RESEARCH REPORT IN TURKEY - GEGAME PROJECT

The study was carried out by Akdeniz University in Antalya in April 2021. The participants were between 12 and 16 years old from both public and private schools. 15 students participated in the research. Semi structured interview was carried out in the research. 12 students were interviewed via face to face and 3 students were interview via telephone. The semi structured interview questionnaire consists of demographics, information about problems faced in the family environment, in the school environment, in the social environment, in the online environment, and in sport activities. Also, it consists of questions regarding gender discrimination faced both in real time and online environment. Furthermore, questions regarding gender issues in video games such as how women characters wear, what are the roles of women characters in video games were asked. The semi structured interview questionnaire also contains the profile of mobile/video games and the genres and features of the video games.

Findings

Demographics

9 participants are 14 years old; 2 participants are 13 years old; 2 participants are 15 years old; 1 participant is 12 years old and 1 participant is 16 years old. While 7 participants are male, 8 participants are female. All the participants live in Antalya in the city center. While 12 participants go to public schools, 3 participants go to private schools. All of the participants declared that their sexual orientation is heterosexual. Just 4 of the participants said that they have a boyfriend/girlfriend. The ones who has boyfriend/girlfriend declared that they have not experienced coercive control from their boyfriend/girlfriend. Just a participant declared that his girlfriend frequently checks his social media account, to whom he is following or what he likes in social media. Most of the participants are unsure about both expressing their personal views and political views online.

Findings on the Biggest Problems Young People Face

Problems faced in the family environment:

Participants mentioned about lots of problems that young people frequently face in their family. Although there are several problems, it is found out that comparison with others, pressure on lessons and not being understood were the main problems of young people face in their family environment. While one of the participant declared that "My parents frequently compare me with my friends especially in the subject of my grade" the other declared that "my family puts pressure on me about the lessons and exams but I think failing someone at math doesn't mean they'll be unhappy for the rest of their life". It can be inferred that families give importance to the education of their students, however, young people feel pressure about this issue.

Furthermore, young people declared that "mocking on their ideas", "my ideas are not taken into consideration by my family", "discrimination between brothers and sisters", "bullying", "violence in the family" are the other challenges that young people face at home.

Problems faced in the school environment:

Participants mentioned about lots of problems that young people frequently face in their school environment. Most of them declared that pandemic caused lots of problems for their school life.

While one of them declared that "Being unable to go to school due to the pandemic, thus not being able to socialize", the other said that "Due to online education we cannot explain ourselves in detail and this causes peer bullying".

Also "afraid of being judged", "being afraid of mocked", "not being understood", "efforts to become popular", "being excluded", and "conflict with students" are the main problems that young people faced in their school life.

Problems faced in the social environment:

While some of the participants declared that if you have a real friend environment, you do not face any problems, some of the participants declared that as young people do not tolerate and respect the other ideas, they have some problems. So "bullying", "brutal criticism" "unnecessary jokes made by friends", "the fear of being humiliated", "inability to express your thoughts freely", "being excluded", "not being understood", are the main problems that

young people faced in their social environment. Also, efforts to become popular is another issue that participants feel as problem.

Problems faced in the online environment:

There is a clear distinction between male and female participants regarding the responses of this question. Most of the male participants declared that young people have internet connection problem. However, most of the female participants declared that girls sometimes have experienced verbal and visual harassment problems in online environment. Another female participant said that young people cannot express their ideas freely in online environment. Furthermore, a female participant mentioned "speaking with strangers" as dangerous. Also, female participants think "receiving disturbing messages from boys" as problematic.

Problems faced in the sport activities:

According to female participants the attitude towards girl is negative in terms of sport. One of the participants declared that "we sometimes hear that ……You cannot do sport as a girl, you cannot achieve in sport". A female participant declared that "the same conditions are not provided for everyone, there is a discrimination between girls and boys". Also another female participant drew attention "the attitude towards girls as being powerless and weak in terms of physical condition, thus this attitude causes underestimation of girls in sport activities".

One of the participants said that "families in Turkey do not encourage their children in terms of sport, because sport is seen as a waste of time by most of the parents. Parents regards everything except lessons is unnecessary".

According to another male participant young people do not want to be involved in sport activities.

Problems faced in romantic relationships:

Most of the participants declared more or less the same problems in romantic relationships as not being understood, not being able to expressing oneself, lack of trust, limiting/restricting the boyfriend/girlfriend, and jealousy behaviour.

Findings about gender discrimination in videogames

14 questions were asked in the issue of gender discrimination. These questions are;

- **Have you experienced gender discrimination in real life? Are you underestimated for being a boy/girl? Have you been humiliated? Have you been joked? Have you been bullied?**

There is a distinction between male and female participants regarding the responses of this question. While female participants said that they have experienced gender discrimination, male participants were found to have not experienced. Most of the female participants declared that they are mocked and humiliated by boys.

One of the female participants declared that "as I am a girl, I'm exposed to expressions like you can't do that, you can't talk like that"

Some of the male participants said that as they are boy, they have not experienced gender discrimination, however they declared that they are in the opinion that girls are much more well behaved by teachers at schools. They think that there is a positive discrimination towards girls at school.

- **Have you experienced gender discrimination in social media?**

Most of the participants declared that they have not experienced gender discrimination in social media. A male participant thinks that boys are humiliated in social media than girls.

One of the female participant declared that "as the games I played is regarded for boys, I was underestimated and excluded in social media".

- **Have you experienced gender discrimination in videogames?**

All of the male participants declared that they never experienced gender discrimination. However, one of the male participant declared that girls are being insulted while playing videogames, because girls play worse than boys. Most of the female participant declared that they are underestimated while playing videogames. A female participant declared that "while I am playing war games, I have experienced gender discrimination, however, the boys got used to me over time".

- **While playing online games, do you play with boys or girls?**

All the girls except one of them declared that they play with both girls and boys. The female participant who said that she plays just with the girls, declared that as she is afraid of being mocked by the boys, thus, she prefers to play with girls.

Most of the boys declared that they prefer to play with boys. One of the main reason for playing with just boys is that they see girls as weak in videogames, and they do not want to be in the same team with a girl. They regard girls as a low performer in videogames. Also most of the male participants said that they play videogames which girls do not like and do not play.

- **Do you play online video games with people you don't know/strangers?**

Just 3 of the participants said that they play online video games with strangers.

- **Do the male and female characters have equal strength/power in the video games you play?**

Except 2 female participants, all the participants think that the male and female characters have equal strength/ power. 2 female participants declared that male characters are more dominant and powerful.

- **How do the female characters dress in games? Are the female characters blonde or dark? Are they presented as attractive?**

Most of the participants agree that women are generally presented as attractive and sexy in videogames. Most of them declared that women are mostly blonde and wear low-cut. One of the most striking finding is that one of the participant said that "I never encounter with a head scarfed woman".

- **What are the roles / professions of the female characters? What are their responsibilities? What are they doing in the videogame?**

Most of the participants declared that there is not a difference in terms of roles between male and female characters in videogames. One of the participant declared that "a woman character can bomb like a male character; a female character can do whatever a male character can".

However, a female participant declared that "generally female characters assist male characters" another female participants thinks that woman characters generally in the roles of cleaning and serving.

- **Do the female characters swear in the videogames? How are female characters addressed?**

While some of the participants think that female characters also swear, some do not. Also most of the participants said that male characters swear to female characters. Furthermore, a female participant declared that female characters are voiced with a more attractive voice.

- **Do you choose female characters as avatars?**

All the female participants declared that they choose female characters as avatars. However, some of the male characters said that they never choose female as avatar. Some of the male participants declared that "if I need a female character, then I sometimes choose".

- **Which nicknames do boys and girls use?**

Most of the participants said that "Everyone choose the name they feel close to". Also it is found out that all the nicknames are English, and they said that the nicknames should be creative. Some of the participants declared that they use their own names, too.

These are the nicknames that the participants declared for boys: "soil", "end", "naru"

These are the nicknames that the participants declared for girls: "rosehues", "ezgimsio"

- **Do you treat your girlfriends as you would in real life while playing video games? Are you calling out the same way?**

Most of the participant said that they behave their girlfriends in videogames as the same in real life. However, one of the male participant declared that as he is aggressive in some videogames, and do not want to behave in aggressive way with the girls, he prefers to play soft videogames with his girlfriend.

- **Who is more advantageous, boys or girls in online platforms?**

Most of the participants think that boys are more advantageous. One of the female participants declared that "boys are more advantageous in online platforms because of Turkish patriarchal ideology." However, one of the male participant disagree on this topic. He thinks that a girl by using her femininity can reach thousands of likes in online platforms.

Findings About Videogames

Frequency of playing video games

It is found out that there is a difference of frequency of playing video games between girls and boys. While most of the boys declared that they play every day, most of the girls said that they play 3 times a week, or less.

Calling yourself a "gamer"

While 3 male participant called himself as a gamer, just 1 female participant called herself as a gamer.

Gamer identities

The participants identified 3 gamer identities;

- Social (You would normally play games with other people. You might spend time with friends in the game. You typically prefer games like Fortnite and World of Warcraft)
- Hard-Core (You have a vested interest in a certain type of game. You are very skilled at playing it and people know it. You would play this game all day every day if you could)
- Casual (You might play games to pass the time every so often. If you get into a good game you might play it more often. Could be any kind of game)

6 participant identified himself/herself as casual; 5 participant identified himself/herself as hard-core and 3 participant identified himself/herself as social.

The reasons for playing videogames:

It is found out that one of the main reason for playing videogame is to spend time with friends or make new ones. The second reason is found as boredom. Most of the participants declared that during pandemic they cannot meet their friends and they got bored, thus they started to play videogames together. Furthermore, some of them also play videogames just to pass the time. Just 2 of the participants declared that they play videogames just to win or to overcome challenges.

Game genres that are preferred:

The genres that the young people like is researched. The most striking finding is that puzzle games are preferred just by female participants. 3 female participant declared that they prefer puzzle games.

The most preferred genre is found to be Shoot em' ups/ Shooters (e.g. Call of Duty). The second one is found to be Action/ Adventure (e.g. Grand Theft Auto, Hitman, Metal Gear Solid). The third one is found to be Sandbox Games (e.g. Minecraft, Super Mario Maker). MOBAs (e.g. Fortnite, League of Legends, DOTA), strategy games and simulation games are also one of the preferred genres. RPG (e.g. Legend of Zelda, Final Fantasy), sport games, horror games, Driver/ Racing (e.g. Gran Tourismo, Need for Speed) games and puzzle games are found to be less preferred by the participants.

The name of the favourite videogame:

These are the names of the favourite videogames.

Counter Strike

Mine Craft

Valorant

Call of Duty

Game of Sultans

Roblox

Zula

Forza Horizon 4

PUBG

The reason of playing these video games are:

Good graphic

Enable to play classmates online

Entertaining

Increasing imagination

Fluent

Meeting with friends during pandemic thanks to this videogame

Competitive

Game features

Social Features	
Social utility features e.g. In-game voice and text chat	13 participants declared that this feature is important
Social formation/institutional features e.g. Guilds/clans in MMORPGs	8 participants declared that this feature is important
Leader board features e.g. "Hall of fame" high score list	7 participants declared that this feature is important
Support network features e.g. Internet forums, strategy guides	7 participants declared that this feature is important

Manipulation and Control Features	
User input features e.g. "Combos", "hot keys"	9 participants declared that this feature is important
Save features e.g. Checkpoints, "quick-save"	11 participants declared that this feature is important

Player management features e.g. Managing multiple resources	7 participants declared that this feature is important
Non-controllable features e.g. Scripted events, loading screens	6 participants declared that this feature is important

Narrative and Identity Features	
Avatar creation features e.g. Choice of sex, race, attribute	9 participants declared that this feature is important
Storytelling device features e.g. Cut-scenes, mission briefing	9 participants declared that this feature is important
Theme and genre features e.g. "Role-playing", "shooting"	10 participants declared that this feature is important

Reward Features	
General reward type features e.g. Experience points, bonuses	8 participants declared that this feature is important
Meta-game reward features e.g. Xbox 360 Achievement points	7 participants declared that this feature is important
Event frequency features e.g. Unlimited replayability of game	10 participants declared that this feature is important
Event duration features e.g. MMORPGs have no endpoint	8 participants declared that this feature is important
Payout interval features e.g. Rewarded instantly for playing	5 participants declared that this feature is important

Punishment Features

Intermittent reward features e.g. Increasing difficulty of levels	11 participants declared that this feature is important
Negative reward features e.g. Gaining health, repairing items	7 participants declared that this feature is important
Near miss features e.g. Difficult "boss" at end of level	9 participants declared that this feature is important

Presentation Features	
Graphics and sound features e.g. Realistic graphics, fast music	13 participants declared that this feature is important
Franchise features e.g. Trademarked names, e.g. Mario	6 participants declared that this feature is important
Explicit content features e.g. Violence, drug use, nudity	9 participants declared that this feature is important
In-game advertising features e.g. Real-life brands, sponsors logos	5 participants declared that this feature is important

Conclusion

The research presents some insights regarding both gender issues faced by teenagers and playing video games. It can be inferred that while girls have experienced gender discrimination, male participants were found to have not experienced gender discrimination in real life. Most of the girls are mocked and humiliated by boys especially at school. Furthermore, the girls are underestimated while playing videogames. Most of the boys prefer to play with boys, not with girls. One of the main reason for playing with just boys is that they regard girls as weak in videogames, and they do not want to be in the same team with a girl. The girls are seen as a low performer in videogames by boys. So it can be said that gender discrimination in real life continues in video games, too.

It is found out that one of the main reason for playing videogame is to spend time with friends or make new ones. Three gamer identities are found; casual, hard-core, and social. Shoot em' ups/ Shooters (e.g. Call of Duty) are found to be the most preferred genres. Also the participants preferred action and sandbox game genres. Puzzle games are found to be preferred just girls. The importance of game features is researched and under social features social utility features e.g. In-game voice and text chat is found to have great importance. Under Manipulation and Control Features User input features e.g. "Combos", "hot keys" and Save features e.g. Checkpoints, "quick-save" are found to have importance. All the dimensions of Narrative and Identity Features are regarded important. Under Reward Features Event frequency features e.g. Unlimited replayability of game are found to have great importance.under Punishment Features just Intermittent reward features e.g. Increasing difficulty of levels are found to have great importance. Under Presentation Features both Graphics and sound features e.g. Realistic graphics, fast music and Explicit content features e.g. Violence, drug use, nudity are found to have great importance. Participants give importance to Explicit content features because they state that this feature makes the videogame more realistic.