

Exploring the concept of “Toxic Masculinity” in Armenia from a historical perspective and
finding the roots of “evil” in today’s society

by

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1. Abstract

This capstone project is an in-depth analysis of the core concept of "toxic masculinity," and it explores the historical events that have affected Armenians to this day. The genocide, Turkish influence, Stalinism, Hardships during the 1990s, and Ongoing wars in Armenia all put Armenian society in a position to shield themselves and protect their families, and toxic masculinity is ingrained in today's society. The aftermath of the genocide gave Armenians a lot of issues, such as identity crisis, depression, and also generational trauma, and they became susceptible to obeying Stalinism and his proposed ideas of a "real man." Because of Stalin, women were put in the second plan and were referred to as "good mothers" or family caretakers." Their propaganda put pressure on women, and even though many were soldiers, their contributions were not acknowledged. Also, during the Soviet Union, people were prone to think that mental health disorders were a myth and that mental institutions were used as a workforce for people, not actual rehabs. Because of that ignorance, many men abused alcohol, which led to the harassment of women. Moreover, the 90s were also harsh for Armenians as wartime created food shortages and economic instability. Men were going to war, and women were taking the responsibilities of the household onto their shoulders. Nowadays, propaganda is done by television, the media, and politics. By analyzing the leaders of Armenia, there are evident polarities of masculinity. Television shows also praise toxic masculinity and create hatred towards femininity. "Toxic masculinity" was shaped by genocide, and the main contributors were the Turks. To this day, the propaganda of toxic masculinity is glorified in Armenia.

2. Introduction

In modern Armenian society, there are a lot of stigmas concerning male and female behaviors. Most of them nowadays come from social media and television news. However, the Armenian mentality always had roots that were connected to the concept of toxic masculinity. Armenians are one of the oldest nations and have been through many historical issues and traumas. Because of that, the Armenian narrative is very harsh. Not every nation went through a genocide, saw a mass killing, experienced sexual abuse, or was isolated from their families. The most similar historical background is that of Jewish people as they went through the Holocaust. They were also abused and separated, and their men were emasculated. Jewish people were not looked at as humans. They were looked at as societal “tumors” for the killers, and the atrocities were merely a nationalistic move for the Germans. This example shows that tragedies lived within communities create a strong traumatic experience, and these nations differ from other nations in terms of their strong will and historical background.

Diving deeper into the historical aspect of genocides, Armenians were separated from their intellectual leaders, and because most of them were arrested or killed, no one was there to lead Armenians. Even though men tried to save their families or have secret uprisings, there was no success. Humiliation, exhaustion, and torturing families were massive traumas for Armenian men and women. Women were silenced and had to cope with sexual abuse and trauma, and men had to battle torture, PTSD, and depression. All of that trauma is genetically ingrained in Armenian generations, and it even makes it hard for Armenians to trust their own communities. Vulnerable and weak, the Armenian people had to face the Soviet regime and work to the point that alcohol was the only way to cope with their own problems.

Armenians were part of the Soviet Union, and they were under the dictatorship of Soviet leaders, who pushed their agenda of the “ideal” man. But with this “ideal” society, in reality, there was a lot of tension. When men and women were overworked, men tried to cope with their problems by drinking massive amounts of alcohol, and in that way, they abused their bodies and also coped with their mental traumas.

Armenia and other countries that belonged to the Soviet Union were exposed to the core of toxic masculinity, and especially Armenians were easy targets because, after the genocide, they were vulnerable and easily controllable. It is important for Armenia to overcome vulnerability caused by genocide, remove the toxic traits of masculinity from the Soviet era, and finally establish healthy propaganda of masculinity to be able to survive in a harsh geopolitical location, neighboring enemies, and unstable political situations.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this study is two-fold. First, because this research focuses on the historical effect, there is no way to get primary data on the specific social and cultural experiences. While conducting a literature review, a gap was identified in the relationship between notions of masculinity and national trauma. A review of secondary archival sources is a well-established method for acquiring a theoretical framework and is particularly useful in historical analysis, subsequently aiding in a critical analysis. Thus, it was decided that an in-depth analysis of secondary data is most appropriate for inferring this relationship. Drawing from various sources makes an empirical and diverse analysis possible. This method also streamlines the process by circumventing the need for long-term data collection by immediately providing a longitudinal perspective.

Second, two interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. The interviewees are two history professors: Suren Manukyan and Tigran Matosyan. Dr. Manukyan specializes in Armenian genocide studies and 19th-20th century Armenian history. On the other hand, Dr. Matosyan's current interest lies in the social and cultural history of Armenia. Their combined expertise provides this paper with a deep insight into the intersection of “toxic masculinity” and the cultural and historical trauma of the Armenians. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 47 and 15 minutes, respectively. The type of interview was chosen because it offered great flexibility while giving it a chronological structure. The goal of these interviews was to deeply analyze Armenian history and get to the roots of the historical eras, which would ensure the understanding of the concept of “toxic masculinity,” specifically in Armenia. Having experts clarify and give deep knowledge about Armenian history gave this study more accuracy and

uniqueness. This ensured that in-depth answers could be gained, allowing the interviewees to provide any unexpected answers.

As previously mentioned, the interview progressed in chronological order. The first part focused on the Armenian Genocide: life before, during, and after, exploring both the Armenian and Turkish sides. It specifically focused on men's social position and the effect the perpetuation of the genocide had on them. Additionally, the comparison of the effects of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide as catalysts for identity crises was explored. The Holocaust was one of the biggest atrocities, and the Jewish nation being the one tortured is very similar to Armenians; both of these nations had issues with their identities. The next section focused on the effects the Soviet Union had on Armenian identity, with a special focus on Stalin's regime. Finally, the interview shifted its focus to investigate the aftermath of the Soviet Union's fall and subsequent identity struggles, PTSD, and governmental corruption, ending with the effects of social media and propaganda media. Also, the guest lecturer, Armen Gevorgyan, at the American University of Armenia, gave a one-hour lecture and is the descendant of Artashes Gevorgyan, who was the assassin of Jemal Pasha. As a person who had diplomatic and strictly professional connections with Turkey, he showed the atrocities that were committed by the Turks, and he also shared personal details from his grandfather and his family. This gave the study a closer look at genocide and more ideas about Turkish officials of that time who were brutally harassing women and killing men. Also, letters from missionaries will be analyzed as they played a crucial role in the lives of many Armenians and helped them to survive the crisis of genocide. This will give an understanding of how people psychologically survived genocide and put their faith in God.

The purpose of this analysis is to bring to point of how historical events such as genocide, Stalinistic oppressions, Armenia's hardships during the 90s, and today's propaganda affect the

“toxic masculinity” in today's Armenian society, because of being a fragile group, a lot of times Armenians were in Survival mode, and when they had a chance to reform their identity after the genocide, they were put into Stalinistic “ideals” which till this day are in people's mentality.

4. Findings, Historical background, and the concept of “toxic masculinity” in Armenia’s discourse

"Toxic masculinity" is a globalized concept that is perceived uniquely in different cultures. The five main distinctions are the regions in which people live. With this analysis, the differing cultures show the growth of the concept of “toxic masculinity” and how each nation behaved during hardships, and how they confronted the imbalances. For example, American masculinity has a historical background that contrasts with Asian masculinity. The main difference between them is the religious beliefs and morals that they live by. Americans were separated into two sides, "black" and "white," and they had to fight for racial equality. Even though there was a whole system of hierarchy where men were classified in America, the most significant factor was racism. Men were measured by potential salary, social class, and sexual orientation. Also, there were a lot of stereotypes spread in America that black men were violent and aggressive, and most of the heinous crimes were committed by them. In contrast to that, white men were privileged enough to be depicted as family-oriented, nationalistic heroes who had values and morals. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.43)

The Second World War and other wars also influenced American society's mindset. As most of the soldiers came back home and started to question their sexualities, and because there was societal pressure, most people faced the challenge of having "nuclear families." (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.43)

White men were privileged enough to experience the suburban lifestyle, and they started to adapt to it. However, the path of black Americans was not as easy. In comparison, Western American males were horribly abused and kept by European slave traders, and they were treated

awfully. They were on ships, in inhumane conditions, naked and chained like dogs. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.44)

Because of these hardships, 75 Africans committed suicide together, and the rest of the people were sold to plantation owners. This type of torture is equivalent to genocide, and they emasculated men and caused generational trauma by raping their families. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.45) This type of trauma has a blueprint for generations, and this is one of the reasons that Black Africans had to literally fight for equality and fight against racism to protect themselves from "white privileged males."

In contrast to African masculinity, Asian masculinity was influenced by many doctrines, and the most prominent one was Confucianism. The main ideology they followed was that the inner house responsibilities relied on women, and outside duties were men's responsibility, as they were considered warriors. Moreover, the pressure was put on women, as they were viewed merely as a reproductive system, only to bear children. If a woman were unable to have children, she was not considered a human. Furthermore, when Christianity was introduced to Asia after World War Two, there was a wave of homophobia as there were new ethical rules, and queer men started to hide. Fearing that masculine men would turn into feminine ones, society viewed it as something shameful. This is similar to Americans who experienced the same type of pressure after coming home from war. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.28-29)

4.1 Historical background on Turkey and the concept of “toxic masculinity” in Armenia’s discourse

Essential parts of the Muslim community are that there are two sides to it: radical Islamists and progressive Muslims who are prone to thinking more openly. The movement of the

“Arab Spring” shows that men especially wanted to communicate openly with women, and they protested against gender discrimination. The Arab Spring was a movement that symbolized the power of people and the progressive muslims' protest against gender inequality. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.18)

Another vital culture to observe was the Muslim community's masculinity in Turkey. Their mission was to shield their women, correct them when needed, and fight with their enemies. One of the glorified characters of masculinity in Turkey was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Because of his well-structured political moves and nationalistic agenda, he is considered the "idol" of masculinity. He was glorified by his country; however, he was one of the planners of the Armenian genocide, which caused a lot of harm to Armenian perceptions of masculinity. His persona is two-sided; on one side, he is a loved leader, on the other side, he is a monster with a hegemonic masculine mindset. (Rothfuß-Hanke,p.18)

Moreover, Turkey, being one of the Muslim countries and having praised masculine leaders, showed not only their good sides but also the atrocities that they committed against Armenians. Turkey used a tactic of humiliation and genocide, and never accepted their faults. The plan was simple: to abolish all Armenians, and the mastermind behind all of that was Talaat Pasha. The reason for this was that the Turkish Committee for Union and Progress, also known as Young Turks, had the support and trust of Armenians and other small communities, and they started to change the Ottoman constitution. Their hidden ideology was to reach “Pan-Turanism,” which consists of connecting Balkan countries and Turkey and Armenia geographically, where Armenia should have been erased. As it was a Christian country, and for the Turks, the Armenians were a threat. Before the deportation, Armenians were taxed for being Christian. They were not allowed to sell any goods to keep their families. After that type of repression, in

1909, there were massacres in Adana, and then in early 1915, deportations started. Young Turks had a strategy to weaken the Armenian society by first deporting the aristocrats of Armenia, and on April 24, 1915, all of the intelligentsia were deported or arrested. Then, the system targeted military-age males, and they were deported to the Syrian desert and separated from their children and women. (Derderian,2005,p.2)

Turks and also Nomadic communities raped and abused Armenian women and forcefully converted them to Islam; men, on the other hand, were exhausted and enslaved. Nomadic communities mainly consisted of Kurds and Yezidis at that time, and because of their lifestyle, they were called “Nomads.” They worked in deserts, and many tried to escape, even women, but the only escape was death. By sexually assaulting the women of leaders in Armenia, they weakened Armenian men and gained the upper hand during the uprisings. By using pressure and loved ones, they made Armenian men suffer and damaged their mental health. (Derderian,2005,p.2)

Mass killings and deportations had an influence on Armenian women and men. Women were mainly silenced and forced to change their religion, marry, and change their identity. On the other hand, Armenian men were in no position to help their families, and because they were physically tortured, most of them couldn't survive.

4.2 Armen Gevoryan’s interaction with Turks and his diplomatic approach to masculinity

A very close interaction with genocide was a lecture by the son of the assassin of Jemal Pasha. Jemal Pasha was assassinated by Artashes Gevorgyan near the building of the Secret Service in Turkey. As his son Armen Gevorgyan mentioned during the lecture, one of the people responsible for the logistics of deportations was Jemal Pasha, and he was brutal towards helpless

women and children. He ordered to get many children on a boat and drown them in front of their parents. He was not only toxic, he was filled with hatred towards Armenian people, and the plan to abolish and torture them was only making him more aggressive. On the other hand, Gevorgyan's family was educated, nationalistic, and well known for their generosity. All of their finances went to helping their fellow Armenians, and the head of the family, who was the big grandma, had a famous quote that our donations don't define us. She proudly states that she has sons, and she gives her sons to Armenia for its protection. This describes how strong-willed men and women in this family were. The most chilling story, told by Mr. Gevorgyan, was that during the genocide, Armenian women were barely alive with their kids and were being tormented and sexually assaulted. They requested a meeting with Jemal Pasha, and at first, he was arrogant and didn't give them any attention. After lots of requests, he approached them with his horse, didn't even bother to get off of it, and treated them as inhumane creatures. Women warned Jemal Pasha that their men would one day take vengeance on them, and the genocide should stop. However, Jemal laughed and rode off with his horse. Later, Artashes Gevorgyan and his friends from Intelligentsia formed a group to successfully assassinate the wrongdoer. Not only did Artashes proudly assassinate Jemal Pasha, but they had a brief dialogue where Jemal was reminded of the woman's request, and he understood that his time had come to pay. Here, Turkish masculinity portrays how weak men, under governmental oppression, were tortured, murdered, and even had fun assaulting innocent children and women. Additionally, Armenians were stoic enough to wait and take vengeance, and save and protect their families. Interestingly, Armen Gevorgyan, being a descendant of the assassin of Jemal Pasha, had a meeting with his descendant in Turkey and Armenia. The Turkish press conference journalists were expecting him to be insecure; however, he was confident in himself, stood tall, and answered all of the tricky questions given to him.

They talked for hours, and Jemal Pasha's descendant came to the conclusion that genocide was wrong, and he apologized for the past mistakes of his ancestors. Their interview got a lot of hatred from both the Armenian and Turkish public, and Mr. Gevorgyan also mentioned that the Turkish descendants came to Armenian school to apologize for their ancestors; however, Armenian teens didn't appreciate his gesture. That is the aftermath of genocide, and after many years, it becomes psychologically harder to accept it. Glorified Jemal Pasha, Kemal Atatürk, and many others have done atrocities and inhumane things towards Armenians, also projecting their hegemonic masculinities onto Armenian men in order to survive.

4.3 Dr. Manukyan's take on the Armenian household and masculinity

Before the genocidal time, both Western and Eastern Armenia lived in big families, where male rule was central. Obviously, female members of the family had their own rights and roles in the household. However, male domination was visible in Armenian society. At the same time, Dr. Manukyan emphasized that in comparison to Armenian and Turkish families or any other Muslim household, intersex relations were much more tolerated. For instance, the grandmother of the family ruled and organized all of the housework, and they were the "bosses" of maintaining the household clean, and everything had to be taken care of by them. Interestingly, Dr. Manukyan mentioned that the oldest women also disciplined the wives of their sons and grandchildren, and, inside the household, there was a total matriarchy. Moreover, she had the power to choose brides for their sons, who in return would come to the household as a "holy and virgin" bride who was not permitted to speak to the older men in the family. While Armenian women had some influences like this, Armenian peasant society was dominated by

men, and men made all the important decisions in the villages. Linguistically, Armenian words distinguish male and female lineage. For example, the male's side was called “ազգակունի”(Azgakan), which meant literally from the same kinship group; the female lineage is called “բարեկամ”(Barekam), which meant well-wisher of the family.

Dr. Matosyan described domestic order in a similar way. He stated that men were the breadwinners, and women mostly occupied domestic roles like raising children and doing laundry. This was a general pattern for household order.

5. Psychological trauma during genocide

The people who survived genocide carry a whole bag of trauma with them, and their genes are mutated by the trauma. As in the research of intergenerational trauma, the author states that (ITT) was found in the Jewish community after the Holocaust, and so were the Khmer Rouge regime survivors and Armenian genocide survivors. (Jong,2023,p.2)

The logic behind it is that trauma exposure not only affects the first generation but also a couple of generations after. For the first and second generations, there is a high risk of having PTSD. (Jong,2023,p.5)

Little research has been done for the third and fourth-wave generations because the main focus was on the first and second generations. However, second-generation people who experienced genocide are prone to having depression, nightmares, and anxiety. This is a mental battle, and it will also be passed on to future generations. (Jong,2023,p.13)

Having this type of traumatized nation leaves vulnerable men and women alone and makes them feel isolated from any kind of norm.

Moreover, transgenerational trauma is a type of trauma that survivors and their descendants go through, and it disrupts their spiritual, mental, physical, and social well-being. Transgenerational trauma is a severe parasite that, if it is not treated, will seriously affect communities and individuals. For example, diving deeper into the Holocaust and Jewish communities' traumatic condition, there is a higher rate of depression and anxiety because of constant immigration, and it is primarily evident in the second and third generations. For instance, a survivor of the Holocaust showed higher levels of stress and mental illnesses, and this was because their mothers were at a certain age of 18 or younger. Being able to survive such a

traumatic event is passing; it is also passing the PTSD to the next generations. (Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021, p.3)

For Armenians, to endure the mental pain of the genocide is harder as there hasn't been a reconciliation with the aggressors. If there were a historical moment where modern Turkey apologized for their actions and heinous crimes, the Armenian community's pain would have been much easier to process. However, Modern Turkey has a "Denialist" approach toward the Armenian genocide, and to this day, they try to continue what their ancestors couldn't finish. For example, Turks abolished over 2500 religious establishments, and with that, they also dishonored and vandalized Armenian historical sites. This type of approach brings out rage and frustration in Armenians, and this emotional state is similar to the experience of the loss of lives. (Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021, p.3)

It was also not easy for Armenians in Lebanon as they were trying to preserve their cultural customs; however, because of their location, they had to adapt to the specific customs and change their way of living. This created two polarizing opposites because some of the people found it comforting to be adaptable, and some of the people found themselves in an identity crisis. (Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021, p.3)

5.1 The interviews on the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide: a deeper dive

Dr. Matosyan mentioned in the interview that the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide are tragedies that have similarities and differences and that affect people's psychology. For instance, the intent of killing was racism in the Holocaust, and Armenians were viewed as a national threat. Also, both of the genocides were conducted during world wars, and this made progress much easier, and isolation from the world made the victims feel more helpless. Dr.

Manukyan, in his interview, added that Armenians had a huge amount of trauma. One of the most experienced traumas was fear of the unknown, and it was not healed and reflected starting from their ancestors. It became a generational trauma that is still carried on throughout generations. The third and fourth waves of the generation don't have strong reflective consequences, and there is an interesting shift in gender roles. After the genocide, Armenian society consisted mainly of women, the elderly, and children. A small percentage of men survived, and in this shift, it is evident that women had the mission to reconstruct society. When you have a society full of women with the primary goal of changing and building a new society, it changes gender-assigned roles. In the diaspora or in different kinds of Armenian communities, women were prone to getting higher professions and higher roles in society. They were seen as “ruling forces,” and they had dominant positions in professional fields. For example, in the education sphere, schools that had been opened in the diaspora were ruled by women. And even communal leadership was taken by women at that time. He also added that an identity crisis was common for genocide survivors, and it occurred not only in Armenians but also in Jews. After the Holocaust, there have been some developments, and many survivors of the Holocaust started to raise the question of justice. The Jewish community was religious, and they were collectively feeling pain and asking God why they, as a nation, had to go through this horrible type of atrocity. The main question was to the Mighty God, and Jewish people were traumatized to the extent that they didn't understand why God didn't protect them from all of the horrors. Dr. Manukyan also added that there are a lot of great debates in the Jewish community about trying to evaluate the events.

Furthermore, the Jewish community was split into two sides. The first group was Israeli Jews who struggled to get their freedom, and it was a victorious and glorious community that

fought against the Arabs to keep themselves alive. Arabs were bigger in numbers, and they were much bigger in terms of territories. However, when Israel won the wars, they had a feeling of pride in their community. It was widespread in Israel that when Holocaust survivors who came back from other countries were shamed and looked down upon. Because Israeli Jews had a strong sense of pride and nationalism, and they saw their community torn apart, there were a lot of questions that arose within the community. First is why their community couldn't resist and let others kill them without any hesitation. The question of 6 million Jews and their tragedy created a crisis amongst the community, an identity crisis because Israeli Jews couldn't understand that their people, who experienced genocide, should be accepted. Of course, later, they found a formula to present the Holocaust; however, in the first years, the only thing between the community was shame and confusion.

In the Armenian genocide, there were also similar deliberations and discussions. However, Armenians also faced the concept of “conspiracy of silence,” which was used for older generations as they refused to speak up about their traumas and past experiences. As the past generation had to deal with everyday work, they wanted to form new communities and reach for new lives. They wanted to start everything from scratch in different parts of the world, and that didn't leave room for rethinking past traumas. Another reason for being silent after the Armenian genocide was that they wanted to protect their children and future generations from the trauma of genocide. They didn't want to put the weight of being killed and the experience of the genocide onto the shoulders of future generations. That is the reason why the Armenian Genocide was talked about only in the late 1950s. In this period, survivors understood their mission was to pass down history and transfer that information to future generations.

In addition to Lebanon's community, American Armenians also dealt with problems such as survivor's guilt. The majority of American Armenians had ancestors who survived genocide. Because of that, they are more prone to being like a helpless community and are xenophobic and abused. Being collectively abused and traumatized has made Armenians feel vulnerable at any breaking point, no matter their location. For example, in 1988, in the Spitak region, there was a huge earthquake that destroyed a lot of lives. This event made most of the Armenians feel collective pain and go back to their worst tragedy, which is genocide. (Sarkissian & Sharkey,2021,p.5)

No matter where the person is, in the Armenian case, people felt pain, and their spirits were crushed, but at times of trouble, they united with unifying grief. Supplementing these interviews gives an understanding of the mental state of survivors and how their trauma was passed down to generations. The Armenian identity was erased, and people were vulnerable and traumatized as the family roles, gender roles, culture, and their heritage were taken away from them. Psychologically, this made Armenians a group of vulnerable people who were traumatized by Turkish atrocities.

6. The Influence of Religions on Armenians before and after the Genocide: letters analysis

Missionaries had an important role in the Armenian people during the atrocities. While children, women, and men were being killed, missionaries were trying to keep most of them alive, educate them, and preserve their Armenian identity. Also, emotional attachment was formed with the survivors and the missionaries, and they formed an unbreakable bond between each other, as seen in one of the letters. In one of the letters, the missionary explained the difficulty of seeing people go down the path of death. She also mentioned extensively that Armenians were heavily abused by Turkish officers, and even though the situation was tough, people were screaming a powerful line. “We have taken up our cross and followed Jesus!” (Bjørnlund, 2019, p. 58)

This powerful quote showed the strong spirit of the Armenian nation and the vitality of the church and the religion. During hardships, Armenians didn't turn away from religion; they faced death with pride and did not abandon their love for Jesus Christ. Starting from children to the crippled old people everyone knew their faith and they still chose to believe in Christianity. By rejecting the toxic masculinity imposed by the Turks, Armenians became closer to God. No matter how many guns were pointed at them, Christianity was an important factor in keeping the traumatized people sane and their identities safe.

Missionaries established a lot of schools in the Ottoman Empire. The schools were established before and during the genocide, which shows their commitment to fellow Christians in need.

(Bjørnlund, 2019, p.68)

The missionaries were not just a Christian group; they also supported women who went through the genocide and never forgot the Armenians in their further destinations. For example, missionaries also did a lot of work in Africa, Syria, and China; however, they never failed to mention and remember Armenians. The biggest example is how missionaries referred to Armenian women as “sisters,” and they explained how the victims were assaulted and thrown in the Turkish Harem. As a result, they acknowledged the atrocities committed by Turkish officers and by taking the innocence of young children, abusing women, and killing men, they reinforced the idea of toxic masculinity and domination over the Armenian nation. (Bjørnlund, 2019, p.69)

7. Psychological analysis of the great Soviet Union leaders

The Dictators of that time, of course, tried to be progressive and follow the Marxist theory, or put their emphasis on working women. For example, in one of the interviews, Vladimir Lenin stated that working women were good for society. Still, he noted that feminism should be an upside-down and beneficial movement for the Soviet Union. (Zetkin, 2004)

However, society showed degradation in this case, and equality was a double standard. Soviet society made men feel pressured at that time and made them drink vast amounts of strong alcohol, which harmed their mental and physical health. (Hinote & Webber,2012,p.306)

Alfred Adler's psychological analysis thoroughly examined Stalin's personality. His approach is called the theory of "Individual Psychology," as it explores a person's life starting from birth to death. Moreover, the most important and unavoidable component is the genetic development. Genes are a powerful tool that influences people throughout their whole lives. For example, as the concept of "mediocrity" develops in the early stages of children, this feeling becomes the core of motivation to achieve bigger goals later in life. However, while striving to achieve higher positions in life, they are expected to please others around them. The achievement of superiority is for personal interests and for solid security for oneself. The path of overcoming these arduous patterns shapes a person's behavior and puts certain characteristics that distinguish the individual from others. (Matsolo,2019,p.2)

Adler was also certain that in order to accomplish a fulfilled life, the person had to overcome three stages: building platonic relationships, doing acts that help to better society, and fulfilling the goal of having a romantic relationship. (Matsolo,2019,p.3)

Another fascinating biopsychological analysis is Millon's model. This model differs from the approach in that the main principle that everything relies on is evolution. Here, the author

differentiates four categories for people. The first one is “existence,” which means that the person constantly improves the quality of their life, survives instinctively, and also gets an increased amount of pleasure out of life. Another aspect that needs to be considered is that the individual avoids places of danger and protects themselves from pain. The second stage is “adaptation,” where, depending on the person's character, they adapt differently to the environment, either passively and slowly or actively integrate themselves into the environment. The behavioral changes for active adapters are shown by the modification of certain aspects of themselves or their involvement with the surrounding environment. (Matsolo,2019,p.3)

The third stage is the “replication,” which is the tendency to be egoistic amongst many siblings. However, some people cope with egoism the other way by showing their soft side and affection towards their people. Moreover, the last stage is the “abstraction,” which is the person’s capability to associate themselves with the ongoing events around their environment. (Matsolo,2019,p.4)

Joseph Stalin’s family before his birth already had issues and encountered a lot of hardships. Mother was an illiterate woman, and father was a shoemaker. Both of these people were victims of a nuclear family as their marriage was based on purely surviving hardships. One of the most considerable losses that they had was the two failed pregnancies, and Stalin was the golden child who survived because of his mother's prayers. (Matsolo,2019,p.67)

Furthermore, after the birth of Stalin, financial issues arose, and his father started to portray toxic masculine traits. After being in a helpless situation, Stalin’s father put all of his anger out on his family and harshly abused his wife and son. Another contributing factor to this was his love for alcohol, as he sought comfort in it. Stalin was brought up in these hardships and in the environment of violence, and was a direct witness and victim of hegemonic masculinity.

As mentioned above, people strive for success to please the others surrounding them. Stalin was an excellent student in the church choir, where he sang. He was the one allowed to read holy scriptures, and he led others to read perfectly. He tormented others to have the best Psalm reciters, and here it is evident that superiority and dominance were coming inherently from him. His mindset from early ages was like a Russian tsar's mindset, as he viewed others beneath himself and treated them as serfs. Serfs were people who were treated as property, lived in inhumane conditions, and could be traded or sold between their masters. Serfs were the Russian slaves for a long time. Stalin was viewed as a confident person, and that is why people around him thought that he would do great things with his life. (Matsolo, 2019, pp.68-69)

Stalin was not only a victim of abuse from his dad, but he also faced the issue of his father's abandonment. By leaving his family, he put a huge scar on Stalin's mental health, and also put the responsibility of raising Stalin solely on his wife. Stalin's mother also started to punish him harshly and abuse him both physically and mentally. However, during his school years, he was the most well-dressed amongst his peers. His mother's financial situation didn't affect his way of dressing, and not only was he dressed well, but he also studied very hard. He was responsible and even survived the harsh school system and got away from beatings. This shows that he knew how to obey a system. However, everything turned gray after he was thrown under a horse carriage. Stalin started to feel insecure about his height and the length of his arms, as they were also affected. The classmates noticed the insecurities, and Stalin was bullied and got in a lot of school fights because of it. The only friend who was by his side was just there to fight the people who tried to make fun of Stalin. Stalin loved to order and be a leader of groups despite being bullied, and he still managed to wear appropriate attire, gain as much knowledge as possible, and be an extraordinary student. (Matsolo,2019, pp. 70-74)

During his adult years, Stalin still struggled with finances and his relationship with his mother. These issues led to colossal development in his character. He persisted in his mother's idea of becoming a clergyman and pursued academia. However, at first in his academic life, he was repressed because he kept his real atheistic views to himself due to repression. The repressed university was closely attached to the church, and the church was the core of the Russian system. After that, Stalin was more confident and joined secret groups where he educated himself with well-known books worldwide, as he felt that the university didn't give him enough resources to improve himself. He was a fond reader of Karl Marx, and he was the leader of the secret Russian Marxist group. For Stalin, there was no such thing as friendships for comfort and genuine platonic relationships. He used people around him to get back at his enemies and used people around him to push his own political agenda. (Matsolo,2019, pp. 74-78)

As for his romantic relationships, he had a lot of connections with women. However, he didn't have any stability here as well. He used women for his own benefit and sexual satisfaction. (Matsolo,2019,p.76)

Before his political rise, he was dismissed from the seminary, and the reason was his political views. He broke every rule and showed hatred towards the authorities, and he was considered unstable. Her mother was saying the dismissal was because of Stalin's health; however, it was because Stalin was going against the system. His mother was disappointed because she saw a bright future for her son, and everything was crushed. The seminary gave Stalin a statement that he had completed four years of study. (Matsolo,2019, pp.76-77)

Despite being anti-religious, Stalin needed money to survive the revolutionary acts. He was once again a clergyman, and off duty, he could read and write. Because of that, he

thoroughly read Lenin's literature and became more rebellious. He sort of created mass groups that obeyed him and listened to his ideas. He portrayed himself as unfearful, masculine, and stoic. His intelligence made people trust him more, and some even sponsored him through tough times. He purposefully chose the name "Stalin" as it was associated with Lenin and it meant "out of Steel". He became a glorified persona and was an ideal archetype of a masculine man. (Matsolo,2019, pp. 77-78)

With all the developments, Stalin was powerful enough to create his own cult. Because of the "Stalinistic cult," people were separated from the church or any religious institutions. Stalin's propaganda was constructed in a way that people saw him as a "father" figure. For his people, he was a savior and a person who saved many children. The emphasis was on the children because he was structuring a system where schools, nurseries, and knowledge were on the highest level for the people. By being a Socialist and also a "Humble" man, he created an image of himself as a teacher of all. Also, the media at that time were editing him as a strict stoic man, yet he had a soft and caring side for children. Society at that time believed that Stalin was fighting injustice and that he would protect them at all costs. (Matsolo,2019, pp 87-88)

Adler's theory proved that Stalin's psychological development and uniqueness came from being an only child. He was charismatic and manipulative, and as family role is important, this is associated with being an only child. Also, the abuse, abandonment, and constant fight with poverty made him prone to discomfort. As he was used to conflicts, this gave him more confidence to talk back against the system and adapt to any difficult situation. Also, the issues of his childhood motivated him to be the first in every aspect of his life and be a perfectionist. Not only was he a rebellious and strong man, but he was also a man with creative power, so he used it to overcome many obstacles throughout his life. Adler came to a point where he showed that

although Stalin achieved his goals brutally, he couldn't successfully shape relationships, and he used them merely as a tool. (Matsolo,2019, pp 136-137)

As for Millon's model, he was prone to coping with hardships; however, throughout his life, he changed a lot and acquired other skills and tools and used them for his good. His main concern was himself, and because of his egoism, he put his needs first. Even though Stalin was against a limited system, he created a system where all the power was his, and people didn't have freedom of speech. (Matsolo,2019,p.138)

7.1 Analysis of Stalin's view on gender roles

At first, Stalin was propagating to women and men to work equally; however, this movement of "gender equality" put women in lower positions in society, and that is what triggered the spread of toxic masculinity in the Soviet Union. For instance, during International Women's Day, Stalin stated that.

"The second and decisive task of the working class is to forge an army of worker and peasant women out of the women's labour reserves to operate shoulder to shoulder with the great army of the proletariat." (Stalin, 1925)

Stalin viewed women as merely an army of working-class workers. Their needs and injustices towards them were covered; however, when there were speeches, Stalin was trying to "praise" women to work harder; however, in reality, it was not for equality, it was for his country's economic benefit. Also, the use of the word "reserve" when referring to women's labor diminishes their rights and subconsciously puts men on a higher pedestal in society. By lowering the role of women in society, Stalin created a stereotypical and toxic environment for his people.

His next statement is about the fight that women need to carry out with the elites.

"Working women are not only reserves, however. They can and must become – if the working class carries out a **correct policy** – a real army of the working class, operating against the **bourgeoisie**." (Stalin, 1925)

Here he started to shift the words and added that women are not just “reserves”. He was motivating women to fight the injustice of the bourgeois system, and they were considered merely a tool for Stalin.

Even though Stalin used persuasive tactics during his speech and manipulated the whole society, his words didn't match the situation of the Soviet Union. As the First World War approached, women were pushed back to the second plan merely as a reproductive system. For example, even the women who were contributing to the nation, working hard, their first component, important for the Soviet Union, was their devotion and patriotism. This also ties in with the role of being a “good mother,” where they had to be visibly feminine, have children, and have nationalistic ideas to educate them to be future patriots and obedient citizens. (Jug, 2013, p. 45)

Also, the role in military service was also biased towards women; the perfect example of this was the great Soviet Union soldier and pilot Marina Raskova. In a Soviet article, she was depicted as a heroic woman who did honorable things for her country. However, the work that she put into becoming a great pilot, the arduous training, and her story were never talked about. The newspaper's agenda was to use women as an example of good citizens who didn't cross the lines of femininity and masculinity. This was a vital aspect for the Soviet Union because by propagating strict boundaries, people of the Soviet Union and especially Armenians were adapting to the new lifestyle of Socialists and were fitting into the toxic stereotypes.

Moreover, women who were equally going to the front as nurses were not acknowledged by the Soviet Union. Women were referred to often as “battle-friends or sisters,” and their role was not rewarded. Psychologically, women felt that by being near the war and helping their soldiers, they were also treated as if they were in the ranks. However, it was not true, and the role of women was underestimated, and they were treated as remedies for soldiers and mental comfort as they acted like “mothers”. Nurses were comforting and giving solace to the tormented soldiers. The mental state of men during wartime was traumatizing, and giving them “mother” figures was important to keep them sane during harsh times. (Jug, 2013, p. 48)

In contrast, this put a huge responsibility on the shoulders of all women of the Soviet Union. After this, the society was also mentally pressuring women to stay feminine while nurturing their families, including their husbands.

The Red Army was also biased towards women, and soon they changed their views on women camps and completely disregarded their impact. For instance, in the signal training, 108 men and 70 women participated; however, this gender neutrality didn't last long as the Red Army only included men in their rifle groups. The explanation of Major General Tarasov fully explained the stance of the Red Army. (Jug, 2013, p. 49)

“The introduction of mandatory military-physical training of male “Komsomoltsy” constituted a completely essential measure. They will provide multi-purpose mobilized readiness not only for the millions of reserves mobilized from the “Komsomol” but also for activating and improving the military-physical training of the whole mass of the country's draft-eligible population.” (Jug, 2013, p. 49)

Here he puts the emphasis on “Komsomols”, which were male soldiers, and later he separated the “Komsomolki”, which are girls aspiring to become soldiers; however, with this separation,

they could only fight in critical moments. Also, their training will differ as they were considered a backup plan for the military and were not taught fighting skills as men were. This also became legal when Stalin created new educational reforms and put a lot of emphasis on men's training. This patriotic and military mindset created a disbalance between genders, and even though Stalin was using his manipulative tactics during his speech, he was letting people believe that they were living on equal terms. (Jug, 2013, p. 49)

7.2 Coping Mechanisms of Soviet People

For Armenians, the current norms and domestic order only started in the Soviet Union, and the traits of toxic masculinity were visible in the "ideal" Soviet man. It was easier for Armenians to adapt to the Soviet Union standards as they had already been emotionally vulnerable, and by abiding by the rules of the "strong" male, they would feel more powerful. People started to work extensively, and with that came a lot of responsibilities and pressure. Soviet men dealt with their issues by drinking, and it was the core of creating hegemonic masculine men. While they were drinking strong alcohol, there was also the pattern of working males fighting in restaurant establishments. It showed masculinity and dominance over other males. Moreover, whoever was strong enough to be detached from drinking was emasculated and shamed. (Hinote & Webber,2012,p.300)

Soviet men showed their masculinity by using words and shameful phrases that insulted women. This type of behavior was for all the countries that were in the soviet union, and all of them unitedly had the same mentality. Toxic masculinity was getting stronger and stronger day by day. (Hinote & Webber,2012,p.300)

Dr. Manukyan also stated that the leaders dictated the “idealized” archetype of the man. The young, strong communist was the ideal for the totalitarian dictator. Totalitarian regimes did not allow any changes, whether moral or societal. The harsh reality at that time was that the dictators did not allow new concepts to enter their countries. The model of the ideal state was also gendered, as they promoted men in a way that they were subconsciously put on a pedestal. As the propaganda went on, men were encouraged to be ready to give their lives for their country and nation without hesitation. This was one of the core roles of masculinity that the ideal Soviet man should have. The men should also be able to devote themselves fully to the development of Communism. There were a lot of propaganda banners, pictures, and newspapers at that time that portrayed men with “perfect” bodies, which contained slim and muscular men. Dr. Manukyan highlights that the Soviet Union's society was entirely soaked with totalitarian ideas. The same regime was going on in the Nazi regime, and Adolf Hitler at that time was also using the techniques of promoting a healthy body, and also he wanted to “clear” his nation and put strict rules for being a righteous Aryan man. One of the key differences between Stalin's and Hitler's regimes was that Hitler demanded that his race be blonde, blue-eyed, and he himself, as a dictator, did not match the description. There is an irony in his demands. However, he used the same methods as Stalin did in society.

Back in the Soviet Union, women's roles changed drastically, and equality was proclaimed. First of all, both men and women could work equally and had the same educational rights. Also, women were given the right to vote, and the Soviet Union encouraged women to study and work. Dr. Manukyan's take on this was that women were pushed far away from their traditional roles, as the Soviet Union also granted opportunities to women to rule their own bodies. Women were free to have abortions without the consent of their husbands, and also, they

were free in their choices of living the way they wanted. More specifically, women were able to apply for divorce, and divorce could be finalized with a woman's application. Also, women not only decide on abortion but also decide when they will have children. In the patriarchal society of Armenia, it was impossible even to have that choice, and the body of women was part of the family relations. However, the Soviet Union put a halt to the repression of women. Another important phenomenon that occurred in the Soviet Union was the concept of “open marriages,” where women, especially, had the right to live a free life and be full members of society. The openness was that women could have relations with multiple men.

Furthermore, women's role in the workforce was much greater as the Soviet Union and especially Armenia went through a modernization process, and the Soviet Union wanted to pull out all the obstacles, which in this case were Armenian traditions, customs, and overall culture. The only way to achieve modernization was to abolish the values that Armenians had for decades. Armenian women benefited from modernization as it affected their education and work opportunities. In Soviet times, it was for the first time that mutual consent was requested for marriage. Before that, there was no concept of “consent” for marriages. It was not just a tradition. It was the law, and the Soviet Union was making its society behave like law-abiding citizens. The Soviet Union also prohibited the concept of dowry because the bride's family had the responsibility to give a dowry, and once again, the law restricted that tradition. Another vital rule that the Soviets applied was criminalizing rape as it put order in society and everyone was equal under the law. Women were also given quotas to participate in political office or in some factories. This was a strict rule by the Soviet government that 30% of the workplace should be women, including the leading positions. Even though, above all of this, Dr. Manukyan is saying the benefits of the Soviet Union, he also mentioned that even though women had all of these

opportunities, they could not get rid of household chores. Even though both genders were working, women also had the responsibility of the house on their shoulders, and the Soviet Union was propagating the concept of being a good mother. Hence, women still had pressure for domestic chores.

Dr. Matosyan had a similar answer, and it was evident that women couldn't escape the cycle of household chores. Idealized Armenian macho men wouldn't do chores as they had strict stereotypes, and it would be beneath them to take up women's jobs in the household. Equality in the workplace and education couldn't change the Armenian culture inside the household, and women were always chained to their responsibilities at home.

During the Soviet Union, a lot of countries struggled with their mental health, and people didn't know how to cope with their disorders, and they started to have long-lasting psychological distress. Most of the people began to cope with abuse and self-harm, and they started to live in a very self-destructive manner. For example, in 1991, the rate of suicide reached over 44.8% per 100,000 population. Then, the suicide rate, especially for men, increased in 2002, and this was all because of the Soviet regime, and people were starting to destroy themselves. (Shek, et al., 2010,p.18)

Mental health during the Soviet Union was a complex topic because it also revolved around people's work. Even rehabilitation centers were workforce environments where people were employed to do "work therapy."

The main difference between the Soviet Union and Europe at the time was that the Soviet Union was trying to be isolated from the other countries because its central concept was that, during communism, people couldn't suffer from mental illnesses. There was an absence of mental disorders. This was the root of the real issue in the Soviet Union because mental health was not taken seriously, and it got little to no attention. Besides that, education on mental health was closed off by salvage unions because they started to use the approach of denialistic propaganda to get rid of the actual problem. However, during Khrushchev's period, Stalin wanted to install stuff, or Stalin's demise started to turn into psychological rehabilitation centers, and reopen educational psychology departments. This was a period when Stalin's dictatorship ended, and here, in this new era, people were more open and prone to change, and the government was also trying to call for action for mental health awareness. However, this was not long because then it was Brezhnev's era, and he repressed his political circle by putting pressure on them and society. A lot of the politicians were found overdosed on psychiatric meds, and they were found in hospitals for being against the regime. Even though the leaders were changing during the Soviet time, most of them kept the pressure, and they used this mental health problem as a solution to repress their people and the politicians who could go against them. (Shek, et al., 2010,p.20)

8. Analysis of the Freedom of the Soviet Union and the People Against the System

Armenia was “thriving” in the Soviet Union, which was up to its standards because the soviet rule was that unemployment was unacceptable. Most of the people worked in the factories. People started to work in the agricultural field, and education was also very systematic. People had issues that were inevitable to avoid. People were short of food and housing. Slowly, this created a hostile environment, and everyone tried to survive. The Armenians remained in the Soviet Union till 1991, and then Armenia started to be on its own and construct its own republic. These years were cold, dark years for Armenians, as there was also a shortage of electricity, there was an ongoing war, and people were still surviving. Because of the constant battle, overworking, and shortage of supplies, the roles of men and women became very clear, and toxicity was inevitable. Most of the men were the ones who earned a living, and they were the ones who were called to war. Women mostly stayed at home and looked after the house and children. Also, the challenging environments affected the family relationship dynamics, as there was a lot of abuse, mental and physical, that was silenced at that time. (Fertaly, 2018,p.8)

9. From the '90s till today's Armenia, and the Political leaders of Armenia, their propaganda

Armenians in the 1990s had a very dark and hard time and experience because of the government's position that the country was in. At that time, there were many issues connected with the scarcity of food supplies and the fact that people were not getting paid for their jobs

properly. Even the basic needs were complex to obtain. At this time, political leaders were a pretty community. The first one was Levon Ter-Petrosyan. He was the first president of Armenia, and he was an intellectual. Dr. Matosyan mentioned the ideals to him and said that his personality would not be compatible with Armenian ideals. Because of his educational background and his love for reading, he was discarded as the ideal archetype for masculinity in Armenia; however, following him was Robert Kocharyan. He was trying to promote healthy masculinity at the time, and his way of propagating it was as a president using sports and showing themselves in sports environments. He was in the gym throughout the term, and men followed his ideas and started promoting a healthy lifestyle. In this way, he also showed a strong sense of masculinity and negotiations, and being able to show his strength in the political sphere, he appeared to be a “Macho.” The third president was Serj Sargsyan, who was very reserved and neutral in his positions. Because of his reserved social media behavior and his personality, a new radical persona emerged, Nikol Pashinyan. He used social media extensively to persuade people, and he was the person who programmed the “Velvet Revolution.”

Robert Kocharyan had an enormous impact on Armenia, and during a press conference, he was asked about the 2020 war and its results. He compared the Armenian situation with Ukrainian and he referred to Nikol Pashinyan and criticized his behavior and fear of signing a contract that would prevent war, and over five thousand soldiers would return home safely. Kocharyan stated that the fear of being called a “traitor” was not enough of a reason to start a war and kill thousands of soldiers. Here, there are two leaders with different approaches and different views on masculinity. The first leader was not afraid of the contract and the name-calling. However, Pashinyan was full of fear and, because of his narcissistic views, not only was the land lost, but also a lot of people were killed and severely injured.

Another analysis was the parliament's last few sessions, where the party of Nikol Pashinyan, called the “civil party” and opposing teams clashed with each other, and the leaders of the group got into a huge fight. The first huge clash was when the opposing party, “Armenia Alliance,” asked a direct and harsh question about corruption. The member who asked was a woman, Anna Grigoryan, who articulated her speech calmly. She stated that corruption is a huge issue in Armenia, and criticized Pashinyan's strategy of claiming “old” corruptors. She also stated that he and his teammates don't have the willpower to actually recognize the corruptors amongst their party, and they are biased. Another important factor she mentioned was that during the Pashinyan government, a huge debt of seven billion dollars was formed, and the documents show that it was for road construction. However, its absurdity is that the same road cannot be fixed 5 times. After these claims, the prime minister goes up to the speaker, aggressively at first, and tries to counter the argument. However, he started to yell at Anna and others and threatened to throw all of them in the National Security service detention center. He showed his aggression and toxic masculinity towards the woman and verbally abused her. His last words were shouted, and he rudely asked that woman to sit back down and not “eat” his nerves. Here is evident the full potential of Pashinyan, and whenever he had an opportunity to attack a woman, he publicly did it and humiliated her. Not only was he the carrier of “toxic masculinity,” but his whole party was. As Alen Simonyan, who is the president of the assembly, interrupted the chaos. He even made the situation worse and suggested that Anna didn't use the informal you while addressing the prime minister, and she should know her place, or else she would be kicked out. Till this day, women are oppressed in politics, and all the rage and toxic masculinity are harming them. In Armenia, women in politics need to have a strong “backup” of strong men to protect them. In this case, Levon Kocharyan defended his teammate; however, the prejudice is unreal. Even

though the body language was aggressive, Pashinyan was showing with his hands that if she were near, he would have slapped her. Ongoing instabilities in the prejudiced government are badly affecting people.

9.1 Influence of ongoing wars on the mental health of people

The study showed that there are multiple factors that affect people's mental health, and during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, a lot of people were traumatized. The first important factor was the closeness to the war. For example, a lot of changes happen during the war, such as the death of a family member, loss of stability, whether it is financial or mental, and this determines the scale of exposure to trauma. The second factor is emotional maturity, and the experts measured it with a scale of how well the person has control over their emotions and well-being during times of war. The third aspect is how the victims of war treat themselves, and their acts towards themselves indicate their self-love. (Hovnanyan, et al., 2024,p.5)

Thoroughly analyzing these aspects, the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh caused huge trauma to Armenian society, and time is needed for the people to recover from this type of community trauma, which is very similar to genocide. The PTSS (Post-traumatic stress symptoms) is common after war, and time is mostly needed for recovery for the people. For instance, people who were interviewed right after the war and after 6 months, there is an astonishing difference, as Armenians by nature are survivors, and time is making people heal naturally. Moreover, those whoever is prone to thinking positively, who are kind to themselves, and who survive the pressure through self-love report less PTSS. In this study, both genders participated; however, there was an unequal number of participants.(Hovnanyan, et al., 2024,p.11)

In times of danger, Armenians try to keep everything together, and in the culture, masculinity is highly valued. Armenian “masculinity” is defined by using anger as an emotionally destructive tool and coping with the vulnerable emotions alone, or not even acknowledging that there is a need for mental help. (Hovnanyan, et al., 2024,p.10)

Cultural stigmas are a crucial aspect for Armenians, and a lot of people associate mental health treatment with negativity or a punishment given by God. Because of the generalization and shaming of the family members who need help, people, especially children, hide their feelings away and avoid medical help. Family members also use abuse as a way to “heal” their children, which then leads them to have a closed mindset and emotional unavailability. Armenian children, however, because of the educational reforms nowadays, have some kind of awareness of mental health. The vital aspect is also how Armenian men perceive others with mental health; they will not have acquaintances who have mental issues and will consider it a “dishonor” if someone has it. (Rushford & Jensen, 2021, p. 10)

9.2 Nowadays, media propaganda of toxic masculinity is compared with that of the West.

“Two and a Half Men” is an American Television show that put its footprint on Armenia. As Armenians did a TV show called “Կարգին սերիալ”(Kargin Serial), and by years of promoting this show, the Armenian show created archetypes of men and showed toxic masculinity in a good light. Firstly, examining the American show the main character being Charlie Harper is the main character of the show. He is the egoistic, single male who is very wealthy and lives a hedonistic lifestyle day by day. His brother Alan is his contrasting character. As he is presented as fragile, the events of his life show that he is the loser of the show. (Redl, 2015, p. 31)

Comparing it with “Kargin Serial”, Charlie Harper is Vardan Karagozyan, who lives a luxury lifestyle, is single, and every day goes to the clubs, and his life changes when his brother Alan, who is Arkadzi Karagozyan, comes with his kid and shows his vulnerability and is bullied throughout the show. (Marutyan, 2010-2013)

Charlie is the impressionable one for men as he has wealth, the attention of women, and all of the hegemonic things that a man could desire. However, he lacks empathy and uses women just for their bodies and his own satisfaction. Also, the habits he shows are very common for toxic males, which are also destructive, for example, drinking and smoking cigars. (Redl, 2015, p. 43)

For “Kargin Serial,” they have the same conditions; however, the setting and culture are different, and in the first episode, when Arkadzi came to his house and interrupted the one-night stand of Vardan, Vardan was annoyed and angry, to which he said. “How much I despise you,” and the brother started to justify his coming by saying he would stay for 2 days, and set the dynamic of always adapting to his brother's. (Marutyan, 2010-2013)

The clothing choice was also not usual; the red hoodie and sweatpants that Vardan wore showed his masculinity and emotional unavailability. He was portrayed as a “real” Armenian man. Arkadzi, on the other hand, was always looking put together and wore sweaters, camisas, and always neatly combed hair. For that, Arkadzi was bullied, and there were indirect references that he was homosexual, which always had a bad connotation to it. Vardan’s hair was messy, which showed his ignorance towards his looks, as he was a cisgender man. The third important character was the son of Arkadi, who was influenced by both his dad and uncle and was in the middle of picking which masculinity is better for him.(Marutyan, 2010-2013)

The other types of praised masculinity, which were portrayed in both shows, were the role of housekeepers. Both of them were harsh and, at times, tough on others, which meant that by being masculine, they could dominate the household. (Marutyan, 2010-2013)

For the Armenian case, the housekeeper was Jemma, and she went to prison for a couple of years, where she was considered an “authority”. She was smoking and ordering others to do tasks for her. Because of that, the relationship between Vardan and Jemma was better, and they had a better bond. Both of these characters formed a coalition to bully and oppress Arkadzi.

One of the ways they were oppressing Arkadzi was by saying his name in a feminine way, “Adzik”. For Vardan, there was no such thing, and he didn't have problems establishing dominance. Even though he lacked knowledge, he was considered “charismatic” and knew his way around the people. (Marutyan, 2010-2013)

Arkadzi, on the other hand, was an introvert, and even though he was in a respectable field of medicine, he was made fun of for being a nurse. This ties back to Soviet Union standards, as nurses were women and hegemonic stereotypes were affected. Being a nurse was considered a feminine trait for a man, and because his salary was not as high as Vardan's, he was considered less of a man. (Marutyan, 2010-2013)

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of "toxic masculinity" is deeply rooted in each continent differently, depending on the historical background. Societies that were affected by the oppression or were exposed to traumatic experiences were considered a more fragile group. Armenians were the victims of genocide, and before that, the Turkish oppressors, who were considered ideals of masculinity and role models for their country, such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, created a huge plan of mass destruction. The "idol" before the genocide started to spread imbalance inside the society, and people were treated differently. For instance, taxes were raised for Christians, and by creating harsh laws, this created a disbalance of order, and Armenian men were unable to sell any goods to keep their families alive. The women were managing the household at that time and had a matriarchy within the household itself. Moreover, Turkish officials labeled Armenians as "cancerous viruses" that need to be eradicated. By pointing out certain groups of Armenians, they pointed hatred and vengeance toward innocent people. Even though Armenians were a smart, intelligent group that was not creating any problems, they were targeted by the Turkish government, and "toxic masculinity" was the way to dominate Armenians and emasculate them as men. During the genocide, the men and women were separated, and during these atrocities, the Turkish officers were taking Armenian women to their harems and sexually assaulting them, which was a tool to psychologically weaken Armenian men and also traumatize women and children. This experience is very similar to the Holocaust genocide, as the Jewish community suffered atrocities and experienced the same humiliation as the Armenians. Moreover, genetically, Armenians, Jews, and other nations who experienced genocide have mutated genes and generational traumas. Generational traumas were different for the first and fourth generations; however, the symptoms were the same. For instance, the first

generation had the highest rates of anxiety, PTSD, depression, and avoidant behavior when talking about traumas. The second, third, and fourth generations had higher rates of anxiety and worse mental health than the average person. In this fragile state after the genocide, Armenians suffered from identity issues and had to belong to a certain group. Because of this massive killing, they lost most of their identity, culture, and heritage. At that time, the Soviet Union came, and 15 countries were under one flag and one dictatorship. At first, Stalin came by with all of his glory and started to dictate new rules and ideals of identity. Stalin came from a very poor family, and the situation always involved financial issues. His father was abusive, and because of his abuse, Stalin had a different mindset and views on life. Furthermore, his mother was also abusive and demanded perfection from Stalin. Because of that, Stalin achieved academic excellence and always strived to learn more and think outside of the box. He was famous for his love of Marxist ideas and purchased a lot of illegal books at that time. Later in his life, he created riots, he was persuasive during speeches, and his main idea was equality among everyone and crashing the "bourgeois" system. The psychological analysis showed that he used people for his own good as a tool. He also used his nation and the "equality" that was promised as a mask, as he was the "founder" of the ideal Soviet man, and he laid the foundation of gender inequality and toxic masculinity. By treating women as "secondary tools" in the Soviet Union, men started to treat women harshly, and the contributing factor was alcohol. Men were brutally using alcohol, and under its influence, they verbally and physically abused, for example, women who were waitresses at restaurants. Also, mental health was a "taboo" and nonexistent concept in the Soviet Union, and even there, people were going to secret rehabs as a workforce. No one was taking mental health issues seriously, and at that time, the Soviet Union was creating an illusion that there were no mentally ill people in their society; because of that, many men and women were

left untreated and put their emotional health at risk by hiding their issues. Moreover, they didn't have any other choice because the so-called patients who had schizophrenic or other health disorders were considered abnormal, and others didn't want to be the white crow in society. Understandably, the judgment and shame led to secret mental health disorders in the Soviet Union. This was a correlating change for Armenian change, and the toxic masculinity was already normalized.

Moreover, in the 1990s, Armenia was in a difficult situation as the Soviet Union collapsed, Armenia was at war, and there was political unrest. This also led to economic instability; people were facing food shortages, and basic goods were in short supply in Armenia. Here, most of the men either went to war or worked tirelessly to feed their families and provide minimal goods. Here, there was also gender imbalance, as nationalistic ideas were needed to survive during wartime. The propaganda of "heroes" and "soldiers" for young boys and "good mothers" and "caretakers" for women was in Armenian literature and shaped children in a way to survive the constant wars and resist enemies. However, this imbalance in the school system created a gender-biased narrative and put a lot of responsibilities on the shoulders of women, and society was forcing motherhood on every woman.

Political figures and their influence also have an impact on Armenian society to this day. They represent the Armenian society, and through their speeches and behaviors, they show their country's values and the people. As mentioned, the second president, Robert Kocharyan, had a lot of influence and, to this day, does so in Armenia. He used sports to show his masculinity and always had strong and persuasive speeches regarding the Armenian conflicts. His body language was always confident, and around other leaders, he was proud to represent Armenia. Nowadays,

his son Levon Kocharyan is in the parliament, and with his party, he proposes masculine and nationalistic ideas to save Armenia from future attacks from Azerbaijan.

Interestingly enough, the "king" of the peaceful Velvet Revolution, who promised equality to people and governs today's Armenia, is using "threat with violence" in his speeches and shows instability and insecurity during international events. He showed in the parliament his rage towards a woman, and if the opposing party did not defend their colleague, the woman would have been left alone as a victim. The constant tribulations, political instabilities, and constant wars have led Armenia to have high rates of toxic masculinity. Moreover, the core of toxic masculinity started before the genocide as the Turks targeted Armenians as victims and, with genocide, erased their identity and managed to give the whole nation traumatic disorders that were transferred from generation to generation. Having a nation with high anxiety and depression rates and an erased identity was vital for the formation of the Soviet Union, as they were creating their ideal type of "man." Armenians were an inherently fragile group, and they fell under Stalinist propaganda. To this day, some elements are used from that time. Nowadays, propaganda is used in television and the media. The biggest influence that had a lot of viewers was the Armenian version of "Two and a Half Men," where they depicted the polarity of masculinity and dictated new standards for modern Armenian men.

The only way to end the stereotypes in Armenian society is to educate people, make them aware of the types of mental disorders, and abolish the concept of "shame" to encourage more people to participate in mental health treatments. Propagating a healthy approach to mental health disabilities and making people aware that negative myths are harming society will help the future generations of Armenia. Men in Armenia are in higher categories of bad mental health, as

most of the stigmas refer to hegemonic masculinity, and most of them use emotional unavailability as a shield to cover their vulnerability. (Rushford & Jensen, 2021, p. 17)

Lastly, the Armenian nation has gone through a lot of hardships but has remained strong and resilient. However, these hardships brought a lot of changes and crises for them. To overcome one of the biggest stigmas is educating future generations. Dr. Manukyan, at the end of the interview, stated that a healthy portion of masculinity is needed. However, men should be more emotionally capable and open to new knowledge and overcoming societal pressures.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questionnaire for both Suren Manukyan and Tigran Natosyan.

Genocide

- How did Armenians live before the genocide? What was their domestic order?
- What were the Roles of women and men in families?
- During the genocide, what was the most emasculating thing done to Armenian men, and how will it affect today's men?
- Ideals of masculinity in Turkey and their real intentions. Kemal Ataturk ,Jemal Pasha, Taleat Pasha
- What was Kemal Atatürk's real motive, as the Turkish nation idolized him?
- How has genocide changed Armenians' behavior and psychology?
 - Did being helpless as a man change their overall nature, for example, their family being killed and assaulted?
 - How do survival instincts affect today's Armenian men's masculinity?
- Can we compare the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide? What were the similarities and differences?
 - Is there a similarity between Hitler and Stalin (their archetypes)?
 - Did holocaust survivors struggle with their identity? For example, men felt emasculated and women helpless like Armenians. Having an identity crisis?

Soviet influence on Armenia

- Was there really an equality between men and women?
- How did Soviet leaders affect the archetype of a "real" man?
- Harsh times create harsh people, but how did propaganda work on people?

- How do people survive harsh times without taking care of their mental health?
- Religion was restricted during the Soviet Union; what was its outcome?
- What was toxic masculinity in the Soviet Union? What was normalized that led Armenia to have toxic masculinity to this day?
- What happened to people who spoke up against the system?
- Freedom of speech in the soviet union and denunciations?

Armenia from the 90s till today

- From the 90s till today, there have been ideals of masculinity and politics. (Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Kocharyan, Pashinyan). Radicalism Nowadays, propaganda movies and social media are as well.
- How can Armenians today build up healthy masculinity, taking into consideration war, post-war mindset, and soldiers with PTSD?
 - Who are good role models for Armenian men?