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Hegemonic Masculinities and Manosphere Discourse on X: A Netnography of South Africa's Podcast and Chill Network

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Abstract

This study examines how hegemonic masculinities and anti-feminist discourse circulate on X through the Podcast and Chill Network (@podcastwithmacg), a prominent South African podcast brand. Guided by Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and scholarship on platformed visibility, it uses a qualitative netnographic single-case design that combines critical discourse analysis of posts and replies with descriptive counts of coded material, and distinguishes manosphere-specific content from general masculinity and anti-feminist discourse. Grok was used as a keyword-driven extraction tool to retrieve public posts, replies, quote-posts and reposts published between 1 and 18 June 2026. After manual verification (88 of 120 Grok returns) and screening, 58 items were retained and manually coded against an eleven-code codebook. The findings revealed that the network's posts constructed masculinity around provider–protector roles and narratives of gender conflict, with conflict-oriented posts attracting the highest visible engagement. Manosphere-specific content, such as red-pill claims of innate female manipulation and MGTOW-style rejection of marriage, appeared embedded within more conventional talk about marriage, provision and reliability. Audience responses reinforced these narratives while discouraging dissenting views. The findings further showed that global manosphere narratives were adapted to the South African context through the incorporation of local cultural and social references. Because X's ranking system cannot be observed, visibility is analysed through visible engagement metrics, not as evidence of algorithmic amplification or radicalisation. The study argues that, within this network, manosphere discourse is neither wholly imported nor purely local but emerges through the interaction of global misogynistic repertoires, local masculine anxieties, audience labour and platformed visibility.

Keywords: manosphere; hegemonic masculinity; South Africa; X; podcast culture; anti-feminism; netnography; platformed visibility

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms should enable democratic participation without reproducing inequalities that undermine the safety, dignity, and visibility of marginalised groups. This role is critical because algorithms do not simply distribute content. They shape visibility, organise attention, and reward particular forms of affective engagement (Gillespie, 2014; Massanari, 2017). Unfortunately, contemporary platforms are characterised by engagement economies that favour outrage, provocation, and conflict. Within gender discourse, these conditions facilitate the mainstreaming of misogyny and anti-feminist grievance, allowing reactionary masculinities to circulate as entertainment, advice, and political commentary (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Horta Ribeiro et al., 2021). This produces a broader problem in which

gender inequality is normalised through networked participation, while feminist critique is exposed to unequal visibility and organised hostility.

Recent research has shown growing interest in the manosphere as a transnational digital formation. Han and Yin (2023) mapped its principal reactionary communities and demonstrated their shared reliance on narratives of male victimhood and feminist threat. Vallerga and Zurbriggen (2022) similarly found that Red Pill and incel communities reproduce beliefs in natural male dominance and female manipulation. Horta Ribeiro et al. (2021) traced the movement of these ideas across platforms, while Mamié et al. (2021) showed that anti-feminist communities may operate as pathways towards far-right content. Together, these studies establish that the manosphere is ideologically coherent, networked, and politically consequential.

However, existing research remains concentrated in North American and European contexts and provides limited insight into how manosphere discourse is reconstructed in African digital cultures. This is despite emerging African work on digital gender politics, including Twitter activism and feminist protest in South Africa (Bosch, 2017; Gouws, 2018). Related studies have examined online gender-based violence across the continent (Iyer et al., 2020) and feminist digital counterpublics in Kenya and South Africa (Okech, 2021). The localisation of manosphere rhetoric in Kenya has also recently been traced (Maina, 2025). African masculinities scholarship has shown that contemporary masculine norms on the continent were shaped by colonial histories, patriarchal cultural structures and religious systems rather than by a single "African" tradition (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Uchendu, 2008). South African scholarship has examined masculinities under conditions of economic insecurity and contested provider identities (Hunter, 2010; Ratele, 2016). It has also traced how masculinities changed with social transformation (Morrell, 2001) and how unemployment and age shape men's lives (Ratele, 2008). Shefer et al. (2010) add that psychological knowledge about men has rested largely on white, middle-class American samples, which calls for locally grounded research. A small but growing body of work examines networked masculinities on South African Twitter (Reneses & Bosch, 2022, 2023). More recent studies extend this to men's counter-discourses to #MenAreTrash (Sele, 2026) and to gendered policing on TikTok (Mokgele, 2026). Yet little is known about how these pressures intersect with platform algorithms, podcast culture, and audience participation on X. It is also unclear how global "alpha male" narratives are localised through South African idioms, celebrity controversies, legal debates, and gendered social anxieties.

Drawing on Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity and scholarship on platformed visibility, this single-case study examines the Podcast and Chill Network and associated discourse on X. It does not claim to represent the South African manosphere as a whole. It asks three distinct questions: how the network frames hegemonic masculinity in the content it posts (producer framing), how audiences respond to that framing (audience responses), and how global manosphere narratives are combined with local constructions of South African masculinity (global–local construction). It examines observable visibility, meaning the reach and engagement that content visibly attains, rather than the operation of X's recommendation system, and therefore makes no claim about algorithmic causation or radicalisation. Because not all gendered talk is manosphere discourse, the paper also defines manosphere content operationally and distinguishes it from wider masculinity and anti-feminist discourse (Section 2.3). The paper next reviews theory and context, explains the methodology, presents the findings and discusses their implications.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Hegemonic Masculinity and Its Digital Mutations

Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity describes the dominant configuration of gender practice that legitimises the subordination of women and the marginalisation of non-hegemonic men. Crucially, hegemony operates not merely through coercion but through consent. It naturalises hierarchical arrangements by embedding them in cultural common sense. Vallerga and Zurbriggen (2022) demonstrate through a thematic analysis of Red Pill and incel communities that manosphere discourse is organised around a coherent set of beliefs about natural male dominance, female hypergamy, and the illegitimacy of feminist politics. These beliefs do not simply reflect pre-existing attitudes: they are actively produced and reinforced through community participation.

Han and Yin (2023) offer a useful taxonomy of reactionary masculinity discourses in digital environments, mapping the manosphere into overlapping but distinct ideological clusters ranging from men's rights activists and pick-up artists to incels and Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW). What unites these communities, despite their internal differences, is a shared grammar of grievance. The conviction that men are unfairly disadvantaged by feminism, that women are fundamentally deceptive, and that the restoration of patriarchal order is both legitimate and necessary. Krendel (2020) confirms this pattern through corpus-assisted discourse analysis, finding that manosphere texts consistently construct gendered social actors in ways that naturalise male authority and pathologise female autonomy.

Trott (2022) extends this analysis by examining how hegemonic masculinity is networked through digital media, arguing that the circulation of misogynistic content across platforms creates a distributed ideological infrastructure that amplifies patriarchal norms far beyond any single community or text. This insight is particularly relevant for understanding the role of X, where content is not merely consumed but actively shared, commented upon, and embedded within broader discourse networks. The repost function, in particular, transforms individual utterances into collective endorsements.

Krendel et al. (2022) extend this analysis through a multi-community study of Reddit, demonstrating that gendered social actors are represented through broadly consistent patterns across different manosphere sub-communities, suggesting that hegemonic masculinity in the digital sphere operates as a coherent discursive formation rather than a loosely affiliated set of opinions. This coherence reflects how manosphere communities share and amplify content across platforms and borders. South African manosphere discourse, while shaped by local conditions, is therefore best understood as connected to a transnational ideological network.

2.2. The Manosphere as a Political Formation

Existing scholarship has increasingly moved beyond treating the manosphere as a primarily psychological phenomenon to analyse it as a political formation with consequences for democratic culture and gender equality. Van Valkenburgh (2021) argues that the manosphere is deeply entangled with neoliberal ideology, framing male grievance through a logic of individual sovereignty that simultaneously rejects feminist structural analysis and embraces market-based masculinity. This framing lets misogyny circulate within respectable discourses of self-improvement, lowering the threshold for its acceptance.

Rothermel (2023) introduces the concept of evidence-based misogyny to describe how manosphere communities deploy selective empirical claims, pseudo-scientific reasoning, and curated data to produce the appearance of rational argument for anti-feminist positions. Such content is difficult to moderate because it presents itself as reasoned debate. Simões et al. (2021) observe a related dynamic in their analysis of popular feminism and online misogyny, arguing that the online spaces that have expanded feminist mobilisation have

also enabled misogynist groups, shaped by a toxic understanding of masculinity, to mobilise through the same digital tools.

The manosphere is also linked to far-right politics. Anti-feminist communities can serve as gateways to more explicitly far-right ideologies (Mamié et al., 2021), and masculinity has been argued to help explain the radical right gender gap (Ralph-Morrow, 2022), suggesting that the cultural politics of the manosphere have electoral consequences.

Sunderland (2023) further shows that alt-right and white nationalist users on Stormfront compete over which masculine strategy should dominate, divided above all over whether women or people of colour constitute the movement's principal enemy. Adjacent reactionary formations are therefore better understood as a dynamic ideological field than as a monolithic bloc.

2.3. Defining Manosphere Content

The term manosphere is often used loosely, so that almost any online talk about men and women is described as manosphere discourse. This study adopts a narrower definition. Six overlapping but distinct categories are distinguished below, moving from the broadest to the most specific, and only the narrower categories are treated as manosphere content.

Masculinity discourse. Any talk that defines, prescribes or evaluates what men are or should be, for example as providers, protectors, reliable husbands or emotionally restrained figures. It is the widest category and is not inherently anti-feminist: it includes conventional, religious and progressive positions as well as reactionary ones (Connell, 2005; Morrell et al., 2012).

Anti-feminist discourse. Talk that opposes feminism, its claims or its gains, for example by dismissing reports of gender-based violence, blaming feminism for social problems or ridiculing women's rights claims. It is older and broader than the manosphere, and it is voiced by conservative, religious and populist actors with no connection to manosphere communities (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Ralph-Morrow, 2022).

Manosphere discourse. The umbrella term for discourse produced within, or drawing on, the interconnected online communities of men's rights activists, pick-up artists, the Red Pill, Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) and incels (Ging, 2019; Han & Yin, 2023). It is distinguished from the two broader categories by three recurring features: the claim that men, not women, are the disadvantaged sex in a social order organised around women's interests; an essentialist account of women as naturally hypergamous, deceptive or instrumental; and a shared subcultural lexicon that includes terms such as "alpha" and "beta", "red pill", "hypergamy" and "high-value man" (Farrell et al., 2020; Krendel, 2020).

Red-pill discourse. The epistemological core of the manosphere. It presents itself as an awakening to concealed truths about female nature and the sexual marketplace, and recasts gender relations as a strategic game in which men must learn to manage women's supposedly innate manipulation (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022; Van Valkenburgh, 2021). It often borrows the language of evidence and self-improvement to make these claims appear rational (Rothermel, 2023).

MGTOW discourse. A strand of red-pill thinking that draws the conclusion of withdrawal. Marriage and long-term relationships with women are framed as a loss for men, and separation from women as rational self-protection (Jones et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2020).

Incel discourse. The discourse of men who identify as involuntarily celibate. It explains their sexual exclusion through rigid hierarchies of attractiveness and status, and often expresses resentment, at times violent, towards women and sexually successful men (Ging, 2019; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022).

Operational definition. In this study, an item or extract is classified as manosphere-specific only when it does more than discuss men, women, marriage or gender roles. It must

either use manosphere lexicon or advance at least one of the propositions above: that women are innately manipulative or hypergamous, that men are the victimised sex in a feminised order, or that men should withdraw from women and marriage. Content that opposes feminism or sexual minorities without these propositions is classified as manosphere-adjacent, and gender-related content that meets neither criterion is classified as general masculinity discourse. These three labels are attached to every extract in Section 7, so that the evidence for manosphere-specific claims is kept distinct from the wider gendered talk in which it is embedded. In terms of the codebook (Section 6.3), the global manosphere trope code captures manosphere-specific material. Female manipulation and male victimhood are manosphere-specific when they are framed as innate female traits or as harm done to men by women or feminism, and adjacent otherwise. Anti-feminist grievance is manosphere-adjacent, while provider–protector masculinity and emotional stoicism belong to general masculinity discourse. None of the extracts reported in Section 7 belongs to incel discourse; the category is defined so that the network's position within the wider manosphere can be stated precisely.

3. Platformed Visibility and Debates on Algorithmic Radicalisation

3.1. Engagement Economies and Ideological Escalation

Algorithmic radicalisation describes the process by which platform recommendation systems expose users to progressively more extreme content because of engagement optimisation. Platforms that maximise engagement metrics, including time on site, reshares, and comment activity, systematically reward content that provokes strong affective responses. Because outrage, moral disgust, and identity threat are among the most reliably engagement-generating stimuli, engagement-optimised platforms create structural incentives to produce and amplify ideologically extreme content (Massanari, 2017). However, its consequences are asymmetric, since patriarchal resentment and misogynistic provocation have been argued to be particularly effective at generating the engagement responses that such systems reward.

Mamié et al. (2021) report that engagement with anti-feminist communities on Reddit and YouTube preceded later engagement with far-right material, and recommendation systems have been proposed as one mechanism for such pathways. Users drawn in by apparently moderate self-improvement content may thus be progressively exposed to more extreme material.

Haslop et al. (2024) document the mainstreaming of manosphere content through what they term affective homosocial currencies: shared cultural objects, including memes, catchphrases, and video clips, that circulate within male peer groups and produce social belonging through collective engagement with misogynistic content. Their study of the "Andrew Tate effect" among teenage boys shows that sharing influencer content is an active social practice through which masculine identities are performed within peer networks.

Botto and Gottzén (2024) complicate straightforward radicalisation narratives by examining vulnerability and agency in young men's engagement with manosphere content. They find that men's pathways into manosphere communities are shaped by pre-existing experiences of social marginalisation, relational disappointment, and identity insecurity, and that the manosphere's appeal lies precisely in its capacity to offer coherent explanations for these experiences within a framework that validates masculine grievance. This is pertinent in South Africa, where structural factors including youth unemployment, educational inequality, and post-apartheid social disruption may create conditions of vulnerability that manosphere rhetoric is well positioned to exploit.

These accounts are used here as context, not as hypotheses that this study tests. Causal claims about recommendation systems require ranking data, algorithmic audits or user-level

exposure data, none of which were available for X in this study. The analysis therefore adopts the narrower concept of platformed visibility: the observable reach and engagement that content attains through platform features such as hashtags, cross-tagging, reposting and quote-posting (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Gillespie, 2014). Platformed visibility is an outcome that can be documented from public metrics; algorithmic amplification is one possible, but unobserved, contributor to it.

3.2. Misogyny Detection and Digital Methodology

The automated detection of misogynistic content has become a significant subfield of natural language processing. Pamungkas et al. (2020) show that lexical features, including sexist slurs, woman-related terms and hate-lexicon categories, are informative for detecting misogyny on Twitter across languages and domains, an insight that informed the tiered keyword strategy used in this study (Section 6.2).

Hopton and Langer (2022) take a discursive approach to manosphere content on Twitter, demonstrating through discourse analysis of two datasets of anti-feminist tweets (around 1000 tweets in total) that men are constructed as victims, women as a monstrous other, and gendered power hierarchies are reinforced, often through rape discourse. Such content is organised by coherent ideological logics traceable through close reading as well as computation.

Simões and Silveirinha (2022) extend this analysis to street harassment discourse, showing how legal debates about gender-based violence intersect with popular misogyny in social media spaces to produce a discursive environment in which feminist frameworks are systematically contested and delegitimised. This insight is particularly relevant for South Africa, where high rates of gender-based violence intersect with a vibrant online culture to create conditions in which debates about masculinity, responsibility, and victimhood carry acute political stakes.

4. The South African Context

4.1. Masculinities, Media, and Post-Apartheid Transformations

South Africa presents a distinctive context for the study of the manosphere. The country's democratic transition produced formal commitments to gender equality that are among the most advanced in the world, including a constitutional framework that prohibits discrimination based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Yet this formal equality framework coexists with persistent structural gender inequality, among the highest rates of femicide and gender-based violence globally, and a cultural landscape in which plural, racially and economically stratified masculinities retain significant popular legitimacy (Langa, 2020; Morrell et al., 2012). This tension between formal equality and substantive inequality creates the ideological conditions within which manosphere discourse can position itself as a corrective to alleged feminist overreach while simultaneously defending arrangements of male dominance that the constitutional framework nominally prohibits.

South African and African masculinities scholarship has long cautioned against reading African men through a single, deficit lens. Ratele (2008) shows that ruling masculinities in Africa are shaped by occupational and income attainment and by age, and argues that neglecting how being male intersects with unemployment obscures why some men resist anti-violence efforts. Shefer et al. (2010) observe that psychological knowledge about men has been built largely on white, middle-class American men, which makes locally grounded research on African masculinities necessary. The concept of hegemonic masculinity has also been carried into practice, informing gender interventions with men in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2015).

This tension is acutely visible in South African digital culture. Gqola (2015) argues that sexual violence in South Africa functions as a mechanism of patriarchal power that is normalised through a wider "female fear factory" of social discourses regulating women's conduct, a framing that helps explain why feminist critique online is so frequently met with organised hostility rather than reasoned disagreement. The platform politics of this backlash have been documented directly. Reneses and Bosch (2023) analyse South African men's responses to the anti-femicide hashtag #MenAreTrash and the reactive #WomenAreTrash, finding that the overwhelmingly negative male response reflected a defence of masculinity and a deflection of structural critique rather than engagement with the violence the original campaign named. In a companion study of the satirical #MensConference hashtag, Reneses and Bosch (2022) show that Black Twitter operates as a key vehicle for both the reproduction and the contestation of hegemonic masculinity, with men policing one another's masculinity through in-group dynamics that reinforce patriarchal hegemony even as alternative and progressive models surface. These studies establish that the dynamics this paper examines on X are not novel impositions of a foreign manosphere but the latest, platform-intensified expression of a longer-standing contest over masculinity in South African networked publics.

More recent work extends this picture. Okech (2021) shows how anger at femicide in Kenya and South Africa built feminist digital counterpublics around #MenAreTrash and #JusticeForSharon that push back against anti-feminist movements. Sele (2026) finds that men's counter-discourses to #MenAreTrash acknowledged the prevalence of gender-based violence but rejected the hashtag as over-generalising and alienating. Mokgele (2026) examines the gendered policing of men who paint their nails on TikTok in a South African context, showing that masculine boundary-work now extends across platforms.

The proliferation of podcast culture in South Africa, and particularly the influence of platforms such as Podcast and Chill, has created new infrastructure for the circulation of masculinist discourse. These platforms occupy a middle position between mainstream media and subcultural content. They are visible enough to reach large audiences, but informal enough to circulate content that more regulated media environments would scrutinise more closely. The viral circulation of clips from such platforms onto X is a key mechanism through which masculinist content acquires the affective intensity and social reach characteristic of manosphere communities.

Kyparissiadis and Skoulas (2021) discuss the concept of the "manconomy" to describe the economic infrastructure that sustains manosphere content production, including subscription platforms, merchandise, and coaching services. This concept applies directly to the South African context, where influencer culture has produced a class of online personalities who earn income by producing masculine performance content. The monetisation of masculinist identity matters for understanding the incentives that shape content production: creators who depend on audience engagement for income have structural reasons to escalate provocative content and cultivate a community identity defined by hostility to perceived enemies, including feminist voices.

4.2. Global Manosphere Dynamics in African and Local Contexts

The global manosphere is not a uniform formation: it encompasses a range of ideological tendencies that are differentially distributed across national contexts. Horta Ribeiro et al. (2021) document the manosphere's evolution across multiple web platforms, showing that its growth has been characterised by increasing interconnection between previously separate communities and the progressive mainstreaming of content once confined to subcultural spaces. Mainstreaming is mediated by platforms but shaped by local conditions that determine which narratives resonate with specific audiences.

Wright et al. (2020) examine MGTOW communities, one of the principal formations within the manosphere, demonstrating that their discourse is organised around a thoroughgoing withdrawal from heterosexual relationships framed as rational self-protection against feminine manipulation. Jones et al. (2020) extend this analysis to examine the production of misogynistic online harassment within MGTOW communities, showing, through an analysis of more than 10,000 tweets from three of the group's most active Twitter users, that this harassment is strongly misogynistic while being framed as rational. These findings are directly relevant to the South African context, where similar patterns of online harassment have been documented in response to feminist commentary on X (Reneses & Bosch, 2023). Johanssen (2021) adds that such participation is both libidinal and ideological, as perceived anonymity licenses the pleasurable expression of ordinarily suppressed hostility.

African scholarship offers a corrective to this Euro-American literature. Studies of Kenyan and South African networked publics show that X, formerly Twitter, has long been a site where gender, race and nation are contested (Bosch, 2017; Nyabola, 2018). This work sits within a wider literature on digital activism in sub-Saharan Africa (Mutsvairo, 2016). Feminist campaigns such as #EndRapeCulture have also used protest and the politics of experience to contest sexual violence (Gouws, 2018). Pan-African feminist research documents how online gender-based violence silences women across the continent (Iyer et al., 2020), while Afro-feminist theory cautions against uncritically importing Northern categories (Tamale, 2020). Most closely related, Maina (2025) shows that Kenyan "alpha male" influencers localise manosphere rhetoric through mixed languages, and Crigler (2024) documents how opaque platform algorithms shape African creators' visibility. African manospheres should therefore be analysed as locally situated formations, not derivative copies.

5. Research Questions

The study is guided by three research questions. Each addresses a different level of the case, and all three are confined to the Podcast and Chill Network's discourse on X during the observation window.

i. How does the Podcast and Chill Network frame hegemonic masculine identities in the video teasers it posts on X, and which frames attain the greatest visible reach?
ii. How do audiences reinforce, negotiate or contest the network's framing in replies, quote-posts, reposts and adaptations?
iii. How are globally circulating manosphere tropes combined with locally specific constructions of South African masculinity, both in the network's posts and in audience responses?

RQ1 concerns what the producer posts and how visible it becomes; RQ2 concerns what audiences do with that content; and RQ3 cuts across both to examine how global and local material are combined. The findings in Section 7 are reported in the same order.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research Design

The study employed a qualitative netnographic single-case design (Kozinets, 2020; Stake, 1995) to examine how hegemonic masculinity and anti-feminist discourse were produced, circulated and contested on X. The Podcast and Chill Network (@podcastwithmacg) was selected as an instrumental case because it is among South Africa's most widely followed podcast brands and routinely circulates gender-relations content through short video clips on X. Netnography was appropriate because manosphere communication depends on specialised language, humour, memes, hashtags and culturally specific references that

require contextual interpretation rather than frequency measurement alone (Farrell et al., 2020). Observation was non-participatory: the researcher did not like, repost, reply to or otherwise influence the sampled conversations.

Case selection followed an information-rich, instrumental logic (Stake, 1995). The network was chosen not for representativeness but because it combined four features relevant to the research questions. These were (i) national prominence as a South African podcast brand with an established X presence (approximately 431,100 followers at the time of data collection); (ii) regular circulation of gender-relations content as short clips on X, which made producer framing and audience uptake observable together; (iii) the use of local idiom and South African referents alongside global manosphere vocabulary, which made RQ3 answerable; and (iv) public accounts and replies, which permitted non-intrusive observation. The findings are therefore offered as an analytically transferable account of one prominent network, not a profile of South African podcast culture.

The design is qualitative throughout. Numbers appear in the paper in two limited roles. First, counts of coded items and units show how widely a theme or reading position was distributed across the 58 items, which helps readers judge whether an illustrative post is typical or exceptional. Second, the visible engagement of the 28 video teasers is summarised with medians in order to compare the reach of different frames. Both are descriptive summaries of qualitative coding, a practice described as 'quantitising' (Sandelowski et al., 2009). They do not make the study mixed-methods or statistical (Maxwell, 2010). No inferential tests were run; the counts are not estimates of prevalence beyond the corpus, and every count is read alongside the textual evidence presented in Section 7.

The counts nonetheless carry interpretive weight, because several of the study's theoretical concepts are claims about pattern and proportion rather than about single posts. First, hegemony in Connell's (2005) sense refers to a configuration of masculinity that is culturally ascendant, routinely reproduced and taken for granted, not merely present. Whether a frame occupies that position within the network therefore depends partly on how widely and how regularly it recurs across items, which is what the item counts show. Second, Connell locates hegemony in consent rather than coercion. The ratio of reinforcing to dissenting replies, and the share of dissent that meets sanctioning, indicate whether the dominant reading (Hall, 1980) is the preferred reading in the network's publics and whether contestation is tolerated or policed. Third, an economy of visibility is relational, because some content is made more visible than other content (Banet-Weiser, 2018). The claim that conflict framing is advantaged can therefore be made only by comparing the visible reach of frames. Fourth, the claim that global tropes are localised (RQ3) is a claim about regularity, and a co-occurrence rate shows whether local anchoring is the ordinary form in which those tropes circulate or an occasional embellishment. In each case the number does not replace interpretation. It sets the scope of an interpretive claim, gives precision to terms such as "most", "routinely" and "rarely", and guards against building an argument on vivid but atypical posts (Maxwell, 2010). Section 7 states, alongside each count, the theoretical claim it informs.

6.2. Data Collection and Sampling

The observation window covered posts published between 1 and 18 June 2026. June was selected because it combines South Africa's Youth Month, including Youth Day (16 June), with international Men's Health Month, periods in which youth identity, male mental health and gender relations attract heightened public commentary; the window closed on 18 June to capture Youth Day and its immediate aftermath. Data were extracted retrospectively over two weeks (19 June–2 July 2026), so that every post had accumulated engagement before metrics were recorded. Grok (xAI), X's integrated AI assistant with real-time access

to public posts, served as the data extraction tool rather than merely a search interface; its outputs were treated as retrieval leads, while the original X posts constituted the data. Extraction followed six steps, and the composition of the final sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Composition of the purposively selected sample.

Data Category	Operational Unit	Analytical Purpose	*n*
Video teaser posts	An original captioned post containing or linking to a programme video clip	Examination of producer-led masculine framing and content presentation	28
Audience reply and quote-post threads	A bounded interaction thread containing substantive audience uptake	Analysis of endorsement, negotiation, dissent and boundary policing	14
Hashtag campaigns and repost clusters	A circulation cluster organised around a hashtag or repost pathway	Examination of visibility, repetition and cross-post circulation	9
Meme and quotation adaptations	Derivative content that reformulated or recontextualised an original claim	Analysis of humour, intertextuality and ideological adaptation	7
Total			58

Step 1—Keyword frame. Sixteen terms were organised into three tiers (Table 2): network identifiers ("@podcastwithmacg," "Podcast and Chill," "#PodcastandChill," "#ReadTheRoom"); global manosphere lexicon ("alpha male," "red pill," "manosphere," "gender wars"); and gender-relations and local terms ("masculinity," "feminism," "women," "marriage," "male mental health," "gender roles," "grootman," "South African men"). Tier 2 and Tier 3 terms were always combined with a Tier 1 identifier to keep retrieval anchored to the network.

Step 2—Seed retrieval. A standardised Grok prompt requested all original posts from @podcastwithmacg within the window (from:podcastwithmacg since:2026-06-01 until:2026-06-19), returned as a table listing post URL, timestamp, text, media type, hashtags and visible engagement (views, likes, reposts, quotes, replies and bookmarks).

Step 3—Interaction retrieval. For each seed post, Grok was prompted to extract public replies, quote-posts and publicly visible reposting accounts, and to identify meme or quotation adaptations reusing the clip, caption or hashtag. Because plain reposts carry no text, they were analysed as circulation data used to reconstruct repost clusters.

Step 4—Keyword sweeps. Each Tier 1 + Tier 2/3 combination was run separately to capture network-related discourse not attached to a seed post, such as hashtag clusters.

Step 5—Verification. Every Grok-returned item was opened on X and checked for existence, date, authorship and wording, and engagement was re-recorded from the native interface. Items that could not be located or did not match Grok's output were discarded (32 of the 120 returned items; Table 2), leaving 88 verified items.

Step 6—Logging and saturation. A search log recorded the prompt, date, term, URL and inclusion decision for every item. Sweeps stopped when repeated queries returned no new eligible items.

Three features of Grok-assisted retrieval (Grok version 4.3) bear on the evidence. First, Grok's outputs are generative and are not guaranteed to be complete or repeatable, since the same prompt may return different items on different runs. Each prompt was therefore treated as a lead-generating query, and only items located and checked on X entered the dataset. Second, the precision of retrieval can be estimated from the verification step: 88 of

the 120 returned items (73.3%) were confirmed on X, while 32 (26.7%) could not be located or did not match Grok's output (Table 2). Third, recall cannot be estimated, because X offers no independent index of all eligible posts; relevant posts, posts deleted before extraction and replies collapsed by X's reply ordering may be missing.

Table 2. Search terms, retrieval and retention.

Tier	Search Term	Returned by Grok	Verified on X	Retained	Operational Role in Representing Manosphere Discourse
1	@podcastwithmacg	26	21	15	Network anchor; seed posts
1	Podcast and Chill	17	13	9	Network mentions beyond the account
1	#PodcastandChill	12	9	6	Hashtag circulation clusters
1	#ReadTheRoom	9	6	4	Cross-promotional hashtag
2	alpha male	6	4	3	Global dominance and status hierarchy lexicon
2	red pill	5	3	2	Global "awakening" and anti-feminist lexicon
2	manosphere	3	2	1	Explicit self- or other-labelling
2	gender wars	5	3	2	Adversarial framing of gender relations
3	masculinity	7	5	3	General masculine identity discourse
3	feminism	5	3	2	Anti-feminist grievance
3	women	7	5	3	Gendered othering and manipulation tropes
3	marriage	5	4	2	Provider–protector and relationship economy
3	male mental health	5	3	2	Male victimhood and "crisis" tropes
3	gender roles	3	2	1	Traditionalist role prescription
3	grootman	3	3	2	Local idiom of senior masculine authority
3	South African men	2	2	1	National and local identity anchor
Total		120	88	58	

Note. Items returned by more than one term were counted once, under the first term that returned them; retained items therefore sum to 58. Tier 2 and 3 terms were always combined with a Tier 1 identifier.

Purposive sampling was then applied to the verified pool (88 items). Content was included when it was public, published within the window, connected to the selected network, concerned gender or masculinity, and contained sufficient textual or interactional material for interpretation. Duplicates, unrelated promotional content, private accounts and posts using relevant hashtags without substantive gender discussion were excluded. A search term did not, by itself, qualify an item as manosphere discourse; inclusion required at least one substantive codebook category (Table 3). Because the inclusion criteria concerned gender and masculinity broadly, the corpus deliberately contains general masculinity and anti-feminist content alongside manosphere-specific material. RQ1 asks how the network frames masculinity as a whole, and the distinction between these categories is drawn in the analysis (Sections 2.3 and 6.3) rather than at the sampling stage. Engagement figures were captured once, at verification, and are treated as snapshot indicators. After screening, 30 verified items were excluded and 58 were retained (Tables 1 and 2), so that 62 of the 120 Grok returns were removed in total.

The four data categories are not equivalent units (Table 1). Video teasers are single producer posts; threads aggregate many replies; hashtag and repost clusters are circulation pathways; and adaptations are derivative posts. The 58 items are therefore treated as a purposive qualitative corpus, not as a sample of comparable observations. Item counts (Table 3) describe how widely a code is distributed across the corpus, not its statistical

prevalence. Comparisons of visible reach are restricted to the 28 video teasers, the only category of like-for-like units with comparable engagement metrics (Section 7.1), and reading positions are reported only for replies within the 14 threads.

Table 3. Codebook, coding frequencies and research-question alignment.

Code	Operational Definition	Coded Units (*n*)	Items (of 58)	RQ
Provider–protector masculinity	Men's worth framed through provision, protection or reputational standing	35	24	RQ1
Male victimhood	Men constructed as disadvantaged, misunderstood or in crisis	27	19	RQ1, RQ3
Anti-feminist grievance	Feminism or women's rights blamed for men's problems	31	21	RQ1, RQ2
Female manipulation	Women portrayed as deceptive, hypergamous or instrumental	29	20	RQ1, RQ3
Emotional stoicism	Emotional restraint praised as strength or lamented as burden	18	14	RQ3
Global manosphere trope	Transnational lexicon or narrative (alpha/beta, red pill, hypergamy, "crisis of masculinity")	38	30	RQ3
Local anchor	South African idiom, celebrity or sport, legal or economic referent	43	35	RQ3
Audience reinforcement	Reply or quote affirming, extending or defending the original frame	46	18	RQ2
Dissent	Reply or quote contesting or rejecting the frame	23	12	RQ2
Hostile sanctioning	Ridicule, insult or quote-ratioing directed at a dissenting user	16	9	RQ2
Platform visibility	Hashtags, cross-tagging, serialisation or repost pathways	41	32	RQ1

Note. Coded units comprise items coded at item level plus individual replies within the 14 threads; one unit may carry several codes. The Items column counts each of the 58 items (including a thread) once if it contains at least one unit carrying the code. All coding was conducted manually by the researcher.

6.3. Data Analysis

Analysis combined critical discourse analysis and thematic coding in four stages. First, each item was read in context and its claim, tone and ideological position recorded. Second, a deductive codebook was developed from Connell's theory and the research questions and refined inductively into eleven codes (Table 3). The coding unit was the item for posts, adaptations and clusters, and the individual reply within the 14 threads. Replies were also coded for reading position (dominant, negotiated or oppositional; Hall, 1980) and for the commenter's self-presented gender where a display name, pronouns or profile text made this explicit; unclassifiable replies were excluded from gender comparisons.

Third, the researcher manually coded all units against the codebook, re-reading each unit in its original context on X. No AI tool was used for coding or analysis. A unit could carry several codes; reading position was assigned to each classifiable reply according to its stance towards the frame of the post it answered; and, because the codebook was refined inductively, units coded before a code was added or revised were re-read against the final eleven-code version. Fourth, code frequencies were tallied and cross-tabulated by data category as

descriptive summaries (Section 6.1), and co-occurrence between global-trope and local-anchor codes was used to answer RQ3 (Section 7.3). Visibility was assessed through comparative reach analysis of visible engagement across discursive frames (Section 7.1); because X's ranking system is proprietary, these metrics are treated as observable outcomes of visibility, not evidence of algorithmic intent. Cross-checking themes across posts, replies, hashtags and adaptations strengthened credibility (Krendel, 2020; Krendel et al., 2022).

The analysis is textual and interactional. It examined the wording of captions, replies and quote-posts, together with platform features such as hashtags, cross-tagging, posting cadence and reposting. The video clips were viewed only to establish the context of each caption. Camera framing, body language, dress, visual composition, colour symbolism and editing conventions were not systematically coded, and the study therefore makes no multimodal claim. A full multimodal analysis in the sense of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) would require systematic coding of these visual resources and is identified as a direction for future research (Section 8.1). Finally, each extract reported in Section 7 was labelled as manosphere-specific, manosphere-adjacent or general masculinity discourse, following the definitions in Section 2.3.

6.4. Codebook Review, Recording Procedure, Reflexivity and Positionality

Because the corpus was coded by a single researcher, reliability was approached through the qualitative criteria of dependability and confirmability rather than inter-coder agreement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Agreement statistics are one way of showing that codes were applied consistently, but they are not the only way, and they are less informative when coding is interpretive and carried out by one analyst (McDonald et al., 2019). The procedures followed instead are set out below.

Codebook review. The codebook was reviewed by the researcher in iterative cycles. The initial deductive codes, derived from Connell's (2005) theory and the research questions, were applied to the items in turn. Where an item did not fit an existing code, or where two definitions overlapped, the definition was rewritten, an inclusion or exclusion note was added, or a new code was created. Once the eleven-code version was settled, all units coded under earlier versions were re-read and recoded against it (Section 6.3). No second coder or external reviewer examined the codebook or a sample of coded items; this is acknowledged as a limitation in Section 8.1.

Recording procedure. Coding decisions were entered in a coding record linked to the search log (Section 6.2). For each unit, the record held its search-log reference, data category and date, the codes assigned, the reading position (for replies), the commenter's self-presented gender where this was explicit, and engagement at verification. The search log, the coding record and the final codebook together form an audit trail through which the path from post to code to finding can be followed (Nowell et al., 2017).

Analytic memos and reflexivity. Analytic memos were written throughout coding. They recorded the reasoning behind decisions on ambiguous units, changes to code definitions and the interpretations that later shaped the findings. A separate reflexive diary recording the researcher's personal reactions to the material was not kept. The memos therefore document analytic rather than personal reflection, which narrows the record of how the researcher's own responses may have shaped interpretation; this is also noted in Section 8.1.

Researcher positionality. The researcher approached the network as an academic analyst of digital media and gender, not as a member of its audience, and did not interact with it during observation (Section 6.1). The analysis takes a critical stance towards gender inequality, consistent with the theoretical framework, and this stance shapes what is read as reinforcement or dissent. To limit the risk that it settled the findings in advance, negotiated

and oppositional readings were coded with the same care as dominant ones, replies were interpreted in the context of the whole thread rather than in isolation, and readings flagged as uncertain in the memos were reported tentatively. Interpreting local references such as "grootman" also required contextual knowledge of South African idiom and popular culture. Where a reference could be read in more than one way, this was recorded in the memos and the reading was kept cautious.

6.5. Ethical Considerations

No screenshots, profile images or full platform interfaces were reproduced because prior permission had not been obtained and visual material could compromise confidentiality or enable re-identification. Because visual features were not analysed (Section 6.3), no visual material is described or reproduced. Usernames and direct identifiers were removed before analysis, and self-presented gender is reported only in aggregate. Posts by the network, a commercial brand account, are quoted verbatim. Audience replies are quoted without usernames or other identifiers, are kept short, and were selected to exclude replies that disclose personal or sensitive information; one reply is paraphrased. Emojis are omitted from all extracts. The researcher retained final responsibility for all coding and interpretation, consistent with internet research ethics (Franzke et al., 2020).

6.6. Generative Artificial Intelligence Disclosure

Grok (xAI) version 4.3 was used for data extraction (Section 6.2); all coding and analysis were conducted manually by the researcher (Section 6.3). The author used Claude Sonnet 4.8 (Anthropic) to prepare this manuscript, including developing the initial structure, screening the literature, editing the language, and improving readability. The author independently verified all generated content, conducted the literature review, interpreted the findings, and takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

7. Findings and Analysis

This section presents evidence from the 58 retained items, organised by research question: producer framing (RQ1, Section 7.1), audience responses (RQ2, Section 7.2) and global–local construction (RQ3, Section 7.3). Each subsection opens with illustrative extracts, then provides descriptive counts or visible engagement to show how typical they are, followed by brief interpretation. Section 8 develops the theoretical implications. The analytic tables in this section profile individual posts by their verbal, platform and intertextual features; visual features were not coded (Section 6.3). Each extract is also labelled as manosphere-specific, manosphere-adjacent or general masculinity discourse (Section 2.3). Of the twelve extracts, two are manosphere-specific (Extracts 3 and 7), four are manosphere-adjacent (Extracts 4, 8, 10 and 11) and five belong to general masculinity or gender-relations discourse (Extracts 1, 2, 5, 6 and 12); Extract 9 contests the programme's value rather than its gender politics. The general extracts are retained because they show the conventional ground on which manosphere-specific content is built, not as evidence of manosphere discourse in themselves. Following Franzke et al. (2020), posts are represented through structured analytic tables rather than screenshots. Network posts are quoted verbatim, audience replies are quoted without usernames, and emojis are omitted (Section 6.5).

At corpus level (Table 3), the most widely distributed codes were local anchor (35 of 58 items, 60.3%), platform visibility (32, 55.2%) and global manosphere trope (30, 51.7%), followed by the thematic codes provider–protector masculinity (24, 41.4%), anti-feminist grievance (21, 36.2%), female manipulation (20, 34.5%), male victimhood (19, 32.8%) and emotional stoicism (14, 24.1%). Among audience codes, reinforcement appeared in

18 items (31.0%; 46 units), dissent in 12 (20.7%; 23 units) and hostile sanctioning in 9 (15.5%; 16 units), giving two reinforcing units for every dissenting unit. Global tropes and local anchors co-occurred in 24 items, 41.4% of the corpus and 80.0% of items containing a global trope (Section 7.3). The posts analysed in Sections 7.1–7.3 are presented as illustrations of these corpus-level patterns, not as stand-alone evidence.

These distributions carry theoretical weight. Under the mapping set out in Section 2.3, manosphere-specific material, captured by the global manosphere trope code, appeared in just over half of the items (30 of 58), while general masculinity codes such as provider–protector masculinity were almost as widely distributed. Manosphere content in this network was therefore common but not dominant, and it circulated alongside, rather than in place of, conventional masculinity talk, which is the pattern that accounts of the manosphere's mainstreaming would lead one to expect (Haslop et al., 2024). The higher frequency of local anchors than of global tropes indicates that South African reference points, rather than imported vocabulary, formed the broader ground of the network's gender talk. The two-to-one ratio of reinforcing to dissenting units shows that the dominant reading prevailed without silencing contestation, consistent with Connell's (2005) view of hegemony as ascendancy secured through consent and always open to challenge.

7.1. Producer Framing: Provider–Protector and Gender-Conflict Scripts (RQ1)

The network's own video teasers framed masculinity through two main scripts. The first, a provider–protector script, presented marriage as a source of men's reputation and reliability while denying that it advances women (Extracts 1 and 2; Table 4). The second, a gender-conflict script, cast women as natural manipulators and extended the conflict to the queer community (Extracts 3 and 4; Table 5).

> Extract 1 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, 3 June 2026; general masculinity discourse):* "Being married is great PR for men it seems like marriage gives men a cleaner image and a more reliable perception"
>
> Extract 2 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, 3 June 2026, second teaser; general masculinity discourse):* "being married and having kids doesn't promote women"
>
> Extract 3 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, 10 June 2026; manosphere-specific: red-pill discourse):* "Shamiso loves broke huns and she believes that women have a natural talent of manipulating men"
>
> Extract 4 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, 17 June 2026; manosphere-adjacent: anti-queer boundary policing):* "Phil finally calls out Musa Khawula including the Queer Community for being OPs on peoples success and do you think that Bisexual people are never satisfied"

Provider–protector masculinity was the most frequent thematic code, present in 24 of the 58 items (41.4%; Table 3), and the primary frame of 10 of the 28 video teasers (35.7%), the largest frame category (Table 6). Its prevalence matters theoretically. A configuration that frames over a third of the teasers and recurs in two-fifths of the corpus functions, in Connell's (2005) terms, as the network's taken-for-granted standard of manhood, the position against which more antagonistic content is measured. As Extracts 1 and 2 show, these posts repeatedly reframed relational commitment as reputational management. The clearest instance (Table 4) recodes marriage as "great PR for men", relocating masculine legitimacy from economic provision to self-presentation through a status-economy lexicon ("cleaner image," "reliable perception"). Read against the definitions in Section 2.3, however, Extracts 1 and 2 are not manosphere-specific. They belong to a wider, conventional masculinity discourse that treats marriage as a marker of male respectability, and similar claims circulate

in religious and mainstream settings. They are reported because the provider–protector script is the ground on which the network's manosphere-specific content builds, not as evidence of manosphere discourse in themselves.

Table 4. Discursive analysis: provider–protector post.

Analytic Dimension	Detail
Source & Date	@podcastwithmacg, 3 June 2026.
Engagement	221 likes·18 reposts·36,240 views.
Discursive Frame	Marriage reframed as reputational capital rather than partnership; described as "great PR for men."
Verbal Features	Status-economy lexicon ("cleaner image," "reliable perception") substitutes reputational for relational value.
Platform Features	Short-form video; #ReadTheRoom/#PodcastandChill cross-tagging; scheduled posting cadence.
Intertextual Links	Shares the status logic that red-pill discourse radicalises, but without its lexicon or claims about female nature; classified as general masculinity discourse (Section 2.3), combined with local "grootman" authority discourse.
Reading Positions	Dominant: accepts reputational frame. Negotiated: accepts frame, contests cynicism. Oppositional: rejects frame (Section 7.2).

Table 5. Discursive analysis: manipulation/gender-wars post.

Analytic Dimension	Detail
Source & Date	@podcastwithmacg, 10 June 2026.
Engagement	172 likes·15 reposts.
Discursive Frame	Gendered "manipulation" trope extended to AI-mediated dating disclosure and celebrity-relationship controversy.
Audience Bifurcation	Affirmation comes mainly from self-presented men. Dissenting replies from self-presented women attract hostile quote-engagement more often than dissent from men.
Local Anchoring	Incorporates the Mbenenge judicial conduct matter and abusive-marriage discussion, localising a transnational "gender wars" register.
Interpretive Link (Section 8)	Popular misogyny/asymmetric visibility economy (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

Table 6. Comparative visible reach by discursive frame (video teasers, $n = 28$).

Discursive Frame	Posts (n)	Median Views	Median Likes	Median Reposts	Median Quotes	Engagement Rate (%) †
Provider–protector	10	28,450	198	16	8	0.85
Male mental health/victimhood	6	19,680	165	22	10	1.12
Gender conflict/manipulation	8	42,360	312	38	24	1.02
Other gender relations	4	15,240	108	12	5	0.88
All teasers	28	27,150	194	20	10	0.96

Note. Metrics recorded at verification (19 June–2 July 2026). † (likes + reposts + quotes + replies) ÷ views × 100. Visible metrics indicate reach but not the operation of X's ranking system.

Platform features organised this framing. The teasers were short-form videos, typically tagged #PodcastandChill and/or #ReadTheRoom and released at a regular cadence (Table 4). The marriage-PR post recorded 36,240 views, 221 likes and 18 reposts at verification, against a provider–protector median of 28,450 and an all-teaser median of 27,150 views (Table 6).

The second producer script framed gender relations as conflict (Extracts 3 and 4; Table 5). Extract 3 presents manipulation as a natural female trait, while Extract 4 turns the conflict towards the queer community, casting it as an opponent of other people's success and bisexual people as "never satisfied". In Connell's (2005) terms, both define the hegemonic position against women and against subordinated, non-heterosexual identities. The two posts nonetheless differ in kind. Extract 3 is the clearest manosphere-specific producer post among the extracts: its claim that women have a "natural talent" for manipulating men restates the red-pill proposition that deceptiveness is an innate female trait (Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022). Extract 4 is manosphere-adjacent, because its hostility to the queer community polices subordinated sexualities without using the manosphere's lexicon or its propositions about women. Comparative reach analysis (Table 6) compared visible engagement across the discursive frames identified in the 28 teasers. Gender-conflict posts, addressing alleged female manipulation, AI-mediated dating disclosure or celebrity relationship controversy, recorded a median of 42,360 views and 24 quote-posts per post, against 28,450 views and 8 quote-posts for provider–protector posts, roughly 1.5 times the views and three times the quote-posts. The comparison matters theoretically because an economy of visibility is relational (Banet-Weiser, 2018). The frame that travelled furthest was the one closest to manosphere propositions, and the one that includes the clearest manosphere-specific producer post (Extract 3), whereas the conventional provider–protector frame stayed close to the corpus median. Engagement rate, however, was highest for male mental-health posts (1.12% against 1.02% for gender-conflict posts), so the asymmetry concerns reach and absolute engagement rather than engagement relative to views. Because these are visible metrics rather than ranking data, they indicate a visibility asymmetry favouring conflict framing but cannot isolate algorithmic effects from follower size, posting time or topic salience. With between four and ten posts per frame, the differences in medians are descriptive and were not tested statistically. For RQ1, the evidence indicates that the network framed hegemonic masculinity through two recurring scripts, provider–protector and gender conflict, organised by content design and hashtag-based circulation, and that conflict-framed teasers attained the greatest visible reach; whether X's ranking system contributed cannot be observed directly (Section 8.1).

7.2. Audience Responses: Reinforcement, Negotiation and Sanctioned Dissent (RQ2)

Audience responses are reported separately from the producer posts they answered. Extracts 5 to 7 come from the thread responding to the marriage-PR teaser (Extract 1) and show dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings in turn. Extracts 8 and 9 come from replies to the 17 June teaser (Extract 4).

> Extract 5 *(reply to the 3 June marriage-PR post; dominant reading; general masculinity discourse):* "Married man is more responsible than an unmarried man... that alone give trust, sense of long term and sense of reliance."

> Extract 6 *(reply, same thread; negotiated reading; general masculinity discourse):* "As a married ex, I learned that marriage is sometimes the best PR campaign a man will ever have. A wedding ring can make people trust you more than your actual character."

> Extract 7 *(reply, same thread; oppositional reading from an anti-marriage position; manosphere-specific: MGTOW-type discourse):* "Marriage is a loss not a gain for men. All successful succeeded when they were single and slowed down when they married... Women are radiation that take away the spark. I said what I said."

Extract 8 *(reply to the 17 June post; reinforcement; manosphere-adjacent: anti-queer moral-decline discourse):* "Unless generation pushing moral decay"

Extract 9 *(two replies to the 17 June post; dissent; not gender-specific):* "This is rubbish content"; "We are busy with football, this crap can wait"

The 14 reply and quote threads were coded at the level of the individual reply, and all three reading positions were present (Table 7). Affirmation outweighed contestation: audience reinforcement accounted for 46 coded units across 18 items, against 23 units of dissent across 12 items (Table 3). Affirming replies extended the provider–protector narrative through personal testimony and claims about married men's responsibility (Extract 5), and through in-group idiom such as "grootman". Negotiated replies accepted the reputational frame while exposing its instrumentalism, as when a commenter observed that a wedding ring can earn more trust than character (Extract 6). Not all oppositional readings came from a feminist or egalitarian position. The "radiation" reply (Extract 7) rejected the marriage-as-PR frame from an anti-marriage stance that echoes MGTOW withdrawal (Wright et al., 2020), treating women as a drain on men's success. It is the most manosphere-specific reply among the extracts, because it joins the MGTOW proposition that marriage costs men their success to an essentialising metaphor of women as a corrosive force. Extracts 5 and 6, by contrast, work within general masculinity discourse: they debate whether marriage makes men trustworthy without invoking female nature or male victimhood. On the 17 June teaser, replies divided between homophobic reinforcement framed as moral decline (Extract 8) and dismissals of the content as worthless or a distraction (Extract 9); the latter contested the programme's value rather than its gender politics.

Table 7. Audience reinforcement: reply/quote thread analysis.

Analytic Dimension	Detail
Source	Aggregated, anonymised reply/quote threads ($n = 14$), with the thread responding to the marriage-PR post (Table 4) as the illustrative case.
Thread Size	Replies and quote-posts across 14 threads, coded at reply level: 46 reinforcement, 23 dissent and 16 hostile-sanctioning units (Table 3).
Discursive Pattern	Affirmation through testimony about married men's reliability and local idiom ("grootman"); negotiated exposure of marriage as image management; oppositional rejection from an anti-marriage position ("Women are radiation").
Reading Positions	Dominant: affirms and extends frame. Negotiated: accepts frame, contesting instrumentalism. Oppositional: rejects frame; target of hostile sanctioning (9 items, 16 units; Table 3).
Interpretive Link (Section 8)	Participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) and networked publics (Boyd, 2010). Networked harassment of dissent (Marwick & Caplan, 2018).

Oppositional replies were treated differently. Hostile sanctioning, comprising ridicule, insult or quote-ratioing directed at dissenting users, was coded in 9 items (16 coded units; Table 3), so that dissent was met with sanctioning in three-quarters of the 12 items in which it appeared. These proportions set the scope of the interpretation of consent and policing. A two-to-one ratio shows that dominant readings prevailed without dissent disappearing, consistent with hegemony as ascendancy rather than total control (Connell, 2005). A sanctioning rate of three-quarters shows that contestation was policed routinely rather than occasionally, which is the condition Marwick and Caplan (2018) describe as networked harassment. Quote-ratioing, in which a higher-engagement quote-post is used to discredit the original, was among its recurring forms. Across the nine hashtag and

repost clusters (Table 1), the seed clips were redistributed by public accounts other than the network's own.

Audience uptake also appeared to divide along self-presented gender lines. In replies to the celebrity-relationship post (Table 5), affirmation of the original framing came mainly from self-presented men, while dissenting replies from self-presented women attracted hostile quote-engagement more often than dissent from men. For RQ2, these patterns show that audiences acted as co-producers who endorsed, extended and policed the network's framing, while dissent was present but sanctioned.

7.3. Global–Local Construction: Hybridising Manosphere Tropes (RQ3)

RQ3 spans both producer posts and audience responses. Extracts 10 to 12 show global manosphere repertoires attached to local referents; the post behind Extract 10 is analysed in Table 8.

Table 8. Discursive analysis: mental-health post.

Analytic Dimension	Detail
Source & Date	@podcastwithmacg, 11 June 2026.
Engagement	256 likes·35 reposts·18,192 views.
Discursive Frame	Male mental-health distress externalised via conspiratorial analogy and a celebrity sporting controversy.
Verbal Features	Conspiratorial/comedic register displaces structural explanation (unemployment, GBV) with absurdist causation.
Platform Features	#ReadTheRoom cross-promotion; episodic serialisation increases dwell time.
Intertextual Links	Grafts global "crisis of masculinity" trope onto local celebrity/sport referents (hybrid masculinity; Ging, 2019).
Reading Positions	Dominant: accepts externalisation, including replies that extend the analogy with local targets (Section 7.3). Negotiated: accepts the frame while contesting part of it. Oppositional: rejects the externalising frame.

> Extract 10 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, 11 June 2026; manosphere-adjacent: male-crisis narrative):* "What causes Men's Mental Health Problems Tsitsi comes with an interesting analogy of what could be the problem causing men's mental health ..."
>
> Extract 11 *(network post, @podcastwithmacg, #MusicPulse, 2 June 2026; manosphere-adjacent: anti-feminist discourse):* "... and people using GBV for PR"
>
> Extract 12 *(reply to the 3 June marriage-PR post; paraphrased; general masculinity discourse):* the commenter cites the Springboks, South Africa's national rugby team, as evidence that married men are reliable and professional.

RQ3 was addressed by cross-tabulating global-trope codes with local-anchor codes (Table 9). Of the 30 items containing a global manosphere trope (Table 3), 24 (80.0%) also contained at least one local anchor: South African idiom (e.g., "grootman"), celebrity or sport referents, a legal or judicial matter, or references to economic precarity. The most frequent pairing was status/"alpha" hierarchy × economic precarity/provider (5 items), whereas 6 items (20.0%) contained a global trope without any local anchor; a further 11 of the 35 items with a local anchor carried no global trope.

Table 9. Co-occurrence of global manosphere tropes and local anchors (items, N = 58).

Global Trope	Local Idiom	Celebrity/ Sport	Legal/ Judicial	Economic Precarity/Provider	No Local Anchor
Status/"alpha" hierarchy	4	3	1	5	2
Male victimhood/"crisis"	2	3	1	4	1
Female manipulation/hypergamy	2	2	4	3	2
Anti-feminist grievance	2	1	3	3	1
Total (co-occurrences)	10	9	9	15	6

Note. Cells report items in which both codes co-occurred; an item may appear in more than one cell. Row totals: status/"alpha" hierarchy 15; male victimhood 11; female manipulation 13; anti-feminist grievance 10; 49 co-occurrences in all, across the 30 items containing a global trope (Table 3), of which 24 carried at least one local anchor and 6 carried none.

The proportion matters for the theoretical claim of hybridisation. Had global tropes appeared mostly without local anchors, the data would support an account of importation. A co-occurrence rate of 80.0% indicates instead that localisation was the ordinary condition under which global tropes circulated in this network (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ging, 2019). Conversely, the 11 locally anchored items without a global trope show that much of the network's locally inflected gender talk was not manosphere-specific, consistent with the classification in Section 2.3.

Legal and domestic referents worked in the same way. The corpus drew on a judicial conduct matter (the Mbenenge tribunal) and on abusive-marriage discussion, with legal or judicial anchors co-occurring with global tropes nine times (Table 9), anchoring a transnational "gender wars" register in South African legal and domestic contexts. Extract 11 applies the reputational logic of the marriage-PR teaser to gender-based violence: where Extract 1 presents marriage as public relations for men, Extract 11 frames public talk about gender-based violence as a bid for publicity, consistent with Gqola's (2015) account of how feminist critique is trivialised. This is anti-feminist rather than manosphere-specific content: the dismissal of gender-based violence claims is shared by wider conservative and populist discourse and does not depend on manosphere lexicon. Extract 12 anchors the global script of the reliable married man in national sport, a local referent that makes it familiar.

The mental-health post (Extract 10; Table 8) illustrates this pathway as a sequence. It (i) adopts the global "crisis of masculinity" trope, (ii) anchors it to a conspiratorial analogy and a celebrity sporting controversy, and (iii) omits the structural explanations, namely unemployment, the decline of the provider role and gender-based violence, that South African masculinities research identifies as central (Hunter, 2010; Ratele, 2016). Replies in its thread extended the analogy with further local targets, showing that hybridisation also occurred at the point of audience uptake. Emotional stoicism was coded in 14 items (24.1%; Table 3), where it was simultaneously praised as resilience and lamented as a burden. For RQ3, the data indicate that global templates circulated in this network predominantly in localised rather than unmodified form.

8. Discussion

This study set out to explain how hegemonic masculinity and anti-feminist discourse are produced, circulated and contested on X through a prominent South African podcast network, a question that manosphere research, concentrated in North American and European settings, has rarely asked of African digital cultures. Read together, the three findings support the paper's central argument: within this network, manosphere discourse is neither wholly imported nor purely local, but emerges through the interaction of global misogynis-

tic repertoires, local masculine anxieties, audience labour and platformed visibility. Each finding is interpreted below in relation to the research problem, the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework, before its contribution to that argument is drawn out.

The first finding suggests that provider–protector and gender-conflict performances were the network's most recurrent producer-led frames, and that conflict-framed posts achieved the greatest visible reach (median 42,360 views against 27,150 for all teasers; Table 6). Interpreted in context, the network's visibility rests on two complementary registers: a reassuring script of men as providers and protectors, and a provocative script of gender relations as conflict. Because male mental-health posts recorded the highest engagement rate, the advantage of conflict framing lies in reach rather than in the intensity of response. This matters because hegemonic masculinity circulates here not as marginal subcultural content but as high-reach entertainment attached to a nationally prominent brand. Connell's (2005) notion of the patriarchal dividend explains why such scripts travel: audiences need not embody the provider–protector ideal to benefit from consenting to it, so affirmation costs little while the hierarchy it endorses is preserved. The visibility pattern is consistent with Gillespie's (2014) view of algorithms as editorial actors and with Massanari's (2017) account of toxic technocultures. It also fits Banet-Weiser's (2018) account of an asymmetric economy of visibility, although the present data capture outcomes of visibility rather than ranking processes. It also accords with Horta Ribeiro et al. (2021), who show that manosphere content expands through cross-platform circulation. The study departs from this largely Northern literature, however, by demonstrating that visible reach in a South African network attaches not only to imported "red-pill" discourse but also to locally recognisable provider authority and celebrity commentary, resonating with Crigler's (2024) account of how African creators negotiate opaque platform visibility. Platform features such as hashtags, cross-tagging and quote-posting therefore appear to organise the visibility of hegemonic masculinity in this network; whether X's ranking system also contributes cannot be determined from visible metrics. The finding advances the paper's argument by identifying platformed visibility, rather than ideology alone, as one of the conditions under which masculinist discourse becomes popular.

The second finding revealed that audiences reproduced manosphere discourse through affirmation, personal testimony, ridicule and hostile quote-engagement directed at dissent. Reinforcing units outnumbered dissenting units by two to one, and hostile sanctioning appeared in nine of the twelve items containing dissent. Ideological reinforcement was therefore participatory rather than producer-driven alone. The network supplied the frame, but audiences extended, personalised and defended it. This addresses the second strand of the research problem, namely how audiences reinforce anti-feminist communities, by showing that much of the policing of gender norms was performed by users rather than by the creators themselves. This is consistent with Jenkins's (2006) account of participatory culture and with Boyd's (2010) concept of networked publics. The affective intensity of these exchanges recalls Papacharissi's (2015) affective publics, while the policing of dissent matches Marwick and Caplan's (2018) analysis of networked harassment. It also supports Hall's (1980) distinction between dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings, because audience responses were not uniform: negotiated and oppositional readings were present, but they were sanctioned unequally. Nor were oppositional readings uniformly progressive: some rejected the network's frame from a more extreme anti-marriage position (Extract 7), which complicates any assumption that dissent and feminist critique coincide. The pattern mirrors the contested terrain documented around #MenAreTrash, where feminist digital counterpublics (Okech, 2021) met men's counter-discourses (Sele, 2026). Unlike studies centred mainly on manosphere content (Krendel, 2020; Vallerga & Zurbriggen, 2022), this study shows how audience labour stabilises and polices masculine meanings in real time.

Theoretically, this extends hegemonic masculinity from the representation of an ideal to the everyday work of consent and sanction that keeps the ideal in place. It thus locates ideological power in interactions among creators, users and platform visibility, which is the relational claim at the centre of the paper's argument.

The third finding suggests that global manosphere tropes were translated through South African idioms, economic insecurity, celebrity culture and legal controversy: 24 of the 30 items carrying a global trope (80.0%) also carried a local anchor. Interpreted against the research problem, this indicates that "alpha male" and "red pill" vocabulary does not arrive in South Africa intact; it is made meaningful by attaching it to grootman authority, provider anxiety and familiar public controversies. This supports Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) view that hegemonic masculinity operates across local, regional and global levels, and Ging's (2019) account of hybrid masculinities. It also resonates with Hunter (2010) and Ratele (2016), who connect masculine identity to provider expectations and structural precarity. Morrell's (2001) account of changing masculinities in Southern Africa points the same way, suggesting that the provider ideal functions as the local hinge onto which transnational grievance is fastened. This pattern also extends the findings of Reneses and Bosch (2022, 2023), whose analyses of #MensConference, #MenAreTrash and #WomenAreTrash showed that South African networked publics already function as arenas in which men reproduce and police hegemonic masculinity while deflecting structural critique of gender-based violence. Whereas those studies examined organic hashtag debate, the present study shows the same defensive repertoire being curated and monetised by an influencer network and then circulated through platform features such as hashtags, reposts and quote-posts, lending empirical weight to Gqola's (2015) contention that the trivialisation of feminist critique is a routine mechanism through which patriarchal power is sustained. The study advances this scholarship by showing that localisation is not merely cultural adaptation; it appears to be a key mechanism through which global misogynistic repertoires acquire legitimacy and affective relevance in a Global South setting. Maina's (2025) evidence of similarly localised "alpha male" rhetoric in Kenya suggests an African, not only South African, pattern that warrants comparative study.

Taken together, the findings answer the study's three research questions and support its central argument. Firstly, hegemonic masculine identities were constructed through provider–protector narratives and conflict-oriented discourses that attracted considerable visibility (RQ1). Secondly, audiences reinforced these narratives while challenging and marginalising dissenting perspectives (RQ2). Thirdly, global masculine narratives were adapted to local contexts, making them more relevant and persuasive to audiences (RQ3). None of these processes alone accounts for the network's discourse. Its force lies in their combination: global repertoires supply a vocabulary of grievance, local masculine anxieties give that vocabulary resonance, audience labour stabilises it, and platform features make it visible. This relational account moves the study of the manosphere beyond the question of whether African digital masculinities are imported or indigenous, and positions platformed visibility and audience participation as the sites where that distinction is worked out in practice.

The classification of manosphere content (Section 2.3) adds a qualification to this account. Manosphere-specific material, such as the red-pill claim that women are natural manipulators (Extract 3) and the MGTOW-type rejection of marriage (Extract 7), was present, but it appeared embedded in, and was made more palatable by, a larger body of conventional talk about marriage, provision and reliability. The network is therefore better described as a mainstream bridge through which manosphere repertoires reach general audiences than as a manosphere community in its own right. This is consistent with accounts of the manosphere's mainstreaming (Haslop et al., 2024; Horta Ribeiro et al.,

2021). It also suggests that, in this South African setting, the boundary between everyday masculinity talk and manosphere discourse is porous, which makes that boundary itself an important object of analysis.

8.1. Limitations

This is a single-case netnography of one network on one platform over an 18-day window, with 58 retained items. Grok-assisted extraction depends on X's search index and may have omitted relevant or deleted posts, although manual verification removed inaccurate returns. Engagement metrics are snapshots, and X's proprietary ranking system could not be observed; visibility claims therefore rest on visible metrics rather than API or ranking data. The study therefore cannot establish algorithmic amplification or radicalisation: it observes neither ranking decisions nor users' exposure over time, and differences in visible reach may reflect follower networks, posting time, topic salience or paid promotion as much as ranking. Self-presented gender is an imperfect indicator. The analysis was confined to verbal text and platform features; the visual and audio dimensions of the clips, which may carry much of their persuasive force, were not coded. In addition, the corpus was assembled on broad gender-relations criteria, so it contains general masculinity and anti-feminist content alongside manosphere-specific material. The classification in Section 2.3 separates these in reporting, but it was applied to the extracts and the code definitions rather than through a separate coding pass. Coding was conducted manually by a single researcher, without a second coder or external review of the codebook, and analytic memos were kept but not a reflexive diary. No inter-coder agreement statistic is therefore reported; dependability rests on the procedures and audit trail described in Section 6.4. The findings offer analytical transferability to comparable influencer networks rather than statistical generalisation to South Africa's manosphere as a whole.

8.2. Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretically, the findings extend hegemonic masculinity theory into platform-mediated publics by showing, through code frequencies, reading positions and visible engagement, that masculine dominance in this network was jointly produced by discourse, audience labour and platform visibility. In practice, interventions should combine media literacy with platform accountability, transparent recommendation systems, researcher access to ranking data and stronger protections for oppositional voices. Focusing only on users would overlook engagement incentives that appear to favour gender-conflict content.

9. Conclusions

This study examined how hegemonic masculinity and anti-feminist discourse were reproduced on X through the Podcast and Chill Network by analysing 58 verified and purposively retained items published between 1 and 18 June 2026. Provider–protector and gender-conflict narratives were the network's most recurrent frames, and conflict-framed posts achieved the greatest visible reach. Audiences extended, legitimised and policed these narratives through reposts, affirming replies, ridicule and hostile engagement with dissenting voices, particularly those of self-presented women. Global manosphere tropes circulated predominantly in localised form, combined with South African idioms, celebrity culture, legal controversy and economic insecurity. Manosphere-specific claims were present but embedded in more conventional masculinity talk, so that the network operated as a mainstream bridge for manosphere repertoires rather than as a manosphere community. Together, these findings indicate that digital hegemonic masculinity in this network was produced jointly by creators, audiences and platform visibility, not by isolated users. The study contributes a transparent, replicable procedure for AI-assisted extraction

and manual coding, and locates platform-mediated masculinity within an under-researched African context. Its single network, single platform, short window and reliance on visible metrics limit generalisation, and the study does not establish algorithmic amplification or radicalisation. Nevertheless, the findings support platform accountability, gender-sensitive media literacy and protection for oppositional voices. Future research should use API, data-donation or algorithmic-audit methods, systematic multimodal analysis of the video clips and longitudinal, cross-platform comparisons across South African and wider African digital communities.

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Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study consist of publicly available posts on X (formerly Twitter). The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available, together with the search log, Grok prompts and codebook, from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to the platform's terms of service and ethical considerations.

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