



Photograph by Bob Price: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-walking-on-floor-764880/>

MALE ALIENATION AND REJECTION SYNDROME

Jerome Teelucksingh



ABSTRACT

One of the undiagnosed epidemics of our time is Male Alienation and Rejection Syndrome. Men and boys regularly experience this rejection and alienation as a result of societal pressures, stereotypes and failed relationships. Additionally, in the aftermath of divorces or separations, the loss of children in custody battles contributes to the alienation and rejection of men that exacerbates mental health issues.

Keywords: alienation, emotions, hurt, male, pandemic, rejection



Few persons would disagree that an increasing number of males feel marginalized and sidelined in society. They have been experiencing hurt and helplessness due to rejection and alienation. Male Alienation and Rejection Syndrome (MARS) is prevalent, and many of us often fail to see the devastating effects. Boys and men have often displayed the symptoms of this syndrome. These symptoms include depression, suicidal thoughts /attempts, addictions, anxiety, mood swings, low self-esteem and difficulty forming healthy relationships. Additionally, the rejection from girlfriends, wives, children, neighbours, family members and colleagues at work have contributed to the frustration experienced by many men.

Authors of books such as *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* and *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* illustrate societal pressures and repercussions on white masculinity in the USA (Savran, Robinson). However, the changes are not restricted to white masculinity or the USA, it is a reality for global masculinities.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and in the post-epidemic era, many men were psychologically and emotionally scarred. Some were infected and feared for their lives; others lost relatives and friends. Working and studying at home, amidst the pandemic, had its benefits, but it also resulted in less of human interaction. Additionally, men who became unemployed experienced emotional distress. The alternative lifestyle dubbed by some as the *new normal* and the scenario of being quarantined created alienation among men.

Unfortunately, there is an absence of yearly statistics reflecting the numbers of mental health problems facing men. And, the greater tragedy is that there are few non-governmental organizations or government agencies that provide support for the alienated man who endures hateful allegations and criticism. Therapists also need to be more familiar with subtle signs that boys and men are experiencing a decline in mental health. There is still the prevailing, outdated perception that men are privileged. Herb Goldberg in *The Hazards of being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege* deals with men who are victims of patriarchy and hurt themselves when they use self-control to restrict emotions (Goldberg).

Many times in the court of public opinion, we have wrongly judged men as the reason for a breakdown in a relationship or marriage. The reality is that often the woman is guilty of provoking the man. Coping mechanisms or strategies can be offered to help men navigate the emotional turmoil they might be experiencing. Men in these situations need to undergo counselling by a religious leader or psychologist or therapist. These men should be guided or socialized to channel these negative emotions. Failure to do so could result in mental health issues. Unfortunately, some husbands and fathers who experience MARS cannot afford the specialized services of medical health professionals. The majority of these men rely on emotional support from a network of sympathetic family, friends and co-workers.

Warren Farrell in *The Liberated Man* identified men who are “emotionally constipated” and “emotionally incompetent” (Farrell, 71). It seems obvious that a boy or male teenager who is mocked or ridiculed by friends and relatives, for expressing his emotions would later find it more difficult to have any emotional display as a man. It is also a tragedy that whenever a man expresses anger or hurt, his emotions are often identified as *toxic masculinity*. However, the display of emotions is healthy and must be released or it will affect his emotional and psychological mindset.

The Men’s Bureau of Trinidad and Tobago coupled with centres, supported by the government, all focus on helping men. These safe spaces are easily accessible throughout the



country for men to seek treatment. However, men are either unaware of these places, or some men believe they can handle their problems. Unfortunately, in the rest of Caribbean, a common coping mechanism involves going to the rumshop or bar and this only worsens the scenario. There are other negative coping strategies by men across the world, and unfortunately these coping mechanisms include addictions, self-harming behaviours (as suicides) and depression. These contribute to a shortened life span of both boys and men. Other positive coping strategies include joining a men's support groups or seeking professional help from psychologists, psychiatrists and/or counsellors.

There are particular societal or cultural expectations that often exacerbate men's struggles during relationship breakdowns. Indeed, societal or cultural expectations expect the man to be resilient and strong. It is often difficult to repair a relationship in a therapeutic setting because often the men complain of not having time or interest to attend sessions. There are warning signs or red flags that therapists should specifically look out for when working with men experiencing high levels of distress after a relationship breakdown. These red flags include one or more of the following- withdrawal from friends, risky behaviour, change in eating and sleep patterns, feeling powerless and worthless, negative attitudes and being disconnected with society. There is no textbook solution or ideal formula to help men. Unfortunately, the therapy available is often general and not specifically designed for men of different backgrounds experiencing varying levels of alienation and rejection.

Parental alienation affects boys whose parents are separated or divorced. Men undergoing divorces and the resulting separation from a child or children have experienced MARS. A few mental health professionals believe that parental alienation is not a diagnosable syndrome whilst others do not understand its seriousness. These mental health professionals would use the term when dealing with their patients who have undergone separation or divorces. There is need for a team of psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors to provide advice and counselling to the alienators or programming parents whose campaign of denigration involves brainwashing or distorting the boys' perception of the alienated partners.

Many boys are innocent victims of the fallout of separations and divorces. The ensuing parental relationship distress affects the mental health of the estranged young male. These young minds are indoctrinated and programmed by the alienator to despise, mistrust and mistreat the alienated parent. Such boys experience intense levels of sadness, rejection and loneliness. The continuous usage of emotionally manipulative tactics makes it difficult to repair the damage inflicted on a young child or older children. One solution is that Caribbean governments could begin training social workers to unravel the feelings of hurt and pain experienced by these children.

Men who have endured divorces or separations have complained that the courts are biased in their judgments. These affected men reveal that they have unconditional love for their child or children and are willing to support their child or children financially; however, the result of the custody battle is predictable as the lawyers and judges give custody to the girlfriend or wife. The legal fraternity (lawyers and judges) need to be trained to understand that a divorce or separation does not mean that the female is automatically awarded custody of the child or children. Furthermore, the legal fraternity in these civil proceedings involving child custody litigation should be trained to identify psychological manipulation and undue influence of a child by an unscrupulous alienating parent. It is painfully obvious that for any country to be



progressive, it needs to move away from outdated thinking that the female is the only option to care for the child or children and the region also has to rewrite its outdated child custody laws.

The Caribbean and other countries urgently need a reunification program so the traumatized child can spend time with the alienated parent to repair the damaged relationship. Persons need to be aware that males who experience MARS can be saved and return to a normal life.

REFERENCES

Farrell, Warren (1974) *The Liberated Man: Beyond Masculinity- Freeing Men and Their Relationship with Women* New York: Random House.

Goldberg, Herb (1976) *The Hazards of being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege*. New York: Nash.

Robinson, Sally (2000). *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Savran, David (1998). *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

AUTHOR PROFILES



Jerome Teelucksingh is an activist from Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. He initiated the inaugural observances of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Men and Boys (31 January) and World Day of the Boy Child (16 May). He has published and spoken on masculinity, the men's movement and challenges facing boys.

Contact details: j_teelucksingh@yahoo.com



NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE.

THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENCE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com)