UNDERSTANDING GENDER IN PC GAMES AND GAMING CULTURE: THE CASE OF LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

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submitted by **CEREN YILMAZ** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Gender and Women's Studies, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin Kirazcı
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR
Head of Department
Department of Gender and Women's Studies

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fulden İBRAHİMHAKKIOĞLU
Supervisor
Department of Philosophy

Res.Dr. Ezgi PEHLİVANLI
Co-Supervisor
University of Stavanger
Department of Media and Social Studies

Examining Committee Members:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aret KARADEMİR (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Philosophy

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fulden İBRAHİMHAKKIOĞLU
Middle East Technical University
Department of Philosophy

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emek Barış KEPENEK
Başkent University
Department of Sociology

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also say that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Ceren YILMAZ

Signature:

ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING GENDER IN PC GAMES AND GAMING CULTURE: THE CASE OF LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

YILMAZ, Ceren
M.S., The Department of Gender and Women's Studies
Supervisor: Assoc.Prof.Dr.Fulden İBRAHİMHAKKIOĞLU
Co-supervisor: Res.Dr. Ezgi PEHLİVANLI

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Online multiplayer games are constructed as male-dominated spaces. Many cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers are excluded from gaming communities and spaces. Marginalized gaming communities are subject to harassment, verbal abuse, and hate speech in online multiplayer games. This research is conducted to document in detail the experiences of these communities in one of the most popular online PC games: the League of Legends. In this thesis, I aim to find answers to the ways of operating and embedding gender inequalities in the gendered gaming culture and the characteristics of the League of Legends' Turkey Server. I conducted parallel mixed-method research by quantitative data and qualitative data. I utilized feminist methodology and critical discourse analysis. In addition, I tried to show how the detection mechanisms and gamerlect as a discourse constitute the online gaming community and spaces.

Keywords: Gaming culture, The League of Legends, Mixed-methods, Gender inequality, Gaming community.

ÖZ

PC OYUNLARINDA VE OYUN KÜLTÜRÜNDE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETİN ETKİSİNİ ANLAMAK: BİR VAKA OLARAK LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

YILMAZ , Ceren
Yüksek Lisans,Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Doç.Dr.Fulden İbrahimhakkıoğlu
Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Arş.Gör.Dr. Ezgi Pehlivanlı

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Çevrimiçi çok oyunculu oyunlar, erkeklerin egemen olduğu alanlar olarak inşa edilmiştir. Birçok cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve LGBTQIA+ oyuncu, oyun topluluklarından ve oyun alanlarından dışlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, marjinalleştirilmiş oyun toplulukları, çevrimiçi çok oyunculu oyunlarda tacizlere, sözlü tacizlere ve nefret söylemlerine maruz kalırlar. Bu araştırma, kırılgan oyun komünitelerinin en popüler çevrimiçi PC oyunlarından biri olan League of Legends'daki deneyimlerini ayrıntılı olarak belgelemek için oluşturulmuştur. Bu tezde, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini, League of Legends'ın cinsiyetçi oyun kültürü ve özelliklerine göre işleme ve yerleştirme yollarını belirlemeye yönelik cevaplar bulmayı hedefliyorum. Feminist metodolojiyi ve eleştirel söylem analizini kullanarak karma yöntemler araştırmasını nicel ve nitel verileri toplayarak gerçekleştirdim. Ayrıca belirleme mekanizmalarının ve bir söylem olarak oyuncu dilinin çevrimiçi oyun topluluğunu ve alanlarını nasıl oluşturduğunu göstermeye çalıştım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oyun Kültürü, League of Legends, Karma araştırma yöntemleri, Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği, Oyun komünitesi

To Maria "Remilia" Creveling and all marginalized gamers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

THE LOL	The League of Legends
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Intersex Asexual +
AD	Attack Damage
AP	Ability Power
ADC	Attack damage carry

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of this research

Many cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers are subject to harassment, verbal abuse, and hate speech in online multiplayer games (Cote, 2020; Condis,2018; deWinter and Kocurek,2017; Vossen,2018; Paul,2018). This research aims to understand, evaluate, and document the gendered experiences of players in the mainstream online PC game: *League of Legends*. While I was exposed to direct harassment, toxicity, and verbal abuse, I noticed that the reporting system was not working adequately in the League of Legends Turkey Server. This observation constitutes my starting point in questioning gender inequality in gaming culture. After that, I became aware that there is a lack of research on gender inequality and the gaming culture in Turkey. Therefore, I conducted a pilot study about gender inequality and gaming culture in 2018 to understand whether other cis-heterosexual women experienced similar online gaming practices. The current study builds on the earlier one to further the understanding of gendered identities in gaming communities.

1.2. Main Arguments

In this thesis, I argue that cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA gamers are excluded and ignored by the hardcore gaming community and the gaming industry. According to Braxton Soderman (2017), hardcore games' perception has constructed through aggressive, brutal narratives and subjects with complex gameplay that requires time investment (2017:40). In addition, hardcore games' customer base is shaped as males through promotion strategies of the gaming industry and game developers (Condis,2017,56). Hence, cis-heterosexual women

and queer gamers are not seen as visible subjects in both the hardcore gaming community and the gaming industry.

I take the League of Legends as a medium of these exclusionary practices to understand the male-dominated dynamics in digital games. Quantic Foundry's research was constructed by 270.000 answers collected from gamers worldwide to inquire allocation of gamers depending on the genres they prefer (Quantic Foundry cited in Statista, 2017). As a result of this inquiry, 69% of 270.000 respondents were female, and they chose to play the family/farm Sim genre[1] and Match 3 genres such as Candy Crush (Quantic Foundry cited in Statista, 2017). On the other hand, 18% of 270.000 respondents were female who played action-adventure genres, and 10% of 270.000 respondents were female who played MOBA genre (Quantic Foundry cited in Statista, 2017).

Even though women and LGBTQIA+ players are a minority in the gaming culture, I argue that cis-heterosexual women gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers do not reveal their gender or sexual orientation during the League of Legends matches because of the risk of exclusion, and further, because of the possibility of sexual harassment, verbal abuse, the use of sexist swear words and unwanted attention through communication channels in the League of Legends. Therefore, the risks they have been encountering make their position much more vulnerable and invisible.

My other argument is that gaming culture and the language used within can be heteronormative and sexist in Turkey. In this thesis, the language that I define as "*gamerlect*" is derived from Astrid Ensslin's concept the "Buddylect," (Ensslin,2012,109), which explains a structure of dialogue interaction includes oral and written language within a particular group (2012:109). Based on this notion, I will use *gamerlect* as a language form that consists of game-based terms, rape discourse, sexist swear words, and trash-talk. Furthermore, besides the

[1] Simulation games or sim genre is based on recreation of reality, such as car racings, building houses and cities (Ellis, July,17,2022)

language structure of *gamerlect*, I argue that such structure creates an environment for harassment and toxic heteronormative, homophobic, and transphobic practices. In the case of the League of Legends, *gamerlect* has been constructed by gaming terms, such as Eloboost, buffed champion, ad (attack damage), ap (ability power) damage, etc., sexist swear words, toxicity,[2] and hate discourses that are directed to one's sexual orientation, gender, and race. Moreover, I argue that *gamerlect* functions as a detection mechanism for gamers who do not belong in the gaming community and gaming culture. As can be seen in detail in Theoretical Tool Section (2.4), I argue that *gamerlect* operates in a gaming community in two ways; the first one is that *gamerlect* operates as discourse (Foucault,1981) and the second one is that *gamerlect* functions to detect and eliminate gamers that do not fit into a homosocial gaming sphere where it is dominated by "male peer culture" (Katz, 2006, 7).

Gamerlect is a gendered discourse because sexist swear words, toxicity, and proficiency in gaming knowledge are seen and accepted as essential characteristics of male players who dominate the hardcore gaming culture in Turkey. Therefore, cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers, who do not adopt and internalize this structure of *gamerlect*, are excluded from the hardcore gaming community. Consequently, they are not considered members of the gaming community.

My last argument is that the assumption that women play only a support role (Condis,2018,55) in the LoL is still relevant. Character choice directly affects this process because the support role and some characters are gendered in the LoL gaming community. During the game, gamers usually try to guess the other players' gender due to their character choice. For instance, female support characters, especially those who focus on healing and giving shields to other players, are identified as "girly" characters. This perception originated from the

[2] Toxicity is seen as cyberbullying (McDaniel, 2016, p 7). Cyberbullying is a relatively recent way of committing psychological violence. Thus, cyberbullies might hide behind their nicknames and say things that they would not say in person (McDaniel, 2016, p 7).

notion that girls don't play hardcore games and are not skilled enough to play complicated characters in hardcore games.

Since this study aims to explore how gender inequalities operate and are embedded in the League of Legends Turkey Server, it also aims to show that cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers are forced to live in a dilemma. It is the internalization of *gamerlect* to prevent the risk of exclusion and harassment by exposing their gender identities or being silent to be unseen for enduring in male-dominated gaming space.

Before understanding how gaming culture is constructed, it is crucial to explain three umbrella categories that the discourse in the gaming industry has created: hardcore games, casual games, and pink games.

1.3. Categorization of Games

1.3.1. Hardcore Games

Hardcore games take long hours to play; therefore, necessity turns into hard work, high gaming ability, and more wealth to play these kinds of games (Chess,2020,91). Amanda C. Cote's (2020) usage of the term "core" is based on two meanings; the first one is about male audiences prioritized throughout the history of the gaming industry, especially the console games and "masculinized games" (Cote, 2020, 25). The second was the term core, derived from the term "hardcore," which is used as an adjective for the defined level of dedication (2020:25). According to Cote (2020), the usage of the term core illustrates the "traditionally prioritized" (Cote, 2020,25) gamer community. The gaming industry specifically wants to protect hardcore gamers because Cote (2020) states that hardcore gamers are loyal, passionate, and dedicated to games (2020:30).

Despite the relationship between the word "hardcore" with male gamers, Jennifer deWinter and Carly A.Kocurek (2017) state that this label is also associated with

the pornography industry (2018:58). As specified by deWinter and Kocurek, “Pornography, then, provides abundance and energy and then spends itself in its play. So, too, is the assumption made by the hard-core gamer: more games, more gameplay, more energy put into the game in a (porno-) utopia of play- and to be clear here, more masculine” (deWinter and Kocurek,2018, 58). This connection is profoundly significant because both the pornography sector and the gaming industry prioritize the fulfillment of males (deWinter and Kocurek, 2018,58). In addition, gaming culture is created as a structure to protect and maintain masculinist pleasures (deWinter and Kocurek, 2018,58). The gaming industry and gaming culture prioritize hardcore gamers. Therefore, these two meanings are crucial because the term “hardcore” has been used in gaming. After all, the relationship between gaming and hardcore demonstrates games' masculinization and the gaming industry's usual focus. My stance on using the word “hardcore” is an opposing view. Because I think the term hardcore is intertwined with masculinity and pornography, where males’ pleasures are prioritized. On the other hand, I have been playing digital games since I was ten. I have internalized hardcore games to define more complex games that require high gaming skills, graphics, and gameplay.

1.3.1.1. Introduction of League of Legends

League of Legends (LoL) was released publicly in 2009 (Paul, 2018, 69). LoL is one of the significant examples of the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) genre. MOBA games generally consist of two teams that try to defeat each other by destroying their base; however, to defeat an opponent’s base, players need to collect experiences, supplies such as money, and different items, and eventually, they can reach the power to destroy opponents base (Paul, 2018, 117-118). Each team has five players in the League of Legends; the matches’ duration lasts from twenty to sixty minutes (Paul, 2018,118).

Also, players earn experiences by killing their opponent champions or more valuable opponent members and non-player creature. For instance, the term

"farming" defines the behavior of killing "minions" or monsters, which can be found in the jungle, and players get experiences and golds to purchase items from those minions and monsters in the League of Legends (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.). Also, to earn gold and experiences from minions, players must make the "last hit" (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.) to them; otherwise, it is not possible to earn the gold, but you can still gain the experience to level up.



[3]

Figure 1. Example of farming in League of Legends

[3] (Retrieval Date: 04.11.21 https://leagueoflegends.fandom.com/wiki/Farming)

1.3.1.1.1. Positions in League of Legends



Figure 2. Illustration of League of Legends map and overview of lanes

There are five positions: top lanes, mid-laner, jungler, bot laner (ADC/ad carry), and support in the League of Legends.

Solo 'Laners' are usually responsible from to absorb the damage from other champions, such as damage of ad carry, mid laner, and jungler; therefore, the conventional pick of the solo lane is armored mainly, which is called "tanky" (Quereshi; March 12, 2021) in the gaming culture.

Mid laner is also named by their position within the League of Legends map, and in my experience in the League of Legends, mid-lane champions are powerful. They give severe damage when they become a complete build of items. On the other hand, mid lane's both sides are open and filled with bushes which can be used by jungler to surprise the other team's mid-laner (Quereshi; March 2021)[4]

[4] (Retrieval Date: 08/21/2022 https://www.esportstalk.com/blog/eli5-league-of-legends-guide-23576/)

Jungler does not constantly play with the lanes, and jungler is named from the requirements of its position (Esports One, n.d.). In my experience, jungler earn their experiences and gold from the monsters in the forest of the League of Legends, and they are responsible for taking different drakes (ocean drake, infernal drake, mountain drake, and Claud drake) that give various powers to the team. Also, the jungler is responsible for taking the herald, another crucial monster that hits towers and seriously damages them in the League of Legends (Esports One, n.d.). Also, the jungler prepare ambushes against the opponent team's players. (Esports One, n.d.).

Lastly, the *bot lane* is the only lane that requires two players: bot *laner (ADC)* and *support.* Bot laner champions are usually defenseless, especially in the early game (Esports One, n.d.). Therefore, they need an assist to be protected from the damage, and supports provide that aid; also, bot laners generate most of the damage in the League of Legends (Esports One, n.d.). However, the responsibility of the support is not just to protect the ADC. In my experience, supporters generate visions by warding totems within the map because there is a fog that covers the whole map in the League of Legends; also, they can clean the opponent team's wards to eliminate their visions. Moreover, they assist in initiating the fight and become victims to protect the damage dealers within the team fights (Esports One, n.d.).

1.3.1.1.2. Ranked matches, anonymity and reporting system in League of Legends

Ranked games are more serious in any online competitive PC or video game because your rank is determined according to your success in these matches. Therefore, competition, tensions, and emotions always rise in ranked games and League of Legends. To play ranked matches, players must be level 30, and players in LoL should own sixteen different champions; on the other hand, the Elosystem, shaped through players' victories and defeats, provides mobility to players in the ranking system (Paul, 2018, 118). However, as specified by Paul (2018), Elorating

alters constantly based on players' success and finding the same people within the same Elorate to create equality of opportunity for mobility; therefore, the ranks are divided into categories which are "Iron, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Master, and Challenger" (Paul, 2018, 119) through this Elosystem (2018:119).

The LoL is based on anonymity. Toxic players are encouraged by the power of anonymity because you don't know who sits behind that computer. On the other hand, there is a reporting system in the League of Legends. Therefore, the discourse "if your reports are correct categorically, that player will be punished" is constructed by Riot Games; however, I rarely received feedback from the report system about my report or ticket, which is a report method when you forget to report any player, in the League of Legends Turkey's server. According to Christopher A. Paul (2018), the general term "toxicity" (Paul, 2018, 69) has become prevalent through the efforts of Riot Games. Also, Paul (2018) states that Riot games have constructed a campaign to eliminate the toxic actions in LoL (2018:118). Therefore, the "Team Player Behavior" (Paul, 2018,118) system was created by Riot to police players' behaviors, incredibly toxic, trolling and harassment, and even though Riot Games was decisive in banning professional Esport players because of their lousy conduct (2018:118).

The communication works by text chat, in-game voice chat, or Discord in League of Legends. Text chat is essential for teammates, but the opponent team uses it via the all-chat feature. On the other hand, in-game voice chat and Discord are usually used by people who play as pre-made couples or five people. However, Riot Games will ban the "all-chat" format within the communication system during the matches in LoL's new season, which will be implemented in 2022 (Leston, Ryan; October 20, 2021). However, the "all-chat" ban might work and reduce part of the toxicity; however, I don't think it will work in the Turkey Server because I believe that the main problem is not all chat communication. The main problem is the toxic behaviors, the use of sexist swear words, and the conduct of sexual harassment within the same team communication because harassment exists in a

continuum in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Furthermore, the harassment, toxic behaviors, and sexist swear words have strengthened the notion that they are cornerstones of the gaming culture.

1.3.2. Casual Game

The gaming industry started to change in the mid-2000 (Chess,2020; Jull cited in Cunningham, 2018); because of the boost of casual computer games (Chess, 2020, 91). Chess (2020) states that casual games' accessibility is more straightforward than hardcore games because they are free or cheaper than hardcore games; also, the people who play casual games do not give their time as much as hardcore games necessitate and don't need expert gaming skills (Chess, 2020). Therefore, casual games can be understood and learned quickly (Chess, 2020; Kuittinen et al.,2007, as cited in Cote,2020). Kultima states that casual games are designed based on acceptable content that could be played by various players who have different gaming competencies (Kultima cited in Cote, 2020). Thus, casual games generate an opportunity to involve fresh players in the gaming field; however, these new players are constructed mainly by women who play games like finding concealed materials (puzzle games) (Chess, 2020; Cote,2020) or arrangement games, especially on time planning (Chess,2020). In addition, Jesper Jull asserts that casual games can be stopped anytime, and punishments are more tolerable when someone fails in a casual game (Jull cited in Cote, 2020).

Kafai et al. state that the gaming industry sees female players as a central customer base (Kafai et al.,2008, as cited in Cunningham, 2018, 25). According to Vanderhoef, many people do not want to be categorized as gamers; thus, casual games appeal to them (Vanderhoef, 2013, as cited in Cunningham, 2018,26). Moreover, Cunningham (2018) discusses how casual games are perceived as a feminine type of digital media (2018:26). Therefore, casual games' growth speed produces the idea that girl gamers are unqualified to play hardcore games; because they lack the required gaming skills (Condis, 2018,55).

Eventually, the assumptions are constructed based on essentialist arguments by the gaming industry, and categorizations are made throughout hardcore and casual games (Condis,2018). Hardcore gamers are seen as equal to males, and casual gamers are seen as females (Condis, 2018,55). According to Braxton Soderman (2017), it is undeniable that gendered discourse's existence is intertwined with casual and hardcore games (Soderman, 2017,41).

1.3.3. Pink Games

According to Carolyn M.Cunningham (2018), the gaming industry has created "girl games" since the 1990s, and the industry aims to produce games that will appeal to female players by employing gendered themes, such as fashion, cooking, make-up, home decorating (Cunningham, 2018,15-21; Condis,2018,56). Subrahmanyam and Greenfield state that the game "Barbie and Fashion Designer" is known as one of the most popular girl games (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield,1998, cited in Cunningham, 2018,21). In addition, girl-directed games' characteristics are shaped by female protagonists, such as Disney princesses (Cunningham, 2018,21; Condis,2018,56). Focusing on the characters' storylines, narration that consists of relationships, and rich graphics generate most of the traits of girl-directed games (Cassell & H. Jenkins,1998, as cited in Cunningham, 2018,21). Therefore, the identification process between girls and the main protagonists pleasures the girls who find pink games entertaining (Rejimersdal, Peters, and Noort,2013, as cited in Cunningham, 2018,21).

On the other hand, game developer companies like "Purple Moon" wanted to raise the rate of female players in computer gaming culture (Condis,2018,56). Still, they produced their games based on an essentialist argument: that girls do not have enough talent to play games (Condis,2018,56). Therefore, Megan Condis (2018) states that pink games or girl games are trapped in a manageable level (2018:57). In addition to this, "girl-friend mode" is generated primarily in First Person Shooter (FPS) games for people who are bad at FPS games but have the ambition to play these kinds of games just for having fun or helping other players

(Soderman,2017,41). However, game developers and designers shape “girl games” to female label players in the gaming community and culture (Cote,2020,90). Thus, this categorization of “girl games” causes the masculinization of hardcore games (Cote,2020,90).

1.4. Research Questions

Based on my arguments, I aim to answer three research questions to understand gaming culture in Turkey and gender inequalities that are embedded in the League of Legends through gaming space, language structure of gaming communities, stereotypes, and prejudices.

My research questions are as follows:

1) How does gender inequality operate through the gaming culture of the League of Legends Turkey Server as an online gaming sphere?

2) In what ways is gender inequality embedded in the LoL Turkey Server & what are the characteristics of the gendered gaming culture in the LoL Turkey Server?

3) How are gendered aspects manifest through a communication channel in the LOL Turkey Server?

1.5. The premise of the research

This thesis contributes to Gender and Women’s Studies by exploring the gender inequalities operationalized, embedded, and maintained in the gaming culture of the League of Legends Turkey Server. The gaming industry has been proliferating, and I will discuss this in detail in section 2.1. I think it is significant to shed light on gamers’ experiences and the language used in League of Legends, especially from the gender lens, because I experienced that many cis-heterosexual male

gamers usually tease about experiences about the video content that consists of how cis-heterosexual female gamers harassed or discriminated against in online video games. Therefore, analyzing gamers' experiences in the League of Legends Turkey Server is crucial to understanding and developing arguments about how entrenched gender inequality affects gamers' experiences. In addition, I think this research will be a resource for other researchers to conduct further research exploring gender inequalities embedded in the gaming culture in Turkey.

I conducted parallel mix method research to generate an extensive and detailed analysis of gendered inequalities intertwined with gaming culture. Despite such illuminating studies on esports and gaming culture in Europe and the United States, I have realized there needs to be more research on this subject in Turkey. However, there is some invaluable research that is conducted in various disciplines and subjects, such as addiction and gaming relationships (e.g., Göymen and Ayas,2019; Yeşildal et al., 2019, Taş and Güneş,2019), the gaming industry (e.g., Kepenek,2018), esports and digital gaming (e.g., Kaya Erdem and Civan Kemiksiz, 2019; Alioğlu and Algül,2021), and gender inequality and esports (e.g., Alp et al., 2020).

1.6. The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is constructed into five chapters:
Introduction (Chapter 1) presents this thesis's main arguments. Also, the backgrounds of the hardcore, casual, and pink games are offered to create an idea about the gaming industry and various gaming communities. Because this thesis elaborates on the game League of Legends, the structure of the League of Legends is introduced in this chapter. Lastly, the research questions that I try to find answers to in this thesis are displayed in Chapter 1.

Literature Review (Chapter 2) first portrays the gaming industry and the relationship between gender inequality and the gaming industry. Secondly, the scholars and researchers address gaming culture, the definition of gamer, gaming

space, and the gaming community from a gendered lens. Therefore, it is discussed how the gaming culture and the gaming community have become a gendered space. Also, the literature review presents a theoretical tool: the *gamerlect* that I used to create patterns from the quant and QUAL data. *Gamerlect* is significant because it operates as a discourse and part of the male-peer culture.

Methodology and Method (Chapter 3) presents the processes and methods I used to answer my research questions. This thesis methodology is constructed with a feminist lens by creating meaningful patterns depending on the diversity of my sample groups in this thesis. In addition, I utilized CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) to evaluate the specific discourses depending on the *gamerlect* used by interviewees, my participant observation results, and the open-ended questions in my survey. Also, seeking power relations through the gaming community and gender inequality has led me to conduct feminist methodology and critical discourse analysis. Also, I utilized the parallel mix research method in this thesis. Quantitative data is gathered from the study that I conducted. Qualitative data, which generates the primary part of this thesis, is formed by in-depth interviews and participant observation.

The Results (Chapter 4) present quantitative and qualitative results analysis together. Therefore, I display my results based on the research questions I constructed for this research. The results are combined with *gamerlect*.

The Conclusion (Chapter 5) presents solution suggestion, a summary of the main points and conclusion of the thesis. The limitations of this research and further research suggestions are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Rise of Online Multiplayer Gaming in the World and Turkey

The gaming industry consists of four sectors, which are consoles, such as "Playstation or Xbox, pc gaming, MMO (Massively Multiplayer Online) gaming, and small games" (Kerr cited in Ensslin, 2012, 34). Three brands, Nintendo, Sony, and Microsoft, dominate the console market, generating an oligopoly (Ensslin,2012,34). The revenues from games have been enormously rising (Ensslin,2012,34). Edge defined the budget for producing console games as around 10-15 million dollars in 2007 (Edge cited in Cote,2020,43). Because of the immense price of designing games, many journalists have reached a similar decision: the high production cost has reduced any chance of novelty or ventures (Cote,2020,43). Amanda C. Cote (2020) states that well-known and big gaming companies prefer to put their financial funds into success-guaranteed game series to decrease the risk minimum (2020:43).

One million dollars were generated from MOBA as a Pc Free-to-Play (FTP) game in North America in 2010; $ 156 million was the revenue in 2011 (gamesindustry.biz cited in Statista, 2015). $499 million was created from the MOBA genre and FTP games for PCs in North America in 2015 (gamesindustry.biz cited in Statista, 2015). League of Legends is one of the significant examples of FTP games because Riot Games created the LoL as an equal form for whole players, those who have computers, and didn't develop a structure that includes pay-to-win (Nutt cited in Jarrett, 2021, 103). For instance, different costumes of characters that players in the League of Legends select are defined as skins, and players can buy them from the LoL server. Still, this alteration of skins does not give any advantage to any player (Jarett, 2021,103).

2.1.1. Rise of League of Legends and Esport in the World and Turkey

According to Juniper Research, the range of customer base boosted from $25 billion to $43billion in the years between 2017 and 2021 for the game genres, which are MMO and MOBA games (Juniper Research cited in Statista, 2017,8). As I indicated in the Introduction, League of Legends was released in 2009. Tencent[5] had 93% of the shares of LoL in 2011(Jarett,2021,107) and purchased the whole allocated portions of the League of Legends from Riot Games in 2015 (Lin and Zhao, 2021,17; Jarett,2021,107). Moreover, Reuters stated that the League of Legends' profit was determined as $1.63 billion in 2015; after that, it increased its earnings to $2.1 billion in 2017 for the whole world by Riot Games and Tencent Holding (Reuters, as cited in Statista, 2021; Jarett,2021,107). The revenue of League of Legends was determined as $1.75 billion worldwide in 2020 (Reuters as cited in Statista, 2021).

According to recent research on multiplayer online games, "MOBA games have been growing increasingly popular and captivate their player base by virtue of complex game mechanics and competitive nature. Riot's *League of Legends* claims to have over 67M monthly active players and grosses over 1 billion US dollars of revenue yearly" (Martens, Shen, Iosup, and Kuiper, 2015, 1). Erdinç İyikul, Director of Publishing Riot Games in Turkey, stated that more than 100 million gamers play the League of Legends every month; also, 15 million users play LoL in Turkey (Game In Turkey, 2019). In 2018, 2 million new users generated LoL accounts, and players spent 400 million hours playing the League of Legends in 2019 (Game In Turkey, 2019).

Esport (Electronic sports) is defined as "a form of competition that is facilitated by electronic systems, particularly video games; the input players and team as well

[5] Tencent Holdings was established in 1998 and is one of the biggest companies that own or have partial shares of an enormous vastitude of games worldwide (Jarrett, 2021, 107). According to Gaudiosi, Tencent dominates to a certain extent, which is one-third of the profits that originated from the "top ten" worldwide gaming companies (Gaudiosi cited in Lin and Zhao, 2021,18).

as the output of the Esports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces" (Hamari and Sjöblom 2016, as cited on Sun, 2017,4). There are many similarities between sports and esports. Both have audiences, teams, coaches, and players who should perform their skills. For instance, Turkey's three leading sports organizations, Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray, and Beşiktaş, have created their esport teams for each competitive game.

On the other hand, the increase and growth of the gaming sector created tournaments in several games in several countries. In addition to these, many investors made their teams for these tournaments. As a result of this increase and growth, the tournaments for these games were accepted as a sport and officially known as an esport worldwide. For instance, more than 1 million people watched the final LoL esport match in Turkey (Game In Turkey,2019). In addition to that, the attention to the esport league of the LoL has constantly been increasing. While 14 million people watched the World Final Championship for League of Legends in 2015, 21.8 people watched the World Final match of LoL each minute (Game In Turkey,2019).

2.2. The Gaming Industry and Gender Inequality

According to Shira Chess (2020), the assumption of the relationship between video games and feminism counters each other (2020:4) because men and boys were seen as primary sources of spectators for video games "in the 1980s,1990s, and early 2000s" (Chess, 2020,4). On the other hand, Chess (2020) argues that the primary source of spectators of video game perception has changed by half of the gamers defining themselves as female (2020:4). However, the female players' rate increased from 42.8% (Gaming In Turkey,2019,41) to 45% (Gaming In Turkey, 2020,55) between the years 2019 and 2020.

In my opinion, even though half of the gamers have identified themselves as female, the gaming industry's primary focus has remained on male audiences because, as I suggested in the introduction, most female players still play games

that are called casual games. Many male players dominate hardcore games as both a player and an audience. For instance, according to Statista's research, a survey conducted among 1,560 people, the female rate for those who play multiplayer online games is twenty-two percent (Statista, 2017). Still, the male rates are thirty-seven percent (Statista, 2017). On the other hand, the female rates of those who say that they don't play multiplayer online games are forty-one percent, and twenty-one percent of males replied with the same answer (Statista,2017). Therefore, female players are still a minority in competitive gaming genres, such as MMOs, MMORPGs, MOBAs, and FPS games.

The game industry has created the category of hardcore gamers to explain the dedicated customer base (Kerr cited in deWinter and Kocurek, 2017,59). Jennifer deWinter and Carly A.Kocurek (2017) contribute to Ker's argument by saying the industry does not just identify players; gamers also choose to be part of this community (deWinter and Kocurek, 2017,59). Furthermore, Bonnie Ruberg defines mass media consumers as "straight, white, middle-class males" (Ruberg, 2017,200). Therefore, it is possible to develop a correlation between the game industry and hardcore gamers through Ruberg's definition of the mass media consumer.

The way that I see that the game industry generates most of the games is based on the satisfying pleasures of cis-gender, heterosexual, and white men. According to Adrienne Shaw (2014), different depictions could only be designed by game industries based on the logic of customer bases' requests. Still, the representations of other communities are possible only as their depictions are profitable (Shaw, 2014,17-18). Therefore, disregarded communities, such as cis-heterosexual women or queer individuals, are omitted, except they are seen as lucrative opportunities for the market (Shaw, 2014,29). Another possibility to represent themselves depends on the attention they will receive from different spectators (Shaw, 2014,29). In addition, Brenda Braithwaite states that game developers and designers finally understood that there are cis-heterosexual women and

LGBTQIA+ individuals interested in playing female or queer protagonists in video games (Braithwaite cited in Shaw, 2014).

Quantic Foundry's research, which is a survey with 1,266 respondents, 56.80% of female participants said that it is vital for female protagonist representation in video games, and 17.10% of male participants replied as the same answer; however, 5.90% of female respondents said that it is not important at all to see female protagonists in video games (Quantic Foundry,2017). Therefore, I believe it is crucial to see an increase in video games with a female protagonist in video games to facilitate an identification process for cis-heterosexual women and queer players.

Various characters allow being or behaving differently for the gamers; however, the interviewees that took part in Shaw's research explained that the female characters are superficial or rudimentary in the games they played (Shaw cited in Cote, 2020,61). On the other hand, Cote's research illustrated that the character identification process matters to some gamers because the participants of Cote's (2020) research stressed that the minimum number of female characters shows that game developers or hardcore game designers don't take women seriously as gamers or they did not matter for the game industry's customer base (2020:61). In addition to that, Lotz states that the first imagined depiction of a gamer is male by the game designers (Lotz cited in Cote,2020,64). The second idea taken for granted by game developers is to generate oversexualized female characters and focus on male characters (Lotz cited in Cote,2020,64). This idea reinforces the essentialist notion that men are insatiable about sexuality (Lotz cited in Cote,2020,64).

Hence, Cote (2020) states that hardcore game structures generally suggest three possibilities for the identification process for women players (2020:65). The first one is that women could internalize the stance of masculine agency, which causes reducing the identification process for them their selected character, the second one is female players could obstruct to the dichotomy that is generated through

female characters' positionality, and the third one is "active female persona" (Cote,2020, 65-66) could be used. On the other hand, an active female persona also could be created through the hyper-sexualization of female characters (Cote,2020,65-66). Therefore, games are not impartial to gender ideologies and stereotypes (Everett cited in Ensslin,2012,36). The game industry has remained fundamentally based on fructuous obligations (Everett cited in Ensslin,2012,36). Because of this reason, it is impossible to create other discursive structures than the dominant form (Everett cited in Ensslin,2012,36).

Moreover, the majority, which is 88.5 percent, of game designers are male, and the minority, which is 11.5 percent, of game designers, are female (Gourdin cited in Williams et al., 2009, 830). Robert Mejia and Barbara LeSavoy (2018) created a significant relationship between the game developers and the lack of female protagonists' representations (2018:84). According to Heron et al., game scenarios and selling strategies are developed through male main characters in the game industry (Heron et al., cited in Mejia and LeSavoy, 2018,84); therefore, Mejia and LeSavoy (2018) state that this game construction plans don't fit the gamer demography (2018:84), because as the Entertainment Software Association's gamer distribution data by gender suggested the game customer base have been acknowledged as heterogeneous (Mejia and LeSavoy, 2018,84).

Despite the increasing number of female gamer developer rate as I stated above, Edwards et al. state that video game designers accept diversification's significance but also it is essential to see improvement in the industry (Edwards et al., cited in Mejia and LeSavoy,2018,85). However, according to Mejia and LeSavoy (2018), heterogeneity consciousness in the game industry hasn't been completely implemented in the female character representations (2018:85). Therefore, Fron, Fullerton, Moire, and Pearce defined this process as the "hegemony of play" (Fron et al. cited in Cunningham, 2018,3). For instance, according to Corriea and Farokhmanesh, Ubisoft alleged that they don't have enough wherewithal to produce games that focus on female characters who animate vivaciously and

actively (Corriea,2014; Farokhmanesh, 2014; cited in Mejia and LeSavoy, 2018,97).

In this section, I argued how the gaming industry prioritizes hardcore gamers as primary audiences. Therefore, the narratives of hardcore games have remained in a dichotomy where men are saviors and women are the ones who are protected by male characters. Because men are seen as the leading target group of the gaming industry, female representations still lack in the gaming industry. Even though the number of female game designers has increased, awareness of diversity still needs to be implemented in the representations of game characters. In the next section, I will discuss how this uneven gender distribution contributes to gender inequality in the League of Legends. In addition, it is significant to see how League of Legends champions is gendered based on their designed roles.

2.2.1. Uneven Gender Distribution in Characters of the Game: The League of Legends

On the other hand, 154 characters are defined as champions in the League of Legends, and 150 are portrayed as male or female (Cheryl-Jean Leo, February 8, 2021). In addition to that, the champions are separated based on their roles, which are “Assassin,” “Fighter,” “Mage,” “Support,” “Tank,” and “Marksman” (Song et al.,2021; Cheryl-Jean Leo February 8, 2021). The gender distribution among champions is designed as ninety-four male and fifty-six female characters (Cheryl-Jean Leo, February 8, 2021). Still, it is crucial to see how champions are allocated based on their roles.

According to Cheryl-Jean Leo, there are thirty-seven assassin champions in the LoL, and fourteen of thirty-seven champions are female; fifteen fighters are also female among sixty-five fighter champions; fifteen of forty-six mage champions are female, seven of forty-one tank champions are female, and the role for marksmen champions are almost distributed equally, which is fourteen male marksmen and thirteen female marksmen (Cheryl-Jean Leo, February 8, 2021).

On the other hand, the only role in that female characters are distributed more than male champions is the support role; twenty-one of thirty-six support champions are female (Cheryl-Jean Leo, February 8, 2021). I believe that the gender allocation among the LoL champions is significant for the unequal representation of characters in the game industry because there is a connection, mainly generated within the LoL; those female gamers can only play the support role and not the ones that are tank champions.

According to Bonnie Ruberg, Riot Games declared that Varus, one of the ad carry champions in the LoL, was gay in 2017 (Ruberg,2019,5). In addition, Neeko is announced as the second homosexual champion in League of Legends by Matt Dunn, who is the senior story author of Riot Games (Carpenter, November 19, 2018). Diversification is an objective to be achieved for Riot Games. The creative producer Tyler Eltringham, who is the creative producer in Riot Games, said: "In a world where a space dragon visited your planet, and someone just threw a flaming teddy bear at you, two dudes kissing isn't going to make anyone bat an eye" (Tyler Eltringham cited in Carpenter, November 19, 2018). While creating queer characters is an important advancement in the game industry, I believe that the Riot Games' aim of designing queer characters was not about creating awareness around sexual diversity. Designing queer champions is a way in which Riot Games shows that it embraces multiculturalism. I think Riot Games created these champions for commercial purposes to target cis-heterosexual female and queer gamers specifically.

In this section, I discussed uneven gender distribution among the champions in the League of Legends. Also, the number of female champions designed for support is higher than male champions. Support lane is already gendered through the development of these characters. On the other hand, the champions, Varus and Neeko, stories are based on homosexual champions. However, the aim was not to create sexual orientation awareness or diversity by creating those characters. In the next section, I will discuss how female characters are designed as hyper-sexualized champions. The hyper-sexualized female characters are designed for

male audiences. Therefore, the relationship between uneven gender distribution and hypersexualized female characters is about the commercial strategy to reach and satisfy the primary audience.

2.2.2. Hyper-Sexualized League of Legends' Female Characters

Lyndsey DeBoard states (2019) that "sex sells" many companies' marketing strategies adopt arguments by sexualizing the female body to generate more revenues (2019:11). This strategy is implemented in the League of Legends by Riot Games' designs of female champions (Deboard,2019,11). The depictions of female champions are designed as "splash art" (DeBoard,2019,11). DeBoard (2019) defines the splash art as the images of the champions that are shown in the "game launcher" (DeBoard,2019,12) and "loading screen" (DeBoard,2019,12) of any League of Legends match.

Lyndsey DeBoard (2019) argues that Riot Games has depicted the splash art and skins of female characters as "generally thin and curvy with large breasts, impossibly small waists, and full hips" (Deboard,2019,12). Moreover, female champions are mostly displayed as partially dressed, exposing bodies with revealing dresses in League of Legends (DeBoard,2019,12). This strategy is designed to satisfy the male gaze (DeBoard,2019,12). In addition, Kuk (2019) points out that the designers put forward the images of female champions temptingly and appealingly in League of Legends, and Bryan Kuk (2019) gives one of the jungler champions "Evelynn" as an example, which fits perfectly to this description (Kuk,2019,61).

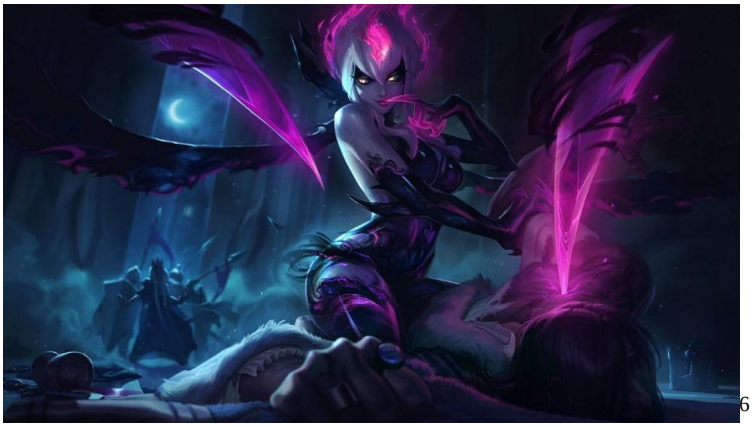
[6]

Figure 3. The appearance of Evelynn in League of Legends.

Therefore, Kuk (2019) states that female champions' overly sexualized representations, like Evelynn's partially dressed body spotlights on her breasts and shapely body size, are chosen mainly by League of Legends to create female characters that satisfy the heterosexual, male gaming community (2019:61). The arguments that Kuk generates, relate to Laura Mulvey's (1989) notions on the male gaze. According to Laura Mulvey, the sexual dichotomy that is developed on men as active and women as passive has been becoming a concrete form in the male gaze by eroticizing the female body for the pleasure of the male audience (Mulvey,1989,19). Therefore, the hypersexual design of Evelynn is also created for the pleasure of the cis-heterosexual male audiences.

On the other hand, Riot Games created the top laner female champion, "Illaoi," a woman depicted in a muscular body, in 2015 (DeBoard,2019,12). Deboard (2019) pointed out that the design of Illaoi, which is different from eroticized "hourglass" (DeBoard,2019,13) body shape of female champions, was significant in creating contradiction among hypersexualized female characters' portrayals.

[6] (Retrieval date: 08/19/2022 https://www.leagueoflegends.com/tr-tr/champions/evelynn/)

[7]

Figure 4. The appearance of Illaoi in League of Legends

According to Lyndsey DeBoard's research (2019), the rate of the male champions, which reveals their skin such as waists, breasts, abdominals, and legs, is only 36% (DeBoard, 2019,47) among 72 male characters in the League of Legends. In addition, the rate of female champions that are designed with revealing dresses is 60% (DeBoard, 2019,47) among 42 female characters. On the other hand, DeBoard (2019) generated a matrix based on female characters' moral attitudes, which are defined as good, neutral, and evil by DeBoard, and portrayals of hypersexualized bodies, which are identified as hypersexualized, overtly sexualized, and subtly sexualized (DeBoard,2019,55). According to this matrix, DeBoard (2019) stated that the characters, those who have "evil and chaotic" narratives within the League of Legends universe, are depicted more revealed and eroticized than the good or neutral ones (2019:55). From my perspective, Lyndsey DeBoard's connection is crucial to understanding how societal immorality is connected to women's exposure of their bodies. Therefore, DeBoard stated (2019) that this configuration also demonstrates how girls are divided into "bad" and "good," which is determined by the moral principles of society through girls' choice of dressing.

[7] (Retrieval date: 08/19/2022 https://www.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/champions/illaoi/)

In this section, I discussed how female champions are designed hyper-sexually. Therefore, the main reason for creating hypersexual female champions is to prioritize male audiences' pleasures because men are seen as the primary customers of hardcore games and the League of Legends. In the next section, I will discuss how women employees that worked at Riot Games experienced sexism, harassment, and gender discrimination. Hyper-sexualized female characters and uneven gender distribution among characters in League of Legends are related to the notion that cis-heterosexual male gamers construct the primary target of marketing strategies of the gaming industry. The problem with regard to gender inequality in the gaming industry, however, runs deeper. The experiences of former female employees of Riot Games attest to the notion that the gaming industry does not merely target cis-heterosexual men as players through the allure of the hypersexualized female characters but also has failed to address sexism in the workplace. That is to say, these designing strategies are not simply market-driven but are also tied to male domination, to which not only the players but also the employees are subject.

2.2.3. Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment at Riot Games

Even though the League of Legends is one of the momentous games that Riot Games have designed and developed, Cecilia D'Anastasio's article (2018), "Inside the Culture of Sexism and Riot Games," revealed sexual harassment incidents that happened to former female employees of Riot Games. For instance, one of the anonymous female interviewees had received an e-mail aimed at harassing her by stating that one of her co-workers sexually defined his intention as "penetrating" (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). She learned that a list was written to specify who to "sleep" with, and she was added to that list created by supervisors (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). By exposing sexual harassment cases that occurred in Riot Games, Cecilia D'Anastasio also made public the sexist insults and gender discrimination behaviors during recruitment processes against women by conducting interviews with twenty-eight present and former employees of Riot Games, and most of their experiences were cited anonymously in the Kotaku (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018).

Hardcore gamers are defined as those who play MOBA games or First-Person Shooter games, such as Call of Duty, by Riot Games (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). The ideal Riot Games employee' is created through being a hardcore gamer and embracing the "bro culture" (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). Therefore, many women are rejected in their requirement processes and are not considered for promotion at Riot Games (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). Even though women who play hardcore games are questioned as true hardcore gamers by men at Riot Games (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). For instance, one of the interviewees, D'Anastasio, stated that she did not interest in LoL because she preferred to play WoW (World of Warcraft) rather than the League of Legends (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). Another example is one of the participants who revealed that the recruiter repeatedly questioned her gamer identity (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). Riot Games also accepted that they search for dedicated hardcore gamers (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018).

Moreover, meritocracy has not worked at Riot Games. Many women, who had worked there, struggled to get a promotion. For instance, another interviewee stated that she was not promoted; instead, a man in the same position was promoted just because "he was bored" (D'Anastasio, July 8, 2018). Therefore, gender discrimination in promotion has been another critical issue between former women and current Riot Games employees. These incidents resulted in one hundred fifty Riot Games' staff quitting their jobs and sexual harassment filed as lawsuits; therefore, they have created the most enormous "protest" against Riot Games in the chronicle of the games industry (Holden et al., 2020,13).

These protests and lawsuits have manifested the resistance of women against sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and violence that they were subject to by men at Riot Games. Also, these events point out how gamerlect is a language form that consists of sexist swear words and rape discourse and creates a hostile environment where harassment, transphobic, and homophobic practices can exist. Thus, the internalization of gamerlect by men who work at Riot Games has

normalized these practices in the gaming industry. Also, the experiences of former female Riot Games employees are similar to what female gamers have encountered in gaming communities and spaces:

1) Women's gaming identities have been questioned in gaming communities and industry and they are not considered "real gamers." They had to prove it to "real gamers," males.
2) Whether women exist in the gaming industry as an employee or in the gaming space as a gamer, they experience sexual harassment.
3) Women are stonewalled when promoted in both the gaming industry and in ranked games.

Therefore, the experiences of former female employees of Riot Games are one side of the problem. These experiences point to a system of oppression, i.e., male dominance, which perpetuates sexist practices and gender discrimination. In addition, I will discuss in detail how female gamers have been exposed to harassment and limitations in the gaming community in Results section 4.0.

2.2.3.1. Gender Discrimination at Riot Games Turkey

Riot Games have encouraged International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia since 2018 (Riot Games, May 17, 2018). As Riot stated in their announcement for Pride 2021, they maintain to stand by the LGBTQIA+ community (Riot Games, May 17, 2018). Therefore, Riot Games implemented special rainbow effects to the champions for those who chose to play with rainbow trails (Riot Games, May 17, 2018)

. [8]

Figure 5. Illustration of rainbows in League of Legends for Pride Fest

However, many League of Legends players and I have realized that Riot Games Turkey decided not to implement these effects into the League of Legends Turkey Server. Riot Games Turkey announced the Color Festival, which was created instead of Pride 2021 (Esguerra, May 18, 2021). They explained this festival by stating its purpose was to "celebrate the different colors of spring" (Esguerra, May 18, 2021). However, Riot Games Turkey's neglect policy was highly political because of the anti-LGBTQIA+ discourses of the government, the Justice and Development Party. As Bianet reported, the products that consist of Rainbow and LGBTQIA+ themes have been brought an age limit, which is +18, by the Ministry of Commerce (Bianet, 2020, December 9). The age limit to LGBTQIA+ themed products was to protect children from the damaging effects that the children may have (Bianet, 2020, December 9). Although many the League of Legends users contacted Riot Games Turkey by sending tickets, which is the direct method of getting through to Riot Games' officials about any issues or complaints that users experience; however, nothing has changed (Esguerra, May 18, 2021). In addition, Riot Games publicized a declaration to answer Tyler Esguerra's article by saying, "Our top priority was making sure players could access this content in as many places as possible. To comply with local laws meant changing labels for some of the regions in which we publish. We hope we'll be able to celebrate with Pride globally" (Riot Games cited in Esguerra, May 18, 2021).

[8](Retrieval Date: 08/19/2022 https://www.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/news/community/celebrate-pride-2021-across-and-beyond-runeterra/)

However, this incident wasn't the only problem Riot Games Turkey has created for the LGBTQIA+ community. Mustafa Kemal Gökseloğlu, known as "Dumbledoge," was a professional support player in the League of Legends Esports League in Turkey (Lol. Fandom, n.d.). Dumbledoge left the "Papara Supermassive" team that he was playing in 2017, and he announced to tell why he quit the team (Matthiesen,2020). Dumbledoge said that he saw the homophobic discussions screenshots, which were made behind him in a message group, and these homophobic discourses were written by professional other esport players, who are known as Trix, Panky, and Elwind, in the Turkish League of Legends Esports League (Matthiesen, 2020, February 23). On the other hand, Dumbledoge shared his experience with Riot Gamers' first referee and asked if they could penalize these esport players (Dumbledoge cited in Matthiesen, 2020, February 23). Still, the first referee responded negatively because these discussions were private (Dumbledoge cited in Matthiesen, 2020, February 23).

However, Riot Games Turkey had to announce that they would not penalize these players, and these homophobic discourses couldn't be punished because of the time-out (Matthiesen,2020). In their words:

> We are aware that the decision we make will disappoint many people, but we would like to clarify one issue in order to give confidence to our fans and to be honest with our players: If a similar private meeting took place today and reported within 12 months, the issue would be investigated and then the penalties specified in the Global Esports Penalty List could be applied (Riot Games, cited in Matthiesen,2020).

As a result of this decision, esport players, who created homophobic discourse against Dumbledoge, kept playing in the Turkish League of Legends League until 2020.

In this section, I argued how women's gaming knowledge and their gamer identity are questioned and discriminated against by men in Riot Games. In addition, women employees of Riot Games experienced harassment, sexism, and gender

discrimination, especially on the issues of recruitment and promotion. However, Riot Games Turkey applied to censor policies to Pride Fest, which is conducted globally in the League of Legends. Also, the other professional esport players did not punish thoroughly depending of their behaviors against Dumbledoge. On the other hand, gaming culture is not independent of male dominance. In the next section, I will discuss how gender inequality is embedded in the gaming culture. Essential arguments about femininity and masculinity surround gaming culture. It is significant to understand how these arguments permeate into gaming culture. Therefore, it is possible to see the relationship between gender inequality and gaming culture that affects both the gaming industry and the gaming community.

2.3. Gender Inequality in Gaming Culture

According to Cynthia Cockburn, technologies intertwine gender identities through capabilities and know-how (Cockburn, 1992). Cockburn (1992) argues that men have been the image of utilizing technology since "the Renaissance, modern science" (Cockburn, 1992,37). Therefore, masculinity has been associated and shaped with technological expertise and talent (Jenson and de Castell,2010,54). According to Jennifer Jenson and Suzanne de Castell (2010), technical inadequacy is associated with women through essentialist explanations. This essentialism is seen as one of the characteristics of a suitable way for displaying femininity (2010:54). Therefore, where I stand, gaming culture hasn't been liberated from these essentialist arguments that are imposed on women because the relationship of the game culture with masculinity is still a sphere that female gamers fight in it (Cote, 2020,108).

Several definitions, which are explained without focusing on gender, are made to identify the gaming culture. For instance, T.L Taylor identified "online gaming culture" as where communal habits and shared identities are generated within the game (Taylor cited in Shaw,2010,406). Soraya Murray (2018) defines game culture as particular practices and groups that are gathered around games; thus, the terms "player culture or fun culture" (Murray,2018,4) are also associated with

games. However, it is impossible to separate games from the structures, which are cultural and prevalent ideologies (Murray,2018,24). In addition, Adrienne Shaw defines the features of game culture as “masculine, heterosexual, and white” (Shaw cited in Murray,2018,24).

Gaming culture originated from the hardcore gamer, which is idealized by the gaming industry (Shaw,2014,45). There is a connection between the subjects of the gaming culture and the idealized hardcore gamer image. In addition, Megan Condis (2018) has contributed to the discussions of the masculinization of gaming culture. According to Megan Condis (2018), gaming is taken for granted as a “masculine institution” (Condis,2018, 48). Hence, the increase of female gamers in the gaming culture has created “gender trouble” (Butler cited in Condis, 2018,45) for male gamers, and the participation of female gamers has threatened their privileged position in gaming (Condis,2018,48). Despite the limited presence of women in video games as gamers, according to Pham, gaming culture does not embrace them (Pham cited in Shaw, 2010, 408) because gaming culture isn’t a different space where misogyny and repressive conduct are normalized in popular gamer cultures (Shaw, 2014,2).

On the other hand, feminists, who critique games, gaming culture, and the industry were identified as “feminazis or killjoys” (Ahmed cited in Chess, 2020,65). According to Ahmed, killjoys destroy fun, pleasure, or joy that others feel (Ahmed cited in Chess,2020). Therefore, it is essential to support “playful feminism” (Chess,2020,67) for women who spend their leisure-time to playing games because the utilization of play as a form of protesting allows being better living and creating activism (Chess,2020).

2.3.1. Gender Inequality in Playing Games as a Leisure Activity

Shira Chess (2020) conceptualizes games where those are analyzed and examined by feminist game academics within the framework of “playful is political” (Chess,2017,16). “The playful is political” argument is constructed on women’s

and girls' decisions shaped by the gendered politics of free time (Cunningham,2018; Chess,2017). However, young people have been introduced to gender inequalities at home through the division of domestic labor since their early ages; while boys were devoting their time thirty percent less to domestic work, they could find time to play games two times more than their time that they spent for the household work (Swanbrow cited in Cunningham,2018,49)

Braxton Soderman (2017) contributed a different perspective to the relationship between leisure time and gaming. According to Soderman (2017), one of the features of casual games is the ability to postpone or disrupt the gaming experience; therefore, the possibility of discontinuity of gaming affects the free-time (2017:53). On the other hand, this discontinuity is associated with the threat for hardcore gamers' gaming experience that requires a certain continuity (Soderman,2017,53). The fear of hardcore gamers is triggered by this notion of gender equality in free time (Soderman,2017,53).

Zek Valkyrie (2017) is one of the game scholars that generate contributed to games studies; hence Valkyrie approaches the perception of gaming from the stigma of "wasted time" (Valkyrie, 2017, 72). When an activity within leisure time couldn't meet the expectations of the productiveness shaped by society's moral judgments, gamers have trouble with the imagined relation between gaming and the stigma of unproductive activity conducted in free time (Valkyrie,2017,72). Like Valkyrie (2017), Cote (2020) also argues about the effects of labeling games as an "unproductive" (Cote, 2020,108) way of spending time. Because of this label, female gamers stand up against the "cultural norms that indicated they should not be playing" (Cote, 2020,18) in their free time, and they try to deal with their guilty conscience in themselves (Cote,2020,108).

According to Valkyrie (2017), the activities defined as fun and entertainment are limited to a minimum amount of time. Playing is usually associated with childishness or immature activity (Valkyrie,2017,73). Despite gaming culture being defined as a masculine sphere by many game scholars, as I argued above,

Valkyrie (2017) points out that the relationship between gaming and childishness affects grown-up people (2017,74). Those who play games are defined by the gendered term “man-child” (Valkyrie,2017,74). Therefore, there is no place for games in imagined and constructed adulthood (Valkyrie,2017,74).

On the other hand, as I noted in the other sections, male gamers’ rate is higher than female gamers’ rate within the ownership of technological equipment to play games; therefore, unequal distribution of the gaming tools affects the participation of female gamers in the gaming culture. For instance, Gilmour suggested that girls had lower opportunities to receive computers from their family members than boys in 1999 (Gilmour cited in Cote, 2020,87). However, Jenson and Castell stated that gender inequalities have continued despite the increase in ownership of computers at home (Jensen and de Castell cited in Cote, 2020,98). On the other hand, GlobalWebIndex’s quantitative (survey) research proves that Gilmour’s research is still relevant today instead of Jenson and de Castell’s claim.

According to GlobalWebIndex’s work, which was constructed by 19,488 participants between the ages 16-64, 39% of PC and Laptop gamers were female, and 40% of game console players were females (GlobalWebIndex cited in Statista, 2021). However, males and females that play tablet gaming had the same percentage, which is 50% (GlobalWebIndex cited in Statista, 2021). I believe this data is crucial to see that there is gender inequality to access and distribute technological instruments for playing specifically hardcore games because most of the hardcore games are designed to play, whether on PC, gaming laptops, or consoles.

In this section, I argued how men are related as technological masteries and women are seen as technologically inadequate. Also, gaming as a leisure activity is seen as a waste of time. However, men can spend more time gaming by not doing domestic work. Therefore, the household work embedded with women as traditional gender roles affects women’s gaming activities that can be played in their leisure time. In addition, women’s participation in the hardcore gaming

culture is considered gender trouble for male gamers. Because of the relationship between men and technology, the definition of a gamer is also gendered. Thus, in the next chapter, I will discuss how other scholars and journalists define the gamer.

2.3.2. The Definition of the "Gamer"

Christopher A. Paul's (2018) definition of "gamer" consists of a gender-neutral perspective. Paul (2018) states that the term gamer is centered on consuming practices. It is about comprehending how games operate based on fundamental presumptions and who are defined as the subjects of the playing activity (Paul, 2018,68). Therefore, according to Adrienne Shaw, the use of the term gamer has been causing the elimination of different gaming experiences conducted by many players (Shaw cited in Paul 2018,68). According to Cunningham (2018), the games created for females are not assumed as actual games. For instance, Chess (2020) states that it is not enough to play a casual game, such as Candy Crush or Diner Dash, for a long time in a day to be identified as a "gamer" because the games that casual gamers have been playing do not fit the category of the "real games" (Chess cited in Cunningham, 2018,23). The "masculine culture of hardcore gaming" (Cunningham, 2018,23) also determines who can be identified as a gamer.

However, Leigh Alexander and Dan Golding have created a shockwave within "real gamers." Leigh Alexander, a gaming journalist, points out that the alteration of gaming culture has caused the death of the gamer status by the increasing numbers of cis-heterosexual women and queers in the gaming community (Alexander cited in Condis, 2018,2). Alexander stated that people do not identify themselves as gamers anymore because they have seen the gamer as an outdated label (Alexander cited in Condis,2018,2); therefore, Leigh Alexander said that "gamers are over" (Alexander, August 28, 2014).

In addition to Alexander's argument about the death of gamer status, Dan Golding argued that conventional gamer distinctiveness has evolved into something

unimportant within gaming culture; therefore, those who identify themselves as gamer suffer from the deprivation of their privileged and prioritized status within gaming industry (Golding cited in Condis,2018,2). In addition to Golding's and Alexander's controversial notions of gamer identity, Shaw introduces the term "gaymer" (Shaw cited in Westcott, 2018,260). Gaymer is a term that is an integration of a player's sexuality and gamer identity (Shaw cited in Westcott,2018). Even though this term is an example of how gaming culture has slowly started to change, on the other hand, according to Jennifer deWinter and Carly A.Kocurek (2017), even though the numbers of male and female gamers had been balanced, masculinity has been sitting at the center of explanation for the term "gamer" (2017:58).

In this section, I argued how several scholars and journalists conduct the definition of a gamer. On the other hand, Alexander's and Golding's arguments on "the death of the gamer" have generated anxiety in hardcore gamers; because of the fear of losing the gamer identity that they have embraced. However, "gaymer" shows players' gamer identity and sexual orientation. Consequently, in the next section, I will discuss how cis-heterosexual male gamers create the gaming community as a homosocial space.

2.3.3. Gaming Community and Game World as a Space

"Technoutopians" (Turner cited in Condis, 2018,5) suggested that people's everyday life practices have shifted from the physical environment to the online sphere. Therefore, the concrete form of the human body that consists of several identities would have been eliminated in the online sphere (Turner cited in Condis,2018). Technoutopians have imagined the online sphere as a place where people would be critiqued based on their cooperation, how they are smart or enlightened, and their personalities; hence, they argue that people would not be judged or discriminated against based on their skin or gender identity (Condis, 2018,6).

As Allucquere Roseanne Stone points out that the discourse of the idealized cyber world is constructed on the full of notions that virtual worlds promise liberation from the limitations of the human bodies; hence, the virtual world designers hope to see that people will neglect their appearances (Stone cited in Condis,2018,6). In addition, similar to Stone's arguments about cyberspace, Alison Adam states that technoutopians' objective is built on the foundation of "meat-free" (Adam cited in Condis,2018,6) fantasies (Adam cited in Condis,2018,6). Therefore, according to Adam, people interested in cyberculture claim that they leave behind their physical images (Adam cited in Condis,2018,6). However, according to Megan Condis (2018), these technoutopians would have imagined a social arrangement or, in Condis' terms, "a new social order" (Condis,2018,6) where people will be liberated from afflictions that are resulted from "racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism" (Condis,2018,6).

According to Megan Condis (2018), constructing the virtual world as bodiless forms has created the fundamental reasoning behind this space. These bodiless cyberspaces have given the power, which is the ability to escape their bodies, to the people who exist in these fields (2018:7). In addition, Sherry Turkle suggests that the virtual worlds allow "gender swapping" (Turkle, 1995, as cited in Condis, 2018,7), which is the transition between various gender identities and the creation of space where emergent genders and invalid genders could be brought into the existence. Turkle argues that these opportunities in virtual worlds have offered to operate like a formation where awareness could be increased about the problems that gender inequality has created (Turkle,1995, as cited in Condis,2018,7).

However, Turkle and other game scholars have written about "gender switching" (Roberts and Parks, 1999, 522; Huh and Williams, 2010, 161) or "gender swapping" (Huh and Williams, 2010, 161; Jenson et al., 2015), gender-swapping is one of the features of online games that have offered. Lynne D. Roberts and Malcolm R. Parks define "gender switching" (Roberts and Parks,1999,522) in cyberspace as a declaration of someone's own gender identity different from that person's assigned sex (Roberts and Parks, 1999). Therefore, Turkle emphasizes

that the shift between gender identities is a usual experience that can be seen as ordinary conduct, which offers an opportunity for a peaceful and comfortable way to investigate someone's virtual world self (Turkle cited in Roberts and Parks, 1999, 525).

According to Diguseppe and Nardi, gender-switching is one of the common features of online game players in game worlds that offers players to choose different gender identities (DiGuseppe and Nardi cited in Huh and Williams, 2010, 161). However, Searle Huh and Dmitri Williams pointed out a lack of research about why gamers switch their gender identity within online games (Huh and Williams, 2010). Zaheer Hussain and Mark D. Griffiths' research, which consists of 119 respondents, eighty-three males and thirty-two females form, demonstrated that gender swapping had been used by fifty-seven percent of the game players (Hussain and Griffiths, 2008,48). Hussain and Griffith (2008) stated that one of the motivations for gender switching of female gamers is to avoid the unwanted attention of male gamers (2008:52). Furthermore, another reason defined by one of the respondents of, Hussain and Griffith and she indicated that male gamers' behaviors against her have altered when she has chosen male character during the games (Hussain and Griffith, 2008,52). Therefore, Hussain and Griffith's and Huh and Williams's research reveal that female gamers use gender-switching as a survival strategy in the gaming culture and gaming community.

On the other hand, many game scholars have criticized the theories constructed by technoutopians or the "magic circle" concept. Games, especially online game worlds, have been built as "homosocial spaces" (Cote,2020; Janish,2018; deWinter and Kocurek, 2018; Sedgwick,1985) for men to create relationships with each other. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) uses the term "oxymoron" (Sedwick,1985,25) to describe homosocial pleasure because homosocial resembles the word "homosexual" (Sedwick,1985,25). Still, at the same time, homosociality signifies itself by differentiating its structure from homosexuality (1985:25). Homosocial spaces have been operated to create "male bonding" (Sedwick,1985,25) through activities that are identified with anxiety and

detestation of homosexuality, which is also known as homophobia (Sedwick,1985,25). The system constructed around the male homosocial spaces has kept women from the connections created in various fields (Sedwick,1985,54).

Furthermore, Megan Condis (2018) criticized the technoutopian arguments by stating that the Internet and guaranteed liberation from the physical body have culminated in the hegemony of heterosexual white men who belong to the middle class (2018:9). Therefore, the people, who are harassed because of their gender identities, races or sexual orientations, are held responsible for the insults, because according to Condis (2018), those who are experienced harassments might have chosen to switch their identity to privileged ones to avoid harassments (2018:9). People, who make their identities visible such as black, women or LGBTQIA+ individuals, have brought their unwanted identities into the cyberspace (Condis,2018,9). Correspondingly to Condis' (2018) counterarguments to technoutopians, the online gaming community also has the same white male hegemony that is constructed for the Internet.

Amanda C. Cote (2020) states that female gamers are seen as a danger in the gaming community, which is defined as a homosocial space for men to create ties with each other (2020:97). In addition, Jennifer deWinter and Carly A. Kocurek (2017) show that men who play games embrace the act of playing games and their community like a final fortress that should be defended as an only homosocial place against mixing various gender identities (deWinter and Kocurek, 2017,60). Therefore, female gamers must put more effort forth for games to be recognized as members of the gaming community in which they take part (Cote,2020,103).

However, in Cote's (2020) argument about female gamers' hard-working behaviors in the hardcore gaming community, some research contradicts Cote's notions. For instance, according to the study that Hartman and Klimmt conducted suggested that female gamers were not seen to vie as much as male gamers, and female gamers' primary goal was not based on being victorious in games (Hartman and Klimmt cited in Cunningham, 2018,19). Like Hartman and

Klimmts' results, Hamlen demonstrated that the duration of time devoted to games by female and male gamers alters the ambitions strengthened by victories and achievements (Hamlen cited in Cunningham,2019,19). Therefore, Hamlen states that the girls who invest less time in competing in games, their ambitions are not identical to male gamers' emotions regarding game success (Hamlen cited in Cunningham, 2019,19).

On the other hand, in the research Fisher conducts, Jenson and de Castell suggest that homosocial spaces constructed by female gamers have established fields where girls could improve their gaming skills and self-assurance in games (Fisher, Jenson, and de Castell cited in Cunningham, 2019,19). In addition to female homosocial gaming communities, two of the participants of Malin Sveningsson's research are members of the "PMS Clan" (Sveningsson, 2012,105), and this clan is a homosocial place where female gamers can have a good time, experience rivalry, and adequate space (Sveningsson, 2012,105). Therefore, the PMF Clan protects itself and the sense of rivalry by banning the "sexism and harassment of female players" (Sveningsson, 2012,105), which I have defined as a cornerstone of the gaming culture that males dominate. Due the fact that the existence of female homosocial gaming communities, such as the PMF Clan, fits with Sedwick's argument (1985), which is that females' alliances and ties are also relevant to the term homosocial (1985:27).

In this section, I discussed how the online sphere is seen as a "meat-free" space where people get rid of their identities. Accordinly, the assumption is that sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and racism would not exist in the online spaces. However, people bring their identities to online spaces. Thus, the gaming community is constructed as a male-dominated homosocial space. On the other hand, as Sedwick suggested, women create a bond by constructing their homosocial space as a safe community where they can be away from harassment and sexism. In the next section, I will define *gamerlect*. I will argue how *gamerlect* as a theoretical tool operates as a discourse and part of the "male-peer culture."

2.4. Theoretical Tool: Gamerlect

As I stated in 1.2, "*gamerlect*" is the term that I have transformed from Astrid Ensslin's concept the "buddylect" (Ensslin, 2012, 109). According to Ensslin (2012), "buddylect" functions to detect people who do not fit into the "buddies" by a structured language that is encrypted and specialized (2012:109). The gamer community that Ensslin called "buddies" (Ensslin, 2012, 109) internalizes the buddylect; therefore, they can recognize themselves and their way of playing and utilize it purposefully (2012:109). Furthermore, I defined *gamerlect* as a language form and discourse that embodies game-based terms, sexist swear words, and trash talk, but also, *gamerlect* creates an available environment for harassment, heteronormative, homophobic, and transphobic practices to become possible. On the other hand, I argue that gamerlect operates in two ways: the first one is that *gamerlect* is a discourse (Foucault, 1981), and the second one is that *gamerlect* functions to detect and eliminate gamers that do not fit into the homosocial gaming sphere where it is dominated with "male peer culture" (Katz, 2006, 7).

2.4.1. Gamerlect as Discourse

How does the *gamerlect* operate itself as a discourse? According to research, antagonistic forms of conduct and verbalization are manifested online where hardcore gamer communities are established (Consalvo, 2012; Ivory et al., 2017, as cited in Cote, 2020). In addition to Consalvo's and Ivory et al.'s research, Amanda C.Cote (2020) states that one of the reasons for this result is the "trash-talk (Cote,2020,75), which is created as a benchmark and norm of the hardcore gaming community (2020:75). Lisa Nakamura defines trash-talk, which is constructed by swear words and harassment, as "a form of discursive waste" (Nakamura,2012, cited in Cote,2020, 76). Also, Nakamura suggests that most gamers consider this form of language to generate significant and unavoidable attribution of online multiplayer gaming culture (Nakamura,2012, cited in Cote,2020). Gray (2014), Nakamura (2012), Salter and Blodgett (2012), as quoted in Cote (2020), meet on a common ground, which is homophobia, sexism, and

racism engender cornerstones of trash-talking; therefore, the groups that have vulnerable identities such as cis-heterosexual female gamers, LGBTQIA+ gamers struggle to deal with trash-talk, which attacks directly to their identities.

Since trash-talk is seen as an inescapable and crucial part of the hardcore gaming culture, most gamers' reason for protecting this language form is to preserve their homosocial place. That's why women who have been criticizing and poking the hornet's nest are called "killjoys and feminazis" (Ahmed cited in Chess, 2020,65) in gaming culture, as I discussed previously. As specified by Sara Mills, discourse is not just a composition of a series of statements (Mills, 2003, 54). According to Michel Foucault (1971), discourse is obliged to go along with body language expressions, conduct, situations, and the collection of signs (1971:62). Therefore, the *gamerlect* is not just about the use of language, trash-talk, and sexist swear words. Also, online harassment is a practice that consists of rape discourse in the *gamerlect*. Referring to Nardi (2010) and Salter and Blodgett (2012), as cited in Cote (2020), trash talk is not free from the rape discourse. Amanda C. Cote (2020) asserts that the rape discourse is used to define events for in-game activities. According to Cote (2020), the statement "You just got raped!" (Cote, 2020, 76) is preferred rather than saying the champion or the character that you play was killed. The example Cote gives directly shows the same statements I have encountered in the League of Legends. On the other hand, Megan Condis (2018) focuses on "trolling" (Condis, 2018, 16), which is defined as a purposive action to irritate or enrage various people, communities, or a particular person in online spheres (Cambria et al.,2010 cited in Condis,2018,16). However, Condis (2018) alleges that trolls provoke their targets using sexist swear words (Condis,2018,16). Also, Codis' (2018) rape is one of the most frequent discourses of trolls that they have been utilizing to illustrate their control and power over the other gamers in gaming culture (2018:16).

According to Foucault, discourse is a structure that produces meaning and knowledge under historical conditions (Adams 2017). Discourse endures and survives under tangled ties developed among "institutions, economic and social

processes, behavioral patterns, system of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization" (Foucault, 1972, 45). Discourse, in other words, constructs how meaning is obtained, arranged, and classified. This discursive structure is built through power relations. Therefore, discourse can mask itself in this structure as objective and unchangeable. In this study, I approach gamerlect as a discourse describing the norms around how gamers behave, act, and speak. Cis-heterosexual young male gamers who internalize and normalize this gamerlect as a discourse exclude other individuals who do not fit in the homosocial order and are not the subjects (but rather, the objects) of discourse. For instance, gamerlect as a discourse includes rape jokes, normalizing rape in the everyday speech acts of the "real gamers." When cis-heterosexual women and queer gamers react to the use of rape in this way, they become stigmatized and pushed out of the gaming community.

In addition, discourse Sara Mills asserts that in Foucault's approach to discourse, exclusion, as a conception, has a significant place, especially in "The Order of Discourse" (Foucault,1981 as cited in Mills, 2003, 54). Considering Foucault, Mills (2003) states that discourse is about creating an entangled group of practices that construct boundaries around itself to take some practices into the discourse's flow, and the practices that do not fit into the circle of the discourse are excluded from the discourse's flow (Mills, 2003, 54). Therefore, gaming communities that do not fit into and internalize gamerlect as a discourse are kept out of the circle of the discourse.

2.4.2. Operationalization of Gamerlect within Male Peer Culture

Jackson Katz (2006) addresses the violent acts and actions against women have primarily been performed by males (2006:5). Since defining "violence against women is a women's issue" (Katz, 2006,5) has been eliminating the liability and awareness of men to create a justification for not concentrating and taking actions on violence against women issue (2006:13). Therefore, sexist swear words, harassment practices, the rape discourse that generates *gamerlect* is not just cis-

heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers issue. While cis-heterosexual male gamers dominate online multiplayer games, they are also responsible for eliminating the *gamerlect* and reducing harassment practices against cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers. However, in my opinion, it is not easy to transform the *gamerlect* into another language form that does not consist of sexist swear words, rape discourse, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and harassment practices because I think that *gamerlect* is internalized by cis-heterosexual male gamers since their early ages. Therefore, harassment and toxic practices that form the *gamerlect* are seen as inseparable features of the hardcore gaming community and gaming culture.

According to Katz (2006), "male-peer culture" (Katz, 2006, 7) strengthens violent, offensive, and toxic conduct that is engendered in some men's lives. Therefore, male-peer culture looks like hardcore gaming culture. The homosocial hardcore gaming space is where "masculine socialization" (Katz, 2006,99) occurs intensely. As Katz (2006) specified, masculine socialization contributes to the construction of violent and offensive conduct in boys (Katz,2006,119). It transforms them into adults that engender violent and harassing practices. Male-peer culture legitimizes insults, misogynistic jokes, abusive language, and violence within constructed masculine conduct (Katz,2006,119). Sexism, harassment practices, and rape discourse are normalized and established as standard language that forms the hardcore gaming community. Creating a gamer identity and feeling of belonging to hardcore gaming culture relate to the argument of "one of the guys" (Katz, 2006, 118). According to Katz (2006), the oppression of the feeling of belonging is formed in boys and men regardless of their racial and class-based identities (2006:118). In addition, the sense of belonging triggers to contribute sexist gags by laughing to illustrate the shared identity and ownership of that masculine community (Katz, 2006, 123).

Because *gamerlect* is seen as a masculine textual performance, politeness and kindness as a textual performance are related to femininity. Therefore, gamers who utilize a language form different from the gamerlect are easily detected. As

specified by Megan Condis (2018), surveillance over gamers' behaviors is established by gamers to examine and expose any behaviors that can be identified as feminine or queer through a single hegemonic masculine gaze (2018:15). Thus, the features of the *gamerlect*, which are the knowledge about game-based terms, practices, and certain behaviors such as harassment and toxicity, the use of sexist swear words, and internalization of rape discourse, has been constructing a specific way of masculine textual performance in the hardcore gaming community, especially in the League of Legends. Therefore, Condis' arguments are crucial to understanding how the toxicity within *gamerlect* operates as a detection mechanism for "others" in the gaming community.

2.4.3. Kindness and Politeness as Detection Mechanism

The textual performance of the *gamerlect* as discourse is utilized to determine femininity and queerness through the hegemonic masculine gamer gaze. Hence, the *gamerlect* function as a sole gaze is internalized by every hardcore gamer. Therefore, it is possible to say that every hardcore gamer monitors the gaming communities and spheres to distinguish the others that don't belong to their homosocial place. As explained by Herring (1994), as cited in Elyse Janish (2018), the reflection and the use of kindness as a form of language are seen in women's textual performances in online spheres; on the other hand, while men are capable of constructing a language that is based on toxicity in their magic circle, women are obliged to exercise politeness in a language form, such as please or thank you, for being visible (Herring,1994, as cited in Janish,2018, 229). Besides Herring, similar patterns have been found in Guiller, and Durndell (2006), Taylor (2006), Martey and StromerGalley (2007), and Massanari (2017) as cited in Janish (2018) about kindness has been adopted as a language form in women's textual performances than men.

In addition, according to Elyse Janish, kindness and politeness are two characteristics that gaming culture, dominated by hegemonic masculinity, has

been deterring (Janish,2018,229). Still, at the same time, groups or individuals who utilize this form of language are abused and flamed in gaming culture and competitive gaming communities (Salter & Blodgett,2012; Bell, Kampe & Taylor, 2015; as cited in Janish, 2018,229). Therefore, kindness is one of the textual performances seen as equal to femininity and used to expose female gamers in online gaming spheres and the Lee of Legends. Because kindness, both as a practice and as a verbal form, stays out of the *gamerlect* discourse, it becomes much easier to be discovered within the gaming community.

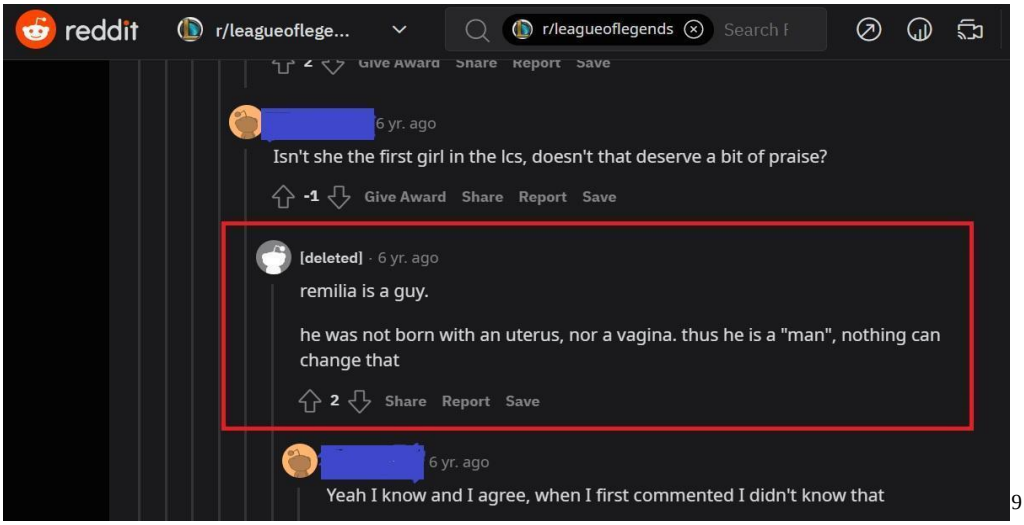
Besides politeness, the emotional response that emerges as a reaction to toxicity is another way of exposing individuals or communities who do not fit into the *gamerlect*, gaming community, and gaming culture. Emotional responses burst, especially when trolls choose their targets and decide to provoke them in the gaming community or during the gameplay. Condis (2018) argues that trolls are in an ambush in the gaming community. Therefore, Condis (2018) evaluates the responses against trolls in two factions that are given to the act of trolling through reactions. The bait determines the factions. If someone understands that they confront a troll and behave against the troll's bait with the presence of mind, then this behavior is seen as rational and related to masculinity (Condis, 2018,16).

On the other hand, Condis (2018) asserts that if the other faction does not understand the bait and engages in an emotional response, they give what the troll desires the most (2018:16). However, the faction that takes the bait is related to feminine identity (Condis,2018, 16). Therefore, trolls, who perform a set of practices and signs of the *gamerlect*, function as a surveillance and detection mechanism of *gamerlect*. They identify the subjects that couldn't wholly internalize the *gamerlect* in gaming culture. Therefore, I think Condis' argument is crucial about textual performance because she states that "elite gamers are defined precisely as those who enact a masculine textual performance." (Condis,2018,16), and she concludes by saying a masculine textual performance does not relate to somebody's assigned sex or biological sex; because inexperienced gamers haven't internalized the male textual performance yet, they

fail when they encounter the toxic environment of the gaming spheres (Condis,2018,16)

2.4.4. Operationalization of Gamerlect

As I specified, the *gamerlect* is a discourse consisting of heteronormative, homophobic, transphobic, harassment practices, gestures, and signs. As a significant case, Remilia was one of the professional players in the North American League of Legends Championship Series (Janish, 2018), but at the same time, she was the first woman that played at the highest rank that can be played professionally (Eberhard,2015; LeJacq,2015 cited in Janish, 2018,243). According to Elyse Janish, Remilia's transgender identity created most of the debates rather than evaluating her gameplay, talent, and proficiency (Janish, 2018, 243). Such as a Reddit discussion trade between two commentators, which I found below, that I found about Remilia shows how transphobia was generated through her gender identity and genitals; rather than debating on her success or in-game tactics.



[9]

Figure 6. Example of some comments that were written for Remilia on Reddit

[9](Retrieval Date: 08/18/2022 https://www.reddit.com/r/leagueoflegends/comments/43m33a/remilia_leave_renegades/?sort=ol)

Gamerlect operated through every aspect for her. Despite climbing the stairs of meritocracy within the League of Legends, her success wasn't at the center of the comments which are made by the gaming community (Janish, 2018). The pronoun "it" has been used to define her by most gamers or audiences (Janish, 2018, 251). Thus, the gaming community has portrayed her as "monstrous and abject" (Janish, 2018, 251). In addition, her gender has been problematized regarding sexuality and desire (Janish, 2018). Some gamers complained that they couldn't even masturbate by looking at her image and specified that they would like to see "real" girls in the professional esport area (Janish, 2018,251). Therefore, Janish's argument was critical to understanding how the gaming community has feared the chance of homosexual prurience or aspiration (Janish, 2018, 251).

Also, Remilia could have found the chance to play just six matches in NA NCL, and after that, she pulled herself out of her team (Conditt,2015; Boatman,2016, as cited in Janish,2018,243). About "male-peer culture" (Katz, 2006, 7), sexual harassment, violence, and toxic practices that Remilia experienced are pertinent here to Remilia's position. According to Katz (2006), cis-heterosexual males have been quiet about sexism, sexual harassment, and physical violence (2006: 125). Katz determines two monitoring and detection tools to create males' reactions against these subjects. These two detection tools are implied to decrease the possibilities of daring constructed masculinity by speaking publicly about sexism and protecting heterosexuality by eliminating the inquiries about heterosexuality (Katz,2006,125). In addition, the weak homosexual labels are related to males who give a voice against sexism and heteronormativity (Katz, 2006, 125). Therefore, the League of Legends gaming community's silent reaction against the sexual harassment and violent conduct of Remilia points out that masculine socialization prevented them from giving a voice because of the risk of alienating them from the gaming community. On the other hand, Remilia is the one who is forced to exclude from the is-heteronormative, masculine gaming community.

Therefore, Remilia's precarious position wasn't amended by the authorities, such as analysts or journalists who are related to NA LCS (Janish, 2018, 244). Remilia was incarcerated in between the dichotomies: such as male or female, esports player or not by the gaming community (Janish, 2018, 244); therefore, she was kept outside of the homosocial place despite the fact that she was a professional esports player. She wasn't considered as a member of the community because of her gender. Also, as stated by Elyse Janish, the process that started by creating derogatory practices and the set of signs against Remilia resulted in protecting and reconstructing the barriers of their homosocial gaming community, significantly sustaining leverage of the cis-heterosexual masculine in the professional area of game-playing (Janish, 2018,244).

2.5. Summary

In this section, I discussed how gamerlect operates as a discourse and gamerlect is part of the "male peer culture." Therefore, textual performances of kindness and politeness work like a detection mechanism in gaming communities and spaces. In addition, I discussed Remilia as a case to show how gamerlect operates in the professional League of Legends esport gaming community and space. On the other hand, Cecilia D'Anastasio's article (2018) showed how former female employees of Riot Games experienced sexual harassment, sexism, and gender discrimination. Therefore, it is possible to think of those experiences from the framework of gamerlect because harassment practices, sexism, rape discourse, and sexist swear words are part of the gamerlect, and just like the gaming community, some men who work in the gaming industry also internalize and normalize gamerlect in their behaviors. Also, Dumbledoge's experiences about how other professional esport players humiliated him because of his sexual orientation is another instance of the gamerlect. Remilia's, Dumbledoge's, and former female Riot Games employees' experiences are not disconnected. They are examples of male dominance and gamerlect in the gaming industry and community.

On the other hand, hyper-sexualized female characters, a few queer champions, and uneven gender distribution among characters in League of Legends showed that males are seen as the primary audience in League of Legends. Also, hyper-sexualized female characters are designed as commercial and marketing strategies to reach that leading target group. In addition, designing queer characters was part of showing that Riot Games adopted a multicultural perspective in developing champions. They also aimed to reach queer gamers to gain them as new customers. On the other hand, most female characters are designed for support roles. Therefore, through this strategy, the support lane becomes gendered. However, in the next section, I will explain the methodologies, data, and research methods I utilized in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

3.1. Background of methodologies and methods of this research

The question that gave rise to this research is the following: “Do other women experience forms of violence as I do in the League of Legends?” In this thesis, I tried to answer how gender inequalities are embedded in the League of Legends gaming culture through different subjects and experiences. I utilized feminist methodology and critical discourse analysis. My primary motivation for employing feminist methodology is to point out the power relations that shape the gaming community and culture in the League of Legends Turkey Server. In addition, these power relations are tied to patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies.

According to Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland, “feminist methodology is one set of approaches to the problems of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, 10). According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) “feminist knowledge is grounded in experiences of gendered social life, but is also dependent on judgments about the justice of social relationships, on theories of power and on the morality of social investigation” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, 3). Therefore, the know-how of developing knowledge is based on power relations and results in inequalities, and feminist methodology requires creating theories of power (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, 13). As specified by Ramazanoglu and Holland, producing feminist knowledge is based on “qualification and empirical investigation” (Ramazanoglu and Holand, 2002, 16). Therefore, contemporary feminist researchers focus on power relations around gender, which are historically contingent (Ramazanoglu and Holland,2002). I utilize a feminist methodology to

illustrate the gendered power relations between cis-heterosexual female, male, and queer gamers in League of Legends Turkey Server. It is significant to show this entangled relationship through a gendered lens because gender inequality, harassment, sexist swear words, and trash talk is usually left behind in the discussions of gaming culture, gaming communities, academics, and the gaming sector. Therefore, the feminist methodology helps me take up gendered gaming experiences and develop feminist knowledge.

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis is significant for me to see how *gamerlect* creates the discourses shaped in the text panel of the League of Legends matches by gamers and how heteronormative they are. Martínez suggests that critical discourse analysis does not just show the relation between discourses and ideologies that result in oppression; also, critical discourse analysis encourages the alterations of the power relations constructed socially and culturally (Martínez, 2007). According to Fairclough (1995) and Wodak & Meyer (2001), as cited in Ensslin (2012), critical discourse analysis provides researchers to for seeing the discourses that are created in culture, especially in media and ideological structures through identity formations, such as gender, race, ethnicity. As specified by Normal Fairclough, the CDA aims to "denaturalize" (Fairclough,1995, 65) discourses. In addition, the CDA investigates the causal connections between discourses such as practices, incidents, and linguistics (Fairclough,1995,132). He constructs a power relationship about how these discursive forms are created by certain connections (Fairclough,1995,132). In addition, critical discourse analysis was crucial for me to conduct participant observation to see power relations through the textual performances of gamers.

Along with feminist methodology and critical discourse analysis, I deployed parallel mixed-method research to find answers to my research questions. According to Hesse-Biber, a researcher's way of problematizing their questions determines which method(s) that they will use to design their research; therefore, mixed research that is constructed by quantitative and qualitative methods should generate patterns that the researcher needs to find for responding to the research

questions that they design (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 44). Furthermore, the research questions I constructed depend on quantitative and qualitative methods to understand and inquire about how gendered inequalities are embedded in the male-dominated gaming community in the League of Legends Turkey's server.

In addition, Hesse-Biber (2010) states that the oppression that shapes the lives of communities or individuals, depending on their gender, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic positions, has been kept in the dark in conventional knowledge and research (2010:2). On the other hand, mixed methods research has created an opportunity to focus on intersectional relationships of discriminated identities, which are mostly pointed out by feminists, postmodernists, post-colonialists, and critical theoreticians, that the conventional mode of knowledge production has not engaged in (Hesse-Biber & Crofts, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy,2006, as cited in Hesse-Biber, 2010). Therefore, I think that feminist methodology, critical discourse analysis, and parallel mixed research complement each other because these methodologies' and mixed-method research's commonality is to show power relations and produce knowledge beyond traditional knowledge.

3.2. Data and Methods

Mixed research consists of quantitative and qualitative methods to explain a specific or combination of questions (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 3). The term "QUAL" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 64) specifies where the qualitative part of research constructs as a prominent section. In contrast, the word "quant" represents the quantitative part of the research where quantitative data strengthens the qualitative data results in mixed methods that form the research structure (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 64). Therefore, this thesis will be used the term "QUAL" to point out how cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ individuals' experiences in the League of Legends Turkey Server are shaped by the gendered structure of the gaming community. Hence, the quantitative data of this thesis will support the arguments which will be resulted from the qualitative data. As specified by Hesse-Biber, both qualitative and quantitative methods can be planned "sequentially" (Hesse-Biber,

2010, 64); also, they can be formulated simultaneously (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The quantitative and qualitative tools to generate data are constructed concurrently in the “parallel mixed method designs" (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 68)

Hence, I developed my methods concurrently because I wanted to see and interpret the upcoming results of the quantitative data with the qualitative data. Also, I found opportunities for comparing the quantitative and qualitative data by conducting parallel mixed research methods. Even though Hesse-Biber critiqued the similar mixed research by focusing on the harmony between them; also, the quantitative data could be overshadowed by the prioritization of qualitative data by the researcher’s non-straightforward involvement in quantitative data (Hesse-Biber,2010).

Following the parallel mixed research, design enabled me to understand quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Qualitative data helped me to see the representation of demography based on gender, age, education, and employment status. They helped me understand whether gamers internalize sexist swear words that generate the gaming community of the League of Legends Turkey’s Server. While the quantitative research supported the qualitative methods’ patterns that evolve slowly, the qualitative part shed light on the cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers’ experiences.

Furthermore, this research creates a space where cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ individuals’ voices are heard. In addition, this thesis analyzes cis-heterosexual women’s and LGBTQIA+ individuals’ experiences based on how gender inequalities are operated and embedded in the League of Legends gaming culture. Therefore, this point relates to a feminist methodology based on creating knowledge from the experiences of queer and cis-heterosexual female gamer communities rather than ignoring them.

3.3. Research Design: Parallel Mixed Methods

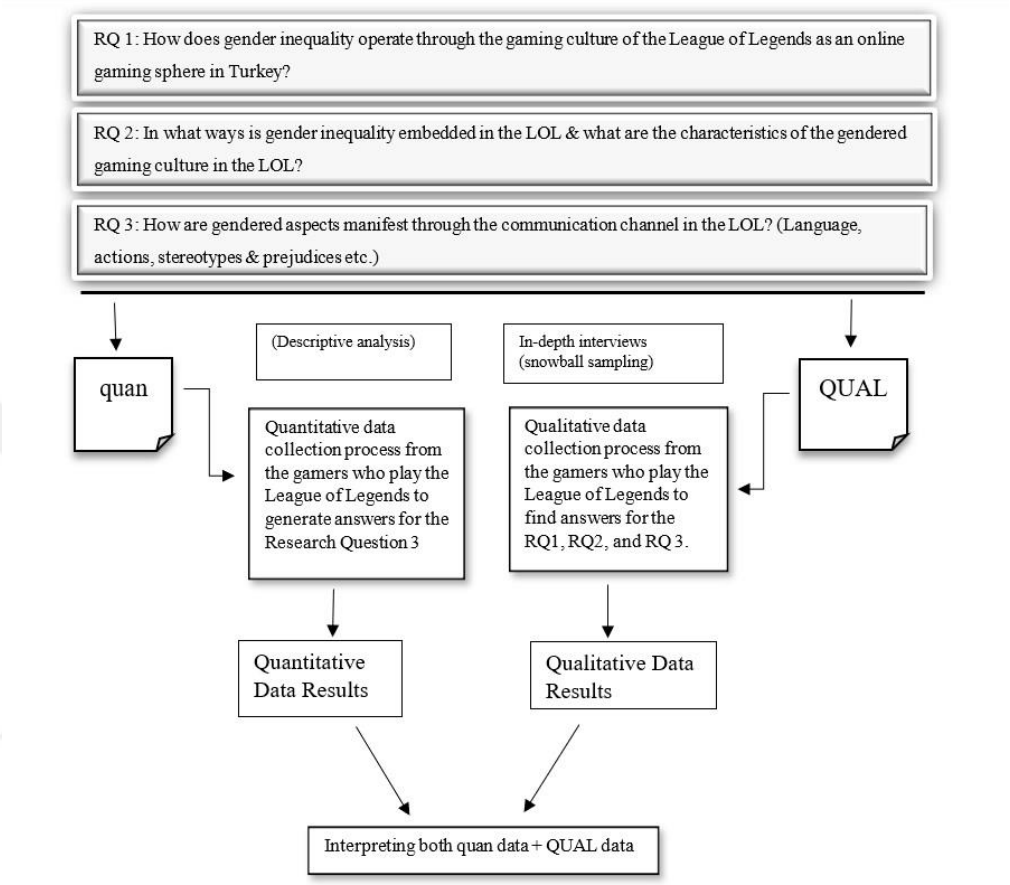


Figure 7. Overview of Parallel Mixed Research Method Design

To discuss the gender inequalities that are embedded in the League of Legends and the way of operating gender inequalities through the gaming culture of LoL, the quantitative method of this research was initiated by using the *gamerlect* within the framework of conceptualization to point out *gamerlect* functions as “discourse” (Foucault, 1981) and part of "male-peer culture” (Katz,2006,7) in the League of Legends Turkey Servers’ gaming community. The operationalization is determined as *gamerlect* is seen in the use of sexist swear words in the communication channel, which is text-panel in the League of Legends, harassment practices, and the essentialist assumptions intertwined with cis-heterosexual female and LGTQIA+ gamers’ in-game skills.

The qualitative phase almost started simultaneously with the quantitative phase to generate more detailed patterns rather than the quantitative phase. The upcoming results that are formed in the quantitative phase gave me an insight that the LGBTQIA+ gamers and cis-heterosexual gamers were generating the minority community in the survey; therefore, the unrepresented groups or groups that had trouble being represented as a number in the survey experiences have gained more significance in the in-depth interview that are constructed in the qualitative phase. That's why the qualitative part of this study will analyze the LGBTQIA+ and cis-heterosexual female gamers' survival strategies in the League of Legends gaming community in Turkey's server.

In addition, the conceptualization of qualitative research is designed as the framework of the *gamerlect* that is strengthened by the survival strategies and the ways of marginalized gamer communities' identification methods with each other. Lastly, the quant and QUAL data results will analyze gender inequalities embedded within the League of Legends Turkey Server's gaming community.

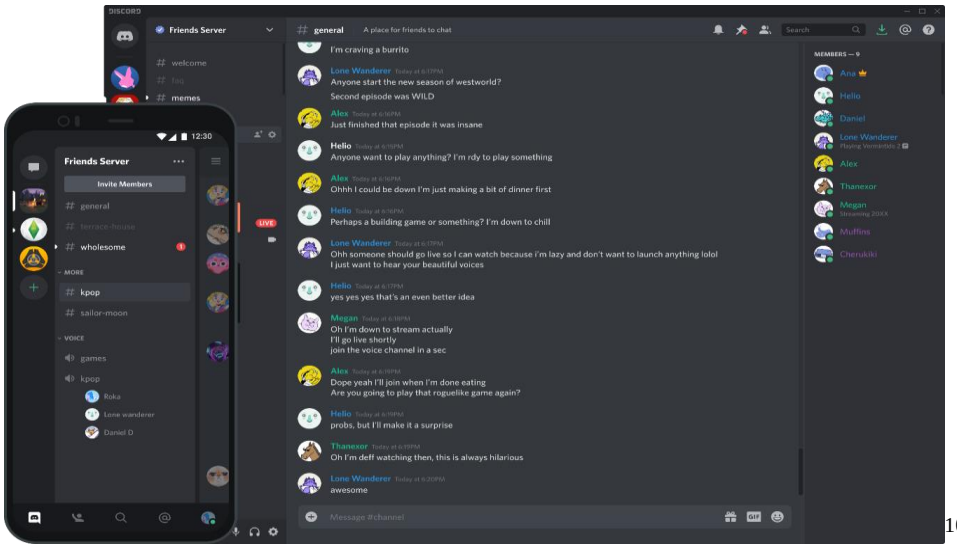
3.3.1. Quantitative Part of the Research

3.3.1.1. Data Collection and Sampling Frame

The pilot study of this thesis, which was done independently, employed a quantitative method and included two surveys administered in 2018. In the first survey, which concerned using sexist swear words in multiplayer online games, 1,506 people participated—1,375 men and 108 women. In the second survey about gaming culture in multiplayer online games, 421 people participated. 289 of 421 participants were men, and 129 of 421 participants were women. Considering prior research, I experienced the importance of observing the unequal gender distribution of gamers in multiplayer online games as a representative form that is gathered from the results of the quantitative data. The pilot study of this thesis included more games than my thesis' focus, the League of Legends. Because I

limited the game genre and the game, I was curious about the gender distribution of my thesis' quantitative data based on the number of gamers who participated in the questionnaire. Therefore, my pilot study influenced me to construct a parallel mixed research design for the thesis that I worked on.

According to W. Lawrence Neuman, sampling's main reason is to engender definitions or the characteristics of the groups or communities studied by the researcher (Neuman, 2014, 246). The target group is generated by the criteria of playing the League of Legends. Furthermore, the quantitative data is gathered from the survey questionnaire between 02/23/2021 – 04/25/2021. As I stated above, the sole criterion for participating in the questionnaire was playing the League of Legends. The questionnaire link was generated in Google Forms and distributed in online spaces; therefore, I could easily reach the League of Legends gaming communities. In addition, Discord, the online application where people can create their servers as spaces, and find opportunities to talk by chat or voice chat rooms (Discord,n.d.), is one of the online spaces where I circulated the link to in the questionnaire.



[10]

Figure 8. Overview of Discord

[10] (Retrieval date: 08/19/2022 https://discord.com/safety/360044149331-What-is-Discord)

Because I was conducting parallel mixed research, I asked some of my interviewees, Twitch broadcasters who have Discord servers generated by thousands of gamers, to help me put out my link on their Discord servers. Therefore, I found a chance to reach various League of Legends gaming communities that play on Turkey's Discord servers. In addition, Twitter circulated the questionnaire link among the League of Legends gamers.

3.3.1.2. Variables of the Qualitative Data

As Neuman (2014) states, the categorization of variables is identified by causal correlation (2014:180). The variable that initiates an impact or engenders the circumstances for another thing is defined as an "independent variable" (Neuman, 2014, 181). Therefore, a "dependent variable" (Neuman, 2014, 181) emerges as a consequence that is generated by the independent variable (Neuman,2014). Neuman (2014) suggests that researchers create their problems based on the dependent variables because events or circumstances, constituted by dependent variables, are the primary triggers that any researcher would like to elaborate on. According to Hesse-Biber, hypotheses are constructed in a structure where researchers put ideas to the test by foreseeing a causal relationship between variables (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Table 1. Variable List

Type	Name	Question
Independent Variable		
	Harassment and sexist swear words.	Whether a respondent had experienced harassment in the League of Legends, whether respondents use swear words in their everyday life, whether respondents use swear words on the text panel

Dependent Variable	Revealing gender identity	Whether women+ respondents hide or reveal their gender identity to prevent harassment
	Gendered pronouns during in-game	The frequency of seeing the phrases like "well-played gentlemen" or "let's have a nice match, gentlemen!"
Explanatory Variable	Gender identity	What is your gender identity?
	Age	What is your age?
	Education	What is your educational status?
	Employment	Are you working?
	Frequency of playing the LoL	How often do you play the League of Legends?
	Lane Choice (Top laner, mid laner, jungler, bot laner, support)	Which lane do you play in the League of Legends?

As the variable table above, harassment and sexist swear words determine the dependent variables in a causal relationship. The revealing gender identity and gendered specified subjects during in-game engender as dependent variables. Therefore, the Chi-square will be used to see the causal connection between variables. The Chi-square test allows a researcher to design cross tables to see the correlation between the variables by looking at the frequency distribution (Norris et al., 2012).

3.3.2. Qualitative Part of the Research

3.3.2.1. Qualitative Component

In this thesis, as I suggested, the qualitative component creates the dominant part of the parallel mixed research. The results gathered from the questionnaire will contribute to determining the biases against cis-heterosexual female gamers' game skills, the internalization of sexist swear words and the harassment practice in the

gamerlect. Therefore, the quantitative data will support the patterns drawn based on the in-depth interviews.

In addition to in-depth interviews, there were two criteria to be one of the participants of this research: the first one was the age criteria, which is determined at the age of 18, and the second criterion was to be playing the League of Legends Turkey's Server. Furthermore, the QUAL data is engendered by in-depth interviews conducted with ten cis-heterosexual female gamers, ten cis-heterosexual male gamers, and ten cis-heterosexual LGBTQIA+ gamers. The interviews of cis-heterosexual male gamers lasted between 20-30 minutes. On the other hand, the length of interviews of cis-heterosexual females and LGBTQIA+ gamers lasted between 40-50 minutes. Because cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers are harassed and discriminated against in the League of Legends gaming community, they have many things to say about their experiences in the LoL.

The voice recording has been used in the in-depth interviews with the permission of the interviewees. I restated that their voice recording, which was gathered from the in-depth interviews, will not be shared with third parties. Therefore, I transcribed the recording myself and didn't use any redacting apps that can be considered a third party, as I did not wish to upload voice recordings to their databases. In addition, the interviewees' names are kept in secrecy. Furthermore, I formed specific themes that generate answers for the research questions that I am interested in. On the other hand, I did participant observation on the dates between 02/23/2021 – 04/25/2021. Therefore, my observations during the League of Legends ranked and unranked matches gave me insights into how gender inequalities operate in the gaming culture and community.

In the gaming industry, game developers prioritize cis-heterosexual male gamers, and the gaming space is constructed as a homosocial place for those cis-heterosexual male gamers. Therefore, the male-dominated gaming communities in the League of Legends and male-centered gaming culture have developed

detection mechanisms to detect and exclude cis-heterosexual female and LGBTIQA+ gamers. Considering qualitative data, this thesis aims to be heard the excluded communities' voices in the academic literature, especially in gaming and gender studies.

3.3.2.2. Sampling Frame

In this thesis, the type of my sample was snowball sampling because, although I define myself as a gamer, it took work to reach cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ individuals who play League of Legends. According to Neuman (2014), snowball sampling is a multi-tiered method where the researchers initiate their research with some people. Depending on the network range of the interviewees, the number of people increases. Therefore, I started looking into Twitch, where various broadcasters generate game content. It is possible to find the contact details of a broadcaster in the "About" sections on their Twitch channels. When I found contact details, I sent e-mails to cis-heterosexual female broadcasters who play League of Legends. After the interview ended, most of the cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers led me to their friends who would like to share their experiences in the League of Legends.

3.3.2.3. Interview Technique

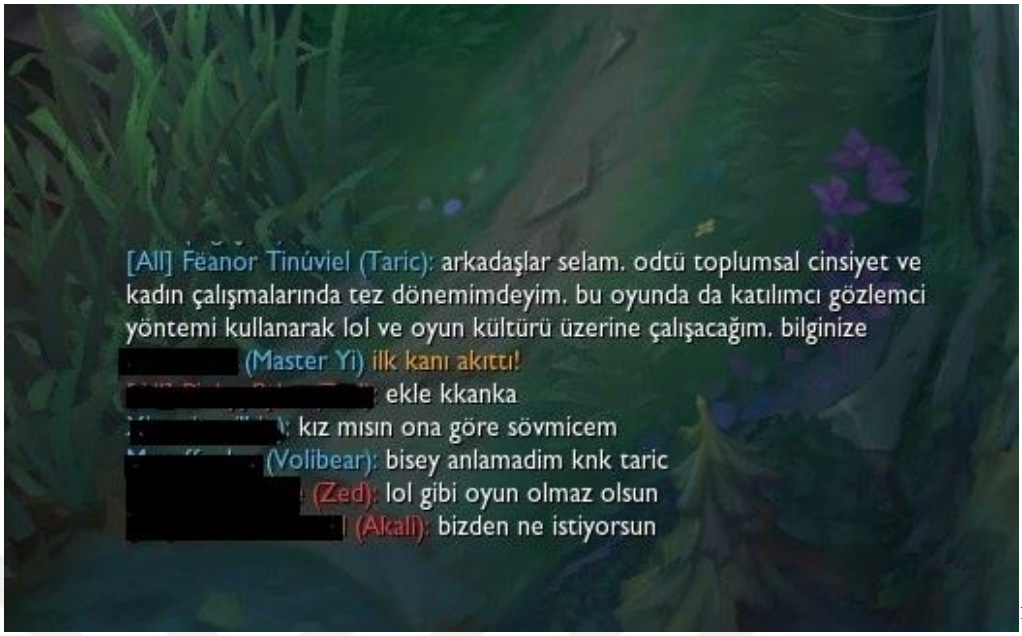
The in-depth interviews were designed with structured questions, and the respondents were informed about the research subject before starting the interview. They also signed the consent forms, which protect their confidentiality. When I started the in-depth interviews, there was a risk of infection by COVID-19. That is why the interviews were conducted in online environments (mostly on Discord), where most gamers use it as a space to sustain communication. The advantage of conducting an online interview is reaching many people who live in different cities than I do. Also, the respondents were in the places where they felt most comfortable. Few respondents didn't want to use cameras because they were broadcasters. I needed to make the participants as comfortable much as possible.

Because I was working with vulnerable groups, I was careful not to trigger the respondents' traumatic experiences and informed them that they could end the interview anytime they felt uncomfortable. On the other hand, the disadvantage of conducting an in-depth online interview was that I couldn't fully see the respondents' gestures, body language, or environment. Still, as I stated, the most important thing was to create a safe and comfortable place to address the gendered inequalities they experienced in the League of Legends.

3.3.2.4. Participant Observation Process

As I suggested at the beginning of this section, I did participant observation between 02/23/2021 – 04/25/2021. According to Neuman (2014), participant observation is one of the methods of qualitative research that any researcher focuses on the environment of the people that are researching, and researchers engage directly with the community (2014:434). Therefore, theoretical contributions evolve from the observations and analysis of the conduct of the communities (Neuman,2014,434).

At the beginning of the participant observation, I tried to conduct non-participant observations. I revealed myself as a researcher who observes their behaviors in the League of Legends ranked matches from the text chat. However, the teammates I played with in League of Legends did not reveal their behaviors, such as using sexist swear words.



[11]

Figure 9. The screenshot 1

The screenshot above illustrates the problem. I revealed myself as a researcher who would observe their behavior during the game. Therefore, I decided to conduct participant observation with the nickname “Feanor Tinuviel " which doesn’t reflect any gender identity and disrupts my anonymity. On the other hand, I changed my nickname from “Feanor Tinuviel” to “feminist queen,” which I used in the League of Legends on April 3, 2021. Therefore, I would like to see the reaction of community members in the League of Legends Turkey Server. I chose the words precisely because feminists in the gaming community are seen as killjoys, and the queen represents my gender identity. Thus, my new nickname was a target of the members who internalized the *gamerlect*. I used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the screenshots of the gamerlect examples from the text panel I received from the games I played.

[11]
[All] Feanor Tinuviel (Taric): Guys hi. I am in a thesis period in METU Gender and Women’s Studies. I will work on this game by utilizing the non-participatory method. For your information.
Zed: Add me as a friend, dude.
Master Yi: Are you a girl? If you are a girl, I will not use swear words.
Volibear: I did not understand dude Taric.
Zed: I am tired of the LoL
Akali: What do you want from us?

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. Operationalization of Gender Inequality in The Gaming Culture of The LoL Turkey Server

As I discussed in the previous sections, there is an uneven gender distribution in online multiplayer competitive games. In this thesis, one of the crucial patterns of the quantitative results portrayed that male gamers constitute most of the participants who play the League of Legends.

Table 2. Gender Identity of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	326	68.2	86.2	86.2
	Female	52	10.9	13.8	100.0
	Total	378	79.1	100.0	

QUAL patterns demonstrated significant conceptions about the operationalization of gender inequality in gaming culture through the definition of gamer and representation of gamer image. Participant 1 is one of the cis-heterosexual female informants of this research. She has been playing games since an early age when she watched her father play games on PC. Therefore, she had yet to become interested in games. She stated about the gaming community and the definition of a gamer:

> Unfortunately, the gaming community that comes to my mind is primarily male, and the definition of the gamer is male because there is a gamer and a female gamer. That is why general audiences form in my mind when I think of games as male. Since the audience is primarily male and when we elaborate on the games

> as products, the games and game developers' primary target becomes the male audience. Therefore, my wishes and demands are not taken into consideration by them. So, I feel like we cannot be precisely in the gaming community as women as men (Participant 1, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 19)

Participant 1's definition of a gamer and the gaming industry's primary targeting policy contributes to how men have dominated the hardcore gaming community as their homosocial place. In Zek Valkyrie's words: "Game worlds still operate as a male landscape" (Valkyrie,2017,170). In addition to Participant 1's definition of gamer, another cis-heterosexual female gamer, queer gamer, and cis-heterosexual male gamer with whom I conducted an interview stated:

> Usually, when it comes to games, an image appears in my head like men play more games. That's why I think it would be more accurate to say that a player base is a male-majority group. Honestly, I hadn't thought of it that way. (Participant 19, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 23)

> In my mind, a mass consisting of 70% and 80% men is formed, but I feel good. The number of female players is increasing day by day. That's a good thing, and they'll accept whatever. I feel more like a guest in the gaming world. It changes according to the game but is like a guest in other games, except LOL. (Participant 24, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 23)

> In conditions like Turkey, if we look at it from a gender perspective, we saw 95-98% of men in internet cafes when we were little. Men used to play games, which is how we see it. However, in today's conditions, this has started to change a little. Women can also easily access games because everyone has a computer when they enter their houses, rather than internet cafes. (Participant 3, cis-heterosexual male gamer, 28)

The operationalization of gender inequality reflects itself in the image and definition of a gamer.

Despite the accepted and increasing rate of female gamers in the gaming community, both quant and QUAL results showed male gamers' domination in the gaming space. According to Everett, as cited in Ensslin (2012), games' audiences are defined as male, and games are created and published for themselves by game companies (Everett as cited in Ensslin, 2012, 3). It is not a coincidence when one considers the gamer image; it is male because the gaming industry and unequal access to technical equipment to play games have strengthened this

image. Therefore, the quant result, uneven gender distribution in gamers who play League of Legends, and the QUAL result, interviewees' definition of gamer and gaming community in terms of gender, complement each other.

In addition, as can be seen from the gender identity and age crosstabulation that takes place, the below show that males can find the opportunity to access the League of Legends' gaming community at an early age rather than females. Therefore, their commitment to the homosocial place, the hardcore gaming community, strengthens daily. On the other hand, the majority of the female gamers in this research are mainly between the ages of 18-25

Crosstabulation 1. Gender Identity and Age

Count

		Age					
		18-	18-25	26-33	34-41	42+	Total
Gender Identity	Male	146	150	25	3	2	326
	Female	2	47	2	1	0	52
Total		148	197	27	4	2	378

4.1.1. Access to video games and hardcore gaming community

As I specified in the quantitative results, male gamers shape most of the participants who play the League of Legends. Therefore, one of the operationalizations of gender inequality is dependent on access to video games. According to Jennifer Jenson and Suzanne de Castell (2010), the technological equipment, such as PC and consoles, to play games are constrained from girls' early ages (2010:58). Family members monitor girls' engagement in technology, especially about the games' genres that they play (Jenson and de Castell,2010,58). Also, the possibility to access girls to games is determined by male relatives because girls had to be at the end of the line that is created to play a particular game from single technological equipment (Jenson and de Castell,2010,58). Therefore, the male relatives create an opportunity for girls to engage in games and the gaming community. Still, at the same time, according to Carolyn

Cunningham (2018), boys are seen as the "gatekeepers" (Cunningham,2018,74) of technological equipment in the domestic sphere (Cunningham,2018). I think that gender roles and games that children play affect their participation in digital video games. Participant 7 focused on how gender inequality and gender roles are intertwined, especially in accessing technological equipment for playing games. She was one of the cis-heterosexual female gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview, and she has been playing games since she was twelve years old. She stated that:

> I had the opportunity to observe both domestic and foreign gamers. If we are to look at it globally, it is not so different from the picture in Turkey. In general, women are in the invisible part or the minority. I think gender roles are very relevant in this regard. No one was put in front of a computer and told to play for girls, but boys were told. PlayStation, as a gift, is bought for them, barbie is bought for me, should I go and play with his PlayStation? I got a barbie; this difference is very effective (Participant 7, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 24).

Furthermore, On the other hand, one of the noteworthy results of the QUAL data illustrated that male relatives, partners, or friends significantly influence the first engagement of cis-heterosexual females and queer individuals to play games. Most cis-heterosexual female gamers' first interaction with games occurs with the guidance of a male partner, male family member, or male friend. For instance:

> I've been playing games for as long as I can remember myself. Since Atari, my brother and I have been playing console games together. I started with a bit of difficulty. My brother, of course, was bored playing alone, and he used to force me to sit and play. While I was playing football matches, he used to win 22-0. I did not enjoy it, but I remembered crying and playing with the PlayStation joystick in my hand. Since I grew up with an older brother, I played with my barbies, but my main interest was in the electronic game part. Later, I started playing games of my own will. I continued on the PlayStation for a long time (Participant 2, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 25).

On the other hand, most cis-heterosexual male gamers discover and meet with the games at an early age than females. Internet cafes constitute spaces where cis-heterosexual men can initiate their relationships with hardcore games. For instance, Participant 3, a cis-heterosexual male gamer, states:

> "I've been playing games since I knew myself. There used to be the Atari. At home, my brother bought me my first Atari. I must have been like five years old. I probably played before that, but the first thing I remember is the Atari, which was bought when I was about five years old. I've been playing since I was very young. We skipped school one day in high school, we were playing Dota at that time, but we were bored. We were four or five friends, if I'm not mistaken. We discovered the game [the LoL] there at the internet café. I've been playing it since 2010 (Participant 3, cis-heterosexual male gamer,28).

Thus, cis-heterosexual male gamers are part of the homosocial gaming community through consoles, PCs, or access to spaces where they can play hardcore games at earlier ages than any marginalized gamer communities. Consolvo's concept of the "gaming capital" (Consalvo,2007, as cited in Cunningham,2018,51) is defined as the know-how of games' similar structures that gives an advantage, such as tricks that make the gameplay easier. As Harvey (Harvey,2015, as cited in Cunningham,2018,51) specified, the gamer identity relates to how much knowledge any player builds up. Because game-based terms are one of the characteristics that engender the *gamerlect*, it is possible to say that cis-heterosexual male gamers who enter the homosocial gaming community start to develop themselves in gaming knowledge. Therefore, the game-based terms and knowledge are used as detection mechanisms for newcomers and marginalized players in the gaming community.

4.1.2. "This is a man's man's man's gaming world."

Emma Vossen (2018) indicates that "real gamers" utilize the discourses that consist of sexism, transphobic, homophobic, and racism for surveillance mechanisms to create oppression of the gamers that can be defined as "the other" in the gaming community (2018:215). Therefore, the "real players" would be sure to secure the boundaries of the homosocial place which is claimed themselves, and their experience of playing will not be disturbed by any subjects who do not belong to that community (Vossen,2018,215). The toxic environment of the gaming culture and gaming community created by the *gamerlect* has also been specified by many participants in different ways. For instance, Participant 4 has played

games since childhood and works in the gaming sector. He defined the gaming community as:

> When I think about the gaming community, the image comes to my mind as fragile, that is, has difficulty in controlling their emotions, and tends to get angry, so yes, a little bit like this, trying to get the troubles and nerves out of the game. I'm more or less part of that community too. I also have similar characteristics. I try not to take my anger out on people, but there are times when I get angry like this, and I write my thoughts on the chat, but I take care not to attack people while doing this. Online games take things from people, and they require a mental burden (Participant 4,cis-heterosexual male, 27)

The mental burden that gamers have been carrying, because of the *gamerlect*'s structure, that burden is not the same for every player in the League of Legends. The marginalized gamers' mental burden that they have loaded is not the same burden that is carried by cis-heterosexual male gamers in the gaming culture because cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers are the stigmatized groups that are seen as people who shouldn't be in that community by the definition of the gaming community's borders. For instance, Participant 5 is one of the cis-heterosexual female gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview. She is 24 years old and has been playing games since she was ten. She noted the mental burden that she has carried while playing the League of Legends Turkey Server:

> First, you must play the game knowing that you will be subjected to psychological violence. If you are in a bad mood, it is a game that you should not play. If you are in a good mood, you will be upset. I have experienced this for eight years. It is a game that should not be played alone. You are absent if you are sensitive because people can use swear words quickly. So, I feel like a guest in the games. I think that to feel like yourself as a community member; you have to feel happy there, frankly. I play to distract myself, but I thought that my psychology had become more upside down when I played intensely (Participant 5, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 24)

As specified by Katz, "male-peer culture" (Katz,2006,7) with *gamerlect* uncovers vulnerabilities in masculine socialization processes in the League of Legends gaming community where toxic masculinity shapes homosocial hardcore gaming space. Therefore, cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers'

disadvantageous and vulnerable positions affect their gaming experiences. The cis-heterosexual male-dominated hardcore gaming spaces are based on monitoring and brutally criticizing every move, such as their gameplay ability, language use, and marginalized gamers. In addition, harassment practices are linked to gameplay criticisms of the gaming community. Participant 6 is one of the cis-heterosexual female gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview. Participant 6 has been playing games since 2014. She also plays games in her broadcasts on Twitch. She stated that some male gamers wait for an opportunity to criticize brutally. Therefore, hierarchical monitoring practices are engendered by male gamers in marginalized gaming communities, which are not considered as one member of their homosocial gaming space:

> I just gave up trying to achieve gender equality: we are not accepted in the gaming community. The same goes for broadcasts. If I broadcast on Twitch and make a mistake during the LoL match, people look for an opportunity to make fun of me. A standard player can always have misclicks in the games, but they are not accepted when a woman makes mistakes. Mistakes are used to state or imply that "Look, you can't play anyway. Women have no place here." by male gamers. That's why I think I'm in that gaming crowd, but I can't feel like a member of that community (Participant 6, cis-heterosexual female gamer,21).

In addition, what Participant 6 said about the constant surveillance of male gamers in her broadcasts is related to the experiences of Participant 7's. Participant 7 is 24 years old and has been playing games since she was 12. The opposing team members, recognizing her as a broadcaster, harassed her during the LoL match. They watched her moves in her broadcast, and they put pressure on her to prevent her improvement in the rank system of the League of Legends Turkey Server. In her words:

> The people who came to my matches as opposite team members used to watch my broadcasts to determine where I went in the game from the broadcast, and they would follow my moves and strategies. They tried so hard that I would not have been promoted to the upper rank. They harassed me. We [female gamers who play in the upper ranks] had such a period. Normally my map is closed during the gameplay, so people cannot see where I go, but they use second monitors to watch the broadcast to see where I go in the match. They were trying to keep me out like that. I had such years, and it was terrible. It was very mobbing (Participant 7, cis-heterosexual female gamer,24).

Participant 8 is a lesbian gamer with whom I conducted an in-depth interview. She was also criticized for the gaming ability of her gender identity as a male gamer. She said:

> I was playing for a while with a friend that I met online. I can't call him a friend, but he was playing at, and I was playing sup [support]. We were always playing together. It made me feel bad for a while because he said that I played poorly and that he always talked about how he promoted or carried me to the upper ranks in the League of Legends. In addition, he stated that because I was a girl, it was not my fault to play badly, and my gender was the reason for my lack of gaming ability. I realized too late that he was a toxic person (Participant 8, LGBTQIA+ gamer,18)

The *gamerlect* is a monitoring mechanism that detects marginalized people through harassment practices through sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and violence.

4.1.2.1. The Inadequate Ban System of the League of Legends Turkey Server and Continuum of *Gamerlect*

Riot Games is responsible for improving the playing experiences of cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ communities in the League of Legends. Conversely, the actions of Riot Games Turkey, such as censoring the pride fest in the League of Legends Turkey Server (Esguerra, May 18, 2021) and inadequate banning system for the gamers who create hate speech, and verbal harassment against the other players, show that they prioritize the cis-heterosexual male gamers' experiences and protect this homosocial gaming environment that is designed to keep away marginalized communities. To clarify what I mean, Participant 10, an LGBTQIA+ gamer in the League of Legends Turkey's Server, is one of the informants with whom I conducted in-depth interviews. He is 24 years old and has been playing games since childhood. He illustrates how reporting and banning systems do not work for the gamers who conduct harassment practices in the text panel:

> I don't know if you're playing a game or a fight in 30 minutes [in League of Legends]. It has an audience that uses swear words from below to the top. This is tried to be balanced with the report system. In the League of Legends' West Server, people generally do not use the chat unless people need to tell an important thing about the match. Because the penalty system is sound, you will be penalized for using hate speeches and harassment discourses in chat. I don't know if it's because there are too many gamers in Turkey or because the precautions are too few. It could be both or at the same time. It cannot be overcome, no matter what is done. If I enter from the Turkey server again, if I throw a random match and use swear words against my teammates or the oppositional team, I know that penalties will not be given to me (Participant 10, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 24).

Participant 10's evaluations about reporting and banning system between the West Server and Turkey Server are crucial to see how the punishment system is inadequate in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Sexists swear words and trash talk are the most common characteristics of the *gamerlect* that constructs the gaming culture of the League of Legends Turkey Server. As I suggested in other sections, hardcore gaming communities and gaming practices are built and internalized by the gamerlect, where cis-heterosexual male gamers protect their homosocial place by supporting the gaming industry's perception of evaluating them as a primary audience. Therefore, because most gamers embrace gamerlect and trolling in Turkey Server, they are seen as a primary gaming audience by Riot Games Turkey. In addition to Participant 10's experience with the reporting system, Participant 2 stated how gamers tried to change their accounts from Turkey to the West Server of League of Legends and how she was stuck in the League of Legends Turkey Server:

> I'm dying to switch to the West Server. I'm stuck on the Turkey Server because the transitions to the West have been closed for a long time. I don't enjoy even a little bit in here. League of Legends Turkey Server was not the same as in season 9. Because after the Elo system broke down, all the players with a good mentality and playing ability switched to the West server. They ran away from the Turkey Server; because harmful and toxic players can also rise because the Elo and reporting system is broken. If you transfer the successful players from one community to another place, that community is made up of only bad ones. So, when I'm stuck in Turkey Server, and I'm about to go crazy, saying like, "Get me out of here." I also sent an e-mail to Riot Games Turkey to see if transferring my account to West is possible. They rejected my request because Riot Games Turkey doesn't want to lose any more players, at least they stated "We lost many players, so we closed the transitions manually. There is no problem with the

> changes; they just said we don't want the players to leave." (Participant 2, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 25)

In addition, most participants shared similar experiences about the nicknames that consist of sexist swear words besides the sexist language created in the chat. Also, Participant 11, a cis-heterosexual male gamer, is 21-years-old and has been playing games for thirteen years. He stated that the banning system does not work in the League of Legends Turkey Server:

> I see it all the time, even in the nicknames. I don't know how they succeed; I need to find out how the League of Legends as a system allows it, too. I guess they don't ban anyone in the game. Who gets banned in this game? Even I had to be banned. If there has thus far been a realistic ban system, there were matches that even I should have been restricted. There were more bans before, but now it's completely gone. I don't see anyone getting banned anymore. Because the thing is, they probably brought a new honor & appreciation system at the end-of-match, and when you earn end-of-match points from there, you probably don't fall into the ban list. It's the game's algorithm. He is not a living person examining the report system. When I write any profanity in a way that the person in front of me can understand with the necessary censorship, I do not enter the ban system. It doesn't affect me much, but I see it a lot (Participant 11, cis-heterosexual male, 21).

The LoL gaming community is strengthened by the lack of punishments for gamers who utilize sexist swear words and nicknames. Therefore, the accumulation of lack of punishment contributes to the protection of toxic masculine homosocial gaming space. In addition, Riot Games Turkey's lack of punishment increases the vulnerable position of cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Also, as specified by Emma Vossen (2018), people who commit harassment and practice toxicity against marginalized communities use the reporting system by reporting and banning the targets they have abused (2018:215). In this way, as Vossen pointed out, the hardcore gaming communities' toxic members try to eliminate gamers that do not fit into their homosocial gaming spaces. Hence, I found Participant 10's insights about the reporting and banning system match the reality of the League of Legends' Turkey server.

4.2. The Characteristics of Gendered Gaming Culture and Ways of Gender Inequalities that are Embedded in the LoL Turkey Server

In this thesis, the QUAL data illustrated the characteristics of gendered gaming culture that have become concrete in several ways in the gaming culture of the League of Legends Turkey Server. The patterns of the QUAL data showed that:

1) The gendered gaming culture created competition among cis-heterosexual female gamers in the League of Legends Server.

2) Solidarity among LGBTQIA+ gamers is generated against the cis-heterosexual gaming culture in the League of Legends Turkey Server.

3) The gendered gaming culture emerged as masculine and feminine textual performances and behaviors in the League of Legends.

4) Gender identity and the perception that "girls only play support champions" engenders the characteristics of the gendered gaming culture in the LoL Turkey Server.

4.2.1. Competition Among Cis-Heterosexual Female Gamers

However, the QUAL data results generated a significant pattern that showed how this pressure mechanism shaped the different ways of two marginalized communities. The cis-heterosexual male-dominated gaming community has developed other effects on cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers. From my observation of the in-depth interviews, when cis-heterosexual female gamers understand that she is not the only female in their team in the League of Legends or whenever they watch another cis-heterosexual female gamer's gameplay, they start to evaluate and compare their gaming abilities of each other. The gamer culture pressures cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers based on their gaming capabilities and skill demonstrations. As I

discussed, the operationalization of gender inequality is conducted through girls' unequal access to games and gaming culture. However, I think that the stereotypes created for the girls who play games are also one reason for the pressures that cis-heterosexual female gamers feel.

Megan Condis (2018) determines three stereotypes of female gamers created in the gaming culture. The first type she calls the "sexy sidekick" (Condis,2018,46) is utilized to describe girls who play games for their male gamer partner with whom she has a sentimental relationship (Condis,2018). The second type is the "casual gamer girl" (Condis,2018,46). Condis portrays casual gamer girls as unfamiliar girls who do not comprehend the gaming community and culture; therefore, the casual gamer girl keeps away from hardcore games where masculinity is intensified (Condis,2018,46). The last stereotype is the "fake nerd girl" (Condis,2018,46), and Condis (2018) defines the fake nerd girl as a depiction of a girl who engages in games to acquire wealth and achieve her goal; she takes advantage of her appearances (Condis,2018,46). These stereotypes portrayed for female gamers do not implicate any connection with the "faithful gamers" (Valkyrie, 2017,24). Faithful gamer is a stereotype that is developed by Valkyrie (2017). He uses this stereotype to describe a gamer fully involved in the games with every aspect of it (Valkyrie,2017,24). Also, Valkyrie (2017) states that faithful gamers generate a community in the gaming industry, and developers design their games to consume faithful gamers (2017:25).

Two results follow from the stereotypical depictions of female gamers: the first is that female gamers are somehow accepted in the gaming community but are not considered real gamers. Therefore, I think that these stereotypes also create a burden and pressure on cis-heterosexual female gamers to prove themselves to be regarded as gamers in the gaming community. From my observation of the interviews, the need to prove themselves establish another competitive environment between cis-heterosexual female gamers. Instead of creating a safe gaming space where they can support each other and unite the gaming community's practices, they also influence cis-heterosexual female gamers. For

instance, Participant 2 told me that girls couldn't get along in this community, and I asked why besides the structured questions. She stated that:

> Here, girls don't get along well with girls. Their worst enemies are girls. That's why everyone is trying to stay away from each other. In the high Elo community, the girls enter rivalry with each other. Unfortunately, there is an event called boost. Whoever gets the highest Elomale gamers is lucky. Likewise, whoever gets the girl who has the most beautiful voice, then he is a lucky man in the gaming community. Nobody talks about it, but unfortunately, there is such a perception. That's why girls often compete to say, "I'm better." However, everyone is the same; only the guy, who entered the League of Legends game, gave more Eloto than that girl. This is a fierce thought, but 90 percent of the high Elo community is like this as girls. Because of this, everyone is in a ridiculous, meaningless competition with each other (Participant 2, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 25).

In my experience and as I explained what Elo is by using the reference of Christopher A. Paul (2018), it also defines a gamer's qualities of the ranked matches in the League of Legends, and some gamers take advantage of other players' high Elosystem. In this way, they can elevate their Elosystem to upper levels. Therefore, the pressure of proving themselves that is put on cis-heterosexual female gamers has led to competition among themselves. On the other hand, Participant 2's narrative shows that even if a cis-heterosexual female gamer would have played the League of Legends, it is possible to hear implicatures about Eloboosting female gamers by cis-heterosexual male gamers and her success would not be devoted to her. In addition to what Participant 2 said about the competition among cis-heterosexual female gamers, Participant 12 was one of the cis-heterosexual female gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview. She is 22 years old and has been playing gamers since childhood. She told me that when she had played with her male friends in the bot lane in the old times, she heard that boosting argument that is generated against her and other cis-heterosexual girls that play with their male friends:

> The discourses like "You play with your male friends because you are boosting yourself to upper rank with his help" were the most common things I did when I did not play alone in the League of Legends. When your ADC dies, it becomes your failure, and when you protect your ADC and make him successful in the LoL, no one appreciates your gaming skill. Therefore, you are both the scapegoat, and you are the focus. You are the focus, but at the same time, you are very

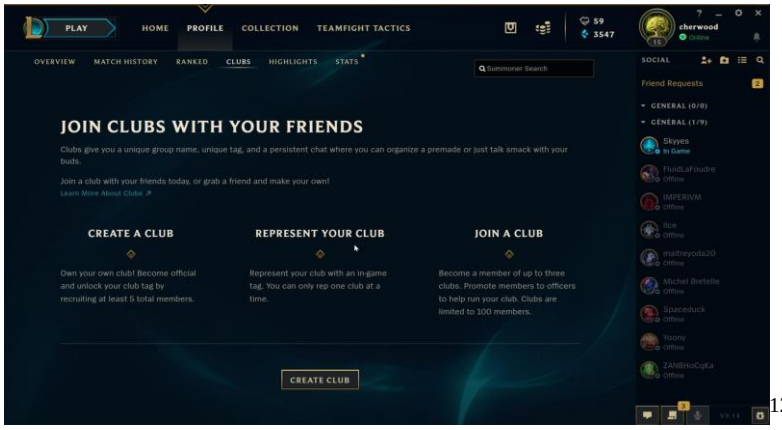
> insignificant. The approaches here throw mud at us in every way because you are a female gamer and choose to play with a male friend (Participant 12, cis-heterosexual female, 22).

Also, the gaming community sometimes creates competition among cis-heterosexual female gamers by triggering them. For instance, when I asked Participant 7 if she ever revealed her gender in the League of Legends Turkey Server, her response also included the competition forms created in the gaming community among cis-heterosexual female gamers. She stated:

> They trigger me. They're annoying. You know, sometimes they were doing something, and then something was famous. “Look how beautiful this girl is playing. I mean, girls also play well, you can't do it," or "only this girl can do it" or something like that, I would be outraged (Participant 7, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 24).

4.2.2. Solidarity Among LGBTQIA+ Gamers in the League of Legends Turkey Server

On the other hand, there is solidarity between LGBTQIA+ gamers in the League of Legends. There was a possibility to create different groups in the system of the League of Legends. Therefore, clubs were like a network system in the LoL. For instance, I usually play as a top laner or support role in the League of Legends, and if I find one of my teammates successful, I might want to continue to the next game with that gamer. At that point, if a gamer had a club tag under their nickname, they could send a request to join their clubs.



[12]

Figure 10. Overview of clubs in League of Legends

Participant 10, one of the LGBTQIA+ gamers in this thesis, generated a group named LGBT, which can be seen under his nickname. He first created LGBTQIA+ visibility for other players and found other LGBTQIA+ gamers who would like to join the group. Creating the LGBT club nickname under an alias is a protest because they disturbed and destroyed the heteronormative notion that the only sexual orientation is heterosexuality in the League of Legends. Therefore, this group generated a safe place for LGBTQIA+ gamers in the League of Legends Turkey server. In Participant 10's words:

> After the clubs were established, people who saw the LGBT tag next to my name asked questions about what it was. According to how they asked, I was saying yes or not answering them during the gameplay. Sometimes, as I said in the chat, some people wanted to hang out, and there were too many lesbians, trans women, gay men, bisexual men, and bisexual women who randomly came to the games saying, "Oh, I'm an LGBT individual too, can you take me as well? (Participant 10, LGBTQIA+ gamer,24)

Based on Participant 10's experiences, I think the LGBT club is a space of resistance to the "homosocial" (Sedgwick, 1985, 25), heteronormative order that is dominated by cis-heterosexual male gamers. It is a space where one does not have to pretend or hide, where one can come together with other gamers who do not belong to or identify with this homosocial order; a space where they can

[12] (Retrieval Date: 08/19/2022 https://interfaceingame.com/screenshots/league-of-legends-clubs/)

establish community, realize that they are not alone, and become empowered together by way of stepping into another kind of a virtual environment where they would not get constantly harassed. It is a space of support and solidarity, where gamers can be themselves without fearing the repercussions. It is possible to think of these gaming spaces like “PMF Clan” (Sveningsson, 2012,105) that are created for female gamers to have a safe place that needed to play games also; the LGBT club is both protest action and homosocial gaming community where heterosexuality dominates in League of Legends gaming community.

In addition, LGBTQIA+ individuals have their language, called “lubunca,” created by their creation of phrases, slang, and jargon (Karaahmet,2019). Therefore, when LGBTQIA+ gamers wrote something from lubunca, another LGBTQIA+ gamer could have recognized that they were not alone. For instance:

> There is someone in my team who used it, for example. When you use a language among gays in your *lubun*, I will jump from there and continue to talk directly to the *lubun*. He says, "Are you *Lubunya*?" I usually specify that I'm transgender, and we can get along better with him. Maybe we can do something as a better team in the match (Participant 9, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 18)

Therefore, the *Lubunca* makes it easier for LGBTQIA+ gamers in the League of Legends to know each other. Also, it contributes to the solidarity created among them in the heteronormative and male-dominated gaming community.

4.2.3. Detection or Undetection of Gender Identity Through Masculine Behaviors as Gendered Norm by Utilizing Gamerlect in the League of Legends Turkey Server

“Don’t play like a girl” or “Playing like a girl” are probably the two most common phrases people have heard while growing up, regardless of gender identity. Barrie Thorne points out that the “playing like a girl” discourse is utilized to create a different gendered character by society (Thorne,1993, as cited in Chess,22). Furthermore, this phrase is used to define anyone’s playing ability as inadequate; therefore, according to Chess (2020), “playing like a girl” is a discourse that is

generated culturally within societies (2020:25). That's why Chess offers instead of using playing like a girl, "playing like a feminist" (Chess,2020,39). I believe that playing like a feminist is crucial when one thinks about inequalities that are embedded in the gaming community because Chess suggests that "playing like a feminist" is to generate possibilities and spaces where there can be equal engagement practices for the activities that can be played (Chess,2020). However, "playing like a girl" is one of the most common themes that cis-heterosexual female gamers focused in-depth interviews. Such as:

> We are trying to create actual survival in the gaming community. While playing the LoL, I said that I am a woman because I came to a point where I could not stand it. Because we often hear, "don't play like a girl" or "don't cry like a girl." I think that a girl should "play like a girl," "run like a girl," and "fight like a girl" because we see that survival everywhere. I'm sorry, but women are few in this game. Therefore, seeing women in games is like finding water in the desert. Especially women, because in this game, they are less than in other games. We are oppressed generally (Participant 12, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 22).

In addition to what Participant 12 says about the phrase "playing like a girl," Participant 7 also focuses on the conception of female gamers' inadequate gaming skills are related to how girls are limited to using their bodies completely because Participant 7 thinks that being a new gamer in a community requires a time to learn and adopt gaming skills. In her words:

> The perception that only women play badly, I think, happens because most people might have just "downloaded" it. I know girls who play the LoL or would like an approach to playing the LoL without prejudices. They have already taken a dislike to the LoL. As for women, I have a friend or two who have played for a long time. Some play well, and those play poorly despite playing for years. I don't think it has anything to do with gender. It just has to do with the fact that women are newly introduced to the experience of the League of Legends (Participant 7, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 24).

The quant data results about the relationship between gender identity and playing frequency relate to her arguments.

Crosstabulation 2. Gender Identity and Frequency of Playing The LoL

Count

		Frequency of Playing the LoL					
		Once a month	Biweekly	Once a week	A few days in a week	Every other day	Total
Gender Identity	Male	24	8	94	44	156	326
	Female	1	0	15	6	30	52
Total		25	8	109	50	186	378

Even though women gamers generate a minority of the participants, they often play the League of Legends the same as male gamers. They spend as much time as male gamers. Therefore, their gaming ability has been increasing constantly based on their dedication to playing League of Legends.

4.2.3.1. Verbal Harassment and Gender Revealing Relationship in the LoL Turkey Server

Crosstabulation 3. Gender Identitiy and Verbal Harassment Based on Reveling Gender

Count

		Verbal harassment based on revealing gender identity		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender Identity	Female	4	46	50

The quant results show that when female gamers' gender identity has been revealed by themselves or without any revealing intention, they experience verbal harassment. This rate can be read as female gamers preferring visibility rather than hiding behind the anonymous and wanting to be seen by cis-heterosexual male gamers and the other marginalized gamer communities. On the other hand,

revealing gender identity brings harassment and toxic practices against marginalized groups in the gaming community. In addition to the relation between verbal harassment based on revealing gender and gender identity. Chi-square results showed that there is an association between these variables. Therefore, I generated two hypotheses to test the independency or dependency of these two variables:

The null hypothesis (Ho) is determined as follows: There is no relationship between verbal harassment and gender identity in the League of Legends Turkey's server. The alternative hypothesis is determined as follows: There is a relationship between verbal harassment and gender identity in the League of Legends Turkey's server.

According to the Chi-square test result that I conducted for the variables verbal harassment and gender identity is $X^2 = 49.659$, and $p \leq 0.001$.

Therefore, as expected, these results indicate a significant relationship between harassment and gender identity in the gaming community, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is valid. As I suggested, harassment is a practice that constructs the *gamerlect* as a discourse. Todd Harper states that real gamers are determined based on generating contradictory conduct against the harassment practices established by language and actions (Harper cited in Paul, 2018, 75). Real gamers do not react to any discourses of harassment because real gamers would be aware that this is part of the gaming culture and is just a practical joke between gamers (Harper, cited in Paul, 2018, 75). On the other hand, Vossen argues that when playing activity is initiated in multiplayer games, any player is assumed to confirm the harassment that occurs potentially in a game (Vossen,2018,217). According to Emma Vossen (2018), women already know that the gaming community involves harassment practices, and they prepare themselves for their right to speak for their bodies (2018:216). Gender identities have been ignored and suppressed by other players (Vossen,2018,216). In light of Vossen's arguments, some cis-heterosexual female interviewees shared their experiences about how they were exposed to verbal abuse in League of Legends Turkey Server:

> Yes, I experienced verbal abuse in LoL. Even if I don't say I am a girl, they can understand it from the nickname and do it anyway. I've played for 5-6 years, and this has happened at least twenty times. There is also something I would like to add related to this. For example, some gamers add each other to play together, and when gamers I do not know in person invite me to Discord. In this situation, I prefer not to go. Because here we are, dealing with someone like this who will find out myself as a woman in voice chat, and he will try to flirt with me or harass me. I don't think this fear is ever present in men. It's probably the feeling that only women have, and it's alarming (Participant 1, Cis-heterosexual female gamer, 19).

> Ugh. I got screenshots of their harassment and got very angry for a while. I even thought about suing them. There was much harassment. At that time, I was putting my head on the pillow and crying all the time. It was an awful time. How did I get through that period? I couldn't get over it. I quit playing League of Legends or being a broadcaster after a while. I got through that, but it's not something that can be overcome. The people in front of you are five hundred people, and you are just a person. If one gets bored from harassing activity, the remaining four hundred ninety-nine men continue to do it. It's tough. These are not people you can sit with and change. These are lost people, I think (Participant 7, Cis-heterosexual female gamer, 24)

The female gamers who reveal their gender during the gameplay are harassed to push them from the boundaries of the hardcore gaming community. Also, if they were "real gamers" like them, they wouldn't react to harassment as one of the cornerstones of this community.

In addition, QUAL results illustrated that queer gamers are also directed to harassment when their sexual orientation or gender identity has been revealed in League of Legends match. For instance, Participant 10 shared his experience with having an LGBT tag under his nickname:

> Yes, this is especially the case. For example, he sees the group tag, he asks, we say yes, etc., or something happens, or he doesn't say anything, but the game maybe we have a terrible game. Some people took it one step further than teasing over the orientation, asking for an address, asking for a phone, adding after the match, and cursing over chat or message. Some took it to the point of harassment (Participant 10, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 24)

Participant 9 stated that when she plays another game with the gamers she had met on the LoL, she experiences discrimination and immediate exclusion from the team. In her words:

> When they asked me my gender, I stated that I was a woman. Do not perceive it as an ego trip; [but] I play splendidly. Afterward, they say, "you played the match well, and our Discord is this. You can come if you want, we can enter the next hand together as a team." I accepted their proposal, and since they liked my game and looked like calm and quiet people, I entered a voice chat conversation in Discord. First, I turn off my microphone because I do not feel comfortable with my voice. Then they say hello, and I write to say hello instead of telling. Then something happens in the game, and I have to turn on the microphone to convey an essential thing about the game. As soon as they heard my voice, they suddenly asked, "What is this?" They directed silly stuff at me, insults, and tried to create oppression against me. Then all of a sudden, they kicked me out of the voice chat and blocked me. This seems a bit silly to me; frankly, if you like my gameplay, why do you care about who I am? (Participant 9, transgender gamer, 18)

QUAL data showed me that transgender gamers have been experiencing gender inequality and discrimination in multilayered and more deeply. T.L Taylor states that the hypermasculine structure of the gaming community and gaming culture denies the existence of cis-heterosexual female and queer gamers (Taylor,2012, as cited in Janish,2018,248). On the other hand, according to Namaste (2000), as mentioned in Janish (2018), transgender individuals dare and provoke the homosocial spaces constructed and designed by heterosexual men. Therefore, Janish (2018) approaches the gaming space as a public space dominated by heterosexual male gamers and suggests that transgender gamers also steal the thunder of cis-heterosexual male gamers (2018:248). Consequently, it is possible to say that by considering the arguments of Janish and Nameste, Yasmin's existence challenged and hurt the cis-heterosexual male dominance in the League of Legends Turkey Server. However, to do that, she had to face harassment from the hypermasculine cis-heterosexual gaming community. Therefore, the QUAL patterns portrayed that cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers create survival strategies from the harassment practices as one of the characteristics of the League of Legends Turkey Server and *gamerlect*.

4.2.3.2. Survival Strategies from Harassment and The Use of *Gamerlect*

According to Malin Sveningsson (2021), female gamers have been trying to stay away from the characteristics that can be identified with femininity in the gaming community (2021:94). Therefore, survival strategies for cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers are shaped by creating a masculine persona to prevent harassment and consider for a gamer rather than experiencing derogatory discourses to their gaming abilities. About Svenningsson's arguments, Participant 7 states:

> I acted like a man when I first started or played alone in the LoL. So, I spoke like a man in the chat. Whatever that means, like a man. I talked more masculinely so that people would not understand me and behave normally. Because there is a group in the LoL Turkey Server, they are trolling because just the girl came to the game. He goes, feeds on purpose, and dies. That's precisely what they do, and they aim to restrain girls from being promoted in the LoL. That's why I hid it. Everyone hid it, I think, who played in my period (Participant 7, cis heterosexual female gamer, 24).

According to Emma Vossen (2018), the gaming community's rules, such as acceptable behaviors, are redefined and reproduced by players (2018:210). Thus, masculine characteristics are defined as acceptable practices in the gaming community. Because harassment is an inseparable characteristic of the gaming culture, as Vossen (2018) stated, harassment practices generated through language and discourses are seen as part of speaking freely (2018:212). Therefore, as I discussed in the theoretical section 2.4, femininity is related to the use of polite language forms; therefore, politeness is not supported in the gaming community (Janish,2018,229). The structure of etiquette is against the characteristics of the gaming culture. For instance, Participant 12 gave an experience where she tried to convince her teammate about having wrong aims to win the game, but she did it politely. Therefore, she was not taken into consideration. In her words:

> I experienced this in a game and started broadcasting at that time. You can call me an anonymous player. I was trying to talk to people during the broadcast. So this is a game that can change. When you destroy the tower, you do not win the LoL game and do not become superior to your opponent when you make money. I tried to talk to him to change his mentality and soften his psychology in this game. Then the mid-lane player told me that "You shouldn't talk to him like that," and they started to generate communication through swear words (Participant 12, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 22).

On the other hand, according to Malin Svenningsson (2012), female gamers are not entirely enthusiastic about revealing their gender identity (2012:100). She focuses that the objectification and sexualization of female gamers within the gaming community have already shown that female gamers are not considered to be one of them (Svenningsson,2012,100). Therefore, she argues that staying silent about the inequalities created in the gaming space is just not enough for women to receive acceptance from the cis-heterosexual male-dominated community (Svenningsson,2012,100). According to Svenningsson (2012), they need to use and internalize the language form that is acknowledged in the gaming community (2012:100). As specified by Shaw, the internalization of the “hyper-masculine” (Shaw,2008, as cited in Svenningsson) by female gamers, provides the use of misogynistic language also with women in the gaming community. Svenningsson (2012) states that every time female gamers’ utilization of the gaming culture’s language form causes the re-creation of it (2012:100), the cycle of this form of language cannot be destroyed. For instance, Participant 13 is one of the cis-heterosexual female gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview. She stated that she uses a masculine persona to avoid harassment in the gaming culture. She said:

> Of course, I have behaved in a masculine way. Even when I play support most of the time, end of the game, players usually try to add me and try to learn about what my name is or my gender; I use a made-up male name to tell them because if I am told him the truth, he would ask repeatably to share my Instagram profile with him. At the same time, I was a Twitch streamer. If he were a little brighter, he could have searched for my nickname on Twitch and found it from there. Sometimes, even if I don't want to, I have to use swear words like them so that my identity is not revealed much. I'm sure that many other girls choose this path (Participant 13, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 28)

The *gamerlect* is utilized as a detection mechanism in the gaming culture. In addition, *gamerlect* is also internalized by female cis-heterosexual gamers even though they use the language form of the *gamerlect* to avoid harassment. Furthermore, Participant 14, one of the LGBTQIA+ informants, stated that she was using voice changer programs to be accepted in different hardcore gaming communities to be taken as a woman. In her words:

> There have been games where I hide my gender, but that was a decade ago. This is because no matter how good a player I am, I used to play MMORPG. As soon as it was understood that I was a woman, I was not accepted into the big clans or taken into the games. I even used a voice changer program. I was using many voice changers and pretending to be a little boy. That's how they got me into the game. Later on, I started broadcasting. Then, I began to say that I am a woman, and I started to put nicknames that indicate that I am female. Previously my nickname was generated by unisex troll nicknames used mainly by men (Participant 14, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 27).

The power of broadcasting and increasing the audience rate of Participant 14 gave her self-confidence to reveal her gender in the cis-heterosexual male gaming space. On the other hand, being visible for cis-heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ gamers in the gaming community means to be also a direct target of cis-heterosexual male gamers because they can either wait there like a vulture to humiliate marginalized people's any wrong decisions in the game or they generate harassment and toxic practices that are surrounded by sexist language to send away the cis-heterosexual female or LGBTQIA+ gamers from the hardcore gaming community.

In addition to the masculine persona as a survival strategy in the gaming community and the LoL, the other survival strategy is determined as humor by LGBTQIA+ gamers in the League of Legends. LGBTQIA+ gamers utilize humor as a riddance mechanism to the harassment, toxicity practices, and homophobic discourses against them. For instance, Participant 15, one of the LGBTQIA+ informants, stated:

> When I say my gender, my most enormous strategic opportunity to protect myself is to turn it entirely into humor or a joke. Therefore, people cannot think of me as

> gay, lesbian, or transgender. They do not think of this question. They think I'm joking because I'm trolling, I'm doing some tricks to amuse them, but in the end, I make jokes so much that I end up endearing them so much that they don't care if I tell them I'm gay or not (Participant 15, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 22).

When Riot Games Turkey's reporting and banning system fails to create a safe gaming space where all marginalized communities can experience the League of Legends, therefore, while some gamers, who utilize the *gamerlect* in both language and practices, are not banned as a result of their actions, the marginalized cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers try to create survival strategies to exist in the LoL. Consequently, cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers have used masculine persona and humor as a survival strategy in the League of Legends Turkey Server.

4.2.4. Guesses over Gender Identities through Support Laners and Their Champion Choice in the League of Legends Turkey Server

The anonymity system of the League of Legends should have protected marginalized gamer communities in the game. However, as I discussed, when the textual performance of LGBTQIA+ and cis-heterosexual female gamers did not use the gamerlect as a language form, it became easier to detect the toxic gamers in the gaming community. However, besides the textual performances and obvious nicknames that imply any gamer's gender identity, the champion, and lane choices, especially the support position, have been gendered in the League of Legends gaming community. Therefore, lane choice and champion preference can be a reason for the violation of anonymity through guessing players' gender identity by the gaming community in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Furthermore, the gender reveal brings with its harassment and toxic practices.

The Chi-square test result illustrated a relationship between gender identity and the choice of support position in the League of Legends. Hence, I constructed two hypotheses to test the independency or dependency of these two variables:

The null hypothesis (H_0): No significant relationship exists between the lane choice as support and gender identity.
Alternative hypothesis (H_1): There is a relationship between lane choice as support and gender identity.

According to the Chi-square test result that I conducted for the variables, the lane choice (support) and the gender identity is: $X^2 = 17.057$, df:1, and $p \leq 0.001$. Therefore, the significant association resulted from the Chi-square tests that showed the relationship between gender identity and lane choice for support.

Crosstabulation 4. Gender Identity and Lane Choice (Support Role)

Count

		Lane Choice (Support Role)		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender Identity	Male	194	132	326
	Female	15	37	52
Total		209	169	378

As the crosstabulation five shows above, 194 male gamers stated that they don't play in the support position, but 37 female gamers specified playing in the support position. Also, this result is significant because it points out that there is uneven gender distribution in support positions and the perception of female gamers playing support champions. This is one of the prejudices that strengthens gender inequality embedded in the gaming culture, but I believe this assumption didn't just come out of nowhere. According to Megan Condis (2018), several reasons exist for the alleged truth about the relationship between female gamers and the support roles in multiplayer online games. One of the reasons that Condis concentrated on the likely claims about support roles is linked to essentialist arguments about women's caring characteristics or taking care of the needs of the male as a conventional duty of women (Condis, 2018, 54).

Concerning quant data results, most female participants said they play a supporting role in the League of Legends. The QUAL patterns also show that

informants think there is no direct relation between gender identity and playing the LoL in a support position. However, most participants believe that the representation of support champions has given the sense that only girls play those characters. However, except for their lane choice, there is a well-known perception: girls play support champions in the League of Legends. In addition, the professional support laners in the League of Legends usually are not judged or humiliated in the gaming community. So, what are the reasons for this perception?

According to Megan Condis (2018), the first reason for believing the alleged perception that "girls play supportive roles" is that the girls' first engagement is facilitated by a male gamer that exists in a girl's life. The second reason is defined as female gamers' character choice decisions are shaped by the preferences of the characters that have the abilities to cure or restore the health of their "warrior partners' wounds" (Condis,2018, 53) or to increase their male partners' characters strength in the game. As Condis (2018) specified, this romanticized way of creating relations between girls and support characters in games implies that the games are seen as a leisure activity to fulfill the needs of male gamers by supporting them in the online spaces (2018:54). Therefore, conventional gender roles have reproduced in the online environment (Condis,2018,54). Participant 11, one of the cis-heterosexual male gamers with whom I conducted an in-depth interview, stated about the perception of female gamers' lane choice as support:

> This perception comes from the classic adc-support narrative of love affairs. I think it's silly. It doesn't make sense either, but there is something strange about it. I know that there is a sexist point in this. I do not object to this, but I think women have started to play the LoL more recently. My roommate is a straight male, and when he began the LoL, I insisted he plays the support role because it's the most straightforward lane choice in the game. After all, you don't have any responsibility to farm[13] (Participant 11, cis-heterosexual male, 21).

Participant 11 alleged that this perception connects heterosexual relationships related to ADC-support laners. On the other hand, the point that Participant 11

[13] The term "farming" defines the behavior of killing "minions" or monsters, which can be found in the jungle, and players get experiences and golds to purchase items from those minions and monsters in the League of Legends (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.).

made about the support role as the most straightforward lane choice is significant because complex lanes and champions go beyond the gaming skills and abilities of cis-heterosexual female gamers in the League of Legends. Therefore, the support role is seen as suitable for women. As specified by Condis (2018), the design of female characters is developed by concentrating on restoring health and aiding other characters; therefore, the creation of female characters mainly not been created to engage in fighting and giving damage (2018:54). Therefore, the abilities of support characters and their portrayals have been strengthening the perception about the relationship between girls and support roles. Cis-heterosexual male informant, Participant 16, focused on how Riot Games is responsible for developing this perception:

> This perception is widespread. We see that all of the support characters that give healing to other players developed as females. Therefore, the producer of the game, Riot Games, created this perception. There is Janna, for example, Sona, and Soraka. They are all healing characters, and there is Lux. For instance, she is not a full support character but can also give shields. In other words, the support champion, Leona, is designed more aggressively. Leona's clothing is more like a gladiator's than a healer's; for example, she jumps directly to the front lines. I think this was done now by Riot Games itself (Participant 16, cis-heterosexual male gamer, 26).

[14]

Figure 11. Image of Leona in League of Legends

[14] (Retrieval Date: 08/18/2022 https://www.leagueoflegends.com/tr-tr/champions/leona/)

[15]

Figure 12. Image of Soraka in League of Legends

On the other hand, this perception increases the cis-heterosexual female gamers' vulnerable position. Because of the perception between support lane and girls, cis-heterosexual female gamers' anonymity masks that protect them from the *gamerlect* falls. Therefore, this perception causes gender identity to be revealed without the intention of cis-heterosexual female gamers. In addition, the disciplinary mechanism of *gamerlect* can be detected easily. For instance, Participant 6 was one of the informants of this research, and she prefers to play in a support position in the League of Legends Turkey Server. She stated that:

> For people new to the game, especially the women I see, the game has a boyfriend effect. They start from there because there have to be two people in the bot lane. For example, if Lux was a male character, she could shoot an ultimate, but if her theme were dark instead of light, maybe she would be a character that men would like to main [the main character means to play constantly with the specific character] her. In other words, when they see a man playing lux, they act strangely to him and work strangely when they see a woman. So how is it possible to earn their respect? Because it is not possible to win and play better. When I play support, especially if I'm playing a female character, if my name can be considered something sweet, if it's not a destroyer31-styled nick, immediately they say, "Oh, you're a girl. Add me as a friend after this match" or even if it is not like that, "Oh, there are donuts in your team, you will lose, guys, let me tell you from the beginning" (Participant 6, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 21)

[15] (Retrival Date: 08/18/2022https://www.leagueoflegends.com/tr-tr/champions/soraka/)

[16]

Figure 13. Illustration of Lux in League of Legends

Consequently, the gender revealing of cis-heterosexual female gamers might occur without their consent, and their nicknames and the characters they picked jeopardize themselves against harassment and unwanted attention.

4.3. The Utilization of Textual Performance and Gamerlect in the Gaming Community of the LoL Turkey Server

According to Tan (2005), as cited in Ensslin (2012), gamer slang generates an identity form that connects individuals. Therefore, as I argued in the thesis, swear words and trash-talk have been constructed as fundamental characteristics of the gaming culture and communities, primarily where hardcore gamers dominate. The text panel has been designed to create communication between teammates in the League of Legends. However, the text panel has transformed into a tool to display harassment and toxic practices within the gaming community. Therefore, *gamerlect* as a discourse operates through the text panel by textual performances of the gamers. As I discussed in the theoretical section, the textual performances of females are related to using phrases that imply politeness and kindness in the gaming community. For instance, Participant 6 stated:

[16] (Source: https://www.leagueoflegends.com/tr-tr/champions/lux/ Retrieval Date: 08/18/2022)

> I feel comfortable, especially among my friends. Otherwise, I feel much more open to harassment and bullying. When I say, “Could you put a ward please” to a teammate of mine, especially when I state, please, they usually say, "You're a girl, right?". As soon as they see kindness in the game, they realize it's a woman. I don't know how they do it, but it changes a lot when I start writing. Recently, for example, when I was playing with my friends, I saw a sentence, and someone said, "This is the classic female gamer sentence; I know this.” Now, people have begun to understand from their sentences whether they are male or female, or they have been using this strategy for a long time. Still, I have just noticed (Participant 6, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 21).

Therefore, Participant 6’s arguments relate to the internalization of *gamerlect* as a normative language form in the gaming community. *Gamerlect* is a language consisting of sexist swear words, rape discourse, and trash-talk intertwined with harassment practices, which are supported by heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia. Furthermore, I suggested that the *gamerlect* operates as a discourse and a detection mechanism. Thus, I think *gamerlect* is a language that goes beyond gamer slang.

4.3.1. The Utilization of Sexist Swear Words in the League of Legends Turkey Server

The QUAL patterns illustrated that most informants see sexist swear words on the text panel, even if they wouldn’t use the text panel during the game in the LoL. In addition, some of them stated that they mute the text panel at the beginning of the game. I believe that muting the text panel affects the experience of playing the League of Legends because you are not the only one in the game, and there are four people with whom you need to play in coordination. However, muting chat is a way to avoid harassment, toxic practices, and sexist swear words. According to Vossen (2018), the anxiety and dread that female gamers have been feeling, which is caused by the risk of harassment, affects their decision to not participate in voice chat in online games; therefore, their gaming experiences are hindered partially when they cut their relationship in the voice chat with the others (2018:212). Consequently, I believe that muting the players in the text panel affects the experiences of marginalized communities in the League of Legends

Turkey's Server. For instance, Participant 6 sometimes mutes the chat in the League of Legends, and she stated that:

> Something usually happens when I mute the chat in the League of Legends, and I can't understand completely because I have already muted the conversation. I often ask, "what happened? What happened?" Nobody answers. So, I have to turn the chat back on. Other than that, I usually try to keep it closed so that it doesn't affect my mind in the game, so I try to keep it closed (Participant 6, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 21).

Therefore, muting the chat might be a solution to avoid the *gamerlect*, but at the same time, it affects your gameplay. On the other hand, one typical pattern generated from QUAL data is that most participants think that seeing sexist swear words on the chat affects their game experience negatively. Such as Participant 3 was a cis-heterosexual male gamer, and I conducted the in-depth interview. He stated that:

> Of course, seeing swear words in the chat has a negative effect. Because you make one mistake, sexist swearing comes from there. He does not know whether I am a man or a woman just because these swear words are ingrained in the structure of the gaming community. Of course, it ruins the gaming experience. No one wants to swear two minutes after entering the game. It is not easy to play that game. After that, you will have to silence it and continue your game (Participant 3, cis-heterosexual male gamer, 28).

Along with Participant 3's argument, the qual data illustrated that the Chi-square test results showed a relation between the variables the use of swear words in everyday life and the use of swear words in the chat for the LoL. Therefore, I created two hypotheses to conduct the Chi-square test:

The null hypothesis (H_0): There is no relationship between the use of swear words in everyday life and the use of swear words on the text panel in the League of Legends Turkey's server.
The alternative hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between the use of swear words in everyday life and the use of swear words on the text panel in the League of Legends Turkey's server.

According to the Chi-square test result that I conducted for the variables, the use of swear words in everyday life and the use of swear words on the text panel $X^2 = 43.247$, and $p \leq 0.001$.

Crosstabulation 5. : The Use of Swear Words in Everyday Life and The Use of Swear Words in the Text Panel

Count

		The Use of Swear Words in the Text_Panel			
		No	Yes	Sometimes	Total
The Use of Swear Words in Everyday Life	No	81	13	61	155
	Yes	51	65	107	223
Total		132	78	168	378

Considering these results, the internalization of swear words and the *gamerlect* that consists of swear words are intertwined. Therefore, they reproduce a constant relationship between them. Because one of the contributing factors of the *gamerlect* is swear words and trash-talk, a new member who internalized this way of language easily fits into the gaming community by using and adopting the *gamerlect*. As can be seen from crosstabulation 6, most participants use swear words in their everyday life and games. Therefore, gamers bring their daily practices into the gaming community and see that swear words, which are part of the actual words, are also accepted in the homosocial male-dominated gaming space. According to Astrid Ensslin (2012), the gamers' linguistic communication system is not something blameless because Ensslin sees the structure of the gamers' language system as "ideological" (Ensslin,2012, 35). The language system of the *gamerlect* is ideological because the *gamerlect* is constructed upon patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies.

4.3.2. The Use of Language over Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation Reveal of Marginalized Groups in the League of Legends Turkey Server

As I discussed in the literature review section, the online space was constructed as another universe where sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and racism would disappear. However, online spaces and gaming universes have never been liberated from discrimination. Therefore, gender inequalities dependent on the ideological powers of patriarchal and heteronormative have remained and protected in the cis-heterosexual male-dominated hardcore gaming community. Most cis-heterosexual male and female gamers would be predicted that LGBTQIA+ gamers would take reactions that consist of harassment and toxicity practices. For instance, Participant 17, a cis-heterosexual male gamer, stated:

> In an environment with incredibly toxic masculinities like in the LoL, I'm sure that people would ridicule and mock LGBTI individuals who open up. So, of course, it can change, we don't know, but insults would be humiliating statements. A gay man explains that he is gay, but there are also ridiculous things, such as mixing gender and sexual orientation. Because of this confusion, the question "Are you girly?" could have been directed to a gay man in the LoL. I think there would be insults that would humiliate both LGBTI [individuals] and women (Participant 17, cis-heterosexual male gamer, 26).

To Participant 17's insights for the League of Legends Turkey Server's gaming community, Bonnie Nardi states that emasculatory discourses are constructed through homophobia for humiliating or stating the inadequacy of the other cis-heterosexual male gamer (Nardi, 2010, as cited in Valkyrie,2017,189). Zek Valkyrie puts it, homophobic and sexist discourses are used to mock individuals in the gaming community, and (cis-heterosexual) men assume that the hardcore gaming community is engendered by themselves; therefore, homophobic discourse as a stigmatization regulates other gamers' behaviors (Valkyrie, 2017,189). Thus, the sexual orientation or gender identity revealed by queer gamers in the hardcore gaming community would make them a target in the gaming spaces and the LoL's Turkey Server. For instance, Participant 8 was one of the LGBTQIA+ gamers with whom I did an in-depth interview. She stated what

kind of reactions she would get as an LGBTQIA+ gamer when she revealed her sexual orientation:

> In other words, I didn't need to specify my sexual orientation. However, I didn't hesitate to mention it in the games I played with my friends. I mean, it's generally perceived as a joke anyway, and I'm a bit of a person who says that in this chat. For example, if someone's nickname is something like a flying gay, I'll write, "Oh, I'm gay too." Everyone thinks it's a joke, but I'm trying to reach the comfort zone a little bit there. I'll specify it if necessary, but usually not. I can't generalize, but in some cases, I could have been exposed to adverse reactions, and the other gamers could have directed swear words at me. I don't know. Apart from that, "Oh, you're playing badly. I could have been exposed to bad jokes like "Because he's gay," which would have happened (Participant 8, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 18).

As Participant 8's said, the poor playing capability is connected with the cis-heterosexual females' and queer gamers' characteristic abilities in the cis-heterosexual male-dominated community. Therefore, this junction increases the vulnerable positions of marginalized communities in the League of Legends because the gaming space consists of violence, discrimination, and harassment forms that make them feel more insecure.

On the other hand, according to Braxton Soderman (2017), while the number of female gamers has constantly been increasing and female gamers have become more noticeable in the gaming culture and gaming communities, the natives of the hardcore gaming culture, felt invaded and replied in a more aggressive way to incoming female gamers. The men who want to protect their homosocial place create discourses that aim to harass cis-heterosexual female gamers. The male-dominated gaming community also harassed the men supporting this increase of female gamers in their community. For instance, Participant 6, a cis-heterosexual female gamer, shared the experience of when her gender was revealed without her will. Some male gamers tried to protect them from harassment practices. She said:

> When my gender was revealed, the other players didn't say nice things, and people usually didn't write to chat about saying nice things. They often write to harass or abuse others and enjoy what they have done. Of course, I tried to help and be protected by male gamers. You know, when I said that the players are divided into three, in my eyes, there is a protective male gamer but the toxic

> community call to that protectionist group as pussy guard (Participant 6, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 21)

The “pussy guard” is crucial to consider how male gamers’ supportive behaviors against harassment and toxic practices are humiliated by the other toxic male gamers. According to Katz (2006), humiliation discourses like pussy guard are used as a detection and monitoring mechanism of men (Katz,2006, 130); therefore, the risk of exclusion limits men’s reactions by staying silent (Katz, 2006,12). For instance, Participant 17 stated:

> There are many sexists swear words in the League of Legends Turkey Server. You already know the specific swear words, especially fyp (fuck your pussy) is very common. When I enter a chat, which here I am, I don't write sexist swear words in the text panel. However, I don’t warn other gamers, “What are you doing?” Maybe yes, I talk from a comfortable place because, unfortunately, I don't care (Participant 17, cis-heterosexual male gamer, 26).

Katz (2006) stated that men have the liability to develop a stance against the violence that is conducted against women by men (2006:21). As Katz specified, “men are not born genetically programmed to assault women; most abusive behavior is learned” (Katz, 2006, 129). I believe that sexist swear words are internalized among children when they grow up and become part of masculine socialization. According to Katz (2006), the socialization of individuals has been occurring in a misogynistic environment (Katz, 2006, 9). Therefore, Participant 7’s silent behavior shows how he internalized and normalized the atmosphere surrounded by sexist swear words in the League of Legends. On the other hand, speaking up against sexism and misogyny create a risk of isolation from masculine homosocial places (Katz, 2006,12). On the other hand, Katz (2006) states that the men who speak up against sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence are labeled with homosexuality.

4.3.3. The Utilization of Gendered Phrases and Pronouns in the Chat of the League of Legends Turkey Server

Regarding protection strategies of cis-heterosexual males' homosocial gaming community, the pronouns they use are not inclusive of the gaming community. For instance, the phrase "well-played gentlemen (*Beyler*) / wp gentlemen" compliments something seen as positive during the gameplay. When they state "gentlemen," they assume automatically that there are no gender identities other than cis-heterosexual males. Both QUANT and QUAL data showed that most gamers consider the gendered welcoming or complimenting phrases as exclusionary.

As can be seen in Table 2 below, most participants notice gendered phrases in the League of Legends.

Table 3. Gendered Phrases in the Begining of the LoL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Never seen	20	4.2	5.3
	Rarely	83	17.4	22.0
	Sometimes	131	27.4	34.7
	Often	86	18.0	22.8
	Always	58	12.1	15.3
	Total	378	79.1	100.0

In addition, gendered phrases are a way of telling and showing the newcomers to the gaming community by the actual owners of that space. Therefore, the newcomers who are cis-heterosexual female gamers and LGBTQIA+ gamers will know their place as "the other," and the cis-heterosexual male gamers will see that they are welcome in this homosocial place. Along with the quant data, the QUAL patterns show that most LGBTQIA+ and cis-heterosexual female gamers are bothered to see a pronoun that implies only cis-heterosexual male gamers. The

exclusionary experiences start even at the onset of the game for them. For instance, I would like to give both Participant 12 and Participant 18's notions about the gendered phrase used in the LoL Turkey Server:

> When I see the word "gentlemen," I feel offended. It is something emotional, and I am disturbed by it. Things like that happened a lot at first. I was throwing a question mark initially, and then I would like to state my gender. It was something I encountered a lot while watching broadcasters before I broadcast; most of the male broadcasters usually say, "let's move on to this game, guys," but at that moment, five thousand people are watching that broadcast, and I'm one of those people. I was having such an emotional burst. For this reason, I felt compelled to state my gender (Participant 12, cis-heterosexual female gamer, 22).

> This is one of the things that bother me the most. For some reason, I get angry when it starts as gentlemen, whether on the LoL or social media. They're the norm group, and we're the spectators. That word triggers me a lot (Participant 18, LGBTQIA+ gamer, 24)

Therefore, the cis-heterosexual male-oriented pronouns used in the gaming community contribute to the detection mechanism of the *gamerlect* because the emotional reaction that could be given to the gendered phrases creates a dilemma for cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers. Because the risk of harassment comes when they provide an "emotional response" to the gendered pronouns in the LoL Turkey Server. Therefore, the dilemma is that they will either accept their exclusion from this gaming community or reveal their gender identity, risking harassment.

4.4. Participant Observation Results

As stated in the method section, I conducted participant observation between 02/23/2021 and 04/25/2021. I started to do participant observation with the name Feoner Tinuviel until April,3,2021. Until that date, I observed the discourses generated by my teammates, oppositional team members, and my discourses. For the participant observation aspect of the thesis, I played the LoL for approximately three hours a day, which equals three or four games, taking screenshots instead of taking notes about the language used in the chat box and my interactions with the other players. Taking screenshots provided me with an advantage because I was a

player at the same time while I was conducting participant observation; therefore, I didn't find any opportunity to write down the discourses that I found compatible with the *gamerlect*. I have played the League of Legends on a Turkey server since 2010. Therefore, I decided to observe myself beside the other gamers.

4.4.1 The analysis of the games that I played with the nickname "Feoner Tinuviel"

According to Elena Bertozzi (Bertozzi,2008, as cited in Condis,2018), gendered cultural norms represented in slang language form are seen in the gaming communities where males are constructed. The sexist swear words "Sissy, pussy, and fag" (Bertozzi,2008, as cited in Condis,2018,22) are acknowledged as part of the gaming culture primarily utilized to define defeated opponents. Therefore, hypermasculinity is reproduced with discourses embedded in heteronormativity (Bertozzi,2008, as cited in Condis,2018,22).

In the League of Legends games that I played between the dates 02/23/2021 and 04./03/2021, I observed sexist swear words, rape discourse, and phrases to glorify masculinity. For instance:



[17]

Figure 14. The screenshot 2

This screenshot was taken from the ranked game I played on 01.03.2021 in the League of Legends. The opponent team member who plays Ashe used the term "gay" to state the dominance over me and used the phrase "have you lied down?" which is another phrase conducted to create hegemony over other gamers. Therefore, the sexist words that both Ryze and Ashe generate illustrate an example of how a toxic environment has been made in the League of Legends Turkey Server. As seen in the screenshot below, I played the ranked game in the League of Legends on 11.03.2021. The essentialist characteristics that are related to masculinity are encouraged and recreated in the gaming community of the League of Legends Turkey Server:

17
(Ryze): Stupid, son of a bitch Riven
(Ashe): Well Taric
(Jinx): Fuck your mom's pussy Riven
(Taric): Riven report thanks
(Ashe): Have you lied down
(Leona): Gay
(Jinx): Riven 9x



[18]

Figure 15. The screenshot 3

The sentence "We need the heart of a man" that Yone used to imply the courage that needs to be applied in the team fights in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Therefore, the League of Legends gaming community has also kept reproducing gendered essentialism through the abilities connected with masculinity.

On the other hand, rape discourse has become an integral part of gaming culture. On the 20th of March 2021, I encountered the use of a rape discourse during the ranked match in the LoL Turkey Server. When he was alone, five opponent team members killed the pantheon, and he described this term with the rape discourse.

[18]
(Yone) We need man's heart
(Yone) You will dive in
(Yone) You will take him
(Yone) Ok
(Yone) Talk through yours hat
(Yone) Fuck it



[19]

Figure 16. The screenshot 4

According to Amanda C. Cote (2020), the rape discourse that is embedded in the gaming culture can trigger traumas of sexual assault (2020:76). On the other hand, I believe that the toxic environment of the male-dominated gaming community would not consider eliminating rape discourse despite triggering other people's traumas because I argue that the hardcore gamers would defend the use of rape discourse by suggesting that true gamers would know why it is used and what is meant by it. Therefore, rape discourse is normalized in the gaming culture and gaming community. Emma Vossen (2018) specified that the trash-talk uses rape discourse and words that imply sexual violence to prove their dominance among other male gamers. Yet the meaning of the rape discourse is different for male and female gamers (Vossen,2018,215). Vossen (2018) states that rape discourse is "empty of its significance to many of the men who use it, [it] can mean something else entirely to female players" (2018:215). Consequently, sexist swear words, essentialist arguments about gamer identity directly connected to toxic masculinity, and the rape discourse have three significant characteristics of the LoL gaming community that I observed in the League of Legends Turkey Server.

[19]
(Yasuo) If you would have come, I could take him.
(Ezreal) You will just stop
(Ezreal) You will win
(Pentheon) I am coming but men raped me back there
(Ezreal) That's it
(Pantheon) No one looks

4.4.2. The analysis of the games I played with the nickname "feminist queen"

I changed my nickname to see what could have happened when male gamers guessed marginalized communities' gender identities. Therefore, I was aware that feminists are not welcome in the gaming culture because they are labeled as killjoys in the hardcore gaming community. Then I used the word feminist at the beginning of the game and chose the phrase queen to represent my gender identity, which can be guessed as female from other players in the League of Legends Turkey Server. This section will focus on three cases I observed and experienced directly in the games I played in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Also, I should specify that I could not pursue participant observation with the nickname that I determined "feminist queen" because the harassment I dealt with started to harm me more than I thought.



[20]

Figure 17. The screenshot 5

The first observation that I found about myself is that I started to use swear words that generate the *gamerlect* against the male gamers that engender sexist

[20] (feministt queen) they still dont give surrender (sur) idiots
(Ryze) shut up stupid woman
(feminist queen) brainless

discourses and harassment practices over me through the utilization of tex panel (as can be seen from the screenshot that I took on the 06.04.2021) in the League of Legends. Therefore, I contributed to reproducing and maintaining the *gamerlect* in the LoL gaming community.



[21]

Figure 18. The screenshot 6

On the other hand, as seen in the second case's screenshot above, I started to expose direct harassment by saying, "feminist! Who will fuck you know?" at the beginning of the match in the lobby of the League of Legends Turkey Server. In addition, mid-laners' random textual laughing reaction was an example of "male-peer culture" (Katz,2006,7), where they would laugh at their sexist and

[21]
M3: feminist
M3: Who will fuck you now?
M3: Isn't it shameful to be feminist?
MR: (Random laugh textual performance in Turkish slang)

misogynistic jokes to signify that they share the same understanding of masculinity. Therefore, I was targeted by the cis-heterosexual male gamer I played on April 6, 2022. During the game, his harassment increased, and I took screen a shot (as shown below) when he stated that he would rape me if I kept talking.



[22]

Figure 19. The screenshot 7

Therefore, the feminist nickname made me a direct target of the gamers who internalize *gamerlect* and misogynistic practices and discourses. My gender identity and defining myself as a feminist disturbed the toxic cis-heterosexual male gamers. I was creating a threat to his homosocial gaming space. Therefore, they utilized harassment practices and rape discourse to eliminate me from the borders of the homosocial gaming community. According to Christopher A. Paul (2018), misogynistic language comprising rape discourse creates a fundamental part of the gaming community (2018:15).

The second harassment that I experienced directly occurred on April 8, 2021. After this harassment experience, I stopped participant observation. He started his insults by calling me a "feminist dog." Then he used verbal harassment to prove his dominance and silence me. Also, I reported both users (Brand and Riven), but

[22]
M3: what does this femen tell?
M3: I did not throw bone to you Sivir
(feministtt Queen): Do you know femen (in childish textual performance)
M3: Don't bark, I will rape you.

nothing happened. I received no feedback about their punishment from Riot Games Turkey. Also, I stated that I would report Brand to himself in the game, but he did not even care. I took two screenshots which can be seen below:



[23]

Figure 20. The screenshot 8



[24]

Figure 21. The screenshot 9

Consequently, both Riven's and Brand's use of the *gamerlect* as a language form to display sexual harassment and toxicity practices aimed as a disciplinary mechanism to push me away from the gaming space and community of the League

[23]
(feminist queen): a feminist dog?
(brand): Shut up and keep licking
(brand): and add this to your complaint

[24]
(brand):A mother fucker comes to you
(brand): And you will be stabbed in 30 timess
(brand):Then you will come to your senses

of Legends because I was undesirable and unwelcome in homosocial gaming space that constructed by cis-heterosexual hardcore male gamers. In addition, the lack of punishment by Riot Games Turkey against these two users has increased my vulnerable and disadvantaged position as a cis-female gamer in the gaming community. Still, the League of Legends Turkey Server is not a safe place where members of marginalized communities can play.

4.5. Summary

In this section, I put together quant and QUAL patterns to analyze and find answers to my research questions. Firstly, the operationalization of gender inequality in the League of Legends gaming culture was seen in uneven gender distribution among survey participants. However, QUAL results showed that the definition of gamer and the representation of gamer and gaming community is still generated as male. Also, gender inequality and gender roles affect girls' access to games. While families were buying PC or consoles for boys, most cis-heterosexual female participants were introduced to games and technological equipment through their male relatives, such as brothers, male friends, or fathers. In addition, monitoring and detection mechanisms create pressure on cis-heterosexual female gamers, especially on those who are broadcasters. Therefore, this pressure has developed competition among cis-heterosexual female gamers.

On the other hand, while cis-heterosexual female gamers were developing competition with each other, LGBTQIA+ gamers created solidarity and used *lubunca* to know each other during games. However, verbal harassment is one of the experiences shared by both cis-heterosexual female and queer gamers. Therefore, acting like one of the cis-heterosexual male gamers by utilizing gamerlect or humor has become two essential survival strategies of both cis-heterosexual and queer gamers.

Also, lane choices are gendered in the League of Legends. Therefore, character choice can reveal cis-heterosexual female gamers' gender identity and increase

their chances of exposure to harassment. In addition, the discourses and language forms, such as kind textual performances, beyond gamerlect are used as a detection mechanism for cis-heterosexual female gamers in the League of Legends Turkey Server. That's why the utilization of kindness in texts uncovers cis-heterosexual female gamers' gender identity.

Most cis-heterosexual females, cis-heterosexual males, and queer gamers see sexist swear words in the text panel of the League of Legends. However, muting the chat negatively affects participants' gaming experiences. However, cis-heterosexual male gamers learn silent behavior in masculine socialization while they grow up. Therefore, most cis-heterosexual male gamers do nothing against those sexists' swear words in the League of Legends turkey Server. On the other hand, some cis-heterosexual male gamer reacts to harassment or toxic textual performances that cis-heterosexual female gamers are exposed to, and those gamers who respond are labeled as "pussy guards" to specify they are not men enough.

On the other hand, I observed that some cis-heterosexual male gamers use the word "gay" to humiliate the other player in the League of Legends. Therefore, homosexuality is another way of humiliating other gamers in LoL. On the other hand, QUAL patterns illustrated how the League of Legends Turkey Server's punishment system works inadequately. Most successful gamers switch their accounts to West Server to access less toxicity in their gaming experiences.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. Solution Suggestion

I defined *Gamerlect* as a language form consisting of game-based terms, rape discourse, sexist swear words, and trash-talk. Besides the language structure of the *gamerlect*, it contains harassment, toxic heteronormativity, homophobic, and transphobic practices. I suggested that gamerlect is common language form of the League of Legends Turkey Server. Therefore, it is normalized and internalized by most gamers. On the other hand, I think that gamerlect can be challenged by a new language form combined with *lubunca* as a counter-discourse. Therefore, if cis-heterosexual female and queer gamers have internalized this new language form, they can understand their identities during games and support each other against harassment and homophobic, transphobic, and toxic practices.

Another solution is an alliance and solidarity that should be developed among cis-heterosexual female, queer, and cis-heterosexual male gamers like the LGBT club in the League of Legends Turkey Server. I think male gamers are responsible for altering violence forms conducted primarily by male gamers against cis-heterosexual female and queer gamers. Therefore, because most cis-heterosexual male gamers still generate a majority of hardcore games, they should be an ally of these marginal groups. I believe it would be significant if cis-heterosexual male gamers had been developing a stance against trolls, gamerlect, harassment, and homophobic and transphobic practices.

Lastly, Activision, one of the biggest gaming companies in the industry, banned 500,000 accounts from toxicity in the game Call of Duty (Harrison, September 13,

2022). This was a vast and remarkable development in the gaming industry because it showed that there would be no tolerance for toxicity and abusive behaviors in Call of Duty. I believe that this is one of the things Riot Games Turkey should have done because participants' and my experiences showed that the punishment system does not work adequately in Riot Games Turkey. Therefore, as I suggested in previous sections, this system protects toxic gamers who conduct harassment practices. Therefore, if the punishment system works in the League of Legends Turkey Server, I believe that the utilization of gamerlect and toxicity will be decreased.

5.2. Conclusion

This research aimed to answer three research questions. These questions inquired about operationalization, embeddedness, and manifestation of gender inequalities in the League of Legends Turkey Server gaming culture. My motivation for conducting this research was to determine and show untouched gendered aspects of the gaming culture through the LoL Turkey Server. Even though invaluable works have been published about gaming in various disciplines, there was a gap in the gaming literature from the gendered and sociological lens. Therefore, by conducting this research, I would like to contribute literature on feminist gaming studies.

This research showed that cis-male heterosexual gamers dominate the League of Legends Turkey Server. However, one of the reasons for this domination is the lack of girls' access to games, especially hardcore games requiring high-level gaming skill ability and time investment. I discussed that the perception of games as a way of wasting time has also affected the girls' tendency to play casual games rather than hardcore games because casual games do not require the dedication of time investment and high gaming skills. You can stop playing casual games without any concern. In addition, male partners and family members influence girls to engage in hardcore games. Internet cafes are one of the spaces where boys can start playing games at an early age, and girls usually do not find any chance

to go to internet cafes unless they do not have male relatives who introduce them to the gaming space. Therefore, the spatial segregation and cis-heterosexual male dominance in gaming spaces begin at an early age. On the other hand, the structural gender inequalities regarding technology also strengthen the sense that girls are inadequate in technological equipment and boys are masters of the technologies. Therefore, gendered inequalities that are socially and culturally constructed affect girls' access to the gaming community since their childhood.

Besides the male relatives' effects on girls, the gaming industry has defined the primary audience of hardcore games as males. Therefore, the hardcore games that are developed include hypersexualized female characters. The representation problems in hardcore games also influence girls' processes of creating relations between themselves and the game's main character. Girls must always find something, such as the story, high-resolution graphics, etc., to generate a bond between them because their wishes or interests are not considered during the game development process. On the other hand, the pink games are developed within essentialist female characteristics. For instance, they created games that are based on cooking or fashion. Therefore, the gaming industry also contributed to gender inequality in the gaming culture.

The definition of gamer has not included females or LGBTQIA+ gamers. The term gamer is not a gender-neutral word. It may seem that way, but gamers would be assumed to be cis-heterosexual males in the gaming community. Therefore, the gaming community has become a homosocial space where cis-heterosexual male gamers dominate, and marginalized gaming groups are tried to be excluded from the homosocial place. Therefore, I transformed the term "buddylect," which was developed by Astrid Ensslin, to *gamerlect* to define a language form that consists of game-based terms, rape discourse, sexist swear words, and trash-talk; furthermore, besides the language structure of the *gamerlect*, it contains harassment, toxic heteronormativity, homophobic, and transphobic practices. In addition, I suggested that *gamerlect* operates as a discourse and part of the male-

peer culture in the gaming community to detect and eliminate groups or individuals who do not fit into the gaming community.

In this thesis, I used feminist methodology and critical discourse analysis and conducted a parallel mixed research method. In-depth interviews construct the qualitative part of this research. The quantitative part is designed to receive supportive data for this research's QUAL part. As a result of the quantitative data, the unequal gender distribution for participating in the survey research generated a representative population of the League of Legends Turkey Servers' gaming community. The male gamers participated in the study in higher numbers than female gamers. Therefore, these results align with the uneven gender distribution in the League of Legends Turkey Server. Also, the Chi-square test results showed that there is a relationship between variables, which are harassment (independent variable) and gender identity (explanatory variable), the use of swear words in everyday life (independent variable as swear words), and the use of swear words in the text panel (independent variable as swear words), lastly, the lane choice as support role (explanatory variable) and the gender identity (explanatory variable).

The QUAL results showed similarities with the Chi-square results. Furthermore, the *gamerlect* is used as a theoretical tool to determine how cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers attempt to be excluded from the homosocial space dominated by cis-heterosexual male gamers. Most informants stated that they see sexist swear words in the communication channel, which is the text panel. Therefore, sexist swear words and trash talk is common in the LoL Turkey Server's gaming community. On the other hand, the humor and assumption of a masculine persona in textual performance have been utilized as a survival strategy for the cis-heterosexual female and LGBTQIA+ gamers in the LoL.

In addition, QUAL data results illustrated that there is a rivalry among cis-heterosexual female gamers rather than creating solidarity. On the other hand, LGBTQIA+ gamers have utilized the "club" feature to be united and create a safe place for themselves. Furthermore, the club tag "LGBT" had created both visibility of LGBTQIA+ gamers and the visibility they gained with the title,

making them a target of some cis-heterosexual male gamers who tried to eliminate them from homosocial gaming. Also, the language, "lubunca," created and adopted in LGBTQIA+ communities, contributed to their notion of solidarity.

Even though cis-heterosexual female gamers had used sexist swear words to sustain the masculine persona in the LoL Turkey Server, they maintained and reproduced the discourses of the *gamerlect*. Therefore, the *gamerlect* was gained as a strength rather than being unused. On the other hand, the reporting system's lack of punishments by the LoL Turkey Server increased cis-heterosexual women and LGBTQIA+ gamers' vulnerable and disadvantageous position in the gaming community.

The other part of the QUAL section was my participant observation. The participant observation results showed me that the nickname that covers your gender identity protects you from direct harassment practices. However, sexist swear words, predominantly "gay," have been used to create dominance over me. The term "gay" was used due to homophobia and humiliation. Therefore, sexist language and swear words have also been used on every player to create oppression.

The nickname conducts the second part of the participant observation I chose, revealing my gender identity and political stance (i.e., feminism). As I discussed above, feminists are considered killjoys in the gaming community. Therefore, some toxic cis-heterosexual male gamers who became aware of my gender identity used hate speech, used rape discourse, and engaged in sexual harassment. Furthermore, it is observed that misogynistic practices are implemented to exclude, silence, and push out gamers who are already marginalized in this gaming community. Even though I reported the gamers engaging in harassment, nothing happened, and they kept playing in the LoL Turkey Server. Therefore, as I discussed above, the constant lack of punishment gave confidence to cis-heterosexual male gamers to reproduce the *gamerlect*.

5.3. Limitations of this research

This research aimed to determine the ways of operationalization and embeddedness of gender inequality in the gaming culture of the League of Legends Turkey Server. However, there were several limitations.

The first limitation was that the qualitative data results from in-depth transcripts accumulated more than I expected. Therefore, every participant's experiences could not be integrated into this research. Consequently, I plan to approach other participants' experiences in future research. Although I have been playing the League of Legends and different genres of games, I had trouble finding LGBTQIA+ gamers to conduct in-depth interviews. I think avoiding visibility has also affected LGBTQIA+ gamers' existence in online spaces.

The second limitation was that cis-heterosexual male informants' in-depth interviews were shorter than LGBTQIA+ and cis-heterosexual females. Therefore, finding the experiences related to the problems I determined for the gaming community in the LoL Turkey Server was hard.

The third limitation was that despite the population increase rate of gamers, games, and game developer companies in Turkey, I needed help finding academic resources published in Turkey. Therefore, my research will be a source of inspiration for other researchers in Turkeys. In addition, I think further research should be conducted on the FPS games that include voice chat, where I know those female gamers experience harassment practices more deeply than the MOBA games.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
ueam@metu.edu.tr
www.ueam.metu.edu.tr

Sayı: 28620816 / 13

29 OCAK 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Fulden İBRAHİMHAKKIOĞLU

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Ceren YILMAZ'ın "Çevrim İçi Bilgisayar Oyunlarında ve Oyun Kültüründe, Cinsiyetç, Küfürlerin Kadınların Bedenleri Üzerinden Nasıl Bir Savaş Alanı Yarattığını Anlamak" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **013-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkanı

B. CHI-SQUARE RESULTS

Crosstabulation 3:

Count

		Verbal harassment based on revealing gender_identity		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender Identity	Male	37	10	47
	Female	4	46	50
Total		41	56	97

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.659[a]	1	0.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	46.803	1	0.000		
Likelihood Ratio	55.610	1	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.000	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	49.147	1	0.000		
N of Valid Cases	97				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.87.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Crosstabulation 4: Gender Identity and Lane Choice (Support Role)

Count

		Lane Choice (Support)		
		No	Yes	Total
Gender Identity	Male	194	132	326
	Female	15	37	52
Total		209	169	378

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.057[a]	1	0.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	15.839	1	0.000		
Likelihood Ratio	17.230	1	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.000	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.012	1	0.000		
N of Valid Cases	378				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.25.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Crosstabulation 5: The Use of Swear Word in Everyday Life and The Use of Swear Words in the Text Panel

Count

		The Use of Swear Words in the Text Panel			
		No	Yes	Sometimes	Total
The Use of Swear	No	81	13	61	155
Word in Everyday	Yes	51	65	107	223
Total		132	78	168	378

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	43.247a	2	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	45.179	2	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Asso	16.799	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	378		

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 31.98.

C. QUESTION LIST

In-depth interview questions for cis-heterosexual women informants

1. Yaşınız?

2. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?

3. Çalışıyor musunuz? Ne zamandır çalışıyorsunuz? Çalışma koşullarınız nasıl?

4. Ne kadar süredir oyun oynuyorsunuz? Oyun oynamaya nasıl başladınız?

5. League of Legends oynamaya nasıl başladınız?

6. League of the Legends oyununu ne kadar sıklıkta oynuyorsunuz?

7. League of Legends oyununda hangi pozisyonda oynuyorsunuz?

8. Eğer grup halinde oynuyorsanız grubunuz kimlerden oluşuyor? Grubunuzu arkadaşlarınız mı oluşturuyor yoksa online platformlarda tanıştığınız insanlar mı bu grubu oluşturuyor ve bu grupta kaç kadın ve kaç erkek yer alıyor?

9. League of Legends oynarken konuşma ekranını kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanmıyorsanız neden?

10. Oyun kültürü ve oyunlar dendiğinde bir kadın olarak aklında nasıl bir oyuncu kitlesi oluşuyor? Kendinizi bu kitle içinde nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Ev sahibi gibi mi yoksa misafir gibi mi?

11. Sizce League of Legends oyuncusunun toplumdaki algısı nedir?

12. Bana bir kaç cümle ile League of Legends'ı oynayan bir oyuncunun sizce ideal özellikleri nelerdir? League of Legends oyuncusu imajını üç kelime ile anlatabilir misiniz?

13. League of Legends oyununu bir alan olarak nasıl tanımlarsınız?

14. Diyelim takımınızda LGBTI biri olduğunu fark ettiniz ya da kendisi size bunu söyledi. Tepkiniz ne olur?

15. Eğer cinsiyetini belirten kişi LGBTI olsaydı, bir League of Legends maçında cinsiyetini belirtir miydi? Eğer belirtse sizce ne tip şakalara maruz kalırdı, sizce oyun deneyimi nasıl olurdu?

16. LOL oynarken sizinle oynayan insanların cinsiyeti sizin için ne ifade eder? Bunu bilmek ister misiniz?

17. LOL (League of Legends) oynarken küfür ediyor musunuz? Ediyorsanız neden?

Hangi küfürleri ediyorsunuz?

18. LOL oynarken konuşma panelinde düzenli olarak cinsiyetçi küfür görüyorsanız bu durum sizi ve oyun oynama deneyiminizi nasıl etkiliyor?

19. League of Legends anonimite üzerine kurulu, herhangi bir iletişim kanalında cinsiyetini belirttiğiniz oyunlar oldu mu? Eğer belirtmiyorsanız neden?

20. League of Legends oyununda cinsiyetini belirtme veya belirtmeme stratejileriniz var mı? Herhangi bir League of Legends oyununda cinsiyetinizi belirtmediğinizde "erkek gibi" davrandınız mı? Hiç League of Legends oynarken kendini koruma stratejileriniz oldu mu?

21. Oynadığınız LOL oyunlarında ne kadar sıklıkla bir kadın oyuncu ile karşılaşıyorsunuz? Azsa neden böyle olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

22. Kadın olduğunuz öğrenildiğinde/ belirttiğinizde ne gibi tepkilerle karşılaşırsınız veya karşılaştınız? LOL'de oynadığınız aynı maçta cinsiyetinizi belirttiğinizde veya fark edildiğinizde takımdaki diğer oyuncular sana yardım edip korunmaya çalışıldın mı?

23. LOL'de yer alan iletişim kanalları üzerinden cinsiyetini belirttiğinde, belirtmeden ya da yanlışlıkla belirttiğinde hiç rahatsız edici söyleme veya sözlü tacize maruz kaldınız mı? Rahatsız edici söylemin cinsiyetinizle ilgili olduğunu düşünür müsün? Sözlü tacizin cinsel yönelimle ilgili tarafları olur mu?

24. LOL'de bir oyuna girdiğinde, hiç küçümsendiniz mi? Hangi koşullarda ve ne olduğunda mesela bu duyguyu hissettiniz?

25. Oyuna başlarken "iyi oyunlar beyler", "wp(well played) beyler" tarzında cümleleri duyuyor musunuz? Evet ise, duymak sizi ve oyun deneyiminizi nasıl etkiliyor?

26. Herhangi bir oyunda erkek arkadaşlarınla pre/duo olarak girdiğinizde ne gibi tepkiler aldınız?

27. Son olarak kadın ve erkekler arasında oyun oynayış farkının olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Nasıl? Anlatır mısınız?

28. LOL oynayan kadınların sadece destekçi pozisyonunda oynar algısı var mıdır? Sizce bu algı neden ve nasıl gelişti?

In-depth interview questions for cis-heterosexual male informants

1. Yaşınız?

2. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?

3. Çalışıyor musunuz? Ne zamandır çalışıyorsunuz? Çalışma koşullarınız nasıl?

4. Ne kadar süredir oyun oynuyorsunuz? Oyun oynamaya nasıl başladınız? League of Legends oynamaya nasıl başladınız?

5. League of the Legends oyununu hangi sıklıkta oynuyorsunuz?

6. League of Legends oyununda hangi pozisyonda oynuyorsunuz?

7. LOL'ü oyununu tek başınıza mı yoksa bir grup halinde mi oynuyorsunuz?

8. Eğer grup halinde oynuyorsanız grubunuz kimlerden oluşuyor? Grubunuzu arkadaşlarınız mı oluşturuyor yoksa online platformlarda tanıştığınız insanlar mı bu grubu oluşturuyor ve bu grupta kaç kadın ve kaç erkek yer alıyor?

9. League of Legends oynarken konuşma ekranını kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanmıyorsanız, neden?

10. Oyun kültürü ve oyunlar dendiğinde aklınızda nasıl bir oyuncu kitlesi oluşuyor? Kendinizi bu kitle içinde nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Ev sahibi gibi mi yoksa misafir gibi mi?

11. Sizce League of Legends oyuncusunun toplumdaki algısı nedir?

12. Bana bir kaç cümle ile League of Legends'ı oynayan bir oyuncunun sizce ideal özellikleri nelerdir? League of Legends oyuncusu imajını üç kelime ile anlatabilir misiniz?

13. League of Legends oyununu bir alan olarak nasıl tanımlarsınız?

14. Diyelim takımınızda LGBTI biri olduğunu fark ettiniz ya da kendisi size bunu söyledi. Tepkiniz ne olur?

15. Eğer cinsiyetini belirten kişi LGBTI olsaydı bir League of Legends maçında cinsiyetini belirtir miydi? Eğer belirtse sizce ne tip şakalara maruz kalırdı, sizce oyun deneyimi nasıl olurdu?

16. LOL oynarken sizinle oynayan insanların cinsiyeti sizin için ne ifade eder? Bunu bilmek ister misiniz?

17. LOL (League of Legends) oynarken cinsiyetçi küfür ediyor musunuz? Ediyorsanız neden?

Hangi küfürleri ediyorsunuz?

18. LOL oynarken konuşma panelinde düzenli olarak cinsiyetçi küfür görüyor musunuz? Görüyorsanız bu durum sizi ve oyun oynama deneyiminizi nasıl etkiliyor?

19. Oynadığınız LOL oyunlarında ne kadar sıklıkla bir kadın oyuncu ile karşılaşıyorsunuz? Azsa neden böyle olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

20. LOL'de bir kadın oyuncu konuşma ekranında cinsiyetini belirtse ona olan yaklaşımınız nasıl olur?

21. League of Legends oyununu oynayan bir kadın arkadaşın cinsiyetini konuşma panelinde belirtse buna tepkiniz nasıl olur?

22. LOL'de oynadığınız aynı maçta bir kadın olduğunu fark ettiğinizde ya da size bu söylendiğinde ona yardım edip korumaya çalıştınız mı?

23. LOL'de oynadığınız aynı maçta yine kadın oyuncu olduğunu fark ettiğinizde sürekli öleceğini, takıma oyunu kaybettireceğini düşünüyor musunuz?

24. LOL oynayan kadınların sadece destekçi pozisyonunda oynar algısı var mıdır? Sizce bu algı neden ve nasıl gelişti?

25. League of Legends oyununda kadın arkadaşlarınla pre/duo olarak girdiğinizde ne gibi tepkiler alıyorsunuz?

26. Son olarak kadın ve erkekler arasında oyun oynayış farkının olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

In-depth interview questions for LGBTQIA+ informants

1. Yaşınız?

2. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?

3. Çalışıyor musunuz? Ne zamandır çalışıyorsunuz? Çalışma koşullarınız nasıl?

4. Ne kadar süredir oyun oynuyorsunuz? Oyun oynamaya nasıl başladınız?

5. League of Legends oynamaya nasıl başladınız?

6. League of the Legends oyununu ne kadar sıklıkta oynuyorsunuz?

7. League of Legends oyununda hangi pozisyonda oynuyorsunuz?

8. Eğer grup halinde oynuyorsanız grubunuz kimlerden oluşuyor? Grubunuzu arkadaşlarınız mı oluşturuyor yoksa online platformlarda tanıştığınız insanlar mı bu grubu oluşturuyor?

9. League of Legends oynarken konuşma ekranını kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanmıyorsanız neden?

10. Oyun kültürü ve oyunlar dendiğinde bir kadın olarak aklında nasıl bir oyuncu kitlesi oluşuyor? Kendinizi bu kitle içinde nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Ev sahibi gibi mi yoksa misafir gibi mi?

11. Sizce League of Legends oyuncusunun toplumdaki algısı nedir?

12. Bana bir kaç cümle ile League of Legends'ı oynayan bir oyuncunun sizce ideal özellikleri nelerdir? League of Legends oyuncusu imajını üç kelime ile anlatabilir misiniz?

13. League of Legends oyununu bir alan olarak nasıl tanımlarsınız?

14. LGBTİ+ biri olduğunu League of Legends takımında veya herhangi bir maçında belirttiniz mi? Eğer belirtmediyseniz, neden? Belirtseydiniz sizce nasıl tepkiler aldırdınız? Ne tip "şakalara" maruz kalırdınız ve bu durum oyun deneyiminizi nasıl etkilerdi?

15. LOL oynarken sizinle oynayan insanların cinsiyeti sizin için ne ifade eder? Bunu bilmek ister misiniz?

16. LOL (League of Legends) oynarken küfür ediyor musunuz? Ediyorsanız neden?

Hangi küfürleri ediyorsunuz?

17. LOL oynarken konuşma panelinde düzenli olarak cinsiyetçi küfür görüyorsanız bu durum sizi ve oyun oynama deneyiminizi nasıl etkiliyor?

18. League of Legends anonimite üzerine kurulu, herhangi bir iletişim kanalında cinsiyetinizi veya cinsel yöneliminizi belirttiğiniz oyunlar oldu mu? Eğer belirtmiyorsanız neden?

19. League of Legends oyununda cinsiyetini belirtme veya belirtmeme stratejileriniz var mı? Herhangi bir League of Legends oyununda cinsiyetinizi belirtmediğinizde "erkek gibi" davrandınız mı? Hiç League of Legends oynarken kendini koruma stratejileriniz oldu mu?

20. Oynadığınız LOL oyunlarında ne kadar sıklıkla bir LGBTİ+ oyuncuyla veya kadın oyuncu ile karşılaşıyorsunuz? Azsa neden böyle olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

21. LGBTİ+ olduğunuz öğrenildiğinde/ belirttiğinizde ne gibi tepkilerle karşılaşırsınız veya karşılaştınız?

29. LOL'de yer alan iletişim kanalları üzerinden cinsiyetinizi veya cinsel yöneliminizi belirttiğinizde, ya da yanlışlıkla belirttiğinizde hiç rahatsız edici söyleme veya sözlü tacize maruz kaldınız mı? Rahatsız edici söylemin cinsiyetinizle ilgili olduğunu düşünür müsün? Sözlü tacizin cinsel yönelimle ilgili tarafları olur mu?

22. LOL'de bir oyuna girdiğinde, hiç küçümsendiniz mi? Hangi koşullarda ve ne olduğunda mesela bu duyguyu hissettiniz?

23. Oyuna başlarken "iyi oyunlar beyler", "wp(well played) beyler" tarzında cümleleri duyuyor musunuz? Evet ise, duymak sizi ve oyun deneyiminizi nasıl etkiliyor?

24. Son olarak oyuncular arasında cinsiyetlerine bağlı olarak oyun oynayış farkının olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Nasıl? Anlatır mısınız?

Survey questions:

1. Cinsiyetiniz nedir?

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2. Yaşınız
- 18 altı
- 18-25
- 26-33
- 34-41
- 42 üstü

3. Eğitim durumunuz
- Ilköğretim
- Ortaöğretim
- Lise
- Önlisans
- Lisans
- Yüksek lisans
- Doktora

4. Çalışıyor musunuz?
- Evet
- Hayır

5. League of the Legends oyununu hangi sıklıkta oynuyorsunuz?
- Her gün
- Gün aşırı
- Haftada bir kaç gün
- Haftada bir
- İki haftada bir
- Ayda bir

6. League of Legends oyununda hangi pozisyonda oynuyorsunuz?
- Orta.
- Solo/Üst.
- Orman
- Nişancı
- Destek

7. League of Legends oynarken konuşma ekranını kullanıyor musunuz?
- Evet
- Hayır
- Bazen

8. Küfürü günlük hayatınızda kullanıyor musunuz?
- Evet
- Hayır

9. Konuşma ekranını kullanırken küfür ediyor musunuz?
- Evet
- Hayır
- Bazen

10. Cinsiyetçi küfür kullanıyor musunuz?
- Evet
- Hayır

11. Hangi küfürleri kullanıyorsunuz?

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12. Oyuna başlarken "iyi oyunlar beyler", "wp(well played) beyler" tarzında cümleleri hangi sıklıkla duyuyorsunuz?
- Her zaman
- Sık sık
- Ara sıra
- Nadir
- Hiç duymuyorum.

13. Çevrimiçi ve çok oyunculu oyunları oynarken cinsiyetinizi belirttiniz mi? (Bu soru YALNIZCA KADIN+ OYUNCULAR içindir.)
- Evet
- Hayır
- Tercih etmiyorum

14. Çevrimiçi ve çok oyunculu oyunları oynarken cinsiyetinizi belirttiğinizde sözlü tacize maruz kaldınız mı?
(Bu soru YALNIZCA KADIN+ OYUNCULAR içindir.)
- Evet
- Hayır

15. LOL (League of Legends) oynarken kadın oyuncular ile erkek oyuncular arasında fark olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
- Evet, erkekler daha iyidir.
- Evet, kadınlar daha iyidir.
- Hayır, aralarında bir fark yoktur.
- Kadınların LOL oynadığını zaten düşünmüyorum.

16. Eğer Lol’de kadınlar ve erkekler arasında bir fark olduğunu düşünüyorsanız bunun hangi alanlarda etkili olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

- Vardır. Örneğin: yetenek kullanımı.
- Vardır. Örneğin: oyun bilgisi.
- Vardır. Örneğin: pozisyon alabilme.
- Vardır. Örneğin: tecrübe.
- Yoktur.

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Birçok cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve LGBTQIA+ oyuncusu, çevrimiçi çok oyunculu oyunlarda tacize, sözlü tacize ve nefret söylemine maruz kalıyor (Cote, 2020; Condis,2018; deWinter ve Kocurek,2017; Vossen,2018; Paul,2018). Bu araştırma, ana akım çevrimiçi PC oyunu League of Legends'taki oyuncuların cinsiyete dayalı deneyimlerini anlamayı, değerlendirmeyi ve belgelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Doğrudan taciz, toksiklik ve sözlü tacize maruz kalırken, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'nda raporlama sisteminin yeterince çalışmadığını fark ettim. Bu gözlem, oyun kültüründe toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğini sorgulamak için çıkış noktamı oluşturuyor. Ondan sonra fark ettim ki Türkiye'de cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve oyun kültürü üzerine araştırma eksikliği var. Bu nedenle, diğer cis-heteroseksüel kadınların benzer çevrimiçi oyun uygulamaları yaşayıp yaşamadığını anlamak için 2018'de cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve oyun kültürü hakkında bir pilot çalışma yürüttüm. Mevcut çalışma, oyun topluluklarında cinsiyete dayalı kimliklerin anlaşılmasını ilerletmek için öncekine dayanıyor.

Bu tezde, cis-heteroseksüel kadınların ve LGBTIA+ oyuncularının, hardcore oyun topluluğu ve oyun endüstrisi tarafından dışlandığını ve göz ardı edildiğini savunuyorum. Braxton Soderman'a (2017) göre, hardcore oyunların algısı, agresif, şiddetli anlatılar ve zaman yatırımı gerektiren karmaşık oynanışa sahip konular aracılığıyla inşa edilmiştir (2017:40). Ayrıca hardcore oyunların müşteri tabanı, oyun endüstrisinin ve oyun geliştiricilerin tanıtım stratejileri aracılığıyla erkekler olarak şekillenmektedir (Condis,2017,56). Bu nedenle, cis-heteroseksüel kadınlar ve kuir oyuncular, hem hardcore oyun topluluğunda hem de oyun endüstrisinde görünür özneler olarak görülmüyor.

Dijital oyunlardaki erkek egemen dinamikleri anlamak için League of Legends'ı bu dışlayıcı uygulamaların aracı olarak alıyorum. Quantic Foundry'nin araştırması, oyuncuların tercih ettikleri türlere göre dağılımını sorgulamak için dünya çapındaki oyunculardan toplanan 270.000 yanıtla oluşturuldu (Quantic

Foundry'den alıntı, Statista, 2017). Bu araştırmanın sonucunda, yanıt veren 270.000 kişinin %69'u kadındı ve aile/çiftlik Sim türü ile Candy Crush (Quantic Foundry'den alıntı, Statista, 2017) gibi Match 3 türlerini oynamayı seçtiler. Öte yandan, 270.000 katılımcının %18'i aksiyon-macera türlerini oynayan kadındı ve 270.000 yanıtlayanın %10'u MOBA türünü oynayan kadındı (Quantic Foundry'den alıntı, Statista, 2017).

Kadınlar ve LGBTİA+ oyuncuları oyun kültüründe bir azınlık olsa da, cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncuların ve LGBTQIA+ oyuncularının League of Legends maçlarında dışlanma riski ve dahası nedeniyle cinsiyetlerini veya cinsel yönelimlerini açıklamadıklarını savunuyorum. League of Legends'ta iletişim kanalları aracılığıyla cinsel taciz, sözlü taciz, cinsiyetçi küfürlerin kullanılması ve istenmeyen ilgi olasılığı. Bu nedenle, karşılaştıkları riskler, konumlarını çok daha savunmasız ve görünmez kılmaktadır.

Diğer argümanım ise Türkiye'de oyun kültürü ve kullanılan dilin heteronormatif ve cinsiyetçi olabileceğidir. Bu tezde "gamerlect" olarak tanımladığım dil, Astrid Ensslin'in belirli bir grup içindeki sözlü ve yazılı dili içeren bir diyalog etkileşimi yapısını açıklayan "Buddylect" (Ensslin,2012,109) kavramından türetilmiştir (Ensslin,2012,109). 2012:109). Bu düşünceden yola çıkarak gamerlect'i oyun temelli terimler, tecavüz söylemi, cinsiyetçi küfürler ve trash talk üzerinden (çöp konuşma) oluşan bir dil biçimi olarak kullanacağım. Ayrıca, gamerlect'in dil yapısının yanı sıra, bu yapının taciz ve toksik heteronormatif, homofobik ve transfobik pratikler için bir ortam yarattığını savunuyorum. League of Legends örneğinde, gamerlect, Eloboost, buffed şampiyon, ad (attack damage - saldırı gücü), ap (ability power - yetenek gücü) hasarı vb. gibi oyun terimleri, cinsiyetçi küfürler, toksisite ve nefret söylemleri tarafından oluşturulmuştur. Dahası, gamerlect'in oyun topluluğuna ve oyun kültürüne ait olmayan oyuncular için bir tespit mekanizması işlevi gördüğünü savunuyorum. Teorik Araç Bölümü'nde (2.4) ayrıntılı olarak görülebileceği gibi, gamerlect'in bir oyun topluluğunda iki şekilde çalıştığını iddia ediyorum; birincisi, gamerlect'in söylem olarak çalışması (Foucault,1981) ve ikincisi, gamerlect'in "erkek akran kültürü"nün hakim olduğu

homososyal bir oyun alanına uymayan oyuncuları tespit edip ortadan kaldırma işlevi görmesidir (Katz,2006, 7).

Gamerlect, cinsiyetçi bir söylemdir çünkü cinsiyetçi küfürler, toksisite ve oyun bilgisindeki yeterlilik, Türkiye'deki hardcore oyun kültürüne hakim olan erkek oyuncuların temel özellikleri olarak görülüyor ve kabul ediliyor. Bu nedenle, gamerlect'in bu yapısını benimsemeyen ve içselleştirmeyen cis-heteroseksüel kadınlar ve LGBTİA+ oyuncuları, hardcore oyun topluluğunun dışında tutulur. Sonuç olarak, oyun topluluğunun üyeleri olarak kabul edilmezler.

Son argümanım, kadınların LoL'de yalnızca bir destek rolü oynadığı (Condis,2018,55) varsayımının hala geçerli olduğudur. Karakter seçimi bu süreci doğrudan etkiler çünkü LoL oyun topluluğunda destek rolü ve bazı karakterler cinsiyete dayalıdır. Oyun esnasında oyuncular genellikle karakter seçimlerinden dolayı diğer oyuncuların cinsiyetini tahmin etmeye çalışırlar. Örneğin, özellikle iyileştirmeye ve diğer oyunculara kalkan sağlamaya odaklanan kadın destek karakterleri, "kız gibi" karakterler olarak tanımlanır. Bu algı, kızların zorlu oyunlar oynamadığı ve zorlu oyunlarda karmaşık karakterleri oynayacak kadar yetenekli olmadığı fikrinden kaynaklanmıştır.

Argümanlarıma dayanarak, Türkiye'deki oyun kültürünü ve League of Legends'a gömülü olan cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini oyun alanı, oyun topluluklarının dil yapısı, klişeler ve önyargılar üzerinden anlamak için üç araştırma sorusuna cevap vermeyi hedefliyorum.

Araştırma sorularım aşağıdaki gibidir:
1) Çevrim içi oyun alanı olarak League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu’nun oyun kültürü üzerinden toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği nasıl işliyor?

2) Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği LoL Türkiye Sunucusu’nda hangi şekillerde yer alıyor ve LoL Türkiye Sunucusunda cinsiyetçi oyun kültürünün özellikleri neler?

3) LOL Türkiye Sunucusu’nda cinsiyetçi yönler bir iletişim kanalı aracılığıyla nasıl ortaya çıkıyor?

Bu araştırmada üç araştırma sorusuna yanıt aranmıştır. Bu sorular, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu oyun kültüründe cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin işlevselleştirilmesi, yerleşikliği ve tezahürü hakkındaydı. Bu araştırmayı yapmaktaki motivasyonum, LoL Türkiye Sunucusu aracılığıyla oyun kültürünün dokunulmamış cinsiyetçi yönlerini belirlemek ve göstermekti. Oyunla ilgili çeşitli disiplinlerde paha biçilmez eserler yayınlanmış olsa da oyun literatüründe cinsiyetçi ve sosyolojik açıdan bir boşluk vardı. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmayı yürüterek feminist oyun çalışmalarına ilişkin literatüre katkıda bulunmak istemekteyim.

Bu tez, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusunun oyun kültüründe işlevselleştirilmiş, yerleşik ve sürdürülen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini keşfederek Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları’na katkıda bulunmaktadır. Oyun endüstrisi büyüyor ve gelişiyor. Oyuncuların deneyimlerine ve League of Legends'ta kullanılan dile, özellikle toplumsal cinsiyet açısından ışık tutmanın önemli olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle, oyuncuların League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu’ndaki deneyimlerini analiz etmek, yerleşik cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin oyuncuların deneyimlerini nasıl etkilediğine dair argümanları anlamak ve geliştirmek için çok önemlidir. Ayrıca bu araştırmanın, diğer araştırmacıların Türkiye'deki oyun kültürüne gömülü cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini araştıran daha ileri araştırmalar yapmaları için bir kaynak olacağını düşünüyorum. Bu tezde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin League of Legends oyun kültürüne nasıl yerleştiğini farklı konu ve deneyimler üzerinden cevaplamaya çalıştım. Bunu yaparken feminist metodoloji ve eleştirel söylem analizinden yararlandım. Feminist metodolojiyi kullanmaktaki birincil motivasyonum, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu’nda oyun topluluğunu ve kültürünü şekillendiren güç ilişkilerine dikkat çekmekti. Ayrıca bu güç ilişkileri ataerkil ve heteronormatif ideolojilere bağlıdır.

Caroline Ramazanoğlu ve Janet Holland'a göre, "feminist metodoloji, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerine ilişkin doğrulanabilir bilgi üretme sorunlarına yönelik bir dizi yaklaşımdır" (Ramazanoglu ve Holland, 2002, 10). Ramazanoğlu ve Holland'a (2002) göre "feminist bilgi, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı toplumsal yaşam deneyimlerine dayanır, ancak aynı zamanda toplumsal ilişkilerin adaletine, iktidar teorilerine ve toplumsal araştırmanın ahlakına ilişkin yargılara da bağlıdır" (Ramazanoglu ve Holland, 2002, 3). Bu nedenle bilgi geliştirme bilgi birikimi güç ilişkilerine dayanır, eşitsizliklerle sonuçlanır ve feminist metodoloji güç teorileri oluşturmayı gerektirir (Ramazanoğlu ve Holland, 2002, 13). Ramazanoğlu ve Holland'ın belirttiği gibi, feminist bilgi üretmek "niteleme ve ampirik araştırmaya" dayanmaktadır (Ramazanoğlu ve Holand, 2002, 16). Bu nedenle, çağdaş feminist araştırmacılar, tarihsel olarak olumsal olan toplumsal cinsiyet etrafındaki güç ilişkilerine odaklanırlar (Ramazanoglu ve Holland, 2002). League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusunda cis-heteroseksüel kadın, erkek ve kuir oyuncular arasındaki cinsiyete dayalı güç ilişkilerini göstermek için feminist bir metodoloji kullanıyorum. Bu karmaşık ilişkiyi toplumsal cinsiyet üzerinden bir mercekle göstermek önemlidir çünkü toplusmal cinsiyet eşitsizliği, taciz, cinsiyetçi küfürler ve trash talk genellikle oyun kültürü, oyun toplulukları, akademisyenler ve oyun sektörü tartışmalarında geride kalır. Bu nedenle feminist metodoloji, cinsiyete dayalı oyun deneyimlerini benimsememe ve feminist bilgi geliştirmeme yardımcı oluyor.

Öte yandan eleştirel söylem analizi, gamerlect'in League of Legends maçlarının metin panelinde oyuncular tarafından şekillendirilen söylemleri nasıl oluşturduğunu ve ne kadar heteronormatif olduğunu görmek açısından benim için önemli oldu. Martínez, eleştirel söylem analizinin sadece söylemler ve baskıyla sonuçlanan ideolojiler arasındaki ilişkiyi göstermediğini; ayrıca eleştirel söylem analizi, sosyal ve kültürel olarak inşa edilen güç ilişkilerinin değişmesini teşvik eder (Martínez, 2007). Ensslin'in (2012) aktardığı Fairclough (1995) ve Wodak ve Meyer'e (2001) göre eleştirel söylem analizi, araştırmacılara kültürde, özellikle medyada ve ideolojik yapılarda kimlik oluşumları yoluyla oluşturulan söylemleri görme olanağı sağlar. Fairclough tarafından belirtildiği gibi, eleştirel söylem

analizi “doğallıktan çıkarmayı” (Fairclough,1995, 65) amaçlar. Ek olarak, eleştirel söylem analizi uygulamalar, olaylar ve dilbilim gibi söylemler arasındaki nedensel bağlantıları araştırır (Fairclough,1995,132). Bu söylemsel biçimlerin belirli bağlantılarla nasıl yaratıldığı konusunda bir güç ilişkisi kurar (Fairclough,1995,132). Ek olarak, eleştirel söylem analizi, oyuncuların metinsel performansları aracılığıyla güç ilişkilerini görmek için katılımcı gözlem yapmak benim için çok önemliydi.

Feminist metodoloji ve eleştirel söylem analizinin yanı sıra, araştırma sorularıma yanıt bulmak için paralel karma yöntem araştırmasını gerçekleştirdim. Hesse-Biber'e göre, bir araştırmacının sorularını sorunsallaştırma yolu, araştırmalarını tasarlamak için hangi yöntem(ler)i kullanacaklarını belirler; bu nedenle nicel ve nitel yöntemlerle oluşturulan karma araştırmalar, araştırmacının tasarladıkları araştırma sorularına yanıt bulmak için bulması gereken örüntüler üretmelidir (Hesse-Biber, 2010, 44). Ayrıca, oluşturduğum araştırma soruları, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu’ndaki erkek egemen oyun topluluğuna cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin nasıl yerleştirildiğini anlamak ve sorgulamak için nicel ve nitel yöntemlere dayanmaktadır.

İlk olarak, League of Legends oyun kültüründeki cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin işlevselleştirilmesi, anket katılımcıları arasında eşit olmayan cinsiyet dağılımında görüldü. Bununla birlikte, nitel sonuçlar, oyuncu tanımının ve oyuncu ve oyun topluluğunun temsilinin hala erkek olarak üretildiğini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri kızların oyunlara erişimini etkilemektedir. Aileler erkeklere bilgisayar ya da konsol alırken cis-heteroseksüel kadın katılımcıların çoğu erkek kardeşler, erkek arkadaşlar ya da babalar gibi erkek akrabaları aracılığıyla oyunlarla ve teknolojik donanımlarla tanıştırıldı. Ayrıca izleme ve tespit mekanizmaları, cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular, özellikle de yayıncı olanlar üzerinde baskı oluşturuyor. Bu nedenle, bu baskı cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular arasında rekabeti geliştirdi.

Öte yandan cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular birbirleriyle rekabeti geliştirirken, LGBTİA+ oyuncuları oyun sırasında dayanışma yaratarak lubuncayı birbirlerini tanımak için kullandılar. Ancak sözlü taciz, hem cis-heteroseksüel kadın hem de kuir oyuncuların paylaştığı deneyimlerden biridir. Bu nedenle, gamerlect veya mizahı kullanarak cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyunculardan biri gibi davranmak, hem cis-heteroseksüel hem de kuir oyuncuların iki temel hayatta kalma stratejisi haline geldi.

Ayrıca League of Legends'ta koridor seçimleri cinsiyete göre belirlenir. Bu nedenle, karakter seçimi cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncuların cinsiyet kimliğini ortaya çıkarabilir ve tacize maruz kalma olasılıklarını artırabilir. Ayrıca League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'nda gamerlect'in ötesindeki nazik veya kibar metin performansları gibi söylemler ve dil biçimleri cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular için bir tespit mekanizması olarak kullanılmaktadır. Bu nedenle metinlerde nezaket kullanımı, cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncuların cinsiyet kimliğini ortaya çıkarır.

Çoğu cis-heteroseksüel kadın, cis-heteroseksüel erkek ve kuir oyuncular, League of Legends'ın metin panelinde cinsiyetçi küfürler görüyor. Ancak sohbetin sesini kapatmak, katılımcıların oyun deneyimlerini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Ancak cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncular büyürken eril sosyalleşmede sessiz davranışı öğrenirler. Bu nedenle çoğu cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncu, League of Legends türkiye Sunucusu'nda bu cinsiyetçilerin küfürlerine karşı hiçbir şey yapmıyor. Öte yandan, bazı cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncular, cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncuların maruz kaldığı tacize veya toksik metinsel performanslara tepki verdiğinde yanıt veren oyuncular, yeterince erkek olmadıklarını belirtmek için "am koruyucuları" olarak etiketlenir.

Öte yandan, League of Legends'ta bazı cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncuların diğer oyuncuyu aşağılamak için "gay" kelimesini kullandıklarını gözlemledim. Bu nedenle eşcinsellik, LoL'deki diğer oyuncuları küçük düşürmenin başka bir yoludur. Öte yandan nitel örüntüleri, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'nun

ceza sisteminin ne kadar yetersiz çalıştığını gözler önüne serdi. Çoğu başarılı oyuncu, oyun deneyimlerinde daha az toksikliğe erişmek için hesaplarını League of Legends Batı Sunucusu'na geçirmektedir.

Bu araştırma, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'na cis-erkek heteroseksüel oyuncuların hakim olduğunu gösterdi. Ancak bu hakimiyetin nedenlerinden biri kızların oyunlara, özellikle üst düzey oyun becerisi ve zaman yatırımı gerektiren hardcore oyunlara erişiminin olmamasıdır. Oyunların bir zaman geçirme yolu olarak algılanmasının, kızların hardcore oyunlar yerine casual oyunlar oynama eğilimini de etkilediğini tartıştım çünkü casual oyunlar, zaman yatırımı ve yüksek oyun becerileri ayırmayı gerektirmiyor. Herhangi bir endişe duymadan gündelik oyunları oynamayı bırakabilirsiniz. Ek olarak, erkek partnerler ve aile üyeleri, kızları hardcore oyunlara girmeleri için etkiler. İnternet kafeler, erkeklerin erken yaşta oyun oynamaya başlayabilecekleri mekanlardan biridir ve kız çocukları genellikle onları oyun alanıyla tanıştıran erkek akrabaları olmadığı sürece internet kafelere gitme şansı bulamamaktadır. Bu nedenle, oyun alanlarında mekansal ayrışma ve cis-heteroseksüel erkek egemenliği erken yaşlarda başlar. Öte yandan, teknolojiye ilişkin yapısal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri de kızların teknolojik donanım konusunda yetersiz, erkeklerin ise teknolojilerin ustası olduğu algısını güçlendiriyor. Bu nedenle, sosyal ve kültürel olarak inşa edilen cinsiyete dayalı eşitsizlikler, kız çocuklarının çocukluklarından itibaren oyun topluluğuna erişimini etkilemektedir.

Erkek akrabaların kızlar üzerindeki etkisinin yanı sıra oyun sektörü, hardcore oyunların birincil hedef kitlesini erkekler olarak tanımlamıştır. Bu nedenle geliştirilen hardcore oyunlar, aşırı cinselleştirilmiş kadın karakterleri içerir. Hardcore oyunlardaki temsil sorunları, kızların oyunun ana karakteri ile kendi aralarında ilişki kurma süreçlerini de etkilemektedir. Kızlar, oyun geliştirme sürecinde istekleri veya ilgi alanları dikkate alınmadığı için aralarında bir bağ oluşturmak için her zaman hikaye, yüksek çözünürlüklü grafikler vb. gibi bir şeyler bulmalıdır. Pembe oyunlar ise özcü kadın özellikleri çerçevesinde geliştirilmektedir. Örneğin, yemek pişirme veya modaya dayalı oyunlar yarattılar.

Dolayısıyla oyun endüstrisi, oyun kültüründe cinsiyet eşitsizliğine de katkıda bulunmuştur.

Oyuncu tanımına kadınları veya LGBTİA+ oyuncularını dahil etmemiştir. Oyuncu terimi cinsiyetten bağımsız bir kelime değildir. Öyle görünebilir, ancak oyuncuların oyun topluluğunda cis-heteroseksüel erkekler olduğu varsayılır. Bu nedenle oyun topluluğu, cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncuların egemen olduğu, marjinal oyun gruplarının homososyal ortamdan dışlanmaya çalışıldığı homososyal bir alan haline gelmiştir. Bu nedenle Astrid Ensslin tarafından geliştirilen "buddylect" terimini oyun temelli terimler, tecavüz söylemi, cinsiyetçi küfürler ve trash talk'tan oluşan bir dil biçimini tanımlamak için gamerlect'e dönüştürdüm; ayrıca gamerlect'in dil yapısının yanı sıra taciz, toksik heteronormativite, homofobik ve transfobik pratikler içermektedir. Ek olarak, gamerlect'in oyun topluluğuna uymayan grupları veya bireyleri tespit etmek ve ortadan kaldırmak için oyun topluluğundaki erkek-akran kültürünün bir parçası ve söylemi olarak çalıştığını öne sürdüm.

Bu tezde feminist metodoloji ve eleştirel söylem analizi kullandım ve paralel bir karma araştırma yöntemi yürüttüm. Derinlemesine görüşmeler bu araştırmanın nitel kısmını oluşturmaktadır. Nicel kısım, bu araştırmanın nitel kısmı için destekleyici verileri almak üzere tasarlanmıştır. Nicel verilerin bir sonucu olarak, anket araştırmasına katılım için eşit olmayan cinsiyet dağılımı, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucuları oyun topluluğunun temsili bir popülasyonunu oluşturdu. Erkek oyuncular, kadın oyunculardan daha fazla sayıda araştırmaya katılmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu sonuçlar League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'ndaki eşitsiz cinsiyet dağılımı ile uyumludur. Ayrıca Ki-kare testi sonuçları, taciz (bağımsız değişken) ve cinsiyet kimliği (açıklayıcı değişken), günlük hayatta küfür kullanımı (küfür olarak bağımsız değişken) değişkenleri arasında ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. metin panelinde küfür kullanımı (küfür olarak bağımsız değişken), son olarak destek rolü olarak kulvar seçimi (açıklayıcı değişken) ve cinsiyet kimliği (açıklayıcı değişken).

Nitel sonuçlar, Ki-kare sonuçlarıyla benzerlikler göstermiştir. Dahası, gamerlect, cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve LGBTİA+ oyuncularının, cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncuların hakim olduğu homososyal alandan nasıl dışlanmaya çalıştıklarını belirlemek için teorik bir araç olarak kullanılır. Bilgi verenlerin çoğu, metin paneli olan iletişim kanalında cinsiyetçi küfürler gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu nedenle, LoL Türkiye Sunucusu'nun oyun topluluğunda cinsiyetçi küfürler ve saçma sapan konuşmalar yaygındır. Öte yandan, metinsel performanstaki erkeksi bir kişinin mizahı ve varsayımı, LoL'deki cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve LGBTİA+ oyuncuları için bir hayatta kalma stratejisi olarak kullanıldı.

Ayrıca nitel veri sonuçları, cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular arasında dayanışma yaratmaktan çok bir rekabet olduğunu gösterdi. Öte yandan, LGBTİA+ oyuncuları birlik olmak ve kendilerine güvenli bir yer yaratmak için "kulüp" özelliğini kullandılar. Ayrıca, "LGBT" kulüp etiketi, kuir oyuncularının hem görünürlüğünü hem de unvanla kazandıkları görünürlüğü yaratarak onları homososyal oyunlardan uzaklaştırmaya çalışan bazı cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncuların hedefi haline getirdi. Ayrıca, LGBTİA+ topluluklarında yaratılan ve benimsenen "lubunca" dili, onların dayanışma anlayışına katkıda bulundu.

Cis-heteroseksüel kadın oyuncular, LoL Türkiye Sunucusunda erkeksi kişiliği sürdürmek için cinsiyetçi küfürler kullanmış olsalar da, gamerlect'in söylemlerini sürdürdüler ve yeniden ürettiler. Bu nedenle, gamerlect, kullanılmamak yerine bir güç olarak kazanıldı. Öte yandan, raporlama sisteminin LoL Türkiye Sunucusu tarafından cezalandırılmaması, cis-heteroseksüel kadınları ve LGBTQIA+ oyuncularının oyun topluluğundaki savunmasız ve dezavantajlı konumunu artırdı.

Nitel bölümünün diğer kısmı benim katılımcı gözlemimdi. Katılımcı gözlem sonuçları bana cinsiyet kimliğinizi örten takma adın sizi doğrudan taciz uygulamalarından koruduğunu gösterdi. Ancak ağırlıklı olarak "gay" olan cinsiyetçi küfürler üzerimde tahakküm yaratmak için kullanıldı. Homofobi ve aşağılanma nedeniyle "gay" terimi kullanıldı. Bu nedenle her oyuncu üzerinde baskı oluşturmak için cinsiyetçi dil ve küfürler de kullanılmıştır.

Takma ad, seçtiğim katılımcı gözlemin ikinci bölümünü yönetiyor ve cinsiyet kimliğimi ve politik duruşumu (yani feminizmi) ortaya koyuyor. Yukarıda tartıştığım gibi, feministler oyun topluluğunda oyun bozan olarak görülüyor. Bu nedenle, cinsiyet kimliğimin farkına varan bazı toksik cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncular nefret söylemi kullandı, tecavüz söylemi kullandı ve cinsel tacizde bulundu. Ayrıca bu oyun topluluğunda zaten marjinalize edilmiş oyuncuları dışlamak, susturmak ve uzaklaştırmak için kadın düşmanı uygulamaların yapıldığı görülmektedir. Tacizde bulunan oyuncuları bildirmeme rağmen hiçbir şey olmadı ve LoL Türkiye Sunucusu'nda oynamaya devam ettiler. Bu nedenle, yukarıda tartıştığım gibi, sürekli ceza eksikliği, cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyunculara oyuncuyu yeniden üretme konusunda güven verdi.

Gamerlect'i oyun temelli terimler, tecavüz söylemi, cinsiyetçi küfürler ve trash talk'tan oluşan bir dil biçimi olarak tanımladım. Gamerlect'in dil yapısının yanı sıra taciz, toksik heteronormativite, homofobik ve transfobik pratikler içerir. Gamerlect'in League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusunun ortak dil biçimi olduğunu öne sürdüm. Bu nedenle, çoğu oyuncu tarafından normalleştirilir ve içselleştirilir. Öte yandan, bir karşı-söylem olarak lubunca ile birleştirilmiş yeni bir dil biçimiyle oyuncu seçimine meydan okunabileceğini düşünüyorum. Dolayısıyla cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve queer oyuncular bu yeni dil biçimini içselleştirmişlerse oyun sırasında kimliklerini anlayabilir ve tacize, homofobik, transfobik ve toksik uygulamalara karşı birbirlerine destek olabilirler.

Diğer bir çözüm de League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'ndaki LGBT kulübü gibi cis-heteroseksüel kadın, kuir ve cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncular arasında geliştirilmesi gereken bir ittifak ve dayanışmadır. Öncelikle erkek oyuncular tarafından cis-heteroseksüel kadın ve kuir oyunculara yönelik uygulanan şiddet biçimlerinin değiştirilmesinden erkek oyuncuların sorumlu olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle, çoğu cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncu hala hardcore oyunların çoğunu oluşturduğundan, bu marjinal grupların müttefiki olmaları gerekir. Cis-heteroseksüel erkek oyuncuların trollere, oyunculara, tacize,

homofobik ve transfobik uygulamalara karşı bir duruş geliştirmelerinin anlamlı olacağına inanıyorum.

Son olarak sektörün en büyük oyun şirketlerinden biri olan Activision, Call of Duty oyununda 500.000 hesabı toksisiteden banladı (Harrison, 13 Eylül 2022). Bu, oyun endüstrisinde çok büyük ve dikkate değer bir gelişmeydi çünkü Call of Duty'de toksisiteye ve kötü niyetli davranışlara tolerans gösterilmeyeceğini gösterdi. Riot Games Türkiye'nin yapması gereken şeylerden birinin de bu olduğuna inanıyorum çünkü hem katılımcıların hem de benim deneyimlerim Riot Games Türkiye'de ceza sisteminin yeterince işlemediğini gösterdi. Dolayısıyla önceki bölümlerde önerdiğim gibi bu sistem taciz uygulamaları yapan toksik oyuncuları koruyor. Bu nedenle League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusunda ceza sistemi çalışırsa gamerlect kullanımının ve toksisitesinin azalacağına inanıyorum.

Bu araştırma, League of Legends Türkiye Sunucusu'nun oyun kültüründe toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin işleyiş ve yerleşiklik yollarını belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Ancak, birkaç sınırlama vardı.

İlk sınırlama, derinlemesine transkriptlerden elde edilen nitel verilerin beklediğimden daha fazla birikmiş olmasıydı. Bu nedenle, her katılımcının deneyimleri bu araştırmaya entegre edilememiştir. Sonuç olarak, gelecekteki araştırmalarda diğer katılımcıların deneyimlerine yaklaşmayı planlıyorum. League of Legends'ı ve farklı türde oyunları oynamama rağmen, derinlemesine görüşmeler yapmak için LGBTİA+ oyuncuları bulmakta zorlandım. Görünürlükten kaçınmanın, LGBTİA+ oyuncularının çevrimiçi alanlardaki varlığını da etkilediğini düşünüyorum.

İkinci sınırlama, cis-heteroseksüel erkek muhbirlerin derinlemesine görüşmelerinin LGBTİA+ ve cis-heteroseksüel kadınlardan daha kısa olmasıydı. Bu nedenle oyun topluluğu için belirlediğim sorunlarla ilgili deneyimleri LoL Türkiye Sunucusunda bulmak zordu.

Üçüncü kısıtlılık, Türkiye'deki oyuncu, oyun ve oyun geliştirici şirketlerin nüfus artış hızına rağmen, Türkiye'de yayınlanmış akademik kaynakları bulmak için yardıma ihtiyacım olmasıydı. Bu nedenle araştırmam Türkiye'deki diğer araştırmacılar için ilham kaynağı olacaktır. Ayrıca MOBA oyunlarına göre kadın oyuncuların taciz uygulamalarını daha derinden yaşadığını bildiğim sesli sohbet içeren FPS oyunları hakkında daha fazla araştırma yapılması gerektiğini düşünüyorum.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : YILMAZ
Adı / Name : CEREN
Bölümü / Department : Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları / Gender and Women Studies

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