Ending Sexual Harassment in Gaming: A review from the UK, Greece, Italy and Cyprus

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Work Package 2: State of the Art and Ecosystem Mapping

D2.3 / D4: Completion of ENHAGA eBook

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Sexual harassment is prevalent in online gaming, with female gamers frequently feeling stereotyped and singled out by perpetrators of sexual harassment due to their gender.
- Sexual harassment of female gamers occurs in multiple arenas in online gaming, including through group chats and individual chat functions, and spills on to social media.
- Female gamers have already developed nuanced strategies for managing their harassment and are more in need of support from game developers/designers and gaming community managers.
- A pervasive and negative online gaming culture is an obstacle to tackling online sexual harassment. 'Toxic cultures' perpetuate sexual harassment online, impede tackling sexual harassment in online gaming, and negatively impact gamers of all ages, gender and sexual orientation.
- There is a lack of mechanisms in place for gamers to report harassment or abuse in online games and the consequences for those perpetrating online sexual harassment are either insufficient or non-existent. There can also be a lack of knowledge around how to report online sexual harassment and that there is a severe lack of effect mechanisms in place.
- There is a lack of dialogue in the online gaming community around online sexual harassment and this adversely affects awareness raising and the ability of the gaming community and stakeholders to address and challenge this behaviour.
- Anonymity, or perceived anonymity, in online gaming and interacting online more generally is a key factor behind perpetrators behaviour.

TACKLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING

- Raising awareness, particularly among younger gamers, is crucial to tackle online sexual harassment. This must involve the creation of online environments where an open discussion can take place.
- Gaming platforms have a responsibility to make reporting online sexual harassment clear; promoting a code of conduct in gameplay and proportionally punishing those who do not adhere to this.
- Effectively addressing online sexual harassment of female gamers involves blocking perpetrators permanently and/or informing law enforcement, with an explicit explanation of why they are facing these consequences; preferably with accountability demonstrated in a social sphere (e.g., the gaming community of which they are a member is aware of this action taking place).

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ENHAGA GAME

- The ENHAGA game needs to have an interesting and engaging story, even if its mechanics are not complex. It would be most effective as an educational tool for early intervention and awareness raising with younger gamers; empowering them to respond appropriately to incidents of online sexual harassment, while discouraging the behaviour. Key messages should be communicated through allegory to best attract and retain players.
- The ENHAGA game should not just "teach" players how to behave, but should elicit empathy with female gamers for the multiple negative consequences of sexual harassment.
- The game would benefit greatly from dissemination by professional stakeholders in the gaming sector

(e.g., games companies, community managers, gaming platforms).
- Having a directory of available support services in the game would be a good idea if the content could be emotive.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Across the developed world the online games industry has grown massively in recent decades. The current Covid-19 pandemic has seen this trend accelerate with many people around the world seemingly pursuing gaming as a means of escapism in the face of harrowing social isolation associated with government restrictions on face to face socializing (Newzoo, 2020). The demographic makeup of gamers have also been changing, with recent statistics by the Entertainment Software Association (2018) suggesting over 45% of Western gamers are now female.

Against this rising popularity a more sinister observation about social interactions in online gaming has come to the fore of public discourse in recent years: the widespread online harassment of female gamers, which often includes online sexual abuse. Globally, a large percentage of female gamers have experienced some form of gender based discrimination including cyber harassment, as noted in a 2017 Washington Post-UMass Lowell poll, 36% of female gamers state that in the gaming world they are treated with less respect than men. Sexist comments, profane name calling as well as stereotypical expressions are commonplace for a great number of female gamers (Clarke, 2019).

As with other forms of harassment and hate crime, online harassment reflects wider discriminatory attitudes and beliefs in society, including those based on gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. Girls and women report higher prevalence of online harassment and bullying than boys and men, as do lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, and/or non-binary people.

According to the FRA Survey on Violence Against Women (2014), 11% of women in the European Union have experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15. Between 18 and 29 years of age, 20% of women have experienced cyber harassment, versus 13% of 29 to 39 years of age and 11% between 40 and 49 years of age.

ENHAGA is a cutting edge two-year project that aims to develop and implement innovative practices to eliminate cyber harassment for female gamers through the development of an online game and associated tools. The project also aims to promote awareness raising activities about the need to ensure harassment-free gaming environments for all. The ENHAGA consortium is comprised of partner organisations in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and the UK.

Between April and November 2020 the ENHAGA consortium conducted desk research and qualitative field work to assess the situation in each of partner countries regarding online sexual harassment of girls and young women in video gaming, as well as online harassment and cyber bullying more broadly. This report provides a summary of these research findings. As such, we have included only the key findings from each country. For the expanded research findings please read the full national reports.

After explaining our chosen methodology, we move on to discuss the specific findings from each country. Following the desk research, we analyse the national legal frameworks in relation to online harassment, asses current policies and practices aimed at combating online sexual harassment generally and specifically within gaming, and provide a summary of the gaps and needs in the national literatures. As for the field research findings, we discuss understandings of sexual harassment in online gaming, female gamers experiences, needs and strengths, and our stakeholders recommendations for preventing sexual harassment.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

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The overall objective of the ENHAGA project – the development of an innovative online game to curb sexual harassment of female gamers and promote awareness of appropriate conduct in online gaming contexts – necessities engaging with female gamers lived experiences of online harassment in gaming. Thus we opted for a qualitative design to collect in-depth first-hand information from female gamers about their unique experiences and needs in relation to harassment in online gaming, their recommendations for the ENHAGA game, and their wider recommendations for combatting online harassment more generally. We triangulate these findings with additional focus groups with expert professionals from relevant fields, including the games industry, diversity and gender equality bodies, and academics specializing in pertinent areas such as gender, technology, games development, online security and digital media.

Focus groups allow for the collection of rich in-depth data as several people share their thoughts, feelings and experiences on the topic being examined at the same time. Moreover, group dynamics tend to focus discussion on the most important topics (Robson, 2007). Additional interviews were conducted with other female gamers to further explore these issues, while facilitating the discussion of sensitive issues, such as experience of online sexual harassment, if any, in the more private context of an interview as opposed to within a group of people.

Researchers in each of the partner countries conducted focus groups and interviews with female gamers, and focus groups with the above relevant professionals. The female gamer research participants were recruited from gaming community groups on a number of different social media sites and via existing personal and professional networks. Our expert professional research contributors were recruited via online searches and through existing personal and professional networks. It should be noted that there is some

cross over between the professional and female gamer participants as some of the professional contributors were female gamers and vice versa.

Acknowledging the severity and impact of sexual harassment and the need to ensure our research participants did not experience re-victimisation, we ensure that the interview questions were designed appropriately and that interviewers were ready to refer participants to support services. Interviews and focus groups were conducted via online conference applications (e.g., skype, zoom) to allow for social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. All focus groups and interviews were recorded with the informed consent of all research participants.

CHAPTER 3: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM

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KEY FINDINGS FROM DESK RESEARCH IN THE UK

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM IN THE UK

In the UK, the player population is estimated at 42% female and 58% male (Gametrack, Nov 2016), with the mobile market more closely distributed at 48% female 52% male (Newzoo, 2017a). More detailed knowledge on the female gamer population in the UK is fairly limited, with relatively few studies about female gamers. Ethnicity, nationality, religious background, sexual orientation seem to have little effect on likelihood of playing games (Nesta, 2017b).

Across the gaming world as a whole, it is widely recognized that female gamers commonly experience both general and sexual harassment from other gamers while playing online (Ballard & Welch 2017; Cote 2015; Cote, 2017; Fox and Tang, 2017; Gray, 2011; Holz Ivory et al., 2014; McLean and Griffiths 2013; McLean and Griffiths, 2018; Vermeulen et al., 2014). General harassment behaviours consist of insulting a players' skill or ability, threatening them or interfering with their progress within the game, whereas sexual harassment includes targeting someone based on their sex, gender, or gender identity, often manifesting in sexist comments, unwanted sexual advances, and rape threats or jokes (Fox and Tang, 2017; Fox and Tang, 2014).

Despite widespread acknowledgement in public and academic discourse over the routine online harassment faced by women in gaming, there remains a relative lack of quantitative data about the breadth and depth of abuse that women suffer in the UK, and the effect this has. One recent survey of 388 female gamers 57% of respondents had experienced harassment online when other gamers found

out about their gender (Casino.org, 2019). The most common types of bullying and harassment included being asked for a sexual favour (54%), and being accused of hacking or cheating (25%), which led to 69% considering withdrawing from a gaming session.

As with sexual harassment outside of online gaming, victims of online abuse experience emotional distress, diminished self-esteem, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Fox and Tang, 2017). The experience of harassment and negative interactions often leads to female gamers 'playing alone, playing anonymously, and moving groups regularly' (McLean and Griffiths, 2018). Further, many women are dissuaded from becoming public figures in the eSports industry, and those who do so face many obstacles (Casino,org, 2019), which may explain the low representation of females in the highest echelons of the eSports world. It is also important to note the intersectional aspects of harassment in online gaming, which is often characterised by intersecting experiences of racial, gender, and sexuality based abuse (Gray, 2011; 2016).

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Although online harassment is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, there are a number of criminal laws that can be applied to cases of online harassment, in terms of harassment, defamation, stalking, threatening violence, and menacing and malicious communications (Universities UK, 2019). See table 1 for a list of relevant UK legislation[1]. For a more detailed description of the application of these laws, see the full UK national report.

Table 1.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION ACROSS THE UK

Obscene Publications Act 1959	Equality Act 2010
Public Order Act 1986	Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010
Malicious Communications Act 1988	Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
Computer Misuse Act 1990	Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act 2016
Protection from Harassment Act 1998	Justice Act Northern Ireland 2016
Protection from Abuse Act 2001 (Scotland)	Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
Communications Act 2003	Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
Sexual Offences Act 2003	
The Law of Defamation	Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (England, 2019)
Sexual Offences (Scotland)Act 2009	

The current UK legal framework has been criticised for being too complex, scattered, and for lacking clarity and consistency (Barker and Jurasz, 2017; Sallavaci, 2018). However, the creation of a new law would only make the current situation even more complex. Therefore, updates and amendments to current legislation, to include clearer definitions and greater consistency, would be a better solution to improve the current national framework on online harassment (Chamber et al., 2017; El Asam & Samara, 2016; Sallavaci, 2018; Barker & Jurasz, 2018).

Despite the potential application of existing legislation to cases of online abuse, recent research on perceptions of online harassment among the police in England and Wales reveals that this type of crime is not perceived to be as serious as other forms of crime (Holt et al., 2019). This reinforces the need for clearer legislation and better enforcement in order to combat online harassment.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

The UK government is certainly taking seriously the threat of online harms and cyber harassment. In 2008, the UK Council for Child Internet Safety was set up, bringing together government departments, academics, technology companies, and third sector organizations, to develop strategies to ensure child internet safety. Responding to the 2017 Internet Safety Strategy, the government announced plans to introduce a social media code of practice, intended to act as guidance for social media companies on how to appropriately report and tackle harmful content. The 2019 Online Harms White Paper sets out a package of online safety measures. Among other things, it suggests the establishment a new duty of care towards technology companies' users, and the creation of a new regulatory framework to oversee this.

Many initiatives have been attempted by a range of stakeholders, including schools, industry groups, and civil society groups, which have tended to focus on skills training and education, support services, and technical tools (Livingstone at al., 2017). Schools use a range of strategies to combat online harms, including developing children's critical abilities, with mixed evidence of improvement. Awareness raising campaigns such as a 'Safer Internet Day' launched by the UK Safer Internet Centre, have reached significant numbers of young people and parents, successfully increasing awareness of online harms (UK Safer Internet Centre, 2019). Industry initiatives exist in the form of agreements with the government, individual company policies, and industry-level initiatives (e.g., ICT Coalition and GSMA Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse) (Livingstone at al., 2017). Livingstone et al (2017) also note that there are some examples of good industry and law enforcement collaboration in the UK, but that this tends to be ad hoc. The impact of these various initiatives is unclear as few are independently evaluated, and those that are evaluated tend to focus on immediate outcomes such as

reach and appeal as opposed to long term reduction in harms or improvement in wellbeing (ibid).

In relation to online gaming, many academics and stakeholders have been calling for greater input from institutional stakeholders (e.g., games developers, community managers). Some gaming systems in the industry have already incorporated reporting tools, allowing users to flag other players' harmful behaviour, triggering penalties in the form of in-game fines, temporary suspensions, or permanent removal. Such penalties are removed from players who improve, while those who do not face increasingly severe punishment, even if they are popular or professional players (Cote, 2017). There have been positive results of introducing such systems. For example, League of Legends (LoL), a notoriously toxic online gaming community, saw bad language as a whole drop by 7% and positive messaging increase after LoL's parent company Riot started restricting chat abilities for players who were being reported.

There are several NGO's operating in the UK where victims of online sexual harassment and bullying can seek support emotional and practical support services. These groups also provide support for the families of young people concerned with the risk of online harms. We have included a full list of these services at the end of our report.

It is important not to treat sexual harassment and bullying in online gaming as totally distinct from "real world" sexual harassment. Instead, gender based violence in gaming must be situated within a context of structural gender inequalities. Outside of gaming, online hate speech and inappropriate or offensive communication aimed at women and girls is also commonplace, with thousands of cases being reported each year across Europe (EIGE, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

There is a general lack of empirical evidence about online harassment in the UK, which is even more pronounced in relation to online sexual harassment in the context of online

gaming. There have been some positive moves from the UK government and civil society groups to tackle online harms more generally which would also feed into combating such abuse in online gaming. However, relatively few of the initiatives have undergone independent evaluation, which must be at the heart of future initiatives. From a legal perspective existing legislation needs revising to ensure greater clarity.

Though research shows that women are capable of managing harassment in order to enjoy playing online games (Cote, 2017), the responsibility of solving the problem of online harassment in gaming must not be placed on female gamers. Ultimately, what is needed is meaningful support from institutional stakeholders and changes to the wider culture of gaming.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Childnet

https://www.childnet.com/

info@childnet.com

020 7639 6967

Get Safe Online

https://www.getsafeonline.org

Ditch the Label

https://www.ditchthelabel.org/contact

Hello@DitchtheLabel.org

Bullying Online

https://bullyonline.org/index.php

E-Victims

http://e-victims.org/

NSPCC

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/

020 7825 2505

National Bullying Helpline

https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/

help@nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uK

0845 225 5787

Bullying UK

https://www.bullying.co.uk/

Family lives

020 3727 3571

katied@familylives.org.uk

Childline

https://www.childline.org.uk

National Equality Bodies

UK Equality Advisory & Support Service

https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask

Government Equalities Office (GEO)

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)

https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)

https://www.nihrc.org/

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE UK FIELD RESEARCH

BACKGROUND AND PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

We conducted an online focus group with five female gamers, and an additional two in-depth interviews with different female gamers. They were recruited from gaming community groups on a number of different social media sites and via existing personal and professional networks. Their ages ranged from 21 to 32. They had a range of different levels of education from Business and Technology Education Council Diploma BTEC to postgraduate qualifications. All but one of our contributors were employed at the time of interview, in a variety of different roles and sectors. See table 1 for the full demographic data. When quoting female gamers, we have replaced their names with codes (e.g., C1, C2 etc).

We also conducted another focus group with five experts professionals from relevant fields, including the games industry, diversity and gender equality bodies, and academics specializing in pertinent areas such as gender, technology, games development, online security and digital media. Our expert professional research contributors were recruited via online searches and through existing personal and professional networks. They were selected to represent a range of the above professional specialisms. Our sample consisted of one former member of a gender equality NGO, now working as a diversity consultant, a MOBA Social Media Manager, and three academics, specialising in games design, security and emerging technologies, and game studies, respectively. We tried to reach out to more institutional stakeholders working in the games industry (e.g., games developers, marketers, and community managers) but were unsuccessful in our attempts.

Table 2.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF FEMALE GAMER PARTICIPANTS	
Occupation	**No.**
Civil servant	1
Researcher	1
Technology Risk Consultant	1
Marketing	2
Retail	1
Unemployed	1
Education level	
Bachelor's Degree	3
Business and Technology Education Council Diploma (BTEC)	1
Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education (CertHE/DipHE)	1
Annual household income (£)	
Not disclosed	3
0-24,000	1
25,000-50,000	2
51,000-75,000	1

Ethnicity No.	
White British	3
Other white	2
Black British	1
British Asian	1
Age	
21-24	3
25-28	4
29-32	1

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING

Our female gamer research contributors and our professional stakeholder research contributors agreed that issues of sexual harassment, and a more general lack of respect for women, are fairly pervasive throughout the majority of 'traditional' video games, commonly played in the UK. They emphasised the structural nature of online harassment in gaming, stressing the need to place it in a wider context of gender based violence and gender inequality. Contributors observed the normalisation of degrading attitudes toward women and cited this as a significant reason for the frequency of harassment in online gaming. As one contributor points out:

When we live in cultures which are characterised by structural racism and structural sexism, maybe we should be surprised when we don't find them [in online gaming],

particularly in enclosed spaces, rather than surprised when we do … I'm not surprised at all that, that there is so much of that kind of culture, because it just reflects the broader societies in which those groups develop. (Amanda Arris, Executive Director, Creative Diversity Network)

It is suggested that these wider cultural forces feed into pervasive and negative online gaming culture, which is seen as a significant obstacle to tackling online cyber sexual harassment. On multiple occasions, contributors cited 'toxic masculinity' as perpetuating sexual harassment online, and negatively impacting gamers of all ages, gender and sexual orientation. The proliferation of labels, such as 'simp' and 'white knight' act as deterrents to male gamers to report or address female cyber sexual harassment and associated behaviours.

According to our contributors, many perpetrators of online sexual harassment, as well as other 'by stander' members of the gaming community who might not engage directly in abusive behaviours, have very little understanding of its real impact. It is also suggested that a very significant number of users are not aware of what actions actually constitute online sexual harassment, with many believing that intention to harm is necessary for an action to constitute abuse.

I feel like a lot of people understand that rape is bad, but there is a whole spectrum of abuse and harassment that a lot of people argue over when it qualifies as sexual harassment, when it's you know bad enough, and whether it's really something that you know we have to take notice of. (Amanda Arris, Executive Director, Creative Diversity Network)

They see the two as sometimes as online as being the equivalent to a game as opposed to real-life so it's the way that some people can't see the disconnect, or see the difference, to be honest. (MOBA Social Media Manager)

The online world is commonly experienced as completely separate from 'real life', with fewer social or normative restrictions on what is deemed to be appropriate behaviour.

It is suggested that such a duality can explain why some people would engage in certain negative behaviours, for example telling sexist or racist 'jokes' online when they would not do so in face to face settings. Relatedly, our contributors noted that there are relatively few penalties for conducting such negative behaviours in online gaming.

Our female gamer contributors generally agreed that online sexual harassment of female gamers is less pervasive than it may have once been, due to the increased popularity of gaming and the associated increase in awareness of harassment in gaming.

EXPERIENCES, NEEDS AND STRENGTHS OF FEMALE GAMERS

As enthusiastic gamers our female gamer research contributors clearly enjoy playing online games, with all agreeing that there are many positive experiences to be had in online gaming. The major attraction is the social aspect of gaming, in which people can come together to collaborate and complete activities, and in doing so form a shared sense of community.

I'll echo everyone else here by saying that it was the community that really drew me to it. I enjoyed working with other players … I enjoy that kind of feeling of everyone working together, working out the best ways to do things, and that sense of accomplishment that we all get at the end of it. (Female gamer, C4)

Despite these positive experiences, female gamers in the UK frequently feel stereotyped and singled out by perpetrators of online sexual harassment, due to their gender. They described either having been subject to online sexual harassment or knowing other female gamers who had. Sexual harassment occurs in multiple arenas in online gaming, including through group chats and individual chat functions. This can be extreme, as remarked by one of contributors:

He went crazy, he called me a slut, a whore, urm, he said that he would like, like fuck my corpse and my skeleton, and then he basically hacked my account … I was young like, I dunno like 14, 13... You don't really know much about stuff like that when you're that young and about the gaming world, so it was yeah, it was quite like, yeah it was horrible. (Female gamer, C1)

My first ever, PS3 online experience… I had never really played online console games before, so I set up… basically a virtual chat room that you can play mini-games in… And I made a female avatar, obviously, mistake number one! Literally within moments of me first ever connecting online via my PS3, someone sent me urm, a rude picture of their nether-regions…And you feel really stupid afterwards, because the title of the message was something really innocent, like 'Hey there, just seen you pop online and thought you might want to say hi' and it had a picture attached and you had to click on it to access the picture, and I don't know why I didn't- I wasn't suspicious... And immediately I was like, well I'm not going to go on there anymore. And it's- that's just normal isn't it, like kinda thing for female, you know, players online. (Female gamer, C1)

I have people quite regularly urm, come into my twitch chat and just make really horrible, inappropriate, disgusting comments. … I watch male streamers who do the same as what I do and they get absolutely none of those comments. (Professional gamer, C3)

Experiencing cyber sexual harassment in gaming, either personally, or hearing about it happening to other female gamers, negatively affected our contributors, leading many to feel intimidated and traumatised. Being affected by sexual harassment in online games at a young age had made them cautious as adults.

Reflecting the findings from the research literature (Cote, 2017), our contributors discussed how over time they responded to sexual harassment by modifying their behaviour in a variety of ways to mitigate the effects of harassment. Behaviour changes included not revealing their sex, playing into exaggerated 'gamer girl' stereotypes, while

inversely others withdrew and became less involved. For some, it led to stopping from playing particular games entirely.

I know a lot of friends, you know, who play games online who definitely use male avatars for that reason because they don't want, you know, people to suspect that they might be a woman and therefore treat them differently… (Female gamer, C6)

If someone says something negative to me about me being female in this space, it will completely destroy me if I think about it too much. So I ignore it, lean into the whole gamer girl, e-girl persona, but that's not who I am as a person. That's very much a front, so that I feel safe enough to be in that space. (Professional gamer, C3)

I would always be terrified of ever even saying that I could do this because I don't want people to go 'oh my god, she's bragging again' or... I don't want that labelled and something to do with that was inherently because I was female, I didn't want to stand out too much to the point where all the attention focuses on me, because that's usually when something negative happens. (Female gamer, C2)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Our contributors gave a number of recommendations to help prevent sexual harassment in online gaming. These included, raising awareness and facilitating dialogue about sexual harassment among the wider gaming community, ensuring clear and effective reporting mechanisms are in place, and implementing adequate punishment for perpetrators. Such efforts would attempt to change wider cultures within gaming communities. It is clear that institutional stakeholders, such as games developers and community managers will have a key role to play if these recommendations are to be put into effect.

Games companies and individual online influencers who benefit from promoting online misogyny, must take on the responsibility for making these wider changes to gaming culture. In some gaming environments, not only have certain players found their negative behaviour going unpunished, or not being explained to them, but some have been rewarded for their negative behaviour. There are some very popular game streamers who have made a name for themselves by offensively 'trash talking' their opponents. One of our contributors gave the example of a famous streamer named 'Ninja', arguably one of the most well-known streamers in the world, who for many years consistently stated that he would not game with women, and would not stream himself gaming with women.

So I think not only do sexist behaviours not get explained as a problem, but sometimes we can see people getting explicitly rewarded in kind of power and fame and resulting money and contracts for those types of behaviours. (Female gamer, C5)

By taking stronger action to change what is seen as acceptable behaviour, games companies could modify the norms of particular communities that allow for sexual harassment to occur. Contributors agreed that this would involve greater regulation of what gaming companies permit in their online spaces. Games platforms have the resources to make it easier for players to report sexual harassment and must take responsibility to ensure that reporting online sexual harassment is clear, and to promote a code of conduct in gameplay, and proportionally punish those who do not adhere to this.

However, it was accepted by one of our female gamer contributors that this is practically a very difficult task. The number of moderators that would be needed to effectively monitor all online players and teams at any one time might be unfeasible. They went on to recommend that during games development a game could be coded to not allow the input of offensive terms, which could be an effective preventative measure for online abuse or harassment.

Effectively addressing online sexual harassment of female gamers involves banning or punishing perpetrators with an explicit explanation of why they are facing these consequences. Online anonymity restricts gaming platforms and communities from effectively holding perpetrators of cyber sexual harassment to account. Ideally, accountability would be publicly demonstrated. For example players of the gaming community in which the perpetrator is a member of should be made aware of the action taking place. Some contributors pointed to the creation and moderation of member-only, online gaming communities (e.g., guilds) as a similar way of challenging and tackling online sexual harassment by ensuring accountability.

As for specific recommendations for the development of the ENHAGA game, it was generally agreed that the game would be most effective as an educational tool for early intervention and awareness raising with younger gamers, warning them about the impact of online harassment and discouraging such negative behaviours. Contributors cited games that they liked which effectively communicated educational messages through allegory. While the mechanics of the game do not necessarily have to be particularly complex, it is absolutely essential that the game has an interesting and engaging story.

In addition to providing guidance to players not to engage in negative and abusive behaviour, the game should be designed to work in a way that elicits a lasting emotional response; most importantly empathy with female gamers for the impact that harassment and how unfair such treatment is. The ENHAGA game should also make it apparent when the rules have been broken, explain why this is not acceptable, and make it clear how to report incidents of harassment.

Our contributors made it very clear that any specific initiatives to tackle sexual harassment in online gaming must ensure that they do not place the burden upon girls and women as opposed to making it clear to boys and young men what behaviours are wrong. Indeed, female gamers are far from naïve when dealing with online

harassment and have already developed a number of strategies to defend against harassment, as detailed in the desk research chapter.

As such, the ENHAGA game must not be designed to educate girls and young women on how to react to online sexual harassment. Instead, it should be targeted at boys and young men as an educational tool to elicit empathy about the impact of online harassment. Contributors also stressed the need to make potential educative programmes around sexual harassment more specific and engaging.

CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS FROM GREECE

Eirini Melissinou, Fenia Pistofidou, and Thanasis Theofilopoulos

KEY FINDINGS FROM DESK RESEARCH IN GREECE

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM IN GREECE

The increasing prevalence of the internet and the widespread use of social media in conjunction with the escalation of violence against women and girls have led to the emergence of cyber sexual harassment against women and girls, which is now a growing global problem. According to recent research, women in Greece feel more insecure than men online (Zarafonitou 2014). In Greece, reported gender-based violence incidents have increased substantially during the COVID-19 and especially during the lockdown.

Cyber sexual harassment against women and girls has not been thoroughly researched and women and girls are not fully protected by law at national level. No gender-based study has been conducted on the extent and effects of cyber sexual harassment against women and girls, but international statistics show that women are much more likely than men to be the target of certain forms of cyber sexual harassment.

The 2017 annual report of the Help Line of the Greek Safer Internet Centre shows that the helpline received 1640 calls, 34% of which were related to gaming addiction and 20% to cyberbullying. Also, in 2018, the data are similar. The parents report their children's addiction to online games. Literature shows that there are a lot of girls and women gamers in Greece, but there is no research indicating exact numbers. Surfing in online platforms like Twitch, there are a lot of girls and women who play, streamline and are active but female gaming is an under-researched area. Random

data can be found online, in articles and gaming platforms and groups but there are no official data.

There are a very few data on cyber sexual harassment against women and girls in Greece, which is why very few cases are known in relation to the actual number of victims of such harassment and the extent of its effects. The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency's study (2014) on Violence against Women included data on cyber harassment. However, as this study was the first to collect data on specific forms of violence against women and girls in the European Union, there are no adequate tools to monitor the evolution of the phenomenon over time and trends in the number of victims. Given that in most EU Member States, forms of cyber sexual harassment against women and girls are not prosecuted, there is no evidence from the police or judiciary that this is the case. Due to the lack of this data, it is difficult to analyze gender-based violence and compare it to online violence.

In a survey coordinated and edited by Kalafati – Michailaki (2019) at Panteion University, on 486 students, 27.3% said they had been sexually harassed online. The types of sexual harassment reported by the respondents are mainly, obscene and offensive comments of sexual content (48%) and cyberstalking (30%). There was a correlation between gender and direct victimization, with women experiencing more often victimization (43.2%) compared to men (8%).

In a cross-national research (Helsper et.al., 2013), analysing the EU Kids Online data, on young people who use the internet daily and the number of risks they ran, in 2013, only 5% of children in Greece were intensive gamers and Greece had the lowest percentage of children at sexual-related risks. However, this can be explained by parental mediation as parents in Greece are involved in the children's online participation and mediate in a restrictive way. The research suggests that instead of restricting children, active mediation could help them develop their digital literacy and broaden their engagement with the internet, and at the same time minimize risks. We can say that because of lack of research data at EU level, we are not able to determine

the extent or impact of cyber sexual harassment against women and girls in Greece.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Greece, the legal framework on cyber sexual harassment is limited. Before 2010, sexual harassment was not even mentioned in law. Law 3986/2010 (National Gazette A'208), incorporated Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. It is the first law to introduce the term "sexual harassment" in the Greek legal system. In concrete, according to Article 2 par.1 subpar: 'sexual harassment' means any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

In 2018 the Greek Parliament ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, 2007). Thus, law 4531/2018 (National Gazette A'62) introduced sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence. Pursuant to Article 12 par.2 of the Convention, parties, thus the Greek Government, shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention by any natural or legal person. In Article 25 the Convention establishes the obligation of all parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims.

In June 2019, a revised version of the Penal Code entered into effect (Law 4619/2019, National Gazette A'95). According to par.3 of Article 337 of the Penal Code, an adult contacting a person under the age of fifteen through the

internet or other media or information technologies, with gestures or suggestions, relating to sexual contact, shall be punished by imprisonment of at least two years. The above provision does not preclude the punishment of sexual misconduct according to other regulations. Specifically, pursuant to par.1 of the said Article, a person which insults the personality of another person by gestures of a sexual nature, by proposals concerning sexual acts, by sexual acts performed in front of another or by the display of his genitals, shall be punished by imprisonment of up to one year or a fine. Prosecution requires a prior complaint by the victim. The act of the previous sentence is punished with imprisonment of up to two years or a fine, if the victim is younger than twelve years.

Furthermore, according to Article 348B of the Penal Code, a person who intentionally proposes to a minor under fifteen years of age, to meet him or a third person using the minor, through computer systems (social network etc.), in order to commit the offences of articles 339 par. 1 and 2 or 348A, is punishable by imprisonment of at least two years and a fine. Articles 339 par.1 and 2 punishes the performance of (or misleading to) sexual acts with a person under the age of fifteen as follows: a) if the victim has not completed twelve years, with detention, b) if the victim has reached the age of twelve but not fourteen years, with imprisonment of up to ten years and c) if he has reached the age of fourteen, with imprisonment of at least two years. Article 348A is referring to Child pornography offences and penalties. Two issues should be noted here: a) Sexual intercourse between minors under the age of fifteen is not punishable unless the age difference is greater than three years, in which case only remedial or therapeutic measures may be imposed and b) Detention in Greek law is a more severe sentence than imprisonment. The first corresponds to a felony and the latter to a misdemeanour.

In Greek jurisprudence, there is no considerable case-law on the issue, since the victims of sexual harassment (in the broad sense) do not bring these cases before the judicial system. Only sexual harassment stricto sensu, meaning the suggestion or display (or attempt to suggest or display of)

sexual acts or genitals, is punishable under penal provisions. Sexual harassment outside the workplace has not been legally formalized as a criminal offense.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

The Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police was established by the Presidential Decree 178/2014 (that was later amended by P.D. 82/2020). The general mission of the Division is the prevention, investigation and prosecution of crimes or anti-social behaviours committed through the internet or other electronic means of communication. One of the Division's Units, the Department of Minors Internet Protection and Digital Investigation, investigates and prosecutes crimes committed against minors through internet and other electronic or digital communication means.

The Cyber Crime Division, has also set up the online platform "Cyber Kid", addressed to children up to 18 years old and their parents. The platform's main purposes is to educate and raise awareness regarding possible hidden risks from online exposure and interactions. The Division has prepared an internet safety advice leaflet, which includes guidelines against – among other risks - sexual coercion and extortion of minors as well as risks while playing online games, such as harassment.

Similarly, the Division has taken part in EUROPOL's awareness campaign "Say No!" against the online sexual coercion and extortion of children. The campaign included counselling and support for youth who have faced online sexual coercion and extortion, as well as awareness raising to help young people identify and protect themselves from risks. The Division has also launched an online campaign regarding safe online gaming, where gamers are instructed to be very careful about age appropriate gaming, not to disclose sensitive data that they might not be aware of, and to be wary of other players' potential malicious intentions.

Since 2016, the Hellenic Safe Internet Centre operates under the auspices of the Institute of Technology and Research and more specifically the Institute of Informatics. It is the official representative in Greece for the INSAFE / INHOPE Pan-European Agencies outlining the European strategy for a secure and quality internet and the recognized representative of Greece for the European Commission's Expert Group on Safer Internet for Children. The Centre offers support to both young and adults internet users through providing information and material on related to safe online gaming (SaferInternet4Kids.gr), online platforms for reporting audio-visual material portraying ill-treatment of minors (www.safeline.gr), and the Safer internet helpline (+30)210 6007686, where Specialist psychological support and advice is available for children, teenagers and their parents, on issues related to sexual extortion and protection from users with fake profiles and inappropriate and abusive online content.

Adult young women who have experienced cyber sexual harassment may find support to a network of 42 Counselling Centres for women across the country, supervised and coordinated by the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). The Secretariat's network also includes the 24hr helpline 15900 for women who have experienced any form of GBV. In case of cyber sexual harassment, both Centres and the helpline cooperate with Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that several projects have been implemented - or are currently implemented - in Greece by civil society organizations with the purpose to prevent and combat gender-based violence (and its different forms) in young ages. Some recent examples include:

- Project "SPEAK: Safety, protection and women's empowerment" implemented by the Greek NGO Centre for Research on Women's Issues "Diotima", focusing on the empowerment and legal support of gender based violence survivors.

- Project "Play it for Change: Raising awareness and empowerment of girls and boys for the prevention of gender based violence through audio-visual media and music" implemented by Greek NGO KMOP.
- Project "Children First: Addressing Gender Based Violence from the bottom up" implemented by Greek NGO Symplexis and partners from UK, Italy and Lithuania, aiming at preventing and addressing "dating violence" amongst children and teenagers (12-18 years old).

CONCLUSIONS

While state bodies and services provide support to women who have experienced sexual harassment – including online; i.e. cyber-harassment – as well as guidelines for a safe use of the internet in general or the online games in particular, there are no clear, direct references to cyber sexual harassment or specific guidelines regarding the phenomenon.

The lack of information and proper promotion of the available services may be quite confusing for a victim and do not facilitate/her/his access to support and reporting services. Moreover, the Greek legal framework does not provide for consequences as regard the whole spectrum of the sexual harassing behaviour outside the working place. Although the suggestion or display (or attempt to suggest or display) of sexual acts or genitals is penalized, there are no specific regulations for the protection of victims against any form of unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. In lack of legal protection, victims do not easily report cyber sexual harassment and prefer to ignore or ban the offender.

Given that all forms of cyber sexual harassment against women and especially minors -but also men and boys - is not prosecuted, data from police and judicial authorities concerning the phenomenon is scarce. There is a need to further research, investigate, formalize and combat cyber

sexual harassment. In summary, because of the lack of research data both in Greece and data at EU level, it is not easy to determine the extent or impact of cyber sexual harassment against women and girls in Greece. There is a need to cultivate a culture of reporting that will protect and support victims and will not target them.

USEFUL CONTACTS

15900 24hr SOS Helpline for women experiencing Gender Based Violence

E-mail(s): sos15900@isotita.gr or info@womensos.gr

Website: womensos.gr/15900-24ori-tilefoniki-grammi

Counselling Centres supervised by the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality:

Alexandroupoli Counselling Centre Address: New Municipal Indoor Swimming Pool of Alexandroupolis, Postal Code: 681 00

25510 25629 | isotita@alexpolis.gr

Arta Counselling Centre Address: 24 Tzavella St, Postal Code: 471 32 Arta

26810 77400 | skgarta@gmail.com | womenaid@arta.gr

Athens Counselling Centre Address: 11 Nikis str., 105 57, Syntagma square

210 33 17 305-6 | F: 210 33 15 787 | isotita4@otenet.gr

Athens Counselling Centre (Polykentro) Address: 11-13 Kratinou St, Omonoia Postal Code: 1055

Tel: 210 52 02 800 Email(s): polykentro@isotita.gr

Chalandri Counselling Centre Address: 7 Stratarhou Alexandrou Papagou St, Postal Code: 152 34, Chalandri

Tel: 210 6899916 Email(s): womenaidhalandri@gmail.com

Chalkida Counselling Centre Address: Aghiou Panteleimonos and Politechneiou, Vasilikos Municipal Office, Postal Code, 340 02, Vasiliko, Chalkida

Tel: 2221 351826-7 Email(s): skg.xalkideon@dchalkideon.gr

Chios Counselling Centre Address: 27 Deriti St, Kammenos Pyrgos, Postal Code: 821 00, Chios, Tel: 22713 50040, 22713 51933

Email(s): womanaid@outlook.com Corfu Counselling Center Address: 7 Palaiokastritsa N.R, Postal Code: 491 00 Corfu

Tel: 26610 47396, Email(s): kerkyra@isotita.gr

Elefsina Counselling Centre, Address: 70 Riga Feraiou St, Dimokratia Square, Postal Code: 192 00, Elefsina

Tel: 213 160 1437 Email(s): violence@syzefxis.gov.gr

Florina Counselling Centre, Address: 49 Kontopoulou St, Florina, Postal Code: 531 00

Tel: 23850 24081, Email(s): symv.kentro.flo@gmail.com

Fyli Counseling Center, Address: 23 I. Kampoli St, Postal Code: 133 41, AnoLiosia

Tel: 210 2483360, Email(s): ksfylis@fyli.gr

Herakleion Counseling Center, Address: 3 Stenimahou St, Postal Code: 713 05, Herakleion Crete

Tel: 2810 341387, Email(s): irakleio@isotita.gr

Ioannina Counseling Cente, Address: 68 Marika Kotopouli St, PostalCode: 454 45 Ioannina

Tel: 26510 77449, Email(s): ioannina@isotita.gr

Korinthos Counseling Center, Address: 58 Ethnikis Anexartisias St, Postal Code: 201 31, Korinthos

Tel: 27410 74670, Email(s): skgyndk@otenet.gr

Kozani Counseling Center, Address: 22 Makriyianni St, Postal Code: 501 00, Patras

Tel: 24610 49672, Email(s): kozani@isotita.gr

Kos Counseling Center, Address: March 25th and E Kiapoka St, Zipari, Postal Code: 853 00, Kos

Tel: 22420 67420, Email(s): women@kos.gr

Lamia Counseling Center, Address: 9-11 Leonidou St, Postal Code: 351 33, Lamia

Tel: 22310 20059, Email(s): lamia@isotita.gr

Piraeus Counseling Center, Address: Ethnarhou Makariou Avenue, Neo Faliro, Postal

Code: 18547 (inside Peace and Friendship Stadium, ground floor, Hall D)

Tel: 210 4828970, 4825372

Syros Counseling Center, Address: 2 Folegandrou St, Postal Code: 814 00, Ermoupoli, Syros

Tel: 22810 76496, Email(s): ermoupoli@isotita.gr

Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police

Tel: 11188 (24hr)

Email(s): ccu@cybercrimeunit.gov.gr

Website: www.cyberalert.gr

Diotima Centre for Research on Women's Issues (CRWI)

Tel: (+30) 210 3244380

E-mail(s): diotima@otenet.gr

Website: diotima.org.gr

National Centre of Social Solidarity (EKKA) (emergency psychological and social support services to children, adolescents, adults, families and socially vulnerable groups in a state of emergency, social exclusion and crisis)

24hr Helpline: 197

Website: www.ekka.org.gr

Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI)

Tel: (+30) 210 38 98 000

E-mail(s): kethi@kethi.gr

Website: www.kethi.gr

Safe Line – member of International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE)

Website: www.safeline.gr

Report an incident: www.safeline.gr/kane-mia-kataggelia/ or report@safeline.gr

Safer internet helpline

Tel: (+30) 210 6007686 (09:00-17:00)

E-mail(s): info@help-line.gr

Website: www.help-line.gr

KEY FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH IN GREECE

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Between July and September 2020, Symplexis and KEAN conducted two focus groups with relevant professionals, two focus groups with female gamers and an additional four interviews with female gamers. Symplexis carried out the focus groups with relevant professionals, KEAN carried out the focus groups with female gamers and both organisations carried out two interviews with female gamers.

Six people took part in the first focus group with professionals and five people took part in the second focus group. Eight of them were (cisgender) women, one was a (transgender) man, one was a (cisgender) man and one self-identified as a queer person. Eight of them have studied social-political sciences, one pedagogical science, one participant studied law and one has studied business administration. One participant holds a Master's Degree on gender issues, one participant has a PhD diploma on gender issues, one participant holds a Master Degree in Communication and one participant holds a Master Degree in Justice and Security issues, one participant holds a Master Degree on sustainable development and another participant holds a Master Degree and a PhD Diploma on Neuroscience.

Five of the participants work in humanitarian non-governmental organizations (Center for Social Action and Innovation, Color Youth LGBTQ Community of Athens, Orlando LGBT, Center for Social Action and Innovation, Kids in Action and Rainbow School) – one of them also works in online media (namely Huffington Post, Helpis.gr, Euronews.com). One participants works at the same time in two different Universities (namely Panteion University and Aegean University), one participant works in a research

center (namely Research Center for Gender Equality), one participant works in a public high school and one participant works at the same time as a freelance consultant in communication and policy strategy and as consultant and adult trainer on intercultural, youth and radicalization issues (for the Hellenic Police, the Council of Europe and the Radicalization Awareness Network respectively). Finally, one participant works for a law firm while finally as well as in an electronic journal of criminology (namely CrimeTimes.gr).

Regarding their professional roles four participants work as researchers in EU-funded gender related projects and as professor on gender issues (one of these three is also a freelance psychologist), another also works for such EU funded projects as a project manager, researcher and adult trainer, and another works as a project coordinator and social media manager of EU funded projects on gender, human rights and social inclusion and as a freelance columnist and blogger on similar topics. One participant works as a communication consultant and as a consultant/researcher expert on youth issues, one participant works as an associate sociology teacher while also preparing a PhD thesis on internet and social media issues. One participant works as an organizer and facilitator of education activities for young people and, finally, one participant works as a lawyer – with professional as well as research experience in human rights and online sexual harassment – and as fellow columnist on gender issues.

Both of Symplexis' female gamers interviewees are of Greek national origin. The first interviewee is 35 years old while the second one is 29 years old. Regarding their educational background status, the first interviewee has studied Computer Science while the other one has studied Sociology and holds a Master's Degree in counselling psychology and psychotherapy. Both interviewees are employed: the first one works in a private transport/shipping company as a customer support provider, while the second one is a freelance mental health counsellor (private office). Finally, regarding their annual income, the first one earns about 1000 euro per month (gross earnings) while the other one

has just started working so was not able to provide more information.

KEAN conducted two focus groups with female gamers, which consisted of five and three female gamers respectively. In the first focus group, the first participant is 26 years old, works as a private employee in a notary. Her experience with online games started at the very young age of 12. The second participant is 24 years old, works in an accounting office and has a monthly income of 500 euros. Her experience with online video games started at a very young age, but ended in the high school period. She came in contact with online games through her boyfriend and then in order to spend her time in a more entertaining way. The third participant is 30 years old, graduated from high school and is currently studying Early Childhood Education. She started playing online games, specifically LOL, about a year ago. The fourth participant is 27 years old, works at a cafeteria and has a monthly income of 550 euros. She started playing digital online games about 5 years ago. The fifth participant is 21 years old and is currently studying. Her first contact with online games was at the age of 12 through her father. The sixth is 32 years old, she is a high school graduate and is currently doing her internship and has been in the field of online digital games for the last 10 years.

As for the second focus group, the first participant is 28 years old, lives in Piraeus and is a graduate of the University of Piraeus. She has been playing since she was 15 years old and so far, she is intensely involved with online digital games, mainly in small groups. The second participant is a 31-year-old female gamer, who is a high school graduate, born and raised in Greece, but is currently living and working in Germany. She is a radio producer. She started playing online games a year ago, mainly in an internet café. The third participant is a 32-year-old high school graduate. She has been in the field of online games for the last 10 years and as a woman she states that she has been treated differently by male players during the game and has been confronted several times with incidents of sexual harassment. In particular, many male players

comment that because of the female gender she should be engaged in domestic activities and that she does not have the knowledge and skills to reciprocate to the same degree as them.

KEAN interviewed two female gamers. One of the participants, a 26 year old girl born and raised in Athens, works at coffee-restaurants as a bartender, while singing in small music stages. She finished High School and her income is about 500 euro per month, although it changes depending on the seasonal job. She has been playing online video games for seven years. The other participant is a 32 years old woman, born and raised in Greece, by a Greek father and a Turkish mother. She has completed her studies in high school, has attended training seminars in various fields and until recently she had been working in her family business with gym floors. She is currently unemployed but doing various jobs from where she gains approximately 3500 –4000 Euros per year. She has been playing for 15 years, since the age of 17, she developed an interest in online games, with her first experience being Line-Age, then Diablo and she now plays mainly LOL and games on games consoles.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING

One professional participant pointed out that in Greece the definition and understanding of the concept of sexual harassment is problematic and the relevant institutional framework is not "complete". Another participant also agreed that the definition of sexual harassment was problematic - stating that even the broad definition provided by the Istanbul Convention, needs to be improved. The result of this - according to the first participant - is that "all of us - not just children - do not know what sexual harassment is". Many agreed with the opinion that young people do not know what sexual harassment is. In fact, many times - according to one participant - sexual harassment is not perceived as such but as normal

behaviour because such behaviours are how the world is", because such behaviours are perceived as "jokes". The same participant added that young people ignore the potential dangers of such harassment and find it even more difficult to perceive it as harassment in online environments because of the "physical distance" between the perpetrator and the victim. One participant - based on his/her own past experience as a gamer - believes that the concept of cyber sexual harassment is not "totally clear" inside the minds of young people - especially of teenagers - so they do not "understand (…) what they are doing [when they sexually harass]". Another participant similarly believes that young gamers who sexually harass may not realize what they are doing or they may just "downplay" the consequences of this behaviour.

Many agreed that there is a "normalization" of sexual harassment in the country and that can "occur on a daily basis" and be "downplayed" explaining that this is the reason why the crossline between flirting and sexual harassment is often blurred. A third also agreed that this crossline is not clear, arguing that this happens because there is no "socially acceptable" definition of sexual harassment, and that the "social environment" also plays a role because it "worsens" the phenomenon. It is argued that many young people do not understand where is the "cross line" between "flirting" and "harassment". One participant concluded that "just as we adults do not know where is the crossline (…) where flirting stops and sexual harassment begins, the same goes for children". Another participant added that - from her/his experience as a public-school teacher - the stance of young people towards sexual harassment is a mixture of ignorance, indifference and normalization.

On the other hand, some of the participants were optimistic about the awareness of young people. One of them argued that young people are much more aware of the phenomenon compared to 5-10 years ago "because there is much greater visibility and public debate on the issues of sexual harassment, sexism" but added that "we have not reached the point where we can say that all incidents are

recognized as such". Another agreed that now "sexist behaviours are much easier to recognize", adding that "the younger generation recognizes and file a complaint much more easily [when an incident occurs]" and "there is an awareness of these issues" and one reason for this is the fact that "during the last 10-15 years gender-based violence is part of the social dialogue in Greece".

When asked to identify the potential dangers for young women when they are online in general and when they play online games in particular, participants referred to sexual harassment on dating sites, extortion and threats by using the victims personal information, sexual and verbal violence, "non-consensual pornography", exposure to gender stereotypes and sexist assaults of all forms and creation of fake social media accounts that are supposedly theirs. It is suggested that male internet users are not exposed to such risks when online, because of the general social "patriarchic" and "sexist environment" in which even women have accepted "harassing" behaviours as "normal" ones. One participant argued that "the internet environment is not independent of the social environment: and this [internet environment] reproduces [gender] stereotypes" and agreed that even women tend to "internalize" such stereotypes. Another participant added that, in the digital world, there is a "hyper-sexualization and objectification of women", especially at younger ages, with multiple negative consequences: these may lead young women themselves into behaviours for which they may later regret.

Almost all participants argued that the Greek State has not taken the sexual harassment phenomenon seriously - both in internet in general and in online games in particular. Another one said that she/he was aware only of campaigns launched by non-governmental organizations. One participant said that while a national legal framework regarding sexual harassment exists, it will be challenging to be enforced when an incident occurs in an online game platform due to "acceptance" of "specific terms of use" by the game users and because the game company that produced the game as well as the people who handle the gaming platform are located in other countries. Another

participant referred to a case in which the Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police supported victims of cyber sexual harassment in order to gather evidence and file an official complaint. The same participant also referred that Hellenic Police is planning to launch a campaign against cyber gender-based violence. Another participant agreed that the Greek State does not properly combat the phenomenon, but added that there are some bodies - such as the Greek Ombudsman and the Greek Ombudsman for Children's Rights - where such incidents can be reported. On the other hand, he/she noted that these bodies and their responsibilities are not known to the public. Finally, one participant said that he/she is not aware of any relevant and recent changes in the national legal framework regarding sexual harassment in online environments, pointing out that implementation of the law in such environments may be challenging especially when the phenomenon takes the form of comments e.g. in posts on social networks or blogs.

EXPERIENCES, NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

Many of the female gamers had direct experience of sexual harassment during gaming. One of the female gamers was one of few girls who started playing more than a decade ago. She believes that this was the reason why in the beginning she was treated differently from other players, both because of her gender and because of her age, and for this reason, she had stopped playing online for some time. After some years she started playing LOL and participating in online groups first with male friends of hers, to feel secure. Another participant mentions that at first she received negative and sexist comments because she was not experienced enough in the game, and was sexually harassed when other (male) players realized that she is a girl.

Another participant says that in high school, where she started joining teams of gamers, she often received negative comments from other players because her

nickname showed that she was a girl and that the others were helping her cope with the games. This is a common view, that being a girl means other players give you presents. Another older participant, states that she has been treated differently by male players during the game and has been confronted several times with incidents of sexual harassment. In particular, many male players comment that because of the female gender she should be engaged in housekeeping, thus, reproducing a dominant gender stereotype according to which housekeeping is exclusively a woman's "duty" and/or main activity and that she does not have the knowledge and skills to keep up with them and their performance.

Another participant also mentions incidents where the user who sends erotic messages and inappropriate photos can even be a woman as one cannot know or control who is really behind the user's profile, which as we are told happens and in online games, the user looks like a woman while he is a man. One participant mentioned that while she used to play in order to relax, now she stopped doing it because the behaviour of her teammates stresses her even more.

Some male gamers who realize that there is a woman in front of them, try to treat her more favourably than they would with a male player, offering her gifts that have to do with the game (e.g., game points to unlock additional levels). In that case, some male players suggested to the participant, to give her points in order for her to do something for them. The exchange was, usually, to send them a photo of her, or her phone number to contact her, or even to describe what she was wearing while she was playing. Sometimes the "fee" can be monetary, for example to send a paysafe card to a woman in order to ask for a sexual exchange.

To overcome these problems, players often chose not to create an avatar (digital representation of the player in the game), but simply write their nickname. A long as teammates don't know female gamers gender they praise their skills and decisions in the game. But as soon as they

realize that a woman is facing them, they change their attitude and accuse her of not playing well, that the team is losing because of her and that the game is not for women.

However, not all had experienced sexual harassment. One participant who has been playing the online game LOL for the last five years mentions that her experience is positive and has not encountered any strange incidents. A few agreed that over time the participation of women in online games becomes more acceptable in society as the percentages of women who participate in them has gone up. Another player who received abusive comments when gaming tells us that she does not pay attention to them and does not allow herself to be influenced by such behaviours, unlike other girls who are often offended when they are treated in a sexist and frightening way. She believes that these comments are not aimed at her personally but are made due to the intensity of the game regardless of the gender of the player.

They believe that the main reason for the phenomenon of sexual harassment in cyberspace is the "easy way" that the internet gives to users to be able to find and reach out to women through social platforms, online games and websites that otherwise could not, as well as the "security" they feel behind the screen as they know that it is more difficult to locate them and they do not need to come in direct contact with the other person and suffer the consequences of such an act.

When asked if they consider the government to be serious about sexual harassment in cyberspace, the participants unanimously answered negatively, as they say there is a complete lack of protection for both those who play online games and those who experience any form of harassment. They feel that there is absolutely no protection for people entering cyberspace and especially for women who play digital online games. Even the third participant, who lives in Germany, says there is no law that protects those who are active on social media. It was generally agreed that the government does not have a serious approach to issues related to sexual harassment in cyberspace and that in

general does not have the knowledge to deal with many issues related to the internet. As she states, the only protection she has, is her family's.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

When participants asked about measures to address sexual harassment in online games, one professional suggested that all gamers should be obliged by the game host to watch educational and awareness videos - on "what is sexual harassment" and "what kind of behaviours should be avoided during the game" – and then be granted to launch the game and play. Another participant suggested that all gamers' profiles should be checked by the game provider during the game in order to "somehow make sure that the profile is not fake, that a user has not entered [the game] not to play the game but to go in another direction [meaning to harass]". The same participant added that the "consent" of all participants in the chatroom of a gaming platform should be "somehow secured".

Another also suggested "a harassment reporting process" to be available within the game as well as a "profile evaluation system" according to the standards of social media for users' accounts, giving gamers the option to report others which could lead to sanctions imposed by the host/provider like blocking the user from playing. The participant finally added that "community guidelines" should be provided to "indicate what kind of behaviour is not allowed". Another participant similarly suggested the implementation of a "strict policy framework" which users would have to consent to, according to which sexual harassment would be prohibited" and "offensive and unwanted content or sexist" behaviour would be reported. Others suggested a "gender neutrality" function to prevent gamers from being able to identify whether another gamer is a male or a female. It is acknowledged that the implementation of such a system would be difficult, and argued that already available online

hate speech detection systems could be modified to include sexist content as well.

Another participant argued that user policies or educational videos would not be sufficient to prevent perpetrators carrying out sexist behaviour, which they may consider "normal". He/she added however that including both of them before launching the game and without allowing the gamer/user to skip them, would be a good idea.

Other suggestions were focused on measures that should be adopted by the State – mainly educational and awareness activities, including the distribution of educational/awareness material at schools, teaching children and young gamers about the potential risks, and promoting safer use of the internet aiming at educating and raising public awareness, public debates on the topic of cyber sexual harassment with maximum involvement of young people, and the organisation of training sessions for professionals who provide support services to victims of such incidents and the use of information and awareness content, in order to educate gamers about sexual harassment and the forms it may take. One participant added that the Police and NGOs should be involved in awareness campaigns teaching young people "what is sexual harassment in the first place?" and how to combat and prevent it.

The professional participants were all very positive about the idea of creating an online educational game and other online tools to tackle harassment, with the development of an online game being far more attractive for the target group(s) "than reading educational material". Regarding the features of the online educational game and the rest of the online educational tools, all participants agreed on the need for the game to be interactive and some suggested that it should include case studies, allow the player to make decisions and choices and somehow reward him/her.

Multiple ideas about the games content and structure were proposed, including a "mosaic" or puzzle where the user would fill in the gaps and after he/she ends an educational "message" will appear, role play games where the user may

control and shape its main character, with "harassment stories" to represent the "different manifestations of the phenomenon" to which the user would be asked to comment and give answers about the behaviour of the stories' characters. One participant suggested that the game should act "to reverse stereotypes" and "be a little more provocative and talk a little louder about these issues". It is suggested that the game should include "windows" that provide "definitions" or "data" about the phenomenon.

One participant suggested that, during the game, the player/user should be learning how to recognize sexual harassment, what are the forms this phenomenon may take, where it can occur and where a victim can seek help e.g. "psychological support" if something happens. This new knowledge could be transferred through videos with tips while playing. Another suggested that where the player is a young female, their character should not be "the one who would experience sexual harassment" as in this case might lead to re-victimization. Others added that the game should not focus only on female gamers and internet users but to male as well, arguing that prevention of the phenomenon may be more important than empowering women to identify harassing behaviours.

All agreed that the game should include real case studies to allow the players/users to realize that the phenomenon is a reality. A few participants suggested that players/users of the game could interact with each other like the mainstream online games.

While most of the female gamers were in favour of the idea of an online game and thought that it could help change existing mentality in school age gamers, it is believed that a game on its own would not help to change the prevailing situation just as much as it could cause even more intense segregation, as a game of this kind would be preferred mainly by women. One suggested that tools should be integrated into existing games and social networking platforms in order to ensure the safety of users. Another proposed the creation of algorithms in games that detect

inappropriate behaviour and automatically delete the players' accounts, as well as age control methods that do not allow children under a certain age to participate in online platforms to eliminate the risk of being exposed to cases of paedophilia.

Moreover, many participants expressed their concerns because of problems of transparency behind such an initiative and how substantial the security would be. They pointed out that it is very important that a user identification should be included, either by requiring contact info (e.g. a phone number) or other ID info.

CHAPTER 5: KEY FINDINGS FROM ITALY

Chiara De Conca, Gabriella Fabrizi, Simonetta Fucile, and Antonella Grossi

KEY FINDINGS FROM DESK RESEARCH IN ITALY

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM IN THE ITALY

According to the report "Video games in Italy in 2019", published by IIDEA (Italian Interactive Digital Entertainment Association), 47% of video gamers are women. An audience of almost 8 million gamers out of a total of 17 million. A further survey highlights the types of gamers for intensity and frequency of play.

Table 3.

Light Gamer	37% of players	Play less than 1 time a week	Play less than 30 minutes per session	48% female 52% male	Prevailing age 25-44 years
Medium Gamer	33% of players	Play 1-2 times a week	Play less than 1 hour per session	38% female 62% male	Prevailing age 18-34 years
Heavy Gamer	30% of players	Play every day	Play about 1 hour per session	29% female 71% male	Prevailing age 6-24 years

(As reported in the analysis) Despite the strong female presence, the world of gaming remains tenaciously anchored to a macho imaginary (Guerra, 2020), both in terms of representation and treatment of female gamers, especially those who play online or stream on Twitch, a popular video game broadcasting platform.

This is also confirmed in an article in an online magazine (Calabrese, 2019), which notes that one constant of the games is to provide even warrior women who are often dressed in skimpy and sensual clothes, regardless of what their role in the game is. The sexualisation of the female figure in video games has contributed to make her perceived as subordinate to the male figure. The identification with these characters leads to the exaltation of stereotyped characteristics that become evident when players and female players confront each other through online platforms, where it is possible to play in teams.

With reference to gambling, as well as online games, for a long time, female poker players and female video gamers have been dismissed because they were considered unsuitable for the game. In recent years, women have also had more space, as reported in the article (Indiscreto.it, 2019). According to some recent studies (Corriere.it,2019) ,the female gender represents a good portion of the number of gamers and we find pink quotas even in the world of casino related work. Recently, companies providing live games, such as live streaming roulette, have bet on the help of female dealers who are oft

en very popular. However, gender discrimination is still a very common problem in all types of online games, including video games. This is, in large part, due to the rampant and widespread harassment that women face when confronted with a diverse multitude of gamers.

The data reported by ISTAT (National Statistical Institute) in the dossier of 27 March 2019 on the occasion of the hearing in the Parliamentary Committee for childhood and adolescence (Istat,2019), describe a worrying picture with regard to the spread of cyberbullying even among minors regardless of the social context of origin.

Regarding adolescents, Istat noted "in 2018, 85.8% of boys between 11 and 17 years of age use the mobile phone daily. 72% of boys in that same age group surf the Internet every day. The greater propensity of girls/teenagers to use mobile phones and to connect to the Internet probably exposes them more to the risks of the network and new communication tools. Among the 11-17 year olds, in fact, there is a higher percentage of victims: 7.1% of girls who connect to the Internet or have a mobile phone have been subjected to constant harassment via the Internet or mobile phone, against 4.6% of boys.

Hyper digitization has produced an "always connected" generation - the web and social are therefore strongly intrinsic in everyday life, sometimes coming to replace real relationships. A new relational world, therefore, in which the screen of a PC or a phone represents the preferred interface and without filters for those who develop behaviours of prevarication or use the web world to vent anger or frustration resulting from their discomforts.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The main objective of the Italian legislator is to prevent the harmful effects of gambling on the psychological, physical and economic health of the community. Another important aspect is that of trying to prevent fraud, which is very easy to carry out, especially via the Internet. Finally, the third point protected by law, is the protection of minors who must be prohibited from accessing both real and virtual casinos.

Although there is no specific legislation concerning sexual harassment in online games it can be attributed to cyberbullying. This is not considered to be a crime in itself, but can include various offences, ranging from insult, defamation, threat, harassment, etc.

Nevertheless, the Law 71/2017 "Provisions for the protection of minors for the prevention and fight against the phenomenon of cyberbullying" (National Gazette 2017/06) was approved. This law was conceived with a view to educational co-responsibility between school and family

producing the relevant guidelines. Paragraph 1 of Article 1 states: The aim of this law is to combat the phenomenon of cyberbullying in all its manifestations, with preventive actions and with a strategy of attention, protection and education for the children involved, both in the position of victims and perpetrators, ensuring the implementation of interventions without distinction of age in educational institutions.

In the Italian legal system, an individual can be imputed only if he/she is older than 14 years (age in which legally speaking he becomes the owner of the ability to understand and to want). The law provides for an administrative measure for the authors of acts of cyberbullying, the warning procedure by the Quaestor. More specifically, the warning procedure provided for in the matter of stalking (Art. 612-bis of the Criminal Code) has been extended to cyberbullying, in the case of insulting behaviour, defamation, threat and unlawful processing of personal data committed via the Internet by minors over fourteen against other minors.

On the emotional wave of a specific news item (the death of a woman victim of cyberbullying, who committed suicide after the release without her consent of a video that portrayed her in intimate moments with her boyfriend), the first law was passed in Italy.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

In Italy, Lazio was the first region to legislate on prevention and support measures for the victims of revenge porn and stalking, unanimously approving the regional proposal concerning it. The Law, in addition to allocating an important economic contribution of 550 thousand euros for these interventions during the 2020-2022 period, establishes concrete help with psychological support and reintegration into the world of work and contemplates prevention and awareness initiatives to be carried out, especially in schools.

Schools are precisely the places where much of the work has been done in recent years to inform, prevent these phenomena and make the younger generations aware of how to defend themselves or avoid risky contexts. One of the projects, called #SOSCYBER, has been carried out in some lower secondary schools in the province of Padua from 2015 to 2017. Through targeted meetings and the administration of questionnaires, the collected data were used to monitor the phenomenon, train the students on the risks and dynamics regarding online solicitation, harassment and abuse on and from the web and, consequently, educate to mutual respect, thus providing the useful tools to consciously face any problems related to cyberbullying.

In 2015, the High School Machiavelli in Rome planned training sessions for students, teachers and parents thanks to the "#OFF4ADAY" project, promoted by the MOIGE (Italian Parents Movement) in collaboration with SAMSUNG and with the patronage of the State Police. This project had the objective of raising awareness among children and adults on the prevention of cyberbullying, following the 2015 "Guidelines for combating bullying and cyberbullying" of the Ministry of Education. On this occasion, a toll-free number and a dedicated email were provided, intended for anyone who wanted to write to ask for information, support, help, advice and report episodes. The project has entered more than 2,000 secondary schools.

In 2019 the Lazio Region, via the "Community Welfare and Social Innovation" area, together with Federconsumatori Lazio and some researchers from the Eures - Institute of Economic and Social Research, supported the project "100 stories of bullying: narration, awareness, intervention". The project involved seven secondary schools located in the area of competence of the ASL Roma 1, the teaching staff and other professionals combating the phenomenon of bullying (managers of dedicated branches, experts, etc.). First of all, a sample survey was conducted, which made it possible to collect quantitative results to measure the characteristics, the incidence and pervasiveness of the phenomenon among young people (through the three subgroups of acted, suffered and assisted bullying). Then

the direct experiences of young people (as victims, perpetrators or direct and indirect witnesses of bullying) were collected, "with the intention of reconstructing, a narration of the events, causes and emotional profiles of different subjects involved".

The Presidency of the Council of Ministers, still during 2019, established the "Stop Cyberbullying" institutional communication campaign, created by the Department for Family Policies. The goal of the campaign was to "raise awareness among citizens, and especially families with adolescent children, on the subject of cyberbullying, offering the parents specific tools to deal with critical situations in which their children are victims of various forms of bullying or cyberbullying". All of this, thanks to an interactive digital brochure for parents and a video broadcasted on RAI networks. Over the years, the public television RAI has also promoted the fight against cyberbullying through its networks and broadcasts, specifically dedicated to the topic (such as "#Maipiùbullismo" TV programme or on the occasion of the 2019 "National Day against bullying and cyberbullying", offering part of the programming to the fight against the phenomenon or by launching commercials such as, in 2016, the one created in collaboration with the State Police

CONCLUSIONS

If from a psychosocial point of view the effects of female sexualisation and objectification produced by the media are well known, on the other hand the relationship between this phenomenon and cyberbullying, especially within social networks and chats, is little known. Data on sexual harassment in online gaming are scarce. The reference legislation also seems fragmentary and unspecific.

The Law no. 69/209 (the Red Code) was a great step forward for the Italian regulatory system. It has increased the Italian criminal legislation on the side of gender-based and domestic violence in a substantial, instrumental and complementary manner to the point of creating a real

subsystem in criminal matters aimed at the more effective and timely protection and safeguarding of the victims of certain facts, now standardized criminals. However, the text is still insufficiently effective on some aspects and has some weak points or, at least, questionable ones.

By ascribing the crime to the subsequent divulger, the law diminishes the lack of consent of the persons represented which, instead, should remain the main element to be taken into account, even if it is a concept with very vague boundaries and it is difficult to prove. The lack of an unambiguous definition of the phenomenon obviously has effects on the verification of its consistency. In a few areas such as this, in fact, the data disseminated seem far from being able to provide a sufficiently clear picture.

While hate speech is a problem in all online environments, the difference is that in gaming, violent communication seems to be a tolerated practice. Toxic video-gamer communities justify themselves by claiming that 'that's how the internet works'. It is as if spewing hatred on others is so ingrained in the fabric of the web that it becomes the required label for those who participate.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Casa Internazionale delle Donne

https://www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org/ Tel: +39 06 6840 1720

Lucha Y Siesta – House of Women

https://luchaysiesta.wordpress.com/ (https://luchaysiesta.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/guidasic urezza_inglese-1.pdf). segreterialys@gmail.com

Differenza Donna Association/Child Contact Services / Baby garden

Tel. +39 06 678 0537

d.donna@differenzadonna.it
https://www.differenzadonna.org/

Family service "Al Quadraro"
http://www.consultorioquadraro.it/

Tel: +39 06 7690 6620

Cooperative IndieWatch: http://www.indiewatch.org – info@indiewatch.org

Social Cooperative Be Free
https://www.befreecooperativa.org/

Tel e Fax +39 06 64760799

befree.segreteria@gmail.com

Social Cooperative "Idea Prisma 82"

(WebForYourLife, Totem, OnTheRoad, Fuoriclasse, Ragazzi al Centro). http://www.ideaprisma.it - progettazione@ideaprisma.it - info@ideaprisma.it

Association "Esplosivamente"

http://www.esplosivamente.com/ info@esplosivamente.it

Municipality Roma VIII

tiziana.chiocchio@comune.roma.it - luisa.tarantino@comune.roma.it

Social Cooperative "Parsec"

info@cooperativaparsec.it - https://www.cooperativaparsec.it/web/index.php

Association "Progetto Graf".

francesco.bianchi@progettograf.it - https://www.progettografroma.com/

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ITALIAN FIELD RESEARCH

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Between July and September 2020, SANSAT and Alternata conducted two focus groups with relevant professionals, two focus groups with female gamers and an additional six interviews with female gamers. The work was shared between the two Italian partners.

All participants of the first focus group are female gamers of Italian national origin; they live in Rome. The first participant, 26 who graduate in History of Art and serves as a civil service volunteer. The second participant is 20 years old, graduated from Scientific High School with a diploma and is studying Nursing Sciences. The third participant is 20 years old, has a Social Science Diploma and is studying DAMS / Disciplines of Figurative Arts, Music, Entertainment and Fashion. The fourth participant is 26 years old, has the Diploma in Accounting and works as a secretary. The fifth participant is 24 years old, has a Diploma and is currently a trainee social worker. All of them are sporadic online players and use social media such as Facebook and Instagram a lot.

The second focus group with female gamers includes participants with different profiles and backgrounds. A participant, 37 years old, currently employed as a pet sitter, low-income Italian, belonging to a community of live role-playing players and Larp with previous experience of role-playing also online. One participant, 22 years old, student, Italian with average income. 3 participants of Nigerian nationality , average age 20, with low income, already integrated in the Italian social fabric. One of them attends a Web Design course. All participants have or previously had experience with online gaming and online interactions, not only on social media but also through some fashion or fashion design apps subsequently uninstalled due to

attempts of harassing interactions via chat (in this specific case we are talking about one of the Nigerian girls).

As for the additional in-depth interviews in Italy, the first girl interviewed is 29 years old, studied biotechnology but works as a waitress. She has a low-income worker. The second girl interviewed is 35 years old, and is currently unemployed. The third girl interviewed is 22 years old is a cook and cosplayer and has a medium high income, The fourth girl interviewed is 25 years old and is a child care educator. Another participant is a 26 year old girl who lives in Rome. She has a Diploma in Accounting, served as a civil service volunteer and now works as a secretary. All respondents are Italian and reside in Italy and have had or still have ongoing online gaming experience, both role (with and without microphone) and console (classic video game).

The professional status of the interviewed professionals in the first focus group intersect with associations and cooperatives of the city of Rome Capital and Province. Specifically, they were: Social Assistants working in the context of local public branches with particular attention to minors and women in a state of psycho-socio-economic distress, assistance and reception services for women who are victims of trafficking, physical and psychological torture and victims of gender-based violence, services to combat adolescent marginalization in terms of combating the use and abuse of drugs and a Professional Educator with experience of teaching Italian L2 to foreigners residing in the territory. The educational fields of origin concern the faculties of Political Sciences, Social Services and Educational Sciences.

Four people took part in the second focus Group: two men and two women. All of them work for non-profit organizations. The first participant is an educator at a SISMIF (service for the integration and support of minors within their families). He has expertise in multimedia. The second participant is an educator working at a service of social emergency, addressed to people with social disadvantage. He has extensive experience in working with young people, both boys and girls. The third participant is a

psychologist but she is employed as an educator working at a SISMIF. She also has a lot of experience as a researcher, as a cultural mediator and as a psychotherapist and counsellor supporting women in trouble. The fourth participant is a psychologist working for 9 years in services for minors and for families (e.g. protected listening services). Due to their roles in the different services, all participants are professionals able to offer an analysis of the phenomenon of gambling and sexual harassment.

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING

A participant broke the ice and started the discussion by reporting that on a personal level she knows many more men than women who play online. However, she has several female friends who are harassed not only through games but also through Messenger and Tinder. This shows that it is very easy to suffer such harassment: in fact, if adult women with appropriate cultural tools suffer this kind of violence, it is easy to imagine what can happen to very young girls.

Another participant mentioned that a few years ago he was the coordinator of a youth centre, which also ran a desk against gambling. Thanks to this desk, young people told the educators about their experiences. The participant also works as a photographer, he also reported negative experiences with his models both in the online game and on social networks. Such harassment comes from fake accounts and is extremely vulgar. What is worrying is that, on the one hand, these young girls seem to get used to it (you have to put up with it!), and on the other hand, if any of these girls go to the police station to make a complaint, they are discouraged and are mostly advised to 'block' the harasser's account.

Last summer, one of the participants worked with an 11-year-old boy who was always connected to the Internet and had been catfished through a gaming platform, through which he was asked for money. The participant emphasised the fact that very often those who fall into these traps are

fragile, they carry with them sufferings. While noting that in the last period there is more attention being paid to the problem (e.g. with the activation of telephone support services), she pointed out that there is a need for widespread territorial prevention work. Another participant reported that he encounters in his work many cases of addiction to online games and social media. Many children aged 10 and over use the Internet without family control.

It was stressed that the term 'digital native' does not mean 'digitally competent'. Participants agreed on the need for prevention and on the fact that awareness-raising campaigns are very often ill-conceived. In addition, the contradiction that emerges from the fact that unfortunately some politicians in government often use social insults should be noted.

The concept of online sexual harassment or abuse is in fact perfectly superimposed on the strictly physical abuse. The great difficulty that concerns the use of the web, social, gaming is precisely to think that what happens on the Internet does not have an impact on the psychological and real life of the person who undergoes sexual harassment online. For this reason, it has been pointed out that, even if the field of professional origin is the world of services aimed at women victims of physical torture, it is not possible to think that there is a real division between these two concepts of violence. In support of this, it was stressed that the mechanism of self-identification of the victim as such is the same; whether we're talking about online sexual harassment or physical harassment. This mechanism can be all-encompassing and fully absorb the person being abused, especially young women.

In the design reality in contact with the world of youth, the perceptions and feelings of users who are, or have been in charge are different from each other. There is and persists a part that minimizes and underestimates the phenomenon, as still unconscious of the real extent of the consequences on the person that incur in case of abuse or online violence. Adolescence turns out to be a phase of life, especially in cases of emotional and social fragility, particularly

influenced by the use of chat also for the purpose of physical encounters. Specifically, the case of a 14-year-old woman, taken over by one of the participants during the work at the local desk, who had undertaken a series of activities in specific erotic chats in order to meet more adult men, is reported. Given the young age of the girl the case was part of sexual harassment, first online and then physical, but in reality the lack of affection due to a weak family and social network had pushed her to search online a way to fill the parental gap . This case wanted to be an example of how in reality the world of life on the web is combined differently according to the individual case.

The polarization of factions and guilds within the games and the "hiding behind the screen" are identified as two factors that surely contribute to the phenomenon of online sexual harassment and cyberbullying.

EXPERIENCES, NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

One of the participants, a regular online and live role-playing user, especially in the fantasy genre, experienced many attempts at inappropriate approaches in game chats, which often resulted in invitations both to change interaction platform (for example to join on Facebook) and to exchange the phone number. According to the young girl, this is also caused by the different basic intent of some people who approach the world of online gaming only in order to approach girls and not for hobby, leisure or passion. Within the online gaming world there has been an evolution as more and more girls populate the various guilds or worlds of role-playing, but this is not yet well accepted. On several occasions, in fact, there have been episodes of manifest impatience of male users in front of a character developed by a woman, who was higher than theirs. The only way to mitigate any disagreements, friction or inappropriate approach attempts is the creation of a male character although several online games require the use of the microphone and then the use of the real voice.

Another respondent reports her experience within an online fantasy genre game of GDR TXT character, in which registration was not required to enter the real sex of the player. So it was possible to find female characters run by men, even if this happened in a small percentage. The young girl tells the ease of receiving attempts to approach, this is also due to the fact that in that game existed a private room where there was no moderation and where it was, therefore, possible to get to have "virtual sex" with other characters. It was possible to access this room only by invitation , which the interviewee always declined..

The world of web interactions appears to be an element that permeates the daily life of the interviewees. The online role-playing experience reported by one of the participants describes a dimension in which factional division plays a decisive role in the establishment of the mechanism of incitement to hatred towards the "enemy". Within the online game very often private chats are born in order to use them as a container to channel hatred towards a certain gamer, chat in which she herself participated in the past while being aware of the negativity of such activity. The game she used was frequented by users she also knew about in real life and this was detected as a protection regarding online sexual harassment. It was noted by the first two participants as in the online game are established two types of mechanisms: that of the use of the character as an alter ego and that is the ability to live and say things within the game that the player would never implement in real life (mechanism also found in social life); and that of identification, that is, living what happens within the ludic narrative as if in some way it can be translated into real life.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The participants were asked for their opinion on what could be the ways to defend women from harassment. They said that social networks should do more checks on fake profiles and delete them, just as they should delete those from

which the sexual harassment originates. For example, there should be mechanisms to filter out specific words. In addition, all platforms should contain very user-friendly warning and reporting paths. Some social networks (a few, actually) report if the photos are used by someone else: all of them should have this function. In addition, while on social networks you can block unwanted profiles, this is not possible on online gaming platforms. Authorities should take this problem very seriously.

The phenomenon of online sexual harassment and cyberbullying appears a kaleidoscope with multiple facets, many of the professional participants stressed the importance of the regulations that have been recently prepared in Italy and that have allowed the birth of specific projects aimed both at listening to and education to the correct behaviour to be kept online. But this is not enough because it is still clear that it is essential to educate primarily the parent who in turn is the first proponent of education to empathy and respect. There is also a disparity between the territories with regard to the services used to denounce and listen. The web is still little "controlled", there is a real and efficient moderation both on social and on other platforms used nor a real policy against online violence. Role-playing can be a useful tool, together with the dissemination of information material, since part of the intervention must also concern young women who face the daily challenge of first learning to defend themselves.

Our female gamer participants stressed that policy makers should not underestimate the problem in question and strengthen education through laws promoting gender equality. In addition to the regulatory world and the actions of the government, three Nigerian participants underline the importance of education to correct behaviour on the web.

A few participants stressed that outreach activities on the topic of cyberbullying and sexual harassment online, such as conferences, are not very effective and efficient in terms of focusing the interest of young people. For this reason, the use of an online role-playing game is certainly a useful tool in this sense but must be developed in such a way as to

make it attractive. Great importance is given to the setting of the game, especially in case of choice of the fantasy genre, because the graphics of the environment is an important element that allows you to attract the attention of the player. Another element suggested concerns the "clothing" of the characters: within the online game there are women's armour excessively "sexualized" that inevitably lead to encourage a kind of deviant thinking compared to purely recreational activity. Taking into account the identification mechanism mentioned above, the development of a role-playing game that allows you to experience on your own skin cyberbullying or sexual harassment online can certainly be more efficient. The first participant stressed the importance of online gaming rather than the classic videogame as a product of the project.

Compared to games that are online it should be safer, because safety is the first thing especially online. Expectations are those of a game that promotes gender equality in some way, therefore aimed at education in their opinion basic. One participant said "I really like this initiative because it is a topic that too few people still deal with, and unfortunately too often episodes of this kind happen on the web, especially on people who have no tools either to defend themselves or to understand".

With reference to the ENHAGA game, professional participants stressed that it is very important to know what kind of game we want to design. There are already games that work in a positive way, e.g. games that facilitate self-help. Another participant said that the game should be designed in such a way as to make players aware of the risks involved in not accessing the platforms in a prudent manner. All participants agreed that training in its use will be certainly very important and we also need to understand how to launch the piloting.

CHAPTER 6: KEY FINDINGS FROM CYPRUS

Annita Eliade

KEY FINDINGS FROM DESK RESEARCH IN CYPRUS

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM IN THE CYPRUS

Trying to delineate the conditions in which female gamers operate in Cyprus is not easy as by definition the gaming communities are international, dynamic and always transforming especially in recent years. To start with, a number of articles during the last decade refer to the global trend of an increased number of women gamers around the world (Heidrich, 2010; Jayanth, 2014) and at the beginning of 2020 "a new study released by the Entertainment Software Association has revealed that adult women now occupy the largest demographic in the gaming industry" (Romano, 2020).

Many of the statistics referring to female gamers provide worldwide numbers and the most recent one in Europe by the Interactive Software Federation of Europe suggest that 45% of European video game players are women (ESFE, 2020), albeit there is no specific indication on what would be the percentage for Cyprus. As a result, we don't have enough evidence of what happens particularly in Cyprus in terms of the percentage of female gamers in this country and of sexual harassment against women in the Cypriot gaming community. Given the lack of concrete statistics and numbers about Cyprus we will try to extract some data indirectly from a number of pertinent sources.

Next, the international organization Women in Games WIGJ "is the not for profit organization that seeks a games industry, culture and community free of gender discrimination, where full equality of opportunity, treatment

and conditions empowers all women to achieve their full potential…. Women in Games is 11 years old and is now officially represented in 47 different countries" (Women in Games website). Their Ambassadors programme has now 12 Corporate and 446 individual Ambassadors from all over the world in order to support women and girls realize the opportunities within gaming and eventually increase the number of women in gaming. It has three female ambassadors in Cyprus, two from the gaming industry and one academic (Women in Games, Ambassadors). The two women from the gaming industry work for a global gaming company which is based in Cyprus and additionally has another woman in prominent position in its administration (Anonymous, 2017). Finally, only a small number of female streamer profiles can be found at the Twitch Hub of the cyprusgamer website but it is not clear how representative these are (Cyprusgamer website).

The absence of specific statistics and data on the number and percentages of female gamers in Cyprus leads eventually to the subsequent absence of statistical evidence regarding cyber sexual harassment of Cypriot female gamers. However, some data on sexual harassment in Cyprus in general may somehow hint what might also exist in the gaming community.

In a 2016 report by the European Institute of Gender Equality, the percentages of gender based violence (including sexual assault) are very high. As reported "at least 28 % of women in Cyprus have experienced some form of domestic violence including economic violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and physical violence" while the numbers might be larger and many cases go unreported due to the social stigma associated with it. It is also noted that in Cyprus 47% of the population tend not to trust the police (EIGE, 2016). Due to the absence of specific statistics on cyber gender based violence, the numbers above could only provide a glimpse into what could possibly be the situation.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Cyprus, there is no detailed legislative framework yet that would specifically focus on cyber sexual harassment. But there is a legal framework for combating sexual harassment in general as Cyprus, namely, the law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training (Law 205(I)2002) (Law, No. 205(I)/2002) and the amending 2006 law (Law 40(I) 2006). Some articles of the 2002 law were further amended by Law N° 150(I) of 2014 (Law N° 150(I) of 2014).

According to the OECD Gender Index 2019 for Cyprus in the relevant legislation sexual harassment is recognized as a form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical demeanour of sexual nature which violates a person's dignity and generates a situation that can be threatening, degrading or offensive (OECD Development Centre, 2019 - with data from the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law of 2002).

According to the Cypriot legislation, the employers are responsible, on the one hand, to provide guiding principles for a workplace free from harassment and, on the other hand, to protect the victim and take any action to end sexual harassment in their workplaces as soon as a case comes to their attention (Pilavaki-Achilleos and Diomidous, 2007). However, the scope of the law "does not extend beyond employment and vocational training" (European institute of Gender Equality, Cyprus Sexual Harassment) and legislation on sexual harassment does not include explicit references to other areas of life such as educational establishments, sports, public places or cyber sexual assaults. According to the OECD Gender Index 2019 for Cyprus, relevant grievances are dealt by the Gender Equality Committee and the Gender Equality Inspectors while the penalties provided by the law are up to six months imprisonment and/or a fine of 12.000 euros (OECD Development Centre, 2019 - with data from the Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training Law of 2002).

An associated recent Code of Practice based on the aforementioned legislation is the 2018 Code of Practice for

the Prevention and Fight against Sexual Harassment and Harassment in public services, which refers to all those working as public servants in Cyprus. This code of practice aims both at preventive measures (training, awareness, creation of an environment of respect and support) as well as to the protection of victims and the guidance of those responsible for the combat against sexual harassment. Although it focuses on issues related to work setting and specifically at the public service sector, the code of practice mentions inappropriate content of digital forms such as email messages or videos while it equally makes specific references to such form of harassment as forms of gender based violence, two stipulations that exhibit a positive trend that could eventually lead to more focused future legislation on cyber sexual harassment as well as to gender related provisions (Epitropos Dioikiseos kai Prostasias Anthropinon Dikaiomaton, 2018).

A major problem that Cyprus faces along with other countries is that the number of the reported cases of sexual harassment doesn't reflect reality. This happens because of the great number of victims that hesitate to report their cases to the authorities and in the end they don't do it at all. This is not only a Cypriot, but a worldwide phenomenon. More specifically, the OECD Gender Index 2019 for Cyprus reported that according to a survey of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014, 14% of women that participated in the survey were victims of some sort of sexual assault (OECD Development Centre, 2019 – with data from a survey of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights). An associated problem is that it seems that there are also unreported cases (OECD Development Centre, 2019) and the authorities can't examine those and consequently cannot adjust the legal framework accordingly.

Another step that Cyprus took in terms of strengthening legal framework against sexual harassment and that could also be further applied in cases of cyber sexual harassment was related to sexual harassment against children. More specifically, in 2017 the Law N. 112(I) of 2017 for the application of the National Strategy for combating sexual

abuse and exploitation of children and against child pornography was published. Although the law is specific on minors, it provides for the establishment of a Council responsible for the application of the National Strategy and the Action Plan against children's sexual abuse and against child pornography through a number of actions including preventive actions and raising awareness on the issue (Law N. 112(I) of 2017) which can only be positive initiatives in regards to future measures in the struggle against cyber sexual harassment not only for minors but for adults as well.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GOOD PRACTICES

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth of Cyprus has created the Coordinating Committee of Health and Civic Education which works towards the National Strategy and the Action Plan against sexual violence and exploitation of children as well as against child pornography which were presented in March 2016. The goal is to promote the prevention of sexual violence against children through sex education and sensitizing teachers on how to recognize and manage relevant cases. The National Strategy recognizes the need of training and education of children from a young age regarding, on the one hand, the dangers of sexual harassment in cyberspace and the need to respect others, on the other. That is, the associated Action Plan targets not only potential victims of sexual harassment but also potential offenders as well as their parents (EsafeCyprus- strategy for safety at the internet website). The Council for the application of the National Strategy titled Foni (Voice) is responsible for the coordination of all the relevant actions was established in 2017. Amongst its other actions, the Voice promotes special training programmes against sexual harassment and violence (Foni website)

The Coordinating Committee for the Prevention and Fighting Against Sexual Violence and Exploitation of Children had

published in 2017 a manual for the training of educators on how to recognize and manage cases of sexual violence and harassment against children. This manual includes a section related to online sexual harassment and cyber grooming particularly for young girls and how to be able to identify such cases and combat them (Coordinating Committee for the Prevention and Fighting Against Sexual Violence and Exploitation of Children of the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). Further Action Plan for the 2020-2022 period is also drafted with the contribution of the Committee (Anonymous, 2020).

As for NGO's, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), a partner in an international project, under the Daphne III Programme of the European Union that was titled: Staying Safe On-line: Gender and Safety on the Internet, published 'Staying Safe Online: Gender and Safety on the Internet'. This work can be valuable to the ENHAGA project because it specially addresses gender issues and harassment of girls and associated findings from Cyprus around that year. Topics that touch upon gaming are indirectly included in the anthology such as gender roles in profile pictures and fake identities (Buchegger et al,2014). In the context of this project, MIGS run a video campaign in Cyprus as a good practice aiming youth around the age groups that ENHAGA also targets raising awareness about cyber gender based violence as well as the "Safenet-CY" Hotline and the Safer Internet Helpline operated by Cyberethics in Cyprus (ibid); the later was the Center for Safer Internet in Cyprus aimed at serving the needs of all individuals.

Cyprus participated in the European-wide awareness raising video campaign 'Say no', a campaign against the online coercion and extortion of children that was launched by the European law enforcement community and was supported by Europol providing advice to potential targets (Europol website). Gamers were mentioned in the Cypriot version of the video.

In addition, the Cyprus Youth Organisation has organized a seminar titled: #NotYouToo – Prevention, Not Punishment in

2018 in the context of an Erasmus+ project and aiming at the prevention of sexual harassment targeting youth 18-30 years old, which is along the lines of the ENHAGA target group. The outcome of this preventing endeavour is a short guide aiming at awareness raising, recognition and prevention of harassing behaviour and includes references to online sexual harassment (Cyprus Youth organization website) as well as an associated short video with similar content (Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation YouTube channel).

CONCLUSIONS

Online gaming is widespread in Cyprus among both male but also among the female population as well and although there is a gap in data and the subsequent analysis, one can speculate that the situation for female gamers in Cyprus won't be much different than the one for their counterparts in other EU countries where discrimination and gender based harassment online is reported.

The current legal framework concerning sexual harassment doesn't specifically cover the digital type of assault especially when it comes to the case of online gaming. Inspired by their own legislation as far as the sexual harassment in the workplace is concerned but also inspired by the broader European legal framework on cybercrime and cyber sexual assault, the Cypriot authorities could eventually update their legal framework by revising the existing laws to protect internet users (including gamers) from digital forms of sexual harassment and impose associated punishments.

Although according to the gender index of the OECD Development Centre for Cyprus in 2019 the law on sexual harassment in Cyprus only defines sexual harassment as applies to the workplace and does not cover cyber harassment or cyber stalking, in Cyprus, there are practices and policies to combat online sexual harassment that are primarily related to the protection of minors (children and

adolescents) through associated institutions and stakeholders (e.g. PI, NGOs).

It is quite positive and hopeful that policies and codes of practices for both state agents, public services as well as for private businesses have been updated in the last few years in order to further present not only a more comprehensive view of sexual harassment (including emails and digital media forms) but also guidelines for employers on how to safeguard the working space and keep it free from harassment. There is an equal increase in the efforts to encourage women in all sorts of environments to report such assaults and to empower them since this is a secure road to the end of sexual harassment. More efforts especially regarding the digital form of such crimes are needed along with relevant legislation with specific penalties for these.

ENHAGA training could also be introduced as part of the Action Plan of the National Strategy of Cyprus against sexual violence and exploitation of children as well as against child pornography that will be designed for the years between 2020 and 2022. The Plan recognizes the need for focused training not only for students and educators but also for police officers as well as for those who serve the justice system and the media (EsafeCyprus-strategy for safety at the internet website). ENHAGA can be a great tool towards this goal and the long lasting influence and the sustainability of the project could contribute greatly in this direction.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family info@domviolence.org.cy

(00357) - 22 339001

Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA) is the leading Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Organization in Cyprus

Facebook: /cyfamplan/ info@cfpa.org.cy (+357) 22751093

Thkio Logia – Non-profit organisation
hello@thkiologia.com

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The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) is a leading NGO promoting gender equality and women's rights in Cyprus and the Mediterranean region.

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Emerging Voices', a radio show that amplifies the voices marginalised in the mass media, ran fortnightly from 2014 to 2018) fb: (1) Emerging Voices Cyprus

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KEY FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH IN CYPRUS

BACKGROUND AND PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The Center for Social Innovation, a partner of the ENHAGA consortium, interviewed five female gamers. Three of them hold a Bachelor's degree, one with a Masters and one with a Ph.D. The two youngest are unemployed while one of the three is a project manager (Master's holder), the one (Ph.D. holder) works with new technologies at an experience center and the third employed gamer is a lawyer. They are all young gamers and are well experienced with years of gaming in a variety of games.

The Center for Social Innovation, a partner of the ENHAGA consortium, interviewed 5 professionals. Four of them are IT experts (3 male and 1 female) that work in different businesses in Cyprus and the fifth (female) is an NGO stakeholder. All professionals except one, have previous experience with gaming. Professionals are very experienced with only one person having five years of experience and the rest ranging from 10 to 30 years of experience. The positions of the IT professionals and researchers working with digital media are data analyst and client service executive, Information systems manager, business analyst and full stack developer and in terms of their educational background and terminal degree one has high school education, two have Master's degrees and one has a Ph.D.

The NGO stakeholder is a female that is currently the President of a foundation promoting equality with 30 years of experience and a Ph.D. Three of the professionals work in rather small size businesses and organizations (about 10 employees) while two of them work in larger ones (about 200 employees).

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ONLINE GAMING

Sexual harassment in cyberspace is common due to the combination of anonymity with the lack of consequences. It often goes unnoticed by both the harasser and the harassed who might not even be able to clearly define the term 'harassment' and even if they do, they do not consider it serious crime. Adolescent and children (but also young adults) do not realize that some of their comments or what they consider to be flirting is actually sexual harassment. Recognizing sexual harassment for what it is and, thus, interrupt it immediately, is among the biggest challenges in gaming for youth, both male and female gamers.

A professional states that gamers often do not distinguish their online behaviour from their day-to-day behaviour which is often equally problematic. But another suggests that in the case of online disrespectful behaviour the offenders can easily hide behind a fake avatar and things get out of control easier than they would do in face-to-face circumstances. One professional states that in his experience, sometimes, male gamers are becoming careful with the words they use when they play with female gamers as they try to avoid being accused of misconduct.

Women are treated differently in digital games and this can be termed as 'harassment'. There are trolls that annoy and harass women or give them donations online (e.g. in streaming) just because they are women. There are also men using female profile pictures in order to get money donations. When men play with women, they often assume that the latter won't play skilfully because of their gender.

The gaming community is not very welcoming towards new users. Women are more vulnerable to this and new users are victims of harassment and judgment by regular gamers regarding their gaming skills. Women could be more vulnerable to this. Additionally, a male gamer may contact a female gamer on issues unrelated to the game just because of her looks. A professional notes that female gamers either

are not taken seriously because of their gender and sometimes hide their gender or their appearance in order to be taken into serious consideration as gamers. Many cases of harassment are not reported and the harassed resolved the problem by just blocking the offender. Many times, harassment goes unreported because the victims are unaware of policies and practices that are placed in order to counteract cyber harassment.

Anonymity is a great challenge especially in the character games in which many players hide behind an alter ego. Female gamers in particular may adopt avatars that show them in ways they aspire to be following the stereotypical views of beauty and associated standards and it is a challenge for gamers to go against the stereotypes and adopt fictional characters that go deeper than the superficial, image level. This comment from one professional comes in conjunction with another professional's view that female characters in gaming and in general online (e.g. in streaming) are often sexually oriented.

Things are getting increasingly worse with the course of time as younger children start dealing with social media. As most of the youth have social media accounts and follow influencers, the superficial, stereotypical images about gender persist. Further training and education are certainly needed.

EXPERIENCES, NEEDS AND STRENGTHS

The female gamers have years of experience in gaming. One of them plays for four years, the others for longer. One of them states that in the past she did not notice serious problems of harassment as there was not much self-exposure. One believes that in the last 8 or 10 years there is an increase in harassment because nowadays it is easier to anonymously harass and because of the introduction of live streaming in gaming. However, one gamer thinks differently, that is that there is sexism but seems to be diminishing through time. She believes that things are

changing and especially in younger ages there is increasingly a greater number of female players according to the type of game, as well. So what would be interesting to look into is whether harassment diminished when female gamers increase.

The term sexual harassment in cyberspace can take different forms (verbal abuse, texting, sexting, inappropriate images, harsh comments in social media etc) and has persistence through time. Women can be leaders of guilds and they might receive some comments that are sexist and the offenders might consider such comments just a joke but in reality they are clearly aggressive.

Some female gamers of the focus group have experienced sexual harassment and/or know of other female gamers who have been harassed. Those usually report the harassment to moderators, but they know others who just quit gaming. Reporting usually leads to the ban of the offenders. One female gamer notes that she has not experienced sexual harassment in cyberspace or in gaming but she attributes this to the fact that her username and avatar does not reveal her gender although she does not do this on purpose. Another player has experienced some harassment when she was minor but not during her adult life probably because she avoids multiplayer games maybe subconsciously in order to avoid harassment since some of them are dominated by male gamers. Often, female gamers either play one-player games or limit their contacts in gaming because they do not want to expose themselves to unsafe settings. They rarely play multiplayer games in groups in which they don't know each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The professional participants have plenty of good ideas and recommendations both for the ENHAGA tools and for policy making in general and you can find them below.

The professionals recommend the introduction of online tools through which gamers would be sensitized in concepts, such as social harassment and through these they can realize that some of their own behaviours are condemnable and unacceptable. Regarding the online tools that ENHAGA wants to incorporate for reporting of offenses, this can be done through an interaction or chat feature. In theory the harassed needs to understand what she needs to submit to prove harassment. What is most important is prevention. A tool that would be useful is the inclusion of a choice of characters that are neither male nor female (as we are moving towards more gender fluid identities as societies).

Flash messages that will open short notes against cyber harassment during a game will be a useful tool. However, in some types of games, such as violent games with battles or shootings, such messages cannot work as the goal is to survive by all means.

Professionals also suggested that the ENHAGA game risks failure if it is only based on the concept of sexual harassment because it will not attract users. It is also dangerous to create a simulation game about sexual harassment because there are trolls that they can hack it in order to have the opposite results. It is possible that a girl that has been a victim of sexual harassment would be reluctant to play a game in which sexual harassment will be presented due to trauma. Some platforms such as the app store might not accept it because they might misinterpret its intentions. The best way to present the ENHAGA game is by not explicitly talking about sexual harassment but creating a challenging game and have the gamers implicitly understand that sexual harassment is something negative. Maybe an app or a tool in the form of a game for educational purposes could work for playing at schools or similar environments.

One of the professionals believes that a game such as the one envisaged by ENHAGA will be particularly useful. Especially a game that would teach young girls how to react to cyber sexual harassment is deemed useful. ENHAGA's

projected actions are considered very innovative and hopefully can address the serious problem of cyber harassment that exists today within the gamers' community. Suggestion for a future project is to plan something similar for minors who are very prone to fast, superficial and stereotypical misinformation in social media.

One of the professionals believes that maybe instead of a game, an ENHAGA platform would be easier to operate with all the information about already known games and harassment cases that take place in these.

Tools like recording the chat or the voice chat in order to detect and record harassment evidence are suggested. Recording tools that will be hard to falsify and will automatically send a screenshot to the central server when the record is created are also noted as good ideas. However, sound and voice communication between the users should not be obstructed. In the past, gamer communities had created reporting tools that could immediately block or sign off offenders as a means against cyber harassment. This was a good practice that helped some gamers.

Generally speaking, another preventive measure could be the creation of games with progressive social norms (e.g. strategic games with more developed female characters, or introduction of non-male characters with powerful features). The problem lies usually with users and this is where training can help.

There is a need for a regulatory, European wide authority responsible for all the accusations and charges filed on this issue. Game companies shall cooperate with this authority and there should be repercussions for offenders. Professionals considered this rather hard to enforce. Nowadays games are addressing a small attention span and it is hard to keep accountable the players. Keeping the companies accountable is better. They could report on the number of cases of harassment based on the users' complaints and if they report this to a possible future authority then there will be some control and the companies will be forced to do something about it.

As for the female gamer's recommendations, all games should have a reporting tool that should have a drop down menu for different reasons for reporting and one of the reasons should be 'sexual harassment'. Some games can even delete an account due to such reporting. For the design of ENHAGA the players should be presented with a scenario in which the players can live the experience from the point of view of the offender, offended and observer. Experiential ways are the best for awareness raising and learning and the story of the game with alternative paths to follow could teach players what harassment is and how to report it. One respondent suggested the type of point and click game. However, some players would still take their behaviour lightly instead of harassment so a definition of harassment would be useful. Maybe through an e-learning course of some sort. Recording of discussions would not be a good idea due to GDPR regulations but filters in discussions could always work with respect to GDPR rules.

Other ways to eliminate sexual harassment is to work through the teams and have the leaders of teams notify offenders in case of harassment. A statement of compliance with the rules of the game (which would include a statement against sexual harassment) could also work. Accounts that violate such rules would be under supervision or suspension. Engaging male gamers was also suggested for the ENHAGA project although it is recognized as difficult albeit critical for ending harassment.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENHAGA GAME

Restorative Justice for All (RJ4All) International Institute

The gender inequality and discrimination against women that remains embedded in society in each of the partner countries has been observed to been increasingly played out online in recent years. Many girls and young women experience sexual harassment and bullying online, as well as in offline environments. It exists on a continuum from gendered and sexual insults, non-consensual sharing of images, through to threats, coercion and sexual violence. Despite the fact that the data demonstrate the need for a wide variety of policies and measures to combat cyber sexual harassment, the current legal and policy framework in most European countries and around the world is inadequate.

Our research findings show that the online gaming community can represent both a safe space for female gamers and an arena within which illegal and abusive behaviours such as online sexual harassment are perpetuated. It is crucial that the wider recommendations from our contributors are acted upon to prevent the latter.

There is a lack of mechanisms in place for gamers to report harassment or abuse in online games and the consequences for those perpetrating online sexual harassment are either insufficient or non-existent. There can also be a lack of knowledge around how to report online sexual harassment. Effectively addressing online sexual harassment of female gamers involves banning or punishing perpetrators with an explicit explanation of why they are facing these consequences; preferably with accountability demonstrated in a social sphere.

Prevention and relevant education are of utmost importance. Training sessions based on the ENHAGA deliverables and purposes should be provided through collaboration with other institutions, such as schools, local

government authorities, and gaming groups. Training addressed at minors could foreseeably lead to prevention of cyber sexual assault as the children will grow to be more respectful users of the web while females will be able to recognize harassment and report it for what it is. Furthermore, such seminars shall include adult stakeholders such as educators and parents and thus reach the adult community, as well.

The focus of the ENHAGA game must not fall solely on female gamers regarding how to respond to harassment as this puts the burden of solving the problem on the victims themselves, which is unsustainable. It would be most effective as an educational tool for early intervention and awareness raising with younger gamers, warning them about online harassment and discouraging the behaviour. The ENHAGA game needs to have an interesting and engaging story, even if its mechanics are not complex. It is also clear from that in order for the ENHAGA game to have the greatest impact and reach a wider audience our project would benefit greatly from platforming by institutional stakeholders.

As with attempts to combat online sexual harassment outside of video gaming and 'real life' sexual harassment in offline contexts, long term change will require wider structural changes – a shift is needed in what accepted as standard behaviour.

Furthermore, the following areas require further research in order to develop greater understanding of online sexual harassment among young people in the partner countries; variations in prevalence by age and gender, dynamics and impacts of online sexual harassment in different groups of children and young people (e.g., gender identity, sexual orientation). Effective educational resources should be developed for all stakeholders to challenge this behaviour and its perceived normalisation in the online environment.

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Notes

[←1]

This table is adapted from a report by Universities UK on online harassment (Universities UK, 2019)

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enhaga-project.eu

This ebook presents the findings of the EU funded project "Ending Sexual Harassment in Gaming" by analysing the current state of the art in the UK, Greece, Italy and Cyprus.

The project aims to develop and implement innovative practices to eliminate cyber harassment for female gamers through the development of an online game

This e-book is based on secondary and primary research that was carried out in Greece, the UK, Cyprus and Italy, looking at tools that empower young girls on how to react to cases of cyber sexual harassment.

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