



### Understanding Pathways into the Manosphere: Boys' and Parents' Perspectives

A qualitative study exploring how boys and parents interpret and respond to the manosphere and everyday patriarchy



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**BIO:** researches how parents and boys make sense of, and respond to male-supremacist ideologies online.

#### RESEARCH SUMMARY

The manosphere has shifted from fringe forums to mainstream platforms. This study explores how parents and boys (12-17) perceive and respond to it. Its growing influence is linked to misogyny, harassment, and harm to women and girls, highlighting the need for strategies to counter its spread and impacts.

#### ONE KEY FINDING

**Boys and young men demonstrate strong awareness of digital literacy, having largely developed their critical digital skills independently. They tend to trust content creators who reference studies, or present themselves with authoritative titles that lend credibility, and use scientific terminology.**

**Manosphere actors build trust by distorting data and framing misleading claims as evidence-based. While extreme content is rejected, subtler forms focusing on self-improvement are often accepted. This reveals a paradox: digital literacy alone does not protect against strategically credible-looking mis/disinformation.**

#### WHY IT MATTERS

The manosphere spreads by aligning parts of male supremacist ideas with accepted norms, while rejecting overt extremes. This selective process normalizes harmful beliefs and stretches what is seen as acceptable, shaping attitudes, relationships, and everyday behavior.

#### KEY CONCLUSION

The manosphere's mainstreaming relies on subtle, credible messaging that aligns with existing norms, making harmful ideas harder to detect and resist. Addressing its impact requires more than digital literacy, focusing on context, culture, and critical awareness.

### Inside the Research

#### ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The study aimed to understand how the manosphere became mainstream, perceptions of it, and how parents and young men responded. Data from parents and boys aged 12-17 in Ireland were collected separately through interviews and focus groups.

#### STUDY AT A GLANCE

**country:** Republic of Ireland

**participants:** Parents (N=13), Young Men (N=40)

**age group/school level:** 12-17; 1st year-6th year

**method:** Interviews with parents, Focus groups with boys and young men

**focus:** Mainstreaming of the Manosphere, Awareness, Concerns, Strategies

#### FINDING 1

**Mothers carry more emotional labour at home and show greater patience and attunement toward sons and their exposure to harmful content.**

#### FINDING 2

**Boys feel they must be emotionally resilient and rational, reflecting both broader cultural patterns and manosphere influences.**

#### FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This study examines how parents and young men understand, negotiate and resist male supremacist ideology circulating through the manosphere. Including parents shows how online platform structures, cultural beliefs, and everyday practices work together to shape how these ideas are circulated and understood. It emphasizes the urgent need for developing critical digital literacy to enable boys to question and challenge such content and its sources.



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