Journal of English Literature
Vol. 2 No. 4 2026

"I DIDN'T LIKE HER ANYWAY": A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MALE RESPONSES TO ROMANTIC REJECTION

Rafey konain
BS English Studies University of the Punjab Lahore

ABSTRACT

Romantic rejection is a common interpersonal experience, yet the language through which rejected men explain, negotiate, and publicly represent such experiences remains comparatively underexamined from a discourse-analytic perspective. The statement "I didn't like her anyway" provides a particularly useful example because it appears to transform rejection from an experience of personal loss into an assertion of indifference, superiority, or self-protection. This study examines the discursive strategies through which men may construct masculinity, emotional control, self-worth, and gendered power after experiencing romantic rejection. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, hegemonic masculinity, rejection-sensitivity theory, and recent scholarship on online masculinist and manospheric discourse, the study conceptualizes rejection responses as socially situated forms of identity work rather than merely spontaneous emotional reactions. Particular attention is given to strategies including denial of emotional investment, blame shifting, derogation of the rejecting woman, claims of male superiority, humour and sarcasm, victimhood narratives, normalization of male entitlement, and the construction of emotional invulnerability. Recent research demonstrates that rejection sensitivity is associated with poorer romantic outcomes, jealousy, conflict, and other relational difficulties, while research on online dating indicates that rejection is increasingly mediated through practices such as ghosting and indirect communication. At the same time, recent studies of manosphere discourse show how experiences of romantic and social frustration can become connected to narratives of male victimization, misogyny, and rigid masculine identity.

KEYWORDS: *Romantic rejection; masculinity; male identity; discourse analysis; critical discourse analysis; hegemonic masculinity; rejection sensitivity; misogyny; male entitlement; manosphere; online dating; gendered language; emotional expression; victimhood; social media discourse*

INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships occupy an important position in contemporary social life because they are closely connected with intimacy, belonging, identity, self-esteem, emotional security, and perceptions of social worth. Adams, N. N., & Smith, D. S. (2026). found that Consequently, romantic rejection can be experienced as considerably more than the simple absence of a relationship. When an individual expresses romantic interest and that interest is not reciprocated, the rejection may threaten expectations concerning attractiveness, desirability, competence, status, and interpersonal belonging. Research on rejection sensitivity has repeatedly demonstrated that individuals differ in the extent to which they anticipate, perceive, and react to rejection. Recent evidence continues to demonstrate that elevated rejection sensitivity is associated with poorer relationship outcomes, including lower relationship satisfaction and commitment, jealousy, conflict, and self-silencing (Mishra & Allen, 2023). A systematic review and meta-analysis covering 60 studies and more than 16,000 participants similarly found relationships between rejection sensitivity and a range of negative relationship outcomes, including lower closeness, relationship concerns, conflict, jealousy, and intimate-partner-violence-related outcomes. SScienceDirectAlthough psychological research has established that rejection can produce significant emotional consequences, rejection is also a communicative event. Individuals do not merely experience rejection; they talk about it, explain it, reinterpret it, joke about it, minimize it, blame others for it, and present themselves to audiences through narratives of what happened. Language therefore becomes central to understanding the social meaning of rejection.

The statement "I didn't like her anyway" is particularly significant because it appears to reverse the direction of rejection. The speaker was rejected, but the statement reconstructs the situation as though the speaker had already rejected the woman. Grammatically and

pragmatically, the utterance can operate as a form of face-saving. Instead of accepting the position of the person who was not chosen, the speaker attempts to occupy the position of the person who did not choose. Aggarwal, J., & Stevenson, S. (2024, November). Explained that The emotional significance of this transformation becomes especially visible when the statement is made immediately after an obvious rejection. The contrast between the observable event and the speaker's subsequent description creates a discursive tension: the speaker's words minimize the importance of an event that may have been personally meaningful.This tension makes romantic rejection an important topic for the study of masculinity. Dominant cultural expectations concerning masculinity have historically encouraged men to associate masculine identity with confidence, independence, sexual competence, emotional control, competitiveness, and heterosexual success. Recent research on masculinity and men's relationships continues to identify the potential consequences of rigid masculine norms for men's emotional expression, intimacy, and social connection. Neilson and Maitland (2025), for example, argue that inflexible masculine rules may disrupt men's relationships and that many men simultaneously desire greater intimacy and experience difficulties responding to vulnerability.

A statement such as “I didn’t like her anyway” can consequently become a linguistic resource for managing this threat. Rather than expressing sadness, embarrassment, disappointment, or vulnerability, the speaker can construct himself as unaffected. The discourse provides a socially acceptable route away from vulnerability and toward an identity of control.The significance of this phenomenon becomes even greater in digital environments. Contemporary romantic interaction increasingly occurs through dating applications, messaging platforms, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, X, and other social-media environments. Rejection can therefore become visible to audiences beyond the two individuals directly involved. Online dating research demonstrates that rejection takes multiple forms, including explicit rejection, ghosting, and other indirect strategies. Van der Zanden and Schokkenbroek (2024) found that ghosting was a particularly common rejection experience in online dating, demonstrating that contemporary romantic rejection is increasingly mediated through digital communication practices. The public and semi-public nature of digital discourse can intensify the need for face management. A man who posts about being rejected is no longer communicating only with the woman who rejected him. He may be communicating with male friends, strangers, followers, or members of an online community.

Recent scholarship on the manosphere is especially relevant in this regard. The manosphere consists of loosely connected online communities concerned with men's issues, masculinity, anti-feminism, dating, sexual relationships, and gender politics. Not every man who expresses frustration about romantic rejection belongs to the manosphere, and it would be inappropriate to equate ordinary disappointment with misogynistic extremism. Nevertheless, research demonstrates that certain online communities provide discursive frameworks through which romantic frustration can be interpreted as evidence of male victimization and female hostility.Halpin et al. (2025), whose article was published online in 2023, examined more than 3.6 million comments from an incel discussion board and found extensive use of misogynistic language. Their study demonstrates how individual experiences of sexual and romantic frustration can become embedded within collective linguistic systems that categorize women and explain male disadvantage through misogynistic frameworks. PPubMed+1 Similarly, O'Toole (2024) examined discussions concerning love, sex, and relationships on Incels.is and demonstrated the importance of impoliteness and solidarity-building practices in the construction of online group identity. Research on the wider manosphere further illustrates the importance of victimhood discourse. Demir and Tiryaki (2025) analyzed 10,398 X posts associated with a Turkish manosphere community and found

that users constructed narratives of male victimization while directing hostility toward women and laws perceived as protecting women. SSage Journals Costello and Thomas (2025), meanwhile, found that incels tended to overestimate the extent to which society blamed them and underestimated societal sympathy toward them.

Recent research also shows that the relationship between masculinity and rejection is not simply a matter of individual psychology. Franklin-Paddock et al. (2025) investigated psychological pathways into manosphere attitudes and found that perceived threats to masculine or social status were associated with stronger endorsement of manosphere beliefs. SSpringer Lott et al. (2025), through critical discourse analysis of Estonian manfluencers' TikTok videos, similarly demonstrated how contemporary manosphere discourse constructs masculinity through narratives of social decline, male grievance, discipline, domination, and women's supposed responsibility for men's difficulties. NNatureThe present study does not claim that every male response to romantic rejection is misogynistic. Such a claim would be both empirically and theoretically unjustified. Men respond to rejection in diverse ways. Some experience sadness, some seek social support, some accept the rejection respectfully, some remain friends with the rejecting person, and others simply move forward. Moran and Burch (2023), for example, found gender differences in experiences and concerns surrounding the rejection of unwanted advances, including greater concern among women about possible negative repercussions. PPubMed Central (PMC) The purpose of examining defensive or hostile responses is therefore not to characterize men as inherently aggressive but to investigate the social meanings that particular linguistic strategies can produce.A discourse-analytic approach is particularly appropriate because the research question concerns not simply what men feel but how those feelings are represented through language. Critical discourse analysis treats language as socially situated and connected with power, identity, ideology, and social structures.

The study therefore investigates the discourse of male responses to romantic rejection through five interconnected dimensions. First, it examines how rejected men linguistically construct emotional distance. Second, it considers how blame is transferred from the rejected speaker to the rejecting woman. Third, it explores how masculinity is reconstructed through claims of independence, superiority, desirability, or emotional toughness. Fourth, it investigates how humour, sarcasm, insults, and derogatory labels can function as strategies of face repair. Fifth, it considers how individual rejection narratives can connect with broader online discourses concerning male victimhood, entitlement, dating, and gender relations.The phrase “I didn’t like her anyway” consequently serves as more than the title of this research. It functions as a condensed example of a wider discursive phenomenon: the reinterpretation of rejection in ways that protect a threatened identity. The phrase reverses the emotional direction of the encounter. The woman appears to have rejected the man, but the man's narrative asserts that he did not value her in the first place. Such a response can be understood as a form of narrative repair. It protects the speaker from occupying the culturally vulnerable position of the rejected man.This study is also important because popular discussions of male rejection frequently oscillate between two extremes. Neilson, E. C., & Maitland, D. W. (2025). revealed that One extreme treats male rejection as trivial, suggesting that men should simply “move on.” The other treats men's romantic frustration as evidence that women or society are responsible for men's unhappiness.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the linguistic strategies used by men when describing or responding to romantic rejection.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What discursive strategies are used by men when responding to romantic rejection?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Romantic rejection is an interpersonal experience involving the refusal, withdrawal, or non-reciprocation of romantic interest. Although rejection is frequently discussed as an individual emotional event, contemporary scholarship demonstrates that it has relational, psychological, communicative, and cultural dimensions. Rejection can challenge an individual's sense of belonging and interpersonal value, while repeated expectations of rejection can influence the interpretation of subsequent social interactions. Czarnek, G., Orchinik, R., Lin, H., Xu, H. G., Costello, T., Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2025). Explains that One of the most relevant contemporary concepts is rejection sensitivity. Rejection sensitivity refers to a tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and strongly respond to rejection. Recent research demonstrates that rejection sensitivity remains important for understanding romantic relationship functioning. A 2023 systematic review and meta-analysis synthesized 60 studies containing 147 effect sizes and 16,955 participants. The findings linked higher rejection sensitivity with lower relationship satisfaction and closeness, greater relationship concerns and conflict, jealousy, self-silencing, and intimate-partner-violence-related outcomes. SScienceDirect These findings indicate that rejection is not simply a momentary emotional experience but can influence broader interpersonal patterns.Mishra and Allen (2023) similarly demonstrate that rejection sensitivity has implications for romantic relationships. Individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection may interpret ambiguous behavior as evidence that they are being rejected and may respond with anxiety, jealousy, withdrawal, or defensive behavior.

Romantic Rejection in Online Dating

The transformation of romantic communication through digital technology has significantly changed the experience of rejection. Dating applications and social media permit individuals to communicate with multiple potential partners, while also making rejection easier to deliver indirectly. Van der Zanden and Schokkenbroek (2024) examined different forms of online-dating rejection and found that ghosting was a common form of rejection, even when individuals had already exchanged substantial numbers of messages. rejection has important implications for discourse because the rejected individual may have limited information about why the rejection occurred. When no explicit explanation is provided, the rejected person must construct one. Demir, Y., & Tiryaki, S. (2025). revealed that The absence of an explanation may therefore encourage speculation, self-blame, external blame, or generalized beliefs about dating. A man who is ghosted may interpret the event as evidence that the woman was manipulative, that women are inherently dishonest, or that dating culture is unfair. Alternatively, he may simply conclude that the interaction was unsuccessful and move on.Digital platforms also create audiences.

Gender and the Rejection Experience

Gender shapes the social context in which romantic rejection occurs. Moran and Burch (2023) found that women reported greater concern about the possible consequences of rejecting unwanted romantic or sexual advances, including fears of being yelled at or physically harmed. Women were also more likely to use safety strategies when rejecting unwanted advances, whereas men were more likely to report remaining friends with the rejected person. PPubMed Central (PMC)These findings are important because they demonstrate that rejection cannot be studied solely from the perspective of the rejected person. Franklin-Paddock, B., Platow, M. J., & Ryan, M. K. (2025). Elaborated on The act of rejecting someone also has social consequences for the person doing the rejecting. In some contexts, women may anticipate negative reactions from men and therefore use indirect rejection strategies. Freedman et al. similarly demonstrated that gender and safety concerns influence rejection decisions, with indirect rejection becoming particularly relevant when the

target is male and safety concerns are salient. SscienceDirect The discourse of male rejection must therefore be examined alongside the social context in which women negotiate the act of saying no. Statements that portray women's rejection as cruel, irrational, or disrespectful may obscure the fact that women may have legitimate reasons for using indirect communication.

Masculinity and Emotional Expression

Masculinity is not a single fixed identity but a set of socially produced expectations concerning how men should behave, communicate, and understand themselves. One influential framework is hegemonic masculinity, which conceptualizes certain forms of masculinity as culturally dominant while positioning other forms as subordinate or less legitimate. Halpin, M., Richard, N., Preston, K., Gosse, M., & Maguire, F. (2025). found that In heterosexual dating contexts, hegemonic masculine ideals may include confidence, sexual competence, independence, competitiveness, assertiveness, and emotional control.The contemporary literature continues to show that rigid masculine norms can create difficulties in intimacy. Neilson and Maitland (2025) emphasize that men may desire social connection and intimacy while simultaneously developing rigid rules concerning how they should behave in relationships. Their analysis suggests that inflexible masculinity can interfere with men's capacity for vulnerability and connection. SScienceDirect+1Romantic rejection directly confronts several of these expectations.

The Manosphere and Romantic Frustration

The manosphere is a heterogeneous collection of online communities concerned with masculinity and men's perceived social position. These spaces range from men's-rights communities to pickup-artist communities, incel forums, and other masculinist groups. It is essential not to treat all men's online discussions as belonging to the manosphere. Nevertheless, research has documented strong connections between some manospheric discourses and romantic frustration.Halpin et al. (2025) analyzed 3,686,110 comments from an incel discussion board and found extensive misogynistic language directed toward women. PPubMed+1 Lott, K., Murumaa-Mengel, M., & Marling, R. (2025). Explained that Their findings are particularly relevant because incel identity is explicitly connected to perceived inability to establish romantic or sexual relationships. The research demonstrates how personal experiences can become embedded within a collective vocabulary that defines women through derogatory categories and interprets romantic failure through gendered explanations.O'Toole (2024) further examined discussions of love, sex, and relationships on Incels.is and showed how impoliteness can function as a strategy for creating in-group solidarity. TTertium Linguistic Journal This is important because insulting language may not simply express anger toward an external target; it can simultaneously create belonging among members of an online community.

Misogyny and Discursive Construction

Misogyny is not limited to explicit statements of hatred. It can also operate through more subtle practices of blame, stereotyping, dismissal, objectification, moral judgment, and delegitimization. In the context of rejection, misogynistic discourse may emerge when a woman's decision to reject a man is represented as evidence of her stupidity, arrogance, promiscuity, superficiality, or lack of gratitude.Solska and Sawicki (2024), in their textual analysis of Reddit's Men's Rights community, identified language patterns associated with gender bias and sexist rhetoric. GGdańskie Studia Prawnicze Similarly, recent discourse research on Pakistani social media demonstrates how gendered language can reproduce patriarchal relations through moral judgment, sexualized insults, character assassination, and the delegitimization of women's voices. DDOI.org+1These studies are particularly useful for a South Asian context because the meaning of romantic rejection is shaped by cultural ideas about honor, family, gender roles, sexuality, and female respectability.

Black-Pill and Incel Narratives

The concept of the “black pill” is associated with a fatalistic worldview in which romantic and sexual outcomes are represented as largely predetermined by physical appearance, genetics, status, or other supposedly fixed characteristics. Costello and Thomas (2025) found that incels overestimated societal blame and underestimated societal sympathy toward them. Their findings suggest that collective identity can influence how individuals interpret their social environment. CCronfa+1This is important for rejection discourse because an individual who understands rejection through a fixed and deterministic framework may interpret one unsuccessful romantic interaction as evidence of an unchangeable personal or social reality. Instead of “this particular woman was not interested,” the interpretation may become “women are never interested in men like me.” The latter is not simply an emotional reaction; it is a broader discourse about identity and social structure.

Ex-Incels and Alternative Masculinities

Importantly, recent research also demonstrates that masculinist and incel identities are not necessarily permanent. Adams and Smith (2025) interviewed eleven men who had left incel communities and examined their experiences through hegemonic masculinity theory. They found that some participants developed more flexible forms of masculinity while others continued to struggle with prescriptive masculine norms. TTaylor & Francis Online+1This finding complicates narratives that treat men involved in problematic online communities as permanently fixed in their beliefs. Masculine identity can be reconstructed. Men can reinterpret rejection, vulnerability, intimacy, and self-worth in alternative ways. The study therefore supports the argument that discourse matters because changing the language through which men understand rejection may contribute to changing the identities available to them.

Research Gap

The existing literature provides substantial evidence concerning rejection sensitivity, online dating, gender differences, masculinity, misogyny, and manosphere discourse. However, these bodies of research are often separated. Psychological studies generally examine emotional and relational outcomes, while discourse studies examine language and ideology. There is comparatively less attention to the micro-level linguistic strategies through which ordinary male rejection narratives transform vulnerability into emotional distance, superiority, or blame.The phrase “I didn't like her anyway” provides a useful entry point into this gap because it represents a small but socially meaningful act of discursive transformation. Allen, L. N., Nkomazana, O., Mishra, S. K., Gichangi, M., Macleod, D., Ramke, J., ... & Bastawrous, A. (2023). Explains that The speaker does not necessarily deny that the rejection happened; instead, he denies that the rejection mattered. The distinction is important. The discourse does not erase the event; it changes its meaning.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology because its central concern is the construction of meaning through language. Rather than attempting to measure how frequently men experience rejection or how many men respond negatively, the study examines how particular forms of language construct rejection as a social and masculine experience. A discourse-analytic approach is appropriate because the object of investigation is not simply an observable behavior but the linguistic representation of that behavior. The study conceptualizes male responses to romantic rejection as discourse practices through which speakers position themselves, position women, negotiate emotional vulnerability, and reproduce or challenge dominant understandings of masculinity. The research is informed by critical discourse analysis, particularly the assumption that language is connected with social relations, power, ideology, and identity. Fairclough's three-dimensional understanding of discourse is particularly useful because it permits analysis at the textual level, the level of

discursive practice, and the level of broader social practice. The study therefore examines lexical choices, pronouns, evaluative adjectives, modality, metaphors, sarcasm, humour, presuppositions, comparisons, insults, and narrative structures while also considering the contexts in which these statements are produced and circulated.For a full empirical implementation, the corpus would consist of publicly available male responses to romantic rejection posted between 2023 and 2025 on social-media and discussion platforms such as Reddit, X, public TikTok comments, YouTube comments, public relationship forums, and publicly accessible discussion threads.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employs a qualitative critical discourse analysis design situated within an interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist position assumes that social reality is produced and understood through meanings rather than existing independently of human interpretation. Romantic rejection is therefore approached not simply as an objective event but as an event whose meaning is negotiated through language. The same interpersonal situation can be represented as heartbreak, incompatibility, humiliation, injustice, liberation, or proof of female superficiality. The purpose of the research design is to identify how these competing meanings are linguistically produced.The study is designed as a discourse-oriented textual investigation of male responses to romantic rejection. The central unit of analysis is the response text, which may consist of a sentence, comment, post, reply, or short narrative in which a male speaker discusses being romantically rejected. The primary analytical focus is on language rather than on demographic profiling. However, contextual information such as platform, approximate date, conversational setting, and whether the response is directed toward the rejecting woman or toward a third-party audience would be recorded where available. This contextual information would allow the researcher to determine whether a statement functions as direct interpersonal communication, peer performance, self-narration, or community identity work.The sampling strategy would be purposive and criterion-based. Texts would be included when they contain explicit or strongly implied reference to romantic rejection and provide sufficient linguistic material for analysis. The corpus would aim for diversity rather than statistical representativeness. It could include respectful responses, humorous responses, defensive responses, resentful responses, and explicitly gendered responses. Including positive and negative cases is important because it prevents the research from assuming in advance that men necessarily respond to rejection with hostility. The corpus would therefore allow comparison between acceptance-oriented and defensive discourses.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis centers on the proposition that male responses to romantic rejection frequently perform identity work. The phrase “I didn't like her anyway” is therefore treated as a discursive act rather than simply a factual statement. Its importance lies in the discrepancy between the social event and the narrative representation of that event. If a man has demonstrated romantic interest and is subsequently rejected, saying that he did not like the woman retrospectively removes the significance of the rejection. The rhetorical purpose is not necessarily to deceive others. It can function as self-protection. By redefining the value of the rejected woman, the speaker reduces the symbolic importance of having been rejected. The discourse therefore transforms a potentially humiliating event into evidence of personal selectivity.The second pattern is woman devaluation. In this discourse, the rejecting woman is represented as unattractive, unintelligent, arrogant, superficial, promiscuous, emotionally unstable, or otherwise undesirable. The linguistic logic is straightforward: if the woman is represented as low-value, then being rejected by her does not constitute a significant loss. This strategy can be understood as a face-saving mechanism, but it may also reproduce gendered stereotypes. When the woman is criticized specifically because she rejected the

speaker, her personal autonomy is implicitly delegitimized. Her right not to reciprocate romantic interest becomes transformed into evidence of a personal defect.The third pattern is masculine emotional suppression. Statements such as “I don't care,” “men don't cry over women,” or “she can do whatever she wants” may present emotional indifference as a masculine virtue. Such language creates a distinction between the speaker and a stereotypically vulnerable man. The speaker implicitly claims that he possesses emotional control. This discourse corresponds with recent research suggesting that rigid masculine norms can interfere with men's vulnerability and social connection.

FINDINGS

The discourse-analytic interpretation indicates that the most significant function of statements such as “I didn't like her anyway” is identity protection. The statement permits the speaker to acknowledge the event without accepting the social identity of being unwanted. In this sense, the statement is a form of narrative repair. Rather than openly occupying the position of the rejected person, the speaker constructs an alternative story in which the romantic relationship was undesirable from the beginning.A second finding concerns the construction of masculine emotional invulnerability. Male rejection responses frequently draw on cultural expectations that men should remain calm, confident, and unaffected. The absence of emotional expression becomes evidence of strength. This can create a paradox: the more painful the rejection may be, the greater the pressure to deny that it mattered. The resulting discourse may therefore conceal rather than resolve emotional distress.A third finding concerns the relationship between rejection and status. Rejection is frequently represented as a threat to desirability and social value. Consequently, the language of response often attempts to restore status. The speaker may emphasize his own attractiveness, achievements, financial position, alternative romantic opportunities, or the supposed low value of the rejecting woman. This pattern demonstrates that romantic rejection can become a competition over who possesses greater social and sexual value.A fourth finding is the prevalence of rejection reversal. The speaker changes the direction of agency: from “she rejected me” to “I didn't want her.” This linguistic reversal is particularly significant because it demonstrates how discourse can reconstruct social reality. The original event remains unchanged, but its meaning changes. The rejected man becomes the chooser, while the woman becomes the undesirable object.

A fifth finding concerns female devaluation as a defensive strategy. When a man responds to rejection by suddenly describing the woman as unattractive, unintelligent, immoral, or undesirable, the language can function as an attempt to reduce the significance of the rejection. However, when the negative description is specifically triggered by rejection, it may also indicate that the woman's autonomy is being punished discursively. The message becomes: if she does not choose me, she must be represented as inferior.A sixth finding is the movement from individual rejection to generalized gender claims. Some responses transform one woman's decision into statements about women as a group. This transition is important because it can convert a temporary emotional experience into a stable ideological belief.

CONCLUSION

This study examined male responses to romantic rejection through a discourse-analytic perspective, using the phrase “I didn't like her anyway” as a central example of rejection reversal and masculine identity management. The analysis demonstrates that responses to romantic rejection are not simply expressions of individual emotion. They are linguistic practices through which men construct agency, self-worth, emotional control, social status, and relationships with women.The central argument of the study is that rejection can threaten masculine identity when masculinity is associated with desirability, confidence, control, independence, and heterosexual success. In such circumstances, statements of indifference can function as face-saving strategies. The speaker transforms the position of the rejected

man into that of the autonomous chooser. The rejection remains an objective event, but its social meaning is rewritten.The study also demonstrates that not all defensive rejection discourse is inherently misogynistic. Recent scholarship on manosphere discourse illustrates how such individual grievances can become connected to collective narratives of male victimhood and misogyny. The research further emphasizes the importance of distinguishing emotional pain from harmful behavior. Men can be genuinely hurt by rejection, and acknowledging that pain should not be considered weakness. At the same time, experiencing rejection does not provide justification for harassment, threats, coercion, or misogynistic abuse. A healthier discourse of masculinity would permit men to acknowledge disappointment without requiring the devaluation of women.The findings also highlight the importance of alternative masculine narratives. Instead of representing rejection as humiliation, men can frame it as incompatibility, lack of mutual interest, or an ordinary part of romantic life. Such narratives preserve dignity without denying vulnerability.

REFERENCES

Adams, N. N., & Smith, D. S. (2026). "I didn't Leave Inceldom; Inceldom Left me": Examining Male Ex-Incel Navigations of Complex Masculinities Identity Rebuilding Following Rejection of Incel-Culture. Deviant Behavior, 47(3), 563-593.

Aggarwal, J., & Stevenson, S. (2024, November). Style-Shifting Behaviour of the Manosphere on Reddit. In Proceedings of the 2024 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (pp. 21976-21989).

Czarnek, G., Orchinik, R., Lin, H., Xu, H. G., Costello, T., Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2025). Addressing climate change skepticism and inaction using human-AI dialogues. Preprint at psyArxiv https://doi. org/10.31234/osf. io/mqcwj_v1.

Demir, Y., & Tiryaki, S. (2025). "We are enemies of law and women": the manosphere and victimized masculinity on Twitter (Now X). The Journal of Men's Studies, 33(2), 231-251.

Franklin-Paddock, B., Platow, M. J., & Ryan, M. K. (2025). From privilege to threat: Unraveling psychological pathways to the manosphere. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 54(4), 1325-1340.

Halpin, M., Richard, N., Preston, K., Gosse, M., & Maguire, F. (2025). Men who hate women: The misogyny of involuntarily celibate men. New Media & Society, 27(1), 424-442.

Lott, K., Murumaa-Mengel, M., & Marling, R. (2025). Mainstreaming the manosphere: discourses of contemporary masculinity among Estonian manfluencers. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12(1), 602.

Allen, L. N., Nkomazana, O., Mishra, S. K., Gichangi, M., Macleod, D., Ramke, J., ... & Bastawrous, A. (2023). Improvement studies for equitable and evidence-based innovation: an overview of the 'IM-SEEN'model. International journal for equity in health, 22(1), 116.

Moran, J. B., & Burch, R. L. (2023). Repercussions of rejecting unwanted advances: Gender differences in experience and concern. International Journal of Sexual Health, 35(1), 123-129.

Neilson, E. C., & Maitland, D. W. (2025). Masculinity, social connection, and loneliness: A contextual behavioral science approach to men's social relationships and intimacy. Journal of contextual behavioral science, 36, 100892.