

Predominant Aggressor Manipulation (PAM)

Systems Abuse and the tactic of Predominant Aggressor
Manipulation in Systemic Coercive Control



Definition

Predominant Aggressor Manipulation (PAM) is a strategic and deliberate tactic used by coercive controllers to manipulate systems and institutions in ways that support, legitimise, or enable continued abuse. It is not limited to isolated interactions, but functions as a patterned misuse of social, organisational, and institutional structures to reconfigure narratives, misdirect interventions, and entrench control. PAM demonstrates how systems and system actors—both human and non-human—become complicit in coercive control by responding in ways that entrench harm and extend social entrapment.

Curated Performances as Social Coercion

Perpetrators of coercive control often adopt curated social performances to influence how others perceive them. These performances serve to mislead social communities, redirect sympathy, discredit the victim-survivor, and reinforce their own legitimacy. This is a tactic of social coercion that operates through deliberate impression management.

This tactic shifts the abuse from relational (between victim-survivor and perpetrator) to social (between perpetrator and wider systems, communities, or professionals). The victim-survivor is no longer just facing one person's control – they are now facing a community or system that may unknowingly act in the perpetrator's interests.

Perpetrators use social manipulation to:

- Control social narratives
- Redirect sympathy or credibility
- Isolate the victim-survivor-survivor
- Neutralise resistance
- Legitimise their authority
- Within systems – schools, churches, social media platforms, support groups
- Along dominant discourses – gender roles, professionalism, parental ideals, cultural norms
- Performed manipulations with intended social effects. The target shifts, and the nature of the abuse evolves. The harm is no longer just private; it becomes socially reinforced and institutionally replicated.

This manipulation happens:

- Through people – teachers, friends, religious leaders, group members

Examples of Curated Performances

Each performance below is used to achieve specific social outcomes.

Social Presentation	Manipulative Purpose / Audience Effect	Impact on Victim-survivor-Survivor
Devoted Dad	Gains sympathy as a caring parent	Minimises her trauma; she appears bitter or angry
Soccer Coach / Volunteer	Seen as generous and involved	She is socially isolated or disbelieved
Savvy Lawyer	Commands credibility through legal knowledge	She appears unstable or uninformed
Clean Buddhist Living	Claims moral superiority and peace	Her distress is reframed as aggression
Heartbroken Dad	Plays victim-survivor of rejection or loss	She is blamed for the family breakdown
Nice Guy / Charming Man	Seen as trustworthy, non-threatening	Her disclosures are dismissed
Prestigious Academic	Projects intelligence, rationality	Her words are discounted as emotional or irrational
Unemployed / Wallflower	Appears passive or vulnerable	Her need for safety is undermined
“Cancer Bus Driver”	Performs altruism to garner public goodwill	Her voice is drowned out by his praise

Purpose of Manipulation

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Sub-Pathways of PAM

1. Manipulation of Social Communities

- **Online forums:** Posts about 'parental alienation' to gain sympathy (Online)
- **Religious communities:** Uses faith to pressure victim-survivor back into relationship (Face-to-face)
- **Ethnic cultural communities:** Frames victim-survivor as dishonourable (Face-to-face)
- **Support groups:** Presents as stable partner to gain trust (Hybrid)
- **Social media:** Shares photos to appear as loving parent (Online)
- **Dating platforms:** Uses fake profiles to stalk and harass (Online)
- **Sports teams:** Gains credibility through coaching (Face-to-face)
- **Volunteer organisations:** Paints himself as a hero (Face-to-face)
- **Community groups:** Discredits victim-survivor as 'dramatic' (Hybrid)
- **LGBTQ+ spaces:** Frames victim-survivor as controlling or intolerant (Hybrid)
- **Parenting groups:** Posts about being excluded from parenting (Online)

2. Manipulation of Organisations

- **Schools:** Contacts school to monitor and discredit victim-survivor
- **Banks:** Manipulates accounts to create dependence
- **Workplaces:** Makes false complaints to damage employment
- **Debt collection agencies:** Shifts debt to victim-survivor
- **Insurance companies:** Removes victim-survivor from cover
- **Rental agencies:** Files false reports to limit housing options

3. Manipulation of Professionals

- **Lawyers:** Uses aggressive legal letters with false claims
- **Court psychologists:** Frames victim-survivor as mentally unstable
- **Police:** Makes pre-emptive complaints to reverse roles
- **Social workers:** Appears cooperative, victim-survivor appears difficult
- **Teachers:** Presents as concerned parent, undermines victim-survivor
- **Immigration officers:** Threatens to revoke sponsorship

4. Manipulation of Formal Support Institutions

- **Police:** Files repeated complaints to discredit victim-survivor
- **Child protection:** Makes false reports of neglect
- **Social services:** Frames victim-survivor as unstable or non-compliant
- **Housing:** Prevents lease changes or creates barriers
- **Welfare:** Claims benefit fraud to cut off support

5. Manipulation of Legal Systems

- **Protection orders:** Files retaliatory or pre-emptive orders
- **Custody filings:** Claims parental alienation or instability
- **Court applications:** Initiates serial or vexatious litigation
- **Legal aid:** Engages multiple lawyers to block victim-survivor's access
- **Financial proceedings:** Uses delay tactics to drain resources

Design Note: Fragments of Hope

The collage imagery throughout my website and handouts carries deliberate meaning and hope. Each artwork, designed by Lucie, represents the “taken parts of the self” those whose lives have been diminished by both perpetrators and systems that perpetuate injustice. The partial faces and layered shapes symbolise how women's lives are devastated and constrained through systemic coercive control, how a perpetrator tries to dismantle her from her own core, her sense of knowing, and from all the parts of herself.

These images hold hope - as the women are “not broken” - they remain present, visible, and whole within their complexity. The bright colours reflect their true inner vibrance and the possibility of recovery, restoration, and the reclaiming of what has been dismantled and fragmented.

As responders, we hold a profound responsibility - as our actions can either compound harm or contribute to safety and dignity. From a place of safety, space and justice, the fragmented parts of herself may be restored to wholeness as they are still there. This, like the images, is the embodiment of hope.