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The Blame Game: Exploring Portuguese gamers' perceptions and experiences regarding sexism in video games

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Escola de Psicologia e Ciências da Vida

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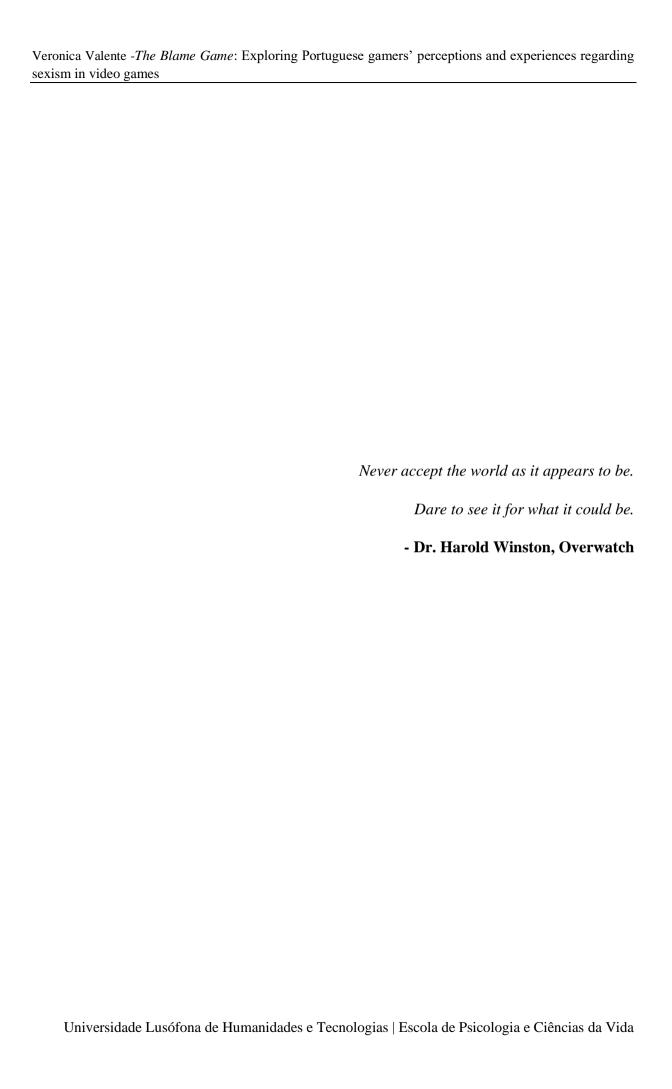**Escola de Psicologia e Ciências da Vida**

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Never accept the world as it appears to be.

Dare to see it for what it could be.

- Dr. Harold Winston, Overwatch

Abstract

As we come closer to numerical equality between genders in video games, evidence indicates a higher display of hostility between players and awareness of sexism in video games. This study intended to understand gamers' perceptions of gender stereotypes and sexism in video games and among the gamers. These topics were explored using data collected through in-depth semi-structured in-person interviews. The participants of this qualitative design study comprised of 30 Portuguese gamers (16 male), ranging from 18 to 42 years old. Thematic analysis of the transcripts suggested three main themes: video games' impact, sexism in video games, and sexism among gamers. Concerning the video game's impact on gamers' lives, the negative impact triumphed as gaming habits negatively influenced gamers' relationships. Within video games, the stereotype of female characters was the most described, while with gamer stereotypes, the male gamers were the most mentioned. On sexism in video games, sexual objectification was highlighted, whereas among gamers, benevolent sexism struck the highest. These themes are discussed regarding relevant research on the matter, recommendations for future research, and possible explanations for the themes observed.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, video games, sexism, gamers, qualitative study

Resumo

Com o aumento do número de mulheres na comunidade de vídeo-gamers maior tem sido o foco dado à hostilidade entre jogadores, salientando-se uma consciência acerca do sexismo no mundo dos videojogos. Deste modo, o principal objetivo deste estudo consistiu em analisar as perceções que os gamers têm em relação a estereótipos de género e sexismo quer nos conteúdos quer na comunidade gamer. Para explorar estes tópicos, foram utilizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas e individuais. A amostra foi composta de 30 entrevistas (16 homens) de participantes entre os 18 a 42 anos de idade. A análise temática das transcrições sugeriu três temas principais: impacto dos videojogos, sexismo nos videojogos, e sexismo entre gamers. Em relação ao impacto dos videojogos na vida dos gamers, o impacto negativo triunfou devido à influência negativa nas relações dos gamers. Em relação aos conteúdos dos videojogos, a objectificação sexual feminina foi destacada pelos participantes, enquanto que o sexismo benevolente por parte dos gamers do género masculino sobressaíram nos discursos. Estes temas foram discutidos a partir da literatura relevante, apresentando-se explicações para os resultados e recomendações para trabalhos futuros.

Palavras-chave: Estereótipos de género, videojogos e sexismo, gamers, estudo qualitativo

List of Abbreviations:

AS: Ambivalent Sexism

BS: Benevolent Sexism

HS: Hostile Sexism

MOG: Multiplayer online games

MMORPG: Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

RPG: Role Playing Games

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TA: Thematic Analysis

% - Percentage

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Introduction

Gaming culture has expanded with media globalization, becoming one of the most popular forms of entertainment and storytelling Gaming culture has expanded with media globalization, becoming one of the most popular forms of entertainment and storytelling (Cross & Smits, 2005; Consalvo, 2006). The Newzoo Global Games Market Report accounted for 2.8 billion gamers worldwide in 2020 and estimated to spend $159.3 billion on games in 2020. The same year the gamer demographic amounted to 54% of male gamers and 46% of female gamers in the US. Whereas the latest statistic in 2012, female to male Portuguese players' ratio was 43 to 57 (Bosmans & Maskell, 2012). The current top 3 earning gamers in Portugal are male, to which the number one earns about $214,900.00 overall when playing Magic: The Gathering Arena according to the ESports Earnings statistics.

The gaming community consists of video game enthusiasts called gamers, often reduced to, and portrayed as individuals who frequently play video games (Westwood & Griffiths, 2010). However, a gamer's definition can vary, the most common being that of the Entertainment Software Association (2015) which defines a gamer as anyone who engages in video gaming regardless of genre, platform, time-investment, or game medium. Current researchers, particularly in social sciences, agree that being a gamer goes beyond their ability and/or desire to play, resembling a social identity (Shaw, 2012; De Grove, Courtois & Van Looy, 2015). Simultaneously, others find the term "gamer" to be a group identity (Grooten & Kowert, 2015) due to its development within a virtual community.

The literature on gamer socialization focuses significantly on massive multiplayer online (MMO) games. MMOGs are a medium of gaming perceive to be a network that leads to the feeling of acceptance by players recognizing its social value, as it allows them to identify and connect with others alike online (Kaye, Kowert & Quinn, 2017). Researchers believe that the sense of community in gaming is also dynamic as it permits the gamer to feel more integrated in the game as an active character (Bayliss, 2007), while feeling like an active player outside of the game when socializing with other players (Jia et al., 2015). Being a gamer includes multiple interactive forms to express their enthusiasm toward video games (Shaw, 2012). For example, gamers communicate between themselves in forums while playing MMOGs (Ducheneaut & Moore, 2004), they attend video game conventions, some perform

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cosplay[1], which is a way of representing a character by wearing clothes related to the game (Grooten & Kowert, 2015). Gamers often prioritize their motives to play a video game. A statistical analysis by Quantic Foundry (2016) showed that males the major motivation to play is competition (14.1%) while for female players it was to attain completion in a game play (17%). Other motivations among male gamers include destruction (11.9%), completion of the game (10.2%), fantasy (9%), and being part of a community (8.8%). Meanwhile, female players motivations focused on fantasy (16.2%), the design of the game (14.5%), being part of the community (9.5%), and finally, the narrative of the game (8.5%).

The growing popularity of video games and increasing number of players of all ages implies a multiplicity of perceptions of video games and their impact in an individual's life (Prot, McDonald, Anderson & Gentile, 2012). As such it is of importance to explore the existence of new and diverse ways video games may have come to impact both gamers and those surrounding them.

1.1. The impact of video games

There are many studies on the impact of video games and their effect on gamers' lives, mental and overall wellbeing (Colwell, 2007; Adachi & Willoughby, 2013; Granic, Lobel & Engels, 2014; Turner, Thomas & Casey, 2016; Shoshani, Braverman & Meirow, 2020). However, there is an emphasis on the negative influence of video games, particularly the impact of significant exposure to damaging and violent content over time may entice the player to partake in active violent behavior in the game (Dowsett & Jackson, 2019).

Popular video games frequently include violence depending on their genre. Some researchers believe the violence in video games triggers players' aggression and impacts them negatively (Greitemeyer, 2018). Moreover, various studies concluded that exposure to violence leads to the desensitization of immoral acts displayed by the video game characters (Gentile et al., 2009; Greitemeyer & Mügge, 2014; Prot et al. 2014; Gentile et al., 2014). Despite this, recent studies do not point to a linear and robust connection between competition or competitive behavior and gamers' aggressive attitudes when playing (Dowsett & Jackson, 2019).

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[1] Cosplay, short for "'costume-play" is modern practice in which fans use costumes and makeup to embody a character they admire from animation, anime, mangas, series or video games (Eng, 2012).

A meta-analysis by Greitemeyer & Mügge (2014) on the other hand provided evidence of gaming leading to positive social outcomes, concluding they increased gamers' empathy through role-playing. When playing with characters, they relate to them, providing a sense of belonging to a community of players (Johnson, Gardner & Sweetser, 2016). Regardless of how they may identify themselves as gamers (Casual or Hardcore), research on the matter indicates that they were motivated to continue to play out of enjoyment, a sense of connection, and enhancing their levels of persistence to play through (Neys, Jansz & Tan, 2014). Since video games are a platform and means for socialization at a broad scale (Kowert & Oldmeadow, 2015), communication and bonding between players will occur, flourishing new relationships and influencing preexisting ones (Coulson, Oskis, Meredith & Gould, 2018).

In sum, studies that explore the positive outcomes of gaming on the individuals' lives often use surveys to find how gaming can improve social relationships, developing enhanced problem-solving skills, as well as adverse reactions to gaming such as violence, aggression, anxiety, or stress (Quwaider, Alabed & Duwairi, 2019). Except the use of surveys limit the answer possibilities gamers have and are based on preexisting notions of gaming which may not coincide with gamer perspective. In comparison, others use cross-sectional associations (Kaye, Kowert & Quinn, 2017) to determine how video games lead to positive and/or negative social and psychological outcomes. Despite their contribution to understanding the impact of video games, they read also divert from the gamers' perspective, losing sight of their concrete experiences in essential functioning areas, such as their relationships.

1.2.   Sexism and stereotyped characters in video games

Despite the gender gap between video game players diminishing, gaming has been historically perceived as a male-dominated activity since its conception. Gender differences related to the gamers' motivations, frequency, and preference for playing are significant (Richard, 2013; Kowert, Breuer & Quandt, 2017). Early studies speculated that men and boys' reasoning for playing video games focused on competition and violent content. Simultaneously, women and girls supposedly enjoyed playing more social aspects (Brunner, Bennett & Honey, 1998). Although evidence indicates shared preferences and motivations when choosing a particular genre or form of playing a video game between genders (Taylor, 2006), gamers tend to have different reasons to play and different gameplay frequencies (Dindar, 2018).

The video game industry is commonly critiqued on its promotion of gender differentiation when creating and publicizing games based on gender stereotypes. Historically there was an inclination to sway female players with "pink" games, emphasizing highly feminized content (*cf.* Kafai, Heeter, Denner & Sun, 2008). Recent work suggests that female gamers' reasons for playing video games are more complicated due to the adversities they face in the gaming community (Cote, 2017; McLean & Griffiths, 2019). Female gamers feel discouraged by negative expectations based on gender and experiences during gameplay (Lopez-Fernandez, Williams, Griffiths & Kuss, 2019).

As video gaming evolved, so has its abundance in genres allowing it to become a leisure activity enjoyed by children and adults. It is valid to assume this form of interactive media, as other forms of media, plays a crucial role during childhood (Council on Communications and Media, 2016). An individual's childhood compiles the years in which a foundation for gender role development is laid down (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The interactive aspect of video games leads researchers to believe it can be a socializing agent for gender role development (Dill & Thill, 2007; Gerding & Signorielli, 2014; Genner & Süss, 2017). Gamer begins playing at a young age, and as games are a continually evolving form of interactive media, the game might affect their lives differently over time. The part video games play in a child's development can help understand how gamers may accept gender stereotypes (Dill & Thill, 2007; Dickerman, Christensen & Kerl-McClain, 2008) and, perhaps, how they aspire or identify with characters according to their gender (Konijn, Nije Bijvank & Bushman, 2007; Klimmt et al., 2010).

There are diverse aspects of a game that are appreciated by female and male players. It has gained support among researchers that the preferences for a genre of video game may differ according to the gamers' gender (Phan, Jardina, Hoyle & Chaparro, 2012; Tondello & Nacke, 2019). For instance, teenage girls tend to look for games with simulation and world-building; for example, The Sims[2] game tends to have more female players (Jenkins & Cassell, 2008). Female gamers take preference of more casual games (Jenkins & Cassell, 2008; Griffiths & Lewis, 2011). When playing hardcore games, they may take measures to cope with potential

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[2] *The Sims* is a series of video games focused on life simulation. The simulation revolves around daily activities of one or more virtual people in a suburban household in a fictional world. Players can customize their characters and control their actions in the game, as they pursue career and relationship goals.

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scenarios of harassment and exclusion between players (Fox & Tang, 2017; McLean & Griffiths, 2019).

Sexism is commonly defined as any form of prejudice or discrimination based on an individual's sex, as can be seen in the Merriam-Webster's dictionary (Brown, 2020). Therefore, there is a maintenance of sexism as being a binary from of discrimination, having evolved with the changes in the construct of gender. Initially sexism focused of physical and biological characteristic of gender (Rickabaugh, 2009). In other words, it is a display of beliefs, behaviors or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex (Swim & Hyers, 2009). The construction of this definition began with sexism being described as a form of prejudice, and the belief that women are inferior and should be subordinated to men (Anderson & Han, 2009). Despite these contributions to the definition being conceptually related, their differences can sometimes be lost and cause confusion during research. For example, when evaluating people's beliefs about gender roles, some responses might be interpreted as attitudes toward women (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Other definitions of sexism include aversive, modern, and symbolic sexism (Pfeifer, 1988; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Melgoza & Cox, 2009), but despite their differences, all affirm sexism to be a prejudice and discrimination based on an individual's gender, while specifying its predominance towards women. As society has come to change and social norm establish new grounds the understanding of sexism becomes more pertinent. Tracing its evolution, its different ways of operating, and how the new definitions come to be. For example, modern sexism and its claim that prejudice and discrimination can function for both men and women (Cameron, 2009), even if not equally.

Alas sexism can take many forms as it encompasses bias and discrimination based on gender beliefs (Savigny, 2020). From "harmless" jokes to more hostile behaviors like harassment, sexism is a manifestation of gender differences. Gender inequality is born of traditional gender beliefs and stereotypes that are early on apprehended by boys and girls (Eccles et al., 2000). Gender stereotypes carry cultural meanings, practices, and (role) expectations that organize life by often (subtly) influencing and guiding people's beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors (Trautner & Eckes, 2000; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ellemers, 2018). All these concepts come into play when defining sexism, and all were incorporated in Glick & Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Theory, this being the reason of its wide adoption as the most comprehensive theory on modern sexism. Glick & Fiske (1996) define sexism to be a "multidimensional construct" that encompasses dichotomic sexist

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attitudes and beliefs. In their Ambivalent Sexism Theory, a distinction is made between two main forms of sexism focused on either negative or positive gender perspectives. The negative type of sexism, hostile sexism (HS), also known as traditional sexism, reflects a hostile vision and comprehension of gender differences in society. HS is defined by the prejudice and discrimination based on misconceptions of gender. The optimistic type on the other hand, benevolent sexism (BS), is understood as a set of sexist attitudes towards women and/or men seen as stereotypical and restricting, yet complimentary.

When inquiring over the concept of sexism in video games, certain stereotypes associated with the characters' gender stand out (Norris, 2004; Deskins, 2013). Video game characters are often stereotyped in their physical form and wardrobe (Beasley & Collins Standley, 2002). Gender representations in the gaming space are exaggerated representations of stereotypes cultured in social narratives in the non-fictional world, in particular female characters (Dietz, 1998; Melzer, 2019). The long-time engagement implies a repetitive exposure to the stereotypes based on gender within the game (Bègue et al., 2017) which may ease the acceptance of those stereotypes. There is a notion of video games being a production made "by men for men" (Ivory, 2006; Burgess, Stermer & Burgess, 2007; Yee, 2008) and thus reinforcing stereotypes since the conception of the game. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), cultural and social representations of one's society are comprehended via a learning process by exposure to models. In other words, people rely on others to understand and learn how they may interact with one another in a society. A few studies imply that children and adolescents who play video games potentially learn and build concepts of gender in this alternated virtual reality (Bègue et al., 2017).

Alas, it cannot be stressed enough how the characters in games are animated stereotypes that often portray women in a misogynistic and sexist light (Burgess, Stermer & Burgess, 2007; Kondrat, 2015), leading to the hypothesis that more spent time playing video games should predict higher sexist attitudes. Prior experimental studies showed the short-term effect of sexualized images and their link to sexist attitudes (Lanis & Covell, 1995; Milburn, Mather & Conrad, 2000; Ward & Friedman, 2006), the hypothesis stand for video games especial with its interactive nature. In that interactive medium there have been studies that contest to the players exposure to sexual objectified characters to lead to expressions of benevolent sexism (Stermer & Burkley, 2015). Video games allow characters to be agents of gender among youth socialization, and as such the amount of exposure to video games should predict the

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endorsement of gender stereotypes (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009; Yao et al., 2010), as well as showing an increase in hostile sexism (Fox & Bailenson, 2009), and increased men's acceptance of sexual harassment (Dill, Brown & Collins, 2008).

In a cross-sectional study, male players with an interest in video games with violent and sexist content tended to score higher levels of benevolent sexism associated with traditional gender roles in which men display a protective, patronizing attitude towards women (Stermer & Burkley, 2015). However, a longitudinal study examining the influence of video game exposure on sexist beliefs and attitudes over three years found no evidence of a cultivation effect (Breuer, Kowert, Festl & Quandt, 2015). The cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986) suggests that the constant and repetitive exposure to media content influences how gamers see and understand their reality. Further cross-sectional and longitudinal studies are therefore necessary to better examine the connection gamers have between stereotyped characters, for instance female characters which passively portray the damsels in distress role to male characters portrayed as heroes (Solano, 2017), and sexism in video games.

In sum, video games may be byproducts of masculinity and its culture (see Burrill, 2008). Several studies have tried to understand the female perspective in the gaming world, mainly how they feel wrongfully treated by fellow players (Assunção, 2016; McLean & Griffiths, 2019), their experiences of exclusion and discouragement caused by the video game design (McLean & Griffiths, 2013). Whether in the game's sexist content (Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel & Fritz, 2016), their player-to-player experience (Fox & Tang, 2017; McLean & Griffins, 2013), or in the way the community perceives them as gamers (Assunção, 2016; Paaßen, Morgenroth & Stratemeyer, 2017), these are all forms in which sexism can be found in video games. However, it is important to note that over time video games' contents, such as the characters' representation, have improved, coming one step closer to gender equality within the game (Nicholl, 2017; Forni, 2020).

1.3. Sexism and gamer gender stereotypes

Past work suggests gender discrimination comes from cultural beliefs about men and women, and these traveled from reality to a digital form in video games (Glaubke, Miller, Parker & Espejo, 2001; Mou & Peng, 2009; Melzer, 2019). The display of gender inequality in the gaming community and how this is perceived and acted upon may have come from

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preexisting concept of gender in society (Tomkinson & Harper, 2015; Gray, Buyukozturk & Hill, 2017). The gender inequality issue, like discrimination, extend from the misconception of gaming being a male-dominated world (Thornham, 2008; Jenson & De Castell, 2013). To the extent that the gamer stereotype often illustrated is of the male player (Paaßen, Morgenroth & Stratemeyer, 2017), significantly reinforcing a heterosexual male as the norm, with all other groups seen as unusual and underrepresented (Peck, Ketchum & Embrick, 2011). Although gender inequality is a big topic within in and out of the game, it has seen some progress over time regarding female presence among gamer populations as recent data suggests 44% of gamers are female (Entertainment Software Association, 2015). As more women and girls gain experience and interest in video games (Kiviranta, 2017), their welcoming to the gaming community was not accepting and is still an issue. Often female gamers encounter sexist attitudes expressed by fellow gamers of a different gender compared to them (Gray, 2012; Kuznekoff & Rose, 2013), even encountering first-hand harassment within the community (O'Leary, 2012).

In the game's design, sexism is found in the narrative (story) through tropes[3] (Friedberg, 2015). Gender stereotypes and sexist beliefs can be expressed in the characters' construction physically, psychologically, and agency within the game (Glaubke, Miller, Parker & Espejo, 2001; Williams, Martins, Consalvo & Ivory, 2009; Wohn, 2011; Kondrat, 2015). The exposure to sexist content in video games may influence how gamers perceive women (Dill & Thill, 2007). According to the results of Stermer and Burkley's (2012) cross-sectional survey, men who play video games featuring sexist characters manifested higher levels of benevolent sexism. Besides, an experimental study found that male gamers exposed to stereotypical representations of women in video game content were more accepting of sexual harassment scenarios after playing the game (Dill, Brown & Collins, 2008). Even though video games attempt to not portray women in a stereotypical tone, they are often a minority (Soukup, 2007; Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel & Fritz, 2016). Frequently, those characters rely on attractiveness and sexualization as requisites to appease and grasp the male audience (Du Preez, 2000; Jansz & Martis, 2007; Yee, 2008).

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[3] Merriam-Webster's definition of trope: "a word or expression used in a figurative sense: figure of speech; a common or overused theme or device; a phrase or verse added as an embellishment or interpolation to the sung parts of the Mass in the Middle Ages."

These findings suggest that overly sexual "male fantasy" representation is a misrepresentation and potentially harmful to gamer's mental wellbeing by enforcing unrealistic standards (Gestos, Smith-Merry & Campbell, 2018) and questioning their appearance in comparison to the characters. Since it is deemed fictional, gamers perceive it not to impact their gaming performance and thus of little importance (Kaye, Pennington & McCann, 2018). However, there is a significant disruption in their performance, particularly related to fellow gamers' attitudes between themselves by using sexist insults (Aghazadeh et al., 2018). Hostile behavior can be exhibited by verbally or non-verbally making the gamer feel out of place in games considered "masculine games" (Assunção, 2016). The hostile disposition can be to cause discomfort through acts of sexual harassment between characters they are wielding, or directly player-to-player (O'Leary, 2012; Fox & Tang, 2017). Sexual harassment is a complex concept to define singularly as it is constantly being *reconceptualized* (Quick & McFadyen, 2017; Shultz, 2018). The concept of sexual harassment adopted is McDonald's (2012) that defines it as any intentional and unrequired conduct that expresses intimidation, hostility and is degrading, humiliating or offensive to others. It is worth highlighting Shultz (2018) contribution to the concept interpreting harassment as an expression of sexism, apart from its connections to sexuality or sexual desire. Similarly, to a prior researcher who described sexual harassment as a "technology of sexism" (Franke, 1997), Shultz's approach saw harassment as a conduct born from gender-based expectations. Namely seeing harassment as a way for one individual to establish dominance and reduce another to a sexual object, perceiving them with inferiority ("as lesser than").

Research with quantitative measures provides limited outcomes delineated by the researchers and their intent. Responses of a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions cannot always represent the personal experience. A quantitative method implies a generalized form, since the respondents have limited responses based on the researcher's selection. For that reason, it is essential to probe the topic of sexism in this population, providing the chance to further understand the impact of gaming activity on the social perception and life of the individual (Bourgonjon et al., 2016). Handing the conversation to the gamers through the interviewing process might aid further research by collecting concepts and issues relevant to the population in question.

Simultaneously, exploring sexism in and out of video games through a post-structural feminist perspective will give a sense of direction and a better understanding of gender

stereotypes and sexism. Since the characters in the game and the gamers outside of it both fall victim to gender stereotypes and suffer from forms of sexism (Reilly, Rackley & Awad, 2017) it is pertinent to understand both sides. As suggested by prior research (Russell & Oswald, 2016; Meagher, 2017; Menegatti & Rubini, 2017) gender stereotypes are the mapping points that guide one's judgment and sustain a sexist view or statement. For example, sexual objectification as a form of sexism would not exist if there were not stereotypes of women as "reproductive sexual beings".

Thus, the aim of this work is to explore Portuguese gamers' perceptions of gender stereotypes in digital role-playing games (RPGs), gaming tropes, and online harassment in and out of the gaming world. It provides relevant insight on a European population with Latin influence in its culture. Previously the Portuguese population of gaming has been minimally explored regarding this topic of sexism. At the same time, it contemplates on the awareness gamers have or not on their attitudes and conceptions on gender representation and sexism. The specific objectives focus on assessing the possible impact of video games in gamers' lives while exploring gamers' perceptions of sexism and gender stereotypes in video game content and understand participants' perceptions and experiences of sexist attitudes and gender stereotypes among gamers.

Method

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised of 30 participants (14 females and 16 males) between the age of 18 to 42 ($M = 26.1$; $SD = 5.9$), recruited from Portuguese gaming groups on Steam[4]: PGC (Portuguese Gaming Community), SGP (Spicy Gamers Portugal), and other individuals from a Discord[5] server regarding RPG as an interest. Both groups have a wide range of backgrounds and come from different regions of Portugal (North (20%), Center (53.3%), Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (23.3%), and Alentejo (3.3%).

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[4] Steam is a software and video game distribution service that allow consumers to purchase video games and be part of a network where communication with other players is permitted (Bailey, 2018).

[5] Discord is a software used to communicate between people through instant messaging with voice calls, video calls, text messaging, media in chats. A digital platform designed to create communities called "servers" (Sherr, 2020).

Participants varied in educational status, 83,3% of the participants have acquired or are in the process of attaining higher education (Bachelor/Undergrad degree, Master's degree, and Ph.D.). Relationship status was divided between with (53,3%) or without a relationship currently (46,7%), the types of relationships the gamers' have including single (46,7%), dating (46,7%) or married (6,6%), while the duration of their prior and/or current relationship with a gamer was on average (2-3 years). Most of the participants have higher education (80%). Some are students (40%), while the remaining are employed (60%). Most participants have employment in 3rd sector jobs.

Those involved had to be at least 18 years old since the interview theme demands that participants play video games with restricted content fit for a mature audience. They were required to have a good command of the Portuguese language and play RPG video games regularly, whether they were considered online or console games. The choice of video game type was RPG due to the interpersonal interaction between characters in a social setting (Tychsen, Hitchens & Brolund, 2008). There was no discrimination based on gender identification nor sexual orientation. Finally, participants had to fit the definition of gamer, according to Shaw (2012). In other words, they had to identify themselves as gamers, expose motives and uses they give to a video game in their social life, and have an average of 7.11 hours per week (Statista, 2020). The sample had, on average, 8.14 hours per week. Participants appearing to have a form of gaming addiction or disorder were excluded from the study for having characteristics of these complications (i.e., exceeding 20 hours of gameplay per week), which was the case for one male participant.

2.2. Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

The questionnaire assessed participants' gender, educational background and classification, current employment status, occupation, relationship status, frequency of gameplay, and preference over different kinds of RPG (Appendix 1).

Interview

The script for the interviews was tailored to fit the main objective (Fife, 2005; Rabionet, 2009). The semi-structured nature facilitated an in-depth exploration of gamers' experiences about gender stereotypes and sexism in video game content and the gaming experience. The

script (Appendix 2) included direct and open-ended questions surrounding the topics of gamer identity, the influence of gaming in gamer relationships, gender stereotypes in video game content (e.g., gameplay discrepancy between characters according to gender), sexism in video games (e.g., gender differences in gaming and different types of sexism in RPG narratives) and at last gaming behavior (e.g., gamers perceptions of their behavior while playing with stereotypical characters and while playing against gamers of another gender).

The script contained audiovisual information (e.g., pictures and video clips) to help the participant construct detailed robust answers. The questions containing audiovisual information were questions regarding video game characters so the Portuguese gamers could describe what stood out about those characters. Some of the questions with audiovisual aid concerned gender-stereotyped characters' topics, sexism in video game content, including sexist attitudes between characters, their behavior, and the gender stereotypes of gamers. The images were popular profile pictures of male and female characters, respectively, and an image of a male gamer's stereotypical representation. The videos exposed were clips cut from video game sequences that displayed unequal actions between characters based on gender and manifesting a sexist behavior (e.g., a video clip of the male protagonist saving a female character in distress).

2.3. Procedures

The Ethics Committee of the Lusófona University project granted full ethical approval. The script was created with guidance from former and current "outsider"[6] gamers' feedback to ensure the clarity of the questions and their pertinence to the project's objective. Five pilot interviews provided feedback to conduct, practice, and evaluate minor changes to the script and verify if the questions were understandable and clear to the gamers interviewed. These five individuals were former members of Portuguese gaming communities that left but fit our participant requirements.

Interviews began on the 13th of January 2020, terminated on the 18th of April, adding to roughly three months spent collecting data through interviews. Transcriptions of the interviews

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[6] Outsider gamer, for the purpose of this project, are considered gamers that belonged at some point to the community and now play less or independently. These gamers were not counted as final participants. However, they consented to the used of their feedback and assistance in creating this measure (script).

coincided with the Master's student's interviews before the data analysis. For further analysis, the data collected from the questionnaire was inserted into a database. Each interview began with the consent form (Appendix 3) and a brief explanation of the interview's overall theme, which was audio recorded. There was a reassurance to the participants that all information would be anonymous and confidential, as stated in the consent form (Appendix 2). Each interview lasted approximately 50 min to which participants permitted recording of the audio, as stated in the consent form (Appendix 2).

All outlined questions followed a thematic order (Appendix 1). There were topics that touch on sexuality, intimacy, and the participants' personal experiences, to which there was full permission for any participant to skip a question they wanted to avoid. There were moments when avoidance of a theme occurred sparingly in some questions; however, it did not harm the analysis of the collected data. At the end of each interview the participant was debriefed. The tape recordings were initially transcribed verbatim with the aid of Sonix[7], as using the program supervision was necessary to avoid mistakes. As follows, there was an omission of noise and statements related to the participant's personal information after full transcription (i.e., removing irrelevant material from the transcripts).

Data analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed to identify and interpret meaningful patterns in the interview transcriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data interpretation had ties to a specific epistemology (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015) of post-structural feminism (Davies & Gannon, 2005; Davies et al., 2006). When analyzing the data collected with the epistemology adopted themes of importance like the description of gender stereotypes and sexism were prominent. The result of a TA highlighted the most salient themes mentioned by the participants regarding their experiences, impressions, thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of what these subjects mean to them as gamers.

The process of data analysis, which was supervised by the thesis advisor, involved coding participants' explicit experiences and statements of the inquired subject descriptively (themes), followed by the development of codes around implicit meanings related to explicit and more commonly referred subjects (sub-themes), while constantly comparing within and

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[7] Sonix is a voice-to-text software program that allows faster transcription in various languages.

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between all the participants' interviews (e.g., Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). For example, when discussing the impact of video games in a gamer's life, participants noted that gaming allowed them to socialize with others while feeling "protected by the screen". Thus, the themes of the impact of video games emerged. The sub-themes focused on a more profound notion emerging from the theme; for example, it would be interpreting "socialization" as a positive impact of video games.

The data's initial coding led to identifying five main discussion types, partially due to the script's organization by categories of discussion based on previous research about sexism in video games. These were coded initially as broader categories, (I) video games' impact (players are personally and socially impacted differently by video games), (II) gender stereotypes characters (typical video game characters characteristics based on their gender), (III) sexism in video games (apparent sexist scenarios between characters in video games) with, (IV) gamer gender stereotypes (descriptions of typical gamer characteristics based on gender), and (V) sexism among gamers (scenarios gamers have experienced and perceived as sexist while playing together). Following the identification of the main categories, analysis, and reformulation of the five categories were necessary to simplify and explore possible connections.

Further exploration led to the reorganization of the data collected, resulting in the final three main themes. The final themes were identified both within a single participant interview and across all participant interviews, considering the perceived pertinence participants gave to these topics by mentioning them often and reporting various examples based on their own experience and beliefs. For example, participants indicated an association between gender stereotypes and sexism. The final three themes emerged as (a) the impact of video games, (b) sexism in video games and, (c) sexism among games. The transcriptions were explored for their semantic meaning (Clarke & Braun, 2018), allowing the development of more meaningful and rich data to be analyzed.

Finally, a pre-structured content analysis proceeded to verify the results' reliability and the themes' interpretation. A table of categories which are the global themes with the definition and respective codes (Appendix 4), and a table of agreement (Appendix 5) with the information to be analyzed and coded was presented to two other unbiased coders (Cod 2 and Cod 3). The agreement (Appendix 5) comprised 20% of the total interviews analyzed, amounting to data from 6 interviews. According to Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken (2010), calculation of the

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reliability rate in content analysis research projects should register coefficients of 0.80 to be acceptable for qualitative design, which was the case, having an agreement rate between the three coders of 0.81.

Results

In total, there were 1273 statements collected from the 30 interviews conducted, from which emerged three main themes, (a) video game's impact, (b) sexism in video games, and (c) sexism among gamers. All these themes have several ramifications to multiple sub-themes.

3.1. Video game's impact

The first theme is *the impact of video games* in gamers' lives, a common theme discussed by all 30 participants (14 females and 16 males). The sub-themes emerging from the impact of video games are the *positive impact*, brought up by all participants, accounting for 6.8% of the total of statements from interviews, whereas the *negative impact* accounted for 7.2% of the results. Each of these sub-themes relates to how video games positively and negatively impact gamers personally and their relationships (Table 1).

The *positive impact* of video games in gamers lives was closely associated to their motivations to play. Video games can offer stress-relief and a new space to socialize with many individuals from different backgrounds and communicate within a fictional world where they can be whoever they want to be. The positive aspects of video games in a gamer relationship were to share part of their world with their partner, as well as feeling part of their identity and actions are understood by their partner allowing conversations on the topic of video games. Lastly, they found video games to offer a chance to experience a healthy form of competition, a motivator to be cooperative in and out of the game by sharing a role-playing experience. Some male players refer to playing video games to "cool off" in moments of tension with their partners. As explained by a male participant (Male gamer, 28 years-old) "it's a good way to let out some steam after a fight".

Another sub-theme was the *negative impact*. Despite the gamer's acknowledgement of the negative influences video games may have in their lives, like sleep deprivation, *tilting*[8], and struggling with time management, they found the negative impact on their relationships to be problematic. They shared their concerns regarding the lack of time shared with a significant other and the adversities that come with it. For example, there were complaints of neglect manifested by the participants as in feeling inadequate and substituted by the video game, perceiving it as a priority in comparison to their partner. All participants, male and female, reflect on their gaming habits negatively impacting their relationships, mostly how it can lead to arguments and fighting within the relationship. However, many of the female gamers (12 females) did not blame video game for these issues, claiming that male gamers "have a harder time taking the game less seriously" and prioritizing their relationship. Some male participants (10 males) agreed to this idea whereas others speculated on its veracity (14 males).

3.2. Sexism in video games

The second theme, *sexism in video games*, was a topic discussed by all 30 participants. The theme comprised of 47.1% of the data collected, which corresponded to the perceptions gamers have of video game characters, situations between characters, and their behavior in the game that they consider to be indicative of sexism. The sub-themes emerging from sexism in video games are the character gender stereotypes and types of sexism (Table 2).

3.2.1. Character gender stereotypes

The sub-theme of *character gender stereotypes* refers to the existence of gender stereotypes in a game, represented physically, psychologically and in the character's behavior or role in the game. It amounted to 21.5% of the data collected, a subject tackled by all the participants (16 male and 14 females). Descriptions varied according to the gender of the character described, the female characters' descriptions focused mainly on their physical appearance, as "physically attractive", "sexy", "delicate", and "beautiful and pretty":

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[8] Tilting is an expression used in the gaming community referring to when a player loses his temper over mishaps while playing. Often misplacing their annoyance or anger towards others and their gaming equipment.

Table 1

Themes, sub-themes and excerpts of the impact of video games derived from the thematic analysis

Main themes ad sub-themes	Example quote
The impact of video games	
Positive	
Individual	"(Gaming provides) Stress relief (...) Because it's a good way for me to keep my brain active and relax at the same time." (Male gamer, 39 years-old)
Relationship	"(In a gamer relationship) you know the person well. It's intimate. You can always talk about games, which for me was, and is a passion. She understood and played with me too." (Female gamer, 24 years-old)
Negative	
Individual	"(Gaming) may have caused some disturbances regarding my perception on body image." (Female gamer, 41 years-old)
Relationship	"One of the disadvantages (of a gamer relationship) would be too much time lost always playing." (Male gamer, 18 years-old)

A woman in between her 20-30 years of age, beautiful, physically attractive, thin... In general fit with some muscle, the depiction, and desire of sexy perfection. Depending on what her role is and what the game is, she can be smart and sensible if she is a feminine damsel in distress or a sexy rebel badass, a dangerous piece of ass. (Male gamer, 35 years-old)

While descriptions related to male characters, according to both male and female participants, focused on psychological aspects, their abilities, strengths, and struggles in the game: "strong", "emotionless", "tough", "aggressive", "smart and strategic" and "manly":

Usually, the main character making him have a somewhat generic personality so that anyone can identify or understand him. He will choose aggression, force, or violence,

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over any other method. He is practical in how the way he acts and treats others, being emotionless at times. Since that's what a man is. A man doesn't show his feelings. (Female gamer, 26 years-old)

3.2.2. Types of sexism in video games

The sub-theme of *types of sexism in video games* was mentioned differently throughout all 30 interviews by all female and male participants. It consists of the perceptions that gamers have regarding situations between characters, and behavior in the contents of video games that they consider to be indicative of sexism.

There were different types of sexism mentioned specific to different contexts in the game categorized in five basic themes. The diversity of sexism in the video game space was exposed and recalled in different amounts depending on the participants' personal experiences and the genre of games they play. Upon interpreting the gamers responses, many sub-themes seemed to be ramifications extended from the two main types of sexism (BS and HS) inspired on prior literature on the matter (Glick & Fiske, 1996): sexual objectification, benevolent sexism, paternalism, gender differentiation, and hostile sexism.

Examples of *sexual objectification* were highly discussed, representing 10.7% of total transcriptions collected from interviews by all participants ($n = 30$; 16 males, 14 females) at least once. The basic theme of sexual objectification is defined by gamers' perceptions and experiences with content in video games that reinforces sexism. In other words, sexist representations typically categorized by the assumption that an individual is a romantic and/or sexual object according to their gender (Table 2). Most of the statements referred to the sexual objectification of female characters, reducing them to the role of love interest of a male counterpart. Frequently labeling female characters as sexually appealing beings and describing these characters for the most part physically:

They are typically beautiful, the depiction of lively beauty. Now with Motion Capture being increasingly used (...) The characters are nearly identical to the actresses who give them a voice. You do see strong, independent, determined women… Role models with more layers. (...) Obviously, the scene is extremely sexualized. This way she corresponds to male fantasy. (Female gamer, 20 years-old)

The second most detected form of sexism in video game was *benevolent sexism* ($n = 25$; 15 males, 10 female). Benevolent sexism is seen as benign and positive form of sexism.

Gamers' perception of behaviors, verbal and/or non-verbal characteristics that express discrimination and prejudice of gender differences, even when disguised by humor.

> Well, like Deadpool! He's always outrageous, but it's not to be taken seriously. Yeah, he pokes a little fun at women, some of it is funny because it is true. (...) On how women go crazy during their period, and you should never trust a creature that bleeds for 7 days. Or how blond women are that bright but super cute in their naive ways. (Male gamer, 23 years-old)

The third form of sexism in video games was *paternalist sexism* ($n = 27$; 16 males, 11 females). It incorporates the gamers' perception of video game content that reinforces patriarchal ideals. It refers to content that portray woman as the "weaker sex" through the characters' description, their story and behavior in the game, and men has their protectors. As expressed by a female participant (26 years-old) who mentioned that even skilled female characters competence is questioned: "We have the (male) hero that always saves the damsel in distress. (...) as if she isn't capable to save herself or to do anything heroic and bold, like a fight".

Gender differentiation was the fourth type of sexism found, defined by how gender stereotypes can be complementary. Gender differentiation arises from benevolent sexism as it is not perceived as a negative expression of sexism. It focuses on the difference between genders' roles and how they may complement each other as two halves of the same coin. Claiming that women will demonstrate "favorable" stereotypical characteristics in some areas where men would fail and the reverse ($n = 19$; 12 males, 7 females). However, given the competitive nature of video games, gender traits can be compared rather than complemented as a female gamer (22 years-old) expressed: "Having female characters have more passive actions in the game, or are almost always characters with little agency in the game in addition to being secondary characters to give clues (...) making male characters more fun to play with".

Table 2

Themes, sub-themes and excerpts of sexism in video games derived from the thematic analysis

Main themes and sub-themes	Example quote
Sexism in video games	
Character gender stereotypes	
Physically Psychologically Attitudes (Role in the game)	"I think (female characters) are very much like the characters we saw, beautiful, attractive, sensual but dangerous whenever they have any agency active in the game." (Male gamer, 25 years-old)
Types of sexism	
Benevolent sexism	"Also (in the video game) these are scenarios of war (...) in which unfortunately there are more men than women in the military world." (Male gamer, 31 years-old)
Hostile sexism	"We have a (female) character like Poison Ivy, (...) sexy and deadly (...)" (Female gamer, 24 years-old)
Paternalist sexism	"The (male) hero saving a damsel in distress." (Female gamer, 31 years-old)
Sexual objectification	"(Female characters are) the hot girlfriends, which are there to show cleavage and ass (...)" (Female gamer, 23 years-old)
Gender differentiation	"(The female characters) Complement the male protagonists. (Male characters) (...) are mostly fighters." (Male gamer, 32 years-old)

The fifth and last sub-theme of *sexism in video games* refers to the perception of gamer on *hostile sexism* in video game content, through character's behavior and how the characters are built ($n = 18$; 9 males, 9 females). Typically, hostile sexism moderates the relational costs between genders based on their differences with a negative and hostile tone verbally and/or non-verbally to express discrimination and prejudice based on gender:

> (A male character whom) Does damage with that hammer or axe. He's a toxic character. Both him and Draven (male character) who also appears in that video, are the embodiment of male toxicity, in my opinion. Draven I know from memes. He's that macho man who thinks he's better than everyone. Total arrogance. They are aggressive bullies. They try to intimidate. (Male gamer, 32 years-old)

3.3. Sexism among gamers

The third and last theme is *sexism among gamers*, accounted of 38.9% of the data collected, having been broadly discussed by participants (14 females and 16 males). The theme is comprised of the perceptions, experiences gamers have of others and their own attitudes toward the opposite gender in gaming. In other words, the theme is indicative of sexist stereotypes and behavior among gamers. The sub-themes emerging from sexism among gamers are the gamer gender stereotypes and types of sexism (Table 3).

3.3.1. Gamer gender stereotypes

The sub-theme closely relates to gamers awareness and belief in the existence and perpetuation of gamer stereotypes-based gender. As it were, it includes the recollection of stereotypes they have been accused of being and/or have encountered in their gaming experience. The sub-theme amounted to 14.9% of the total statements collected from all 30 interview transcriptions regarding male and female gamer stereotypes.

The majority of gamer stereotypes made known were related to male gamers. The male gamer is a highly coveted stereotype depicted both inside of outside of the gaming world. Describing male gamers as solitary competitive individuals, "nerdy", outcasts who hide "childishly" in their 20's. Participants questioned their "autonomy" from the game, to gaining refuge in playing to avoid "real" responsibilities, they described themselves as gamers as being too aggressive and inconsiderate when playing with others, regardless of gender. Most gamers,

in particular the males (16 males) believed that relying on competition as a necessary motivation to "win".

> I think this is the vision the world has a gamer. A white male, lazy. Looks like a slob, shut in his room, with a Peter pan syndrome, that is rude and toxic in the way he plays with others. Perhaps taking the game too seriously, even lashing out on people that interrupt him while he plays. (Female gamer, 24 years-old)

While female gamer stereotypes were seen in a more negative light than male gamers. As there was a common description of female gamers having to be questioned on their motives and competence to playing video games, claiming that their intentions to play are disingenuous. Painting the female gamer stereotype as not fit to play all types of games because they show emotion and are "too sensitive":

> They don't take us seriously (…) the guys think we play because our boyfriends make us, or to find a boyfriend (…) I might have started playing because of my boyfriend, but I already had an interest and now I play games that I like when I feel like it (…) because it's cool. The trend of the fake gamer girl. (Female gamer, 26 years-old)

3.3.2. Types of sexism among gamers

The sub-theme constituted of the perceptions and experiences gamers have of others and their own attitudes in gaming that could be indicative of sexist behavior. The multiple sub-themes of types of sexism mentioned emerged in different amounts throughout interviews: benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, gender differentiation, paternalism, and sexual objectification.

The highest basic theme mentioned regarding gamers' attitudes and experiences with sexism while playing was *benevolent sexism* ($n = 26$; 10 males, 16 females) with 6.0% of the total statements gathered. Benevolent sexism among gamers translated to positive attitudes towards the opposite gender that reinforce gender stereotypes. The gender stereotypes associated to benevolent sexism limit and/or discriminate the individual based on gender while disguised by a compliment. Most participants admitted having acted upon in the past benevolently, since they did not believe it to be a "bad" form of sexism. Since at times this type of sexism may be disguised by humor to be taken lightly and show that it is harmless while behind it there may be an amount of judgment:

> I think that both girls and guys communicate while they play. Maybe girls are more descriptive (…) and they are too emotional, they take stuff to seriously and are too sensitive, it's not their fault. A guy does the exact opposite hide they feelings (…) heart of stone. (Male gamer, 23 years-old)

The second type of sexism regarding gamers' perception and experiences of others attitudes with sexism in gaming was *hostile sexism* ($n = 26$; 13 males, 13 females), added up to 5.7% in the total of statements gathered from interviews. Hostile sexism in gaming setting was identified by participants as apparent negative attitudes with a tone of hostility towards the opposite gender. According to participants hostile sexism included behaviors that came with malicious intent and with the purpose to affect the other player that may have sexist belief associated. For example, expressing the belief that women should not be gamers. In fact, female participants (14) indicated that in their experience, hostility seem to come mostly from male players to reinforce the belief that one gender is superior to the other.

Thus, hostile sexism comes to justify that "the inferior gender" should not be involved in gaming:

> In my experience, it's less likely to find or play with other female gamers. Partly because we are poorly received. (...) some players mock us, insult us, others sabotage us. This drives some female gamers away and they are male gamers that can corroborate this. (Female gamer, 31 years-old)

Gender differentiation was the third type of sexism to surface ($n = 26$; 13 males, 13 females) reporting 5.1% of statements regarding gamers' perceptions and experiences with sexism while playing fellow gamers. Gender differentiation as a type of sexism refers to the comparison between genders and their respective stereotyped roles. Thus, gender differentiation has two main aspects that define it, the competitive aspect which is focused on the superiority of one gender over the other (i.e., male gamers are better at playing video games than female gamers), and the complementary aspect based on how gamers can complement each other based on the assumption of gender and their stereotyped roles (i.e., female gamers are better at playing support positions to male gamers attacking position):

Table 3

Themes, sub-themes and excerpts of sexism among gamers derived from the thematic analysis

Main themes and sub-themes	Example quote
Sexism among gamers	
Gamer gender stereotypes	
Physically	"(A male gamer is a) Young, Caucasian, playing with chips next to them or other unhealthy snacks around, while ignoring anyone around to focus on the game." (Female gamer, 29 years-old)
Psychologically	
Behavior	
Types of sexism	
Benevolent sexism	"Even gamer girls: you have the princesses, the more feminine pink. Versus the more tomboyish gamer girls." (Male gamer, 22 years-old)
Hostile sexism	"Imagine you are playing and having a jerk: always killing you, even if you are on the same team. All to lower your score and prevent you from advancing." (Female gamer, 22 years-old)
Paternalist sexism	"White knights (male gamers) are the defenders of girls in competitive games" (Female gamer, 21 years-old)
Sexual objectification	"Slut-shaming as I said before. A streamer took one of her (a female gamer) pictures, put it on his screen while filming himself kissing her butt" (Male gamer, 21 years-old)
Gender differentiation	"Girls (gamers) tend to play more support roles to male front line attack positions." (Male gamer, 19 years-old)

Games like Assasins Creed[9], God of War[10], LoL[11], COD[12], you see men or boys playing in the ads and real life. It's a male-dominated audience. When do you see girls? When they are games related to karaoke, dating, role play, dance, or co-op[13] games like Mario Kart[14] or similar. (…) so, with online battle games, which are popular ones you'll have girls that can pull their weight as well as the guys (…) They aren't as prepared nor experienced, or they stick to one play only. (Male gamer, 25 years-old)

The fourth type of sexism to arise was *paternalist sexism* or *paternalism* (n = 23; 11 males, 12 females), corresponding to 3.7% of the total statements on gamers' perceptions and experiences with sexism between fellow gamers. Paternalism is expressed in people's actions and beliefs regarding gender in a protective manner, it generally depicts women as the "weaker sex" and in need of men's protection. Most male participants (14) reported paternalist behavior positively, seeing it as a form of chivalry. At the same time, many of the female participants (12) claimed that the protective behavior emphasized a stereotype of female gamers being "sensitive" and defenseless, this "fragility" was heavily associated to incompetence:

I think the acceptance and belief in gender stereotypes, together with the sense of superiority that a person can have, leads to sexism in gaming (…) this thought that us (female gamers) are fragile little girls that need a white knight to come and defend us should be considered outdated. (Female gamer, 25 years-old)

The fifth, and last, type of sexism to have emerged was *sexual objectification* among gamers (n = 24; 12 males, 12 females) with 3.5 % of total statements of gamers' perceptions and experiences playing with fellow gamers. Sexual objectification was defined by gamer's

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[9] Assassins Creed is a franchise of open-world RPG video games with missions on action-adventure and stealth published by Ubuisoft.

[10] God of War is a third person action-adventure game developed by Santa Monica Studio and Published Sony Interactive media.

[11] LoL, also known as League of Legends. is a MMOG in a Battle arena format developed by Riot Games, in it is a player versus player combat with two teams.

[12] COD, also known as Call of Duty, is first-person shooter video game franchise published by Activision, its theme surrounded by war.

[13] Co-op is an abreviation for Cooperative gameplay, which is a feature in a video game that allows the player to have a teammate to work with to complete one or more levels.

[14] Mario Kart is a series of virtual go-kart racing video game developed by Nintendo, containing a variety of Super Mario characters to choose from as racers.

responses of gender inequality and misconduct by objectifying an individual based on their gender. All the female participants (14) mentioned having experienced some form of sexual objectification at least once every time they play with other male gamers, at times leading to harassment. A significant number of male participants (11) said to be aware of the ongoing issue of sexual harassment in online gaming, however, find it to be less concerning than "real" harassment. Male participants referred to their experiences with sexual objectification to be of witnessing female gamers being harassed or to their sexuality being questioned based on the way they played:

> It implies that all it takes is for a boy to save or help a girl in a game to jump her bones. (...) Having other gamers comment on the physique (of the gamer) is so creepy especially with a dirty tone. (…) Complementing her body and her voice instead of her plays. (…) It's so inappropriate but so common. (Male gamer, 27 years-old)

Discussion

The aim of the analysis was to understand gamers' perceptions of sexism in the world of gaming. It focused on the impact of sexist content gamers are exposed to while playing video games, and sexist attitudes and experiences shared between players in and out of the game. While most of the findings matched those identified in previous research, there were emerging themes that have had limited attention in the literature.

First, regarding the impact of video games, the results showed that the participants as gamers are aware of how integrated video games are in their daily lives, positively influencing them and their relationships. In agreement with previous research (Halbrook, O'Donnell & Msetfi, 2019), gamers mentioned multiple positive effects of gaming closely related to their motivations to play. Gamers identified a variety of offers provided by video games that impact them positively, according to previous research results supported the Portuguese participants' perspective by finding video games to provide positive social outcomes and more positive gaming effects on the individuals' life (Greitemeyer & Mügge, 2014; Bourgonjon et al., 2016). Since gamers start playing at a younger age, research tends to prioritize how video games influence a player's development, how it may shape their perception of gender (Dill & Thill, 2007; Dickerman, Christensen & Kerl-McClain, 2008). Video games can be beneficial for them as individuals, and for their relationships with their significant other. There was a concurrence

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among the gamers on considering video games as a shared activity, mainly valuing being understood by their partner and accepting their gaming habits, even if not always.

Unexpectedly however, the negative impact of video games seemed to be mentioned in more abundance than the positive aspects of video games in the participants' lives. The male participants did not find video games to strongly impact their daily life negatively, mentioning time management to be the biggest issue as it can affect other aspects of their life, like work. Prior research assessed that gaming could complicate the balance between leisure time and productive work (Yee, 2006; Weaver, Kim, Metzer & Szendrey, 2013). However, female participants expressed their concern with harassment in gaming. Many studies on females' experience in gaming touch on the topic of hostile behavior towards them (Ballard & Welch 2017; Fox & Tang, 2014; McLean & Griffiths, 2019). Often female gamers over-think their experience and state that harassment has been the main reason for wanting to give up or having to change their behavior to mask their identity as women when playing with men (Fox & Tang, 2017). Thus, the findings, as illustrated in previous research (Lindner, Trible, Pilato & Ferguson, 2020; Blackburn & Scharrer, 2019), show that female gamers stress the significant negative impact for them was the lack of acceptance among other players in an aggressive form.

Fewer studies have explored the impact video games may have on gamers' relationships. There is very little research regarding gamers' amorous relationships. Both male and female participants indicated significant disadvantages gaming can bring to a relationship. All participants perceived video games to have an overbearing negative impact on their relationships in comparison to the positive aspects that may contribute to their relationship. Gamers found the negative impact to focus on the struggles faced in conciliating their gamer identity with relationship responsibilities. The adversities faced in a gamer relationship are poorly explored making it important to elucidate the concerns for gamers' partners (Lianekhammy & Van De Venne, 2015), and the issues with time management (Wood, Griffiths & Parke, 2007). A significant number of female participants mentioned there were issues brought up by jealous outbreaks from a partner while playing with other players, the lack of time shared with a partner, the switched schedules, feeling as if the game is a priority, and having concern for the partners.

Regarding sexism in video games, in line with Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Theory, results evidenced that sexism could imply a mixture of hostility and benevolence. Each predicts the endorsement of common gender stereotypes, including old-

fashioned and modern forms of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001). As culture and society evolve, so do gender roles and stereotypes, leading them to be either left behind or kept (Morales, López-sáez & Lisbona, 2008; Hiller & Baudin, 2016). The results point to a change in video games, as participants report that female presence in video games has gained more traction in the last five years. It is continuously evolving, characterizing female characters as vital with diverse backgrounds and some stories that do not limit them to love interests, while maintaining their attractiveness and exuding "sex appeal". Thus, it does not come as a surprise that participants perceived sexual objectification to be the most common form of sexism in video games. The justification they found for the recurring sexualization of characters was that "sex sells" and that sensuality are strongly associated with women, along with romance. Perhaps the misconception of male gamers being most of the community leads to the sexualization of female characters as a way to attract them to the game (Summers & Miller, 2014; Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel & Fritz, 2016; Cole & Grogan, 2018). Meanwhile the attractiveness of the male protagonist allows the gamer to aspire to be him (Hefner, Klimmt & Vorderer, 2007).

Other forms of sexism were found in video games, mostly related to benevolent sexism. The use of positive accolades to reinforce traditional gender roles as stereotypes in video games (Dill & Thill, 2007) is the most common example presented by the participants. Although benevolent sexism was the hardest to interpret in the contents of a video game for the gamers (Lindner, Trible, Pilato & Ferguson, 2020). All participants recalled the stereotype of the damsel in distress, it depicts a sub-type of benevolent sexism described in literature as paternalist sexism (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Salomon et al., 2020). With paternalism women are frequently stereotyped as weak, defenseless, innocent, and gentle individual that need to be protected by a strong male figure. Sexism in video games is placed in the narrative subtly displaying the submission of the female character over the dominion of the male character as a trophy to be acquired in the story of the game (Lynch, Tompkins, van Driel & Fritz, 2016). The representation of female characters paid high importance to their physicality and connection to male characters provided a link once again to sexual objectification in video games (Hollett, Morgan, Chen & Gignac, 2020).

Lastly, right at the root of sexism among gamers there was their perception of who a gamer should be. Gaming is still considered male-dominated and male-oriented (Kaye & Pennington, 2016; Murray, 2018), when the reality is that it is an activity shared by female and male players scattered worldwide (Engerman & Hein, 2017). In fact, most of the female

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participants had a hard time considering themselves gamers, preferring the term "casual" rather than hardcore gamer which does not deviate from what Scharkow, Festl, Vogelgesang & Quandt (2015) considered to be one their struggles. The strong belief in the gender stereotypes were what the female gamers interpreted to prompt their fellow gamers' behavior in the form of harassment to them. For example, being badgered with questions on their motives and competence to play well video games (Vermeulen, Van Looy, De Grove & Courtois, 2011; Kaye & Pennington, 2016) lead them to at times hide their gender identity from others, consistent with the findings of McLean and Griffiths (2013). Meanwhile, the male gamers claimed hazing to be typical of playing games, and that female gamers are "too sensitive". The use of humor to disguise sexist attitudes is an expression of benevolent sexism. Although the Portuguese male gamers are aware the jokes are sexist yet do not deem it important or hurtful, emphasizing it should be taken lightly as "*all fun and games*". Even a few female gamers recalled the sexist jokes they have said in the past, finding them to also not be important or hurtful, but they considered it to be little retribution to the hostility they face while gaming. Female gamers spoke of their experiences with bullying and harassment in the gaming community, which goes along with previous research on hostility towards females in the gaming world (Känsälä, 2016; Kaye, Gresty & Stubbs-Ennis, 2017). Having to deal with harassment, comments and insults related to their gender (Breuer, Kowert, Festl & Quandt, 2015; Choe, Doh & Ha, 2020). Sexist jokes are usually rooted on a sexist belief in traditional gender stereotypes (Williams, Martins, Consalvo & Ivory, 2009).

Moreover, all Portuguese female gamers stated to have experienced sexual harassment while playing, whereas only some males experience it second hand. When questioning the male gamers on the topic, some found that female gamers' sexual objectification should be taken benevolently as compliments. Nearly equal to benevolent sexism, hostile sexism showed a significant percentage among gamers' perceptions and experiences when playing with others, for both genders similarly. There is research on the matter of hostile sexism between players considering it as being a result of long exposure to aggressive and violent video game content (Assunção, 2016; LaCroix, Burrows & Blanton, 2018; Darvin, Vooris & Mahoney, 2020). However, given the data collected, for this sample hostility seemed to be triggered by negative dispositions due to a competitive and aggressive setting (Shafer, 2012). A possible explanation to the maintenance of the hostility faced among genders is seeing it as part of a sportsmanship rhetoric, detailed as sore losing and/or a way criticize a person's plays to better their

performance (McLean, Waddell & Ivory, 2020). Research demonstrated that female gamers feel out of place when hostile behavior was directed at them, particularly when it was claimed that gaming is a male hobby, leading them to feel marginalized by gamers and the rest of society (Crawford & Gosling, 2005; Paaßen, Morgenroth & Stratemeyer, 2017; Darvin, Vooris & Mahoney, 2020). A type of sexism expected to be highly mentioned by participants given the nature of gaming as a competition was gender differentiation (Rogerson, Gibbs & Smith, 2018). Since playing video games implies the need for cooperation and competition (Kaye, Gresty & Stubbs-Ennis, 2017), it was not expected to strike so low in, similarly to paternalist sexism. A possible explanation for these types of sexism to be mentioned the least is that protecting other gamers when playing is not a priority in a competitive atmosphere. However, recollection of gender stereotypes of gamers reinforced the differences in behavior based on their gender, as male participants described the female's sensitivity to promote the need of to protect them by being cooperative. In line with previous research on the topics, gender difference in gaming is associated to gamers preferences in the way they play based on their gender (Phan, Jardina, Hoyle & Chaparro, 2012; Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2016; Williams, 2009). As female gamers appear to not prefer violent games as much as a male gamer (Terlecki et al., 2011; Maclean, 2016), thus when playing female gamers have more expertise playing in defensive positions whereas male gamers are best at offense (Symonds, 2017).

4.1. Limitations

Various limitations must be taken into consideration, one of which relates to the small sample size and the subjectivity that come with a qualitative method. Even though gamers shared certain perspectives, such perspectives cannot be generalized outside of this setting due to the diversity of answers. Different backgrounds as cultural differences, i.e., the sample is Portuguese, with a culture sharing close history with the Latin sexism of *marianismo* and *machismo*. Lastly, pertinent to another limitation regarding the method, the Master's student, having had first-hand experience with gaming from being a gamer herself and even with two male coders to categorize transcripts taken from interviews, her gender could have influenced the interpretation of results, for gender influences how one interprets sexist cues.

A limitation associated with online interviewing is the dismissal of non-verbal (e.g., body language) and paralinguistic (e.g., tone of voice) cues. Since the interview was merely voice recorded made it difficult for the interviewer to know the psychological disposition of the

participants, even though as gamers they are familiarized with this type of communication daily. The existence of different age groups, even though the range is diverse, might have influenced the result as most of the gamers are students in their 20's, having more time and flexible schedule to play. Video games affect other age groups differently depending on their stage of life, habits, occupation, and lifestyle. In this case, most of the gamers were in a committed relationship which may change their view on sexism and are impacted differently. Lastly, perhaps if there was a specification on the type of RPG answers might have differed, since female gamers tend to distance themselves from online gaming, choosing console games instead. According to the findings there is a difference in experience depending on the type of game, whether it is online (with more contact between gamers) or in console (more contact between the player and the game).

4.2. Contributions and implications

It is suggested that there should be brought more importance for future research to further explore the world of video games, gaming, the connection between video games and gamers since this activity has gained much traction in the past 10 years. The majority of the findings are consistent with previous research, illustrating the influence of games in gamers' lives as well as the construction of their identity. The qualitative method chosen was not set out to reach findings that can be generalized, rather to gather meaningful data and to comprehend the constructs that emerged, tasks at which it was successful. It also provided a better understanding of myths and stigmas related to the difference in age groups, and by geographic area regarding gaming.

New concepts emerged through an analysis of male and female gamers' perceptions of sexist content in video games and experience with sexism while playing. Due to how the script was constructed with an array of questions it allowed discussion on a controversial topic of sexism freely. The thematic analysis bestowed an intuitive and organized way to interpret the results and allowed a greater understanding of how these new concepts interact and connect, including how gender influences how one interprets sexism and sexist content. Seemingly there were internal and external contributions to why female gamers may avoid certain games and actions within a game (i.e., avoiding using voice communication) impairing their gaming abilities and adding a catalyzer to negative interactions towards them. It demonstrates a vicious

cycle of the lack of social support and the imperfection in the social system in gaming that influences this predisposition of "video games are for men".

Thus, further research would benefit from looking into each of these themes in a more precise manner, to deepen the meaning, causes and beliefs that may be rooted in these perceptions and experiences. Providing a better understanding of how this has remained a male-dominated environment and how, if possible, it can become a gender-neutral space that can truly provide a haven for all and not just some. It would also be of value to investigate gamer profiles for both female and male gamers, how games influence the individual in their daily lives and their perception of gender in and out of the gaming community. Lastly, despite all sub-themes showed prevalence in one gender over the other, proper statistics analysis was not made to verify is these differences in gender are significant, so future research could elucidate if these differences are effective and better explore their meanings and existence.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Questionnaire – Demographic data

Which gender do you identify yourself with:	Male	[ ]	Female	[ ]
	Transgender Male	[ ]	Transgender Female	[ ]
	Non-binary	[ ]	Rather not say	[ ]
	Other:			
Age:				
Place of birth:				
District of residence				
Do you reside in a rural or urban setting:	Urban	[ ]	Rural	[ ]
Who do you reside with:	Alone	[ ]	Parents	[ ]
	Partner(s)	[ ]	Colleagues	[ ]
	Other:			
Level of education:	High school	[ ]	Professional degree	[ ]
	Bachelor degree	[ ]	Master degree	[ ]
	Doctorate	[ ]	Other:	
Employment status:	Student	[ ]	Employed	[ ]
	Unemployed	[ ]	Retired	[ ]
	Other:			
Profession:				
Sexual orientation:	Heterosexual	[ ]	Homosexual (Gay)	[ ]
	Homosexual (Lesbian)	[ ]	Bisexual	[ ]
	Sexually fluid	[ ]	Other:	
Are you currently in a relationship:				
What is your relationship status:				
Age of first sexual experience:				
Length of previous relationship:				
Weekly video game playtime:				

What type of RPG (Role Playing Games) do you regularly play?	RPG - Role Playing Game [ ] SRPG - Strategy Role Playing JRPG - Japanese Role Playing Games [ ] Games [ ] ARPG - Action Role Playing WRPG - Western Role Games [ ] Playing Games [ ]

Appendix 2

Thematic sections	General objectives	Specific objectives	Open-ended questio
I. Information	1. Request permission for the audio recording of the interviews and clarify doubts about the functioning of the interviews after delivering informed consent		
	2. Proceed to the interview	2.1. Proceed with the interviewer's presentation 2.2. Proceed to the presentation of the topics that will be addressed and interview	
	3. Explain the purpose of the interview again	3.1. Provide information on: Objectives, purpose, duration, and content of the interview	
	4. Deontological aspects	4.1. Thank the collaboration 4.2. Ensure confidentiality and anonymity 4.3. Inform about the right to non-response 4.4. Ensure the clarification of any doubts	
II. Gamer identity	1. Gamer identity	1. Confirm that the participant identifies himself as a gamer	1.1. Do you ident yourself as a gamer?
	2. Play time (Frequency)	2. Estimate the time spent playing per week (in hours)	2.1. How much time spend on average pe
	3. Gaming motives	3.Reflect on the different reasons that the participant will have to play	3.1. What drives you
	4. Use/ Purpose of gaming	4. Understand the use/purpose that the game or play has for the participant	4.1. What kind of us give to video games?
III. Relationships and sexuality	1. Experiences of relationships with a gamer	1. Explore and characterize loving experiences with other gamers.	1.1. (If you date or h dated) Do you have, you had an affective

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		sexual relationship w
		gamer?
		1.2. How did you fee
		relationship with gar
		Tell us about these
		experiences.
		1.3. Do you consider
		tend to be attracted /
		gamers?
		1.4. What advantage
		there be in having a
		relationship with a g
2. Impact of video games on relationships	2. Analyze the perception that gamers have of the impact of video games on their love relationships	And what disadvanta
		there be?
		2.1. Do you think tha
		video games can infl
		our love relationship
		2.2. (If you have bee
		relationship) Have vi
		games ever caused
		disagreement or conf
		the relationship?
		2.3. Have you ever c
		play instead of doing
		activities with your p
		If so, how do you loo
3. Fantasies associated with video games	3. Explore possible sexual fantasies derived from RPG scenarios (e.g. cosplay)	
		3.1. Do playing vide
		have an impact on se

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			3.2. In terms of fanta
			3.3. Have you ever b interested in cosplay which you represente character in the game 3.4. Would you like t replicate any sexual s you have seen in a ga
IV. Stereotypes and *tropes*	1. Discussing stereotypes and "tropes" in RPGs	1. Explore the narrative as a perpetuator of stereotypes through tropes	1.1. In your opinion, more male or female protagonists?
			1.2. In your opinion, a stereotyped represe of characters in vide according to gender? 1.3. What, for you, a common "tropes" in
			1.4. As for the chara describe a typical fer character in an RPG both physically and psychologically 1.5. Describe a male character both physic psychologically. 1.6. Do you tend to p characters that have t gender as you identif 1.7. Any character of same genre you iden with?
	2. Interpret images and videos taken from video games	2. Obtain opinions and impressions that the gamer has when presented with stereotyped characters	2.1. (Exposure to the Collective Battle clip is highlighted in this scenario?

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2.2. (Show a picture
Character A: Ahri) D
know this character?
you think of her?
2.3. (Show a picture
Character B: Darius)
know this character?
you think of him?
2.4. How would you
the physical and
psychological charac
of each character in :

3. Gender tropes and narrative

3. Identify "gender tropes" either due to the knowledge of the game and thus its narrative as well as the presentation of the character and his action of the game without considering his input on the plot

3.1. We had previous
about tropes; can you
any in this scenario?
3.2. (Exhibition of th
clip: Batalha sensual
your opinion regardi
presentation and
representation of the
character in this scen
3.3. (Exhibition of th
clip: Batman Origina
you identify gender
stereotypes in this sc
so. Which are?
3.4. (Exhibition of th
clip: Batman Swap) I
find any differences
video compared to th
previous one? If so, v
you think?

3.5. (Exhibit in figur
Interpret what you se
image?

V. Sexism in video games

1. Explore examples of sexism in the narrative of RPG video games

1. Introduce the topic of sexism. Letting the gamer first talk about the concept

1.1. Since we are tall
about gender stereoty
would like to ask wh
notion of sexism?

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	2. Interpret images and videos taken from video games through examples of different types of sexism	2. Exposing the individual to introduction clips of male and female characters separately, so that the individual identifies differences between the two and identifies characteristics that are generally stereotyped in video games	2.1. (Exhibition of th clip "kiss") What do think of the interactic between the characte
			2.2. Describe your id protagonist for the R your dreams.
		3. Interpret scenarios taken from video games that demonstrate interaction between characters so that there is a presentation of the character's skills and behavior towards others	3.1. (Exposition to th clip: Sudden Attack) stands out in this sce
VI. Gaming behavior	1. Representations of stereotypes of gamers	1. Understand whether there are gender inequalities between gamers in terms of representativeness within the gaming community.	1.1. Is there a gamer stereotype? 1.2. Are there more i gamers than female g
			1.3. Do you think gai play differently?
			1.4. Statistically we l that there are more n gamers than women. could explain this dif

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2. Perception of game attitudes according to the characteristics of other gamers	2. Whether the way of playing changes depending on whether you are playing as individuals of the same gender or not.	2.1. Do you think yo differently with men women? (if yes) Wha changes in your beha
3. Meanings of Online sexual harassment	3. Explore the topic of online harassment and its different types and presentations.	3.1. More and more p are talking about onl sexual harassment. H would you describe t concept in your own
		3.2. Have you ever fe offensive comments "tropes" centered on genre of the characte characters?
		3.3. Do you consider there are situations o harassment in the gar community?

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Appendix 3

Informed consent

We would like to invite you to participate in a study within the scope of a Transdisciplinary Master's Dissertation in Sexology, taking place at the School of Psychology and Life Sciences (EPCV) of the Lusophone University of Humanities and Technologies (ULHT), under the guidance of the Professor Ana Filipa Beato Ph.D. This study was approved by the EPHV Ethics and Deontology Committee of ULHT.

The main purpose is to evaluate the influence of time spent playing video games (gaming) on gamers' perceptions and attitudes regarding issues about human sexuality concerning the sexual content represented in violent games. Anyone over the age of 18 who is fluent in Portuguese and who plays video games regularly can participate in this study.

Participants will be interviewed individually by the principal investigator for this study. The interviews will take place in a place without interference or distractions, to be agreed with the researcher and subject to the availability of both parties, the audio of these interviews being recorded for later analysis. The questions raised during the interview will have considerable intimate questions, relating to sexuality, but also about gaming habits, emotions, ways of thinking and opinions about sexist content video games, as well as about the way you react to certain contexts around gaming. Videos of excerpts taken from popular RPG videogames that contain content related to stereotypes and gender inequalities will be presented. The interview will have an average duration of 50 minutes and will be scheduled according to the availability of both parties.

All your data is confidential. Your identity will not be revealed at any time and only the research team for this project will have access to audio recordings and your data. In preparing the dissertation, only excerpts from the speeches of the participants will be used and never their names. All interview data and databases used are properly stored and protected by a password. After transcribing the interviews, the audios will be deleted.

Participation is voluntary, and it is possible to withdraw at any time in the process, without prejudice. Participation in this study will have no associated reward, but it will be making a unique and valuable contribution to the enrichment of knowledge in this area that is still little explored. At the end of this academic year, the results will be published in the master's thesis of the student who is carrying out this study. After being approved, the dissertation will

be accessible to the public. Still, if you need any more information or if you have any questions about the study, do not hesitate to contact the research team:

- Ana Beato, Ph.D., professor at the School of Psychology and Life Sciences at Universidade Lusófona: ana.beato@ulusofona.pt

I declare that I have read the terms of this consent and that I have been informed about the theme, objective, and main procedures of this study. Thus, and considering the above stipulated, I decide:

___ Participate in the study.

___ Do not participate in the study.

_____

_____, ___/___/_____

(Place)   (Date)

Appendix 4

Appendix 4: Themes and their description with respective codes.

Themes	Subthemes	Definition of the category
The impact of video games	**The positive impact of video games**	Perceptions of the positive consequences of gaming to a gamer's life, well-b relationships when playing video games regularly
	The negative impact of video games	Perceptions of the negative consequences of gaming to a gamer's life, well-b relationships when playing video games regularly
Gender stereotypes in video games		Identify and/or recognize the existence of gender representations and stere and psychologically and their history in the video game, in their behaviors an
Sexism in video games	**Benevolent sexism in video games**	Identify and/or recognize in video game content representations of the opp positive characteristics, while nonetheless reinforcing gender stereotypes (E and pure)
	Hostile sexism in video games	Identify and/or recognize negative representations of gender in video game stupid, women are vindictive)
	Paternalism in video games	Identify and/or recognize in video game content attitudes that reveal g representation of dominance of one gender over the other (Example: there characters than female) and/or protection of one gender over the other on the (Example: the princess being saved by the hero)
	Sexual objectification in video games	Identify and/or recognize in video game content representations tending to ob their gender (Example: the woman as a trophy of the male protagonist)
	Gender differentiation in video games	Identify and/or recognize gender roles stereotyped as complementary betwee women being better able to build (support) compared to men who are better a and/or competitive between characters, manifesting superiority of skills of or considering male characters have better leadership skills than female characte
Gender Stereotypes among gamers		Identify and/or recognize the existence of gender representations and stereoty based on their gender regarding their gaming behaviors and the interaction be community
Sexism among gamers	**Benevolent sexism among gamers**	Identify and/or recognize apparent positive attitudes towards the opposite ge reinforcing gender stereotypes. These perceptions can arise through humor, l gamers are more friendly to play)
	Hostile sexism among gamers	Identify and/or recognize apparent negative attitudes related to gender with a the opposite gender (Example: characterization of male gamers as being mor
	Paternalism among gamers	Identify and/or recognize attitudes among gamers revealing of gender inequa domination of one gender over the other (Example: consider female gamers l

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		gamers) and/or by the protection of one over the other on the precedent that o *white-knighting*, where a male gamer defends and protects a female gamer du
	Sexual objectification among gamers	Identify and/or recognize attitudes among gamers revealing of gender inequa individual based on their gender (Example: a *simp* or *simping* in which a gan adoring behaviors by a gamer to captivate his interest with intentions to get a
	Gender differentiation among gamers	Identifying and/or recognizing gender roles stereotyped as complementary be considering female gamers are better at virtual life to role-play games while war games), and/or of the superiority of one gender over the other regarding Considering male gamers play better in attack positions)

Appendix 5

Interview number	Transcriptions	Cod 1	Cod 2	Cod 3	Agreement (Y/N)
1	"(...) In general I play for the interest in the game and, in particular, because it is a good way to manage stress. When I play I can shut down."	PIV	PIV	PIV	Y
1	"(In a non-gamer relationship) (...) we argued due to playing. (...) the tiredness sometimes weighs, and priorities are difficult to manage. (...) in past relationships, it was even the reason why the relationship broke down."	NIV	NIV	NIV	Y
1	"(...) I already have difficulty managing (time) alone. (...) Sometimes, when I lose a game... She (girlfriend) says that I sulk. But it's more a feeling of frustration than anything else (...)I play when she is doing something else or sleeping. That's why the tiredness weighs on me."	NIV	NIV	NIV	Y
1	"Chick gamers are in style. For some it's an insult, for others they are a dream. (...) that a typical (gamer) focused on the game, probably a nerd who still lives with his parents and has no social life. (...) The guy who plays and doesn't even listen to his girlfriend. (...) the target audience (for video games) is men or boys there at the height of puberty"	GGS	GGS	GGS HG	Y
1	"(...) (In a gamer relationship) we talked more about games. I felt that she understood me more and why I play (...)"	PIV	PIV	PIV	Y
1	"I can find the packaging (of the female gamer) attractive, but the content is not there. (...)"	GGS	GGS	SOG	Y