

Is it a man's world? Exploring Portuguese female gamers' perceptions and experiences regarding sexism in gaming

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Background

Generally **female gamers are not accepted accordingly among other gamers** (McLean & Griffiths, 2013), despite accounting for nearly half of the community. (Statista, 2020).



Traditional **sexism** is defined by antipathy toward women, Glick and Fiske (1996) presented sexism as ambivalent, involving not only hostile as well as benevolent sexism.

Hostile sexist behavior can be exhibited verbally or non-verbally making the gamer feel out of place in what are considered “**masculine games**” (Assunção, 2016). Hostility in gaming can take many forms, some of which trigger acts of **sexual harassment** between characters, or directly player-to-player (O’Leary, 2012; Fox & Tang, 2017).

Despite previous research exploring the hostility women face in gaming from fellow players, most focus on the male perspective having mainly male participants. Suggesting that female gamers experience gaming differently, particularly online gaming.

Purpose

The **aim** is to explore Portuguese female gamers’ perceptions of gamer gender stereotypes and their experiences with sexism and the online harassment derived from it in the gaming world.

Method

Qualitative approach using thematic analysis (TA) of the transcriptions of semi-structured interviews.

Participants

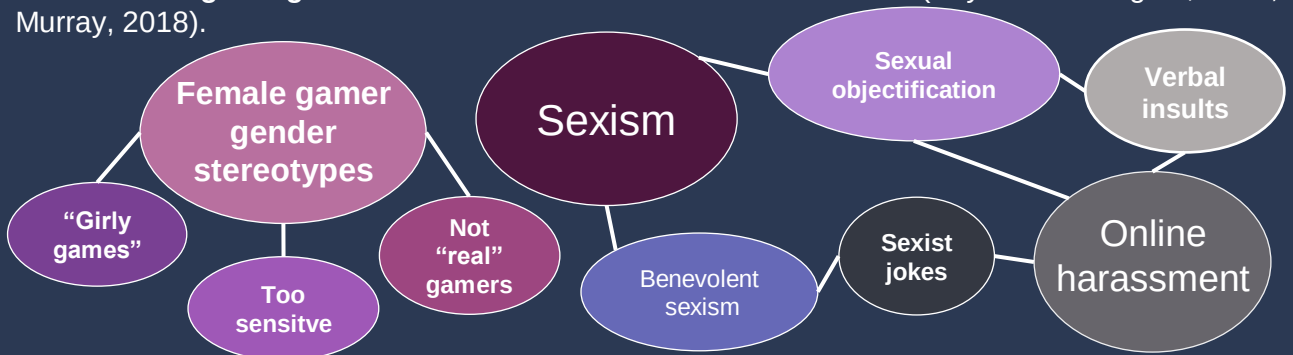
- 14 female gamers
- 18 to 42 years-old (M=26.1)
- 64,3% in a relationship
- 35,7% single
- 35,7% dating
- 7.1% married

Results & Discussion

From the TA emerged three main themes **female gamer gender stereotypes**, **sexism among gamers** and **online harassment**.

The patterns found indicated that sexism toward female gamers related to the gender stereotypes, they felt judged as stereotypes and not by their abilities to play. Having to endure sexist jokes and remarks toward their voice or appearance. Thus, being sexual objectified by fellow players, which when rejected escalate to a more hostile form of sexism, like harassment.

Female gamers found sexism in gaming to be rooted in their perception of who a gamer should be as gaming is still considered a male-dominated world (Kaye & Pennington, 2016; Murray, 2018).



The use of humor to disguise sexist attitudes is an expression of **benevolent sexism**.

Female gamers spoke of their **experiences with bullying and harassment** in the gaming community, and **hostility towards them while playing online** (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).

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