

---

## The Evolution of Public Reactions on Celebrity Grooming Relationships: An Analysis of Billie Eilish and Taylor Swift

Elka Tsara<sup>1</sup>, Dewi H. Susilastuti<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

✉: elkatsara@mail.ugm.ac.id

---

### ABSTRACT

The two well-known female musicians, Billie Eilish and Taylor Swift are examined in connection to their grooming relationships within different periods, specifically in the pre-and post-Me Too movement. The study uses comparative analysis, and feminist media theory was implied, it explores public perceptions, digital magazine portrayal, and cultural awareness of on grooming relationships depicted by celebrities. The pre-Me Too era, characterized by romanticized portrayals of celebrity romances and a shortage of investigation into power dynamics, gave rise to accusations concerning Swift's grooming relationship. However, when the Me Too movement gained popularity, Eilish made her charge at a period when grooming techniques were more generally acknowledged and denounced. This article highlights how societal perceptions of consent, power dynamics, and ethical problems in relationships have evolved using news reporting, cultural discussions, and public responses. The findings demonstrate how public discourse, along with an understanding of celebrity grooming relationships, has been revolutionized by social movements such as Me Too. In the context of evolving societal norms and values, they also illuminated how the public's views and media portrayals are shifting.

Keywords: *Billie Eilish; celebrity; grooming; Me Too movement; public reactions; relationship; Taylor Swift*

Article information  
(Filled by Editorial  
Management)

Received: 28 Feb, 2024

Revised: 20 Oct, 2024

Accepted: 24 Oct, 2024

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v11i2.94434>

Available at <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/rubikon/article/view/94434>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

---

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most well-known movements in the US is the Me Too movement. The Me Too campaign was started in 2006 by a black activist named Tarana Burke (Bhattacharyya, 2018). Its first goal was to assist and create a place of safety for victims of sexual assault. According to Rodino-Colocino (2018), the Me Too movement strives to empower survivors via empathy to help them become self-sufficient and feel whole. However, when reports of sexual harassment towards American producer Harvey Weinstein appeared in the latter part of 2017, the Me Too movement had a breakthrough and went viral globally. As a result, many women are beginning to speak up on social media to share their experiences with sexual assault.

The Me Too campaign is crucial because it can break through entrenched systems of power that have allowed sexual misbehavior to continue undetected and highlight how widespread it is. The movement has started meaningful discussions regarding consent, boundaries, and the misuse of power in numerous contexts by giving survivors a forum to voice their stories (Me Too.

Movement, n.d.). As a result, significant discussions, such as those pertaining to grooming relationships, have attracted a lot of public attention. According to Mcalinden (2006), the actions that an abuser takes to get ready to abuse a child sexually are referred to as grooming. Reaching the child, getting their cooperation, and keeping them secret to prevent revelation are some of the specific objectives - because the perpetrator can use this procedure to refute or defend their acts, it strengthens their abusive tendency (Craven et al., 2006).

To comprehend the relationships between grooming and the Me Too movement, it is crucial to understand the dynamic, for instance, the abuse of power and responsibility within interpersonal relationships. Gradually, the abuser establishes trust, reliance, and obedience in the target through flattery, presents, and emotional blackmail, among other strategies - this is what defines grooming relationships (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). Even though grooming has been known for a long time, especially by psychologists and people from

child sexual abuse, people's concern has started recently due to the pick moment of the Me Too movement in 2017. Since the awakening of the Me Too movement in 2017, it has become the organization that spreads awareness of sexual violence and abuse of power. It supports people in voicing out their sexual assault experience and combating sexual violence.

Through the Me Too movement, we can comprehend the social phenomenon regarding intimidation, abuse, and consent in interpersonal interaction. For instance, it can be seen in the celebrity life. According to Rojek (2001), a person who has gained significant recognition and popularity in the public eye is often referred to as a celebrity, while the phrase can apply to a broad spectrum of people from different backgrounds and sectors. Since the fame of a celebrity has gained public attention, it is common for every aspect of celebrity life to get people's attention, such as relationships or celebrity love life. Recently, the celebrity relationships that got people's attention due to the age gap are Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford couple.

Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O'Connell is an American singer-

songwriter, she was born on December 18, 2001. Eilish gained her popularity in 2015 with the song entitled "Ocean Eyes". Despite the hit debut song, Eilish is also known for her unique sense of fashion and her bold stance on environmental and social issues. Meanwhile, Rutherford is also an American singer-songwriter who was born on August 21, 1991. On October 2022, Eilish and Rutherford were spotted together and have been caught kissing by paparazzi (Bailey, 2023b). It was not long before Eilish and Rutherford were seen together; some online magazines reported their official relationship. However, the reports through digital magazines about their relationship caught various people's reactions, especially from feminists, due to the age gap. Since Eilish is still minor, her relationships with Rutherford tend to be grooming.

Moreover, the social concern towards grooming has increased since the campaign of the Me Too movement spread awareness surrounding some issues such as sexual violence, abuse, and assault. So, there is no wonder why people reacted and criticized the relationship between Eilish and Rutherford. Meanwhile, far from the Me Too movement hit the public in 2017, people are not too

concerned about this issue except psychologists or people from this kind of field. Thus, it can be seen in the relationship between Swift and Mayer. Swift is a successful and famous American singer-songwriter who was born on December 13, 1989. Swift's skill, genuineness, and unrelenting commitment to her work have made her one of modern pop culture's most significant and known individuals. On the other hand, Mayer is an American singer-songwriter who was born on October 16, 1977. They were involved in a romantic relationship between 2009 and 2010 when Swift was 19 and Mayer was 32 (Burke, 2023).

Over the years, the relationship between Swift and Mayer has been recognized as grooming by Swift's fans. Back then, there were fewer people concerned about this issue, unlike nowadays, people are more attentive due to the Me Too movement. The emergence of the Me Too movement increased public scrutiny and demands for accountability as a result of increased awareness of cases of power abuse, exploitation, and manipulation (Luo & Zhang, 2022). Then, when the relationship between Eilish and Rutherford was published, it attracted people's reactions. Since their relationship is coming out after the Me Too

movement, it makes people criticize their relationship and try to warn Eilish that she got groomed by her partner. Thus, the various public commentaries of grooming towards Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, are interesting to examine due to the different periods - specifically before and after the emergence of the Me Too movement in 2017.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

In analyzing the different people's reactions to grooming issues towards Eilish and Rutherford couple compared to the Swift and Mayer couple, the comparative analysis and the theory of feminist media studies relies on the theory of feminism. It applies theories, notions, and logic that articulate feminist ideals and conceptions to reception as well as media processes like recruiting, production, and distribution (Press & Tripodi, 2021). It also addresses the structure of representation in both news and entertainment beyond the platforms (Steiner, 2014). People's responses and perceptions of the grooming issue regarding Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, varied, revealing different viewpoints on gender, power, and media portrayal. This part, which draws on feminist media theory, looks at

how viewers interacted with media depictions of the case and assesses its importance in relation to larger contexts of culture (Walters, 1995).

The Me Too movement had already caused a general awareness and conversation about issues of sexual assault, abuse, and inequality of power in numerous industries when the grooming case regarding Eilish and Rutherford arose. Audiences were becoming more critical of media portrayals of the case, especially those that reinforced victim-blaming or downplayed the seriousness of grooming and assault. Through social media, survivors have been able to tell their own stories, show support for one another, and hold grooming offenders and supporters accountable. The theory of feminist media focusing on audience reception and interpretation in responding to grooming issues by examining Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, are used in this study to discover people's different reactions to grooming issues in a range of time before and after Me Too movement hits public. Furthermore, digital magazines used as the primary data in this study, such as Elle, Glamour, Seventeen, USA Today, etc.; - these digital magazines consist of information about Eilish and

Rutherford's relationship, also information about Swift and Mayer's relationship.

Digital magazines as the object of study are classified as a new media product. According to Glen and Royston (2008), part of the global cultural revolution, new media and the digital revolution are expected to impact the world just as much as the invention of the electrification or printing press. Digital magazines are dynamic, interactive digital products that have emerged with the advent of digital technologies and online platforms (Fidler, 1997). Accommodating the evolving tastes and habits of contemporary consumers, digital magazines have increased their scope, accessibility, and adaptability by embracing digital media. Then, digital magazines tend to develop and innovate as new media products, influencing how people will consume and communicate in the age of digital media (Pavlik, 2008). Therefore, the theory which considers digital magazines as a product of new media is applied to find out the role new media plays in disseminating information to spread awareness.

Steps in examining the study include, first, reading and collecting several credible

digital magazines. Second, the researcher presents evidence which shows people's reactions to grooming issues towards Eilish and Rutherford, as the Swift and Mayer scandal - which later relates to how different people reactions since in the Billie Eilish era, people were already concerned due to Me Too movement, unlike the Swift era. Third, after picking out the scenes that were collected, the researcher analyzes the narratives. The researcher incorporates a few posts that are from X with the keywords "Billie Eilish got groomed by Jesse Rutherford" and "Taylor Swift got groomed by John Mayer" to find people's reactions. The data period is selected specifically since the different periods the Eilish groomed cases are in the range of 2022 - 2023.

Meanwhile, the Taylor Swift groomed cases were in 2009 - 2010. Additionally, the secondary data comes from earlier publications in journals and papers that are relevant. Following that, the researcher examines the information gathered and incorporates it into the discussions.

## **DISCUSSION**

Being a celebrity has many benefits, such as fame, recognition, money, and the

chance to follow interests and passions. It is common for celebrities to have advantages over resources, activities, and events that are not available to ordinary people. They also have a platform from which to inspire and encourage others (Gamson, 2023; Rockwell & Giles, 2009). However, there are drawbacks to becoming a celebrity as well, like invasion of privacy, continuous media attention, and pressure to uphold a particular image (Van Krieken, 2018). Being stalked by paparazzi can be especially tough for celebrities, rendering privacy a challenge in their everyday life. Therefore, it is no wonder that the public spots the love lives of celebrities. The celebrity grooming couples of Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, are in the public spotlight. The issue of grooming arose due to the relationship between Eilish and Rutherford; people criticized their relationship since the awareness of grooming increased because of the Me Too movement.

Even though grooming issues have already been known in the past, people are much less concerned about grooming; this can be seen in the relationship between Swift and Mayer. Then, the different people's reactions to the grooming issues can be compared with the

specific periods before and after the Me Too movement through the reports of digital magazines. Furthermore, in this discussion, there are several sub-sections presented. First, the dynamic of the grooming relationship between Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer couples. Second, the different public reactions to the grooming relationship before and after the Me Too movement sparks in society. In addition, the evolution of public reactions on grooming relationships was depicted in Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, in the range period pre- and the Me Too movement.

### **The Comparison of Dynamic Grooming Relationship Between Billie Eilish and Taylor Swift**

The relationships between Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, are referred to as grooming. These fascinating case studies offer to examine the complexities of the age gap, disparities in power, and public reactions. Although both couples attract public attention due to their romantic life, both have their characteristics.

#### *Digital Magazines' Portrayal of Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford's Relationship*

Rutherford, the main vocalist of The Neighbourhood, was romantically linked with Eilish from 2022 - 2023, an aspiring and talented musician (Logan, 2023). Since Rutherford was considerably older, 11 years older than Eilish, there was much conjecture about their supposed relationship. It may be argued that the power dynamics in this case were lopsided because Rutherford was a more well-known figure in the industry than Eilish, who was still figuring out her rise to fame. Because of their age gap, there have been concerns expressed over the power dynamics in their relationship, and perhaps Eilish was more susceptible to pressure or manipulation because she was a younger, less experienced person; due to this - it brought up concern regarding agency and consent. Then, the people had varied opinions on the couple. Some were worried and felt comfortable about their age gap and possible power imbalances; the information that Rutherford and Eilish met when she was about sixteen and that Eilish had long been an admirer of his band, the Neighborhood, further disturbed many people.

Others were fascinated and intrigued by the couple's popularity and even stood up for the couple, claiming that

Eilish may make her own decisions free from public scrutiny because she is an authorized adult who granted her consent.

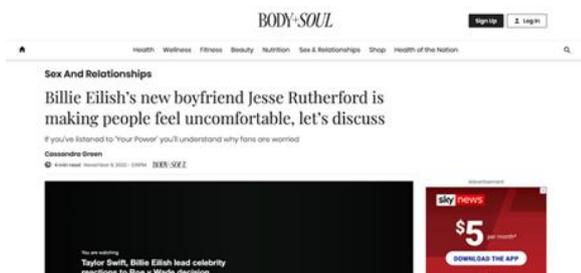


Figure 1. Digital magazine reports on Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford's relationship (bodyandsoul.com.au)

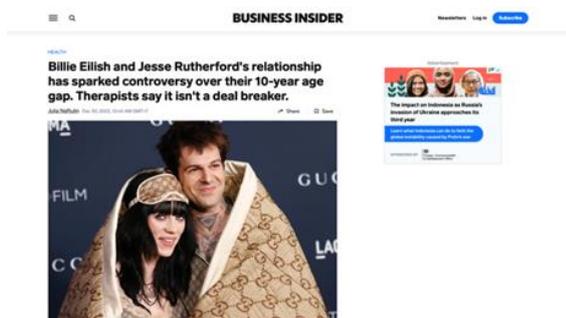


Figure 2. Digital magazine reports on Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford's relationship (businessinsider.com)

The media portrayal through digital magazines entitled Business Insider about the grooming relationship between Eilish and Rutherford shows varied perceptions. It presents two strongholds, as quoted by Business Insider magazine in 2022, regarding Eilish's relationship. Their news captured people criticizing the relationship by showing their worries about the age gap (Naftulin, 2022). For instance, "Your sister's dating a 31-

year-old man, and your music is shitty." Also, on the other side, there is a stronghold of people who support and think that age disparities are not a matter.

It's not necessarily what the age gap is, but what phase of life you are in. Depending on what experiences you've had, that's really going to be the determining factor for a long-term relationship.

The only age gap that is 'too big' is one where you, as the person entering into the relationship, don't feel connected or can't relate to the person you're with. That's it. It's no one else's decision.

Hopefully over time, after getting to know somebody the power dynamic changes a little bit and they become more on equal footing. But initially, I think it can definitely cloud somebody's judgment to be with someone they once had a crush on, or admired, or looked up to

Despite their controversial relationship, they seem indifferent to public reactions. Even the couple chose to make light of all the criticism over their age difference by dressing up as an older man and a baby for Halloween. They were completely unaffected by the criticism they received. Eilish had a full face of doll-like makeup

on her face and was dressed in a bib, diaper, and bonnet. In the meantime, Rutherford altered his appearance to resemble an older man by donning a bald head covering and prosthetics, which caused people to criticize him hard, but they did not care at all about the commentaries. They even thought that they looked perfect and hilarious in their Halloween costumes (Mohammed, 2022).



Figure 3. Digital magazine reports of Eilish and Rutherford in Halloween costumes (X.com)

Later, they appeared together on the red carpet in similar costumes but said nothing in response to questions about their age difference.



Figure 4. Eilish and Rutherford red carpet debut as officially dating (vogue.com)

In another interview with Vanity Fair in 2023 (Same Interview, The Sixth Year, 00:16:00 - 00:16:43), Eilish expressed her excitement and happiness about the romance. She remarked on dating Rutherford, and she looks happy with it.

It's really cool and I'm really excited and I'm really happy about it. I managed to get my life to a point where I not only was known by a person that I thought was the hottest fucking fucker alive but pulled his ass! Are you kidding me? Can we just... Round of applause for me? Thank you. Jesse Rutherford, everyone. I pulled his ass! All me. I did that shit. I locked that motherfucker down.

(Billie Eilish:

The public perceptions have responded to Eilish's remarks about Jesse Rutherford in a variety of ways, with many feelings particularly uneasy about her effusive praise given

her long-standing adoration for him.

### *Taylor Swift and John Mayer's Relationship*

Swift and Mayer, on the other hand, had public attention and established renown as they developed their relationship from 2009 until 2010 (Campano, 2023). Swift, who was well-known in the music business already, started dating Mayer, an experienced musician with a track record of often dating women. While still noticeable, Swift and Mayer's age differences were not as significant as those between Eilish and Rutherford. When Swift started dating Mayer, she was already a well-established musician. Thus, the age gap was less of something to discuss when talking about their dating dynamics. Their relationship was complicated in terms of power dynamics, though, as Mayer's standing and experience might have an impact. The public and reporters closely examined how the public saw Swift and Mayer's relationship, with conversations frequently centering on questions of age, compatibility, and the possibility of emotional manipulation in light of Mayer's previous romantic relationships.



Figure 5. Digital magazine reports of Swift and Mayer's relationship (intouchweekly.com)



Figure 6. Digital magazine reports of Swift and Mayer's relationship (hollywoodlife.com)

At the time they were dating between 2009 and 2010, only a few digital magazines are reporting their romantic life and questioning the relationship dynamic. One of the digital magazines, In Touch Weekly, reports the closeness of Swift and Mayer by saying they seem cozy and act like teenagers. Then, due to the reports, people assumed that Swift adored Mayer even though he was much older than her (Staff, 2010). However, like Eilish and Rutherford's reports, the way media captured the relationship of Swift and Mayer, there are also ones who are against their relationship

and trying to voice out if they should not be in a relationship because it is illegal (Life, 2010).

### **The Different Public Reactions on Celebrity Grooming Relationship in The Pre- and Post-Me Too Movement Sparks**

Far from the Me Too movement becoming popular, the public reactions on grooming are not a hot issue to discuss. Cultural views, societal conventions, and media representations of celebrity relationships frequently influence public perceptions of grooming partnerships (Illouz, 2023). Since the grooming issue arose in celebrity romance, for instance, Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer. This comparison of grooming relationships reveals that the dynamics of celebrities' romances are significantly shaped by power disparities, public perceptions, and age gaps. Moreover, the study case of the grooming relationship presents captivating case examples to investigate how media narratives, established societal norms, and age gaps in relationships affected public impressions.

### *Public Reactions on Taylor Swift's Grooming Relationship in The Pre-Me Too Movement*

The grooming relationship of Swift with her ex, Mayer, caught the public eye and made a lot of media coverage and curious since Swift dating an older man. Tabloids and celebrity gossip columns diligently tracked their progression as their romance developed against a backdrop of intense public scrutiny and controversy. However, at the time, the dominant cultural perspectives and societal norms greatly influenced how the general public responded to their relationship. Before the Me Too movement, romantic clichés and conventional gender roles frequently shaped public opinions about grooming relationships (Kosut, 2012). Mayer was often depicted as the charming and domineering partner because he was the more experienced and mature one in the partnership. Swift, on the other hand, was frequently portrayed as the youthful, naive ingénue seduced by his charm despite her achievements and agency. Their romance had been romanticized by media narratives, which portrayed it as a story of passionate lovers facing the challenges of fame and money.

Then, the public perceptions of Swift and Mayer's relationship, however, were divided. Some public sectors assumed that Swift was not groomed and that Mayer was falling in love with her. Meanwhile, the others voiced concerns or suspicion and already thought their relationship would not work well.



Figure 7. People's reactions over Swift groomed by Mayer (X.com)



Figure 8. People's reactions over Swift groomed by Mayer (X.com)



Figure 9. People's reactions over Swift groomed by Mayer (X.com)

The varied public perceptions towards Swift's relationship with Mayer show there was a power dynamic. Even though it does not question whether the age gap was appropriate clearly, the narrative says, "... We all know he just wants the puss!" implies she has been exploited due to the power dynamic. Thus, it can be seen from the significant age gap of Mayer who is 12 years older than Swift and has a lot of experience in the music industry - which tends to create power imbalance environments and exploitation. Even while Swift was a well-known musician, media representations of her frequently highlighted her youthful status and vulnerability, feeding preconceived notions and clichés about gender and age gaps in love relationships.

However, since the media reported that the relationship between Swift and Mayer ended in 2010, as a creative musician, Taylor Swift wrote about her life experience in a song. Even though she has not declared that the song entitled "Dear John" is aimed at Mayer, people assume through the song lyrics that the person who inspired her is Mayer (Dodd, 2023). Her lyrics show the disappointment and heartbreak due to the person she loved only

taking advantage of her (Bailey, 2023). Unfortunately, the public response to "Dear John" was hating the victim, Swift.



Figure 10. People's reactions over Swift groomed by Mayer (X.com)



Figure 11. People's reactions over Swift groomed by Mayer (X.com)

Despite supporting the grooming victims, people were hating Swift. Ironically, victims were getting blamed, and the perpetrators escaped from the public eye. However, this kind of situation is quite understandable due to the lack of public awareness of grooming issues. Therefore, since celebrities are public figures, they play an important role in influencing and shaping public perceptions (Boon & Lomore, 2001). Hence, the entertainment industry frequently promoted damaging tropes about inequality in power and consent, as well as false expectations of relationships,

through its romanticized depictions of love and romance. When abuse and sexual harassment were not widely known, the media frequently romanticized on grooming relationships, giving little thought to the ramifications associated with them.

Furthermore, the public reactions over the grooming relationship between Swift and Mayer before the Me Too movement gained momentum reflected the prevailing cultural beliefs and social mores regarding celebrity relationships. The representation in framing grooming relationships is frequently romanticized, which contributed to the spread of negative preconceptions and cliché about gender and the age gap in celebrity love life. Meanwhile, the issues regarding power imbalance and moral issues within them referred to latent worries about abuse and consent that would emerge as the Me Too movement grew.

#### *Public Reactions Over Billie Eilish Grooming Relationship in The Post-Me Too Movement*

The awakening of the Me Too movement campaign in 2017 raised people's awareness or even concern about abuse and power imbalance, harassment. Since the romance between Eilish and Rutherford happened

in the post-period of the Me Too movement, people are more concerned about their age gap and consider it grooming. Hence, their relationship has drawn more public attention to power imbalance, consent, and moral issues. The Me Too campaign, which exposed pervasive instances of sexual assault and harassment, has forced society to confront problems of responsibility and consent, especially in the field of entertainment (Durham, 2021). However, although the Me Too movement has spread awareness to society, it does not rule out the possibility that there are still a lot of people who are not concerned and even support grooming relationships. It can be seen in the media portrayed in reporting grooming relationships through digital magazines or the public debates on social media such as X.

In response to Eilish and Rutherford's relationship, there are varied public reactions to their age gap. As their relationship developed, the cultural environment changed and the way public perceptions raised questions about consent in intimate relationships, power dynamics, and age gaps. Certain sections of the public have expressed that their relationship was not a grooming relationship due to

Eilish being a consenting adult, and she has been Rutherford's admirer for a year.



Figure 12. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)



Figure 13. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)

Meanwhile, others have voiced skepticism or concerns regarding the power imbalances involved. Some public view the victim as having the potential to be exploited by her partner due to their age gap and power imbalance.

on public dialogue and relationship attitudes.

cass semi ia  
@MERMAIDBARS

i cannot believe instead of jesse rutherford dating a 20 yr old and just SHUTTING THE FUCK UP him and billie dressed as a baby and old man.....i am at a loss

02:04 AM - 31 Oct 2022

Reply Retweet Favorite

Figure 14. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)



Figure 15. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)

Relationship standards have changed in the wake of the Me Too movement, with a focus now more on openness, responsibility, and respect for one another (Clark-Parsons, 2021). The media's recent focus on grooming relationships – which were previously idealized or disregarded – reflects broader changes in societal perceptions of consent and the balance of power in relationships (Durham, 2021). Therefore, Eilish, groomed by her ex, Rutherford, in the post-Me Too movement, sparked public reactions in highlighting social movement and cultural changes have a profoundly positive influence



Figure 16. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)



Figure 17. People's reactions over Eilish groomed by Rutherford (X.com)

Many of the responses are concerned about Eilish's romantic life, even though she is denied that her relationship is not wrong. However, the way people criticize and try to spread awareness about grooming is such a significant cultural change in society.

### **The Evolution of Public Reaction Factors on Grooming Relationship between Billie Eilish Era and Taylor Swift Era**

Following the Me Too movement, there have been general changes in culture towards more compassion and accountability, which is reflected in the rising recognition of power imbalances and moral issues within relationships (Bhattacharyya, 2018). Thus, the evolution of people's reactions in responding to grooming relationships depicted in celebrity love life, for instance, Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, were interesting. Therefore, some factors cause huge differences in people's thoughts on grooming in the range period pre- and post- the Me Too movement. For instance, the cultural context, celebrity age and experience, and the way media portrayed celebrity relationships.

Regarding the larger cultural context of discussions

about consent, power dynamics, and moral issues in relationships, the time of the claims is an essential factor. The accusations of grooming made against Swift surfaced in the late 2000s when conversations on sexual assault and exploitation were not as expected or pervasive as they are now. On the other hand, once the Me Too movement gained traction, Eilish's accusations came to light, raising awareness as well as sensitivity to the problems associated with relationship abuse and manipulation. The celebrity's background at the point of the allegations is another consideration. When the accusations of grooming against her came to light, Eilish and Swift were young musicians, even though a lot of people already recognized them. But as teenagers who are still young and do not have many experiences in relationships, they have the potential to be abused by their partners. Then, Swift's grooming relationship arose far from the Me Too movement, which gained public attention. Meanwhile, Eilish's relationship happened after the Me Too movement hit public societies - it means the awareness over power imbalance, abuse, age gap, etc., had been spread out through the Me Too campaign.

When Swift and Mayer were portrayed in the media prior to the Me Too movement, their relationship was frequently not given the same level of close examination as it did in the post-Me Too era. The media tended to romanticize celebrities' relationships over Swift and Mayer's relationship in the late 2000s, emphasizing the glitz and mystery of their relationship instead of challenging any potential power disparities or moral issues. The subtleties of Swift's relationship were rarely highlighted in favor of an overly dramatic portrayal of the rising star and musician as they navigated the difficulties of romance and popularity. On the other hand, in the wake of the Me Too movement, media attention on grooming relationships—like the relationship between Rutherford and Eilish—became more analytical and complex. The Me Too movement's emphasis on consent, abuse, and imbalances in power had changed the cultural environment at the time the charges first arose in the early 2020s, and the media were part of it. As a result of this change in the public consciousness, reporters and analysts began to scrutinize Eilish and Rutherford's relationship more closely, looking for indications of

grooming behavior and power imbalances.

Therefore, a more romanticized picture of celebrity romance was possible in the years before the Me Too movement because conversations about consent and abuse were less common in the media. The public perceptions of Eilish and Rutherford's relationship, however, were shaped by the post-Me Too era's increased knowledge of and criticism of grooming activities. Reporting became increasingly critical and reflective because of the reporter's propensity to examine the power dynamics through the prism of more significant societal debates. In addition, the broader changes in societal attitudes, cultural knowledge, and the media environment are reflected in the disparities in how Swift and Mayer's relationship was portrayed in the media before the Me Too movement and how Eilish and Rutherford's romance was shown after the Me Too movement.

## **CONCLUSION**

Comparing the relationship between Eilish and Rutherford, as well as Swift and Mayer, which is considered grooming, has raised exciting debates in public, especially since both of their relationship periods are different. Conclusively,

the examination of the public's responses to the grooming relationships between Eilish and Swift highlights the significant influence of societal background, cultural consciousness, and media attention on the understanding of celebrity relationships. The disparities in responses to these two incidents demonstrate how public discourse on consent, power dynamics, and moral issues in relationships is constantly changing. Regarding Swift, the media frequently idealized celebrity relationships, prioritizing the glamour of fame above a critical analysis of the possibility of imbalances or moral issues in the relationship. These allegations regarding Swift's grooming surfaced during the pre-Me Too movement era. On the other hand, Eilish's grooming claims came to light during the post-Me Too movement period, when grooming practices were more widely recognized and denounced. The Me Too movement's emphasis on consent and abuse changed the cultural environment, as seen by the more analytical and complex way in which the media reported her situation. Finally, consent, agency, and ethical behavior in all relationships—including those involving celebrities—will likely be more widely acknowledged as public

perceptions toward the dynamics of power change and reports in the media and public responses grow more critical and contemplative.

#### **COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT**

Herewith the author declares that this article is free from any conflict of interest regarding the assessment, review and revision, and publication process in general.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Bailey, A. (2023a). Taylor Swift's Ex John Mayer Posted a Not-So-Subtle Message to Fans Amid 'Dear John' Re-Release. ELLE. <https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a44475105/taylor-swift-ex-john-mayer-speak-now-dear-john-release-reaction/>
- Bailey, A. (2023b). Who Is Jesse Rutherford? - Meet Billie Eilish's Ex-Boyfriend. Elle. <https://www.elle.com/culture/celebrities/a41722605/who-is-jesse-rutherford-billie-eilish-boyfriend/>
- Bhattacharyya, R. (2018). #metoo movement: An awareness campaign. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 3, 1-12.
- Boon, S. D., & Lomore, C. D. (2001). Admirer-celebrity

relationships among young adults: Explaining perceptions of celebrity influence on identity. *Human Communication Research*, 27(3), 432-465.

Burke, T. (2023). Taylor Swift & John Mayer: Everything You Need to Know. *Who*. <https://www.who.com.au/taylor-swift-john-mayer-everything-you-need-to-know>.

Campano, L. (2023). Let's Look Back on Taylor Swift and John Mayer's Brief Rumored Romance. *Seventeen*. <https://www.seventeen.com/celebrity/celebrity-couples/a44474723/taylor-swift-john-mayer-relationship-timeline/>.

Clark-Parsons, R. (2021). "I see you, I believe you, I stand with you":# MeToo and the performance of networked feminist visibility. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(3), 362-380.

Craven, S., Brown, S., & Gilchrist, E. (2006). Sexual grooming of children: Review of literature and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 12(3), 287-299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600601069414>.

Dodd, S. (2023). Taylor Swift and John Mayer's

Relationship: A Look Back. *People*.

<https://people.com/music/taylor-swift-john-mayer-relationship-timeline/>.

Durham, M. G. (2021). *MeToo: The Impact of Rape Culture in the Media*. John Wiley & Sons.

Fidler, R. F. (1997). *Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media*. Pine Forge Press.

Gamson, J. (2023). *Claims to fame: Celebrity in contemporary America*. Univ of California Press. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OWNLM1ur8C&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=Being+celebrity+might+have+much+benefit+such+as+fame,+recognition,+money,+and+the+chance+to+follow+interests+and+passions&ots=fo0x-qnaTX&sig=ffAKsRY7kxXbV-2IPWJCLsl8iA>.

Glen, C., & Royston, M. (2008). *Digital Culture: Understanding New Media*. Understanding New Media. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Illouz, E. (2023). *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. University of California Press.

Kosut, M. (2012). *Encyclopedia of gender in media*. Sage.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=FEB1qHyvN4C&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=public+perceptions+of+grooming+relationships+were+often+influenced+by+traditional+gender+roles+and+romantic+tropes+perpetuated+by+the+media.+&ots=bzggQdZr05&sig=s9eH8mulrTKABMgvZCVqMYYJ63c>.

Life, H. (2010). Taylor Swift, How Could You Dump Cutie Taylor Lautner For Creepy John Mayer? - Hollywood Life. <https://hollywoodlife.com/2010/01/28/taylor-swift-john-mayer-dating-taylor-lautner-couple/>.

Logan, E. (2023). Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford: A Relationship Timeline | Glamour UK. Glamour. <https://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/article/billie-eilish-jesse-rutherford-relationship-timeline>.

Luo, H., & Zhang, L. (2022). Scandal, social movement, and change: Evidence from #MeToo in Hollywood. *Management Science*, 68(2), 1278-1296.

Mcalinden, A.-M. (2006). 'Setting 'Em Up': Personal, Familial and Institutional Grooming in the Sexual Abuse of Children. *Social & Legal Studies*, 15(3), 339-362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663906066613>.

Me too. Movement. (n.d.). Me Too. Movement. Retrieved February 19, 2024, from <https://metoomvmt.org/>.

Mohammed, L. (2022). Billie Eilish On Dating Jesse Rutherford After Being A Fan. BuzzFeed News. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/leylamohammed/billie-eilish-on-dating-jesse-rutherford-after-being-a-fan>.

Naftulin, J. (2022). Billie Eilish and Jesse Rutherford's relationship has sparked controversy over their 10-year age gap. Therapists say it isn't a deal breaker. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/billie-eilish-jesse-rutherford-age-gap-therapists-say-can-work-2022-12>.

Pavlik, J. V. (2008). Media in the digital age. Columbia University Press. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HbCs5rEEr1AC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=the+digital+magazines+tend+to+develop+and+innovate+as+new+media+products,+influencing+how+people+will+consume+and+communicate+in+the+age+of+digital+media.+&ots=SAmJQHYCuQ&sig=oO3HODzrQnBr7lLnji7b-MBLhp8>.

Press, A. L., & Tripodi, F. (2021). Media-Ready Feminism

and Everyday Sexism: How US Audiences Create Meaning Across Platforms. State University of New York Press. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NpH1DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=theories,+notions,+and+logics+that+articulate+feminist+ideals+and+conceptions+to+reception+as+well+as+media+processes+like+recruiting,+production,+and+distribution&ots=2U111Tn-jV&sig=OXR-KibSStK\\_fW6D4Vzo3Fpdn-Y](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NpH1DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=theories,+notions,+and+logics+that+articulate+feminist+ideals+and+conceptions+to+reception+as+well+as+media+processes+like+recruiting,+production,+and+distribution&ots=2U111Tn-jV&sig=OXR-KibSStK_fW6D4Vzo3Fpdn-Y).

Rockwell, D., & Giles, D. (2009). Being a celebrity: A phenomenology of fame. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 40*(2), 178-210.

Rodino-Colocino, M. (2018). Me too, #MeToo: Countering cruelty with empathy. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, 15*(1), 96-100.

Rojek, C. (2001). *Celebrity*. Reaktion Books.

Staff, I. T. (2010). In Touch Exclusive: John Mayer brags about hooking up with Taylor Swift—In Touch Weekly | In Touch Weekly. In Touch Weekly. <https://www.intouchweekly.com/posts/in-touch-exclusive-john-mayer-brags-about-hooking-up-with-taylor-swift-21692/>.

Steiner, L. (2014). Feminist Media Theory. In *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory* (pp. 359-379). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591178.ch20>.

Tsara, E. (2024). *Voice of Change: Male Celebrity Allies Through Me Too Movement in Redefining Masculinities*. Yogyakarta: Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Van Krieken, R. (2018). *Celebrity society: The struggle for attention*. Routledge. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HAFDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=Being+celebrity+might+have+much+benefit+such+as+fame,+recognition,+money,+and+the+chance+to+follow+interests+and+passions&ots=jPegGpviSf&sig=ay\\_P4c8Cua\\_pGkk2Bh1KQOTYDY4M](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=HAFDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=Being+celebrity+might+have+much+benefit+such+as+fame,+recognition,+money,+and+the+chance+to+follow+interests+and+passions&ots=jPegGpviSf&sig=ay_P4c8Cua_pGkk2Bh1KQOTYDY4M).

Vanity Fair. (2022). Billie Eilish: Same Interview, The Sixth Year | Vanity Fair. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55XJ1ObZKaM>.

Walters, S. D. (1995). *Material girls: Making sense of feminist cultural theory*. Univ of California Press. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=1V5JYMY3P1QC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=feminist+media+theory,+looks+at+how+v>

iewers+interact+with+media+d  
epictions+of+the+case+and+as  
sessed+its+importance+in+rel  
ation+to+larger+contexts+of+  
culture.&ots=g1WyBJr9G &sig=  
0mmMgTnYvu-ABsl0g7G5I41vfVM.

Winters, G. M., & Jeglic, E. L.  
(2017). Stages of Sexual  
Grooming: Recognizing  
Potentially Predatory  
Behaviors of Child Molesters.  
*Deviant Behavior, 38(6), 724-  
733.*  
[https://doi.org/10.1080/0163  
9625.2016.1197656](https://doi.org/10.1080/0163<br/>9625.2016.1197656)