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MODULE 3

Barbershop Toolkit

ESTD 2025

DIGITAL MASCULINITIES & ONLINE BEHAVIOR

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DIGITAL MASCULINITIES & ONLINE BEHAVIOR

→ Why This Module Matter?

Online spaces - social media, gaming, streaming, forums, and messaging apps, now shape masculinity as powerfully as families, schools, or workplaces. They can nurture connection, learning, and care, but they also amplify misogyny, homophobia, racism, doxxing, targeted harassment, and image-based sexual abuse (often called "revenge porn"). This module examines how boys and men learn and perform masculinity online, how algorithms and peer cultures reward dominance and dehumanization, and how these dynamics harm mental health, relationships, and communities. It invites men to move from passive consumption or silence to active, ethical participation - calling out abuse, refusing to share non-consensual images, supporting survivors, and modeling consent-based, respectful engagement.

The module equips participants to audit their digital footprints, recognize manipulative "manosphere" scripts, and practice concrete ally behaviors: refusing to forward or store intimate images without explicit consent; reporting image-based abuse immediately; challenging peers who minimize harm; using platform safety tools; and amplifying content that normalizes care, accountability, and help-seeking. The goal is to build identities that value empathy and consent as strengths, transforming online communities into safer, more equitable spaces where men's influence reduces harm rather than spreading it.

→ Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

+ Recognize how online platforms influence masculine identity, beliefs, and behaviors.

+ Reflect on the values and messages they consume and project online.

+ Identify harmful patterns of digital behavior (e.g., trolling, silent complicity, influencer idolization).

+ Practice skills to challenge digital sexism and exclusion while maintaining emotional resilience and safety.

+ Commit to one or more habits that promote respectful, inclusive digital engagement.

→ Who This Module Is For

+ Male youth active on social media and gaming platforms

+ Teachers and educators working with adolescents and boys

+ Influencers, content creators, and digital community leaders

+ Tech sector professionals and platform moderators

+ Men who use or manage online forums and platforms

TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT
1. ONLINE PERSONA MAPPING

→ **Goal:** Help participants become aware of how they represent themselves online and what messages they reinforce or ignore.

→ How To Facilitate

+ Ask participants to list the top 3 platforms they use
 (e.g., Instagram, X, TikTok, Reddit, Snapchat, Bluesky, WeChat, Discord, Douyin, etc.).

  Then have them reflect:

  → What do I post, comment on, share, or like? Note any patterns tied to "masculine" status cues (strength, wealth, control) or content that mocks or targets groups.

  → What types of content creators do I follow? Include "masculinity influencers," fitness/finance/self-help channels, and whether any promote disrespect or rigid norms.

  → Are my online actions aligned with my offline values? Where do algorithms seem to push me toward more extreme or stereotyped content, and how do I respond?

+ Invite them to draw a simple "digital self-portrait" showing the types of messages, aesthetics, and values they portray online, and annotate where algorithms, parasocial influencers, or male-dominated spaces shape that portrait.

→ Debrief Questions

+ Are there gaps between who you are offline and online? Where do algorithm nudges or parasocial pressures widen that gap?

+ What norms about masculinity show up in the content you engage with (e.g., entitlement, emotional detachment, protection/control, wealth/status)? Which ones do you challenge, ignore, or reinforce?

+ What's one thing you might shift about your digital footprint (e.g., unfollow, block, diversify sources, use "not interested," boost empathy-based creators), and what system will keep that shift going (lists, time limits, curated follows)?

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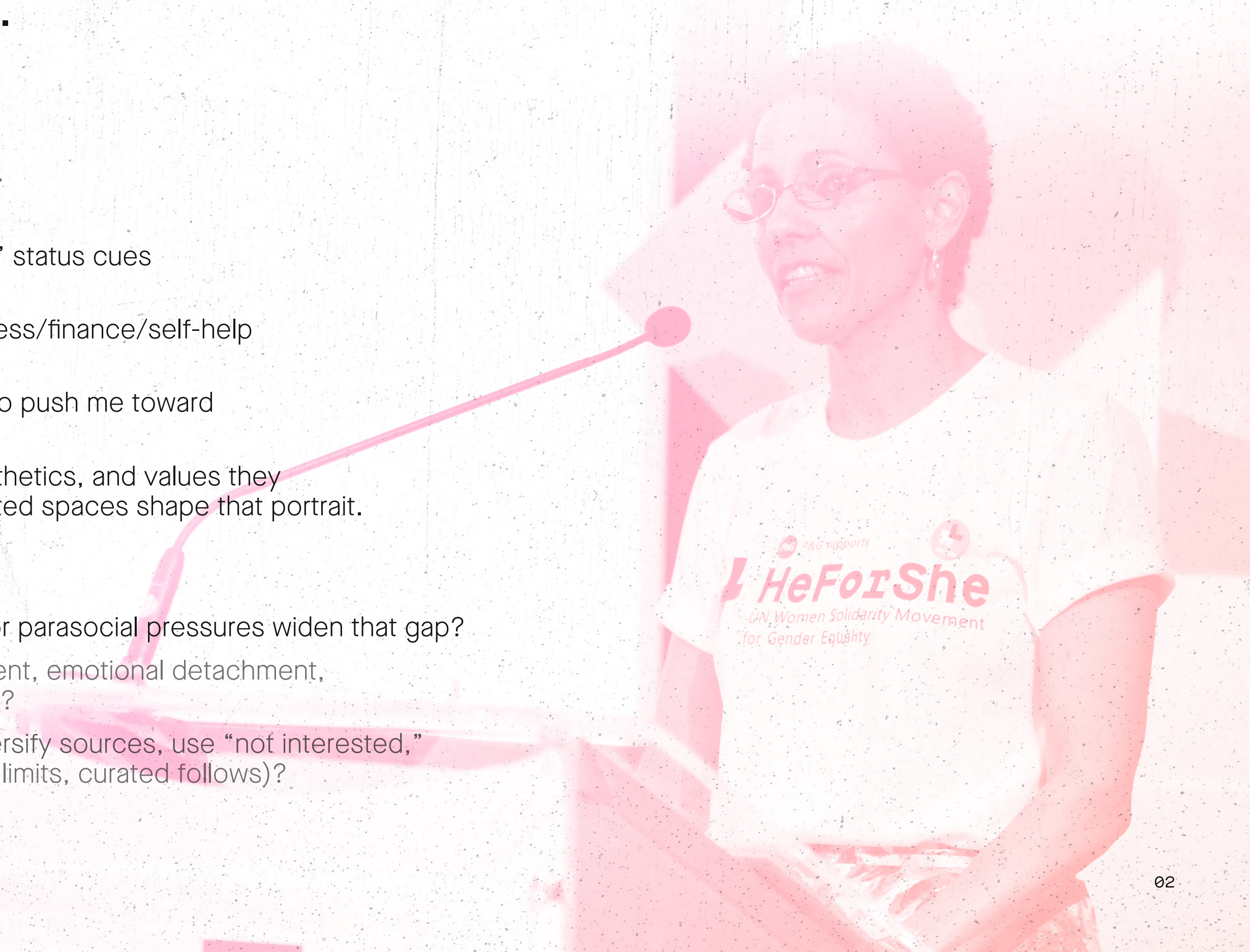
TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT
2. INFLUENCER VIDEO ANALYSIS

→ **Goal:** Critically examine how digital influencers shape masculine values and community norms across platforms, including how algorithms amplify certain messages.

→ How To Facilitate

+ Choose 1–2 short video clips (2–4 minutes each):

  → One from a hypermasculine influencer (e.g., promoting dominance, anti-feminism, violence, humiliation, doxxing/trolling, "sigma/alpha" tropes).

  → One from a progressive or emotionally expressive male influencer or activist (e.g., consent, care, accountability, mental health, allyship).

+ Watch as a group. Then break into small groups for analysis:

  → What's being said about gender, power, or emotion? Name the behaviours being modelled (e.g., boundary-setting vs. negging; de-escalation vs. incitement; empathy vs. contempt).

  → Who is being uplifted or excluded? Consider women, LGBTQ+ people, boys/men who don't fit the promoted ideal, and those targeted for harassment.

  → What impact might this have on young men or boys? Discuss likely effects on help-seeking, relationships, consent practices, and bystander behaviour online (e.g., sharing, commenting, reporting).

  → What messages are young men receiving about masculinity and leadership?

  → Optional digital-citizenship lens: What platform rules or algorithm cues seem to amplify these clips (hashtags, engagement bait), and what pro-social actions could redirect the feed (mute, block, "not interested," follow alternative creators)?

→ Facilitator Tip

+ Encourage openness. The goal isn't to shame people for who they follow, but to reflect critically on influence and responsibility. Invite participants to propose one constructive online action (e.g., follow three caring/skill-building creators, practise "pause before share," comment with prosocial norms, or report targeted harassment) and one offline action (e.g., check-in with a friend, model apology/repair, host a consent conversation).

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TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT
3. TROLL SIMULATION AND RESPONSE PLANNING

→ **Goal:** Practice confronting online sexism , homophobia, and "manosphere"- style harassment while preserving safety, and model healthier digital masculinities (accountability, empathy, boundaries).

→ How To Facilitate

+ Share a fictional online thread or social media post with problematic content (e.g., sexist comment, a "boys will be boys" comment excusing harm, a dogpiling reply chain targeting a woman/LGBTQ+ person, or a clip spreading manosphere talking points).

Ask participants:

→ Would you respond? Why or why not? Consider audience, risk of brigading, and platform policies.

→ How would you respond in a way that is constructive, respectful, and clear, modeling pro-social masculinity (naming harm, centering care, citing facts, avoiding escalation)?

→ When is it better to report/block/ignore—and when to engage? Factor in safety (doxxing risk), algorithms (don't boost harmful content), and community norms (use platform tools: report, mute, limit replies).

→ Follow-Up Activity

+ In pairs or small groups, craft three example responses:

→ One direct: "This isn't okay, and here's why…")(briefly name the harm, share a credible source, invite better conduct, and set a boundary; avoid insults and pile-ons)

→ One humorous/diffusive: Use light, non-sarcastic humor to defuse without belittling the target; pivot to values like respect and accuracy; avoid tone that could escalate,

→ One private follow-up: Check in with the target of harm, ask consent before amplifying, offer to report or help document, and share relevant safety resources; if appropriate, message the poster privately to flag the issue and suggest a correction..

→ Debrief Questions

+ What fears do you have about engaging online (brigading, doxxing, reputation risk), and what safety steps help (privacy settings, screenshots, reporting, not quote-tweeting trolls)?

+ Have you ever seen a powerful example of someone standing up online? What made it effective (clear boundary, evidence, support to the target, de-escalation, community guidelines reference)?

+ How can you stay grounded and safe when facing backlash (step away, use team handoffs, avoid engagement loops, lean on moderation/reporting, prioritize well-being over "winning")?

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FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR
NEW OR INEXPERIENCED TRAINERS

→ Core Concepts to Know

+ **Digital masculinity:** How norms of being a man are constructed and reinforced through online spaces.

+ **Toxic masculinity online:** Often includes dominance, bullying, glorification of violence, misogyny, emotional detachment, and rejection of vulnerability.

+ **Digital allyship:** Using your online presence and privilege to challenge harmful behavior, amplify marginalized voices, and foster respectful discourse.

+ **Doxxing:** Publicly revealing someone's private, personally identifying information (such as home address, phone, workplace, or family details) without consent, typically to intimidate, harass, or enable offline targeting; often crowdsourced and paired with threats.

+ **Brigading:** Coordinated mass harassment or manipulation of a person, post, or community by mobilizing a group to flood replies, downvote/upvote, report, or otherwise overwhelm targets and distort visibility.

+ **Manosphere:** A loose network of online communities, influencers, and forums that promote male-supremacist or anti-feminist ideologies, often pushing misogyny, entitlement, and adversarial narratives about women and gender equality.

+ **Dogpiling reply:** A swarm of hostile or bad-faith responses directed at a target in a short time window - sometimes coordinated, sometimes emergent, designed to overwhelm, silence, or punish, regardless of the original content's merit.

→ Suggested Session Flow (90-100 Minutes)

Time	Activity
00:00 - 00:10	Welcome & Introduction: "Why Online Masculinities Matter"
00:10 - 00:25	Online Persona Mapping
00:25 - 00:45	Influencer Video Analysis + Group Debrief
00:45 - 01:05	Troll Simulation + Safe Response Planning
01:05 - 01:20	Group Reflection: "What I Will Do Differently Online"

→ Before The Session

+ Familiarize yourself with popular online platforms used by your audience (e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Discord).

+ Select video clips or posts relevant to your context.

+ Print persona mapping worksheets or provide blank paper for reflection.

+ Ensure content warnings are given if showing aggressive or misogynistic content.

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FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR
NEW OR INEXPERIENCED TRAINERS

→ Sample Script Openers

+ "Online spaces are amplifying models of masculinity that celebrate dominance, aggression, and contempt for "softness", characteristics also found in authoritarian, patriarchal leadership."

+ "Online, masculinity is being shaped in real-time. The question is—by whom?"

+ "Our digital footprint is more than just content. It reflects our values."

+ "You don't have to go viral to be impactful online. Everyday choices matter."

→ Cautions & Tips

+ Be mindful of participants' emotional safety—some may have experienced trolling or digital harassment.

+ Avoid shaming participants who engage with problematic content—encourage critical reflection and growth.

+ Acknowledge generational and cultural gaps in digital behavior without judgment.

→ Key Takeaways

+ Masculinity is not neutral online—it is curated, influenced, and reinforced.

+ Men can either uphold or disrupt online harm through their silence or action.

+ Allyship online requires courage, discernment, and consistency.

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FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR
NEW OR INEXPERIENCED TRAINERS

→ Reflect On

+ **My Digital Footprint:** What does my own social media presence communicate about masculinity and gender roles? Am I prepared to examine this with participants? What online influencers or content do I consume, and how might they shape my views?

+ **Generational Differences:** If there's an age gap between me and participants, how will I bridge different understandings of online culture? What assumptions might I make about "kids these days" versus older participants' digital literacy?

+ **Confronting Toxic Content:** How comfortable am I viewing and discussing disturbing online content about women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, or other marginalized groups? What self-care practices will I use before and after the session?

+ **Technology and Authority:** How do I navigate discussions about online platforms or influencers I'm unfamiliar with? How will I maintain credibility while acknowledging knowledge gaps?

→ Insert Sidebar

+ A 2024 systematic review maps how misogyny circulates across platforms via memes, in-jokes, and cross-linking communities, showing that harassment is not isolated incidents but networked practices that teach and reward hostile norms. (Nature, 2024)

+ YouTube exposure concentrates among already resentful users, but channel subscriptions and external links sustain persistent engagement with extremist and sexist content—illustrating how committed audiences self-curate pipelines that reinforce digital masculinity ideals. (Science, 2024)

+ In a 2024 survey summarized by Women in Games, 59% of women and girl gamers reported toxicity from male gamers, including 14% receiving rape threats and 30% reporting sexual harassment, prompting many to avoid voice chat or quit sessions - evidence of silencing and exclusion at scale. (Women in Games, 2023)

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USEFUL RESOURCES

1   Movember. (2025) Young Men's in a Digital World. Retreived from:
     https://ex.movember.com/movember-institute/masculinities-report

2   HeForShe. (2024). Joint Open Letter Calling for Action Against Online Misogyny. Retrieved from:
     https://www.heforshe.org/en/joint-open-letter-calling-action-against-online-misogyny

3   UN Women. (2022). Accelerating Efforts to Tackle Online and Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/accelerating-efforts-to-tackle-online-and-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls

4   UN Women. (2023). Applying Behavioral Insights to Address Digital Violence Against Women and Girls. Retrieved from:
     https://lac.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/10/la-aplicacion-de-las-ciencias-del-comportamiento-para-abordar-la-violencia-digital-hacia-las-mujeres-y-las-ninas

5   UN Women and World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). Expert Group Meeting Report: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/expert-group-meeting-report-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women

6   UN Women. (2025). FAQs: Digital Abuse, Trolling, Stalking, and Other Forms of Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/digital-abuse-trolling-stalking-and-other-forms-of-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women

7   UN Women. (2025). How to Counter the Manosphere's Toxic Influence. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-to-counter-the-manospheres-toxic-influence

8   UN Women. (2020). Online and ICT-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls During COVID-19. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brief-online-and-ict-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls-during-covid-19

9   UN Women. (2025). Repository of UN Women's Work on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/repository-of-un-womens-work-on-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls

10   UN Women. (2024). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Developing a Shared Research Agenda. Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-developing-a-shared-research-agenda

11   UN Women. (2023). Toolkit: Youth Guide to End Online Gender-Based Violence. Retrieved from:
     https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/12/youth-guide-to-end-online-gender-based-violence

12   UN Women. (2024). Transforming Patriarchal Masculinities: Learning From Practice – Lessons from UN Women DRILS Initiative (Dialogue, Reflection, Insight, Learning & Sharing). Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/transforming-patriarchal-masculinities-learning-from-practice-en.pdf

13   UN Women. (2021). Violence Against Women in the Online Space: Insights from a Multi-Country Study. Retrieved from:
     https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/11/violence-against-women-in-the-online-space

14   UN Women. (2025). What is the Manosphere and Why Should We Care? Retrieved from:
     https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/what-is-the-manosphere-and-why-should-we-care

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SEE OTHER
BARBERSHOP 2.0 MODULES

M1
MODULE 1
ACCOUNTABILITY & POWER SHARING
>>>

M2
MODULE 2
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION & ALLYSHIP
>>>

M3
MODULE 3
DIGITAL MASCULINITIES & ONLINE BEHAVIOR
>>>

M4
MODULE 4
MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION
>>>

M5
MODULE 5
FATHERHOOD & CARE WORK
>>>

M6
MODULE 6
CLIMATE JUSTICE & GENDER
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M7
MODULE 7
INTERSECTIONALITY & INCLUSIVE MASCULINITIES
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M8
MODULE 8
MENSTRUAL EQUITY & SRHR
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M9
MODULE 9
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)
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M10
MODULE 10
GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE
>>>

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN WOMEN

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FOR **ALL**
WOMEN
AND GIRLS