

GAMING AND GENDER POLITICS: FEMALES NAVIGATING TOXICITY IN ONLINE MULTIPLAYER GAMES

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ABSTRACT

Online Multiplayer Games, have been a source of entertainment and a place for people to socialize for many years. Still, slowly its environment has become hostile for female players where they are constantly facing gender-based toxicity. This qualitative study investigated the experiences of female players, their coping mechanisms, and how the toxic behavior affected them over time. Using Social Dominance Theory (SDT) explains how society is affected by both personal and social discrimination, and it describes how the male-dominated gaming space is reinforcing stereotypes and gender inequalities on female players.

A total of eight interviews were conducted, and the players were chosen through a purposive sampling method. According to the findings, female players mentioned some of the toxic behaviours they faced; explicit in-game sabotage, verbal abuse, sexualized remarks, and exclusion from team-based activities. Participants also reported coping mechanisms such as; avoiding voice chat, changing avatars, and concealing their voice. By restricting female participants, these practices serve to uphold male dominance in gaming, which aligns with SDT.

In the West, there is abundant research on the toxic environment of games but little attention has been given in non-western countries like Pakistan. This study has addressed a critical gap in the literature regarding toxicity faced by female players on gaming platforms in Pakistan.

Keywords: Online Multiplayer Games, Toxicity, Female Players, Social Dominance Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The online gaming industry has evolved into a multibillion-dollar sector that has elevated the entertainment industry to the next level and created a new avenue for social interaction. No matter what gender, people from all around the world enjoy taking part in online multiplayer games (Khan, Reyes, & Subhani, 2022). These digital sites – where players interact with each other in competitive or more cooperative environments – are an increasingly integral part of how people communicate, build relationships, and express their identities

(AlAfnan, 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic, online multiplayer games experienced a significant surge and emerged as a major social platform, providing a space for numerous communities and individuals to interact. Moreover, we also come to an understanding of how these online gaming platforms are the main grounds for toxic behaviours, and the most affected by this behaviour are the minority groups that are present in the gaming community, such as women. (Maharani, 2024).

The term toxicity in the gaming domain has been poorly defined and is highly inconsistent, although the term is often used in gaming-related literature. In online gaming, language plays an important role, as that is how the players communicate with one another. The players use this as a strategy piece in social gatherings; to show some sort of superiority over others, they do this by using particular terms or changing their manner of speaking just to signal membership in certain groups. Toxic behavior is one clear example of such abuse when people wield derogatory, exclusionary, or harmful language to achieve power over others. The regularity of such toxic language in online gaming communities has raised concerns about its impact on people, and their experiences, which particularly affects women (AlAfnan, 2025).

There should be more focus on exploring the reception of femininity in online games, and more specifically, massively multiplayer online games. This encompasses gender stereotyping in the treatment of female gamers. It is also seen that women who took part in the same online discussion forums as men were consistently ignored, trivialized, vilified (Brehm, 2013).

Gender Toxicity has an impact on mental health, with sexual harassment having the most severe effects. This primarily targets women, so the majority of the ill effects fall on women. Sexual harassment causes deficits in mental health, such as depression and PTSD, and rumination can occur. Even if not the direct victim of sexual harassment, witnessing it or perceiving it to be present in an environment can produce these ill effects, too (Khandaker, 2019).

While this toxicity does have a lasting effect on the minds of the players, some women have been reported using coping mechanisms to alleviate the harassment, such as gender neutralization through screen names or the choice of their avatars, so that they can avoid communication with other players in the game. Even after using these mechanisms, it gets harder for the girls to play and move further in the game, they feel it is best to leave the game completely, here we do see that the industry plays an important role if the industry does not create an environment that feels safe for the girl gamers it is very likely that they will start exiting

the game (Fox & Tang, 2016). It is understood that the trajectory of this toxicity can cause lasting damage (Belskie, *Measuring Toxicity Toward Women in Game-Based Communities*, 2023).

Managing toxic behaviour in online gaming involves an overall strategy encompassing game developers, community campaigns, and educational campaigns to encourage inclusivity and respect. By building a culture of respect, the gaming community can make online gaming a more secure and hospitable place for all players (Maharani, 2024).

According to the social dominance theory (SDT), societies are hierarchical, and dominant groups use a variety of strategies to control subordinate groups. This theory offers a helpful prism through which to view how male gamers frequently establish control over female gamers, thereby sustaining gender-based inequalities in the context of online gaming. Through practices like harassment, marginalization, and criticizing the talents of female players, online gaming environments—which are often male-dominated spaces—can perpetuate traditional gender norms and power dynamics (Belskie, Zhang, & Hemminger, 2023). These behaviours uphold male supremacy in the virtual world in addition to reflecting larger societal trends of gender inequity.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the toxicity faced by female gamers in online multiplayer games. The research area that I chose was Pakistan, and a major gap was found regarding research on this topic in this particular area.

1.1 Problem Statement

The online world of multiplayer gaming has shot to popularity because of the unique virtual experience it provides and the connections formed within it (Alison & Cary, 2017). Unfortunately, women face a lot of gender-related issues that all stem from online toxicity, regardless of how popular gaming has become. The various forms of misogyny, cyberbullying, exclusion, and harassment create an extremely harmful environment that drives women away from the industry while furthering hatred toward women in general (Consolva, 2012). This issue has been documented by various studies in the West (Chan, et al., 2022), but

there is very little information on how women in other regions, especially non-Western regions, attempt to navigate these circumstances. This study aims to understand how women online gamers deal with toxicity and how it influences their online personas. By concentrating on female gamers' experiences, this research hopes to enhance the conversation regarding the intersection of gender and technology while shedding light on the sociocultural issues women face in the gaming environment.

1.2. Research Objectives

O₁ To determine the different types of gender-based toxicity faced by women in online multiplayer games.

O₂ To examine the challenges faced by girls across different online multiplayer games.

O₃ To investigate the coping mechanisms and adaptive behaviors used by female gamers to cope with aggressive gaming environments.

O₄ To analyze if there is exclusion and hostility in gaming and its impact on girls over time.

1.3. Research Questions

RQ₁ What are the common forms of gender-based toxicity experienced by women in online multiplayer games?

RQ₂ How do the challenges faced by women differ across various gaming communities?

RQ₃ What coping mechanisms do female gamers use to navigate and resist gender-based bias?

RQ₄ How whether there is exclusion and hostility in gaming and its impact on girls over time?

RQ₅ How exclusion and hostility in gaming has impact on girls over time?

2. Literature Review

Online Multiplayer games have been quite a common and enjoyable activity that is known to provide positive benefits to gamers, such as providing them the chance to reduce loneliness, offering them a way to socialize, and also to enhance their well-being, but this is not the only side of online games, these games can also become a cause of harm and a place where players might encounter toxic behavior (Belskie, Zhang, & Hemminger, 2023).

The term toxicity is used to describe the pessimistic behavior among players that creates a

community filled with abusiveness (Beres, Frommel, & Reid, 2021). It includes the players violating the rules and social norms and using verbal abuse, insults, and racial slurs while addressing others. This is their way of asserting dominance over the lower-ranked players (AlAfnan, 2025). Through research, we have found that the younger audience who was into playing online battle arenas and shooting games was more prone to be exposed to toxic behavior (Zsila, Shabahang, Aruguete, & Orosz, 2022). In his paper (Belskie, 2023) stated that the most frequent gender-based or sexual harassment that girls face in games or the gaming community comes from the use of toxic language and behavior.

2.1. Gender-Based Harassment

Female gamers in esports and online gaming face continued harassment, which includes sexist remarks, discrimination, and social exclusion (Cary, 2017; Cameron, 2019). A 2020 report, "Sexism and Harassment in the Gaming Industry," documented over 70 allegations of sexism and harassment, further attesting to the necessity for instant intervention (Lorenz & Browning, 2020). Studies have indicated that female gamers are disproportionately targeted compared to male gamers, subjected to discriminatory comments, and gendered harassment (Cary, 2017). Girls are deprived of the opportunity to compete or enhance their skills, which impacts their career development directly (Darvin et al., 2021). This is not because of a lack of female interest but because of challenges and adverse environments (Smith et al., 2021).

Toxic gamer culture has been described as the effort to maintain patriarchal privilege in esports and thus continues to harass and exclude females. Despite facing exclusion and a ton of toxicity, females are thriving in the gaming community and taking part in esports (Consolva, 2012).

2.2. Competitive and Esports Gaming

Esports can be defined as competitive gaming in which players participate in many tournaments and leagues competing for rewards (Rogstad, 2022). Women are significantly underrepresented at every level of competition (Hilbert, 2019; Robert, 2022). The prevalence of

gendered harassment in the form of objectification and sexist comments, as well as toxicity, a culture characterized by unwanted behaviors from other players, is one of the factors that could be responsible for the low female participation in esports careers (Darvin et al., 2021; Ruvalcaba et al., 2018).

There exists a very strong relationship between harassment and women's underrepresentation in the gaming sector. Empirical evidence shows that gender harassment causes frustration and stress, leading most women to leave gaming and online communities as a whole. In their paper (Fox & Tang, 2016) have proved that harassment leads women to constantly think about their bad experiences, which eventually leads them to leave gaming.

In the esports community, there is a phenomenon that has been noted as "gender-zoning," where men deliberately exclude female players from playing certain games, teams, and online groups. This exclusion is achieved through concerted harassment, bullying, and toxic behavior, thus establishing strong barriers to women's inclusion (Ruvalcaba, Shulze, Kim, Berzenski, & M.P., 2018). One of the main ways of excluding women is denying them access to practice matches ("scrims"), which are essential in developing skills and performing at high levels (Darvin et al., 2021).

2.3. The Role of Masculinity vs Marginalization of Girls

The game community is highly influenced and preoccupied by males, and the games have also been specifically designed to attract male audiences. The kind of depictions we see in video games of women are extremely sexualized, not just in images but also in actions (Harrison, Drenten, & Pendarvis, 2016). One of the factors that were found in these online multiplayer games that reinforced the toxic sides of masculinity towards females was the drive to keep playing the games, the constant push of gaining a higher score no matter what, to assert dominance over the player under them and to make it to the top of a leader board (Chandler, 2019).

Online gaming is said to be dominated by the male audience; females are also present but are low in number due to the unpleasant experiences they have endured while gaming

(McLean & Griffiths, 2019). Social dominance orientation (SDO) is a personality trait where individuals support unequal group relations. This means a belief that some groups are superior to others, which may lead to discriminatory behavior and abuse (Fox & Tang, 2014).

Research has shown that the most prominent gender that is present as the main character in the games is male, and the females are pursued as a secondary character, who requires constant rescue or are being shown in unrealistic and objectified ways. The repeated exposure to these portrayals may lead the younger generation to think and manifest these differences in games and real-life (Kivijarvi & Katila, 2019).

Women in games are marginalized and limited to playing three types of roles: invisible, sex objects, or the enemy (Salter and Blodgett 2012). They are also marginalized because gaming is considered a man's property, both in the household and in the gaming world (Crawford 2012). Even though 41% of gamers are women, they are still subjected to enormous online harassment every time they venture into masculine gaming communities (Entertainment Software Association 2016). Females need to be considered as essential members of the gaming community rather than outsiders (Cote, 2017).

2.4. Stereotypical Gaming System

Feminist scholars contend that women are systematically exploited within the marketplace through advertising imagery and media representations. Despite the presence of similarities between male and female gamers, the stereotype that video gaming is predominantly a masculine endeavor remains entrenched in the market (Harrison, Drenten, & Pendarvis, 2016). Video games frequently reinforce hypermasculine stereotypes, a term that defines masculine cultural traits with a bit of exaggeration (Cote, 2017). Women in gaming face strong gender stereotypes that make it harder for them to be accepted as equal players. Although studies show that men's and women's reasons for gaming are identical, the gaming stereotype as a "male activity" is still common. The common stereotype does not include women in the group of gamers; thus, it is difficult for them to be recognized as equal

gamers (Harrison , Drenten, & Pendarvis , 2016).

2.5. Coping Mechanisms

Toxic behavior (TB) is a negative response to in-game frustration in multiplayer online games, and females are constantly being targeted (Kordyaka, Krath, & Park, 2022). As a response to frequent harassment and social exclusion, women gamers create a coping strategy of self-defense. The most common among them is gender masking, in which women hide their gender identity so that they will not be targeted (Fox & Tang, 2016). They try utilizing gender-neutral names to prevent being recognized as a woman. Steer clear of voice chat in the game because their voice might give away their gender, exposing them to sexist comments. Also, try using a more objective tone of language to avoid reinforcing oneself (Hao et al., 2020).

Other women go further and take measures like avoiding certain toxic games altogether or only gaming with close friends (Madden et al., 2021). Some go so far as to fake being male gamers by using male avatars or a lower voice when they communicate. These solutions decrease harassment but also restrict women from being fully immersed in gaming culture. Rather than game freely, women have to recheck themselves continuously and adapt their behaviour just to be able to game securely (Hao, et al., 2020). Some females have reported going as far as adapting the male role and taking part in their jokes and banter just to be able to continue playing (Taylor, 2012).

We have gone through research regarding female gamers and their facing harassment in Online Multiplayer Games. The papers that we came across were from Western countries, and no paper was available that would have talked about the issues girls faced while gaming from non-Western countries. To address this gap, the current study aims to develop our understanding of the experiences of girls playing online multiplayer games, exploring how they are personally affected by gender harassment and toxicity in Pakistan. I will take a qualitative approach using thematic analysis of interview data to gain insight into the lived experiences of girls.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

The chosen theory for analyzing this harassment and the strategies used by female gamers is the Social Dominance Theory. The theory discusses how the dominant groups have an upper hand in every field and always put the other groups down, while the subordinate groups are often left to feel suppressed. In online gaming, the situation seems to be the same: The males suppress the female gamers and harass them (Sidianus & Pratto, 1990). The gaming industry is expanding very swiftly and has become a complex social environment where everyone can socialize, interact, and collaborate (Khandaker, 2019). There aren't only positive situations, but this has also brought forth a significant number of issues related to gender harassment of female gamers, toxic behavior towards the players who are not highly skilled, and the exclusion of the marginalized group, which is mainly regarded as the female group.

3. Methodology

This study has adopted the qualitative method as the main method for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is descriptive and interpretive, focusing on understanding the person's perceptions from their perspective, paying attention to the person's mental state and construction of meaning. This fits in with the research objective of this study, which is to explore the perception and experience of playing games among girls.

3.1. Sample

To investigate women's gaming experiences, this research looked for women who are acquainted with and experienced in the gameplay mechanics that are specific to combat games and participated in the online multiplayer game modes. The research area is limited to finding only female gamers who reside in Islamabad or Rawalpindi. They must have experience in playing online multiplayer games that could include battle arena games such as Pubg, Free Fighter or Call of Duty. The main goal of this research is to see the side of girls who have been harassed while playing these sorts of online games. The research databases used to find literature include Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Springer; other databases were not included.

3.2. Sample Size

A total of 8 interviews were conducted of female gamers, who had gone through harassment while playing online games.

3.3. Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select female gamers who have a past regarding toxicity or harassment of any sort they endured while playing online multiplayer games. The respondents were requested to share their side and tell us about the different types of toxic behaviour they encountered and the coping strategies they applied to handle or get away from this gender-based harassment.

3.4. Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed for conducting interviews. The questionnaire consisted of four major sections, which further had multiple questions. These sections include questions related to the participant's interests and the genre of games that they have played, their experience regarding harassment, the kind of coping mechanisms they used to move past this toxicity, and the recommendations on how the

gaming community could improve the whole environment and make it safe for the females.

3.5. Data Collection

A total of 8 semi-structured interviews are conducted via audio call or in person. All of the interviews were conducted online; for this reason, the audio files were transcribed, and a complete analysis was conducted for each interview.

4. Findings and Discussion

This portion of the paper analyzes the findings in the form of semantic concepts as well as addressing all four research questions one by one.

4.1. Key Themes for Each Section of the Questionnaire

The following tables present the key themes from the participants' questions. This information will help us conclude all the responses, and make it easier for us to understand the struggles that female players go through while gaming.

Table 4.1 Demographics

Questions	Findings
Age	Early 20s to late 20s
Diverse Backgrounds	Students, Artists, Researchers
Interests	Art, Design, Animation
Involvement in Gaming	Some are deeply involved in gaming, and some just play for casual fun.
Time Frame of Gaming	Childhood and Early Teens
Exposure to Online Games	Siblings, Parents, and Friends
Basic Console	PC and Consoles
Reason for Gaming	To relax, Stay Mentally Engaged
Genres of Games	Popular games (FPS, MMORPG, RPG, Strategy and Action Adventure)

Table 4.2. Experiences of Harassment

Questions	Findings
Types of Harassment	Inappropriate comments, Use of vulgar or abusive language, targeting based on gender, stalking, and misuse of personal information
Encounter Harassment	It frequently occurs in random matches and lobbies, mostly when gender is revealed
Perpetrators	Strangers in random lobbies, Teammates when they lose a game
Gaming Experience Affected	Increased Caution, avoiding voice chat, reduced confidence
Changed the way you Play	Avoid voice chat, use male avatars or names, limit interactions with strangers, or avoid certain games that have more harassment issues

Table 4.3. Coping Mechanisms and Support

Questions	Findings
Strategies	Block, report harassment, avoid voice chat, reveal personal information, play with trusted friends, take breaks or step away from toxic environments
Support from Friends, Family, or online communities	Limited support from Family, but friends and gaming communities provide support
Report harassment to game moderators	Mixed responses: some report, while others do not, a lack of faith in platforms taking action, and some feel it is ineffective due to large numbers of users

Table 4.4. Recommendation

Questions	Findings
Changes in games to make them welcoming for girls	Stricter moderation, banning devices rather than accounts, developing games that cater to female audiences
Advice from Participants to Future Female Gamers	Set boundaries, find supportive communities, do not let harassment discourage you, and report toxic behaviour

Furthermore, here there is going to be a discussion on all the responses from every participant and have their answers, answered my

research questions. Under each table, a summarization paragraph is included for more understanding.

Table 4.5. Respondent's Backgrounds and Their Gaming Preferences

Respondents	Age	Background	History in Gaming	Platform for Gaming	Genres	Motivations
1	23 years	Digital artist	Started with Brothers and Sister (7 years)	Mobile	MMORPG/RPG	Visual appeal, social gaming
2	24 years	Arts graduate	Since Childhood, A Stress Relief Activity	Mobile	FPS (PUBG/COD), strategy	Teamwork, competition
3	24 years	Fine Arts graduate	10-11 Age	PC/Mobile	Arcade, hidden object	Escapism, nostalgia
4	23 years	Researcher	For Researching	Mobile	Cooking games	Research, relaxation
5	27 years	Pro gamer	Family Influence 7 years)	PC	FPS (Valorant)	Career, performance
6	22 years	Physics student	Childhood (brothers' influence)	PC	FPS, horror	Social play, nostalgia
7	22 years	Medical student	10 of Age (Brothers Influence)	Laptop/mobile	FPS, Minecraft	Stress relief, bonding
8	24 years	Art Student	Childhood (Brothers Influenced)	Console/Mobile	FPS, COD, PUBG,	Stress Relief

The first section only covered the participant's backgrounds and interests and a little information about themselves. The participants, mostly women in their early to mid-20s, came from various backgrounds, such as professional gaming, academics, and the arts. The majority started playing video games as kids, frequently at the suggestion of friends or family and became addicted to the medium over time. While PC and console consumers prioritized performance and nostalgia, mobile gamers were often favored

for convenience. Popular gaming genres ranged from leisure and strategic games to competitive FPS and MMORPGs, while players' reasons for playing ranged from professional esports to social connection and stress reduction. The variety of platforms and genres demonstrated the various functions that gaming fulfilled in their life, ranging from competitive fulfillment to artistic expression, while also expressing personal preferences influenced by social circles and accessibility.

Table 4.6. Experiences of Harassment

Respondent	Harassment Types	Frequency	Perpetrators	Emotional Impact	Behavioral Adaptations
1	Sexist remarks, bias	Often	Strangers	Pressure to "prove" skills	Avoids male players
2	Profile misuse, abuse	Frequent (PUBG/Clash)	Strangers	Uncomfortable, cautious	Mic off, neutral names
3	Gender-based targeting	Every session	Strangers	Fear, anxiety	Male avatars, no VC
4	N/A (observed in students)	N/A	Teammates	N/A	Advocates education
5	Sexism, trolling	Every other match	Strangers	Depression, anger	Mic delayed, mood swings
6	"Kitchen" jokes	Rare (now)	Teammates	Initial distress	No mic ignores
7	Sexual advances, sexism	90% matches	Strangers	Fear, blackmail risk	Text-only, trusted friends
8	Sexual Jokes, Bad Language	90%	Strangers/Teammates	Depression	Avoided playing

From the responses of the participants in this section, my first research question related to common forms of gender-based toxicity experienced by women in online multiplayer games, the participants reported frequent experiences with harassment, which ranged from sexist comments and sexual advances to more serious situations including profile misuse and blackmail. Harassment was shown to be a widespread problem. These seemed to be the common forms of harassment that they had to go through. The main offenders were strangers in random lobbies, although teammates might also get antagonistic, especially if a player played poorly or identified as female.

As for the second research question, how do the challenges faced by women differ across various gaming communities? the response from the female players was that they did not feel any difference or change regarding harassment across various communities. A respondent

mentioned how streaming games on Twitch got so difficult because of the constant reminder of how the gaming space is for males, and males only, this not only affected the player mentally, but she decided to quit streaming and even leave gaming altogether. Many gaming communities had similar outcomes of female players facing constant harassment. Many people adopted protective tactics such as limiting gameplay to trusted friends, avoiding voice chat, or masking their gender through male avatars as a result of the emotional toll, which included worry, depression, and self-doubt. These modifications demonstrated how much harassment interfered with their gaming experiences, and it did not matter which community they were playing in they were constantly harassed and put down. Such behavior's normalization revealed structural problems in online gaming culture, where discrimination based on gender went unchecked.

Table 4.7. Strategies for Coping Toxicity

Respondent	Immediate Actions	Reporting Behavior	Support Sources	Long-term Adaptations	Platform Trust
1	Blocking	Reports often	None	Selective co-op play	Low
2	Block + report	Always reports	Friends	Mic off, anonymous	Moderate
3	Avoidance	Rare (ineffective)	None	No VC, male identity	None
4	Education focus	Rare	Students	Parental controls	Low
5	Assess teammates first	Rare	Stream community	Mic delayed	Very low
6	Ignore	Reports toxicity	Friends	No mic	Low
7	Report + block	Consistent	IRL friends	No VC, text-only	Moderate
8	Avoid, Block	Rare	Friends	Selected Co-ops	Low

In the section where research question 3 regarding coping mechanisms by female gamers

use to navigate and resist gender-based bias, the participants were asked to disclose certain tactics

or mechanisms they used to cope with harassment. The responses included how participants used a combination of reactive and preventive strategies, such as reporting events, blocking offenders, and restricting interactions with strangers, to lessen harassment. However, many people believed that reports were ignored or that sanctions were insufficient, which led to a lack of faith in platform moderation. Since few turned to family or formal channels for assistance, support networks were mostly made up of friends and small gaming communities. Long-term tactics included limiting exposure to toxicity by creating safe play spaces, including gender-neutral profiles or private lobbies. Participants very clearly emphasized the fact that being Pakistani had an impact on their gaming experience. The most common sentence and phrase that they heard was, how gaming is an activity just for the males to pursue or indulge themselves with, and if a female were to play games, it was considered bad and inappropriate. They did not just hear this in their daily lives

but were also reminded of it by the male players while gaming. The use of social dominance theory sits right here as it phases over how the males are to dominate the gaming society and take over, while the other gender is supposed to not play. The participants also mentioned how male players hold more influence and voice in terms of esports or leadership roles in games, and the female player is not even considered an option.

Research question 4 and 5 were related to how there is exclusion and hostility in gaming and its impact on girls over time. From the responses, it was concluded that there are many team-based games and competitive games where exclusion and hostility are at a high level. The types of hostility that the female players faced were in the form of verbal abuse, discrimination, mocking of the new players, and even just straight-up trolling. Exclusion impacted female players over time, which resulted in them not participating in games and some even completely leaving them.

Table 4.8. Recommendations for Making Gaming Environment Better

Respo ndents	Platform Changes	Game Design	Community	Education	Advice to New Players
1	Device Bans	Less sexualization	Female-friendly spaces	Parents and Children	Find supportive groups
2	Device/IP bans	Make it more welcoming for females	Stricter name rules	Both Parents and Children	Block immediately
3	Faster moderation	Include An Age Limit	Stricter Rules	Digital Knowledge	"Don't lose interest"
4	Respond and Take Action	Decrease the Sexual Format	Privacy focus	Parent/child training	Reject randoms
5	Take Action	Empower the Females	Privacy Policy	Knowledge about the Net	Find a Supportive Friend Group
6	Ban Accounts	Age Limit	Normalize female gamers	Child Training	"Ignore toxicity"
7	Ban	Design it for females	Private lobbies	Digital literacy	No mic with strangers
8	Ban Accounts	Lower The Sexual Factors	Normalize Female Gamers	Digital Information	Prioritize your Peace of Mind

The participants were asked to recommend how the online gaming community could change and be more welcoming for female players. Their responses included; stricter platform moderation, including quicker reaction times, hardware bans for offenders, and modifications to game design to lessen sexualized content and encourage inclusivity, which were the main points of improvement. Community-level initiatives focused on normalizing female

participation in gaming environments and educating parents and young gamers about digital safety. To promote positive experiences, participants counseled newcomers to set boundaries, disregard harmful conduct, and look for supportive groups. These recommendations addressed both the urgent safety issues and the more profound cultural changes required to establish welcoming

environments, reflecting a desire for structural transformation within the sector.

5. Conclusion and Analysis

Several recurrent themes emerge from the transcribed interviews, emphasizing the experiences of female gamers, especially when it comes to online multiplayer games. These topics highlight the difficulties women encounter in gaming environments as well as the larger social and cultural elements that contribute to these problems.

5.1. Gender-Based Harassment and Sexism

Through research and interviews, we came across the fact that female players often face gender-related harassment, such as sexist comments, suggestive remarks, and sexual solicitations. Harassment becomes more pronounced when their gender is disclosed, either via voice chat or through profile data. Anonymity in online environments encourages culprits to act with impunity, fostering a hostile environment for females. (Kwak, Blackburn, & Han) have also mentioned similar types of abuses female gamers have faced while playing. Social dominance theory states that societies have created hierarchies based on gender, race, or class. The males dominating the gaming space are no different. Most participants reported cases in which they were harassed simply for being female, with someone making anything from light-hearted sexism to lewdness directed at them. They were also constantly reminded of gaming being a male activity and not a female one. They are not treated equally and are silenced by the dominant groups so that the male players can uphold their dominance and position in the gaming community. This issue has not died down because some individuals find these hierarchies to be true and want them to stay in place.

5.2. Modifications in Behaviour to Prevent Harassment

In literature, it is also mentioned the types of coping mechanisms female gamers have used to get away from the toxicity they face in online games (Fox & Tang, 2016). Many female gamers use techniques to hide their gender to deal with harassment. These include concealing personal information, avoiding voice conversations, and

utilizing male avatars. Some participants even modified their gaming habits, avoiding some games entirely or playing only with individuals they could trust. These modifications demonstrate how much women feel compelled to change how they behave to play video games securely.

5.3. Inadequate Reporting Procedures

The major disappointing behaviour the female gamers showed was the inefficiency of gaming platforms' reporting systems. Many believed that platforms did not do enough to stop harassers or that their reports of harassment went unanswered. Women are deterred from reporting occurrences by this lack of accountability, which makes them feel helpless and abandoned. While going through research papers, we did not find much hope regarding this matter of reporting abuse to the moderators because it is mostly thought of as useless.

5.4. Community Building and Social Support

(Vermeulen, Bauwel, & Looy, 2017) talks about the importance of social support and the threats female players face due to stereotypes regarding online gaming. Through the interviews, we found that female players would often turn to friends and familiar communities to deal with harassment. Gaming with familiar faces gives a more comforting and enjoyable gaming experience. Yet, the absence of wider support systems for female players indicates that there is a need for more integrated and welcoming gaming societies.

5.5. Suggestions for a More Inclusive Gaming Community

A constant piece of advice from the female players was regarding education to be taken seriously. They suggested making education a top priority in households so that the children who do start playing online games know what is good and what is bad. Players suggested tighter moderation, quicker response to reports, and the creation of games appealing to women. They also stressed the need for education and awareness regarding online safety. These suggestions are indicative of a need for changes in the gaming industry at the systemic level to make the gaming environment more inclusive.

5.6. Recommendation for Future Studies

Toxicity in the gaming community is a severe problem, and to deal with this type of environment game developers need to facilitate the victims and ensure them of a safer gaming experience. Female player's interaction with toxic behaviour is a constant issue. This study focused on highlighting the gender-based toxicity and strategies female gamers used to cope with the harassment that they endured while playing online multiplayer games. For future studies, researchers could bring forth the side of the developers and how are they trying to work around this situation. Future studies could also highlight how an increase in education and support from family can help provide guidance and be beneficial for the youth which in return would decrease the toxic behaviour.

The experiences of Pakistani women gamers portray a disturbing image of online gaming environments where harassment has become a widespread problem, ranging from sexual propositions to sexist comments. Many women adjust by limiting their capacity to fully participate in gaming by steering clear of voice chat, using male disguises, or simply playing with individuals they can trust. Weak reporting procedures and a lack of responsibility for offenders make the issue worse, leaving victims feeling helpless and disappointed.

The combination of internet abuse and offline societal pressures is what makes the situation in Pakistan so difficult. In addition to in-game negativity, female gamers frequently have offline repercussions such as social disapproval and privacy issues. Although grassroots initiatives like women-only gaming communities provide some respite, structural reform is necessary for more significant change. This involves the increased presence of women in esports and game creation, awareness efforts to change cultural stereotypes, and improved moderation tools that are suited to local languages.

In the end, platforms, legislators, and the gaming industry itself must work together to create safer and more welcoming gaming environments in Pakistan. Without significant action, female gamers will have to continue navigating a hostile atmosphere, which will restrict their ability to engage in what ought to be a fun and empowering pastime. Now is the moment to take action; by confronting abuse

head-on, Pakistan's gaming community may serve as a model for promoting tolerance and diversity in online communities.

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