



INSTITUTO
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DE LISBOA

Barriers to Women in the Gaming Industry

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Master in Management

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ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon

September, 2023

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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To my family and friends who supported me in this process

Acknowledgements

I want to express my deep thank you to all who have helped me and supported me in completing this thesis.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Mónica Mendes Ferreira, whose guidance and support have truly helped guide me through this research.

I am grateful to my parents, family members and friends, who have helped me in this journey and consistently motivated me to keep working. Their belief in me genuinely gave me the drive and incentive to finish this project.

Finally, I would love to thank my work colleagues and participants in this study. Their continuous feedback, support and willingness to share their experiences with this study have been instrumental to this research.

To all those mentioned and the countless others who have played a part, my heartfelt gratitude for your continuous encouragement and contribution. This project would not have been possible without you.

RESUMO

As normas masculinas continuam enraizadas no sector digital, especialmente na área de jogos. Apesar do progresso, as mulheres que trabalham neste sector ainda enfrentam obstáculos significativos para alcançar posições de liderança. Este estudo visa destacar essas questões e aumentar a voz das mulheres nesta indústria.

De acordo com um estudo de 2020, a indústria dos jogos continua esmagadoramente dominada pelos homens, com 84% dos membros do conselho das 20 maiores empresas de jogos sendo homens. Além disso, as personagens femininas nos vídeos jogos são frequentemente retratadas como personagens coadjuvantes ou altamente sexualizadas. Resolver esta questão é fundamental para eliminar o preconceito de género e maximizar as hipóteses de uma equipa mais diversificada criar jogos que agradem a um público mais vasto. Pesquisas sugerem que a liderança diversificada promove a equidade no local de trabalho, aumenta a satisfação dos funcionários e amplifica os lucros.

Tem havido pouca investigação sobre as barreiras específicas que as mulheres enfrentam quando procuram posições de liderança nesta indústria. Este estudo visa preencher esta lacuna, investigando mulheres que trabalham nesta área. O método qualitativo do estudo baseia-se nos elementos descritos na pesquisa de Ramos et al. (2022) utilizando-os para entrevistar 6 trabalhadoras.

As conclusões destacam a necessidade de aumentar as oportunidades, a igualdade e a representação das mulheres na indústria dos jogos. Os participantes destacaram necessidade de desconstruir estereótipos, promover a diversidade e dar às mulheres oportunidades iguais. O estudo apela à indústria para que prepare o caminho para um futuro mais inclusivo e equitativo.

Classificação JEL: M14; M51

Palavras chave: Mulheres Líderes; Indústria de Vídeo Jogos; Barreiras para Mulheres; Indústria Tech

ABSTRACT

Deeply ingrained masculine conventions continue unchallenged in the modern professional scene, particularly in the gaming sector, reinforcing gender gaps and stereotypes. Women in the gaming business still face significant barriers when rising to top leadership positions. This study aims to highlight these issues and give women in the industry more voice.

According to a 2020 study, the gaming sector remains predominately male, with 84% of the board members of the top 20 gaming businesses being men. Also, women are frequently portrayed in supporting roles and as highly sexualized characters in video games. Tackling this problem is essential for eliminating gender prejudices and maximizing the potential of a more diverse staff to produce games that appeal to a broader audience. Research indicates that diverse leadership promotes fair workplaces, higher employee happiness, and better financial results.

The barriers faced by women seeking high-level positions in the gaming industry have not been extensively studied. This study hopes to help close this research gap by interviewing women in the field. The study's qualitative technique draws on the elements mentioned by Ramos et al. (2022) to conduct six interviews with women in the gaming industry.

The study's findings highlight the urgent need for more opportunity, equity, and representation for women in the gaming industry. Participants emphasized the need to debunk stereotypes, promote diversity, and give women in the gaming business equal chances. This research urges the sector to embrace change, question deeply rooted beliefs, and clear the way for a more inclusive and fair future.

JEL Classification: M14; M51

Keywords: Women in Leadership Positions; Gaming Industry; Barriers to Women; Tech Industry

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Great Place to Work®¹ survey shows that companies with at least 30% female CEOs generate 6% greater earnings than those with homogeneous leadership, according to a study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). Likewise, employees rate their firms higher when there are more female executives, as the Great Place to Work® survey shows. Women are adept at using interpersonally focused leadership philosophies; they frequently do so democratically and with concern for others, which helps to foster a positive work atmosphere. Also, women have unique qualities like bravery, resiliency, and risk-taking that support businesses during uncertain times. When women are allowed to lead, they can contribute various skills and viewpoints to a company, positively impacting the bottom line. While there has been considerable improvement in the last ten years regarding the presence of women in executive positions, there is still a long way to go before genuine inclusivity is attained. To benefit from the numerous advantages of increased gender diversity, businesses must actively work to increase the proportion of women in leadership roles. Research demonstrates that organisations with higher ratios of women in leadership typically have more favourable work environments. So why are women still struggling to reach high-level positions in the workplace?

According to Kossek et al. (2017), women's career equality is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon that is reflected in the unequal access that men and women have to career opportunities as well as the rewards they experience in terms of intrinsic (job and life satisfaction) and extrinsic (pay and promotions) rewards. Women are less likely to advance in gender-segregated fields like human resources and administrative services, where this imbalance is frequently reinforced. Joshi et al. (2015) conducted a study using data spanning three decades. They found that women are less likely to earn the same compensation and promotions as males, even with the same qualifications and performance. This is especially true for jobs connected to higher education (e.g. medicine and law).

The complex character of women's career inequality is demonstrated by several studies that show women endure more significant stress, have worse career longevity and happiness, and receive less recognition than their male counterparts (Metz, 2011; Trevio et al., 2015).

¹ Franczak, and Margolis (2022)

The influence of this inequality issue extends to society as a whole. Therefore, rather than expecting women to change independently, efforts should be made to alter the environment that disadvantages them. Examining the nexus of bias, career, and work-family narratives is crucial to understanding why women's advancement is lagging and to develop effective policies to address this imbalance.

Recent years have seen a lot of discussion among academics, the media, and public policymakers about the importance of female CEOs and board representation. Nguyen and Thai (2022) use Japanese data as the foundation for their investigation into the effects of board gender diversity on gender diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) performance at lower organisational levels. Their sample includes publicly traded Japanese companies recently adding female directors to their formerly all-male boards. They discovered that appointing the first female director positively correlates with increased office representation of women, supporting institutional and upper-echelon theories. Also, establishing the first female director is associated with higher CSR ratings, keeping the upper echelon, stakeholder, and resource reliance theories. Also, according to the study, companies with their first female directors typically have larger boards, more outside directors, a higher percentage of foreign ownership, and more female staff. These findings show that increasing board gender diversity can benefit businesses by reducing the gender gap below the board level and raising CSR ratings.

Oliveira and Zhang's work from 2022 expands on prior research on diversity on the board of directors by examining patterns and root causes of gender and age diversity. The analysis shows an increase in the mean age of boards and a consistent increase in gender diversity, notably in the last five years, but a decline in age diversity. The analysis results show that female directors are often younger, and while the size of the board remained constant, businesses replaced older male directors with younger ones. Furthermore, it was discovered that more women were on the boards of more extensive, older companies and those with more independent directors, possibly due to these businesses' cultural responses and readiness for new rules. The study also demonstrates that larger boards typically have more age and gender diversity, but more complicated firms tend to have older board members, which results in less age diversity. Additionally, the number of female directors is related to greater age diversity on older boards and less on younger ones. Finally, it was discovered that corporations benefit from having female directors on older boards.

Safiullah et al. (2022) have also shown a strong link between diversity and performance, which suggests that female employees are more moral and stringent with financial activity monitoring, which can benefit corporate profits. Businesses should take advantage of women's ideals to improve their bottom line. Companies should also eliminate biases and foster strong connections between board diversity and market-based performance criteria (Papangkorn et al., 2021).

Not only in financial benefits can women have a positive impact. A 1 percentage point increase in the share of female managers could result in a 0.5% decrease in CO2 emissions, according to research done by Altunbas et al. (2022) using data from roughly 2,000 listed companies in 24 industrialised economies throughout 2009–19. This finding held even after accounting for differences in institutional cultures and religions. The study also revealed that gender diversity at executive levels had a higher moderating impact on climate change when women were well-represented outside the organisation. Businesses with more female managers were found to have cut their CO2 emissions by about 5% more than those with more male managers after the Paris Accord. The results of this study are supported by a theoretical framework that contends that female personalities with traits like empathic behaviour, social sensitivity, and risk aversion assist female managers in exercising better decision-making control over the implementation of the board's strategy, resulting in more significant reductions in firm CO2 emissions.

Also, it was discovered that the gender gap in leadership aspirations differs significantly depending on the gender makeup of the industry, being more extensive in sectors like banking and STEM, which also seems to be true in the gaming industry (Badura et al., 2020).

To evaluate the gender disparity in leadership aspirations throughout the previous six decades in the United States, Netchaeva et al. (2022) performed a meta-analysis. They discovered that men have higher aspirations for leadership positions than women, and this influence has not diminished noticeably over time. Also, they found that the gender gap in leadership aspirations is worse in fields dominated by men, including banking and STEM, with possible repercussions for the emergence and efficacy of leadership (Badura et al., 2020). This study contradicts the idea that men and women enter the workforce with similar objectives because they discovered that post-secondary students have different leadership aspirations based on gender. As a result, their work emphasises the necessity of treatments focusing on the gender disparity in ambitions before and when individuals are in the workforce. (*Gender Pay Gap in UK Games Still Wide at 17.1% for 2021 | GamesIndustry.Biz, n.d.*)

This gender inequity in the workplace is evident not only in the amount of women in leadership positions but also in the wage gap across industries. The median gender pay gap for full-time workers across all UK professions was 7.9% in 2021. However, the gap in the UK gaming sector was an even higher 17.1%. (*The Video Game Industry Has a Diversity Problem – but It Can Be Fixed* | Games | *The Guardian*, n.d.)

In the UK and the US, the percentage of women employed in the games sector is barely 14%, according to recent reports. Young women and people of colour are less likely to apply for jobs in the industry as a result of the underrepresentation in the workforce. While the business has long catered to a group of hard-core young guys, there is also an issue with how major publishers react when those same players engage in abusive and threatening behaviour. Moreover, institutional discrimination and abuse are widespread in the sector, as shown by The Gender Balance Workforce Study (2015)², which revealed that 33% of harassed women reported directly encountering harassment or bullying and 45% of the women surveyed thought their gender was a barrier to professional advancement. The video game industry has a diversity issue, but it can be addressed and remedied with careful initiatives. Like other industries, the gaming sector brings women a set of barriers to high-level positions that not only discourage gender equality but are an overall detriment to firms' performance.

This study investigates women's barriers to reaching management-level positions in the gaming industry. It will follow the Ramos et al. (2022) study conducted in other sectors to confirm whether the assumptions made in those studies apply to women in the gaming industry. This study will be qualitative, and the goal is to explore the primary pain points women experience when trying to ascend to high-level positions in a traditionally male-dominated and misogynistic environment.

This literature review will explore the perceptions of women in top positions in the workplace, their role and status in the gaming industry, and the obstacles they face when pursuing success in their careers. Furthermore, an examination of how these issues impact women's experiences in the gaming industry and the implications for their advancement will be conducted.

² The video game industry has a diversity problem – but it can be fixed | Games | *The Guardian*. (n.d.)

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1. Women in the workplace

Extensive studies have shown that women face more barriers than men when reaching high-level job positions. Even today, women are underrepresented in top management and find it hard to get specific roles and salaries compared to men. According to Kossek et al. (2017), the topic of women's professional equality is complicated and represents how not well-positioned women are to participate in the workforce, access career possibilities, and achieve equal results at work and outside of it. Women have less access to power, decision-making, opportunities, and networks than men since they are frequently overrepresented in HR and administrative roles. A survey by Joshi et al. (2015) also showed that women are less likely to earn the same pay and promotions as males even when they perform at the same level. As a result, women face lesser career longevity and satisfaction, less recognition, and higher stress levels regarding job advancement. Ultimately, women's job inequity hurts them personally, their families, and society. To ensure that women may attain career equality, it is crucial to concentrate on measures that address the underlying conditions that disadvantage them rather than attempting to alter women themselves.

Cardillo et al. (2021) found that gender diversity favoured bank profitability and that female directors may be better at overseeing bank conduct than male directors. This sheds important light on the function of female directors and the significance of having more women in the financial sector. Therefore, it is evident that more has to be done to ensure that women may engage in high-level positions equally with males.

Despite the attention they have received from the media and social activists, women and minority directors continue to be notably underrepresented in the boardroom (Field et al., 2020). According to a study by Glass and Cook (2018), gender diversity among senior leaders positively impacts some business and equitable practices. According to the research, female CEOs are more likely than male leaders to support honest causes and positively influence corporate governance, product strengths, diversity, and community participation. The study also discovered that the gender leadership composition at all levels affects the positive effects of gender diversity. Women directors are also thought to have more power and influence on the board and are strong proponents of corporate responsibility. These results, taken together,

provide solid evidence for the diversity perspective, which contends that diversity on the leadership team will result in various positive firm outcomes.

Kirsch (2018) investigates the representation of women on corporate boards and their potential impacts. This study adds to the body of knowledge by examining the barriers to women serving on boards and the potential benefits of a more gender-balanced board. The study thus sheds light on the significance of gender diversity in boardrooms and how it may affect the efficiency of boards. This study of female directors has found specific sex disparities in directors' ideals and qualities and demographic, human capital, and social capital factors. The ease of access to boards for women, which is impacted by higher-order institutional variables like regulation and culture and rational-economic and social factors, affects the gender composition of boards. The gender composition of the board has little bearing on the company's financial performance. Still, it benefits the firm's social and ethical behaviour and gender diversity below the board. The specific institutional and cultural framework of a nation, changes in policy and culture on a global scale, and the interests of essential actors all impact the introduction of regulation on board gender composition at the national level. The practical school of thought frequently dominates regulation discussions and formulates expectations about how female directors will affect corporate behaviour, firm financial outcomes, and outcomes for women.

This review by Kirsch (2018) indicates how increasing women's access to boards can help managers, business owners, and policymakers. However, to make this happen, there should be requirements for appointment procedures, such as the minimum number of women on boards, and guidelines supporting women's advancement into managerial positions, such as work-family policies. Additionally, promoting gender equality in the workplace will benefit organisations, the cause of equality between the sexes, and overall community wellbeing.

For example, Liu (2018) discovered that businesses with more women on their boards had fewer environmental claims, indicating that the gender of top executives can interact with board gender diversity to influence business behaviour.

This pattern is seen worldwide and through all industries, even more evident in male-dominated fields such as gaming.

2.2. Women in Gaming

Lopez-Fernandez et al. (2019) claim a noticeable gender disparity in the gaming industry. Due to stereotypes and unpleasant gaming experiences, women are frequently dissuaded from

playing video games. Which, in addition, are commonly made and constructed in a way that is unattractive to women by having excessively violent and sexualised content. Even if the number of female gamers is rising, gaming culture is still dominated by men, with female players not regarded as "real" or "hard-core" gamers. The same obstacles to entering and working in male-dominated businesses, as shown in other fields with technical discrimination, also apply to the gaming industry, where women face harassment and discrimination. Therefore, it is evident that women still do not participate in gaming equally as men and that more measures must be taken to ensure that they may take part without encountering bias based on their gender.

The Gamergate incident of 2014, in which women were threatened with murder and sexual assault for speaking out against the gaming industry's male-dominated and sexist culture, is cited by Lorenz and Browning (2020) as evidence of how hostile the gaming industry has grown toward women in recent years. Following these allegations, more streamers and female professionals started talking openly about their interactions with prominent males, including other streamers, YouTubers, game developers, and talent agents. There is little doubt that the gaming industry contributes significantly to a culture of misogyny and sexual harassment, and more measures must be implemented to ensure that women may engage in the gaming industry without worrying about harassment or discrimination.

Interestingly, first-person shooter (FPS) games, in which male players typically dominate, are seen as empowering by a sizable proportion of female players. However, many still encounter harassment and/or discrimination when playing them (McDaniel, n.d., 2016). In particular, 75.9% of women report experiencing harassment or discrimination while playing video games, and 79.4% of women think video games can empower them. Additionally, 34.6% of participants stated that upon seeing such incidents of harassment, the majority of players do or say nothing. This research highlights the need for additional steps to guarantee that women may enjoy gaming without worrying about persecution or discrimination.

What do the statistics say about the gender imbalance in the industry? According to the article *"Exploring the Pay Gap: What does the data say about the industry's gender imbalance?"* (2018), gender equality in the gaming industry is depicted in a depressing light. In the UK, the median gender salary gap in the games sector was 15.3%, higher than the national median of 9.7%. Additionally, organisations like Sumo Digital (34.5%), Rockstar (31.8%), and Codemasters (27.9%) have huge compensation gaps. These results highlight the need for more measures to reduce the gender wage gap and boost the proportion of women in the gaming business.

Gender stereotypes are still quite common in the video gaming industry, as Drummond et al. (n.d.) have remarked, with male gamer culture aggressively isolating women and pushing them out of the profession. Due to the gender sacrifices required for working in this field, many women are deterred from pursuing careers in the games industry, leading to a considerable gender gap. To overcome this problem, giving women more opportunities to grow, occupy leadership positions, and exert influence is critical. Additionally, businesses must allow women to express themselves and highlight their skills. The game industry can only then progress toward greater inclusivity and gender parity.

The significance of boosting female representation in the gaming business is emphasised in the article "*Women in Gaming: Leveling Up the Industry*" (TransPerfect, 2020). This research from 2020 revealed that 84% of the boards of the top 20 gaming firms were still made up of men despite the exponential growth of female streamers and gamers. Games are frequently not made to appeal to female gamers since there is a lack of female representation in the industry, and marketing campaigns often miss their target demographic. With 48% of gamers and 63% of mobile gamers being female, the data also reveals that female players present a significant market opportunity for game creators and marketers. To take advantage of this potential, it is imperative to ensure that more women are involved in the gaming industry, both in game design and marketing.

2.3. Women in gaming management

The results of Costen et al. (2012) study point to the possibility of a glass ceiling in the gaming sector. Although women made up over a quarter of the managerial staff in gaming companies, most of these women worked in "women's occupations", including human resources, marketing, special events, and conventions, which often pay less than jobs held by men. Additionally, the average compensation of the positions held by women was \$38,645 less than the average salary of the positions held by males. This demonstrates that women may be underrepresented in crucial roles and frequently have jobs with lower visibility and scope of responsibility than men. Therefore, it is evident that more needs to be done to ensure that women in the gaming business may access the same opportunities and achieve the same degree of success as men.

To find out why women are leaving or avoiding professions in the gaming business, Ochsner (2019) carried out a study. Three main topics emerged from the examination of the #1ReasonWhy Twitter conversation: (1) Women's voices are hushed, disregarded, and rendered invisible in ways that may make them feel like they do not belong in games. (2) Women are judged on standards and criteria other than their professional successes. (3) Women are denied acknowledgement of their competence. These results highlight not only some of the significant barriers for women to reach higher positions in gaming but also the need for focused initiatives to give women a chance to learn how to navigate the workplace cultures of various industries, as well as to increase their access to informal networks and high-quality mentoring opportunities, to ensure that women can pursue and succeed in gaming careers.

2.4. Barriers to women in management

Numerous studies have attempted to pinpoint the obstacles that prevent women from obtaining managerial jobs (Ramos et al., 2022). Catalyst (2002) found 17 comparable hurdles in a sample from 20 European countries. Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) recognised several complicated barriers in the academic context of science and technology, while Cook and Glass (2014) highlighted many implicit and explicit barriers. Twenty-seven additional barriers were found by Dielh and Dzubinski (2016) and categorised as Macro-level, Meso-level, and Micro-level barriers. Even though these studies have shed light on the nature of walls, most lack a shared theoretical framework and do not classify the barriers into different groups.

The BAFFLE model, recently put forth by Lyness and Grotto (2018), highlights the top-down and bottom-up processes that underlie both barriers and facilitators at several levels of analysis (society and cultural values, organisational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels). The model considers internal organisational factors at various levels from the firm ladder and external organisational factors (society and industrial setting) (board of directors, senior management, middle management, groups, and individual employees). Although this integrative model does not provide a closed taxonomy of obstacles (or enablers), combining most obstacles frequently mentioned in empirical research into a single framework is helpful.

The first barrier to women being promoted involves women's professional development and desires (competencies, attitudes, and motivations). Women still struggle to access management positions, have lower self-confidence, and have lower expectations of success, even though outdated stereotypes of female incompetence have been disproved (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005; Garca-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2008; Miller et al., 2011). Gender roles and stereotypes play a significant part in explaining prejudice against women. These stereotypical notions of the traits of men and women are the source of these masculine and feminine roles.

The corporate culture is a crucial impediment to the advancement of women in management (Castano et al., 2010; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). The patriarchal and androcentric beliefs that underlie this society encourage competitiveness and aggression in men while excluding interdependence and collaboration in women, leading to unequal relationships between men and women (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Maddock & Parkin, 1993; Maier, 1999; Marshall, 1992). Women must, therefore, assume a male manner to blend in with this culture (Lindsay & Pasquali, 1993). In particular, the characteristics that prevent the eradication of job discrimination in managerial positions are maintained by the organisation's patriarchal culture. Organisations continue to favour men in hiring decisions despite being unaware that they contribute to gender inequity (Tienari et al., 2013). The lack of gender-responsive career development, organisational timelines, training, and compensation remuneration rules further restricts women's access to equitable opportunities.

An independent barrier in organisational processes is the unequal evaluation of men's and women's performance. According to studies, males esteem and trust women less than their male counterparts, which results in harsher criteria for female employees (Jonnergard et al., 2010; Soleymanpour Omran et al., 2015; Dielh & Dzubinski, 2016). Due to the lack of female top managers who can act as mentors or role models, women are also excluded from social networks and groups that have the most influence and power in organisations (Castano et al., 2010; Catalyst, 2002; Cook & Glass, 2014; Dielh & Dzubinski, 2016; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). Women's access to mentoring is further constrained by the fact that men prefer to mentor other men (European Commission, 2010; Larrieta et al., 2015; Barber et al., 2011). To provide mentoring opportunities for those further down in the business, there needs to be a more excellent representation of women in top leadership roles to lessen gender segregation (Glass & Cook, 2016).

Several issues prevent women from being promoted to more senior positions. These ideas are both supported by and contribute to gender stereotypes that are present in both corporate policies and culture. The difficulty of maintaining work-family balance is also a significant concern since women are still frequently in charge of the majority of family caregiving (Catalyst, 2002; Dielh & Dzubinski, 2016; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Miller et al., 2011). As a result, a double barrier hinders their professional progress (Sarrio, 2004). Women are less likely to be promoted or hired by businesses because they are expected to spend more time caring for their families. Although both men and women prioritise their professional growth, gender roles and stereotypes influence employers' expectations for women's participation in the workplace (Barber & Coord, 2005).

If we look at leadership positions, there is also gender disparity, probably caused by the unequal distribution of domestic duties between men and women. Women now face career restrictions, which lowers their aspirations for leadership. To address this, Fritz and van Knippenberg (2018) discovered that work-life efforts are more successful in boosting women's than men's aspirations for leadership. The ideal employee is still seen as a male with no family duties and a focus on their career. Work-life efforts may thus be perceived as outliers and subject to unfavourable criticism. Utilising such programs could result in punishments for women in particular, which could reinforce gender stereotypes. Research should concentrate on changing culture to promote a work-family culture and what steps are necessary to increase leadership aspirations and female participation.

With the European Commission setting a goal of 40% female executive board representation by 2020, it is evident that expanding the number of women in leadership positions is a top priority (European Commission, 2013). However, despite recent advancements, women are still underrepresented in high leadership positions in the US. For instance, while women make up 44.3% of the workforce in the S&P 500 businesses, they only hold 36.4% of first- to middle-level management jobs and 25.1% of senior-level executive posts. Women hold only 5.4% (27) of CEO roles and 19.9% (of corporate board seats), with rumours that other female CEOs are considering retiring. These figures clearly show that there is still a gender imbalance in US leadership. More research is required to close this gap (Lyness & Grotto, 2018).

The literature study by Lyness and Grotto (2018) sheds light on why it has been difficult to close the gender gap in leadership. The numerous gender-based obstacles that women in leadership positions must overcome inside a company are pervasive and have a compounding effect. Interpersonal challenges that affect women's confidence and feelings of identity as leaders are possible. Even at lower organisational levels, women may experience a lack of legitimacy and authority. Further undermining their objectives is the possibility that they adopt the idea that men are more qualified for leadership positions. They might also face more challenging expectations and have their performance scrutinised more frequently than their male counterparts, which makes it challenging for females to hold onto leadership roles. However, The women who overcome these barriers may be more qualified and successful than their male colleagues. A crucial first step in establishing a fairer workplace for female leaders is raising awareness of the problem.

Previous studies by Samuelson et al. (2019) have suggested that even when men and women are hired into an organisation from outside at an equal rate, differences in opportunity values can create a "sticky floor" for female workers (Booth et al., 2003; Yap & Konrad, 2009) that results in fewer promotions, higher turnover rates, and a lack of representation in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2004; King et al., 2012; Ohlott et al., 1994; Silva et al., 2012). Despite having equal representation in the workforce, it took women about 25 years to catch up to men's representation at the top levels of leadership. The simulations showed much variation in women's leadership rates in firms with a male predominance due to things like career delays and a predisposition for taking risks. These results imply that the path to parity might be difficult and drawn out.

Organisations must adopt a comprehensive strategy to support the advancement of both men and women as leaders, enhance organisational effectiveness, and increase member happiness and wellness. Organisations can advance in this direction with continued research and evidence-based policies, but reducing gender stratification takes time and work. According to Bastida et al. (2022) findings, women do not appear to have better levels of subjective well-being (SWB) when they hold supervisory positions, despite having higher education levels that may come with higher job expectations.

Differences in gender and kind of employment for those with high degrees of job discretion corroborated this conclusion. These findings add to the conversation about the obstacles women face when seeking advancement in the workplace. According to their findings, individual preferences should be considered in addition to exogenous barriers. Women's SWB at work is increased through job discretion and participation in decision-making processes, not by holding prominent positions. In order to foster a fairer workplace, organisations should concentrate on developing a culture of diversity and equality.

In a recent study, Nandkeolyar et al. (2022) show that women are punished in performance appraisal at lower and higher levels of agreeableness than men. The idea put forth by Eagly and Karau (2002), which contends that women are perceived favourably when they comply with descriptor gender stereotypes, is supported by this study. However, women are perceived adversely when they depart from traditional gender boundaries and act too assertively or competitively (Eagly & Heilman, 2016). In order to be perceived as successful and competent, women must strike a delicate balance between being overly lovely and disagreeable in the workplace. Men, on the other hand, did not experience performance penalties based on their level of agreeability.

According to the application of this research (Schein, 1973), a two-pronged strategy is required to lessen gender bias in performance reviews. While firms must act to minimise prejudices in HR procedures, women can balance their level of agreeableness by increasing the frequency and quality of management training. In order to level the playing field for women worldwide, supervisors can find and eliminate covert biases about the gender of their subordinates by having a better understanding of agreeableness. This study also demonstrates how the exact needs of women do not constrain men from achieving a desirable balance between agreeableness and disagreeability to earn positive performance ratings. This may be explained by the idea advanced by Powell and Butterfield (2003) and Derks et al. (2010) that women must adopt masculine attributes to ascend to more senior positions. Masculine characteristics include aggression, forcefulness, reason, competitiveness, decisiveness, strength, self-confidence, and independence. For women to make a difference, they need to be more visible in senior positions. This might be done by promoting feminine qualities like warmth, friendliness, altruism, and sympathy (Schein, 1973).

According to Prescott and Bogg's (2011) research, the games business faces similar challenges to the more significant ICT sector, such as a lengthy workweek culture and a dearth of female presence in high-level positions. The fact that there are still obstacles in the way of women's career advancement was acknowledged by both sexes. This suggests that the computer games industry and its more established equivalent, the ICT/SET sector, are not all that distinct. However, the positive attitudes of both sexes toward their career advancement and work-life balance difficulties suggest that the industry may experience a change for the better in the future. Greater attention should be paid to eliminating the obstacles preventing women from advancing in their careers and giving them more opportunities to do so in order to bring about this transformation.

This study, similar to Ramos et al. (2022), explores the challenges that prohibit women from achieving managerial positions and gender discrimination and inequality between men and women in workplace environments. While Ramos et al. (2022) present a quantitative scale to evaluate the main barriers to equal opportunities for women in accessing management positions, this present study wants to explore the qualitative perception of these barriers by women and men in the gaming industry to help organisations develop strategies to eliminate them. The scale Ramos et al. (2022) used includes barriers related to organisational culture, access to robust networks, unfair HR policies and practices, unequal performance appraisals, work-life balance, gender stereotypes, women's career preferences, and professional development. With this study, we aim to focus on the gaming industry and its challenges and get a more qualitative view of how and when women face these barriers.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Methodology

Women from entry-level to senior management positions in the gaming business will be interviewed for this study project. By using this methodology, we want to understand better how the influential women in the sector have dealt with the hurdles that have been mentioned.

Interviews were used as the research approach in this qualitative study to see how women feel about the barriers shown by Ramos et al. (2022). The objective is to comprehend the interviewee's individualised viewpoint on the problem and allow them to share their personal experiences. Following Reeves et al.'s (2015) assertion that qualitative interviews can offer a voice to societal minorities and groups who may not otherwise be heard, this study opts to give women in gaming a voice to express their experiences with career barriers in this industry.

3.2. Sample and procedure

Following the Ramos et al. (2022) study, this investigation will examine three businesses emphasising the gaming sector. To ensure that the sample and experience of these ladies are as diverse as possible, the three companies are from various nations and have varying sizes. The three businesses chosen are a startup (with about 150 workers in the gaming industry), a medium-sized business (with approximately 2000 employees in the gaming industry), and a multinational (with approximately 10,000 employees in the gaming industry) in order to avoid any potential bias in the results. The participants selected for this study were chosen based on their seniority in the gaming industry and job positions. Since it is a qualitative analysis by the method of interviews, the sample has to be reduced, and two women from each company were selected. Women from various positions in the gaming industry, including developers, product managers, etc., were selected as interviewees. Roles like HR and Finance were not considered because they would not represent the unique issues in the game industry. The women chosen have all started their careers in the gaming industry within the previous five to ten years, so their perspectives will be unique. They will also provide insight into how the industry has changed regarding diversity over the past few years. Some respondents opted for a video call interview, while others preferred to write down their responses to the questions at their convenience.

Table 1 – List of participants in this study

Position	Years in the gaming industry	Company	Size of Company
Head of Product Experience	10 years	FRVR	Small
QA Specialist	3 years	FRVR	Small
Software Developer	1 year	Miniclip	Medium
Product Manager	5 years	Miniclip	Medium
Game Producer	10 years	Meta	Large
Strategic Partner Manager	6 years	Meta	Large

Source: Elaborated by the author

3.3. Questions

This research needs to concentrate on the themes Ramos et al. (2022) described as the most significant barriers to women thoroughly assessing and comprehending the consequences of the study done by Ramos et al. (2022). In the study, women judged seven elements to be more present than males. These included unfair performance evaluation, gender stereotypes, the ability to combine work and family, organisational culture hurdles, barriers to motivation, barriers to accessing robust networks³, and unfair HR procedures. With this in mind, 12 questions were developed to determine whether women in the gaming business believe they are more affected by these barriers than men.

The following questions elicit the interviewee's observations and personal experiences related to gender stereotypes in gaming. They seek to understand the impact of these stereotypes on decision-making, career progression, and overall professional experiences for women in the field.

Table 2 – Key research questions for the study

Key Research Question:	Do women feel more barriers to growth in the Gaming Industry careers than men?

³ Barriers to accessing robust networks were not studied in this context as most women interviewed were not in senior positions and did not have information or contact with these networks.

Main issues by Ramos et al. (2022)	Research Question
Gender stereotypes	How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?
	Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?
Organisational culture hurdles	Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women than men? Can you provide specific examples?
	How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?
Barriers to Motivation	Are any challenges or obstacles that may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?
	In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?
Ability to combine work and family	How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?
	Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems within your organisation to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially about supporting women?
Unfair HR procedures	How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe women and men are treated equally in recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?
	Have you noticed any disparities in compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men

	in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?
Unfair performance evaluation	Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?
	Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

Source: Elaborated by the author based in data from Ramos et al. (2022)

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

This questionnaire is critical to thoroughly researching women's experiences in entry-level to senior management roles within the gaming industry. This study carried out as a qualitative research project, aims to delve into the intricate fabric of the gaming industry and examine the various obstacles and problems women have faced during their careers in this dynamic industry. This research aims to understand better how prominent women in the profession have overcome these challenges. By using the interview methodology as our research strategy, we hope to give women in gaming a forum where they may share their open viewpoints and personal stories. By amplifying their voices and focusing light on their experiences with career impediments, this study aims to empower women in the gaming industry.

The research covers three companies focusing on the gaming industry, and it follows the same approach as the survey conducted by Ramos et al. (2022). These companies were purposefully selected from various nations and sizes to guarantee a broad and well-rounded sample. The three chosen businesses are a startup with about 150 people in the gaming industry, a medium-sized business with about 2000 employees, and a multinational firm with about 10,000 employees. This intentional diversity significantly reduces the risk of bias in the research findings. Interviews are the primary way of gathering data for this study, and two women were chosen from each of these businesses to represent a variety of gaming-related jobs, such as developers, product managers, and more, to achieve a balanced viewpoint. Notably, positions like HR and Finance were not considered because they might not accurately reflect the difficulties encountered in the gaming sector.

Additionally, the chosen interviewees all started their careers in the game industry within the last five to ten years, providing new perspectives on the industry's ever-changing diversity landscape. The interviewees had the freedom to select the method of participation that best suited them; some chose video calls, while others wanted to answer the questions in writing whenever it suited them. This multidimensional methodology guarantees that the study captures a detailed understanding of women's experiences in the gaming business and enables a thorough analysis of the obstacles they run against during their careers.

While diving into the results, this study aims to not only confirm that women face more significant barriers when trying to move up in their careers, as demonstrated by Ramos et al.

(2022), but also to give voice to the challenges women must overcome when compared to men in the same industry.

In order to thoroughly analyse the questionnaire, the answers to each question and the distinctive experiences each respondent provided will be reviewed.

Starting with question one, overall, the replies show that all participants know how frequently women are portrayed in video games using gender stereotypes. While some emphasise the continued need for reform and greater inclusion of women as prominent characters, others note progress and a shift towards more diverse depictions. More variety is desired and a move away from overtly sexualised and stereotypical representations of female characters.

The amount to which the respondents believe gender stereotypes impact their job success varies between replies. Several respondents particularly note facing biases regarding opportunities, recognition, compensation, and perceptions of their talents. Others complain about a general need to prove oneself or the difficulty of identifying specific problems with gender bias, as stated by interview 1: "I always feel like I need to prove myself a bit more than men when it comes to getting ahead". The comments show how difficult it is to evaluate challenges caused by gender and how societal expectations affect people's perceptions and behaviour.

Regarding cultural norms, the responses differ regarding particular instances and observations. Some respondents bring up difficulties with engaging in particular activities or the presence of stereotypes from other cultures. Others discuss their encounters with gender norms and prejudices in gaming, underlining the necessity to disprove assumptions and push back against them. Although the degree and exact examples differ, the responses show an awareness of the gender-related difficulties that women may encounter in the gaming industry.

When asked about the level of diversity in the gaming industry, the replies reveal a shared knowledge among the participants that the gaming business still has diversity and inclusion challenges to overcome. Emphasis is placed on the necessity of more representation, fair opportunities, and a change in cultural norms. Other areas for development include the dearth of women in leadership roles and the historical gender disparity in particular roles such as HR and engineering.

In question five, all the comments point out several difficulties and barriers that may adversely affect women's motivation in the gaming industry. Potential obstacles include prejudices, a lack of representation, slim chances for advancement, imposter syndrome, and a male-dominated culture. All interviewees agree that addressing these issues is critical, offering

equitable opportunities and altering industry myths to foster a more welcoming and inspiring atmosphere for women in the business.

However, when asked to compare women's motivation to working in the gaming industry vs. men's, the respondents are conflicted. Some claim that women are less motivated or enthusiastic than men, which may be related to issues with representation and treatment. Others claim there are no appreciable changes and that personal interest and a supportive workplace culture are the primary drive sources. However, they all agree that to prevent the gaming industry's motivation and passion from being disproportionately impacted by gender, there is a need for more excellent representation, equitable treatment, and an inclusive work atmosphere.

Questions seven and eight asked the participants about the balance between work and family life and whether they felt a disparity between men and women. The responses show a variety of viewpoints overall. Some respondents acknowledge the difficulties women in the gaming business experience in juggling work and family obligations, including lengthy work hours, maternity leave, and social expectations. Others do not notice noticeable distinctions or blame cultural standards more broadly for the difficulties than industry-specific elements. Even though most already feel like their companies fully support both women and men to have a balanced work and family life, all agree that companies must invest even more in family-friendly regulations, including maternity leave and flexible work schedules, to improve work-life balance.

When asked about the HR practices and biases in the gaming industry, the replies show a variety of viewpoints. While some respondents believe that gender biases exist in hiring, promotions, and career advancement that harm women, others point out initiatives taken by their organisations to advance diversity and gender equality. However, there is a need to highlight that still better methods are required to confront and stop harassment behaviour not only in the gaming industry but in all sectors. As mentioned in interview 6, there are still a lot of unpleasant experiences lived by women that go unpunished when HR departments fail to take the proper action.

In question ten, the interviewees were asked about the differences between men's and women's salaries in the gaming sector. Even though they all recognise this topic's individualised and complex nature, there are also potential differences between men and women in the gaming sector regarding pay, benefits, and chances for professional advancement. Some respondents even had personal experiences describing gender-based discrepancies in income and career possibilities.

The results of the last two questions on performance appraisal show a mixed sense of bias and fairness in the gaming industry's performance evaluation procedures. Some respondents express worries about the need for women to put forth more effort to be heard and gender-based discrepancies in opportunity and recognition. They gave examples of stereotype-based dismissals or devaluations, more significant standards for women to uphold, treatment disparities based on behaviour, and unfair comparisons to male coworkers. These incidents demonstrate the necessity for impartial evaluation procedures that are gender-neutral and equitable. However, others believe there is no difference in gender and recognition. The observations imply that team dynamics, interpersonal interactions, and individual experiences affect fair performance evaluations more than gender.

In conclusion, diverse opinions are still based on personal and professional experiences. While it is hard to get a standard answer to all topics, the overwhelming feeling from all interviewees is that the gaming industry still has much to work on regarding gender biases and accurately recognising women's value in the industry.

4.2. Discussion

This study examines gender inequality and discrimination at work, concentrating on the barriers that prevent women from obtaining managerial positions. Open-ended interviews have been the primary research method for this study, focusing on women who work in the gaming industry. The main goal of this study is to listen to women's voices who work in the industry to determine whether the gender barriers mentioned by Ramos et al. (2022) are still felt by the women working in this Industry.

In recent decades, initiatives have been made to advance gender equality in managerial and employment roles. However, gender discrimination against women still exists despite these initiatives. Disparities, including the gender wage gap, the preponderance of women in lower-paying professions, and their limited influence at work, are clear indicators of this. Research has examined the causes of this prejudice and potential mitigation techniques to understand it better (Ramos et al., 2022).

Ramos et al. (2022) research has shown numerous barriers that prevent women from rising to leadership roles. These included unfair performance reviews, gender stereotypes, challenges to work-life balance, obstacles to motivation, unfair HR practices and policies, obstacles resulting from organisational culture, and obstacles to accessing networks of influence and

positions of power. These factors were used to base the questionnaire presented to the interviewees.

According to the results of the interviews conducted, the gaming industry's cultural norms and practices have changed throughout time, moving towards mixed teams and diversity, which results in more vital products. However, this shift is still ongoing and insufficient to make women feel like they are working in a fair and unbiased work environment.

As Ramos et al. (2022) suggested, women's career preferences, competencies, attitudes, and motives are the primary causes of the barriers to women's promotion. Women's lower expectations of success, lack of interest and drive, weaker self-confidence, and lack of training or experience are now used to justify these hurdles rather than their lack of training or experience. Our research confirmed that most participants believed women have all the capabilities and skills to make it to leadership roles. However, they face hurdles to get there, especially in male-dominated industries such as gaming. Challenges that may disproportionately affect women's motivation in the sector were highlighted as gender biases, a lack of role models, and constrained opportunities for professional advancement. All these can also affect women's motivation to work and grow in this sector. While some participants did not feel a difference in motivation between men and women, others highlighted that male workers usually show higher enthusiasm to be in the industry, which may result from better representation and attention to their interests. Not only that, but given their responsibilities for their families, lengthy work hours, and the fast-paced nature of the sector, women have been shown to have difficulty juggling work and family life. When looking at the gaming industry, it has been shown repeatedly that it is a male-dominated environment, and gender stereotypes still play a significant role in discrimination against women, not only in the work environment but also in their representation in games. All interviewees emphasised the need for improvement in how women are portrayed in video games, where female characters are frequently exposed to objectification and gender stereotypes. Although there have been some changes, they pointed out that how women are portrayed in games frequently entails sexualisation and stereotypes, as female characters are still frequently represented in supporting roles and overtly sexualised. The need for more and stronger female main characters is evident. The same goes for the work environment, which discussed the difficulties women experience in advancing in their careers, including the fact that they have fewer chances and high-profile jobs than males and feel more pressure to succeed.

According to social role theory, gender roles are developed based on the customary expectations of men and women and the sexual division of labour. Women's prospects of

advancing to the top management levels may suffer because men are often expected to take on the professional role. In contrast, women are typically expected to take on the career role. Furthermore, the leadership position is considered more suited for men than women because of the perception that women are less capable or effective in managerial posts. Overall, gender stereotypes are a significant barrier to women's performance and ability to hold leadership positions (Ramos et al., 2022). While most participants recognised that most women in the gaming industry work in “typical” roles associated with females, like HR and Finance, they admit there has been a shift where women take more technical roles.

Moreover, with that shift, policies and practices must come. Women frequently encounter pressure to put family before career. In male-dominated sectors, there is usually a bias or lack of policies to help women progress in their careers while sustaining a healthy family life. Ramos et al. (2022) talk about the challenges women have in finding work-life balance and how this can limit their possibilities for promotion. It implies that gender preconceptions and roles place a double burden on women, preventing them from advancing professionally and from being hired or promoted by employers for fear that they will be less engaged owing to responsibilities related to their families.

Additionally, the organisational culture, personnel selection procedures, and human resources policies and practices are only a few obstacles women face while applying for managerial jobs. The patriarchal and androcentric organisational culture, which excludes feminine values, is a big part of the problem. Because of this, there is an imbalance in the relationship between men and women, forcing women to assume a more masculine appearance to blend in (Ramos et al., 2022). Some participants also expressed this concern, mentioning that they often felt they should incorporate male behaviours to be perceived as more effective in the workplace. The interviewees also expressed worries about gender bias in performance reviews, where it was felt that men in similar roles were given more credit for women's successes. Women were thought to put in more effort to achieve parity in remuneration and recognition. A few participants expressed the opinion that women needed to work more to be heard and respected, and biases in performance reviews were brought up where women were criticised for actions for which males were given a pass.

Also mentioned by Ramos et al. (2022), the policies and practices of human resources are also biased in favour of men, with managerial hiring practices favouring men. Organisations must modify their policies and practices to promote equal chances for women since they are unaware of how they contribute to gender disparity.

Many organisational practices put women at a disadvantage at work, including unequal standards, unfair performance evaluation, undervaluing of the contributions of women, underrepresentation in robust networks, and a lack of mentoring opportunities. The glass ceiling, which stops women from advancing in their careers and taking on positions of greater responsibility, is influenced by these variables. This was also confirmed by the interviews conducted, where most complained about biases in HR procedures, particularly in hiring promotion, where there is a tendency to hire more male workers for technical positions. Recruitment procedures in the gaming business may favour men, creating a cycle that reinforces itself and leaving women in lower positions and salaries. When it comes to performance evaluations, most generally find it fair, even though they feel that women frequently have to put in more effort than males.

Lastly, although there is no tone of the factors studied, Ramos et al. (2022) also mention that a significant obstacle to women's job advancement and promotion at work is sexual harassment and sexism. Since harassment is illegal, it should be approached differently and left out of examining factors that prevent women from being promoted. However, some personal experiences were mentioned during our interviews, where this is still a prevalent factor. This should be highlighted not only as a barrier but also as a creator of a demeaning and fearful work environment that makes women feel unsafe and scared to work in this industry.

Overall, the responses showed how much more equity, representation, and chances for women in the gaming business are still needed. All participants emphasised the value of dispelling myths, encouraging diversity, and giving women in the gaming business equal chances.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion, Limitations, Suggestions and Recommendations

5.1. Short key findings

The results of this study highlight the numerous difficulties and restrictions women face when pursuing career advancement in the gaming sector. Women perceive and encounter more significant barriers to their progression in this field than their male peers. These obstacles include various things, such as gender stereotypes, unfair HR practices and rules, organisational culture biases, unequal performance evaluation, issues juggling work and home obligations and obstacles to motivation. A more inclusive and equitable gaming business, where women's skills and contributions are fully valued and used to spur innovation and development, can only be created by acknowledging these inequities.

Even though most women have different experiences with these obstacles and some companies are working to foster a more inclusive workplace, the short answer to the research question “Do women feel more barriers to grow in their careers in the Gaming Industry than men?” is yes, there is still a bias and enforced stereotypes that the industry and companies must work on.

5.2. Conclusion

5.2.1. Theoretical Implications

In the current professional setting, the persistence of masculine norms remains invisible and unchallenged. The idea that women are seen as deficient in the context of the traditionally masculine workplace seems widely accepted. Consequently, women feel pressured to improve their capacities to conform to a masculine-dominated environment. As a result, the gender norms that maintain masculinity's dominance both within and outside of the workplace are perpetuated to this day (Dashper, 2019).

Notwithstanding that, some advances are being made. According to Lyness and Grotto (2018), there are signs that women are making significant progress towards obtaining senior positions in both the corporate and governmental spheres. A significant example of this trend may be in June 2017, when 32 Fortune 500 businesses, including some of the largest organisations, were led for the first time by female CEOs, or 6.4% of the total. Despite these

women's impressive accomplishments, the overall statistical picture suggests that women's representation in senior leadership positions in the American public and private sectors is still insufficient. For example, women comprised nearly half (44.3%) of the workforce at S&P 500 companies in 2017. However, the proportion of women in management and leadership positions was less significant, with just 36.4% of first to middle-level management jobs, 25.1% of senior-level executive positions, 19.9% of corporate board seats, and 5.4% of CEO positions held by women. This can be explained by women's several barriers to reaching top-level positions. Even though a considerable workforce comprises women, only a tiny percentage makes it to leadership roles (Lyness & Grotto, 2018).

Lyness and Grotto (2018) offer insightful information about the ongoing difficulties in closing the gender gap in leadership. Deeply embedded gender barriers occur at many organisational levels, with wide-ranging and significant repercussions. The combination of these theories and supporting empirical data suggests that women face numerous barriers connected to their gender when trying to obtain and maintain leadership positions, even at lower organisational levels. Therefore, the combined effect of these several barriers has a significant impact and continues the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, especially at the highest levels. Aspirant women leaders face various interpersonal challenges that might undermine their confidence and prevent them from developing a leadership identity. Even when women hold leadership positions, they may be given less authority and are more likely to be scrutinised for their legitimacy as leaders, ultimately hindering their effectiveness. Women may internalise the notion that men are better suited for leadership positions, and these beliefs, together with male leadership templates, can further derail women's leadership ambitions and impede their personal development. As heard from the women interviewed in this study, most believe they must adhere to a more masculine workplace posture to ensure success. However, the women who overcome these obstacles to leadership positions are likely more effective and qualified than most male leaders.

Furthermore, the results of Ruiz-Jiménez and Fuentes-Fuentes (2016) support that gender diversity in the top management team is an advantageous moderator for the relationship between management skills and product and process innovation effectiveness. This implies that having a diverse mix of genders on the upper management team encourages a work atmosphere that encourages the development of original ideas, knowledge sharing, effective communication, and trust. In order to spur innovation in both products and processes, it simultaneously encourages the execution of diverse procedures and routines and the use of more effective resources.

According to a study by Russen et al. (2021), companies with higher levels of fairness and effective diversity management reported higher levels of job satisfaction among their employees. Additionally, compared to organisations with less female representation in their top management teams, those with a higher proportion of women in their managerial teams attracted a more diverse pool of female applicants from various industries. Employees of both sexes view organisations as more just when their executive teams are balanced compared to situations in which males hold the majority of managerial posts. This attitude will likely penetrate the entire organisational hierarchy if top-level managers show more tolerance for diversity. Employees will perceive more opportunities for women to advance to higher levels of management if a strong culture of diversity and inclusion is fostered. By improving their organisational structures to aid women and other minority groups in their pursuit of executive positions, businesses can further their diversity aims. One approach is to create a transparent promotion process with clearly defined milestones to provide fair opportunities for all eligible individuals, including gender-balanced offerings and other demographic concerns. Organisations can also encourage gender-neutral job descriptions and implement efforts like cross-training and manager-in-training programs that are tailored to women's skill sets. Because of the organisation's better reputation and working environment, employees may enjoy higher job satisfaction and lower turnover due to these initiatives. Additionally, organisations that promote diversity through a formal declaration will likely have a more positive reputation among clients and the general public, increasing client and staff loyalty. Importantly, research has shown that the many perspectives, ideas, and backgrounds that women bring to managerial teams have a favourable effect on financial success (Russen et al., 2021)

The same can be said for the gaming industry. As we move up the organisational structure, the gender gap becomes more pronounced, with the underrepresentation of women on corporate boards particularly striking. A startling 84% of the board members in the top 20 gaming companies, according to a 2020 study, were men. With more women in leadership positions in the industry, creating games that cater to the fast-growing community of female streamers and players and forging lasting relationships with them is possible. Women in these top-level positions bring a variety of viewpoints to the table, especially when designing diverse in-game characters and creating marketing campaigns that successfully appeal to target groups. Female gamers comprise about 48% of the gaming population, so the data highlight a significant opportunity for game creators and marketers to interact with them. The mobile gaming industry offers even better prospects because 63% of its players are female (Women in Gaming: Leveling Up the Industry | TransPerfect, n.d.).

Prescott and Bogg (2010) also pointed out that recent data shows that women working in the computer games industry still face problems like the industry's culture of long hours, gender imbalance, especially among women with families, skill shortages, work-life balance, and the significance of flexible work arrangements. Given the current skills scarcity, the games industry needs to increase its attractiveness to a more diversified talent pool and wants to do so. A more diversified workforce can produce games that appeal to a broader range of players. Like the larger ICT and SET sectors, the games business is still mostly seen as a "boys' club" by the public. However, with the addition of a more diversified staff, this image could change. As the number of female gamers increases globally, the industry might eventually lose its "for boys only" stereotypical masculinity. The sector should raise public knowledge of the variety of responsibilities and talents it requires, emphasising the benefits and rewards of working in such a fast-paced, cutthroat, and expanding field. It is essential to comprehend the experiences of women working in the predominantly male-dominated computer games business in order to improve future recruiting and retention efforts and increase the sector's general appeal, and that is why research like the one conducted in this study has the power to bring voice to women working in this industry and their challenges.

5.2.2. Managerial Implications

However, how can we get there? Besides the barriers reviewed in this study, looking at what can be done to improve the quality of work life and opportunities for women in the gaming industry and all sectors is essential. According to Dashper (2019), the empowerment of individual women and the promotion of their professional development depend significantly on initiatives like women's mentoring programs and other programs designed to advance women in the corporate sector. While it is essential to empower individuals, this effort falls short of confronting the dominant macho success myths that continue gender inequalities. Organisations are accountable for doing more than just supporting individual staff members in training and development initiatives; they also need to systematically evaluate and modify their current procedures in order to promote and facilitate greater gender equality.

Lyness and Grotto (2018) address several ways companies can move forward to foster a more diverse working environment. The collective wisdom from leadership, diversity, and global studies converge on the same idea: elevating women into leadership positions can successfully close the gender gap in leadership. To achieve this, however, starting the process by fostering women's leadership aspirations and actively supporting their participation in

leadership roles is essential. Men and established leaders must work together because they can mentor and sponsor women and secure their inclusion in professional networks, which is something that organisations should actively promote. Additionally, organisations may play a crucial part in building a strong pipeline of female leaders by implementing empowerment programs and developmental activities and establishing definite goals for gender-balanced leadership. By implementing voluntary targets for women's representation in significant leadership positions and promoting transparency by disclosing gender diversity metrics in such roles, companies can further advance gender equality in the workplace.

Within organisations, a multi-level effort should address biased values and unfavourable perceptions. Individual values, beliefs, and behaviours have a significant impact on organisational culture, which in turn shapes the degree of support for female leaders. Women can start by reassessing their own gender and leadership identities, looking to successful women leaders as role models, acknowledging the pervasiveness of gender bias in organisations, and appreciating the value of their leadership styles as ways to start this transformation. Conversely, men and leaders should acknowledge their inherent biases towards women in leadership positions and take deliberate measures to counteract them. This entails actively taking part in workshops on gender equity and collaborating with successful female leaders.

Additionally, organisations should examine their fundamental values to see if they unintentionally promote gender bias and inequality. They should also question and eliminate gender preconceptions from their principles. It is crucial to foster a culture that values justice, equality of opportunity, gender inclusivity, and work-life balance. This calls for changing workplace practices, such as excessively lengthy working hours that hinder women's advancement into leadership positions. As a result, comprehensive educational and training initiatives addressing issues like unconscious prejudice should be combined with accountability mechanisms to achieve lasting behavioural changes.

Cultural changes should coexist with modifications to organisational procedures that promote the advancement of female leaders. Equal chances for growth and advancement, open promotion processes, consistent performance criteria for both genders and recognition and awards for effective leadership practices must all be implemented by leaders. Additionally, organisations should offer solid work-family support for all employees and gender-neutral career paths. As advocates, males should promote organisational practices that support women's aspirations for leadership, look for biases when evaluating women's performance, and recognise and reward women leaders who succeed.

However, the success of these facilitators depends on organisations' dedication to removing persistent and covert obstacles that prevent women from advancing in leadership positions, as concluded in this study. This includes getting the backing of all organisational leaders, especially men. Senior leadership must show genuine commitment to achieving gender parity, share power equally with female leaders, and carefully listen to and address the issues women face in the workplace for such initiatives to be successful.

5.3. Limitations, Suggestions and Recommendations

While conducting this study, a few limitations were encountered. This qualitative study's minimal sample size limits its ability to generalise. Only six individuals were interviewed for the research, mainly focusing on data gathered from three companies. As a result, the conclusions drawn from this survey can not fully reflect the wide range of opinions and experiences held by all women working in the gaming business. Given the limitations of the small sample size, generalising the findings to larger populations or different situations should be done cautiously. For future research, it is suggested to consider enlarging the participant pool by recruiting people from extra businesses and various work positions within the gaming sector to improve the robustness and applicability of future studies. This would make it possible to explore the difficulties women encounter in various organisational roles thoroughly. Additionally, including male participants in the survey could provide insightful information about how they view the issues raised, offering a balanced viewpoint and a better grasp of the dynamics at work. By broadening the study's scope, we may examine gender-related hurdles in the gaming industry more comprehensively and sophisticatedly.

Another inherent limitation of qualitative studies is the subjectivity and potential bias. Qualitative studies rely primarily on the researchers' interpretations, which might add subjectivity and bias to the study process. The stages of the study, such as data collection, analysis, and interpretation, may unintentionally be influenced by the researchers' individual opinions, beliefs, and experiences. It is advised to have numerous researchers in the study to reduce these drawbacks and improve the rigour of qualitative research. By encouraging a diversity of viewpoints and interpretations, collaborative research projects can help reduce personal biases and subjectivities. The study's conclusions can be triangulated by having many researchers independently analyse and interpret the data, boosting their validity and reliability. A process for inter-rater reliability evaluation can also be included to further guarantee consistency and dependability in the study's findings.

The difficulty of replication is another prominent restriction of qualitative research in this study. Comparatively to quantitative research, qualitative studies investigate particular circumstances and individual experiences, making them less susceptible to exact reproduction. The lack of standardised processes in qualitative investigations can hamper the capacity to repeat the study for validation. It is essential to recognise that some research examples, like the study conducted by Ramos et al. (2022), use quantitative data collection techniques that provide higher degrees of reproducibility and statistical dependability. It is also essential to understand that while quantitative data may offer insightful information, it might not adequately reflect the whole breadth and depth of people's experiences, as qualitative research does. For this reason, when choosing the best research strategy, researchers should carefully consider their research goals and the characteristics of the phenomena they are studying. For this particular study, it was essential to understand more personally what women in the gaming industry experience, but it is worth substantiating the research with more qualitative data.

One of the most challenging limitations to overcome in this study was the privacy factor for the interviewees. The presence of ethical and privacy concerns is a crucial factor in qualitative research. Participants' sensitive or personal information is regularly collected as part of qualitative investigations, which makes it challenging to protect their privacy and confidentiality while respecting ethical norms. It was noted that some participants in this study reported reluctance to disclose their data because they were concerned about possible professional ramifications. In order to protect participants' privacy, they were given the choice of anonymising their data or using pseudonyms in the reporting of findings. These procedures are essential for fostering participant confidence and reducing the likelihood of ethical conundrums.

Finally, as this study follows the findings of Ramos et al. (2022), its conclusions cover issues like unequal performance evaluation, widespread gender stereotypes, difficulties juggling work and family obligations, barriers to motivation, unfair HR practices and policies, as well as organisational culture barriers and obstacles to accessing robust networks and positions of influence which were the main factors highlighted by Ramos et al. (2022). However, all conclusions are limited to these topics, highlighting the need to investigate other variables that could affect how women in the gaming sector experience their professional lives. The multiplicity of complexity and nuances that underlie gender-related issues in the gaming industry must be explored and understood as this research project progresses. We may learn more about women's difficulties in this dynamic and changing business by widening the focus and tackling a more extensive range of concerns.

In conclusion, due to its research design, this qualitative study has some inherent limitations similar to those found in all qualitative studies. The limited generalizability caused by the small sample size and narrow emphasis on three organisations and six interviewees limits the findings' applicability. Future studies would be more thorough if the research's focus were widened to include a broader spectrum of participants and firms, including male viewpoints. The subjectivity and possibility for researcher bias associated with qualitative research also highlight how crucial multi-researcher participation is to reduce interpretive difficulties. Although these shortcomings are acknowledged, they provide helpful starting points for additional investigations into this vital area. It is advisable to look into additional issues and barriers, amplifying the voices of both women and men in this dynamic profession, to deepen our awareness of the difficulties women encounter in the gaming industry.

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APPENDIX

Interview 1 - Software developer, 1 year and 3months in gaming at Miniclip

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

There is definitely potential for improvement in how women are portrayed in video games. Female characters are frequently portrayed utilizing gender stereotypes, such as being overtly sexualized or cast in supporting roles. As a software developer I often struggle with the names, colors, behaviours of the characters, etc being mainly masculine. This helps to maintain the stereotype that video games are primarily the domain of men and might make women feel excluded. When you look at the gaming industry as a whole, most game developers, players and characters are still men.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

I've faced obstacles in my career development that, in my opinion, were brought on by gender preconceptions. For instance, compared to my male competitors with comparable credentials and experience, I have received less opportunities to work on high-profile projects. As a developer, I am within a minority being a female. Most of my peers, managers, etc are male. I have noticed that sports games for example are usually given to more male engineers and developers.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

Within the gaming industry, there are certain cultural norms and practices that can be more difficult for women. For instance, it may be more difficult for women to feel fully included or at ease participating in specific team activities or outings that are focused on customarily male-dominated interests. For example I have been the only women in a team building event of playing football which I did not enjoy or feel much at ease.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

There is still potential for improvement in the gaming industry's diversity and inclusion levels. While attempts are being made to develop a culture that is more welcoming to women, there is

still a need for more representation, equitable opportunity, and a broader acceptance of other viewpoints. I see an ever growing number of female gamers but most of them are still objectified or treated as inferior players.

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

Yes definitely, I think that women may experience biases that cast doubt on their technical aptitudes or talents, which lowers their self-esteem and motivation. Motivation can also be hampered by the absence of obvious role models and the scarcity of prospects for professional progress. Having a lack of female peers in the same roles or appropriate representation in the product they work on, may lead to lack of motivation for women in this industry.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

Yes a little bit I guess... I do see more enthusiasm from male developers. Maybe because they feel more represented and catered for. It is not as usual that a game with a fierce female lead character comes out.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

It can be difficult for women in the gaming business to balance work and family. Employees are frequently expected to put in long hours at work, which can be challenging to juggle with personal and family obligations. It is well known that women have more family obligations than men and balancing those two full time jobs can be hard. The gaming industry is also very fast paced so I've seen colleagues struggle when they get back to work after taking a long time of maternity leave.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

For now, I think the best policy in place to help in this scenario is the WFH policy. At Miniclip, both women and men can manage their personal and professional commitments with the support of flexible work schedules and remote work possibilities. However, based on unique circumstances, these measures may or may not be effective.

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

The gaming industry's HR procedures aren't always fair. Despite initiatives to encourage diversity and inclusion, there are still some situations where recruiting, promotion, and other HR processes may be biased against women. Gender prejudices can influence choices and prevent women from moving up the corporate ladder. I see this mainly in my area (developers) as most are male and it seems that, when recruiting, there might be a bias to hire more male developers.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

I am pretty sure there are differences in pay, benefits, and chances for career advancement between men and women in the gaming sector but I have not come across any specific example. I am not fully aware of compensation and benefits for each individual at my company.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get same recognition as men in same roles?

I have discovered that performance evaluation procedures in the gaming business are often fair but not completely unbiased. There have been times when I've thought that women's accomplishments in similar roles weren't given the same acknowledgment as men's. It's depressing to see how gender can affect how performance is viewed. I do feel like women are seen as less capable as men and therefore usually less challenged at work and given less opportunities to rise.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

I haven't witnessed any specific example but I can see that it is very likely that in bigger companies, some women maybe dismissed or misevaluated based on their gender and the stereotypes around the gaming industry.

Interview 2 – Product Manager, 5years in gaming and 3years at Miniclip

Product manager 5y in gaming 3y at miniclip

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

Well I am not exactly a hardcore gamer but I am aware that most big ticket games out there show women as a sexualized element rather than the “hero/fighter” of the game. I do feel like this is changing a bit but overall it’s a bit prevalent the anime style girl in games.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

I am not sure of specific challenges in my career progression but I always feel like I need to prove myself a bit more than men when it comes to getting ahead.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

Don’t think I have seen this specifically in the gaming industry but there is always some cultural stereotypes of how women should be/participate in the work environment.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

If we talk about gaming/product roles, it’s still very much male dominated. In my current company there are only 2 female product managers compared to more than 8 male. Could be that more men apply as women are not as interested in the industry but it’s still less than ideal. Specially if you look at leadership or board members in these companies these are still very much a boys club. I’m not sure what can be done really, but I think there might be a generation shift coming that might bring more women into tech and gaming.

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

Well I think its hard to be motivated to work on a product where female representation is quite poor. So even though I don’t work directly on those kind of games, I can imagine motivation there is low if you are a female employee. When it comes to companies like mine, I think motivation is pretty equal as we all just want to make a cool fun product and gender does not play that much into it.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

Not really, I think if you like gaming and your company or team, that's mostly where motivation and excitement come from, regardless of gender.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

I haven't noticed this being any different in the gaming industry compared to other tech industries but I have heard of stories where in small gaming startups women have faced some barriers. I have a friend who started working for a very small 25 person gaming startup and she was the second female to join. So when she got pregnant and wanted to change her work hours etc to be more involved with the family there was no policy in the company for that. They changed it of course but it's interesting that a group of men did not think of that. And here come women disrupting of course.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

I believe we have the standard flexible work, plus maternity leave policies. Though I'm sure much more can be done

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

Humm I never felt like it was a biased recruitment but I guess you usually don't feel that. I always thought that the changes I would get hired were smaller... but mainly because most recruiters are male and again I always felt like I had to prove myself more.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

I have never checked in detail how much a man vs women makes in the same role but I am sure there are disparities. If not in roles at least in skillsets as a woman needs to prove her skills much more to get the same recognition as men.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?

I am not sure about this honestly... hard to access if the recognition is not given or given more related to gender but I guess it can be possible. Not sure.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

Well not personally but I do think, again, that women need to prove themselves more so when it comes to performance reviews we might not get as good evaluation even though we perform the same as men. We always need to perform even more to get the same evaluation.

Interview 3 – Game Producer, 10 years in gaming and 8 years at Meta

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

I've been working in games for quite a while and seen it get better over the years but definitely there's still a poor representation of women. I mean big box games such as Grand theft auto and resident evil, females are portrayed as less than men and overly sexual beings. No girl should feel good playing this. But if we look at the gaming industry as a whole, games are much more than this. Most worldwide played games don't even relate to gender at all like solitaire or dominoes. Yet, when we think of gaming and gamers we still go immediately to the stereotype gamer male and relate that to whole the industry.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

I think gender stereotypes are always present. Definitely when I first started working in games I was one of the only girls there. Was not easy being a girl in gaming back then as I don't think we were taken very seriously. Things have definitely gotten better and I work with a lot of women in gaming but still most of my superiors are male.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

Not that I'm aware of, I think in general most working conditions are usually harder for women and we need to work a bit harder to get where we want.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

When I first started in this industry I would definitely say it was about 90% male. Not counting on HR and finance jobs etc. Now I've seen a shift for sure as I see at Meta we have quite a few female developers and gamers. The biggest improvement that can be made in my view is just

big companies like this to keep hiring and promoting girls in this industry. We should lead by example.

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

I think you might be pretty discouraged as a women to work in gaming if your assumption of gaming is the big sexist games that come with the stereotype. The best we can do to change this is change the narrative that that's what gaming is. Gaming is much more than that and if women realize that and identify more with gamers than I think we will have many more women in the industry.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

I don't think I've found this. At least not in the places and positions where I have worked.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

I think expectations will always be different for men and women but I don't feel this at meta.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

I think mainly maternity leave policies. Everything else should be similar to men

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

I think when it comes to promotions there might be a bias and might take women more time in this industry to get to high positions vs men. I've seen instances where a woman was more qualified for a position but the man got the job. Top positions are still male dominated in gaming and men tend to hire men so evolving in the gaming industry is still definitely more challenging for woman.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

Yes, there are definitely disparities when it comes to pay between man and women in the same position. I think this is specially more prevalent in developer positions where women are still seen as not as qualified as men.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?

Don't know if it's recognition per say but many times in this industry women have to make a bigger effort to have their voices heard compared to men.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

Yeah I feel like this happens a bit everywhere where women need to empower themselves to make it up the latter. And very often I've had some of my behaviours called out when men get away with the exact same behaviour. It's still very bias in the way that if a man is evaluating your performance he might reprehend you for the same conduct he has just because that's not expected from a female employee.

Interview 4 - Strategic Partner Manager, 6 years in gaming and 4 years at Meta

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

I think we still need to show more women inside games themselves. Most female characters are still in supporting roles, would be great to start seeing more main characters.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

Not really, I've felt that most my progression has been due to merit and I didn't feel any obstacles when it comes to gender. However, it's hard to access if you are being discriminated due to gender or not.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

No, not any different than in different industries.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

We still need to work on the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry Both in terms of hiring and games themselves. Historically, I feel that I've seen more women in Marketing and Partnerships positions but it seems to be changing in the right direction and am seeing more and more women in Producing and Engineering as well

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

The fact that it is sometimes male dominated can be intimidating for some women. It might be demotivating and difficult to enter a male dominated area.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

No, I feel like both female and male employees have the same level of motivation.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

I don't think it's specific to the Gaming industry, I see this in all jobs where women not as easily reach top positions because they have to put a stop in their careers to support family. And this is what is expected. That's why also men reach higher positions as they are not expected to take as much time off work for family.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

I feel like in Meta we have good policies such as flexible hours, ability to work from home, generous maternity covers, though they don't differ that much for men.

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

Yes, I think so. At Meta, our gaming team has a lot of women and in different teams as well: Partnerships, Product, Engineering. We make an actual effort to recruit equally when it comes to diversity and gender.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

Not that I have noticed but it is a general problem within the tech industry so I wouldn't see any difference in the gaming side.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?

Definitely feels free and unbiased. Meta focuses performance evaluations on impact and strengths, regardless of gender.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

No, never. I feel like we judge performance on outcomes and don't take gender into account.

Interview 5 – Head of Product Experience, 10 years in gaming and 2 years at FRVR

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

That is a good question because it's almost almost like a stereotype that you say that women are these characters with like very defined hips and huge boobs and and very pretty, like the manga type of of characters and I think that that is still there and the question is just whether it's getting a bit more nuanced. I still think that we're maybe lacking to see more real women portrayed in games. But there are some I think. I haven't played The Last of Us but I've watched the the TV series out of that and that's definitely a storyline with a different type of female character. At least in the movie portrayal. It's more multifaceted in terms of female leads in there.

I don't think so, no. That's a that's a good, good point. I don't play enough video games. So I don't have a good sense of how it is across all games. So it's easy to just say that no female characters are not represented. But what I do think is that we don't have enough focus on it. When we do develop characters there should be more of a focus on diversity and inclusion in the broader sense of also like ethnicities etc, women especially.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

So if we go broader than the gaming industry and look at tech in general, it's difficult to pinpoint because you don't necessarily know when you're being biased.

When you're in it, you're not necessarily aware of the challenges because you don't see that perspective. But I will say that it takes a certain type of personality for women, I think, to thrive in that environment and to not, run screaming away.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

I definitely think that there was a big difference between men and women and it was very clear at Lego but it evolved a lot over the seven years that I was there. Traditionally the women would work on the girl lines and the men would work on the boys lines.

And then it shifted. You actually got a lot of men that worked Lego Friends which was super nice to see because it also brings a different point of view and it brings a different perspective and cultural references and a different upbringing and a different way of playing and a different way of interacting. So I think that having mixed teams and having that diversity builds stronger long term products.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

I worked at Lego in the new technologies and new ways of interacting etcetera and when we would do broad company wide projects or brainstorming I'd be invited to those and it'd be like a 35 – 40 people plus meeting and I walk in there and I would always have this habit of just looking around and counting all the women and typically there would be like two or three.

So that would be the division. And that was not normal. So I was in a department that we called the front end at Lego and there we were like 35 people and we were two females, no three, one was the assistant.

One was in the leadership team on the production side, and then there was me as the design manager at the time. Everybody else were male.

And I think one thing is the overall split between men and women. I think what's also important is looking at men and women in leadership positions and then also what type of roles do the females tend to undertake versus the men. I've seen at Lego that definitely when you get to the top layer it is dominated by males. And it's quite harder for women to get to these leadership positions.

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

I think the recruitment process is important. I think the way that we bring women into these roles and the way that we build them up for success is extremely important. I think and this is another sort of rule that, I have and whether it's biased in the other direction, you could argue that, but when I see a woman in a managerial or a leadership position within this industry, within tech I always sort of add like 30% on top of her skill set or on top of the position that she sits in, because I know that she will have fought so much harder and having to prove herself and evolve her skills much more than the men at the same position.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

I think, and this might be a bias on my end, I think more men grew up gaming and having games. I think it's gonna be a while before we see the generation of the people that are teenagers today or in their early 20s, I think it's different. I can see that with the smartphones, through Nintendo launching the Nintendo Wii and like gaming becoming a family oriented activity, made it so that much more people would grow up gaming also. A lot more girls are socially oriented towards or playing Minecraft for example.

Building more different types of games that engage women or girls in this matter helps so that you won't have as much of a divide. More girls will have grown up as gamers, and therefore I think will find interest in the gaming industry moving forward.

Also, the way women can be treated sometimes can affect their motivation for sure. I've had examples of where somebody in a professional e-mail context wrote to me "Hi sweetie, can you help me with this". I find it extremely patronizing. Like writing an e-mail to a woman like she is just this little sweet thing, doesn't show much respect for her work and accomplishments. So there's also certain things that you just need to be aware of. Careful around those things.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

I don't know if it's biased towards women. I think there's a general understanding of how much you need to work. And there's definitely one thing that I realized in my career when I started having kids, is that you get to a point where you can't solve challenges or work challenges with time.

And a lot of things can be solved by you just working more or working longer hours or taking more time. At one point in time I was realizing, because I was looking at that wasn't so much like male, female, but also more just in terms of younger colleagues versus people that had families versus people that didn't have families. I wasn't able to solve things in the same way or just staying longer, etc. because I had to get home to to my family. I wanted to get home to my family.

That actually forced me, if you'd say, encouraged me to extend my toolbox and find different ways of solving things, which I think helped me sort of mature faster and mature in a different way in terms of my professional path.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

I do see that it's a problem, for example, now it's different from country to country, but in Denmark for example, paternity leave slash, maternity leave is typically one year. So that means that if you have three kids, it's three years away from the working environment, it's three years of pension payments that you don't save up because you don't get the pension etcetera. So there is definitely these differences that skews more towards the ones that are there. I don't know how to solve it because it's not like the men should be penalized for or deselected because it should be based on merits and skills and if the woman is not there to develop her skills, then you know it goes towards somebody else. So I don't know how to solve it because I don't think it it's a good idea to necessarily favor somebody but it's just how it goes.

One issue or one thing that sort of irks me, is when people talk a lot about soft skills and they tend to put women and soft skills together, that really annoys the hell out of me because I think it would do us all better if we talk more around being well-rounded in terms of the skills that you need. And I think having technical skills or hard skills can be as important as having what typically get referred to us as soft skills. It's not about the skill sets that you have, it's about the impact that you can drive.

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

There's a bit of a bias when recruiting people in the gaming industry. It is more preferential to men, usually.

I think it's a self-enforcing loop. I think that there are more men that apply and therefore it continues to build more or have that skewed more towards men. We also know from research

that you tend to hire like minded people. So if you are a male of a certain way of thinking or a certain position, then you hire people that are that are more like you where you don't necessarily see the same bias in women. Women are actually also biased towards women leaders. So it's difficult and you have to be aware on how to break those or in the recruitment process be aware of your own biases so that you can correct those in the interview process.

I can come with an example. We were doing a recruitment process for new design manager.

And there was sort of as a fun introduction to the position with Star Wars as the theme. "Did you grow up playing Star Wars? Would you like to come work with it? Did you grow up loving and playing with Lego Star Wars? Would you like to come be a designer at Lego?" And when I read that, I gave the feedback that that doesn't really include women because women in the 80s didn't typically grow up connected to Star Wars and having that as toys. So in what seems to be just a nice connection to the product and what the company was building was actually alienating females to apply for that job.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

I think there is. I think that there is a confidence difference between men and women going into an interview and also what they ask for. I think men go in and they're more confident in asking above or even extending upon their skill set where women typically will have proven and known to 100% that they're able to do things and then that that's what they will tell that they're able to do and that's the type of position that they'll apply for. And then, yeah, so I think that there's a difference already there. I've had the opportunity of hiring multiple people for this similar role at one point in time, and I had both male and female applicants. I ended up hiring both a man and a woman and they went in asking for different salaries. So the man was asking for a lot more than the female who applied for the position and I made sure that they got the same salary.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?

That's that's a good question in terms of recognition.

I don't find that it's that different. Not to my experience, doesn't mean that it's not different, It's just means that I haven't seen it and I don't have any good examples or been able to pinpoint that specifically.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

In performance evaluations, I never saw that it's any different, but not in terms of appraisal, more in terms of the type of feedback that you get.

Let's say that a woman practices similar or same behaviour as a man, she can be labeled as arrogant or bossy or pushy. They're definitely behaviours that if women acted the same way or took the same approaches as men, would be perceived as something else.

So I think you have to find different ways to act within teams and within the the industry and you have to find a different way of producing results. You can't just copy a man's behaviour because it's just perceived very differently coming from a woman, if that makes sense.

Interview 6 – QA Specialist, 3 years in gaming and 7 months at FRVR

1. How do you perceive the portrayal of women in gaming, both in terms of characters and overall representation? Do you feel gender stereotypes are prevalent?

I feel like depending on the target audience that gender stereotypes have been prevalent but in recent time, i can't say that the problem went away fully, but rather there is more diversity in how they are portrayed and altho some stereotypes are still present, it's not as bad as it used to be. There is definitely a change coming but I can still see women under or badly represented in video games.

2. Have you encountered any challenges or obstacles in your career progression that you believe were influenced by gender stereotypes? Can you provide examples?

The main challenge that I faced in my career progression is the fact that I always got less money than my male counterparts even though I did the same amount of work or sometimes more. But I wouldn't put the blame fully on companies, but also on myself because I was made to think that I should ask for less because my CV didn't check every box, as opposed to males usually asking what they want without caring if they check every box or not.

3. Have you ever experienced or observed any cultural norms or practices within the gaming industry that you believe may be more challenging for women compared to men? Can you provide specific examples?

There is no secret that in a male dominated industry when women join they are expected to perform less or know less than males as in the 90's and early 2000's it wasn't expected or accepted for girls to play video games, it was a boy thing. And i felt this on my skin when i first started at EA, i was lucky to land on a project that i loved and played for years but i was looked

down upon because when they heard that a girl will join the team i would be girly and need help with everything therefore on my onboarding week, i showed that i knew the game very well and and even managed to play it better than some of the other testers at the time, which made me earn their respect even if at first they looked down on me because of stereotypes and preconceived notions.

4. How do you perceive the level of diversity and inclusion within the gaming industry? Are there any particular areas where improvements could be made to create a more inclusive culture for women?

In my opinion, it should not matter how diverse a game is, from voice actors to the actual character design, if a person has talent then they should be cast and if the other design elements are met to make a solid meaningful game, I honestly don't care if they have x, y, z included. I think that talent outways quotas. Even though this should be the case, there is still a lack of diversity in the industry for sure.

5. Are there any challenges or obstacles that you believe may disproportionately impact women's motivation within the industry? Can you provide examples of situations where you or others may have encountered such barriers?

I can't speak for other women but for myself, i feel like i could be very motivated to prove someone wrong but at the same time i could easily be putting myself down for small mistakes which impact me and my performance. The obstacle that i encountered was the impostor syndrome, i witnessed male co-workers perform worse than me and get promotions faster than me, which feed into the impostor syndrome and made me doubt my abilities.

6. In your interactions and conversations with colleagues and peers, have you noticed any differences in the level of motivation or enthusiasm between women and men in the gaming industry? If so, how would you explain these differences?

I think that i am more sensitive towards feedback than males are, since i tend to overthink things over, males from what i've seen just push on, which isn't bad on either side, it's just different thought processes, i think. But I have also noticed that in the past, they put low effort into their tasks and I felt like I had to compensate or do it because of pettiness, which didn't always make me feel better. So I guess this can take away from the motivation of women.

7. How do you perceive the work-family balance within the gaming industry? Do you feel that women face different challenges or expectations compared to men in this regard?

From what i've seen they are about the same. Women might be more inclined to take days off if their kids are sick in Eastern Europe at least, where they are expected to be the house care

takers and men are expected to work. But i know that in the west, this is not as common. But since i don't have a family of my own, i can't say for sure.

8. Are there any particular policies, practices, or support systems in place within your organization to address work-family balance? How effective do you find them, especially in relation to supporting women?

I honestly don't know. I believe the standard maternity policies but I can't confirm.

9. How would you describe the HR practices within the gaming industry? Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in terms of recruitment, hiring, promotions, and other HR processes?

Absolutely not, well, this would depend on the company but i have a past experience where a male coworker used to harass every new hire that was a woman, myself included, HR was informed, and they took no action, they made me join a call with him and we had to apologize to each other even when i didn't do anything wrong. He laughed it out and continued on his merry way causing one of my coworkers to quit since he would not stop harassing. What was incredible in this situation was the fact that all of HR were women and they did nothing about it. As usual, and specially in a male dominated field, men get away with bad behaviour while women need to take it just because that's what's expected.

10. Have you noticed any disparities in terms of compensation, benefits, or opportunities for professional development between women and men in the gaming industry? Can you elaborate on any specific instances or trends you have observed?

Men tend to earn more because they ask for more, as I said above, but for the rest i think it depends on every individual's personality and how they manage situations in order to potentially get those opportunities, men might be more pushy, and women might be more quiet and hope for the best, but then again, this is very subjective.

11. Can you share your overall experience with performance appraisal processes in the gaming industry? Do you feel they are fair and unbiased? Do women get the same recognition as men in the same roles?

I think it fully depends on how the chemistry of a team is, if it's good, then there won't be any unfair performance appraisals, but when the energy is off and some might have disputes then that will be reflected in the performance appraisal especially if one has a better or closer relationship to a higherup. I also feel like men tend to always distinguish other men more.

12. Have you ever witnessed or personally experienced any instances where gender played a role in performance evaluations? If so, could you provide some examples?

The only thing that happened to me was that my team lead, gave me a bad performance review when i was the only tester for up to 6 months, after i begged her to talk to the company and add another member to the team as i was not able to take any time off, and she mentioned in my review that i don't keep the team in mind when i decide i need time off, where i always gave at least 2 weeks notice for one day, since i couldn't take more even if i wanted or needed to. And she gave a coworker a good review even though he was slacking off 3 days out of 5 and i did his job for him.

I don't see why as a women I should work more to have the same benefits as men but unfortunately it still happens.