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Cyberbullying on World of Warcraft: Experiences of Finnish Gamers

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Abstract

We use Internet and play games over the Internet connection more than ever. Many researchers have noticed that cyberbullying on the Internet is increasing and it is a significant problem between young people, also on online games. In this thesis, I focus on a Finnish gamers of Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) named World of Warcraft (WoW), and examine 1) what kind of cyberbullying they have encountered or witnessed, 2) What kind of experiences they have concerning dealing with cyberbullying, and 3) what are their experiences of the support developers, service providers, or other parties are offering to cope and prevent cyberbullying.

The research was carried out in two parts: First, a literature review was carried out in order to identify what kind of research is ongoing concerning cyberbullying in games, as well as support available to gamers experiencing cyberbullying. Then, empirical research was carried out through four semi-structured interviews with Finnish gamers. The data from the interviews was analysed using theory-guided content analysis.

This thesis provides the reader up-to-date information about current situation of cyberbullying on MMOGs in Finland. The results of the thesis suggest that cyberbullying in WoW is very common issue between Finnish gamers. The results of the interviews showed that cyberbullying is a noteworthy issue and should be increasingly taken into account by both players and game providers to reduce it. The thesis also identifies new ways to cyberbully that were not discussed in earlier literature or were not found during the literature review process: steam sniping, racism and swatting.

Racism is a comprehensive concept of cyberbullying act in games but one female participant said that someone called her as gay while another participant talked about racism in games in general level just like it might happen in real life. Stream sniping is way to do cyberbullying where player itself streams his/hers gaming over the Internet in real-time and other people are able to watch it live. On the aspect of WoW, stream sniping can be used as harass meanings. Streamer itself shows private game information to other people (e.g. game server and location in-game) so other players are able to use that private information of the streamer and then kill him/her for example. Swatting is part of live streaming as well where someone calls to the emergency service and does a false reporting of a serious law enforcement emergency about someone, on this case, a streamer and this is called as a criminal harassment tactic. So, because of this false report FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) or equivalent direction raids the streamer's home while the stream is on. These phenomena warrant future research.

Keywords

Cyberbullying, Gaming, Massively Multiplayer Online Games, MMOG, Online safety, Qualitative interviews, Qualitative research, World of Warcraft, WoW

Supervisor

PhD, postdoctoral researcher Heidi Hartikainen

Foreword

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor PhD Heidi Hartikainen for guiding me during this thesis process and University of Oulu. Also, I want to thank Senior Information Specialist Pertti Martinmäki who helped me with the search strings of the literature review and apulaisprofessori Marianne Kinnula who pre-examined this thesis. Of course, I want to thank all participants of the interviews who made this thesis possible to complete and my mom Raija and dad Mikko for the support during the thesis process.

The topic of the thesis is really close to my heart mostly because I have played different kind of games whole my life and I have seen multiple cases of cyberbullying on Massively Multiplayer Online Games myself. I have played MMOGs around 12 years and some examples of these games are Conquer Online 2.0, Dragon Nest Europe, Blade & Soul, and currently Final Fantasy XIV Online.

Ville Valanne

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Abbreviations

AH = Auction House

ARPANET = Advanced Research Projects Agency Network

DPS = Damage Per Second

ENISA = European Network and Information Security Agency

EULA = End-User License Agreement

FBI = Federal Bureau of Investigation

GM = Game Master or Guild Master

IM = Instant Messages

LFR = Looking for Raid

PC = Personal Computer

MMO = Massively Multiplayer Online

MMORPG = Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game

MUD = Multi-User Dungeon

NPC = Non-Player Character

PvE = Player versus Enemy (or Environment)

PvP = Player versus Player

RoC = Rules of Conduct

RPG = Role-Playing Game

ToS = Terms of Services

VoIP = Voice over Internet Protocol

WoW = World of Warcraft

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1. Introduction

We use an ever-increasing amount of our time online - socializing, maintaining relationships, seeking for entertainment and creating content among other things (Kuss, Griffiths, Karila & Billieux 2014; Poushter 2016). With the increase of technology use, also cyberbullying has increased (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor 2006) and it has been recognized as a significant problem between young people (Slonje, Smith & Frisé, 2013). Cyberbullying is defined as a “*willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text*” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007), or “*cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others*” (Tokunaga, 2010). It involves persons who seek indirect or immediate enjoyment or profit through the mistreatment of another individual on the Internet (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

Cyberbullying is an increasingly common issue (Eden, Heiman, & Olenik-Shemesh 2013; Marcum, Higgins, Freiburger, & Ricketts 2014; Von Marées & Petermann 2012), also on massively multiplayer online games (Fryling, Cotler, Rivituso, Mathews & Pratico 2015; Qing 2015; Mark & Ratliffe 2011). The developers and service providers of Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) provide users different ways to prevent harmful acts. For example, in World of Warcraft (WoW), there is a possibility to report a player during gameplay any time because of harassment behavior (Blizzard Entertainment, 2020a) or because of cheating and the game master or admin will inspect the case for a possible punishment which can lead to a cancellation of the account (Blizzard Entertainment, 2020b). Another example is League of Legends Tribunal System where players are able to report other players for inspection (Blackburn & Kwak, 2014; Kwak, Blackburn & Han, 2015). These kind of reporting systems have however also received criticism. For example, Coyne and Gountsidou (2013) argue that these kinds of systems are not an effective way to punish violators because they can always come back with another account.

The thesis explores the experiences of Finnish World of Warcraft players related to cyberbullying. WoW was selected, as it has a large and active gaming community worldwide, with 140 million created accounts (Liao, 2019). WoW is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) which the most popular genre of MMOGs (Chen, Huang & Lei, 2006). In 2014, Forbes magazine reported that there are more than 400 million MMORPG players all over the world (Tassi, 2014). The thesis poses the following research questions:

RQ1. What kind of cyberbullying have Finnish gamers encountered or witnessed in MMOGs/WoW,

RQ2. What kind of experiences do Finnish gamers have concerning dealing with cyberbullying in MMOGs/WoW, and

RQ3. What kind of experiences do Finnish gamers have concerning the support available for gamers who have been victims of cyberbullying?

Qualitative semi-structured interview studies with two male and two female gamers from Finland was carried out in order to answer the posed research questions. Interview data was analysed using theory-guided content analysis and has discussed in light of prior literature to see if there are differences between Finnish experiences and related work.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. First, a review of research related to cyberbullying in MMOs is presented. Next, the methods used in data collection and analysis are described and their limitations addressed. This is followed by presentation of the results. Finally, the results are discussed in the light of previous research and topics for future research identified.

2. Background

This section first presents a history of online games and MMOGs in general, as well as World of Warcraft and WoW gameplay. It then discusses how cyberbullying takes place on MMOGs introduces related research concerning cyberbullying and how to prevent and cope from it. Finally, prevention systems by game developers based on general practices are identified.

2.1 Massively multiplayer online games

Online game is a game which is meant to play over the Internet connection (Adams & Rollings, 2006) and it allows more than one player to play the game in different locations (Lexico, 2020). Those games can be played via multiple devices and platforms (e.g. gaming consoles, smartphones and personal computers) (Childnet International, 2017). Online game can be a simple text-based game or a virtual world game with thousands of players online at the same time with complex graphics (Sardone, Devlin-Scherer & Martinelli, 2008).

Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) were first online games for personal computers (PCs) between 1970s and 1990s where players were able to connect into the game via Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) (Rutter & Bryce, 2006). There are many online games which can be categorized under the MUD but there is only one real MUD named game which Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle created in 1978 (Slator et al., 2007). MUDs are multiplayer real-time virtual world games, and mostly simple text-based games where players were able to read things of other players or non-player characters (NPCs), or view descriptions of rooms or objects (Rutter & Bryce, 2006). NPCs are characters which are not controlled by players, but have advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) giving better and richer gaming experience for the players in the virtual worlds (Meredith, Hussain, & Griffiths, 2009).

Definition of MMOG is a videogame with virtual world where large amount players are able to play at the same time together over the Internet connection (Rice, 2006; Technopedia, n.d.). Role-Playing Game (RPG) means a game where player is able to move as a character and win a game, but deeper definition for RPG is that there is a system that rewards character progression, for example experience points so character gains levels, so the character is getting stronger and RPGs are story-driven with NPCs but without other players (Perez, 2014). MMORPG is a virtual world with large number of players playing together, focusing on a character improvement, player versus enemy (or environment) (PvE), and player versus player (PvP) (Rice 2006). The biggest difference between RPG and MMOG or MMORPG is that on RPG's game world stops when player logs out from the game while MMORPG's world keeps running by a game publisher for other players who are online (Olson, 2018).

Electronic Arts (EA) published Ultima Online game in 1997 and the term MMORPG was introduced at the first time by Richard Garriott, the developer of the Ultima Online (Safko, 2010). Ultima online is one of the oldest MMORPG and it has influences from MUDs with role-playing traditions and computer-controlled people, items and monsters which can be manipulated many different ways in a virtual world (Taxén, 2002) and it is still running after over 20 years from the launch and it has 26 expansions (Ultima Online, n.d.). Other popular MMOG games are South Korean's Lineage in 1998 and Sony Corporation's EverQuest in 1999 (Whang & Kim, 2005). EverQuest is probably the best-

known from these MMORPGs because it has published in 1999 and people are playing it simultaneously (Rutter & Bryce, 2006).

MMORPG is the most popular form of MMOGs nowadays (Chen et al., 2006). In 2014 Forbes magazine reported that there are more than 400 million MMORPG players all over the world (Tassi, 2014). Nardi and Harris (2006) stated that prosocial behaviour is a common occurrence in MMOGs and it is one of the reasons why people are playing MMOGs. Kou, Johansson and Verhagen (2017) explained that some players are proud and happy to help other people and make a community a better place in games.

2.2 World of Warcraft

In the year of 2004, Blizzard Entertainment published MMORPG called WoW (Nardi & Harris, 2006) and it dominated online gaming market with 52.9 percent of all MMOGs with 9 million active subscriptions per month in 2007 (Meredith et al., 2009). In the year of 2013 WoW had estimated 7 million subscribers and its' market share was still 36 percent of all MMORPGs (Lianekhammy & Van De Venne, 2015). In 2015, the reported amount was 5.5 million subscribers (Fernandes, Castanho & Jacobi, 2018), since then Blizzard Entertainment has stopped giving exact numbers of active subscriptions.

WoW is a multi-user RPG in a fantasy context (Fromme & Unger, 2012). The gaming environment of WoW is the world named Azeroth (Nardi & Harris 2006). Players are exploring the game world while completing the game quests, fighting versus many different monsters and bosses, and soloing or playing with other players as a group and interacting with non-player characters (Nardi & Justin, 2006).

At the beginning of the game, player must choose Alliance or Horde side. Players of Alliance look like humans or dwarves while Horde players look like trolls or hordes. Alliance side players can join in the guilds with other same side Alliance players, speak, mail and group with each other while those actions are not possible with Horde side players. For example, if an Alliance side player sees a Horde side player, typed text in the chat, it is not possible to read it because it is not understandable but if a player has been playing long time enough they are able to understand somehow that "language" because it is more or less like a real language which is not understandable before you learn it. (Corneliussen & Rettberg, 2008; Nardi & Justin, 2006.)

Players are free to choose one of many different classes like mages, priests and warriors (Nardi & Justin, 2006). Anyways, some of the classes are limited to particular races, Alliance or Horde. Form of the party of players is mostly formed with tank, healer and damage dealer or damage per second (DPS) classes. Tank is heavily geared class and its purpose is to shield the team members from enemy attacks while healer class restores all health which is lost in a combat. DPS class is more or less light armoured class which purpose is damage dealing and killing the monsters. (Yee, Ducheneaut, Nelson & Likarish, 2011.) All of those classes are needed for successful group formation in harder scenarios of the game (Bergstrom, Jenson & de Castell, 2012). Yee et al. (2011) stated that females play as supporting classes for example healers while males play as defending classes for example tank. As well as Bergstrom et al. (2012) agreed with it but argued that it is not same with novice and expert players.

Classes are able to level up with experience points you can gain from the monsters you kill and from the quests you complete (Nardi & Justin, 2006). Most of those quests are given by NPCs (Blizzard Entertainment, n.d.a). Character levelling is called as PvE when

monsters of the game are killed for experience points or for items while there is a possibility to fight versus other players, which is called as PvP (Yee et al., 2011). More levels the class gets, more various skills and talents the class is able to learn. Every class can have two different primary professions which can be mining, skinning, jewel crafting, blacksmithing, or tailoring. The items you are able to get with those primary professions are able to use for many purposes, for example, sell them to other players to gain in-game currency, gold. Auction House (AH) is the place where those items can be sold to other players for gold. (Nardi & Justin, 2006.)

WoW can be played alone (e.g. levelling a character) but harder content is not possible to solo because it is meant to complete as a group. Those places where players need to group up with other players are called dungeons. The dungeons are also known as instances because the term “instance” comes from a unique copied place where there is no other players or groups interfering each other. A typical dungeon is meant for five players’ group. Some of the dungeons need more than five players and those are called raids and the raids can need 40 players to succeed (Meredith et al., 2009). Instance dungeons are the most difficult content on WoW but the most rewarding on loot wise as well. (Blizzard Entertainment, n.d.b; Bardzell, Bardzell, Pace, & Reed, 2008). Loot means gold and item drops from the killed monsters (Meredith et al., 2009).

Based on Herodotou (2010) online survey, players of WoW are focusing on social aspects or achievement progress while playing. Players who are interested in socializing with other players are not that much interested in competition of the game and the other way round. Anyways, the relationships in the game were found to be biggest motivation to play WoW.

2.3 Cyberbullying definition and categories

Cyberbullying can be defined as a “*willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text*” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007) and cyberbullying occurs in online games, phone calls, social networks, websites e-mails, instant messages (IM), personal blogs and websites or on digital messages (e.g. pictures and videos) (Abbasi, Naseem, Shamim and Qureshi 2018; Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2012). Cyberbullying involves persons who seek indirect or immediate enjoyment or profit through the mistreatment of another individual on the Internet (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007), the goal of the bully is therefore to harm the victim (Kiriakidis & Kavoura, 2010; Tokunaga, 2010).

Li (2007) stated that cyberbullying is a form of traditional bullying but it happens with 21st-century technologies. Bullying and cyberbullying have similar forms and difference between them is that traditional bullying happens mostly face-to-face while cyberbullying happens online (Donegan, 2012). While cyberbullying, the suspect can hide his or her personal identity and be anonymous. The anonymity afforded by the Internet makes it possible to say even more mean and harass things compared to traditional bullying. (Donegan, 2012.) Different types of cyberbullying acts, as defined by Willard (2007), are described below.

- *Flaming*: Happens mostly in chats, social networks, forum posts, or in games. Cyberbully uses rude or vulgar language and threats other Internet users with them. Flaming is mostly short-lived and those arguments do not cause long aggressions between the participants.
- *Harassment*: Repeatedly sending harassing messages to the victim. Once the harassment reaches a certain level, it can be a crime on some jurisdictions.

- *Denigration*: “*Denigration is speech about a target that is harmful, untrue, or cruel*”. Meaning of that is to harm the reputation of the targeted person, and that kind of activity contains rumours and gossip or false information.
- *Impersonation*: Impersonation means that someone is using, for example, someone’s personal social network or gaming account and sending scathing messages or pictures under other person’s identity.
- *Outing*: Sending someone’s personal and very classified information or pictures into a public web page.
- *Trickery*: This is part of *Outing*. Cyberbully makes target to believe the information the target sends to the cyberbully stays private but then cyberbully publishes it.
- *Exclusion*: Member of the group, for example guild member or member of the raid party, gets removed from the group because of group or someone in the group. This is can happen in an online gaming environment, or any password-protected communication environment. “*The emotional impact of exclusion can be intense*” and “*constitutes ultimate rejection*”.
- *Cyberstalking*: Difference between *cyberstalking* and harassment is not clear but it is repeat messaging mean or harmful messages to another person. Those messages can be extremely offensive. Direct *cyberstalking* mostly needs some kind of direct messaging system.
- *Cyberthreats*: Can be sorted on two different threats; direct threats and distressing material. Direct threats are more or less intent to hurt someone. It contains an information of planned incident, for example a suicide. Distressing material is a material which in online can set some clues that someone may hurt someone or do self-harm to himself or herself.
- *Is it real?*: It can start from a stupid joke someone says or posts somewhere and it starts to spread and becomes a bigger issue than it was meant at the beginning. This kind of issues are really hard to recognise if they are real cases or just jokes. (Willard, 2007, p. 5-15.)

Varjas, Talley, Meyers, Parris, and Cutts (2010) found out that motives of cyberbullying can be characterized on external and internal matters. Internal matters are retaliation, boredom, envy, trying out a new personality or redirecting own feelings. External matters are - no consequences, non-confrontational between tormentor and victim or the victim was somehow different in appearance (e.g. handicapped) (Varjas et al., 2010). Males’ main motive of cyberbullying other people is to make themselves socially strong or weaken others while namelessness and anonymity are females’ main motive for cyberbullying (Abbasi et al., 2018).

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) researched that some people who have cyberbullied someone have been victims of traditional bullying and are doing it as a compensation. Vandebosch and van Cleemput (2008) did not find connection between those but Smith et al. (2008) found some influences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying and said that victims of traditional bullying can be victims of cyberbullying as well.

Like traditional bullying, cyberbullying can last a lifetime (Kowalski et al., 2012). Many researchers are stating that cyberbullying causes serious problems for mental health (Srabstein, Berkman & Pyntikova, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004) for example, problems with school, or school failure, or even a suicide (Chibbaro 2007; Mason, 2008). Mitchell, Ybarra and Finkelhor (2007) found out that cyberbullying has caused many different problems like substance and alcohol problems, eating and self-injury problems, and social anxiety and depression problems. Kowalski and Felina (2011) reported that

cyberbullying in virtual worlds can cause psychological consequences (e.g. depression and anxiety) to the victims and explained that cyber-bullies have been bullied as well before and that is why they are bullying the others now for a compensation and they are getting relief for themselves to make others feel the same. That is why everyone should understand consequences of cyberbullying which can cause litigation and criminal prosecution (Beale & Hall, 2007).

2.4 Categories of cyberbullying specific to MMOGs

Cyberbullying on online activities (e.g. forums or social media) and on MMOGs have similar forms but many different perceptions depending on how and what is the situation where it is happening. That is why it is good to open concepts of cyberbullying on MMOGs. The following listing is gathered from prior literature of cyberbullying.

Ganking is one example of cyberbullying and it means that in MMOGs someone is attacking other player all in sudden without telling about it forehand, or attacking other player while the targeted player is in combat with someone else or fighting against non-player character already (e.g. monsters), or the attacker has a high-level advantage against lower level player (ENISA, 2008). Another example of cyberbullying in online games is an account theft where tormentor steals victims accounts and passwords for own benefits. In MMOGs, accounts are related to valuable virtual money. Account theft is illegal and violates games' accepted forms. (Teng, Tseng, Chen & Wu, 2012; ENISA, 2008.)

Griefing is a type of cyberbullying and its definition is that someone in the game is interrupting someone's gaming experience but it can be a form of cheating as well which gives a cheater a big advantage over other players, or scamming other players' items in game (ENISA, 2008; Rubin & Camm, 2013). Lin and Sun (2005) did a qualitative study with interviews and analyzed forum posts and reports and found out that term griefing was connected into cheating, stealing, kill stealing (ENISA, 2008; Achterbosch, Miller, & Vamplew, 2013), killing other players, and insulting other players on online games. Achterbosch et al. (2013) and ENISA (2008) called stealing (e.g. items) as a ninja looting where someone is taking items from enemy corpses that they should not be taking. Schell (2008) stated on *The Art of Game Design* book that the term griefing with same ways with one new concept which is that a griefer's greatest joy is to find loopholes in the games which basically means that they are trying to find some bugs or glitches in the game to let them to do something they should not be able to do and Achterbosch et al. (2013) told that these kind of acts are giving advantages for its user during gameplay. Paul, Bowman and Banks (2015) have researched a connection of the enjoyment of gaming and griefing and found out that some players are getting an enjoyment from harassing other players' gaming experience and that is why they are doing it while other players are enjoying other things in the game, and Teng, Tseng, Chen and Wu (2012) researched that enjoyment of profanity is part of some players' enjoyment because that way they can release real life pressures.

Foo and Koivisto (2004) categorized griefing in four sections which are harassment, power imposition, scamming and greedy playstyle.

- *Harassment* is defined as an act which provokes other players' emotional feelings in a negative way. Trolling is part of harassment and its meaning is provoking other people in a game or a website (Foo & Koivisto, 2004).
- *Power imposition* means that players who are stronger than the others are killing weaker players in game just because they can, or preventing weaker players to

reach achievements (Foo & Koivisto, 2004) or just killing them for fun (Lin & Sun, 2005; Achterbosch et al., 2013) which is part of corpse camping where stronger player is killing weaker player multiple times in the same place without letting the player escape (Achterbosch et al., 2013).

- *Scamming* can happen in a game or in a real world. The main idea of it is that a scammer tries to make good deals in his or her point of view to gain virtual world or real-world benefits from other players' items or gaming accounts (Foo & Koivisto, 2004).
- In *greedy playstyle* players are playing for their own benefits without caring other players' needs. (Foo & Koivisto, 2004; Schell, 2008).

Social exclusion: While socializing in multiplayer games is increasing quality of gaming experience, there is a possibility to get socially excluded by other players. This decreases a feeling of be part of community and it increases hostile acts which cause aggressive behavior. (DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister, 2009.) Social exclusion can happen on MMO games many different ways, for example: not picked for a raiding party, or kicked out from the guild, or other players are not waiting you before they start the fight. These kind of exclusion manners can cause several harmful implications. These are that victim of social exclusion can start to feel normally neutral social situations or texts in a hostile manner the during gameplay which easier hurts victim's feelings. These effects can cause worse gaming performance of the victim and it also affects negatively in a gaming experience on MMOGs. (Birk et al., 2016.)

Hostile behavior can be verbal and behavioral. In verbal behavior players are insulting other players with mean words while in behavioral acting players are for example stealing other players monsters by killing them (Birk et al., 2016; Achterbosch et al., 2013) or killing another player's quest NPCs without getting any advantages from it (ENISA, 2008). ENISA (2008) stated that verbal harassment in MMORPGs can happen in in-game chat, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) (e.g. Skype or Discord), in images which are posted in the chat channels, and in-game links which contain offensive material (e.g. sexual, abusive and racist). Reputation related harassment is another class of threats in online gaming which includes stealing other player's account and sending offensive material through it or cheating the ones account. These actions may damage the victim's reputation and can cause cancellation of the account by a game developer, or cause a rejecting from the guild.

Rest of the cyberbullying acts are part of some kind of disruptions which can happen while playing. These acts are *spamming* where someone is repeatedly sending same message in in-game chat, or *blocking* where someone is blocking the path of other players or obstructing view of items by standing on them so other players are not able to collect them. Also, *interrupting group's* gaming experience, or *interrupting in-game events*, or *interrupting other players' role-playing* for purpose are called as cyberbullying behavior. (Achterbosch et al., 2013.)

2.5 Frequency of cyberbullying in MMOG's

As Ballard and Welch (2017) stated that 52 percent of MMORPG players reported that they have been cyberbullied and 35 percent said that they have been tormentors of cyberbullying. Over half of participants said that they have faced profanity and name-calling. Exclusion and sexual harassment had faced both over 20 percent of participants. Threatening, sexual harassment, kicking out from a guild and lies were reported cause of cyberbullying from ten percent of participants. Conclusion of their findings were that

males are cyberbullying more than females, game ranking is the biggest reason for cyberbullying, and anonymity is one reason for cyberbullying which has to be taken into account. Gender related harassment against women were reported by 22 percent of participants (e.g. sexualized comments) while 23 percent of the participants reported that they were faced comments about women are lacking skills in the game and 53 percent of responders said that negative comments have affected on their gaming experience negatively (Shaer, Westendorf, Knouf & Pederson, 2017). These results vary a lot depending on who are participants and what kinds of questions are asked.

Li and Pustaka (2017) reported on their research that over half of the participants of the survey have been part of cyberbullying as a tormentor or a victim and 70 percent of them have seen cyberbullying in games. The main genres of the games where cyberbullying takes place are sports, action and role-playing games. Many participants of their survey said that they would like to play the games which have anti-cyberbullying elements. International Data Corporation (IDC) has done an online survey in 2008 and announced that a cyberbullying against weaker players is the biggest problem that causes a bad gaming experience in online games. From all responders more than 64 percent said that cyberbullying against new or weak players decreases enjoyment of online gaming. At the same time, most of players said that social aspects in online games are the most important things and over 50 percent of players reported that meeting other players online is important. (Torres, 2008.) Some interviewees resulted that third-party tools like DPS meter, which calculates every group members' dealt damage, can cause cyberbullying in the raid party if someone's damage is lower than other party members or just lower than expected (Kelly, Watts & Payne, 2016). ENISA (2008) stated that reporting systems can be used for abusing purposes. These acts are, for example, false reports when a player or a group of party members are doing false reporting about other player which can cause an inspection by admin of the game.

2.6 Cyberbullying prevention and coping

On this section, cyberbullying prevention and coping strategies are discussed. First it explores cyberbullying prevention campaigns and curricular programs on school environments that aim at prevention of cyberbullying in general. This is followed by introduction of coping strategies that people that have experienced cyberbullying. Finally, the section explain what kind of action is currently being taken to prevent cyberbullying on MMOGs.

2.6.1 Prevention strategies

Cyberbullying prevention is usually discussed and researched related to children and school environments. Snakenborg, Van Acker and Gable (2011) stated that there are some approaches for preventing cyberbullying by schools, governments, families and students. Those approaches are sorted in the three different categories:

- Controlling Internet and media usage with laws, rules, and politics
- Teach Internet users (e.g. children and youth) with curricular programs how to prevent cyberbullying and consequences of cyberbullying
- Technical prevention systems to minimize cyberbullying

Some of those curricular programs are iSAFE Internet Safety Program (1998), Lets Fight It Together: We All Can Do to Prevent Cyberbullying (2007), Cyber Bullying: A

Prevention Curriculum (2008), Sticks and Stones: Cyberbullying (2009) (Snakenborg et al., 2011), and the KiVa (Kiusaamisen Vastainen tai Kiusaamista Vastustava) antibullying program (2009) (Salmivalli, Poskiparta, Ahtola & Haataja, 2013). For example, Google has a feature where parents can ask to delete some unwanted information but youngster has to be 13-year old or younger because then it breaks Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. There are many different programs available for parents where they can block and filter unwanted words, web sites, or other specific categories. This kind of programs are Cyber Bullying Prevention Engine by NetBox Blue or Child-Friendly Internet by PureSight. Those programs can block automatically unwanted keywords and those no need to review every single communication which violates the added rules. (Snakenborg et al., 2011.) According to Mason (2008), most of the cyberbullying cases are happening from home computer, but Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) stated that some of them happen from other locations like public library and on these cases, programs are providing only a limited protection.

Lee, Lee, Park and Han (2018) have designed a system which detects abusive text and removes violent words but because of slang words it can be really difficult or remove all harass words at once. Their system is self-learning and it is filtering the words which are part of blacklists, edit-distance metrics, mixed languages, punctuations, words with special characters, abbreviations, and n-grams. They expect that the system helps different services (e.g. social networking and online games) to improve existing word detection systems.

2.6.2 Cyberbullying prevention in MMOGs

There are some rules which are based on National Law and how game developers are trying to prevent it with EULA and ToS while there are some in-game prevention strategies like reporting systems developed by developers but those systems can be used as cyberbullying purposes as well.

Rules of conduct. Many if not all MMORPGs have the Rules of Conduct (RoC) which is part of the Terms of Services (ToS) which players have to agree when they start to play a game. Many of those rules are prohibiting unkind acts because those acts are restricting enjoyment of players' gameplay. (Rubin & Camm, 2013.)

EULA (End-User License Agreement): EULA is used by many service providers of the game as a main tool of governance. When the players start to install and play the game for the first time, they have to accept the terms of EULA and breaking the rules can cause the cancellation of the account. (ENISA, 2008.) EULA has many different rules depending on the game but the most important ones are griefing and cheating on this thesis' point of view. There can be separate set of rules under the community guidelines as well. Also, EULA has to include consequences of breaking these rules. (ENISA, 2008.) European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) stated in 2008 that cheating in MMOGs is a threat against social experience in MMOGs. Every MMORPGs operate under the national law and EULA operates under it.

Reporting systems: Many games also implement different kinds of reporting systems. In League of Legends (LoL), there are a player reporting system called The LoL Tribunal System which can be used after end of the match. The system is a crowdsourcing system which means that players who have gotten reported few hundred times will be inspected by expert players which are able to choose if the offender should be punished or not. Players are able to report other players by several categories of toxic playing style

(Blackburn & Kwak, 2014; Kwak et al., 2015.) Toxic playing style basically means AFKing (away from keyboard) or leaving the match before it has ended, offensive language or verbal abuse against the other players, negative attitude, unsuitable names, and so on. (Blackburn & Kwak, 2014; Kwak et al., 2015.) Coyne and Gountsidou (2013) argued on their book that Tribunal System is not so effective way to punish violators because they can always come back with another account. In WoW, there is a possibility to report a player during gameplay any time because of harassment behavior (Blizzard, 2020a) or cheating and the game master will inspect the case for possible punishment (Blizzard, 2020b).

2.6.3 Coping strategies

Victims of cyberbullying have reported some strategies how to cope and prevent cyberbullying. These can be divided into direct problem solving, positive cognitive restructuring, distraction avoidance, and support seeking (Michikyan, Lozada, Weidenbenner & Tynes, 2014). Concrete actions involve blocking unwanted persons online, changing usernames, or passwords, or even phone numbers (Slonje et al., 2013). The most effective way to prevent cyberbullying is blocking harassing messages from the tormentor (Aricak et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2008).

There is a basic procedure for people who are targeted by a cyberbully. First, stop the communication with a tormentor. Second, save the material for further investigation. Third, block the tormentor. And last, tell to someone about it. (Snakenborg et al., 2011.) Juvonen and Gross (2008) have researched that 90 percent of responders who had faced cyberbullying failed to report a tormentor to someone and 50 percent of responders said that they had to deal with it alone. This is backed up by other research which suggest a pretty low number of victims are trying to find help from somebody (e.g. friend, parent or teacher) to make cyberbullying to stop (Smith et al., 2008; Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008) but Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011) found strong connection between help seeking and cyberbullying ending. Some responders of the Dehue et al. (2008) survey responded that they have even cyberbullied back or told them to stop cyberbullying (Aricak et.al., 2008). All responders were not so optimistic and said there is no way to stop cyberbullying (Slonje et al., 2013). Kou et al. (2017) discovered that toxic behaviour is a part of every players' own experience rather than a community issue. Some of the participants said that one of the toxic behaviour's coping strategy is to be more toxic back with even more offensive language.

3. Methods

In this chapter I will first introduce qualitative research approach and why it has been chosen for this thesis purposes. I will also explain how I carried out the literature review for this thesis, and how I prepared and conducted semi-structured interviews. I am also discussing about ethical issues related to the interview process and lastly how I analysed the interviews.

The purpose of the initial literature review was to gain an understanding what kind of research is currently ongoing concerning cyberbullying in online games, and to narrow out research questions. The literature review also helped to prepare the interview questions for the empirical part of this research that help get a richer understanding about the experiences of gamers in Finland concerning cyberbullying in WoW.

3.1 Qualitative research approach

This research was carried out using the qualitative research approach because qualitative research as a technique is meant to explore a human behaviour and reasons why something happens as well as how something happens (Given, 2008). Interviews are based on interviewees' personal experiences which is one of the aims of qualitative research and qualitative research approach tries to understand the research questions. A field research is one qualitative data collecting technique which means that researcher conducts case studies between small group of people (Neuman, 2014) and data analysing of the qualitative interviews is time-consuming so that is why many researchers interviews only small group of people (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). On this case, it is small group of WoW players in Finland.

Qualitative research answers to questions *why* or *how* something happens while quantitative research answers to questions *who* or *what* (Given, 2008; Lune & Berg, 2016). For this thesis purposes, we are more interested *how* cyberbullying is happening and *why* this kind of cases interviewees have faced in MMO games, and quantitative research approach seeks mathematical evidences for the research questions (Given, 2008), which is not needed because the general idea of the thesis is figure out how gamers in Finland are facing cyberbullying and do the experiences differ from prior literature. Qualitative research approach was chosen for this thesis because interviewing participants with open-ended questions is the best way to get information and more specifically try to find something new for the research questions.

3.2 Literature review

Literature review is an important part of this thesis to find support for the research questions, identify the material which is useful based on the topic, build an understanding about the terms and theoretical concepts about the research area, producing reference list of sources which are used, find a correct research methods which can be useful, and for analyzing and understanding the results. (Rowley & Slack 2004.)

The literature review was conducted by following the guidelines of literature review process by Rowley and Slack (2004). The process consists of evaluating information sources, searching and locating information sources, developing conceptual frameworks

and mind mapping, and writing a literature review (Rowley & Slack 2004). There are five steps of writing the literature review after the prior literature has been collected:

1. Reading the material that has been collected and grouping them in the sets with similar themes.
2. Making notes of key themes and messages of the material. It is important to note the sources so it is easier to cite them later.
3. Parsing the literature review the way that the documents are sorted by the key themes.
4. Writing the literature review can start after material is resolved. All relevant material can be gathered together and writing of the literature review can start.
5. Building a reference list is an ongoing process and it lasts from the beginning of the review until the end. It is a list of all used references which have used in the text, and the list should be updated all the time when some cites have used. (Rowley & Slack 2004.)

In my work, a review of academic research articles was carried out to get one big picture what kind of research has been done before concerning cyberbullying in massively multiplayer online games in order to identify different categories of cyberbullying and the support that is offered to those who experience it. For example, from the gaming community, peers, or game developers. First, prior literature about cyberbullying will be gathered. Second, prior literature about WoW and cyberbullying on it and what kind of support is offered for people who have experienced bullying in WoW.

Prior literature about cyberbullying on MMO games was gathered from Scopus, Ebsco, ProQuest, Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) databases and from relevant web pages and news between years 2010-2019 because online gaming is an emerging trend and that is why cyberbullying on online games is increasing issue. Starting year was set as 2010 because online gaming is evolving all the time so older information is not needed for this thesis purpose. Google Scholar is used only if those databases I mentioned above are not giving enough relevant articles.

The literature review process started from Oulu University library with help of information specialist. We conducted several search strings with words "Online Game", "Online Playing", "MMORPG", MMOG "World of Warcraft", "Bullying", "Harassment", "Tormenting", "Mobbing", "Cyberbullying Behaviour", "Help" and "Peer Support". The search strings we used are done with Boolean operators because this is how you are able to make more accurate searches on the databases. Here is one example of search string which were used: "Massive Multiplayer Online Game" AND "World of Warcraft" AND (Bullying OR Harassment OR tormenting OR mobbing) where Boolean operator AND means that MMOG and WoW has to be found from the search with at least one other word which is under parenthesis. The program named Zotero - personal research assistant has been used while gathering relevant papers because it is easy to use and fast to categorize and control the papers in the same place.

All those five databases which were mentioned above, without Google Scholar, gave around 300 hits with used search strings between years of 2010-2019. First of all, I read abstract, introduction, discussion and sections of the all articles and then chose if those were relevant for the topic of the thesis. Many of those databases had same papers with each other so that little bit helped the literature review process. Scopus had highest amount of papers which were not free to read with some foreign language papers while ProQuest had lowest amount of hits with one relevant paper only. Results of IEEE were

based on relationship factors with the WoW mostly with 8 hits and one book which was not free to read. At the end of literature review, 86 of the papers were chosen as relevant articles. During the literature review process, some of the articles had really interesting references which were out of timescale but I still wanted to use some of them on this thesis.

Some findings which came up during the literature review were that Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin have researched cyberbullying the most, over 10 years. Big amount of the studies was focused on cyberbullying in school environment rather than in games. Researchers have used questionnaires rather than interviews and Mancilla-Caceres, Pu, Amir and Espelage (2012) stated that traditional way to research cyberbullying is by using surveys but those are not giving specific information about cyberbullying without causing an exhaustion to the participants. There were more qualitative than quantitative research methods used on those papers.

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Data which is collected from interviews is called the primary data because it has been collected from first-hand-experience and it is not published anywhere before. Advantages of the primary data are that there is no doubt of quality of data and the data is specific for the study. Main purpose of primary data is that it is unique information for own study and it is classified until it is published. (Kabir, 2016.)

Interviews as a method can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured and purpose of those are to ask questions and get answers for them. Interviewing can be carried out as face-to-face, or individual, or face-to-face interviewing with a group of people but interviews can be conducted via electronic devices (e.g. smartphones or computers) as well. (Kabir, 2016.) Semi-structured interview as a method has been chosen for this thesis because the general idea of semi-structured interviews are open-ended discussion and this way new ideas and views can be brought up during the interview. Data from semi-structured interviews is qualitative because it is collected from interviewees who have participated on the interview and it contains words and sentences, and meaning of those “guided conversations” is to get data of responders’ lives and motivations, as well as to see things on responder’s point of view (Blee & Taylor, 2002, In Kabir 2016).

In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer uses an interview guide developed before the interviews and it includes a list of questions and topics in particular order and those will be asked during the interview. During the interview, the interviewer will follow a structure of the interview guide but can stray from it when it is appropriate, for example if the interviewer finds out something interesting or interviewee says something interesting which is not part of the questions. (Kabir, 2016.)

There is no one good and correct way to formulate questions for every interview (Dunn, 2005) and every interview needs its own preparation and practice (Valentine, 2005). Every researcher has to have full knowledge of the topic before they can work out with list of questions for interviews (Longhurst, 2003). Mostly researchers start the interviews with a question which makes participant feel comfort and combination of different kind of question can be effective way to get information but difficult and provoking questions are better leave in the end of the interview (Longhurst, 2003). Based on Longhurst (2003) list of questions, many questions start with a sentence which is based on a fact (e.g. “*In New Zealand there is a strong tradition of spending time at the beach.*”) and continues

with pretty simple question (e.g. “*Do you go to the beach?*”) and a focusable question follows after that (e.g. Explain or “*What is it like for you at the beach?*”).

The questions used in this study were based on prior literature and main idea of the questions for this thesis were that the questions of basic information are asked first like gender and age so those can be used on result part of the thesis to specify who has said something but it is still reported anonymously. Second, I wanted to figure out how much interviewees are spending time on the Internet and how many hours they are playing games. Cyberbullying and support section were formulated using prior literature to see if there are similar results or do the results differ from prior literature. Coping strategy and peer support questions are in the end of interview to see what kind of prevent and coping strategies are available on WoW and what kind of peer support systems (e.g. websites) exist. Some of the articles had some questionnaires about cyberbullying as appendixes so few of the questions are formulated from those but since semi-structured interviews are open-ended, only basic information questions are accurate. As Longhurst (2003) said that questions will start with a sentence which is based on a fact and then follows the question with focusing question. Structure of the interviews can be found as appendix A in Finnish and as appendix B in English.

Benefits of semi-structured interviews are that interviewer can prepare questions beforehand which gives a good appear competent during the interview. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended so any interviewee is free to talk in their own terms. Normally, the interviewer has a paper-based -guidelines for the interviews but since semi-structured interviews are open-ended, it is best to record interviews for further analysis. Recording is a good way to capture all data and it decreases need of taking notes which makes focusing on interviewing itself easier. (Kabir, 2016.).

The interviews were held in Finnish language and recorded using Levono Nerve Center’s video and voice capturing software. Interviewees were asked if they can be recorded. The interviews were held in Discord which is a chatting and voice chatting software and very popular among gamers nowadays. During the interviews, all questions were asked like they were written, however, the interviewees were encouraged to give informative answers rather than short and cursory answers, by encouraging them with short words while he/she was answering the question. If the answer was short or unclear, the interviewees were asked more information/clarification. At the end of interview, the interviewees were thanked, and explained how the results of the interviews will be analyzed and published.

3.4 Participant selection

This is the empirical part of the research and selecting participants for interviews is really important event and participants are mostly chosen because of their own experience related to topic (Longhurst, 2003). There are different ways to recruit participants for interviews (e.g. telephone or e-mail) but there can be really high refusal rate (Longhurst, 2003) and this is why Krueger (2014) refers that it should be good way to recruit people on-site or on location to get participants easier. The main idea of the participant selection is that the writer of the thesis is part of big online gaming community on Discord so participants are selected from there. Since many of the articles were focused on cyberbullying victimization between females or males or both of them, it is good that I got female and male gamers for the interviews.

Empirical research data from the interviews were conducted with two males and two females from Discord channels where I have been for a long time. This kind of participant selection is called as a convenience sampling. Based on Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), Convenience sampling, which is also called as Haphazard or Accidental sampling, is nonrandom sampling technique which means that targeted people fulfill certain practical criteria. Examples of these criteria are availability, geographical proximity, or readiness and willingness to participate.

Some of the possible participants did not want to take part of this kind of interviews related to the topic although, they knew beforehand all gathered data will be handled anonymously but it is totally acceptable. At the end of participant recruiting, I got two males and two females for the interviews. All participants who took part on the interviews were somewhat compeer to me so the interview moments were pretty relaxed which is clearly connected into the results the participants gave.

Respecting anonymity in the results section, names of the participants are not disclosed but are abbreviated as F1, F2, M1 and M2 in accordance with good ethical practice where first letter stands for a genre and a number stands for the order of the interviewer.

Table 1. Basic information of the interviewees.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Education
M1	Male	32	Bachelor's degree
M2	Male	32	Upper secondary level
F1	Female	30	Bachelor's degree
F2	Female	32	Upper secondary level

3.5 Ethical issues related to interview studies

When interviews are recorded and data gathered, there are two very important ethical issues which are anonymity and confidentiality because people who are participated into the interviews needs to be sure that the all data is in the safe place and participants stay anonymous if they want so (Longhurst, 2003). It is good to notice that participants can withdraw from the interview whenever they want and they are provided to get results of the research after the research is completed (Longhurst, 2003). There are many good web pages about principles of research ethics which are expressing what has to be done and what is good to know before the interviews:

- Minimizing the risk of harm: Physical or, psychological or, social or, financial harm.
- Deliver and obtain back informed consent: This consent must include why participant is needed for an interview and what the research requires from them, purpose of the research, used methods, and outcomes of the research. (Lærd Dissertation, n.d.)

Before the interviews, every interviewee got Scientific Research Privacy Statement to see and understand rules and policies how the data will be gathered and handled on this thesis. Same email included Consent Form which participants had to sign before the interviews. Scientific Research Privacy Statement contains information about the research and how

the recordings and other data will be used during the thesis process, how the data will be stored, and what rights participants have. Scientific Research Privacy Statement is based on National Law of European Union general data protection regulation.

3.6 Data analysis

Used data analysis method for semi-structured interviews depends on a goal of the research, formulated questions, and methodological approach but research equipment and how much time is available depends on it as well (Schmidt, 2004). As Kowal and O'connell (2004) stated, analysis of conversations (e.g. recordings) starts with a transcribing where conversations will be put into written form and colloquial expressions will be changed into literary language, for example 'dunno' will be changed into 'do not know' but still keep the data accurate as possible.

The interviews have held in Finnish language and I translated the records into English language accurate as possible. The interview data was analyzed using thematic content analysis. Based on Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002) book, thematic content analysis is needed when important meanings of the records or texts need to be highlighted. The aim is to obtain concise and general description of the subject without losing relevant information. Meaning of the thematic content analysis is to find similarities and differences in the text and to describe them verbally.

There are three different types of content analysis which are:

- 1) Data-driven content analysis where the material highlights are raised up regardless of what they are and how they are related to prior literature.
- 2) Theory-based content analysis where the theory guides the analysis from the beginning to the end which means that the material is analyzed based on prior literature to find out similarities between material and prior literature.
- 3) Theory-guided content analysis where analysis is guided by theory and material but in such a way that the analysis is done on the basis of data, but in the end the observations made on the basis of the data and then tied to theory.
(Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002.)

Schmidt (2004) listed analysis of semi-structured interviews into few stages. First stage is repeated reading of the material where the data is transformed into written form already and research questions and researcher's theoretical prior knowledge are guiding the reading process. Main idea is not to find familiarities between recordings but it might help on later stages. On the second stage written forms are categorized into individual categories, for example same topics are gathered under the one category where it fits the best (e.g. 'F1 and M2 said that cyberbullying against women is more common than against males'). Third stage is called detailed case interpretations where is possible to discover something new what is not mentioned before and selected transcripts are interpreted to particular research question.

Theory-guided content analysis has used during the material analysis phase because the main idea is not only to find similarities between the data and prior literature but to find something what is not mentioned before on prior literature. At the beginning, I translated and wrote down the records in English and then I categorized all answers of the participants under the specific questions so I was able to see overview of them and then analyzed all of them at the same time. It is good to mention that, as it was said during the

interview, I needed some clarification for few things (e.g. concepts) what participants said during the interviews so I emailed them and got a statement back.

4. Results

In this section, I will first present the results of the interviews concerning internet use, gaming habits and types of cyberbullying acts what interviewees have witnessed. This is followed by victimization and perpetration experiences of Finnish gamers. Finally, coping strategies, peer support and cyberbullying prevention results are shown. Discussion based on these results is offered in the following section.

4.1 Internet use and gaming habits

All interviewees were between 30-32 years old. F1 and M1 have completed bachelor's degree and M2 and F2 have completed upper secondary level education. Internet usage varies from one to 12 hours per day which includes all kind of Internet usage (e.g. watching Netflix, reading News, or playing games over the Internet connection). F2 said that she has reduced use of social media nowadays and there are days when she is not using social media at all but weekly average is 6 to 8 hours per day. F1 and M2 are spending their time on the Internet over 10 hours per day.

"My Internet usage varies a lot if I have a job or something but let's say my usage of the Internet is four to 12 hours per day." (M1, 32)

The responders are spending their time playing games from one to eight hours per day. M2 said that he does not have much time to play because of work so he plays around one hour per day.

"At the moment, I play the games very little... Before I played several hours (per day) but current average could be around one hour per day if even that." (M2, 32)

The responders are playing many different kinds of games, for example arcade, MMO, survival, RPG, strategy, and FPS-games. F1 listed MMO and RPG as favorite genres but she is playing arcade and survival games as well. F2 is playing WoW mostly but she mentioned FPS games, like Overwatch, which she has played. M1 have played FPS games because of its' competitive feeling and multiplayer reasons and strategy games for example because of in-game achievements.

"I think that FPS games are easiest to define... I say that those (FPS-games) are competitive and I have a competitive mind... So that is why, I have played them because those (FPS-games) can give competitive feeling... I think I have played MMO-games because of fantasy vibes and probably because after I got more into it, for community because I did not play them (MMO-games) alone in the end so, community (of the game) was important and interesting thing. It (WoW Classic¹) still had same community feelings as WoW Retail² like we did things together and it was the coolest thing on it." (M1, 32)

¹ Wow Classic is original version of WoW which was released in 2004 before any expansions but Blizzard Entertainment relaunched it in 2019.

² Wow Retail is WoW with expansions.

M1, M2 and F2 said that the biggest motivation of playing games is socialization but F2 added willing to succeed in MMO games.

“It has been much influenced by what the other friends have been playing and I started to play WoW because my boyfriend played it and I was curious what is this kind of game where people are spending so much time... And because of social pressure or spending time with friends (in-game) but I have had a desire to succeed on it but it is that kind of game that I would not play it alone.” (F2, 32)

All of the responders have started to play games when they were pretty young. M1 started to play video games on 8-bit Nintendo when he was five years old and M2, F1 and F2 started to play video games around from 10-13 years old. All of them are still playing video games more or less.

“I started to play video games when we got a computer and I was that old that... Let’s count, it was year of 1998 and we did not have an Internet connection... So, I played single player games and selection of games were really different than nowadays.” (F2, 32)

Everyone has played WoW more or less and different amount of time. F1 started to play WoW when she was 18 years old and M1 has played WoW Retail and WoW Classic. F2 have played WoW 13 years and still playing it continually.

“WoW has released in year of 2004 but I did not play it then yet... I did not play WoW Vanilla³... If I remember right, I started to play around one year after Burning Crusade⁴ was released... maybe it was 2008 or 2009.” (F1, 30)

4.2 Types of cyberbullying witnessed

All participants have seen cyberbullying situations while playing WoW and different forms of it. F2 gave pretty good comment about cyberbullying:

“This is a freezing question because if someone answers that I have not seen cyberbullying he/she just do not recognize it... Cyberbullying is systematic and long lasting...” (F2, 32)

The most common form of cyberbullying was (social) **exclusion**, which all interviewees mentioned having faced at some point. For example, M2 explains:

“Exclusion has happened if you have been bad or new player (on WoW) or if you did not have good gear enough (on your character) so, many times they (raid members) left you out from the raids, or if you could not grind something 8 hours per day.” (M2, 32)

The interviewees also mentioned **verbal harassment**. For example, F2 explains:

³ WoW Vanilla is original version of WoW which was released in 2004 without any expansions.

⁴ Burning Crusade is the first expansion of WoW.

“For example, how people are treating random players on LFRs (Looking for Raids) is shit to be blunt... Whole way of communicate is really rude because basically you can be any kind of shithead there... And you will never see them again, probably and there will be no consequences... (F2, 32)

Griefing has many different meanings but as a form of NPC blocking seemed to be less common experience which was mentioned by F2:

Griefing is cyberbullying as well then someone stands on NPC and you are not able to click it (NPC).” (F2, 32)

Both female players mentioned **women’s undervaluation** that they have seen while playing WoW. F1 explained it like this:

“And then there has been some kind cyberbullying against female players, because I am a woman, I have seen it, so other players are expecting that women do not know how to play the games.” (F1, 30)

F1 and M1 have heard the news or cases where the cyberbullying has gone so far that law enforcement has intervened cyberbullying. F2 have not heard this kind of cases in Finland but popped up **swatting** of the streamers where someone calls to the emergency service and does a false reporting of a serious law enforcement emergency about someone, on this case, a streamer and this is called as a criminal harassment tactic. So, basically because of this false report FBI or equivalent direction raids the streamer’s home while the stream is on.

“I feel like I have read some... Oh, I know! For example, swatting of streamers is cyberbullying and it is really dangerous because you can die because of that... Like if someone reports to FBI, that this (streamer) is a suspicious person and they (FBI) raid the place during the stream... But in Finland I have not heard this kind of cases.” (F2, 32)

4.3 Victimization experiences

F1, F2 and M2 have been victims of cyberbullying at least once. M1 said that he has not been victim of cyberbullying, although he has experienced an exclusion but it was not cyberbullying because he understood the situation.

“I have not been victim of cyberbullying but once all members of the group got in the guild but I did not and I felt outed but I understood the situation... They did not tell me exactly why I did not get in the guild but I realized it later that my gear of the character was not good enough.” (M1, 32)

F1 has faced an **exclusion** because she has been kicked out from the party because lack of healing skills and **racism**.

“I got kicked from the group if I could not heal (other group members) enough or if my DPS was too low... and some people are using Third-party DPS tools to see how much DPS you do and yes, they use it very filthy and show it if you are not doing enough DPS... I remember one situation when I was playing WoW Classic and one Finnish guy private messaged me and asked if I am gay, because I type (in the chat) like this... and I told him I do not have balls to my knowledge.” (F1, 30)

Both female players have been victims of **sexual and gender harassment**. F2 has been victim of cyberbullying which includes **verbal harassment, grieving, ganking**. Cyberbullying has caused mental problems to F2 as well.

“I have been victim of verbal harassment for example name-called as a shit player and called all kind of bitches and private messaged all kind of sexual harassment... and this was a reason why I could not dare to create my own brand or be featured in my life because the amount of shit I have taken in my neck was unbelievable already and I was thinking that it is normal and I earn it because I am a woman... And tormentors are seeking for easy target let’s say that if I were mentally handicapped, I would surely be cyberbullied because of that more than I am a woman... Well I am not sure I think that would be a great combination for cyberbullying... I am a very demanding person and when I play WoW, I have a constant fear that other players are thinking that I am not playing good enough and this is driving me into very demanding behavior... And this is why I do not enjoy to play (WoW) and the constant fear of getting cyberbullied causes mental problems to me at the moment and decreases enjoyment of playing WoW.” (F2, 32)

Stream sniping was mentioned by only one participant probably because she was the only one who is steaming on Twitch continuously.

“Oh, and when I started to play WoW Classic, and I streamed it (on Twitch)... There were some Finnish players who watched (my stream) where I was, like two to three hours, and killed me many times... I was thinking that what should I do on this situation but then I realized that, because they were on my chat and watching me, I asked (on Twitch) if they could stop... They still killed me once and then I rolled (from PvP) into PvE server... And I think that stream sniping is against ToS... And they had a discussion about that on their guild and some players said that it is awful what you did to her and others were like WTF and in the end, GM (Guild Master) had outlined that he is not taking any position on the case, like for example you could get kicked from the guild if you do a stream sniping.” (F2, 32)

M2 has experienced **exclusion** because of lack of gear of the character and **ganking**.

“Exclusion has happened if you have been bad or new player (on WoW) or if you did not had good gear enough (on your character) so, many times they (raid members) left you out from the raids, or if you could not grind something 8 hours per day... Ganking has happened a lot sometimes.” (M2, 32)

M1 has not been cyberbullied as mentioned above while F2 told that almost everyone has cyberbullied her and it has lasted years.

“Everybody has cyberbullied me: randoms guildies, good friends, well maybe that was more like a badinage... And about guildies, I could name over 10 people who have cyberbullied me... And it has lasted years (cyberbullying)... I know some friends who enjoy to cyberbully random people and it is their enjoyment of gaming... I have not sought any help (for end of cyberbullying) and I think, on the Internet world, there is much that kind of attitude that victim (of cyberbullying) earns it.” (F2, 32)

4.4 Perpetration experiences

F1 has cyberbullied other players by killing them which is part of ganking but justified it with the reason because the server where she is playing is PvP server and it is the idea of it. M1 said that he is not much prone to cyberbullying and do not know if it was a cyberbullying act what he did.

“I remember when we (guild members) were running instances and this guy had really good luck with rolling loots and this situation escalated and I kicked him out from the guild because of that... It was a childish act from me... But I do not know if he took it as cyberbullying... Because he was an arrogant person.” (M1, 32)

F2 said that she has cyberbullied other players but she is not sure if everything is comparable to cyberbullying and playing with specific character changes her as a person.

“I have been officer of the guild where I talked evil about other people (guild members) behind their backs... I have treated unfairly other players in the guilds but I am not sure if they took it as cyberbullying... And then I have one character, paladin tank, I have no idea what happens to me when I play it but somehow, well maybe it is insignificant and I have more time to watch what other team members are doing and I was very awful like that guy is not dealing DPS, let’s kick him/her (out from the party)... I was really mean to other people and I manipulated them.” (F2, 32)

None of the answerers do not know how the victims reacted after the cyberbullying. Only F2 said that people who were in the same guild with her could not do anything about it.

“I do not know how the victim reacted.” (F1, 30) “I do not know if he took it as cyberbullying... I do not know if someone took something as cyberbullying.” (M2, 32) “About randoms, I do not know how they reacted because they do not feel like people... They are just like robots who are very annoying and when something has done (with randoms) they just cease to exist... But people who I cyberbullied in the guild they could not do anything else than accept it.” (F2, 32)

All participants have told some of the cyberbullying situations to someone (e.g. friends). F2 has mentioned to someone about verbal harassment and sometimes to a boyfriend but did not get any empathy at all.

“I have not told about it to anyone... Okey, well I could mention to someone like how ridiculous whispers (private messages) some people are sending to me... To boyfriend I told something and he was like he understands the tormentor side and I got sad because of that and I decided not to tell anything anymore to anyone because my perspective could not be seen at all... No empathy.” (F2, 32)

4.5 Coping strategies and peer support

M1, F1 and F2 have tried to interfere or prevent cyberbullying in WoW but F1 said that interfering is really challenging in WoW world.

"I have tried to interfere (cyberbullying) like if there are newbies... But it is hard to do anything if someone is shouting something (harass)... In world chat." (F1, 30)

F1 and M2 said that if cyberbullying happening as verbal harassment via world chat, you cannot do anything for it but **block the tormentor**.

"There is a chat filter to block communication with someone... you can block those guys who are shouting something for nothing." (F1, 30)

F2 has tried to **talk to the bully**, relying her own feelings for how she would feel it.

"I have to say when I have played WoW I have tried to, during the last year, when I have recognized cyberbullying situations I went and told to them (tormentors) how I experience this situation and how I feel it and this has often affected to them (tormentors)." (F2, 32)

M1 and F2 have been guild masters of the guild and M1 said that cyberbullying in the guild was **discussed between the guild members**.

"I have been officer or guild master (in the guild)... I have done some sort of policing in the guild... I got private messages (from other guildies) that this player has done this and this... And those cases were discussed between the guild members." (M1, 32)

F2 created so called **friendly guild** where is not cyberbullying.

"I have been a GM (Guild Master) in one guild... There were pretty big skill levels between the players... And we tried to make it as a friendly guild where is no verbal harassment and it worked pretty well..." (F2, 32)

F1 and F2 said that they do not know any web pages which support or help victims of cyberbullying and F2 noted that this kind of web pages would be really helpful. M1 and M2 have heard this kind of web pages but cannot name any of them but M1 said that he has seen some kind of advertisements about those web pages and maybe even in Finnish.

4.6 Cyberbullying prevention in WoW

F1 said that there is a **Need and Greed system** for loot when all rare items that drop from the monsters or bosses go to the specific characters that are able to use them. This reduces greedy playstyle and ninja looting at some point because every classes cannot roll Need but everyone can roll Greed.

"There has come Need and Greed system... Well, it was there before already... Like loot (in game) is reserved for the characters to whom they really belong." (F1, 30)

F2 and F1 mentioned a **blocking system** with which players are able to block and ignore other players but F1 resembled that cyberbullies can create a new character and continue harassing acts with it. F2 added that if someone has been ignored you may not fall into same group with him/her either.

“There is blocking system... For those you want to ignore... But they can make a new character and continue cyberbullying with it.” (F1, 30) “There is a ignore tool... With that you are not able to whisper (to ignored person) and you may not fall into the same group.” (F2, 32)

Everyone brought up that there is a **reporting system** available for all players if they want to report other players because of unsporting acts in the game.

“There is a reporting system but it is more for, let’s say for spammers (gold sellers), I mean there are opinion for spammers and then for cheaters... But there is no option for harassment if I remember right.” (F1, 30) “There is in-game support page and it is possible to make a ticket for some reason so you might be able to talk with GMs (Game Masters) or moderators.” (M1, 32)

F1, M1 and M2 said that there is a **profanity filter** which you can turn on or off in the settings and it censors all general forbidden words and shows stars in place of that word only but F1 reminded that if the word has typed anyhow differently than its normal form, the system cannot recognize it as a forbidden word.

“There is in the game options profanity filter available... And it censors the forbidden words but it does not actually remove them... The stars will appear if it is some forbidden word.” (M1, 32)

M2 added that you are able to change a server from PvP to PvE if you are getting cyberbullied because of ganking for example. All participants noted that these kinds of coping strategies have not affected on their gameplay on WoW.

“If you are getting cyberbullied on PvP server, you can swap to PvE server so you can play in peace.” (M2, 32)

When I asked if someone got a respond from a GM (Game Master) after sending a ticket, possible automatic responds have not been taken into account. M2 said that you are able to talk with a GM on live chat in game if you have some kind of problems and F2 have talked with a GM many times while F1 and M1 have not talked with GM or GM was not needed.

M1, F1, and F2 said that they do not know if reported player has got banned but F2 clarified that based on Blizzard Entertainment policy, GM or admin cannot tell to anyone if someone has gotten a ban or a timeout. M2 do not remember if he ever reported anyone.

“Based on Blizzard’s policy, they are not telling if someone has gotten banned or time outed... They (Blizzard) can say that they have seen an offence but not telling what happened to this player.” (F2, 32)

5. Discussion

In this section I will answer the three research questions posed in the thesis and discuss these findings in the light of previous literature and some interesting findings will be discussed.

5.1 RQ1: What kind of cyberbullying have gamers in Finland encountered or witnessed in MMOs/WoW?

All participants have seen cyberbullying situations while playing WoW and different forms of it. They mentioned exclusion as a one form of cyberbullying what they have faced or been victims of it. Willard (2007) mentioned an exclusion as a form of cyberbullying which can happen in-game environments and in communication environments. DeWall et al. (2009) and Birk et al. (2016) were talking about social exclusion but seems that the meaning of the concept is the same. Ballard and Welch (2017) stated that over 50 percent of participants have been victims of cyberbullying while 70 percentage of participants have seen cyberbullying situations. On my interviews, all of the participants have seen cyberbullying and F2 said pretty good that if someone says that he/she has not seen cyberbullying he/she is not just recognizing it.

Only one participant mentioned griefing directly as a cyberbullying method but like Foo and Koivisto (2004) and ENISA (2008) stated, griefing includes harassment, power imposition, scamming, and greedy playstyle. Two participants mentioned power imposition and greedy playstyle. Greedy playstyle includes ninja looting as one participant it mentioned but ENISA (2008) and Achterbosch et al. (2013) put it under stealing. F2 mentioned corpse camping where stronger player is killing weaker player multiple times in the same place without letting the player escape (Achterbosch et al., 2013), and Foo and Koivisto (2004) put it under power imposition.

Harassment was mentioned by two participants but the one talked about verbal harassment and the others about harassment in general level. F2 talked about insulting as well but it means same as harassment or griefing (Lin & Sun, 2005). Willard (2007) listed harassment under cyberstalking but stated that difference between cyberstalking and harassment is very small. Foo and Koivisto (2004) announced that harassment belongs to under griefing but pointed out that trolling is a form of harassment while ENISA (2008) defined verbal harassment as harassment which happens in-game chat or VoIP. Birk et al. (2016) and Achterbosch et al. (2013) were talking about hostile behavior as harassment where verbal behavior means same as a verbal harassment. All participants mentioned ganking (ENISA, 2008) as cyberbullying act more or less but Foo and Koivisto (2004), Lin and Sun (2005), and Achterbosch et al. (2013) did not talk about ganking but added this kind of acts under the power imposition.

Gender related harassment (Shaer et.al., 2017) where mentioned by both female participants that they have seen gender related harassment because they are women (e.g. lack of gaming skills) and Shaer et.al. (2017) got pretty same results and said that negative comments have affected on game experience negatively but F2 said that it is not only happening for women, it is happening for males as well. Racism was not mentioned as a cyberbullying act in games on prior literature but F1 said that someone was called her as a gay while F2 talked about racism in games on general level just like it might happen in real life. Racism as a concept is comprehensive in real life as it is on MMO games and that is why there can be many different acts which can be called as a racism.

F2 mentioned humiliation, blackmailing because of loot and blocking the NPCs as forms of cyberbullying. Achterbosch et al. 2013 mentioned blocking of NPCs as a cyberbullying act but humiliation and blackmailing because of loot were not mentioned on prior literature but, of course, both of those concepts can be connected under another concept. Based on F2's definitions, humiliation means that other players are laughing in a circle round a player, literally but in the game, when the player did not have an enchant in the gun or armor and blamed the player because of that on the difficult instance if a wipe happened. Blackmailing because of loot means that if the group is farming something, in-game mounts for example, and other players of the group are saying that if we give this mount to you then you have to play so long with us that everyone gets it too.

5.2 RQ2: What kind of experiences do the gamers in Finland have concerning dealing with cyberbullying in MMOs/WoW?

F1, F2 and M2 have been victims of cyberbullying. M1 said that he has not been victim of cyberbullying, although he has experienced an exclusion but it was not cyberbullying because he understood the situation. On Ballard and Welch (2017) research, 35 percent of participants have been tormentors themselves. M1 was not sure if something what he did, was or was not cyberbullying on victim's point of view.

F1 has faced an exclusion because she has been kicked out from the party because lack of healing skills and verbal harassment while F2 has been victim of verbal harassment which includes verbal harassment, stream sniping, griefing, ganking, and sexual and gender harassment. Cyberbullying has caused mental problems to her as well. This is what Kowalski and Felina (2011) reported that cyberbullying in virtual worlds can cause psychological consequences (e.g. depression and anxiety) to the victims and many researchers are stating that cyberbullying causes serious problems for mental health (Srabstein, Berkman & Pyntikova, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004).

M2 has experienced an exclusion because of lack of gear of the character and ganking. F2 told that almost everyone has cyberbullied her and it has lasted years and Kowalski et al. (2012) stated on their paper that cyberbullying can last a lifetime just like traditional bullying, while M2 and F1 said that random players are cyberbullied them but M2 added guildies as tormentors but cyberbullying has not lasted a long time. Ganking has lasted longer, according to M2 and F1, but they said that is it part of the idea of PvP server on WoW. None of the responders have not sought any help for end of cyberbullying and as (Smith et al. (2008) and Dehue et al. (2008) asserted, very low number of victims of cyberbullying are trying to find help to make cyberbullying to stop.

All participants have told some of the cyberbullying situations to someone (e.g. friends). M2 said that he has discussed about it with in-game friends and they were asked a reason of cyberbullying and said that it should be figured out why it is happening but not commented much more about it. F1 has talked with her friend, sometimes even called to her/him but the friend has been unable to do anything. F2 has mentioned to someone about verbal harassment and sometimes to a boyfriend but did not get any empathy at all.

5.3 RQ3: What kind of experiences do Finnish gamers have concerning the support available for gamers who have been victims of cyberbullying?

Everyone brought up that there is a reporting system available for all players if they want to report other players because of unsporting acts in the game and according to Blizzard Entertainment (2020a; 2020b), in WoW, there is a possibility to report a player during gameplay any time because of harassment behavior or cheating and the game master will inspect the case for possible punishment which can cause a cancellation of the account (Blizzard Entertainment, 2020b).

There are Need and Greed system in WoW for loot when all rare items which drops from the monsters or bosses should go to the characters which are able to use them so it reduces greedy playstyle and ninja looting at some point as F1 said and in-game blocking system is available with you can block and ignore players who you add in the blacklist. These acts are familiar with Aponte and Richards (2013); Snakenborg et al. (2011); Aricak et al. (2008) and Smith et al. (2008) who noted that ignoring and blocking are effective strategies to prevent and cope against cyberbullying. F1, M1 and M2 said that there is a profanity filter which you can turn on or off in the settings and it censors all general forbidden words and shows stars in place of that word only but F1 reminded that if the word has typed anyhow differently than its normal form, the system cannot recognize it as a forbidden word. Teng et. al. (2012) argued that Game developers should intervene profanity with technical in-game settings (e.g. preventing bad language), as it is possible to do in WoW, but some players like to use profanity in MMOGs because it is way to release real life pressures. Game developers have to think wisely if restricting profanity is good or bad thing because freedom of speech is one important thing which should not be reduced because of profanity but profanity controlling might not be limiting freedom of speech. As interviewers said, Blizzard Entertainment has solved this issue with freedom to choose if players want to see everything in the in-game chat or not.

F1 and F2 said that they do not know any web pages which support or help victims of cyberbullying and F2 noted that this kind of web pages would be really helpful. M1 and M2 have heard this kind of web pages but cannot name any of them. M1 said that he has seen some kind of advertisements about those web pages and maybe even in Finnish. Search strings of the literature review did not cover the answer for this kind of question or databases did not offer any researches based on this kind of support. Salmivalli et al. (2013) listed curricular programs of cyberbullying prevention but those are not part of gaming environments. Some of the researchers have designed auto-blocking forbidden word systems which are self-learning and can be used in games or on social networks (Lee et al., 2018).

5.4 Interesting findings

Some interesting findings popped up during the interviews. First of all, stream sniping is a new phenomenon of cyberbullying where player itself streams his/hers gaming over the Internet in real-time and other people are able to watch it live. As Nash, Rihan, Loose and Cheng (2020) stated, live streaming has increased nowadays and that is why stream sniping has become more common. On the aspect of WoW and what one participant said about this, stream sniping can be used as harass meanings. Streamer itself shows private game information to other people (e.g. game server and location in-game) so other players are able to use that private information the streamer and then kill him/her for example

(Nash, Rihan, Loose & Cheng, 2020). Another perspective of the stream sniping is that, as F2 said, people are doing it because they are able to see reaction of the streamer in real-time.

Second interesting thing were cyberbullying method which is called as a swatting. This is very new phenomenon and part of live streaming as well where someone calls to the emergency service and does a false reporting of a serious law enforcement emergency about someone, on this case, a streamer and this is called as a criminal harassment tactic. So, basically because of this false report FBI or equivalent direction raids the streamer's home while the stream is on.

Thirdly, it is not so clear what has to be called as a cyberbullying. For example, all the participants mentioned ganking as some point as a cyberbullying act but then said that it is understandable since the server, they have been playing, is PvP server and it is mostly part of the game. Also, different persons are taking different things as a cyberbullying, some more and some less just like in real life bullying and one interesting thing arise since one participants said he has not been cyberbullied or it has happened very little and also said that he is not that kind of person who likes to cyberbully other players while another participant said that she has been victim of cyberbullying many different ways and a long time but said she has cyberbullied other players many different ways as well. So, just like based on Kou et al. (2017) and Dehue et al. (2008) responders said that they have even cyberbullied back and that it is a prevention and coping strategy for those people who are getting cyberbullied to bully tormentors or other players.

Lastly, cyberbullying itself seems to be so fresh academic research area that meaning of the concepts differs depending on who is writer of the paper and this causes confusion for readers. This means that there are many different concepts which means the same thing so harmonization of the concepts is needed and this is noted on paths for future research.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Summary of findings

The goal of the thesis was to discover the experiences of Finnish gamers on WoW regarding to how they experience cyberbullying in WoW, and what kind of support is available to those who experience cyberbullying in games by conducting qualitative interviews on Finnish players of online games. The results section shows results of the interviews with direct quotes while discussion part gives answers for the research questions. Here, I am summarizing key points of the of the results.

RQ1. What kind of cyberbullying the gamers in Finland have encountered or witnessed in MMOs/WoW?

The interviews exposed that all participants of the interviews have seen cyberbullying cases while playing MMOGs and (social) exclusion and ganking are the biggest influences because all participants mentioned it or have been victims of it. Other forms of cyberbullying which were noted once or more were harassment (verbal or non-verbal), griefing, greedy playstyle which includes ninja looting, corpse camping, insulting, humiliation, blackmailing because of loot, blocking the NPCs, racism, stream sniping and swatting.

RQ2. What kind of experiences do the gamers in Finland have concerning dealing with cyberbullying in MMOs/WoW?

All interviewees have cyberbullied someone while playing MMOGs or they are not sure if the victim took their acts as cyberbullying. Both female interviewees mentioned gender and sexual harassment on some point which has affected on them because they are female players. Both of them stated that players are thinking that females are not able to play games good as male players. One participant has had mental health problems due to cyberbullying. All participants have told about cyberbullying to someone but they have not sought any help for it.

RQ3. What kind of support is available for those players who have been victims of cyberbullying?

When support systems were asked everyone mentioned reporting system on WoW. Need and Greed loot system, player blocking system, and profanity filter were stated as well. None of the interviewees knew any supporting web pages which helps players who has faced cyberbullying themselves but some of them said that they have heard or seen some kind of advertisements about them, maybe even in Finnish language.

6.2 Limitations of the study

A number of interviews might be a limitation because only four interviews has been considered but as Neuman (2014) said that meaning of qualitative data collecting technique is to conduct case studies between small group of people to get rich data from present situation. But still, bigger number of interviews or picking up different persons for the interviews might have given somehow different results which is pretty clear.

Other limitations arise from the data collection methods even though purpose of master's thesis is to learn following things. Concerning the literature review that formed the basis of this thesis work, different search strings might have given different amount of relevant prior literature and some of the interesting scientific articles were not available for free. In addition, the terminology used in the papers meant the same things varied, which was confusing and made formulating the search strings difficult. Because of this, some relevant papers might not have been found. Many references used in this thesis are not scientific articles but for example news articles or websites that were used to clarify the understanding of terminology not found in scientific articles. Concerning the interview study, forming interview questions differently might have produced different results, and at points I likely failed to ask for more information or further questions that might have led to richer descriptions. When conducting the interviews, the worldwide coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic also caused challenges. I had some troubles recruiting people for online interviews, and when carrying out the scheduled interviews, I was not able to do interviews face-to-face and see reactions and emotions of the interviewees which is part of face-to-face qualitative interviews (Kabir, 2016). Because of COVID-19 pandemic, universities and other public departments were closed so I was not able to use the services they provide for this thesis purposes. Example of these services are Oulu University library which were closed because of it.

6.3 Paths for future research

As literature review showed WoW is widely researched MMOG so there might be a need to research other MMOGs more. Another thing is that preventing and coping strategies of the MMOGs should be researched more in the light of which game developers is using the best tactics to reduce cyberbullying and find out if those systems can be used on other MMOGs that are infected with higher amount of cyberbullying. As I mentioned the concepts on limitation section, authors of the scientific articles should unify the terminology of the concepts because there are several concepts which mean same thing at the moment. Cyberbullying acts as swatting, stream sniping and racism are pretty new phenomena and that is why those should be researched more in the future: how to get rid of them or how to develop some kind of tactics to prevent and intervene them is needed.

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Appendix A. Haastattelujen runko

1. Aloitus

- Gradun aiheen esittely
- Kysy, onko tietosuoja ilmoitus luettu ja ymmärretty
- Kerrotaan että haastattelut tallennetaan ja miten sitä käytetään

2. Perustiedot

- Sukupuoli
- Ikä
- Koulutusaste

3. Internetin käyttö ja pelaaminen

- Kuinka monta tuntia keskimäärin vietät aikaa netissä vuorokaudessa?
- Entäs pelejä pelatessa?
- Minkälaisia pelejä pelaat // miksi?
Kuinka pitkään olet pelannut erilaisia pelejä?
Kuinka pitkään olet pelannut WoWia? // miksi?

4. Kiusaaminen ja tuki

- Oletko nähnyt minkäänlaista nettikiusaamista silloin kun ole pelannut Wowia?
Minkälaista?
Oletko yrittänyt puuttua asiaan millään tavalla?
Jos olet niin miten?
Jos et niin mikset?
- Oletko itse ollut nettikiusaamisen kohteena pelatessasi Wowia?
Jos olet, niin millä tavalla tämä kiusaaminen on ilmennyt?
Kuka on kiusannut?
- Onko sinulla tietoa, että miksi kiusaaminen on kohdistunut sinuun?
Kuinka pitkään tämä kiusaaminen kesti?
Etsitkö mitään kautta apua sen loppumiseen?
- Oletko itse kiusannut ketään pelatessasi WoWia?
Jos olet, niin mitä teit?
Jos olet, niin miksi?
Millä tavalla kohdehenkilö käyttäytyi?

5. Tuki // Jos kiusattu

- Jos sinua on kiusattu, niin kerroitko siitä jollekulle?
Kenelle?
Kuinka hän reagoi asiaan?
Antoiko hän jonkinlaisia neuvoja, miten ehkäistä kiusaamista?

6. Selviytumisstrategiat WoWissa

- Tiedätkö että onko WoWissa jonkinlaisia systeemeitä, joilla yritetään estää kiusaamista?
Millä tavalla pelintarjoaja tuo nämä systeemit esille?
- Pelaajan raportointijärjestelmiä?
- Tiettyjen sanojen suora poistaminen chatista?

- Millä tavalla nämä pelintarjoajan ennaltaehkäisevät systeemit vaikuttavat sinun pelaamiseen?

- Jos olet raportoinut jonkin pelaajan pelinsisäsen kiusanteon seurauksena, niin onko game master tai vast. vastannut sinulle esimerkiksi sähköpostitse asiasta?
- Onko kiusaaja saanut bannit tai väliaikaisen pelikiellon sen takia että olet hänet raportoinut GM:lle?

7. Vertaistuki?

- Onko sinulla tiedossa mitään nettisivuja tms. jotka tarjoavat vertaistukea niille henkilöille jotka ovat joutuneet nettikiusauksen uhreiksi peleissä?

8. Poliisi tapaukset?

Onko sinulla tiedossa yhtään tapausta, joka olisi nettikiusaamisessa mennyt niin pitkälle, että poliisi on puuttunut asiaan?

9. Lopetus

- Kysy jos haastateltavalle on mahdollista tehdä täsmentäviä lisäkysymyksiä myöhemmässä vaiheessa, jos jotakin kysyttävää tulee
- Kerro että datan analysointi vie aikaa
- Kerro että analysoitu data löytyy gradusta sen jälkeen, kun se on valmis
- Kiitä haastateltavaa

Appendix B. Structure of the interviews

1. Introduction

- Introduce topic of the master's thesis
- Ask if Scientific Research Privacy Statement is read and understood
- Tell that data will be recorded and how the data will be used

2. Basic Information

- Gender
- Age
- Education level

3. Internet use and gaming

- In average, how many hours per day do you spend online?
- How about gaming?
- What kind of games you are playing? // why
- How long have you played games?
- How long have you played WoW? //why

4. Cyberbullying and support

- Have you seen any kind of cyberbullying while playing WoW?
 - What kind?
 - Did you try to intervene?
 - If so – how
 - if not – why
- Have you yourself been victim of cyberbullying in WoW?
 - How has someone has cyberbullied you?
 - Who bullied you?
 - Do you know why you were targeted?
 - How long did it last?
 - Did you seek help?
- Have ever bullied anyone while playing WoW?
 - If, What did you do?
 - If, Why did you do it?
 - How did the other person respond?

5. Support // If bullied

- If you were bullied did you told to someone about cyberbullying?
 - To who?
 - How he/she has reacted?
 - Did they give any tips to you how to prevent it?

6. Coping strategies in WoW

- Do you know if there are some kind of systems how to prevent cyberbullying acts in WoW?

Do they bring these issues up

- Reporting systems?
- Word blocking in chatting systems?

- Consequences of that?
- Did you receive any kind of mail from game master after the reporting?
- Did bullies got banned or time outed from the game?

7. Peer support?

Do you know any websites which supports players who have faced cyberbullying in MMOGs?

8. Police cases?

Do you know any cases which have gone that far?

9. Ending

- Ask if it is fine to contact interviewee later if any questions come up or some clarification is needed
- Tell that the data analyzing will take some time
- Tell where the analyzed data can be found after the master' thesis is completed
- Thank the interviewee for his/her time