

WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD: A FEMINIST STUDY OF SELECT DRAMA SERIES

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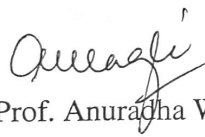
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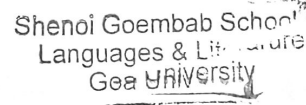

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CHAPTER ONE

INDRODUCTION

“Of all creatures that can feel and think, we women are the worst treated things alive”

- Euripides

1.1 Background of the Study

Patriarchy is a deeply rooted institution whose product is a male-dominated society. Patriarchy is derived from the word “Patriarch” which stands for father who has, “the right of ownership over the seed. He is not a person but an institution, a mindset, a practice, a hegemony and thus an oppressor (Jain)”. According to patriarchal ideology, the man is dominant and the woman is submissive. Thus, from this ideology stems the male-dominated society. In a male-dominated society, all the political, social, economic, and cultural power lies in the hands of the men; they are the lawmakers, they are the ones who create beliefs in the society, and they are the privileged ones who make traditions and ideologies. As Simone de Beauvoir quotes Poulain de la Barre in her famous literary text *The Second Sex*, “Being men, those who have made and compiled the laws have favoured their sex, and jurists have elevated these into principles (22)”. This unequal balance of power in a society leads to the subjugation of women. Men having the most power and authority in society have made women dependent on them. In a male-dominated society, women are subordinate to men and inferior beings. Thus, women live in a men’s world where they do not have a place of their own.

As we live in modern times women are taking part in world affairs, they have careers, and they have a life outside the four walls of their homes. Yet, it is a man's world that they are part of. The highest political positions are still held by men, there are only a few women who are political leaders in the world. Women do have jobs but, in many companies, they are not paid equally as men. According to the statistics most influential companies in the world do not have single female board members (Ndiwalana). In the field of science, most scientists are men. The highest number of Nobel Prizes have been won by men. Women do have careers but they have to work twice as hard in comparison to men. Because though they are working, they also have the responsibility to look after their home and family. According to Bowden and Mummery: "work-life balance, how to juggle employment and family responsibility is one of the most pressing contemporary issues for women (17)".

Virginia Woolf in her feminist manifesto *A Room of One's* highlights how men physically and socially dominate women. She describes how historically the doors of the political and social institutions have been closed for women (Humm 21). She stresses this point by giving the example that she as a woman will not be able to get access to the manuscript in all-male Oxford College. During the early 20th century, women though were allowed in colleges but they were forbidden from certain spaces in colleges (Tearle). This shows how men have been privileged they have got everything without asking for it and women must fight for basic rights in a male-dominated society.

Simone de Beauvoir questions in *The Second Sex*: “How is it that this world has always belonged to the men and that things have begun to change recently? Is this change a good thing? Will it bring about an equal sharing of the world between men and women? (21)” According to the study research of Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, male dominance is related to agriculture. Their theory explains that 1200 years back when agriculture was the prime occupation of human society, there was a need for manpower. The power between men and women shifted to men because they were physically stronger than women. Because of their strength in the area of agriculture, they got authority over their female counterpart. Later inheritance of the father was passed down to male generations of the family. Thus, patriarchy emerged in human society and male domination over women became a tradition, an ideology which is passed on still today (Zaniewska).

For Greeks, to be men was a privileged phenomenon “Plato thanked God that...he had been created free not enslaved; the second a man, not a woman (Beauvoir 22)”. During the golden age in Greece, Athenian women did not have the privilege to participate in the intellectual advances of their time. Female citizens did not receive any education as men like Plato and Aristotle got. This was because of their subordinate position within the male-dominated environment of Greek civilisation. The same goes for other societies of the world. In English societies, women were allowed to read religious scriptures or receive the education which will benefit them to perform their roles as wives and mothers. In the 19th century it was rumoured that higher education will make women unfit to bear children (Tierney 418-420). By not providing women with the benefits of education or providing inferior education men kept women dependent and submissive.

It is recently because of the women's suffrage movement things began to change for women to some extent with the start of the right to vote. Earlier only men had the right to vote. Even though women got the right to vote with immense struggles they were still dominated by men. Women did not have money or property of their own. It either belonged to their fathers or their husbands. Virginia Woolf in her famous quote opines: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (6). This quote explains the social condition of women in history. Who did not have a room of their own because in rooms women were living in; the kitchen, bedroom, and living room belonged to their husbands or fathers. A woman did not have a single room to call her own.

Historically women were underprivileged; they did not get chances to be something other than their male relation. Patriarchal ideology trained them to be dependent on men to be useful to them. An example of this is Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* in which he wrote; "women should be trained about men; to please them, be useful to them, to be loved and honoured by them, raise them when young, care for them when grown, counsel them, console them render life sweet and agreeable to them (qtd. in Tierney 418)". This kind of ideology that she is the "other" and the man is the "subject is internalized by a woman." Simone de Beauvoir believes: "Woman may fail to lay claim to the status of the subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other (21). This patriarchal ideology that women should be submissive and dependent on men

was passed down from one generation to another. Patriarchy and male domination are not only problems today but have been problems for centuries.

In a male dominated society, women face the consequences before birth in the form of female infanticide and feticide where the baby girl is killed because of preference for male babies over female babies. According to a United Nations report around 2000 female babies are being aborted illegally in India (Zaniewska). The reason behind this is India's patriarchal ideology which considers the male as the heir of the family and the female as the responsibility. Many Indian patriarchal families do not want to burden themselves with the responsibility of a girl child. So, they abort the female child before she is born or kill her after she is born.

Another consequence of a male-dominated society is femicide. The term femicide means killing of a woman which was first coined in England in 1801 by John Corry. Misogynist murders are the most common examples of femicide, which include rape murders, and mutilation murders. Historical examples are: the burning of witches in Western Europe, the Sati system in India which is the burning of widows, honour crimes in some Latin American countries where women who have lost their virginity before marriage are murdered by their male family members. One theory of femicide suggests that abusive men think that rape and murder are not enough to keep women subservient so they commit femicide (Tierney 470).

Patriarchy has become a terrorizing force for women where the human civilization has turned into, a "sex and violence culture...breeding ground for the amateur torturers and executioners who have emerged as the shock troops of male

dominance (Tierney 469)”. Other kinds of violence like sexual assault, domestic abuse, and emotional abuse are all products of male dominance. A male-dominated society makes men believe that they are superior to women. Considering their physical strength, they feel entitled to misbehave towards women. Which leads to safety issues for women. Women will not feel safe if she is alone with a crowd of men but a man in the crowd of women may not feel the same safety issue (Zaniewska). Male dominance is the reason women face safety issues. Sexual harassment, objectification of women, slut shaming, and victim blaming are other issues faced by women in a male-dominated society.

With the emergence of the first and second wave of feminism women’s oppression in a male-dominated society became a widely prominent topic in the world. Earlier, women issues were confined, just like them within the walls of their houses. But during the feminist movements, personal became political as women came forward about problems like gender discrimination, sexual assault, domestic violence, etc. they faced in the patriarchal domain. The rise of feminism led to the address of women’s struggles and issues in films and television. Films and television are the most popular medium of entertainment which shape the culture of society. Films and television play a vital role in society as they try to portray the realities of the world in the form of fiction.

The second wave of feminism gave birth to feminist films and feminist criticism of films. During this period feminists began to question the representation of women in films by men. Which did not do justice to the women characters in the films. In the

films made by men women were either love interests or vindictive jealous women.

Judith Mayne in the mid-1980s noted:

two possible directions for feminist film criticism: encouraging filmmakers to formulate another kind of cinema with a feminist perspective or encouraging film viewers to understand Cinema as symptomatic of women's contradictory investments in a patriarchal society. (qtd. in Tierney 497)

Feminist filmmakers have brought women's points of view onto the screen. Some popular feminist movies are; *The Life and Times of Rosie Riveter*, *Janie Jane*, *With Babies and Banners*, and *Union Maids*. All these films gave a platform to the stories of women that have been neglected by male filmmakers. Feminist films also helped to counter the negative image of women in the mainstream media (Tierney 498).

The films not only deal with topics like women's empowerment, and the struggles of women in a male-dominated society, but also other social problems in the world, like drug addiction, mental health, poverty, racism and many others concern of the society. They are not as successful as drama series to make impact among the audience. No matter how good the film is, it ends within two or three hours. It does not give the viewers a chance to create a connection with the characters in the films. But a television show contains many seasons and episodes that help viewers not only to connect with the characters but also allows screenwriters to create multiple points of views of characters in a show. This helps viewers to experience the trauma of the characters from different perspectives. In television and web series, different issues can be raised but this cannot be done in films. Films due to time constrain may deal

with one or two issues in the plotline. Because of which drama series have become a perfect medium to raise issues faced by women in male-dominated society by bringing them to the forefront.

Over the recent years, there have been incredible shows which deal with feminism, women empowerment, and women's issues with their noteworthy portrayal of female characters and impactful storyline. Series like *Fleabag*, *I May Destroy You*, *The Handmaid Tale*, *Glow*, *Black-ish*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *13 Reasons Why*, *Sex Education*, *Big Little Lies*, *The Morning Show* and many others have greatly influenced the viewers of these shows. They have also left a mark of impression behind them.

1.2 Literary Theory

This research study is based on feminist literary theory. The term feminism highlights the oppression of women in the patriarchal regime of a male-dominated society. Maggie Humm in her book *Feminist Reader* writes; “the emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that, in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men” (1). The term feminism came into use in English because of the women's suffrage movements in the 19th century. Feminism believes in the philosophy of all gender equality and based on that demands equal rights for women.

Feminist literary theory is a critique of male dominance and ideology which examines literary works from a feminist perspective. The major feature of feminist literary theory is gender politics. According to feminist theory, sex and gender are two

different concepts: sex which is biological and gender is depended on the cultural and social aspect of society. Feminist critics examine and criticize the stereotypical characterization of men and women divided into masculinity and femininity in literary works. The second feature of Feminist literary theory is tracing women's oppression in the literary works. Because of the influence of patriarchal ideology and tradition on literature. Feminist critics argue that women have been oppressed for ages because of male dominance. This can be reflected in old literary works (Yang). The third feature is to critique and question the belief system that women are subordinate to men. Feminist critics criticize the portrayal of women as subordinate in many literary works. For example, in most of the works written by men women are just mere objects who are defined in relation to men. In most of the famous literary works women do not have a major role they are just there for the sake of the storyline. The fourth feature is analysing the female characters in literature. Most of the women in literature are portrayed as either evil or good, she is either submissive or vindictive. Feminist critics question this description of women in literature. Feminist literary theory also aims to explore the lost early female writers who may not have been recognized widely in a patriarchal world. It also aims to promote feminist works with multilayer female characters with better storyline. By emphasizing the point that women are not just evil or good. Recently feminist literary theory has started to examine other range of disciplines like films and television series from the feminist lens.

Feminist Literary theory is the by product of the first and second waves of feminism. The first wave of the feminist movement fought for equality. While the

second wave of the feminist movement opposed the discrimination faced by women based on their sex in the patriarchal world (Humm 11).

The first wave of the feminist movement took place during 19th and early 20th century. During this period women demanded equal rights for women. Their aims were to procure the right to vote, right to education, right to own property and to be legally recognized as citizens independent of their husbands.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* which was published in 1792. Considered to be a landmark literary work of the first wave of feminism. Which was inspired by Enlightenment principles. In this book, Wollstonecraft demands equal education for both men and women. She argues that society does not treat women as equals to men because men and women believe that women are inherently weaker than men. She believed the way divine rights of the king were opposed during the French Revolution, in the same manner the divine rights of husbands over their wives should also be opposed (Bowden and Mummery 2). She insists on challenging the ideology that women are inferior to men. While arguing the depiction of women as objects and possessions she criticises many literary works. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* in which Wollstonecraft criticises his portrayal of the ideal woman she also protests Rousseau's idea in the book that feminine weakness and passive nature is sexually appealing. Wollstonecraft points out in her book the hypocritical nature of culture and society that values women for beauty and pleasure but at the same time criticises them for vanity, fashion, and trivia (Tierney 1457). Wollstonecraft believed that by providing women

with education would give them the freedom to participate in equal opportunities in society.

John Stuart Mill also contributed with his perspective of equality to the first wave of feminism in his literary work *The Subjection of Women* in which he about how the subordination of women is wrong and unfair. As it encourages unhappiness among women. Mill believes that equality is an important factor in the growth of society. The main problem of the subordination of women is that men make the assumption that women are weaker compared to them, and these assumptions are the product of customs and traditions of patriarchal society. Men are taught that women are subordinate to them and women are taught men are superior to them. Mill argues that just because men and women are taught in this manner, that does not mean women are subordinate to men. He believes that in a free society, everyone should be treated equal and everyone should receive equal opportunities to succeed. According to Mill a progressive society gives everyone equal opportunity regardless of gender. (Super Summary).

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and extended till the 1980s. It addressed the issues of workplace inequality and equality at home. Second-wave feminists were critical of women's household work which was claimed as unacknowledged and uncompensated labour. They encouraged housewives to get out of the four walls of their homes and explore opportunities to become independent in society. One of the most prominent aims of second-wave feminists was to gain access to affordable sexual health care which included contraception, abortion, and pregnancy support for young women. There were many other issues faced by women

in the patriarchal institution. During this period Carol Hanisch popularized the term “personal is political”. The meaning behind this was the personal lives of women had deep political roots. Thinking critically about women’s life was the only way to dismantle the oppression faced by women in a male-dominated society. The second wave of feminism gave birth to many feminist theories from feminist personalities like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Kate Millett, Julia Kristeva, Adrienne Rich, and others.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* has now become one the most influential texts in feminist literary theory. De Beauvoir in her text argues that men treat women as inferior to them. *The Second Sex* examines the assumptions of a society that place women as “other” with the help of biological, Marxist, and psychoanalytic theories. She argues that this assumption of a woman as “other” is internalized by women (Humm 44). In her famous quote in *The Second Sex*, she states; “One is not born but rather becomes a woman (de Beauvoir)”. She believes that being a woman is not the same as being constructed as a woman. If women will break away from this objectification, patriarchy will end. *The Second Sex* has given a great contribution during the second wave of feminism. It is also considered the founding text of the second wave of feminism.

Another literary text that kick-started the second wave of feminism is Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*. Friedan in her text discusses the middle-class white housewife, and how they feel emptiness, boredom, and incompleteness while just being housewives. She discusses the ideology of “feminine mystique” that says women’s foremost value lies in their femininity. Under the terms of “Feminine

mystique” Friedan, contended women were living a lie. Embracing a life that constrained and distorted their full potential (Bowden and Mummery 13). Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* is also a prominent text of the second wave of feminism in which she argues that ideological indoctrination and economic inequality are the root cause of women's oppression. In this book, Millett explores the traces of literary, social and historical images of patriarchy and masculinity. Millett's analysis of literature based on sexist ideologies led to feminist literary criticism (Humm 61). All these feminist writers and critics contributions led to the feminist literary theory.

1.3 Television and Feminism

Since the emergence of the second wave of feminism, feminist ideas on television have been often represented and misrepresented on the television screen. The Feminist critic Charlotte Brunsdon gives four main characteristics in the field of feminist television criticism:

1. To investigate the situation of women working in the television industry.
2. To analyse the description of the women on the television screen.
3. To detail analyse the television shows as “texts”.
4. To study and analyse the effects of television on its viewers.

Earlier feminist critics approached television and media from a more realistic lens and their focus was to critic the stereotypical images of women on the television screen. They compared the description of the femininity of women in television with the reality of women's life. They also criticized the stereotypical representation of women characters on television which was often demeaning. They argued that such

portrayals of women on television and the media normalize traditional gender roles in society (Heywood 315).

During the second wave of feminism shows like *The Mary Tyler Moore Shows*, *Wonder Woman*, *Murphy Brown*, and *Roseanne* are examples of television series that were influenced by the second wave of feminist movement. One of the dominant themes of the television series in the 1970s was the independent liberated women which can be seen in the show *The Mary Tyler Moore*.

The 1980s saw the decline of feminist ideals on television. As Susan Faludi argues in *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* in 1992. In this, she points out the marginalization of women in America's prime-time television between the 1980s to 1990s and calls it the "Backlash Decade." During this period television series, mainly sitcoms, which were the most popular during this time focused on fathers and the same was in case of films. Single independent and ambitious women disappeared from the television screen. Faludi diagnosed that in the late 1980s both television and films portrayed those women who were: "sexually and professionally independent...as either a pathological monster or neurotic (Heywood 315)" spinsters which can be seen in *Fatal Attraction* and *Thirty something*.

The 1990s saw the emergence of "Girlie Feminism" which considered the femininity of women as the empowering factor. The women characters in the 90s were strong and independent and embraced their femininity. The characters like Buffy, Xena, Ally McBeal, and Carrie Bradshaw, Lisa Simpson, Farscape, Aeryn are examples of empowered women characters of the 90s on the television screen. Who

are also said to be a representation of ideals of feminism on the television screen. The respective television series to which these characters belong addressed numerous concerns and themes of feminism. During this period the television screen gave importance to female sexual confidence and critiqued marriage and family. By doing so they attacked the patriarchal ideologies which existed on television (Heywood 315).

The popular television series *Sex and the City* which premiered in 1998 is progressive in its content, particularly with concern to female sexuality. They presented on the screen the topics which were considered taboo such as masturbation, orgasms, and abortion. *Sex and the City* gave validation to the choices of the women. Who chose the other primary goals of life instead of family life. Some of the most prominent representations of independent, physically strong powerful women were the action heroines of the mid-1990s television screen, for example, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Dark Angel*, *Alias*, *La Femme Nikita* and many others. This portrayal of women as action heroines destroyed the stereotypical notion of women as weak, passive victims.

In recent years, television has given commendable feminist storylines. Series that not only portrays empowering independent modern women characters on the screen. But also, has highlighted many concerns about feminism in the 21st century. Shows like *I May Destroy You* which portray the vast spectrum of sexual assault and consent and the trauma of the sexual assault. Netflix's *Sex Education* has given several multi-layered fascinating women characters. *Game of Thrones* which became the most watched show in the history of television series has given many empowering

women from Daenerys Targaryen, Cersei Lannister, to Arya Stark. Though the show is set in the Middle Ages when women hardly owned any power these women characters made their own way in the male-dominated environment. All these Television series are an example of representation of feminism on the TV Screen.

1.4 Hypothesis

Representation of women in the selected drama series reflects the gender-based abuse in a male dominated society.

1.5 Objectives

1. To critique the male dominated society and patriarchal ideology.
2. To analyse select drama series from a feminist perspective.
3. To analyse relation between feminism and television.
4. To compare current issues faced by women with the female characters in the select drama series.
5. To analyse the sexism and gender discrimination faced by women through the medium of select drama series.
6. To critique the issue of objectification of women highlighted in select drama series.
7. To critique the issue of objectification of women in select drama series.
8. To critique the violence against women in male dominated society through the study of select drama series.
9. To compare and analyse the subjugation of female characters because of male dominance and patriarchal ideology.

1.6 Scope

This research work is a critique of a male dominated society and patriarchal ideology. The scope of this research is to examine the issues faced by women in a male-dominated society through the spectrum of drama series.

1.7 Limitations

1. This research work will not focus on any creative or cinematic aspect of the select drama series.
2. This research work being a feminist study will not focus on any other societal issues depicted in the select drama series.
3. This research work has analysed and focused on Season One of *The Handmaid's Tale*. No other seasons of *The Handmaid's Tale* has been analysed.
4. Though this research work is a feminist study, it has not analysed any women empowering movements in the selected series. As this research work focuses on the issues of women in a male dominated society.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research work lies in the fact it can be used to expand the feminist research studies further by involving the feminist analysis of recent drama series. The research material of this dissertation can also be useful as reference material for studies of different disciplines like; Media, Women Studies, and Sociology.

1.9 Literature Review

Primary sources of this research work have been analyzed by many scholars:

Jeffrey A. Bridge et al. have done research analysis on the topic *Association Between the Release of Netflix's 13 Reasons Why and Suicide Rates in the United States: An Interrupted Time Series Analysis*. In this paper for Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry they have done research survey of the suicide rates in America after the realise of Netflix's *13 Reasons Why*.

Katarina Börjeson Martins has written a research paper on the topic *Linguistic Patterns in 13 Reasons Why*. In which she have did a study on Narrative cohesion and televisual characterization in the in the Netflix *13 Reasons Why*.

Juliet J. Parris has done research study on *Popular media as a double-edged sword: An entertainment narrative analysis of the controversial Netflix series 13 Reasons Why* in this she has examined the entertainment narrative content of *13 Reasons Why* Season 1 to understand how these health and social issues were portrayed in the show, and what specific examples it could identify as potential behavioural modelling.

P. Samuel Duraivel and R. Lavanya have done a survey research on *A study on the effect of 13 Reasons Why on young adults with low self-esteem*. This Study examined effects of *13 Reasons Why* on 216 low self-esteem young adults before and

after watching the *13 Reasons Why*. The result of this survey showed self-esteem of female young adults were improved but no improvement was seen in the male young adults.

Katlyn Skye Taylor has done a research thesis on the topic *Exploring the Reasons An emergent analysis of Thirteen Reasons Why and media* in which she has analysed representations of suicide in media, specifically Netflix's original series, *13 Reasons Why*.

Sierra Dann has written a research paper on the topic "*Big Little Lies: Using Hegemonic Ideology to Challenge Hegemonic Ideology*" in this paper she has focused on dynamics of gender and challenged stereotypical patriarchal ideology about women analysing representation of women in the first season of the *Big Little Lies*. This paper argues that it presents hegemonic ideologies about gender and women, and then erodes this hegemony in an indirectly feminist way.

Irene Cambra-Badii, María Paula Paragis, Paula Mastandrea, have Delfina Martínez have done research study on *Big Little Lies: a contemporary TV series about the representation of feminine subjectivity and violence against women*. They have explored the narratives in *Big Little Lies*, especially in relation to contemporary issue of women.

Ali Alkhalifa, has done research study on the topic *Euphoria: The High Highs and Low Lows*. This research examines the effectiveness of *Euphoria*'s ability to progressively depict addiction and mental illness, queer romance, and the violence of patriarchal society. This paper also critiques the show for its harmful representation that fetishizes teen bodies and trauma.

Anthony Gierzynski, Madeleine Blaber, Marjorie Brown, Sophie Feldman have done a research survey on *The Euphoria Effect*. In this paper they have examined association between *Euphoria* and the perspectives of Gen Z regarding the drug issues.

Oktarina Wahyu Triningtyas has done research on the topic *American Juvenile Delinquency as Social Problem Portrayed in Euphoria TV Series*. This work of research has explored juvenile delinquency in *Euphoria* it also examines the social factors of juvenile delinquencies.

Alusk Marciel Santos has written a research paper on *Brief analysis of symbolism in the TV adaptation of The Handmaid's Tale*. This work has analysed the dystopian elements present in the series that carry symbolism.

Pernille Kofoed Pedersen and Sjøholm Jensen has done a research study on the topic *Dystopia in the TV-series The Handmaid's Tale*. This research work has

examined the narrative elements of the television series *The Handmaid's Tale* to establish it as dystopian tale.

Dyahprajnandhari, has written a research paper on the topic *Woman Oppression in the Handmaid's Tale TV series Season 1: Transitivity Analysis*. With the help of stylistics approach this paper has analysed oppression in *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Chloe Harrison, has worked on *The truth is we're watching each other': Voiceover narration as 'split self' presentation in The Handmaid's Tale TV series*. This research has analysed cognitive stylistics features through June's voiceover narration in *The Handmaid's Tale* television series.

Fernanda Menegotto has done a research thesis on the topic *From Offred to June Osborne: The Handmaid's Tale, dystopian television and literary adaptation*. This work compared *The Handmaid Television series* to Margarete Atwood's novel with the same name from television series had been adapted.

Jonna Kurikkala has done a research study on the topic "*Under His Eye*" – A *Comparison of Margarete Atwood's novel The Handmaid's Tale and The Television series adaptation* which is a comparative analysis between *The Handmaid's Tale* television series and the novel.

No feminist research studies have been conducted of the television series *13 Reasons Why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* together. In this research work, I would like to analyse condition of women in male dominated society by analysing the above mentioned drama series.

1.10 Primary Texts

13 Reasons Why is a Netflix series based on Jay Asher's 2001 novel of the same name. It was developed into a television series by Brian Yorkey. Starring Kathrine Langford as Hannah Baker and Dylan Minnette as Clay Jensen. The show revolves around the aftermath of Hannah's suicide. Before she committed suicide, she left a box of cassette tapes in which she reveals 13 reasons why she decided to end her life. She also reveals 13 people who are responsible for her death. Throughout the four seasons of the show the storyline focused on different societal issues like sexual assault, harassment, suicide drug addiction, mental health problems and many others. The show received positive feedback from the audience and the critic for its impactful subject matter, themes, and acting performance. Kathrine Langford even received a Best actress nomination for Golden Globe Awards. Although *13 Reasons Why* was praised for its content it raised concern among the mental health professional for its graphic depiction of rape and suicide. They argued that this type of emotionally traumatic content can be harmful to rape survivors and people who are struggling with mental health problems and suicidal thoughts. Nevertheless, by not filtering out the major concerns of today's society *13 Reasons Why* portrays the reality of society through the medium of fiction.

Euphoria is an HBO television series created and written by Sam Levinson. It was based on Israeli miniseries of the same name. Starring Zendaya as Rue Bennett, Hunter Schafer as Jules Vaughn, Alexa Demie as Maddy Perez, Sydney Sweeney as Cassie Howard and Jacob Elordi as Nate Jacobs. The show revolves around Rue Bennett a teenage drug addict. The drama series has received praise for its storyline which explores the highs and lows of teenagers it has also been praised for its cinematography and its fashion have highly influenced Gen Z. *Euphoria* received positive reactions from both audience and critics for its acting performance, especially from Zendaya, Sydney Sweeney and Hunter Schafer. Zendaya has received two Primetime Emmy Awards, a Critics Choice Award and a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress. The show has also received some negative criticism for its nude and sexually explicit scenes. However, *Euphoria* has been a cult favourite show among the viewers of drama series.

Big Little Lies is a series which premiered on HBO for two seasons. It is based on the novel of the same name by Liane Moriarty. It is created and written by David E. Kelley. It stars famous actors like Reese Witherspoon, Nicole Kidman, Shailene Woodley, Laura Dern, and Zoe Kravitz as the leading ladies of the show Meryl Streep joined in a supporting role for season two of the show. The show received praise and acclaim for the writing and direction, particularly the acting. *Big Little Lies* has received many awards including eight Emmy Awards. The show's content illustrates the themes of motherhood, a bond of friendship between women, and societal issues like Domestic Violence.

The Handmaid's Tale is based on Margaret Atwood's 1985 dystopian novel of the same name. Created by Bruce Miller, it premiered on the streaming service Hulu. The plotline of the series revolves around a systematic totalitarian society of Gilead which has stripped away basic human rights of women and has subjected fertile women called "Handmaids" to bear a child for the political leaders of Gilead called Commanders to solve the problem of low reproduction rate in the Gilead. *The Handmaid's Tale* has been critically praised for its outstanding storyline which depicts the predicament of women in a rigid male-dominated society. It has won many awards like eight Primetime Emmy Awards. *The Handmaid's Tale* highlights the reality of patriarchal institutions through the medium of the dystopian genre.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter One of this research work is the *Introduction* which includes, background to the study, literary theory, the third section of this chapter includes an analysis of television and feminism, and examination of portrayal of women on television screen. This chapter also includes scope of the research, hypothesis, aims and objectives of the research study, limitations, significance of the research, literature review, chapter outline and primary texts.

Chapter Two, *Sexism and Gender Discrimination* deals with sexism and gender discrimination faced by women in a male dominated society with the help of drama series. This chapter is divided into to five sections as follows:

- Section one deals with the definition and explanation of sexism and gender discrimination.

- Section two, “Shaming” in *13 Reasons Why* is an detailed analysis of how sexist and gender discriminatory ideologies slut and victim shames women.
- Section three, “Gender and Love” in *Euphoria* is an analysis of how the notion love is gendered.
- Section Four, “Motherhood” in *Big Little Lies*, explains how the idea of motherhood is sexist.
- Section five, "Institutional sexism" in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is an analysis of sexist institutional system of Gilead.

Chapter Two, *Objectification of Women* examines how women are objectified in the male dominated society by analysing the select drama series. This Chapter has five sections as follows:

- Section One, deals with definition and theory of objectification of women.
- Section Two, “Sexually Objectifying Environment” in *13 Reasons Why*, is examination of sexual objectifying environment depicted in the drama series and its effect on the women characters of the show.
- Section Three, “Male Gaze” in *Euphoria* is critical examination of male gaze in the show.
- Section four, “Subtle Objectification of Women” in *Big Little Lies*, examines how subtle objectification is normalized in the male dominated society which can be harmful.
- Section Five, “Objectification of Women under a systematic system,” in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is examination of how women are treated as object of patriarchal system of Gilead.

Chapter Four, *Violence against women in select drama series*, this chapter is examination of different types of violence faced by women in a male dominated society. This chapter have five sections as follows:

- Section one, Violence Against Women is definition of violence against women and types of violence faced by women in male dominated society.
- Section Two, “Sexual Assault” in *13 Reasons Why*, is an analysis of sexual assault depicted in the series *13 Reason Why*. It also focuses on the Rape Trauma Syndrome of sexual assault victims of the show.
- Section Three, “Abusive Relationships” in *Euphoria*, deals with analysis of abusive relationship between Nate and Maddy in *Euphoria*. And how Maddy suffers in that relationship.
- Section Four, “Domestic Abuse” in *Big Little Lies*, is examination of Domestic abuse suffered by women in male dominated society through the medium of *Big Little Lies*.
- Section Five, “Rape Culture” in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, examines the rape culture by Gilead’s systematic government in *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

Chapter Five is the *Conclusion* which deals with the overall analysis of the aforementioned chapters of the research work.

CHAPTER 2

SEXISM AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION

“That's how it is for girls, people judge you by the way you look the things they hear about you they put label on you; I just feel like boys get to define themselves they get to choose their identity”

– (13 Reasons Why)

2.1 Definition of Sexism and Gender Discrimination

Sexism is discrimination based on gender, especially against women. The sexist beliefs consider one sex superior to another. It imposes limits on one person based on their gender and demands to behave typically according to gender stereotypes (Masequesmay). Both men and women face discrimination because of sexist beliefs in society but women because of their sex face more discrimination than the men on a daily basis. And this is because a woman lives in a male-dominated society where men have created laws, rules, regulations, and definitions. The definition of "woman" itself is created by men and a man defines women in relation to himself (de Beauvoir 16). She is nothing other than what man defines her, for men she is other, the inferior, the subordinate, the weaker, not the equal. According to Saint Thomas "Woman was an “incomplete man,” an “incidental” being" (Beauvoir 16).

Women have always been considered less than men because of their sex. But still, an enormous amount of social and moral responsibility is placed on women. In a male-dominated society, a woman is a model of virtue she has to be innocent, pure, sacrificing, loving, and selfless, like the Virgin Mary and Alcestis. If she doesn't

adhere to these qualities, she is considered evil and sexually wicked like Eve, Pandora, and Helen. While a man can live his life according to his wishes a woman is allowed to live her life only by following rules created by a man for her.

Even though in these modern times women's condition is changing but women still face gender discrimination because of the sexist system. In no country, her legal position is equivalent to that of a man. Despite having rights in the constitution, the long system of patriarchal traditions and customs deprives them from manifesting them. In the sexist system of the patriarchal world, men have better jobs compared to women, higher salaries, and more chances to succeed compared to their female competitors, most important positions in politics, the educational system, the business sector, in the industries and companies are held by men (de Beauvoir 20). A woman has to work twice as hard as a man to become successful and still she is considered lesser than men.

It is very hard to measure the extent of discrimination faced by women publicly, socially, and morally. But today's films and drama series through their plot and storyline are attempting to highlight the problem of sexism and gender discrimination. *13 Reasons Why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies* and *The Handmaid's Tale* are some of the series which have tried to do the same.

2.2 "Shaming" in *13 Reasons Why*

In the series *13 Reasons why*, women face sexist attitudes and discrimination based on their gender in a male-dominated society, where women are shamed for the same acts committed by men. *13 Reasons why* does not shy away from showing the subtle yet harsh sexist attitudes women face since their young age through women characters in the series mostly like Hannah Baker and Jessica Devis.

Episode one of *13 Reasons Why* shows how Hannah was slut shamed after her inappropriate photo gets passed around the school (Velocci). Hannah had just kissed her boyfriend Justin but a rumour was spread in her school that she had intercourse with him. In a society where moral laws are created by men; a woman should always protect her reputation while men are free to live their lives without any concern about their reputation. For the same rumour where Hannah was, slut shamed Justin was praised for it as a player:

How many girls I have slept with? like a lot classifies me as like a player or something. And my best friends used to think I was the ... best...Hannah she sleeps with guy, she has a crush on another...and she kisses a third guy. Its whatever its all fine, right? All of a sudden, she is slut. (*13 Reasons Why*)

Here Justin is questioning the sexist treatment Hannah got in a patriarchal society.

The issues which might seem small and unarmful to men can have a tremendous effect on a woman and one example of that is the "hot list" in which Alex a former friend of Hannah mentioned that Hannah has the "Best Ass". This may

appear trivial to a boy or men which is evident through the opinion of Clay regarding the "hot list." He thinks Alex wrote in the hot list that Hannah has the best Ass as a compliment he states that it is an achievement that her name is included in the "hot list" but for Hannah, it was not a compliment because of that she felt objectified and later for the same reason she was slut shamed and harassed by boys like Bryce Walker inside and outside the school; "You think I am taking it all way too seriously but here is the thing, you have never been a girl before (*13 Reasons Why*)", Hannah states during Alex's tape.

After listening to Hannah's tape about Alex as a result of Alex's "hot list" she was harassed and objectified and it was one of the reasons she committed suicide. Clay fails to fully understand how hard this situation might have been for Hannah as he tells Alex that he should not be on the tapes since Alex has mentioned Hannah's name as a compliment. This shows how alien and ignorant men are about the predicament of women in a male-dominated society for men a woman is an "other" whose struggles they never fully understand. The difference in opinion between Hannah and Clay proves how sexist the experiences and points of view of a man and a woman can be.

While Clay loves Hannah his love is problematic (Moore) because being a man Clay defines Hannah in the stereotypical role of a woman as innocent, pure, naive, and precious. He creates an image of her in his mind and when she does not adhere to his imagined definition of "perfect Hannah" he questions everything that Hannah stated in her tapes he even questions if she was even raped by Bryce at one point in

the series he says "Are you sure he lied?", referring to Bryce after his testimony in court in the Season two. Clay is disappointed in Hannah because she did not abide to his mental image of her so he questions her truth and integrity. This attitude of Clay is an example of Benevolent Sexism. Benevolent Sexism is a type of sexism where a man expects a woman to behave according to their stereotypical traditional gender roles. Thus, Clay expects Hannah to adhere to the traditional gender stereotypes and when she does not, he slut shames her. His sexist attitude can again be seen when he finds out the box of inappropriate polaroids of girls in the Clubhouse and he states, "why are these girls getting themselves in this situation in the first place? (*13 Reasons Why*)". He blames the girls in the polaroids for what happened to them. This highlights the fact that society thinks it is the responsibility of the girl to be careful, whereas men are free to behave as they like while women are enslaved in the bondage of moral values, laws and definitions created by a male dominated society.

Another character who faces sexism in *13 Reasons why* is Jessica. She was sexually assaulted by Bryce just like Hannah but because of the sexist environment of her school, she was victim shamed. Most of the time in cases of sexual assault female victims are blamed often for being provocative, seductive, suggestive, or "asking for it" and opposite to these male perpetrators are seen as helpless, sexually frustrated beings who fall prey to the sexually seductive women (Victim Blaming). The same thing happened with Jessica – her schoolmates did not believe her story and believed the lie Bryce told them. They harassed her and called her with inappropriate names. This shows the attitude of a male-dominated society where the truth of a woman is questioned and the lie of the perpetrator is believed.

The Liberty High school where Hannah and Jessica were students is an example of institutional sexism. Institutional sexism refers to gender discrimination in government organisations, educational institutions, medical institutions, workplaces etc. Liberty high school supported the rape culture and an environment where sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual violence were normalized and excused and victims of sexual assault were blamed. After the traumatizing encounter with Bryce Hannah tries to seek help from her school counsellor but he assumed Hannah was at fault he states "Maybe you consented then changed your mind"(*13 Reasons Why*). This is again an example of victim blaming. And because of this sexist environment, many victims of sexual assault never came forward because they knew they would never get the support they need and instead of that they would be blamed for it "Because guys talk at our school, and they do things to girls that no one ever talks about no one ever does anything about (*13 Reasons Why*)". Jessica states during her testimony.

13 Reasons why through an impactful plot and content does an excellent job to bring in front the sexist and gender discrimination problems faced by women at a young age.

2.3 "Gender and Love" in *Euphoria*

The word love does not have the same meaning for men and women. Simone de Beauvoir, in her famous book *Second Sex* quoting Bryon, said, "Man's love is of Man's life a thing apart, Tis woman's whole existence" (652). For a woman, love means devotion; in love she will gift her body and soul to her lover without any

regard for herself. She will lose her sense of self to provide unconditional love to her lover. In love, man does not feel the need to completely abandon himself. He tries to mould her according to his wishes and needs and women in love will obey him as a slave obeys his master. It is because at a young age, women have been taught to be unconditional and that they are the epitome of love and sacrifice these benevolent sexist beliefs women internalize, and a woman makes love her faith and lover her God and she takes it upon herself to please this God.

In *Euphoria* Maddy and Cassie forget their sense of self in love. Whereas Nate tried to mould women that he loved according to his expectations. Nate is an abusive, misogynist, and sexist character in the Television series *Euphoria*, Nate's sexist attitude towards women is perfectly described in episode two of the series in the words of Rue the narrator of the series:

He made a long mental checklist of the things he liked and disliked about women. He liked tennis skirts and jean cut-offs, but not the kind so short you could see the pockets. He liked ballet flats and heels. He hated sneakers and dress shoes. What was fine was sandals, as long as they were worn with a fresh pedicure. He liked thigh gaps, hated cankles. He liked tan lines, long necks, slender shoulders. He liked good posture and fruit-scented body mist. He liked full lips, and small noses. He liked chokers, but the lacy ones with flower cut outs or delicate patterns. He hated girls who sat like boys, talked like boys, acted like boys. But there was nothing on planet Earth he hated more than body hair. That's one of the first things he noticed about Maddy. She was basically hairless. (*Euphoria*)

Nate's list represents societal beliefs of how a woman should be. Maddy checked all the expectations of the ideal woman that he wanted in a lover. The most important thing Nate liked about Maddy was that she was a virgin. The idea that a woman should be a virgin has always been sexist, a man in love wants his beloved woman to be a virgin but the woman does not expect the same from her lover. Nate liked the fact that Maddy is a virgin because he thought no man has ever touched her, and it boosted his confidence that he is the first one to touch her. Though Maddy lied to him that she was a virgin because she knew how important it was for Nate that she is a virgin, so to please him she lied about her virginity. Nate's ideas about virginity highlight his sexist beliefs and Maddy's lie about her virginity highlights the internalization of his sexist beliefs.

For a man, a beloved woman is a possession that he wants to have in his life, and he will go to any lengths to have her. Nate courted Maddy with flowers and other things, and in return for this Maddy showed her devotion by moulding herself according to his wishes. Once they engage in a sexual relationship Maddy tries to be his fantasy girl. She watched pornography not because she liked it but to learn and analyse sexual techniques. She performs like a porn star for Nate so that he can feel confident, masculine, and powerful (Autumn). But while providing for Nate Maddy forgets about her own sexual arousal as she focuses only on how to satisfy his needs thus, she forgets about herself in love and only thinks about Nate and his happiness.

Nevertheless, later in their relationship Maddy did try to break free from Nate's sexist beliefs but when she does that Nate physically abuses her, but despite this

Maddy does not stop loving him: "It wasn't the violence that scared her, it was the fact that she knew, no matter what he did, that she'd still love him (*Euphoria*).

The reason women like Maddy chooses to love their abuser can be because women are always expected to love everyone more than themselves; a woman as a daughter, lover, wife, and mother has to love others more than herself and because of this she tends to forget her self-worth in love. Thus, Maddy though a confident young woman forgets her own self-worth in the name of love.

A woman in love lives for her lover, she will do anything to please him and Cassie is the perfect example of this, as a people pleaser Cassie sacrifices her own comforts to please others. Cassie fell in love with every guy she dated and she was never able refuse to their demands. For instance, every guy she dated asked for her nude pictures and later uploaded them on the internet. Because of this, she was slut shamed and she was looked at as a sexual object, a girl who is only worth having intercourse with, not relationship material. But after all, this, when Cassie loved someone, she gave her entire body and soul to that person. When she fell in love with Nate, she changed her dressing style and make-up according to Nate's liking; "The woman in love tries to see with his eyes; she reads the books he reads, prefers the pictures and the music he prefers...she lets her own world collapse in contingency, for she really lives in his (de Beauvoir 663)".

The idea of love for both men and women is sexist and gendered where men consider woman the object of their desire which he tries to shape according to his ideas as Nate did in the case of Maddy and Cassie. Whereas for women love is

everything. She idealizes love and the men she loves, moulds herself according to his wishes in the name of love like Maddy and Cassie did for Nate.

2.4 “Motherhood” in *Big Little Lies*

Motherhood is the destiny of every woman which fulfils them as human beings and maternal instincts are the biological nature of women, is a long-established sexist belief of patriarchal society. The idea of motherhood is often idealized in a male-dominated society. Mother is an epitome of sacrifice, unconditional love, a selfless being, and a hard worker. These definitions of motherhood are sexist which a woman in a patriarchal set-up internalizes and tries to adhere to this romanticized version of a “good mother” who is explicitly expected to bear and care for children by deriving satisfaction from being just a mother and putting the needs of the child first and subordinating her needs as a human being (Aiken). If a woman does not abide to these societal expectations of “being a good mother” then she is termed as “a bad mother” or even a “monster” who went against her biological nature.

In *Big Little Lies* we find five main characters and a common thing among these five characters is that they are all mothers who have different approaches towards the idea of motherhood. The women in these drama series face sexism in a male-dominated society as they try to navigate their lives as mothers. *Big Little Lies* shows how motherhood is idealized in society and that it is impossible for a woman to fulfil this idealized version of motherhood.

In the first episode of *Big Little Lies*, the audience is introduced to the conflict and social structure of mothers in Monterey Bay between “Stay at home mommies”

and “Career movies.” According to Madeline one of the main characters in the series, who is a stay-at-home mother and only works part-time, working mothers spend less time at home and more time at work and because of this in her eyes they are careless mothers who care more about their work than their children (Dann). This is the stereotypical sexist prejudice about women where women are expected to forget their careers and focus on their children once they have children. Renata who is a working or Career mother in *Big Little Lies* feels demoralized by other mothers because she is a career woman; “What kind of person chooses to work? Certainly not a mother, by any acceptable standards (*Big Little Lies*).” This highlights the fact that a mother is only valued if she sacrifices her dreams and career for the sake of her children and choosing to work instead of taking care of her children is not acceptable in the eyes of a patriarchal society. The fact that Madeline being a woman does not understand her idea of a good mother is sexist because, as many women in male-dominated, she has internalized the sexist notion of motherhood which confines women within her house.

The idea about choosing to work after becoming a parent is not problematic for the men. The father does not have to sacrifice his career for his children. No one will say he is a bad father because he chose his career over his children. This is the double standards of a male-dominated society which condemns women for the same acts committed by men. Madeline calls out these sexist double standards of male dominated society in episode one of season two of *Big Little Lies* when she talks about how the mothers are always being judged on the first day of school of their children and the same thing does not apply to fathers: “It is complete double standard.

Because if a dad shows they're like wow there is a dad here. He is involved, but with the mom's, it just makes me wanna brow (*Big Little Lies*).”

How using the sexist notion of motherhood, a misogynist man tries to control a woman can be seen in the case of Celeste and Perry. Celeste who used to be a lawyer stopped her practice at the request of her husband after she gave birth to their twins so that she can stay at home and look after their children. “He just likes me to be at home in the house and we have the twins (*Big Little Lies*)” When Celeste tries to resume her practice Perry shows strong dislike towards it, and to change her mind he tries to manipulate her by telling her he wants to have another baby. Celeste gave up her career as a lawyer which she was passionate about in order to be a good mother and wife. But the same thing is not done by Perry. He did not give up his career to raise his children. In a male-dominated environment, it is always a woman who must give up her career, needs, desires, and passions to raise the children. Why always women must make all these sacrifices? Is taking care of children only the mother's responsibility? The idea of being a parent is not the same for men and women in the patriarchal society is highlighted in *Big Little Lies* through Celeste and Perry.

Just like women lose their identity when they are in love, the same thing she does as a mother. “Her existence is justified by the wants she supplies (de Beauvoir 528). In *Big Little Lies* Celeste after helping Madeline in a legal case accepts the fact that being a mother consumed her and she lost her identity as an individual, after six years when she practised law even for a short amount of time, she felt like herself; “For six years I have been wiping running noses, organizing playdates, doing everything to be a good mother... Today I felt alive, I felt good, is that crazy (*Big*

Little Lies). Celeste says while talking to Madeline how being a mother took a toll on her sense of self. Later in the same conversation Celeste accepts the fact that being a mother is not enough for her; “I feel ashamed for saying this but being a mother is not enough for me, it's just not, it's not even close. It's evil right? (*Big Little Lies*)”. Merely thinking about this makes her feel ashamed because of the misconception that “maternity is enough in all cases to crown woman's life (de Beauvoir 536).” These misconceptions are passed on for generations from mother to daughter which every woman internalizes.

The societal ideas about motherhood are sexist and gendered which confine the identity of women to motherhood. *Big Little Lies* shows that motherhood has many definitions and every mother is different and by doing so this series put forward the flawed patriarchal notion of motherhood.

2.5 "Institutional Sexism" in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Institutional sexism refers to gender discrimination or sexism within an organization or institution. When an institutional organization like a government, legal system, educational system, healthcare system etc, enforce laws or policies that are biased to one gender or favours one gender above another gender resulting in gender discrimination. This type of sexist attitude within the institution is called institutional sexism (Leonard). Women are the ones who often become the subject of institutional sexism. For example in many workplaces women are paid less than men even after working the same hours as men. A prominent example of institutional sexism is the overturning of *Roe v Wade* in the U.S.A. Which allows the states in America to ban abortion earlier than 12 weeks. While it does not mean abortion

would be banned countrywide, now the individual States have the power to decide whether to ban abortion or not.

According to the reports of the Guttmacher Institute, more than 20 American states will ban abortion and possibly 40 million women in the U.S.A will find it difficult to have access to abortion. This is a major reproductive right which government can strip away from women. This type of institutional sexism from an organization like the government which is supposed to treat everyone equally as a governing body of a state creates a sexist attitude towards women in society. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, we see the illustration of hostile institutional sexism towards women which is not only gender biased but also oppressive.

The story of *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in a dystopian version of the future which tries to warn its viewers about the future of human society. Though it is set in distant future, the oppression faced by women in Gilead seems familiar to the present situation of women. The patriarchal Gilead society in the series has laws which are highly religious and discriminatory towards female counterparts of that society. In Gilead, men are the leaders and women are confined to their traditional roles.

When the institution of Gilead was formed women's economic rights were taken away. They were restricted access to financial institutions like banks their accounts were closed and their funds were transferred to their husbands or male family members. They were also not allowed to own property as the male leaders of Gilead society believed according to their patriarchal religious values that women cannot take care of their things and it is the duty of the men to take care of women

and provide for them. They also forced employers to fire all female employees and stripped away women's right to work and restrained them within the boundaries of their homes. Women under Gilead's rule lost the liberty to move freely within or outside the country and slowly most of the basic human rights of women by dominated institution (Fike) like the right to education were also taken away as females in Gilead were not allowed to read and write. They did this because they thought women are subordinate to men and their real place belonged within the boundaries of domesticity as one of the leaders of Gilead says about women while forming an all-male government; "We gave them more than they could handle. They put so much focus on academic pursuits and professional ambition. We let them forget their real purpose (*The Handmaid's Tale*)."

The Handmaid's Tale's dystopian world is going through an ordeal of several crises. One of the crises is that the fertility rate has dropped which led to a decrease in the population rate. During these uncertain times, the Gilead authoritarian regime came into power (Fike). The systematic sexist government of Gilead forced fertile women to give birth as a duty or obligation as a woman to give birth to save the human race (Septiawati). These fertile women were called Handmaids who were forcefully separated from their families and were used as a reproductive object to provide a child to the high powered leaders of Gilead. In Gilead's male-dominated society, women are the object and men are the subject who use them as reproductive tool to solve the problem of fertility. If a handmaid fails to provide a child she is sent to colonies where it is presumed that they usually die. In this case, if a man is infertile, he is never blamed for it is always the women who are blamed for being infertile. As June the main character of *The Handmaid's Tale* says; "There is no such thing as a

sterile man...There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren (*The Handmaid's Tale*).

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, we see most of the women have accepted the sexist gender-biased beliefs of Gilead's theoretical government. It is because Gilead creates sexist discourse where men are the powerful and women are weak and women accept this as truth because the majority who are in power. In the case of Gilead only men are in power which makes them believe that their version of sexist truth is the real truth. Foucault calls this a “regime of truth or the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true” (qtd. Septiawati). What Foucault meant by the regime of truth is that the truth does not have to be true it just only has to be thought as true or acted out as true. If the ideas are believed and established by the dominant group in society, they become a particular regime of truth. For example, in Gilead it was considered sin if women read and write but the same thing was not applied for men. It was because the discourse which was created by Gilead was based on sexist beliefs which worked to put women under the power of men (Septiawati).

The Handmaid Tale perfectly illustrates the systematic institutional sexism faced by women in male dominated society where women are not only confined to their stereotypical traditional gender roles but also are oppressed as they do not have any say in their life and are literally controlled by the all-men institution.

In a male dominated society sexism can be seen in many levels' forms, Robin Morgan opines:

“Everything, from the verbal assault on the street to a well meant sexist joke your husband tells, to the lower pay you get at work (for doing the same job a man would be paid more for) to television commercials, to rock song lyrics, to the pink or blue blanket they put on your infant in the hospital nursery to speeches by male ‘revolutionaries’ that reek of male supremacy-everything seems to barrage your aching brain, which has fewer and fewer protective defences to screen such things out. You begin to see how all pervasive a thing is sexism- the definition of and discrimination against half the human species by the other half.” (qtd. Whelehan)

The drama series *13 Reasons Why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies*, and *The Handmaid Tales*. Gives numerous examples of different types and levels of sexism that can be seen in a male-dominated society. The fictional women characters in these shows are the reflections of real women who were not only victims of sexist prejudices and ideologies but were also treated as objects by men. The objectification of women in a male-dominated society is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

“What are you going to trade us for?... What ... chocolate? We are human beings”

- (The Handmaid's Tale)

3.1 Definition

According to the feminist study objectification is treating or looking at women as an object (Papadaki). The theory of objectification was first proposed by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts. This theory tries to illustrate the ideologies and tendencies which equate women to their bodies separating them from their sense of self. It also focuses on the consequences of objectification of women on their mental well-being (Mishra).

Martha Nussbaum an American Philosopher has given seven characteristics which are involved in treating a person like an object:

1. Instrumentality: Treating a person as an object for the purpose of objectifier.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier will treat a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats a person lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats a person as an object who can be exchanged with other objects.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats a person as lacking in boundary integrity.

6. Ownership: The objectifier treats a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold).
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats a person as something whose experiences and feelings need not be considered (257).

Rae Langton an Australian British philosopher has added three more characteristics in the list of Nussbaum:

1. Reduction to the body: The objectified person is equated to their body or body parts;
2. Reduction to appearance: The objectified person is primarily identified in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses.
3. Silencing: The objectified person is denied the right to speak by the objectifier.

Both men and women are victims of objectification but compared to men women tend to face objectification to a greater extent than men. Because they live in a male-dominated society where they tend to be objectified on a daily basis. Women's treatment as a sexual object is one of the most common examples of objectification of women in the patriarchal set up.

Sexual objectification equates a woman's worth to her body parts and sexual functions (Bernard). Sexual objectification of the female body is widely seen in visual media where a certain part of the female body part is highlighted instead of the whole body to attract male attention. Or sometimes in films or advertisements the camera is placed in such a way that it can only focus on certain body parts of a woman by a

single outing female body or body parts a woman is not viewed as a person. Instead, she is seen as a physical object whose body is used to attract male's attention and to satisfy his sexual desires (Szymanski).

Sexual objectification of women can range from mild to extreme, sexist jokes about certain parts of the female body can be considered a mild form of sexual objectification. Whereas sexual harassment and sexual abuse are the extreme forms of sexual objectification. Irrespective of it being a mild or extreme form of sexual objectification, both are harmful as psychological studies show that the women who are victims of sexual objectification are likely to deal with mental health problems like an eating disorder, depression, anxiety, sexual dysfunction etc (Szymanski). Many times, women internalize external views about their objectified body and see themselves as an object to please others. Which may lead to extreme anxiety about their physical appearance or body shame.

Proof of sexual objectification of women can be found anywhere, from the media to the woman's workplace to her interpersonal space. In male-dominated environments, objectification of women is so common that it is ingrained in society. In some societies, women are only viewed as an object to give birth and procreate. While in other societies she is only used as a sexual object.

In this Chapter, we are going to analyse four television series *13 Reasons why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies* and *The Handmaid's Tale* on the issue of objectification of women from sexual objectification to systematic objectification and we are going to

see how the objectification in different ways affects the women characters in these television series.

3.2 “Sexually Objectifying Environment” in *13 Reasons Why*

In the patriarchal set-up of male-dominated environment women tend to be more objectified than men. It is because the core criteria of a sexually objectifying environment are the existence of traditional gender roles. Which separate men and women into two categories of social behaviour femininity and masculinity. Many-atime traditional gender roles may lead to toxic masculinity which encourages men to be “powerful, controlling, and dominant. See women as a sex object, view sex as a conquest and believe women are their property (Szymanski)”. Thus because of the existence of traditional gender roles sexual objectification of women becomes normal which leads to a sexually objectifying environment in which women must live. In *13 Reasons Why* the women characters live in an environment in which sexual objectification was normalized and encouraged which eventually led to the rape and sexual assault of many women characters in Netflix’s prominent series.

13 Reasons Why is set in Liberty high school which is dominated by high school jocks and bullies. For whom sexually objectifying their fellow female schoolmates is a normal everyday thing. When Hannah’s inappropriate photo was leaked boys in her school sexualized that photo and made inappropriate remarks about it and slut shamed her. This makes Hannah uncomfortable in her own skin, as her body becomes an object of others' entertainment. Another instance of the sexually objectifying environment in Hannah’s high school is the “Hot List.”Where boys made a list about

which girl has the best body parts, this is an example of subtle objectification of women. Which is in a male-dominated set-up is accepted. This “Hot list” would have been passed as normal things that boys do but *13 Reasons Why* makes it problematic by highlighting how this objectification of women’s bodies is harmful through Hannah.

In Alex’s “Hot list” he wrote Hannah has the best backside intimate part. By doing this he makes her an object who becomes the target of men’s gaze in school. Which makes Hannah feel like an object, not a person whom everyone is looking at and talking about: “you didn’t feel those eyes on you never heard those whispers (*13 Reasons Why*)” Hannah states in Alex’s tape. This list was circulated in the school but no one did anything about it and this encouraged the boys of Liberty High School to objectify and misbehave with girls without any fear of repercussions “Because guys... do things to girls that no one ever talks about and no one ever does anything about (*13 Reasons Why*).”

Bryce Walker is a misogynist, toxic and abusive character in *13 Reasons Why*. For whom girls were nothing but a property and a conquest (Lang). He used to think he can sleep with any girl he wants because for him girls were an object. It is because he grew up in a sexually objectifying environment. Where women’s body parts were gazed at and observed by men and the observed woman was the object of their sexual desire. In Season 1 episode 3 of *13 Reasons Why* Bryce in a departmental store grabs Hannah’s bottom as if she is a non-living thing not a human being with feelings and emotions. He looks at Hannah like whatever he is doing is not a big deal just

entertainment for him; “for what it’s worth the list got it right (*13 Reasons Why*)”

Bryce shamelessly says to Hannah.

Bryce keeps the same mentality that girls are property or an object when he rapes Jessica. During the rape scene of Jessica Justin her boyfriend who was also a friend of Bryce tries to intervene to which Bryce responds, “What’s mine is yours (*13 Reasons Why*).” This highlights the fact that Bryce thought of Jessica as an object who belonged to Justin and them being friends, he can have her. In this scene, Bryce not only rapes Jessica, he sees her as a sexual object to satisfy his urge. Bryce never treated the women in his life equally and because of this he thinks of them as inferior to him who does not has feelings, emotions, a mind or a sense of self. He treats them as an object he even most of the time treated his girlfriend Chloe as a sexual object whom he claimed to love. As it has been shown in many scenes of *13 Reasons Why*. He forced Chloe for sexual intercourse when she did not want. He even rapes her when she was unconscious.

The sexual objectifying environment of Liberty High School affected not only Hannah but most of the girls in the school. Who never came forward because they knew the male-dominated set up of their school would never help them. This environment affected Hannah’s mental health when every day Hannah was sexually objectified in and outside of the school. This made her hate her body as seen in one of the scenes where she commits, she hates her body. Her experience at her school made her depressed and the sexual objectification of her body is one of the reasons she committed suicide. After her sexual assault which is a direct result of the sexual objectifying environment, Hannah did not feel she belonged to her body as she felt

her body being used and violated by Bryce. The same way Jessica felt as she states: “I have this body you know? And every day it gets up and puts on clothes from point A to point B. But it's not like mine anymore (*13 Reasons Why*)”.

Sexual objectification takes place not because of men but because of the patriarchal set up which normalizes this type of behaviour many times. Men would comment about any private parts of women as if it is normal. Because those inappropriate comments are accepted in a patriarchal society which creates a sexual objectifying environment. If Hannah and other girls like her were not living in a society which normalizes sexual objectification they would not have suffered as much as they did. *13 Reasons Why* by tackling the issue of sexual objectification has shown the mirror of reality to its viewers.

3.3 “Male Gaze” in *Euphoria*

The Male Gaze is a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men and diminishes women into sexual objects. Laura Mulvey a British feminist film theorist coined the term “Male Gaze” in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which was published in the 1975 magazine named *Screen*. In it she illustrates how mainstream media which includes films, TV series, advertisements, and other visual arts sexually objectify women. By showing the female body through the lens of heterosexual males for the pleasure of heterosexual men. This theory from a feminist point of view can be seen from three different angles; how men look at women as sexual objects, how women see themselves and lastly how women look at other women (Vanbuskirk).

The series *Euphoria* deals with many issues which teenagers go through like substance abuse, sexual dysfunction, identity crises etc. But when it comes to depiction of female actors in series, they have sexually objectified and oversexualized them for the purpose of attracting viewership. Though *Euphoria* has objectified both male and female characters, predominantly in the two seasons of the show there are more nude scenes of women than men. Many times, they have hypersexualized female characters without any reason. Thus, diminishing them into sexual objects. An example of this is Cassie who is sexually objectified both in and outside the show because of the male gaze.

In the first episode we get to know that Cassie's sex tape was leaked and because of this, boys in her town view her as a sex symbol. For them, she is an object who according to them is only worth to bed, not to date. Her entire life she was objectified because of her body. Everyone including her family members objectified her. This made her believe she only has her body to offer to anyone and not anything else. This was mentally exhausting for her as she felt she is always loved for her body like a sexual object not for her personality or how she is apart from her body. Cassie internalizes this and looks at herself as an object to please others. As it is seen how she tries to use her body as a sex object to gain affection. In one of the scenes her boyfriend Mackay complains to her by saying; "why you have to make everything sexual (*Euphoria*)".

Euphoria does a great job of highlighting the issue of sexual objectification and how it can affect the perception of a person about themselves. But at the same time *Euphoria* objectifies Sidney Sweeney the actor who plays Cassie. She has even

accepted that most of the time the over-sexualization of her body is uncomfortable for her while shooting the scenes. Cassie has the most nude scenes compared to any other characters in *Euphoria*. The way her scenes are filmed is over sexual. For example when Cassie is on the screen, the focus of the Camera is always on her breasts. This is an example of the Male gaze as we see Cassie depicted in a sexualized manner which makes her a sexual object of male viewers entertainment.

Cassie is often portrayed via the male gaze and this becomes more evident in season two one of the perfect textbook examples of the male gaze in *Euphoria* is when Cassie changes into a pink swimsuit the camera is panned slowly over Cassie's body (Mason). Another instance of the Male Gaze is when Cassie is pictured in Nate's Fantasy where they are engaged in having sexual intercourse. During the entire scene Cassie is naked and her body is shown in a sexualized manner. This scene affirms her role as a sexual object of male fantasy and gaze (DeMarrais). Apart from Cassie Maddy and Jules are also sexually objectified and often appear in Nate's Fantasies as an object of his desires. This sexual objectification of these female characters via the Male gaze is normalized in media because the mainstream media and film industry is male-dominated which fulfils male desires by objectifying women through the male gaze and selling this content as Erotica. Andrea Dworkin a feminist critic defines erotica as "simply high-class pornography; better produced, better conceived, better executed, better packaged, designed for a better class of consumer (137)".

The creators of *Euphoria* have commodified Cassie's body: "Commodifying the sexuality of women is recognized...the abuse of women's bodies as if women were

the products of mass consumption (Shukla 139)”. By treating her as a commodity they have dehumanized Cassie as less-than-human and have treated her as an object. Who can be used or misused for sexual entertainment (Shukla). The problem with *Euphoria* is not that they are showing the modern lives of teenagers by showing R-rated scenes but the problem lies with the hyper-sexualization of female characters without any reason. There are several scenes where there was no need to sexualize Cassie. For example, in one of the scenes Cassie is walking down the stairs and the entire focus is on her chest not on her face or any other part of her body.

Euphoria is not the only show which has used women’s bodies for the sake of entertainment. There are many other films, advertisements, and television series that use female characters as sexual objects through the male gaze. This happens because the creative and production team of any television series is dominated by men who create content without thinking about how objectifying women on the screen may affect the woman who is objectified. Neither do they think about the women who will watch this objectification of another woman on the screen.

“It is hard to imagine a time when men will run out of ways to exploit women’s bodies for sexual entertainment (Shukla 141)”. But this must be stopped if we want a society which is equal for both men and women. The entertainment industry is now growing and many films and drama series are focusing on women's issues in their plots. But at the same time there are some shows like *Euphoria* that are creating content about issues of teenagers which should be raised and talked about. But at the same time objectifying female characters via the male gaze. This can be because the male gaze is so normalized in the entertainment industry that it does not seem

harmful. But it is harmful to both male and female audiences as this normalizes the problematic idea of woman being a sexual object.

3.4 “Subtle Objectification of Women” in *Big Little Lies*

Subtle objectification is a type of objectification which can be seen in day-to-day life. Which at first glance would not look problematic but a deep analysis of it proves that subtle objectification is as much harmful as sexual objectification. In *Big Little Lies* the women characters are denied the right of agency of self. They treated as an instrumental object used by men for their own purpose. Subtle objectification is so much engraved in our everyday activities that it is normalized within our society.

The women characters in *Big Little Lies* do not even realise that they have been objectified or used as a tool by the men. Because this type of objectification is rubbed off as normal in the patriarchal institution. Within the male-dominated patriarchal realm of *Big Little Lies*, most of the time the role of objectifier is played by their husband or by a close male relation. There are some instances in the show where we find women have self-internalized the objectification ideology and they have self-objectified themselves and sometimes a woman has objectified other women. The female characters of *Big Little Lies* live under a patriarchal setup. Because of this, they tend to face sexist beliefs of the male-dominated institution. Due to the sexist beliefs these women are not treated as subjects but are treated as objects in the society in which they live.

The most common type of sexism which is deeply rooted in a male-dominated society is Benevolent sexism which is seen in *Big Little Lies* which results in the

objectification of women as an instrument. According to the beliefs of Benevolent sexism, women should be like an instrument. Whose job is to provide care and support to their male counterparts or to their family members (Papadaki). The mothers in *Big Little Lies* think of themselves as an instrument whose job being a woman is to provide for their families. How Madeline demoralises the working mothers is sexist is discussed in the previous chapter. But she demoralizes them because she thinks it is women's duty to be useful to their children like an object. By focusing on their career, working mothers give importance to their self thus giving a sense of subjectivity to themselves. The stereotypical idea of being a mother is that, a mother is never a subject she is an instrumental object whose job is to provide and care. The objectification of motherhood is deeply engraved in a male-dominated society that it does not seem problematic.

Perry Wright is the perfect character who plays the role of objectifier in *Big Little Lies*. He is a misogynist who thinks women are his property and he can use or misuse them as he pleases. He denies Celeste agency of self by controlling her like an object: "He just likes me to be at home in the house and we have the twins and he is not that crazy about me having too many friends. He is possessive that's who he is (*Big Little Lies*)". Perry's possessive nature can at the first seem like a husband being protective of his wife, but to a deeper extent it is his attitude of showing ownership over his wife. For him, his wife Celeste is not a human being but an object which he owns and who has all ownership rights over that object. Perry also views Celeste as a sexual object as many times he forces her to have sexual intercourse even when she does not want to. Thus, denying her agency of approval and diminishing her into a sexual object. In the same manner, he uses Jane as a sexual object when he rapes her.

Jane's rape by Perry is an example of sexual objectification of women's bodies as Perry uses Jane's body to fulfil his sexual urges.

Another example of sexual objectification can be seen in *Big Little Lies* which may not be as extreme as rape when Ed, Madeline's husband, comments on Bonny who was teaching yoga by saying; "I love sweat on women (*Big Little Lies*)" this is a perfect example of sexual objectification disguised as a compliment (Evans). Another instance when Bonny is sexually objectified is through the male gaze during Renata's daughter's birthday party. When Bonny was dancing and every man in that room was gazing at her like she is a sexual object.

Objectification of any type is harmful as it diminishes a person into an object or property that does not have agency of its own. In *Big Little Lies* we see how objectification is subtle yet harmful. As this type of sexual objectification creates a sexist and unequal environment for women. Subtle objectification makes the ideology of objectification of women normal in society. Which may encourage men to never change their perception of owning or controlling women like Perry. *Big Little Lies* by focusing on the problem of subtle objectification has tried to raise the issue of the problem of objectification of women.

3.5 "Objectification of Women under a Systematic System" in *The Handmaid's Tale*

In the dystopian society of *The Handmaid's Tale*, women live under a systematic patriarchal system. Within this patriarchal system women's predicament is the same as the object or instrument. As in the futuristic dystopian society of Gilead, the rate of reproduction has dropped significantly. To solve this problem of low birth

rate, fertile women were categorized as handmaids. Who were only valued for their reproductive qualities, their ovaries and womb defined them. These handmaids were used as an object to bear children for the commanders of Gilead.

The handmaids are the perfect example of the objectification of women in the systematic patriarchal system of society where they were treated as literal objects owned by the commanders. These handmaids had a life of their own before the totalitarian patriarchal government was formed. Under this government all their basic human rights were stripped away. These handmaids were captured and separated from their family members and were used as an instrument to solve the problem of reproduction. These handmaids were objectified within the system of government and were denied the agency of subjectivity. *The Handmaid's Tale* through Handmaids highlights how the objectification of women is oppressive and dehumanizing under the systematic patriarchal system of Gilead.

Handmaids from *The Handmaid's Tale* did not have any agency or rights over themselves. They were the commodities owned by the commanders of Gilead. This is highlighted through the fact that when a handmaid is sent to a commander to bear his children her name was changed. For example, Offred's real name was June but she was renamed Offred after she was sent to the house of Commander Fred. June's new name Offred means she is of Fred's. Likewise, whenever a handmaid was sent to a new commander she was again renamed after her new commander. The renaming of handmaids after the commander gave the commanders ownership of the Handmaids. Thus, stripping away their sense of self and diminishing them into an object. The objectification of women is clearly depicted during the ceremony scene. The

Ceremony in *The Handmaid's Tale* is the sexual act which takes place between the commander and the Handmaid every month. Before the ceremony June takes a bath and describes the process as: "I am to make myself clean, washed, and brushed like a prized pig (*The Handmaid's Tale*)". This dialogue of June shows how handmaid is viewed as an object. During the ceremony, the commander performs the sexual act methodically. In this process handmaid's pleasures are never considered. They are just treated as baby-making machines. The ceremony is, in fact, a rape as handmaids were never asked for consent before the act. In the eyes of the patriarchal system of Gilead, they were just an object who are used for the purpose of reproduction and do not have agency of consent.

Handmaids do not have any reproductive rights and their existence depends on their reproductive functions. When Handmaids are denied the rights over their body, they are objectified into tools. Whose function is to grow children for others. Handmaids exist not only to serve men but also to serve the systematic society of Gilead (Karlsson). Example of this is seen in Episode 6 season 1 of *The Handmaid's Tale*, where we see Gilead's government trying to trade Handmaids with another country to solve their problem of reproduction. The agony of being treated like goods by Gilead's systematic patriarchal government can be seen through June when she says, "What are you going to trade us for?... What ... chocolate? We are human beings (*The Handmaid's Tale*)."

While the Handmaids are objectified because of their reproductive function, the escorts of the Jezebels are sexually objectified. Jezebels is a club where powerful men like commanders and their superiors go for enjoyment. These women are used by

powerful men to fulfil their sexual desires. Just like handmaids these women have no rights over their bodies. They have to let the men use or misuse their bodies for their survival. As in the patriarchal system of Gilead, women neither have any rights nor say in the matters of their bodies. In one scene when Commander Fred takes June to Jezebels, he takes her into a room to have intercourse. When he removes her hair from behind the red tag on June's ear is made visible. This symbolises the status of her as an object whose ownership has in the hands of Commander Fred (Karlsson). To survive June had accepted her oppressed condition, thus self-objectifying herself.

Women's role in the patriarchal society of Gilead is determined by their submissive function as an object of men. This is symbolized by the dancing doll gift which Serena Joy gave to June: "A girl trapped in a box, she only dances when someone else opens the lid, when someone else winds her up (*The Handmaid's Tale*)."

Other remaining women of Gilead like Wives, Marthas, and Aunts are all treated as an object in the patriarchal system of Gilead. Wives are subordinate to their husbands who are denied agency of opinion, Marthas are objectified through their labour work and Aunts are self-objectified ones who objectifying other women. Every woman in Gilead is oppressed under the systematic patriarchal system and is denied basic human rights. As they are treated as an object not as human beings. *The Handmaid's Tale* shows the dire consequences of objectification of women and illustrates the dehumanizing oppression faced by women under the patriarchal system of government.

Objectification of women in a male-dominated society is dehumanizing behaviour towards women. The women characters of the select drama series are all

victims of objectifying treatment towards them. Hannah, Jessica, Cassie, Celeste, and June were all objectified. They reduced their body parts which impacted their emotional well-being. Objectification of women is an extremely harmful concern which most of the time is normalized in a male-dominated society which can lead to other harmful consequences for women. For instance, the sexual objectification of Hannah led to her sexual assault. Sexual Assault is one of the most common violent crimes committed against women which is discussed in the next chapter along with other violent acts committed against women.

CHAPTER 4

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SELECT DRAMA SERIES

*“I don’t know a single woman who hasn’t faced sexual assault, abuse,
or worse not one”*

- (13 Reasons Why)

4.1 Violence Against Women

Violence signifies an attack or an assault which results in threatening consequences. In the act of violence, two or more people are involved; the perpetrator or perpetrators of violence and the victim on whom violence is inflicted (Singh et.al.). Both men and women can be victims of violence but this chapter will focus on violence against women in the patriarchal male-dominated environment. Violence against women does not only mean physical violence against women. violence against women is a complex phenomenon and on a larger level includes emotional, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse against women. United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women defines violence against Women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (National plan to reduce violence against women and Children).”

Violence against women is Universal oppression faced by women across the boundaries of country, culture, income, education, class, religion, caste etc. It can take place anywhere within a family, workplace, or in communities (Singh et.al). The violence faced by women can have life-threatening consequences both physically and

mentally; “The survivors of violence often experience lifelong emotional distress, mental health problems, and poor reproductive health (Singh et.al 10) Violence against women violates the human rights and is an extremely dehumanizing factor about society. Women face violence whether it is physical, sexual, or emotional because in a male-dominated society, the position of women is as a subordinate. There are some men who feel entitled to being men and want to control every aspect of women’s life, thus maintaining their dominant position and treating women as subordinate.

Here are the types of Violence faced by Women in a male-dominated society:

- **Physical Violence:** It can be any act of physical aggression faced by women. It can be either be minor acts such as slaps, pushing, shoving, pinching etc or major acts such as kicking, hitting with a fist, hair pulling, and threatening with any kind of weapons.
- **Sexual Assault:** Sexual assault is any kind of sexual activity which is performed without the consent of women. It also includes acts of sexual exploitation, control over reproductive freedom, marital rape and showing pornography against the will of women.
- **Psychological or Emotional Violence:** Psychological or Emotional violence can be misogynist behaviour of men towards women which undermines women and also can instil fear in women’s minds. Acts such as name-calling, insulting women in front of others, and controlling women’s freedom which affects the women mentally are examples of psychological or emotional abuse.

- **Economic Abuse:** Economic abuse is denying a woman access and control over basic financial resources. Depriving women of money for their daily needs, taking women's money or property without her consent, demanding dowry and not allowing women to pursue jobs are all examples of financial abuse faced by women in a male-dominated society.
- **Domestic Violence:** Domestic Violence is a type of assault faced by women within the household. In most cases husbands are the perpetrator of domestic violence and in other cases, the in-laws are the perpetrators of domestic violence. Domestic abuse is carried out to maintain total control over the victim. Abusers may use tactics such as: Dominance, Humiliation, Isolation, Threats, Intimidation, Denial and Blame, in cases of Domestic Violence (Singh, Singh, Pandey).

This Chapter is an analysis of the violence faced by the women characters in the drama series, *13 Reasons Why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. This chapter will also examine effect of that violence on the mental well-being of a woman.

4.2 “Sexual Assault” in *13 Reasons Why*

According to Women's Legal Service NSW, “Sexual Assault is a legal term used to describe a range of sexual offences, from showing indecent images to another person to kissing or touching them, as well as penetration of the person's body with a body part or object (Tierney 1182).” If someone does something sexually or touches any part of someone's body which makes them uncomfortable it is also sexual assault. To call an act sexual assault it does not have to be Rape which is limited to vaginal-penile intercourse. Sexual assault broadly includes sexual penetration; vaginal, oral,

and anal. Men and Women are both victims of sexual assault but according to the statistics female victims of sexual assault are more than men. In a male-dominated environment chances of women getting sexually harassed, assaulted, or raped by men are higher than the chances of men getting sexually assaulted in a female-dominated environment.

13 Reason Why shows how the nature of toxic masculinity in a male-dominated society feeds in to rape culture which excuses sexual assaults and blames the victims of assault. *13 Reasons Why* without any filter illustrates how gruesome sexual assault can be through its female victims in the television series.

Feminist writers like Kate Millett, Susan Griffin, The New York Radical Feminists, Andrea Medea, Kathleen Thompson, Diana Russell, Debra Lewis, and other feminist writers highlighted how rape plays the role of keeping women submissive. They also examined myths about rape for instance the perpetrators of sexual assault are always strangers or the psychopaths who do not have anything common with normal men (Tierney 1182). In the case of Hannah, Jessica, and Chloe the person who raped them was not a stranger or a psychopath, he was someone they knew. In Episode 12 of Season 1 of *13 Reasons Why* Hannah in Tape 6 side B discloses that Bryce raped her during a party in a hot tub. In Episode 8 of Season 1, we discover Bryce also raped Jessica while she was unconscious. He also raped his girlfriend Chloe when she was unconscious. In these cases, Hannah and Jessica knew Bryce he was their school mate and in the case of Jessica Bryce was her boyfriend's best friend and in the case of Chloe, he was her boyfriend.

Bryce did not bother to ask for consent from the girls before having sexual intercourse. Bryce is a male chauvinist bully who never had the proper knowledge about consent. When he rapes Hannah, she was too shocked to say no, he misinterprets her silence as yes even though it was clear through her body language as is depicted in the “Rape Scene” of *13 Reasons Why* that she is not consenting to the sexual intercourse. When he rapes Jessica at her own house party she was unconscious and was not in the condition to say no. The same goes in the case of Chloe. Men like Bryce misinterpret women’s consent or never bother to ask one because for them women are inferior beings whose consent does not have any importance.

Many research studies have shown men do not take their sexually abusive behaviour seriously. Taking an example from *13 Reasons Why* When Clay confronts Bryce about Hannah’s rape, he downplays the seriousness of his act by saying, “you wanna call it rape call it to rape same difference (*13 Reasons Why*).” During Bryce the course of two seasons of the show never fully realised the intensity of his actions. Because he knew he would get away with his crimes. As it is seen at the end of the trial Bryce did not face any consequences from the justice system for sexually assaulting his schoolmates. He was the privileged who was protected by his wealth and the golden boy athlete reputation (Nicolaou). In the research conducted on male college students by Neil Malamuth it was found that 35 per cent of male students admitted that there is a possibility of them raping a woman if they would get away with it (Tierney 1182). Thus, Bryce a spoiled brat who did not have any fear of his actions sexually assaulted many women from his school. We know only three but it is

evident by the look of his sexually abusive behaviour that he must have raped many girls who never came forward.

Victim blaming is the direct consequence of sexual assault that many survivors of rape have to suffer. Bryce's victims were afraid to come forward because they were afraid, they will be victim blamed. As it can be seen in the case of Hannah. After she was raped Hannah was at the breaking point so she consulted her counsellor. When she tells him she might have been sexually assaulted he responds: "maybe you consented and then changed your mind (*13 Reasons Why*)."

This is an example of victim blaming where the victim Hannah was questioned for being the victim of rape instead of being supported. *13 Reasons Why* give ample of examples of victim blaming attitude of the male-dominated society. When Hannah's tape was circulated most of the recipients of the tape did not believe Hannah and supported Bryce. For instance, in one of the scenes Ryan one of the recipients of the tape during a conversation says "Bryce is a Rapist" to that Courtney replies "Alleged rapist" (*13 Reasons Why*).

Another example of victim shaming of sexual assault victims in *13 Reasons Why* is when Jessica filed a complaint that she was raped. Most of her schoolmates slut shamed her to protect Bryce. How victim shaming affects the rape victims emotionally is described by Jessica: "I am tired of staring at my closet wondering what people are gonna think. Wondering what I can wear that will cover the most skin (*13 Reasons Why*)."

Victim blaming is the product of patriarchal culture and it helps to brush off the wrongdoings of men by blaming female victims. It also keeps women subservient to men.

Many research studies have found that sexual assault can have a long-term damaging effect on mental health (Tierney 1182) *13 Reasons Why* explores the Rape Trauma Syndrome suffered by sexual assault victims through Hannah and Jessica. Every individual has a different response to sexual assault depending upon the magnitude and experience of the incident. Hannah and Jessica were both victims of sexual assault but their response to the incident was not the same. In the case of Hannah who was in depression after she was raped, she felt lonely, alienated and suicidal: “I need everything to stop (*13 Reasons Why*)” said Hannah, to her Counsellor. Hannah’s sexual assault becomes the last straw that breaks her soul and she commits suicide by cutting her wrists in a bathtub. Bryce raping Hannah in a hot tub and Hannah taking her life in a bathtub ironically symbolises the first death of her soul: “Bryce Walker crushed my soul” and the later death of her body. One study found that almost one in five raped women in the community had attempted suicide (Tierney 1184). Hannah is a metaphorical representation of all the women that committed suicide after the sexual assault.

In the case of Jessica after the assault she did not remember that she was raped but Hannah in Tape 5 side B reveals that she witnessed Jessica being raped by Bryce. After this revelation Jessica was in denial, she denied believing Hannah. But her paranoid condition and heavy drinking were one of the symptoms of the post-traumatic effects of rape. After Justin told her the truth that she was raped at end of Season 1 Jessica was forced to face the truth about her sexual assault. According to research studies, “the most long-term symptoms experienced by rape victims are fear and anxiety (Tierney 1184).” For instance, Jessica was not able to sleep on her own

bed because that was where she was raped. So, after learning the truth about her assault, she started to sleep on the floor out fear and anxiety. Fear in rape victims is triggered by the things associated with rape or the situations associated with rape. Jessica's bed was constant reminder to her that she was raped. Facing her rapist at school made her fear and anxiety worse. Jessica also lost sexual interest due to lowered self-esteem this is one of the symptoms of Rape Trauma Syndrome. Many women who are the victims of sexual assault never recover from the trauma as perfectly expressed by Nina who was one of the rape victims in *13 Reasons Why*: "Maybe we are just gonna never stop being victims (*13 Reasons Why*)."

13 Reasons Why through Hannah, Jessica, and other victims of sexual assault in the show tries to show the violence faced by the women in the male-dominated society. Feminist writers Lorennne Clark and Debra Lewis view rape as a result of coercive sexual and non-sexual power men have over women in the patriarchal environment. To eradicate rape they argue it is important to change the power dynamics between men and women (Tierney 1185). In *13 Reasons Why* women characters live under the dominance of men. Who control the system of the school in which they study. They also support and encourages rape culture. *13 Reasons Why* shows how sexual assault is the direct consequence of male-dominated society.

4.3 "Abusive Relationships" in *Euphoria*

Abusive relationships are unhealthy relationships. In an abusive relationship, one partner will treat their better half with disrespect, cruelty, harm, and violence. In a relationship, abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual or it can be a combination of all these three things. In a relationship, abusers might use aggressive language, and

call their partner derogatory names, Abusers might also try to control their partners in a physically or emotionally violent manner. In a relationship, abuse may start on a minor level but small things can build up which can lead to bigger disastrous consequences (Dovi). In most cases, the abuser in a relationship is a man. There will be rare cases where the woman in the relationship will be the abuser. It is because, in a male-dominated society, it is easier for men to show their dominance over women through violence in a relationship, as in an abusive relationship power lies in the hands of the abuser. Thus, when men in a relationship are abusive, they hold all the power in the relationship. *Euphoria* shows these dynamics of an abusive relationship through Maddy and Nate.

While physical abuse is visible to the eyes as it can leave marks and bruises but emotional abuse is invisible as it is often subtle and very hard to detect but it can have an immense effect on one's mental well-being (Gordon). Maddy goes through both physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her boyfriend Nate. Nate's abusive tendencies stem from his toxic masculinity, internalization of homophobia, and extreme need for control. Maddy is a strong young woman who has opinions of her own but she misunderstands Nate's abuse towards her as love. In Nate's eyes, Maddy is pure and innocent when she does not adhere to his idea of the perfect girlfriend. He shows his abusive tendencies in Episode 4 when Maddy wears revealing clothes, he calls her derogatory names and exhibits his controlling behaviour by telling her what to wear and how to behave. When she refuses to listen, he slams her on the wall and chokes her leaving bruises and marks all over her neck. According to a research study, one out of three women are the victims of physical or emotional abuse in a relationship and most women from the age group of 18 to 24 are more likely to be

abused and not able to understand that they are being abused in the name of love in a relationship (Lazarus). Maddy belongs to this age group she is a teenager who does not know what she and Nate have is not love but a toxic relationship. Instead of leaving Nate for being physically violent to her, she hides her bruises with makeup. When her mother presses charges against Nate for physically abusing her daughter Maddy defends Nate and refuses to accept the fact that she is the victim of physical abuse. Maddy's love for Nate blurs the reality for her. The toxic and addictive nature of their relationship binds Maddy to Nate. Even when she breaks up with him, she ends up going back to him. Many victims of physical abuse go back to their abuser. Although none of the victims has the same reason for going back but the pattern of a victim going back to their abuser is the same. Maddy is one of such women who goes back to her abuser. Rue, the narrator of the *Euphoria* perfectly highlights Maddy's toxic love for her abuser: "It was not the violence that scared her! It was the fact no matter what he did, she would still love him (*Euphoria*)".

The victims of abusive relationships find it difficult to leave their abusive partner because of the manipulative nature of the relationship which has immense control over the emotional state of the victims and clouds their judgement about their partner and relationship. In an abusive relationship, the abuser controls the strings of the victims the way Nate did in the case of Maddy. Victims of abusive relationships often have low self-esteem but if we analyse Maddy's character from the outside Maddy is a confident unapologetic woman but when it comes to her private life with Nate, her confidence shatters. To put it in her own words: "Nate just totally ruined my confidence (*Euphoria*)". Victims of abuse many times also seem to believe abuse is normal and even abuse is love as Maddy did:

I am just saying, love, is a million things. Sometimes it feels good and sometimes it doesn't. The one thing I know is that Nate loves me no matter what. He wouldkill for me, and I would kill for him. It feels good to know that there's a person in this whole world who has my back. (*Euphoria*)

Maddy here defends her toxic relationship in front of her mother but she misunderstands Nate's abusive nature as love. Nate's violence towards Maddy reaches its peak when he holds her at gunpoint leaving Maddy psychologically traumatized. When Nate and Maddy break up he finds another victim to abuse in the form of Cassie, who desires male valediction. The way Nate yells at Cassie in the season two finale of *Euphoria* is clear Nate is caught up in the cycle of toxicity and will harm everyone around him. Nate's misogynist attitude, his toxic masculinity, and his urge to control the women in his life through the use of violence make him one of the most abusive characters in television history.

Through Maddy's experience with an abusive relationship, *Euphoria* tries to represent young women who sometime misunderstand abuse as love and get caught in the web of a toxic relationship. *Euphoria* also illustrates how men try to dominate women via the use of violence through the character of Nate.

4.4 "Domestic Abuse" in *Big Little Lies*

Domestic abuse is a crime committed by one family member or members against another family member in the form of physical and sexual violence. In the broader context the term "Domestic Violence" is used for family violence, spouse abuse, wife battering, child abuse by parents or any other family member, sibling

abuse, violence against an elderly member of the family and abuse against any disabled person in a family (Tierney 380). Many victims of domestic abuse do not come forward because the violence occurs within the four walls of the home and to protect the façade of happy family victims do not report the crime. “Domestic violence occurs in all socioeconomic and racial groups. Its victims may be of any age or sex (Tierney 380)”. But according to statistics women are more prone to be the victims of domestic abuse. The unbalanced power between men and women results in women being at a disadvantage when it comes to holding the authority of power within the family. Women live in a male-dominated society where the family institution is governed by patriarchy. Though we are living in the modern era, most the head of families is the father or any male member. In the family, the man holds the power to make decisions thus man is dominant and the woman is subordinate to him. This unequal power struggle within the family can result in domestic violence. According to statistics it is estimated that 4 million women are the victims of life-threatening assault by their male partners. Statistics also show 95 per cent of reported cases of domestic abuse are committed by a husband against his wife (Tierney 381). The series *Big Little Lies* through the storyline between Celeste and Perry tries to show the evils of domestic abuse and the predicament of the victims of domestic abuse.

Perry Celeste’s husband used to beat Celeste; he would kick her, and choke her and there were many instances where his abusive behaviour was life-threatening to her. Men are violent towards their partners because they want to maintain control and power in the relationship and over the wife as Perry did in the case of Celeste. He wanted to control every aspect of her life. He even manipulated her into giving up her

job as a lawyer to look after the children. In a domestic abusive relationship, the wife is usually the marginalized character. Thus, Celeste did not have any power over her relationship with Perry. Despite being abused for years she was not able to leave him because of the power he had on her. Many victims of domestic abuse do not leave their abusive husbands and hide their actions from the world because they are attached to their abuser as the abuser is their husband who they think loves them. The fear of losing the love they had makes them stay with their abuser the way Celeste did; "I have thought of leaving many times. But then I think about what we have and we have lost (*Big Little Lies*)". She states this to her therapist.

The abusive men in order to make women dependent on them will cut their ties with the outside world. To make Celeste isolated and dependent on him when she decided to start her practice of law again, Perry tried to prevent it by manipulating her by telling her she cannot work because she has a history of depression and that working will be stressful to her. He even suggested having a baby to stop her from working. He even tried to isolate her from her friends and treated her like a possession. Whenever Celeste did not oblige to his demands, he used violence against her. The relationship between Perry and Celeste is a continuous cycle of violence. The cycle of violence is divided into three phases. The first phase is tension building. Phase two is the enactment of verbal and physical assaults. Phase three is also called the honeymoon phase. The victim thinks they did something to provoke the violence. During this phase, men will apologise and make promises to get better to end the violence but will rarely abide by their promise (Tierney 381). Celeste and Perry go through this cycle of violence every time Perry hits Celeste. For example, at one time Perry comes home and sees the toys of his twins spread across the living room. He

asks Celeste angrily why it is not cleaned yet, and Celeste replies they will clean it later. This is phase one of the cycle of violence where tensions are built between the couple. The Second phase is when Perry collects the toys in a box and pours them over Celeste's head and then grabs her beats her. During the third phase he cries and apologizes for his actions and every time they have this violent encounter, they end up getting physically intimate. During this third phase, Celeste feels powerful as he feels guilty for hitting her and she feels she has the upper hand in their relationship. This highlights Celeste getting habituated to the violence that she started to feel powerful after it. In this third phase, Perry would bestow gifts upon Celeste to make up for his actions, and she would forgive him because Celeste being a woman feels the responsibility for their relationship and her duty to maintain it. But Perry's promises were never sincere as he continues to physically assault Celeste.

Celeste during most of the time of Season 1 of *Big Little Lies* refuses to accept that she is the victim of domestic abuse. When she and Perry go for counselling, she defends Perry in front of their therapist by saying: "we both become violent sometimes (*Big Little Lies*)". She makes herself an accomplice in the violence out of denial. Celeste's acceptance journey as a victim of domestic abuse is an intense and complex journey she which under takes with the help of her therapist. Her therapist makes her understand that her husband is an abuser. At last, when Celeste tells Perry that she is leaving him he almost kills her, as he finds himself losing control over her.

Domestic violence leads to the violation of human rights. The sole purpose of Domestic abuse is the subordination of women (Singh, Singh, Pandey). Perry exerted violence against Celeste to control and subdue her. The dominance of the husband

over his wife is the root cause of domestic abuse in a relationship as it has been perfectly explained in *Big Little Lies* through the case of Celeste and Perry.

4.5 “Rape Culture” in *The Handmaid’s Tale*

Rape culture is an environment where sexual violence is normalized, excused and encouraged within a society (Schaefer). Rape culture is enforced by cultural practices that support rape and sexual violence against women. Rape jokes, victim blaming, objectification of women, and slut shaming are all products of Rape Culture. Rape culture is extremely harmful to human society as it completely ignores the human rights of women and dehumanizes them by normalizing violence against them. In a male-dominated society, rape culture plays a role to exert power and dominance over women. Misogyny and unequal balance of power in society contribute to rape culture. *The Handmaid’s Tale* the television show is a warning of how rape culture can affect society and turn human society into a dehumanizing institution. The example of rape culture in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is Gilead’s systematic oppressive form of government (Schaefer) which normalized sexual assault in the form of law. By forcing fertile women to become handmaids who were raped by Gilead’s powerful men to have children and solve the issues of low fertility rate *The Handmaid’s Tale* shows how Rape Culture is an act of oppression and violence against women.

In the patriarchal realm of Gilead, the men in power use biblical references and stories to justify rape culture (Gallant). The handmaids are the women who are just an object of reproduction in the Gilead society. These Handmaids were being raped by the commanders who are the men in power in Gilead. These Handmaids were raped every month by these Commanders and the Gilead law called this act of systematic

sexual violence against women a “ceremony” This ceremony according to them is a sacred act. During the ceremony scene where June eventually will be raped by Commander Fred in *The Handmaid’s Tale* Commander Fred recites the passage from Genesis about Racheal and Bilhah; “And she said Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her (King James Bible)”. By alluding to Biblical stories Gilead encouraged and normalized rape culture, oppression, and violence against women in society. The men in Gilead misuse biblical stories so that they can exert power over women. Commander Fred reciting the verse from Genesis before June’s rape highlights the same. The cultural factor of biblical allusions enforces the rape culture in Gilead.

Rape in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is both a political and physical act. Gilead uses the physically dehumanizing act of rape to uplift the political leaders of Gilead. As rape gives them power over the handmaids, it also works as a method to fulfil political goals of Gilead (Gallant) For example Gilead needs to increase reproduction for which fertile handmaids are required to serve under the commanders as law and bear their children, and for that Gilead excuses rape as a law under which handmaids are abused to increase the reproduction rate in Gilead. Under the systematic institution of Gilead only men have power and privilege. Women do not have any political rights or power. They cannot hold political power in Gilead as they are inferior beings in the institution of Gilead. Rape culture works as a force to keep them under the subjugation of men. The rape of handmaids is justified according to the law as an act of duty for Gilead. Thus, handmaids are deprived of any power they did not have any means to resist the “ceremony” which dehumanizes them through the act of rape. As

June states; “we are prisoners, they rape us, treat us like animals” (*The Handmaid’s Tale*).

Victim blaming also stems from rape culture as it puts the blame of rape on the victim instead of the perpetrator. In *The Handmaid’s Tale* this can be seen in one scene where Janine confesses in front of fellow handmaids and Aunt Lydia. Aunt Lydia puts blame on Janine and asks “Whose fault was it?” the other handmaids reply; “her fault, her fault, her fault”; “Who led them on?” she asks them and they reply; “she did, she did, she did” (*The Handmaid’s Tale*). By blaming Janine for the rape, they justified the crime committed by the perpetrator which is an example of how rape culture is encouraged by putting the blame on the victim.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* Gilead's rape is a political act against its female citizens which is culturally enforced by using scriptures to justify the dehumanizing act. Thus, *The Handmaid’s Tale* illustrates the extreme nature of rape culture which traps women under the dominance of men and patriarchal institutions.

In a male dominated society violence against women is seen in various forms and this is being reflected in the drama series, *13 Reasons Why*, *Euphoria*, *Big Little Lies* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“I want to know what I did to deserve this”

- (The Handmaid’s Tale)

A patriarchal society has been in existence for ages. Thus, women have been under oppression for ages. The main cause for the survival of a male-dominated society is the rigid ideology which upholds male dominance. It encourages cultural, political, religious, and social dominance of men over women. Patriarchy being a deeply rooted ideology has been internalized by both men and women which strengthens the male-dominated society. But the male-dominated society is an unfair institution which not only treats women as unequal to men but also mistreats them. Sexism, gender discrimination, objectification of women and violence against women are all products of the male dominant society.

In a male dominated world women are the victims of sexism and gender discrimination. In *13 Reasons Why* Hannah and Jessica were slut shamed because of sexism and gender discrimination. They were shamed for the same actions for which boys in their school were praised and encouraged. In the case of Hannah, slut shaming becomes one of the reasons that led her to commit suicide. In *Euphoria* we see how the idea of love is different for men and women and how love becomes a sexist notion in the male dominant society. Maddy and Cassie lose their identities while loving Nate. But the same does not happen with Nate. He remains unchanged in love. He tried to mould the girls he loved according to his misogynist idea of the “perfect girlfriend”. While in *Euphoria* love is sexist, in *Big Little Lies* the idea of motherhood

is sexist. Mothers in this television show are a victim of the patriarchal ideology of ‘unconditionally sacrificing mothers’ which makes them sacrifice their passion and dreams for being mothers as Celeste did for the twins. But the same sacrifice was not done by her husband. Thus, this highlights how the idea of motherhood is deeply influenced by a patriarchal ideology which only benefits men. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, women are the victims of institutional sexism in a male-dominated realm, where the institution which governs them is sexist.

In a male dominated setup, women are objectified as can be seen in *13 Reasons Why* which affected Hannah’s mental health. *Euphoria* does tackle the issue of objectification but also objectifies women via the male gaze for the purpose of content and attracting viewership. The male gaze in *Euphoria* is harmful as it encourages the objectification of women. In *Big Little Lies* we can see the subtle objectification which women face in everyday life which can appear harmless but can lead to harmful consequences. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, women are objectified under systematic patriarchal institutions. Handmaids are used as a reproductive object to solve the problem of low reproduction rate.

Women in a male-dominated environment are the victims of violence. There are violent acts committed against women by men in a male-dominated society. For example, in *13 Reasons Why* teenage girls like Hannah and Jessica were sexually assaulted and later victim blamed. In *Euphoria* Maddy was in an abusive relationship with men. Nate’s toxic masculinity, his anger issues and his misogynist attitude were the products of a male dominant environment. He abused Maddy both physically and emotionally. In the same manner in *Big Little Lies* Celeste was the victim of domestic

violence. There are a lot of similarities between Nate and Celeste's husband Perry who are both abusive men, who used violence to dominate Celeste and Maddy. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women have been victims of many violent crimes but the most evident one is the rape culture in *The Handmaid's Tale* which enforces the male-dominated institution of Gilead and oppresses the women of Gilead.

The hypothesis of the study which read: "Representation of women in selected drama series reflects the gender-based abuse in a male dominated society" was found to be accurate as the research highlighted the mistreatment of women in society. They are the victims of sexism, objectification, sexual assault, domestic violence, and many other issues.

Through the medium of the selected series this research work has examined the oppression and mistreatment received by women in a male-dominated society. In *13 Reasons Why* and *Euphoria* it can be seen how young girls are made victims of sexual assault, sexism, sexual objectification, the male gaze, and abuse in a male-dominated society. *Big Little Lies* depicts how the notion of motherhood is sexist and gender biased, how subtle objectification is rubbed off in a male-dominated society and how abusive husbands try to keep their wife submissive by the use of violence in the relationship. Lastly, *The Handmaid's Tale* displays the rigid male-dominated society which has demolished all basic human rights of women in Gilead. Though Gilead is a dystopian fictional intuition it in many ways and instances resembles the male-dominated environment of today's society. The society today still has a long way to go to create a less unequal and more equitable space for women.

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