exacerbated by society's expectation that men be domineering and emotionless (Hooks, 2004, p. 56). In *How I Met Your Mother*, Barney Stinson's obvious and readily apparent masculinity conceals his emotional vulnerabilities, reflecting this idea (Hooks, 2004, p. 59).

This specific passage highlights and draws attention to the intricate connection between violent conduct and social identities including gender, ethnicity, and class. These overlapping identities have an impact on how people perceive oppression and authority, which in turn leads to violence in *The Alienist*. People's experiences of violence and prejudice can be intensified or changed by the concept of intersectionality, which emphasizes that social elements like race and class are not experienced by themselves but rather in combination. For example, individuals from marginalized racial or ethnic groups may

have structural obstacles in gaining access to resources or social mobility, which might raise their risk of being victims or offenders of violence (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 14). Additionally, the interaction of race and class frequently results in various types of violence, with those from lower socio-economic backgrounds more at risk of criminal activity as well as financial difficulty. This can be especially true in impoverished and underprivileged situations, where feeling helpless, hopeless, despair and a lack of options can lead to violent behaviour (Hernandez, 2003, p. 54).

Another significant factor that shapes violent and aggressive conduct is gender. Male dominance, control, and aggressiveness are frequently encouraged by societal norms around masculinity, particularly when men feel that their identity or status is threatened. People may feel pressured to express their masculinity, which can intensify disagreement and result in aggressive and violent conduct (Connell, 2005, p. 89). The representation of masculine characters committing violence in *The Alienist* is a result of larger cultural standards that associate violence with power and control, in addition to reflect the individuals' own personal reasons.

2.5 Gaps in Existing Research

There is an enormous amount of study on violence and masculinity, but very few of it looks at how media portrays these concepts in connection to mental health. This research attempts to close this gap by examining the ways in which the male characters in *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You* use their characters to examine the psychological underpinnings of violence and to challenge social standards. By exploring these instances from the media narratives, this study will explore how fictional depictions of masculinity simultaneously support and challenge the societal norms and structures that fuel male aggression.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Questions

Despite significant research on masculinity, trauma, and violence, a few studies have looked at how popular television storylines incorporate psychological and societal aspects into character development and storytelling. There is a gap in our knowledge of how media narratives concurrently reflect and influence male emotional behaviour since existing research frequently isolates either psychological components or cultural representation. In order to bridge this gap, the current study uses an interpretive textual analysis based on gender and psychological theories to examine the intersections of violence, masculinity, and mental health in a few television shows.

As a result, the following research questions form the framework of this study:

1. How do *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist*, and *You* represent psychological and emotional roots of male violence through their central male characters?
2. In what ways do these television narratives normalize, romanticize or critique toxic masculinity and emotional repression?
3. How do psychological theories such as Attachment Theory, Social Learning Theory and Gender Role Theory collectively explain the transformation of male vulnerability into violence in these narratives?

3.2 Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative textual analysis with thematic and narrative techniques, led by Social Learning Theory, Attachment Theory and Gender Role Theory. The analysis is interpretive and reflective with an emphasis on meaning-making rather than measurement. Three television shows: *How I Met Your Mother* (a sitcom), *The Alienist* (a historical crime drama), and *You* (a psychological thriller), were chosen using a purposive sampling technique because they all focus on male emotional repression, trauma and violence despite having different genres. The study uses genre as an interpretive component to explore how different narrative modes such as comedy, historical realism, and psychological suspense, mediate the portrayal of masculinity, emotional repression, and violence throughout various series. The unit of analysis include primary male character arcs and significant episodes that depict narrative portrayals of psychological instability and aggression: *You* (Season 1, Episode 3; Season 2, Episode 5), *The Alienist* (Season 1, Episode 1; Season 1, Episode 8), and *HIMYM* (Season 4, Episode 1; Season 6, Episode 14). In order to find patterns of emotional suppression, trauma-driven pathology, and the narrative normalizing of violence, data were analysed using iterative coding procedures i.e., open coding, axial coding, thematic development (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This interpretative approach enables a multifaceted knowledge and understanding of the construction and contestation of masculinity across various narrative frameworks.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, people adopt or take up habits by observing and imitating other individuals around them. When prominent individuals or the media resemble or mimic such actions, this process has the potential to continue violence.

Connell's Gender Role Theory looks at how women's and men's actions are influenced by cultural norms. Anger and domination are two negative behaviours that can be exacerbated by rigid gender standards, particularly those related to masculinity.

Bowlby's Attachment Theory, emphasizes the influence of early interactions on young people's emotional growth and conduct as adults. Healthy emotional relationships are fostered by secure attachments, however behavioural patterns might be adversely affected by interruptions.

The conceptual structure offered by these ideas helps us comprehend how early relationship experiences, mental health, and social conventions impact the actions of male characters.

4.1 Summary of the Series

1. *How I Met Your Mother*

This sitcom centers on Ted Mosby and his close friends Marshall, Lily, Robin, and Barney as they chase love. Barney's hyper-masculine conduct, which the series frames stemming from childhood neglect and abandonment/attachment-related issues, draws attention to toxic masculinity, while Ted's romantic idealism and fears reflect attachment difficulties and cultural pressures. The show examines friendship, love, and human development; Barney's final transition into a parent demonstrates emotional maturity. This transformation becomes evident when Barney holds his daughter Ellie for the first time and says, "You are the love of my life. Everything I have and everything I am is yours" (Bays & Thomas, 2005-2014, *HIMYM*, Season 9, Episode 24). This moment directly contrasts his earlier detachment, indicating genuine emotional progress.

2. *The Alienist*

The show centers on Sara Howard, journalist John Moore, and Dr. Kreizler as they look into cruel murders in 19th-century New York. Moore's empathy and Kreizler's therapeutic detachment are used to explore the psychological causes of violence. Violent conduct is influenced by trauma and social learning, as demonstrated by Willem Van Bergen, a character whose childhood abuse is presented as formative in his development. The series examines how trauma is narratively linked to violent behaviour while criticizing cultural suppression.

3. *You*

This psychological thriller centers on Joe Goldberg, whose portrayal includes an insecure attachment style and unresolved childhood trauma that the narrative links to his violent acts and obsessive love. His distorted view of love serves as justification for his stalking,

manipulation, and murder, challenging popular narratives that romanticize dominance and obsession. The series examines the perils of untreated psychological instability and emotional suppression. For instance, Joe says, "I'm not the bad guy. I'm the guy who does what has to be done" (Gamble & Berlanti, 2018-2023, *You*, Season 1, Episode 3), moments before he kills Benji, portraying how he rationalizes violence as devotion.

4.2 Analysis of Media Narratives

How I Met Your Mother and Emotional Neglect

In the series, *How I Met Your Mother* (*HIMYM*), the life and relationships of five friends are looked at and examined. The male characters like Ted Mosby and Barney Stinson shed light on toxic masculinity and emotional neglect.

Ted Mosby: The Romantic Idealist

The expectations that society places on romantic success are reflected in Ted's never-ending search for "the one". Unhealthy relationships and self-doubt result from his recurrent romantic failures. Relationship sacrifices made by Ted reveal his insecurities.

"I'm not the guy who meets a girl, falls in love, and lives happily ever after. I'm the guy who screws it up" (Bays & Thomas, 2005-2014, *HIMYM*, Season 4, Episode 1).

Ted's reliance on outside approval can be explained using Attachment Theory, which contends that social expectations that associate successful relationships with masculinity are the root cause of his emotional instability.

Barney Stinson: The Mask of Hyper-Masculinity

Barney, with his extravagant lifestyle and "bro code" to cover up inner vulnerabilities, especially those stemming from childhood neglect. He is an iconic representation of toxic masculinity. His influence and manipulation over women, which is frequently depicted in a comical way, is a reflection of a culture which emphasizes power, dominance and emotional distance.

"Suit up!" (Bays & Thomas, 2005-2014, *HIMYM*, recurring), his catchphrase, represents his efforts to protect himself against vulnerability.

"A lie is just a great story that someone ruined with the truth" (Bays & Thomas, 2005-2014, *HIMYM*, Season 6, Episode 14).

Barney's actions fit in with the Gender Role Theory, which examines how objectification and emotional repression are rewarded by cultural standards. His subsequent development, particularly in his connection with his daughter, contradicts and defies these expectations and shows how emotional intelligence may end destructive patterns, practices and behaviours.

Critiquing Masculinity Norms

HIMYM reinforces stereotypes and frequently normalizes Barney's harmful actions through dark humour. Nevertheless, it also quietly challenges these standards by demonstrating Barney's ultimate self-discovery, suggesting the possibility of emotional development and transformation.

The Alienist and Trauma-Induced Violence

The Alienist, which is set in Gilded Age New York, explores the psychological causes of violence by showing masculine characters battling with social constraints and trauma.

Dr. Laszlo Kreizler: The Compassionate Observer

Kreizler encounters the most sinister facets of the human psyche in his role as an early Psychologist. He struggles with social expectations personally, which is reflected in his physical impairment and mental solitude.

"The mind is the most mysterious thing we possess" (Carr, 2018-2020, *The Alienist*, Season 1, Episode 3).

According to Attachment Theory, Kreizler's work highlights the long-term consequences of unresolved emotional wounds on both his patients' and his own conduct. His emotional detachment and difficulty in forming strong relationships are presented as possibly linked to early attachment disruptions, which the series situates as influencing his behaviour and contributed to his difficulty in managing personal connections. This detachment surfaces when Kreizler, emotionally isolated, says to Sara, "We are all marked by our wounds" (Carr, 2018-2020, *The Alienist*, Season 1, Episode 8), acknowledging trauma but showcases inability to form emotional intimacy.

John Moore: The Empathetic Investigator

While helping with the investigations, Moore, a journalist and close friend of Kreizler, struggles with his own ethical issues and moral dilemmas. He offers a sobering and a realistic viewpoint on the cruelty they come across. Moore's personality stands in strong contrast to Kreizler's clinical indifference. Even unintentionally, his responses to violence and empathy reflect the psychological effects that violence has on its victims.

"I have seen terrible things, but this, this is beyond anything I could have imagined." (Carr, 2018-2020, *The Alienist*, season 1, episode 1).

John's emotional reaction to the inquiries and investigation in *The Alienist* corresponds with the Attachment Theory, which holds that early attachments influence emotional coping. His increasing remorse, empathy, regret and sympathy for the victims are

indicative of an anxious attachment style, showing how emotional ties might make it difficult for him to maintain his distance (Bowlby, 1982).

Willem Van Bergen: The Creation of a Predator

Abused as a youngster and social rejection are the root causes of Willem's aggressive inclinations. His acts serve as a reminder of the terrible consequences and his crimes demonstrate how terrible unresolved trauma can be.

"They made me this way" (Carr, 2018-2020, *The Alienist*, Season 1, Episode 8).

By using the Social Learning Theory, it becomes clear how Willem's aggressive actions were impacted by the exposure of negative attitudes and behaviours around him. His road towards violence was influenced by the trauma and abuse he endured, which probably caused him to observe and take on the negative actions exhibited by others.

Critiquing Societal Norms

The Alienist challenges social conventions by demonstrating how men's emotional and psychological problems are frequently suppressed with negative results. It also talks about how structural issues, such as stigmatization in society and poor mental health care, promote violent cycles.

You and the Pathology of Obsession

In *You*, Joe Goldberg's character highlights the perils of compulsive violence by illustrating the relationship between psychiatric disorder and popular tales about love.

Joe Goldberg: The Charming Predator

The cause of Joe's compulsive actions is his concerned attachment style and childhood trauma. His perverted and flawed conception of love serves as a justification for his abuses, including stalking, manipulation, and murder.

"I'm not the bad guy. I'm the guy who does what has to be done for love" (Gamble & Berlanti, 2018-2023, *You*, Season 1, Episode 3).

The Attachment Theory, which connects emotional instability and possessiveness in adult relationships with early abandonment, is reflected in Joe's craving and desire for control and possessiveness.

Critiquing Romanticized Violence

You criticize the way culture romanticizes male dominance and compulsive love, raising concerns about the audience's involvement in justifying Joe's actions

as a sign of affection. This representation questions societal narratives that promote or legitimize masculine aggressiveness.

4.3 Comparison of the Series

Each series offers a different perspective on the male psyche and how it relates to violence.

- *How I Met Your Mother* uses humour and nuanced storylines to challenge toxic masculinity and emotional neglect.
- *The Alienist* explores how violent tendencies are influenced by untreated trauma and societal expectations.
- *You* demonstrate how societal narratives about control in relationships can be linked to the representations of psychological instability, within the narrative.

4.4 Shared Themes Across the Series

- **Emotional Suppression:** Men are discouraged by social standards and conventions from showing vulnerability, which leads to internal conflicts and external aggressiveness. Violence, whether emotional or psychological (for example, the characters Barney and Ted from *HIMYM*) or physical (for example, the serial murderer from *The Alienist* and character Joe from *You*), frequently manifests as a misguided way to cope with the feelings of inadequacy, rejection, or fear.
- **Trauma and Mental Health:** Destructive behaviours are often brought on by unresolved trauma, highlighting the significance of mental health care. Characters like Barney (*HIMYM*), the serial murderer (*The Alienist*), and Joe (*You*), show how early experiences greatly influence adult actions and promote violent and impulsive behaviour.
- **Cultural Norms and Masculinity:** The series challenge patriarchal cultural notions of masculinity that perpetuate violence and suffering by emphasizing power over affection. Through their domination, characters like Barney and Joe represent toxic masculinity, whereas the character John Moore serve as healthy example of masculine conduct.

4.5 Cultural Impact and Media Narratives

Each of these media tales emphasizes how male conduct is influenced by cultural expectations, whether they are connected to trauma, masculinity, or romantic success. *How I Met Your Mother* criticizes the social forces around emotional neglect and toxic masculinity,

whereas *The Alienist* examines how untreated trauma may result in violence. The romanticization of compulsive love is explored in *You*, which also critiques how cultural narratives influence and even justify risky conduct. These series challenge the narratives that support harmful patterns in real life and offer an insightful commentary on the relationship between violence, societal expectations, and mental health.

4.6 Narrative Framing, Genre and Audience Positioning

The narrative and aesthetic frames of each series influence how audiences interpret male trauma and aggression. *HIMYM* downplays emotional repression by using sitcom sarcasm and comedy, portraying it as charming or humorous. *The Alienist*, contextualizes male dysfunction within historical and scientific discourse, employing the aesthetics of the crime genre to justify violence as a necessary part of development. *You*, on the other hand, uses first-person narration and thriller realism to get the audience into protagonist's head and foster empathy for his violent and possessive inclinations. These genre-based framing methods influence audience position and moral perception, exposing how masculinity is challenged and normalized in recognizable media forms (Hall, 1997; Butler, 1990; Mittell, 2015). The interplay of representation (Hall, 1997), performativity (Butler, 1990), and narrative form (Mittell, 2015) highlights the importance of production environment and audience engagement in creating meaning in media tales.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

5.1 Promoting Mental Health Literacy

In order to break patterns of violence, men's mental health and emotional intelligence must be promoted. Men who receive thorough mental health education can understand and control their emotions better, leading to healthier and happier lifestyle choices. The media plays a crucial part in achieving this objective by promoting good masculinity models that prioritize empathy, emotional transparency and non-violence.

5.2 Interventions for Trauma

The core reasons of violent inclinations must be tackled by incorporating trauma-informed treatment into mental health services. The chance that people may acquire negative behavioural patterns in the future can be considerably decreased by early therapies that target childhood trauma. Emotional resilience and better coping strategies are guaranteed when unprocessed trauma is addressed with counselling, therapy and medical care.

5.3 Cultural Shifts

In order to reduce violence, it is important to change how the society views masculinity. This entails defying expectations and questioning social standards which attribute masculinity to control, dominate, and emotional repression. Men's expressive emotions, empathy, and vulnerability are encouraged since they improve interpersonal connections and promote a mutually respectful and understanding society.

5.4 Media Responsibility

Media producers bear a heavy burden of debunking gender stereotypes and offering complex representations of masculinity. The media has the power to shape cultural attributes and support a larger social movement for gender equality and mental health awareness by distorting and breaking harmful myths and negative stereotypes, and advancing varied and healthy depictions of male identity.

6. CONCLUSION

This study critically analyzes the complex interrelationships between violence, cultural expectations, and male mental health as depicted in *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist* and *You*. The study emphasizes that male aggression is a learnt and acquired behaviour that is influenced by societal norms, emotional suppression, and unresolved psychological challenges and emotional issues rather than being a natural feature through the application of Social Learning Theory, Gender Role Theory, and Attachment Theory.

One theme that runs through all of the examined series is how cultural ideas of masculinity prevent men from expressing their emotions, which leads to internal conflicts that show out as aggressiveness and violence. *How I Met Your Mother* sheds focus on the subtle but widespread ways that broken relationships are caused by emotional neglect and cultural expectations of masculinity. Ted Mosby, for example, exhibits exaggerated idealism and insecurity that reveal a deeper emotional emptiness shaped by social dynamics and societal pressure. In the same way, Barney Stinson uses his exaggerated hyper-masculinity as a coping method for his unresolved childhood traumas and feelings of inferiority. These characters, which prioritize emotional distance and power above vulnerability, transparency and connection, serve to be the prime examples of how societal norms perpetuate negative marital dynamics.

The historical and psychological aspects of trauma, particularly in relation to war and societal expectations, become the main emphasis of *The Alienist*. The desire and the need to fit into rigidly masculine stereotypes and

consequences arising from previous violence are issues that the male characters struggle with. Psychological instability and trauma may result in damaging and affecting one's actions and behaviour, as seen by Dr. Kreizler's complicated inner difficulties and John Moore's internal battle between personal morality and societal standards. This series emphasizes the cyclical nature of violence and the long-term effects of societal repression, as men frequently imitate the aggressive habits that have been engrained in them by historical and cultural factors.

On the other side, *You* provide a terrifying examination of how unresolved psychological and emotional instability may turn hostile. Joe Goldberg acts in this way because of an incomplete and incorrect understanding of relationships and love, which is further exacerbated by childhood trauma and dominant societal ideas. His negative actions, destructive behaviour and compulsive habits highlight the perils of unfulfilled psychological demands and emotional repression. The show offers a critique of societal myths that legitimate dominance and possessiveness as manifestations of masculinity by exploring Joe's mind.

The study concludes and highlights the importance and the need for social and cultural change. To address the underlying causes of violence, destructive standards that associate masculinity with control, domination, and emotional repression must be eliminated. Men's emotional transparency and vulnerability are not just a personal change, but also a social change that promotes better communities and relationships. This is the point at which media and education play a crucial role. By encouraging emotional literacy and presenting varied, positive representations of masculinity in the media, we can change societal perceptions and minimize the stigma associated with masculine emotional expression.

This study illustrates how media portrayals and cultural standards teach and reinforce violent and aggressive behaviours through the prism of Social Learning Theory. Furthermore, Gender Role Theory shows how inflexible societal norms around masculinity promote emotional suppression and harm interpersonal relationships. Finally, the relevance of early emotional experiences in forming adult behaviour is emphasized by Attachment Theory, which also emphasizes the necessity of early therapies to address psychological issues.

In conclusion, a diversified strategy is needed to reduce violence and achieve gender equality. Society may break violent patterns by treating mental health issues, fostering emotional intelligence, and changing cultural narratives about masculinity. These initiatives are crucial for promoting empathy, diversity, and more positive interpersonal relationships. In the end, changing

the definition of masculinity and emphasizing emotional health are the very essential first steps in creating a society that is more just and caring.

Based on these findings, the study suggests concrete methods for promoting better depictions of masculinity and violence in media. Integrating media literacy programs into schools and institutions could help young people understand how television normalizes the portrayal of aggression and emotional repression. Writers and producers could benefit from working collaboratively with mental health specialists and gender academics to create storylines that convey vulnerability without mocking or hypermasculine backlash. To responsibly contextualize psychological issues, streaming services may incorporate content cautions and reflective conversation guides. Finally, adding emotional literacy modules to the present media education programs may promote empathy-based participation, while assisting audiences in identifying, challenging and questioning the normalized violence. Together, these interventions turn criticism into constructive cultural practice.

6.1 Limitations of the Study

Despite certain limitations, this study offers a thorough examination of how male perpetrated violence is portrayed in media. Initially, the selection of *How I Met Your Mother*, *The Alienist*, and *You* focuses on Western culture, which could not accurately reflect culturally or globally varied conceptions of violence and masculinity. Secondly, the character-based approach excludes the production environment, audience reaction, and institutional beliefs that underlie these programs in favour of emphasizing narrative interpretation. While this study focuses on textual and thematic analysis, it does not go into detail on the formal cinematic elements, such as cinematography, audio, editing or the reception context that influences audience interpretation. Future study could combine these dimensions to create a more complete picture of how media form and audience placement reinforce or oppose masculinity and violence depictions. Since this is a qualitative research based on theoretical frameworks and conceptual structures, the interpretations are necessarily subjective and can change based on the viewers or readers.

The fact that there is no discussion on how violence functions across a wider gender range, including queer or non-binary identities, and that the focus is mostly on cisgender male characters is another drawback. Moreover, the study does not go into detail about how the intersections of race, class, and sexuality influence masculine representation. These dimensions have significant effects on how power, vulnerability, and violence are represented and received in media narratives

(Crenshaw, 1991). For example, *How I Met Your Mother* and *You* present middle-class white masculinity as the cultural norm, whereas *The Alienist* depicts late nineteenth-century class hierarchy and racial tensions in New York. Future research could explore how non-Western media or queer masculinities address emotional suppression and violence differently within their sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, the analysis's relevance to behavioural investigations in the real world is limited since it does not experimentally quantify the influence of media on audience opinions. The study does not make a direct causal link between media exposure and violent behaviour; instead, it interprets how television narratives symbolically construct and normalize ideas of masculinity and aggression. And also, rather than using psychological and clinical research, the study primarily handles trauma and mental health as narrative elements. These restrictions point out the necessity of a more comprehensive, multidisciplinary framework in order to expand on the conclusions and findings made here.

6.2 Recommendations

Future studies should examine media narratives from other cultural and geographical origins, particularly from non-Western contexts, in order to expand on the findings of this study and offer a more comparative view of violence and masculinity. Studies on audience reception, conducted through surveys, interviews or focus groups, can provide factual information on how viewers absorb, understand or reject these depictions. Furthermore, future studies should use an intersectional perspective to look at how masculinity shapes violent behaviours and emotional suppression in relation to race, class, sexual orientation and disability. It might enhance the gendered understanding of violence to include depictions of female and non-binary offenders. Using mixed-method approaches, researchers may also combine quantitative data, such as frequency counts of violent actions or psychiatric symptoms or behavioural disorders in media text, with qualitative content analysis.

The last way to connect narrative theory with practical effects is through long-term research examining the behavioural and psychological effects of such media on audiences, particularly younger viewers. These suggestions will support the development of an interdisciplinary, more complex conversation around violence, media and gender.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) did not employ any of the Generative AI and/or AI-Assisted technologies for Language refinement, drafting background section and did not perform any Task of the technology.

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Television Series

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