School of Health, Care and Social Welfare

AN UNSAFE PLAYING FIELD

Examining the troubling state of video game industry employees and their problems at work.

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ABSTRACT

Instances of professional misconduct, such as sexual harassment, mobbing and bullying, have become increasingly common, particularly in male-dominated industries like the video games industry. This has led to work-life balance problems and a high turnover rate among employees, especially females. Despite existing policies, female workers continue to face unwelcome situations and feel marginalized by their colleagues. The lack of robust measures from authorities to address professional misconduct adds to their insecurity and intention to leave their jobs. This workplace unrest and role conflicts also prevent employees from fulfilling their emotional, social, and familial responsibilities. A mixed methods research study was conducted to understand the reasons behind the increase in professional misconduct and the factors contributing to its severity at the workplaces in the gaming industry. The study found that employees, particularly females, are subjected to bullying, mobbing, and sexual harassment. They are often not considered integral to the industry by their co-workers, but male employees also experience professional misconduct, but to a lesser degree. Urgent attention and effective measures are needed to create a safe and inclusive work environment for all employees, regardless of gender, and to address the rising incidence of professional misconduct, thereby improving work-life balance.

Keywords: Professional misconduct, sexual harassment, bullying, mobbing, work -life balance.

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

Workplace misconduct comes in the form of sexual harassment, bullying, and mobbing. It has been one of the most prevalent forms of workplace problems for the last few years if not longer, and the recent rise of the #MeToo movement has given many individuals the ability to confidently come out and talk about their experiences. While the movement started with people in Hollywood talking about their experiences, it soon became prominent for people in other fields to address it too. Over the last few years, the United States of America (USA) has seen a massive spike in reports of sexual harassment being reported, especially in the video games industry. This further opened people coming out to talk about their incidents in Europe, the UK, and other parts of the world as well. When we look at the history of sexual harassment in the video games industry too, it shared a similar pattern to Hollywood, where many women who previously would report their abusers would be ignored or dismissed. There has been evidence to the contrary, however, when we look at the numbers. In 2020, it was found that almost 41% of gamers who resided in the USA were women, and that number is even higher in Asia, rising to 40-45%. It was also found that women do play the same popular games as men do, with 88% of women in gaming participating in competitive games such as first-person shooters (FPS Games) and fighting games. (Reach3 Insights, 2021; Yokoi, 2021).

When we look at the video games industry globally, in 2020 it was reported to be a $152 Billion revenue industry that has approximately 3.1 billion people working in the field (Ingersoll & Anti-Defamation League, 2019), and it is now bigger than the film and music industry combined in terms of revenue (Price, 2020). In 2020 it was discovered that in the top 14 gaming companies across the world, males made up 84% of positions at an executive level, and to the contrary, women held a paltry 24% of positions in non-executive level positions. This also retroactively ties back to an obvious demotivation occurring in the space, where in 2015, in a survey conducted in the UK for working women in the gaming industry, 45% of the respondents said that their gender was withholding their career prospects (Yokoi, 2021). That is not to say this is a blanket issue, and there are reports of supportive colleagues and co-workers, but they only exist in the minority, particularly at the time of this study. Before the power of #MeToo, women who dared to speak up against an abusive co-worker were afraid of showing "female weakness" or being portrayed as a damsel in distress who is seeking attention. The common element amidst all three themes is that over a decade ago, women's portrayal in the workplace, particularly one dominated by men, is still seen on an unequal footing. Women are easily dismissed, objectified, ignored, and otherwise not taken seriously. Even in a post #MeToo world, where companies have now implemented whistle-blowing policies, women are still scared of speaking out against their abusers (Garrett & Hassan, 2019). The direct parallel of #MeToo is #WhyIDidntReport: where employees understand the power of speaking out but still chose to remain silent about their abusers. In

the end, many of these reasons came down to intrinsic factors in the person such as Shame, Denial, Fear, Hopelessness, Memory, and Lack of Information. Or there were extrinsic reasons such as Protecting the abuser, and the victim being young at the time. Both relate to how the victims thought reporting their abuser could potentially ruin their life (Garrett & Hassan, 2019). An example of this is how a 15-year-old was told by their abuser that if they told anyone about the sexual abuse, they would leave the victim and that it meant they didn't love them (the abuser). The victim didn't want to get in trouble and didn't even know that they were a victim of rape, and how years after the incident, it still has taken a significant toll on their mental health (Garrett & Hassan, 2019).

Whether we are talking about a pre-#MeToo or a post-#MeToo work environment, it's evident that enough is still not being done for reducing sexual harassment in the workplace, particularly in Sweden, Folke and Rickne's (2022) study shared that the country had the highest reports of incidents at the workplace at an alarming 10% when compared to the EU average of 6%. Without intervention, the prevailing threat of sexual harassment can create an exodus of talented male and female employees to completely vacate the video games industry leading to a situation where the industry could potentially fail, particularly in a country like Sweden where in 2021 where the industry made up 4.1% of the country's total service exports and has 7,944 employees working in it (Dataspelsbranschen, 2022).

When we also look at the threats of sexual harassment to one's mental and physical health, it can lead to harmful effects such as anxiety, diminished self-esteem, depression, suicidal thoughts, post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional distress, sleeplessness, self-blame, organizational withdrawal (Fox & Tang, 2016).

Hepler (2016) wrote a book named "Women in Game Development: Breaking the Glass Level-Cap" in which she highlighted a few instances of women who reported sexual harassment to their superiors only for no action or accountability to be taken. Moreover, Bort (2013) mentioned looking at why female programmers were choosing to not attend a prestigious gaming event in 2013, Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco, many women talk about their experiences of being groped or otherwise being treated as inferiors by their male peers through a series of Tweets, with other male attendees also remarking equally sexist replies (Bort, 2013). However, the biggest incident would not go on to occur until 2017, when numerous women came forward and reported high amounts of sexual harassment experienced at Activision-Blizzard, one of the biggest video game publishers and developers. This would lead to a class-action lawsuit by employees, and an investigation found that the CEO, Bobby Kotick, knew about the allegations and chose to dismiss them as they were not a priority to the business (Grind et al., 2021).

However, the incidents were not exclusively taking place in the USA only. Another major company in Europe would also come under fire for similar accusations. Ubisoft is another major video game publisher and developer based in France that dismissed and ignored numerous complaints against employees for inappropriate behaviour toward male and female employees that involved bullying, mobbing, and sexual harassment. In 2021, a collective lawsuit was filed by the French Union against Ubisoft on this matter (Sinclair,

2021). Taylor (2018) also discovered that the CEO of the French video game studio Quantic Dream, David Cage, was openly racist, sexist, and homophobic in the office and employees took to the Paris courts to prosecute David Cage as this is one of the only times a CEO is directly responsible for creating a toxic work environment for their employees (Taylor, 2018). Lastly, in 2020, numerous complaints came out about Rocksteady Studios from female employees about the company dismissing sexual harassment complaints (Sinclair, 2020). We can see that the practices that began at Activision-Blizzard in the USA are also replicated in Europe, and as time goes on, many other developers in Europe are also talking about their experiences of working in the video games industry.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study was to understand how video game company employees perceive their manager's responses to incidents occurring at the workplace regarding policies taken by their employers to protect them from sexual harassment, bullying, and mobbing. All the behaviours are classified as acts of professional misconduct. The core research questions that the researcher looked to be addressed were:

- How do employees in the video gaming industry go about dealing with professional misconduct?
- What experiences do they have of incidents of professional misconduct and how have they acted around them?
- What solutions do the employees see to be taken by employers to ensure the mental and physical safety of employees in a post #MeToo workplace?
- What are the harmful effects to the work-life/family balance to employees due to professional misconduct at the workplace?

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Sexual Harassment

Phillips et al., (2019) have defined Sexual Harassment as;

"Any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offense or humiliation to any employee; or that might, on reasonable grounds be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion situates determining whether sexual harassment has occurred with the recipient of the behaviour in question" (p. 16).

Regarding the aim, and research question of this study, this definition still is the most relevant one and adequately covers all of the problems that are faced by individuals, regardless of occupation, academia, or other situations. The definition aptly covers all forms of sexual harassment that will be the center of discourse for this thesis and are applicable to men and women who are or were impacted by the phenomenon. Sexual Harassment has evolved over the years, but the definition of it has remained static, which is why it is difficult for us to find a new definition that is more recent.

2.1.2 Bullying

The differentiation between mobbing and bullying here is that bullying is between two individuals, i.e., the abuser, and the victim. Mobbing, on the other hand, is considered a group effort by a single ringleader with malicious intent to deliberately, as a group, make the life of another employee at the workplace miserable. While bullying can also be done in a group setting with two or more individuals taking a cue from the leader of the group, for the purposes of this research, we are going to give it a symbiotic relationship where one person is causing suffering to the victim. With the following definition taken from Saunders et al., (2007) "unwarranted, offensive, humiliating, undermining behaviour towards an individual and an abuse of power or position, that can cause such anxiety that people gradually lose all belief in themselves, suffering physical ill health and mental distress as a direct result" (p. 340).

For the purposes of this research, we recognized bullying in all its forms - physical, verbal, emotional, and social bullying.

Physical bullying entails some form of physical harm taken by the victim from the abuser. These can even be pranks done to an employee, knowing they may or may not cause harm to the employee - minor or major.

Verbal bullying entails some form of verbal intimidation or otherwise exchange from the abuser to the victim that may not have friendly connotations and thus can lead to the victim feeling inferior about themselves. These can be inappropriate phrases such as "Why don't you sit on my lap?" to a female employee.

Emotional bullying entails fear through intimidation and is different from verbal bullying because of the context attached. A form of verbal bullying could be "You would look better with that dress off in my office" to a female employee, and emotional bullying could be phrased as "I can make your life at this office even worse if you don't do what I say" to the

same female employee. Where one may or may not be a threat, the other is intended to be a threat that the abuser may act upon more seriously.

Social bullying entails deliberate damage to one's reputation by involving others using harmful words among other employees with the deliberate intent of framing them to be weak and vulnerable. This can be through rumours, gossip, or talking about them inappropriately to others behind their back.

2.1.3 Mobbing

In the 1970s, a Swedish Psychologist first coined the term Mobbing in an attempt to describe bullying in the workplace by a Swedish industrial psychologist, Heinz Leymann (1996) "systematic and deliberate exposure to hostile and unethical aggressive behaviour by an individual or a group of people in the workplace" (p. 165). Leymann's definition would include psychological harassment at the workplace that was systematically practiced on an individual level or in a group setting as well, with the intent aimed toward another employee or individual to act in unfriendly and/or unethical manners. This is a relatively new phenomenon as well that has picked up prominence in recent times when a group of employees will collectively work together and put an effort toward pushing an employee out of the company through pressure tactics, intimidation, and other activities that rely on a group being able to threaten the well-being or their mental health. The tactic is often used by the abuser once they have found the person who reported them, and when they know that action cannot be taken against them, can create a mobbing group to make the employee who complained about them resign from their job due to the combined pressure of the abuser and their peers coming together with the goal of making the person as uncomfortable and unwelcome in the office, knowing their actions are without any punishment (Shallcross et al., 2008)

Another element of mobbing may or may not include the disposition of power. Instances where a supervisor or a manager may be the one responsible for gathering other people (other employees or people who share a similar position of power) to support them in bullying efforts toward an employee who may not share their designation and may not have the same power or status in the organisation as the superior. Mobbing is classified as a call to action by one employee who holds a position of power among other employees and makes deliberate efforts to intentionally conduct activities that are knowingly harmful to an intended victim to make their presence at the setting uncomfortable, and/or push them toward leaving the job (Keashly, 2021). Men and women can equally be victims of mobbing at the hands of their fellow employees, and a company that is willing to protect or ignore problematic reporting of sexual harassment from employees only further encourages this behavior to further prevail. Equally, men and women can also be perpetrators to this act, and as such, it should be the responsibility of the organisation to thoroughly investigate incidents involving these acts and to keep the victim's name anonymous to prevent mobbing/retaliation behaviour from occurring after the individual in question has been reported.

2.1.4 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance has been defined as an individual's ability to fulfill work and life responsibilities without making one side cost the other. Work-life balance is also a relationship between work and family functions. The concept of work-life balance has been defined in different perspectives by scholars. According to Fleetwood (2007) work-life balance refers to individuals having some say about when, where, and how they work. It is attained when an individual's entitlement to a fulfilling existence both within and outside of paid labor is acknowledged and regarded as the norm, benefiting the individual, company, and society. Similarly, Work-Life Balance, from the standpoint of an employee, is the preservation of a balance between duties at work and at home (De Cieri et al., 2005). Finally, in this study work-life balance has been discussed for how a person's workplace incidents influence his/her personal life and family responsibilities.

3   RECENT RESEARCH

Most of the literature was found on Science Direct, JSTOR, Research-Gate, Pubmed, Sagepub, Wiley Online Library, Academia.edu, and Springer. And the following keywords were used: professional misconduct, bullying video games industry, mobbing, and sexual harassment video game industry.

3.1 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has been a serious matter for researchers as it is where employees hesitate to respond to this aspect of their job specifically when women are concerned. This very analysis was proposed by De Castell and Skardzius (2019) as they interviewed American and Canadian female video game developers regarding their roles and experiences in the video gaming industry but they found the majority of females were uncomfortable while discussing harassment issues which could be coming from their experiences with chauvinistic male-dominated nature of the video gaming industry which eventually reflects how they as female are being treated in their field (De Castell & Skardzius, 2019). Recently, Siuta and Bergman (2019) stated that with the rise in the slogan #MeToo, there has been an instant decrease in female's reluctance to come forward with their experiences, and with the help of a meta-analytic study, it was found that 45-55% of working women in Europe face sexual harassment with the highest reports of prevalence in the phenomenon (71-81%) coming from Denmark, Netherlands, France, Finland, and Sweden, as opposed to 24-32% faced in Eastern European countries like Poland, Romania, Portugal, and Bulgaria (Latcheva, 2017; Siuta & Bergman, 2019).

Likewise, in 2015, a survey of women in the UK who worked in the gaming industry stated that 33% of them were victims of gender-based bullying and harassment in the workplace. In 2020 it was discovered that in the top 14 gaming companies across the world, males made up 84% of positions at an executive level, and to the contrary, women held a paltry 24% of positions in non-executive level positions (Yokoi, 2021). Misogyny, a branch of sexual harassment, has also been observed toward first-time female video game developers due to the companies they work for making them experience misogyny, marginalization, and sexism that led to women not being taken seriously in the field (Ochsner, 2017), the finding was that when professional attitudes toward women are not seeing them as equals, this allows male co-workers to leverage their superior position and treat them with less respect than they would a male colleague who shares their beliefs and ideas (Ochsner, 2017). According to researchers, there is a suggestion that the gaming space has a strong association with being a highly masculine space even though many strides have been made to further the diversity in the space, this has not prevented women from being seen as the minority within the group, but this inequity of recognition has prevented women from being taken seriously in this space by their male peers, which creates obstacles and barriers for women at all ages and levels from being taken seriously (Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2016; Burnay et al., 2019). Further, there are other researches based on the specific aspect that when the gaming industry holds prejudices against women employees as cited by Fox and Tang (2016), it is strongly believed among co-workers that women do not belong to the gaming industry as gaming is still described as a predominantly male-occupied industry that is made up of young, heterosexual, white, and young males and they are still viewed as outsiders (Clarke, 2019; Easpaig & Humphrey, 2016; Ruberg et al., 2019; Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2016). This also retroactively ties back to an obvious demotivation occurring in the space, where in 2015, in a survey conducted in the UK for working women in the gaming industry, 45% of the respondents said that their gender was withholding their career prospects (Yokoi, 2021).

Similarly, in 2012, a campaign on the micro-blogging platform Twitter was started by the name of #1ReasonWhy examined the reasons why people who worked in the gaming industry, mostly women, had either left the industry entirely or lost their passion for it. At the time of the campaign, it was found that 23% of the adults who used the platform were further broken down into 24% of the users being men, and 21% being women, and they were under the age of 50 with a college education (Ochsner, 2017). With the help of these metrics, Twitter was the best place for professionals and casual members of the public to intersect as opposed to other platforms like LinkedIn which are targeted primarily towards professionals and networking, with no room for the style of conversation that can take place on Twitter. Using 140 characters, many of the participants who spoke out about their problems with the videogame industry shared their complaints about the problematic industry and its practices. With the final tally of 1,920 tweets, Ochsner (2017) was able to identify three major themes that occurred amidst her findings - **First**, women are critiqued differently by male co-workers and are only recognized for their professional contributions and accomplishments. **Second**, women are not given the status or recognition of expertise or status on the same level as male colleagues. **Third**, Women's voices are more often than naught dismissed, treated like invisible entities, and silenced. All three points highlight prominent recurring

themes across regions in the industry where women are not treated as equals and show great inequality in the workplace dynamic. With Ochsner's (2017) findings, we see that sexual harassment is deep-rooted in sexist behaviour that exists across multiple occupations (Burgess et al., 2018). Relating to the first theme, women added that their looks and clothing were another way for men to further objectify women, even in the workplace. One of the responses in the data stated how the respondent must spend twice as much time choosing what to wear for work than she does for going on a date. It was also found that women who dressed too professionally were part of the office gossip among male co-workers who said she should dress more loosely (wear tight clothing, more makeup, etc.), and women who did wear tight clothing or something they enjoyed wearing were perceived as "desperate for a promotion" or trying to use sex to earn a living (Worke et al., 2021).

Relating to the second theme, women reported misogyny and sexism in the classroom for women who were enrolled in male-dominated classrooms such as business, or in subjects like game design, where the teacher/instructor themselves openly encouraged the sexism by using words like Sweetheart. Of course, when such a figure of authority is dismissive of women in a class, the students are likely to follow suit as well (Riley et al., 2006). Women who were often in these classrooms were asked condescending questions by their instructors e.g., "if they were sure they were in the right classroom?" (Ochsner, 2017). Coming out of academia, women are also hard-pressed to find jobs in the industry as well, with one respondent to the campaign directly reporting she was denied a job because of her having boobs. Women were perceived by employers and HR as distractions to the workplace (Rouse et al., 2016). When women would also try to impress recruiters and employers with their accolades or achievements prior to the job interview, they would get crude replies such as "Women aren't smart enough", "we don't need any more secretaries", etc. (Ochsner, 2017).

Relating to the third theme relates to how women are portrayed on the internet by male users. This is the worst in online gaming spaces where female video game players are the primary targets of sexist, derogatory, and demeaning remarks about women in that game (Zajechowski, 2022), Particularly when a female player makes her identity prominent through the voice chat function in a game, this is when the flurry of sexist messages and voice chat responses begin to overwhelm the female player and force her to leave the game, effectively a victim of mobbing. With sexism only being one of the few themes of these interactions, women in gaming spaces also are prone to getting death threats, threats of sexual violence, and other heinous acts with no one to speak for them or stop the bullying in that online gaming room. Leaving the online space, women also said they aren't safe at conventions, conferences, or public industry events where they are frequently victims of groping, verbal and physical assault, and uninvited advances from other attendees (Ochsner, 2017).

Lastly, women at the workplace who would directly complain about a delinquent male co-worker directly to HR or their superiors were told dismissive responses. A few of the instances shared in Ochsner (2017) study showed that when a female employee reported her male employee constantly flirting with her, she was told to 'give him a break'. Another is of a

woman who was harassed and even had witnesses looking at the incident, all the co-workers remained silent, and no one acted against the abuser. Lastly, when a female employee reported being physically hit or touched by a drunk male colleague, HR, and fellow employees told the female employee to 'calm down'. In his book, Jeffries (2020), chronicles the horrific instances of employees being examples of systematic intimidation, sexual harassment, and individuals who have committed suicide, chronicling incidents that occur across various parts of the Western world. In countries like the UK, Australia, and even in Europe. In many of the instances of sexual harassment, the victims were women and were facing a disposition of power against a superior. Reporting to HR would be futile as HR had taken more measures to protect the abuser rather than the employer. Individuals like Isma Zaman, a mental health worker in Birmingham, England is an example of such (Richardson, 2014). Jeffries (2020) book details how bullying at the workplace is a common practice for men and women regardless of geographic location, but women were on the receiving end of sexual harassment and bullying together. The problem is deeply rooted in present academia too, where students also potentially see their peers in favourable or unfavourable eyes depending on the role assigned to them in the context of a sexual harassment incident.

Additionally, in a study by Bongiorno et al., (2019), a fictive setting scenario presented to male and female students about a man harassing a woman, in the first study of 97 respondents, men took the side of the male abuser and blamed the female victim. However, in the second study with 135 respondents, participants were asked to see the perspective of the male abuser or the female victim, and regardless of gender, the majority of the respondents who took the male abuser's perspective still reported that the victim was to blame for the harassment, which goes to show that harassment is still viewed as something is the victim's fault (Cowan, 2000), and accountability for the abuser is a second priority, even to observers or non-participants to the incident. In the end, the study concluded that in a fictive scenario of a male abuser and a female victim, participants are more empathetic to the abuser than they are to the victim, which is a factor that could contribute to the lack of women speaking out about abuse because they know that they are going to be at the mercy of society judging them and their actions (Lucarini et al., 2020), versus the abuser and the lack of empathy for her is disappointing to the people who want to support her. Bongiorno et al., (2019), further show that there is very little difference between genders when it comes to victim blaming with men having a mean of 3.15 and women having a mean of 2.44. Victim empathy was (mean) 5.33 for men and 5.73 for women, but abuser empathy was (mean) 2.35 for men, and 1.82 for women (Bongiorno et al., 2019). With all these incidents and research, it is clear to see that a woman is clearly always in a lose-lose situation of a sexual harassment incident, which is why there is such a major reluctance in them reporting abuse at any location (Sikorski & Saumer, 2021).

Fortunately, good steps are being taken recently towards combating this in the industry, with class action lawsuits targeting two of the biggest companies in the United States - Activision Blizzard, and Riot Games. Both companies were subject to class action lawsuits by present and former employees to bring public awareness to the issue and bring some level of accountability to the abusers (Sinclair, 2022a; Rousseau, 2021). The action was also taken in

Europe when Ubisoft France laid off problematic staff and undertook a companywide restructuring as a result, dismissing employees who had for years gotten away with professional misconduct charges toward other employees (Valentine, 2020). These lawsuits and new whistleblowing policies enacted at the workplace allow for employees to anonymously report professional misconduct at the workplace and have it formally investigated, this should help in reducing incidents of sexual harassment and professional misconduct at the workplace, because now public opinion toward these issues has brought enough attention to the reputation of the company as well, to where ignoring them can be detrimental to its public image should any of the previously mentioned lawsuits occur again.

3.2 Bullying

Bullying in the workplace is also another major issue that has become prevalent in the workplace. It is an undesirable situation, and while one would assume that after we escape it as a student in academia, Jeffries (2020) puts it best - unfortunately, the business world often works the same way as high school does. Bullying can exist as a dispositional relationship and positional relationship as well, it can occur from workplace peers who may be our equal, who are on the same employment status as the employee (Cowie et al., 2002). Like mobbing, men, and women can equally be victims of the phenomenon, and both will have their own separate reasons for choosing to withhold reporting the experience to peers, co-workers, and superiors, and this is another reason why it continues to exist and flourish in the workplace today (Escartín, 2016). Bullying comes in many shapes and forms, and due to the variety of how it can be done, makes it a major threat to the safety, sanctity, and well-being of an office and the people working in it to function in a professional capacity.

Bullying in the gaming industry is equally a problem. In a report by Sinclair (2022b) these studios were originally appreciated and praised for presenting the gaming medium with beautiful, vibrant, and eye-catching visuals that helped in telling meaningful, heart-touching stories. Among these studios is Austria-based game developer, Moon Studios. Responsible for two entries in the Ori series - Ori and the Blind Forest & Ori and the Will of the Wisps, 2015 & 2020 respectively, the studio caught media attention in 2022 when the founders of the studio, Thomas Mahler and Gennadiy Korol, were accused by former and present employees of bullying which included inappropriate jokes (Sinclair, 2022b). Employees felt that they had to play along with the jokes or otherwise felt their jobs would be at risk.

According to York (2021) the two were not only abusive and unprofessional toward the employers, but towards each other as well, with employees citing both founders frequently having shouting matches with each other during office hours, and in one instance, arguing in front of the whole team during a meeting that lasted for an hour. The inappropriate jokes ranged from jokes about phallic members to even Hitler. The founder's jokes were described to be homophobic, sexist, racist, and even ableist in nature, and one employee who had worked at multiple game studios previously even said that their time at Moon Studios is the reason for their PTSD (Laschinger & Nosko, 2013) when it came to the mention of the

gaming industry, to the point where this anonymous employee even thought about changing fields if it meant escaping this industry. The studio was made up of more than 80 employees, and in this instance, when the culprits are the CEO's themselves, will HR really take the mantle in disciplining the leadership? (York, 2021).

In a report, People Make Games (2022) they interviewed employees of three different indie studios that all suffered at the merciless hands of the CEO of the development studio, and when the employees tried to reach out to the publisher of the title to intervene, they were met with resistance and inaction, as in the absence of a corporate structure, the employees felt that pressure from the publisher would help bring the workplace back to a professional track. Moreover, there are instances of these incidents documented with the catch of anonymity. However, the publisher failed to acknowledge or even take the complaints of these employees to any gravity, and instead presented inaction and allowed the bullying to prevail (Namie, 2003).

One of the first people reported in the People Makes Games (2022) was Ken Wong, the CEO of Mountains Games in Melbourne, Australia, who was frequently condescending and belittling toward his employees. Employees would eventually warn new hires that "it's not you. This is just how he acts". Employees reported being frequently publicly shouted at by Ken in front of other employees, effectively emotionally bullying these people. Even though the other employees in the room knew that Ken was the real villain, the person being lambasted still went through significant mental and physical trauma from the incident of being belittled in a room full of their peers with no tact or professionalism from their boss. Ken was often described as having a very short fuse, and belittling his employees for all other employees to see was routine for him. In a company-wide meeting, without Ken present, employees at the game company were asked blunt questions about the company and its reputation by the other founders of the company. At the time of the meeting, the staff of the studio was down to seven employees, and the leadership at the time asked the employees the following questions: 1. "Would you feel comfortable recommending Mountains as a workplace as it currently stands?", and 2. "In the last six months have you thought about leaving Mountains because of Ken?" The answer to the first question was six employees voted no and only one employee voted yes, and to the second question, six employees voted yes, and one employee voted no, this can explain why employees were reluctant on staying against a bad leader (Reina et al., 2018). The employees and leadership at the time would hope that the results from these questions would change the work environment of Mountains was futile as no action was taken against Ken, and ultimately, just like the other employees in these reports, would only walk away with scars from working in the gaming industry (People Make Games, 2022).

The next incident is of Steve Gaynor, a co-founder of Fullbright Studios, located in Portland, Oregon, the United States. A story of how toxic leadership was once again allowed to get away with treating employees with indignity (Carpenter, 2021; People Makes Games, 2022). Fortunately, this is one of the rare incidents where the problematic individual was made to leave the company, as a form of retribution for employees after several complaints. The video

again reiterates the reluctance of individuals to be directly named as they are criticizing someone of authority in the gaming industry and this can potentially jeopardize their future employment aspects. In his report, Carpenter (2021) outlines how Steve created a hostile working environment for women, especially something like what Ken Wong did, which was belittling female employees publicly in the office in the presence of the other employees of the company. There was a strong pattern of monthly departures from the company, particularly female employees. Steve was eventually made to take a mandatory leave from the company by the other heads of the company, but once again the damage had already been done, and not enough had been done to make amends for the people affected by Steve's actions.

Finally, the last incident from People Make Games (2022) report comes from Funomena and its co-founder, Robin Hunicke. The studio is in San Francisco, California, United States. Where Ken and Steve made public spectacles because of their attitudes, Robin would make it a point to air other people's private secrets in front of other employees. In a professional setting, Robin would make it a point to frequently talk about intimate parts of her employee's lives in a professional setting, and would break professional and personal boundaries, which is important for a workplace (Heite, 2012), with a few examples being talking about how an employee's messy breakup is messing up their work, or how an employee's troubles with their spouse at home is affecting their work at the company. These were not held in private meetings but rather shared publicly in a room full of people with the person being talked about spoken about by name by Robin. She basically made it a point to turn the office into an area of gossip with no awareness of how airing sensitive information like this impacts the mental health of the people she is directly talking about in front of others. These intimate conversations did not stop within the confines of Funomena either, Robin also discussed her employees' private lives with other members of the gaming industry as well, people who could be potential employers in the future. As always, when the CEOs were made the subject of an investigation about their actions, they did issue an apology, but the damage to present and former employees had been done (People Make Games, 2022).

Moreover, Yarwood (2022) reported another instance of bullying in the workplace is TT Games. A game development studio located in Maidenhead, United Kingdom. The name is synonymous with the Lego games mostly, and in 2022, after the launch of Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga, the studio racked up complaints of bullying among staff, and this was particularly strong in the case of female employees who were the biggest victims of this. Women at the company had crude and crass comments made about their appearance. In the report, Quality Assurance testers (QA) were treated as inferiors and weren't allowed to roam the other floors outside of their workspace without escort or supervision (Yarwood, 2022). When inquired about the working conditions portrayed by anonymous employees, a company spokesperson was quick to dismiss the claims and put forth the message that TT games a workplace that is respectful, fair, and inclusive, yet the company had incidents reported by employees anonymously that told a much different tale (Yarwood, 2022). According to Yarwood (2022) when employees of such incidents were asked about why they reported these incidents anonymously, many of them said that they wanted to stay in the videogames industry, and that their name getting out there can jeopardize their future career

prospects should they ever want to find another job (Whiting et al., 2021). This is a common complaint with these types of incidents, with even movements like #MeToo encouraging people to speak out about injustices, nothing protects them from the aspect of being looked over for a job because of their name showing up in a background check by a recruiter or employer who found their name in a news article online, and thus could be perceived as a problematic employee to have at the company. Many people cooperate with these outlets on the promise of anonymity and discretion, with many of them using their personal devices and online services like protonmail (a secure email communication medium) or apps like Signal to anonymously communicate their experiences with people who can be a voice for them and highlight the issue to the world, so that some level of accountability or justice can prevail, where the company was not able to do so on their own accord (Yarwood, 2022).

Further instances and records of bullying can be found in Jeffries' (2020) book, Bullyocracy, which highlights the story of Kevin Morrisey, a 52-year-old managing editor of the Virginia Quarterly Review for the University of Virginia, USA. Kevin tragically committed suicide, citing repeated bullying from his boss, Ted Genoways. Kevin had constantly told his sister, Maria Morrisey about the bullying he faced and how inaction occurred when Kevin tried to contact the university's ombudsman, human resources department, employee resource center, the university president, and the faculty. Kevin tried his best to complain about Ted up the hierarchical chain, but all of them went unattended. An anonymous colleague spoke about Kevin's tragedy stating, "Bullying seems to make it like sort of schoolyard thing… they didn't protect us" (p. 176). Ted would deny the accusations and instead blamed Kevin's suicide on a history of depression. However, employees at the university would anonymously report frequently hearing Ted shouting at Kevin loud enough that it could be heard through the door. Another anonymous employee shared the final efforts made by Kevin and them to demand action to be taken against Ted, to which the superior replied, "Working with creative people is sometimes difficult" (Sanchez, 2010).

Another incident from Jeffries (2020), talks about an incident in 2011, where a telecom engineer in Scotland was bullied to the point of suicide by his co-workers. David Orr, was a 21-year-old who committed suicide after his co-workers and management at BT Openreach, and the bullying would also continue outside of his workplace, impacting his social life. He shared his bullying ordeals with his friend who remained anonymous. The actions caused by his co-workers and superiors in and out of the workspace pushed him to the place where he took his own life. His mother requested the company to formally investigate the bullying allegations, but to her knowledge, they did their best to bury the incident behind them, and no accountability was ever given to her over the actions of the people involved in her son's demise (Jeffries, 2020, p. 178). Jeffries (2020, p. 181) also further discovered that employers are at times encouraged to be bullies and that they deliberately turn a blind eye to these incidents. Jeffries (2020) cites stories written online such as "Why Workplace Bullying Should Be Legal" (Lucas, 2011), in 2013 another similar piece was written that has the words "Lawsuits are a counterproductive way to reduce workplace suicides." directly below the headline as soon as you open the webpage (Kaiman, 2013). When there is a such sentiment being spread around about workplace bullying with an audience of potentially millions of

readers and viewers, this is bound to be the catalyst for many people to replicate the behaviour posted in these online articles, and for people to justify their actions. However, not all publications were pro-bullying, other publications would talk about the importance of countering it in 2008 with headlines such as "Employers Can't Ignore Workplace Bullies" (Klein, 2008). In 2014, the Gazette would also bring a spotlight to the issue with a similar themed article "When it comes to workplace bullying, employees have limited options" (The Gazette, 2014).

Furthermore, Jeffries (2020, p. 181) would go on to postulate that bullying can also be on a broad range of definitions. He postulates many questions such as if a boss can yell at an employee without being called a bully? He further references David Yamada, the director of the New Workplace Institute to say how bullying can have a varying definition based on the context, saying that it doesn't count as bullying if a person isn't a member of a protected class (sex, race, or other categories protected by discrimination law. There are also cases where bullying comes as a form of retaliation according to Yamada, because of whistleblowing or calling out the company's unethical practices, and this is where employee protection falls short (Jeffries, 2020, p. 181).

Jeffries (2020) further talks about bullying at the workplace as a prevalent behaviour that even employers turn a blind eye to. It was found that 72% of bullies were in positions above normal employees such as supervisors, and 53% of employers took no action when employees when a boss was reported for bullying, lastly, it was also found that 24% of employees who made the complaints were also fired, and this goes with his other findings that employees who experience bullying are hesitant on reporting it or confronting the bully (Jeffries, 2020, p. 181 - 182). Moreover, the chief of the Workplace Bullying Institute, Gary Namie, stated "Bullies sneak into companies disguised as high performers and desirably ambitious go-getters," which is why employers and bosses are less likely to act against them (Fisher, 2011).

In his other book, Survival of the Richest (Jeffries, 2017), talks about how physical appearances can also create a form of bias toward the action taken against them. With comparisons made to high school ecosystems. "Hot" females are the pursuit of the males and are the recipient of favourable treatment, and aggressive males have an evolution from everyday bullying to hazing and other behaviours similar to that of a frat boy, and deliberately targeting people who do not fit in the same class as them in terms of appearance, not being part of the clique or the "cool guys" of the office, and as such, target individuals they know are vulnerable and weak to bullying, because they hold a power hierarchy in the office that is difficult to contest, and complaining about the bully to HR would lead to possible retaliation (Bodensteiner, 2011). Jeffries comparisons to how the workplace operates similar to that of a high school/college is an astute observation, as we have seen throughout the incidents highlighted in the previous paragraphs, that Human Resources simply exists as a facade to appease a corporate structure, but when it comes to taking action against actual instigation at the workplace, particularly when a disposition of power is apparent, there is a clear bias and a lack of attention given from the company representative, and this, in turn, can lead to the dismissal, resignation, or even retaliation against the employee. Even with

whistle-blower policies, video game industry employees still sought to have their voices heard by the public because they knew that complaining within the company would only add to the file of complaints against that individual with no action being taken, but to bring the public eye to the company worked for a more desirable outcome (Rooij & Fine, 2019). A couple of examples of redemption for employees for the above can be the restructuring of Ubisoft France, and Steve Gaynor from Fullbright Studios, but for every victory, there are more defeats in the workplace where the abuser gets off with a slap on the wrist or barely any punishment (Carpenter, 2021; People Makes Games, 2022).

3.3 Mobbing

As discussed earlier, bullying is a social phenomenon that has existed for decades. It is something we experience throughout our life, mainly in places of collective gatherings such as schools, and at the workplace (Kurtulmuş, 2020). While the actions of bullying vary from one institution to the other, it is still a phenomenon that can greatly impact the mental, physical, emotional, and psychological health of an individual exposed to it, even creating Work-Family conflict in certain situations (Liang, 2019). The distinguishing feature of mobbing for the context of this study is classifying it as a group-based behaviour, where one malicious ringleader gathers other employees to intentionally sexually harass or otherwise deliberately make the life of another employee miserable at the workplace as defined by Leymann (1996).

The reasons or motives behind mobbing may or may not exist for the abuser, these can be a form of retaliation, where the victim reported the abuser, and they came to know about being reported by that employee, and now they have chosen to make it their deliberate intention to maliciously act toward the employee, knowing there is a great disposition of power for them to leverage on the victim (Mujtaba & Senathip, 2020). Workplace Mobbing and the Role of Human Resources Management. Even if retaliation is not involved, mobbing can also have racial, sexist, or other motivations behind it (Erdis et al., 2019). Further a study by Salin (2021) they did confirm that women still make up a majority of victims of bullying in the workplace, and men are also slowly becoming statistically relevant as well, especially when it came to self-reporting, where men lagged behind due to the societal expectations from them of not showing weakness and these findings were further corroborated by Rosander et al., (2020) where women reported higher levels of bullying than men, even with a follow-up to the study, women were more active in recognizing themselves as victims of bullying, but men were reluctant on labelling themselves as victims, and also participating in the follow-up.

One of the impacts of bullying at the workplace is how employees are more likely to have a higher intensity of turnover, particularly when they feel that management has not taken adequate or sufficient action, or any action at all in remedying the problematic workplace, despite complaints (Reknes et al., 2020). In his book, Bullyocracy, Jeffries (2020) details various accounts of men and women as victims of mobbing behaviour that spans several geographic regions. The majority of these are developed countries such as the UK, USA, and

Australia. The malicious actions of their co-workers have led these individuals to severely degraded mental health, they were forced to leave the workplace or quit working in the field or industry entirely due to these behaviours. Like sexual harassment, reporting mobbing behaviours to superiors yielded no positive results, and instead made the mobbing behaviour worse as retaliation was now added from the group. Research affirms that the expectation of a workplace being a place of fairness, respect, and safety is of paramount importance to its employees. Any deviation from these principles can lead to a company facing high turnover and even a negative perception of the employer. With such incidents gaining rampant occurrence regardless of location, it won't be soon until we see a rise in incidents of people leaving the industry entirely, attributing to the professional misconduct in the field that goes unpunished (McLaughlin et al., 2017). This could be the fault of management and their refusal of acting against male perpetrators of these incidents (Macdonald, 2020). One such incident is that of Michael Mercieca, who in 2014 was awarded $11.6 million in the form of damages due to being a victim of retaliation, bullying, and harassment (Craig, 2014). A similar case occurred in the UK in 2014 to Glen Hill, a former executive at Blackberry, who was also a victim of bullying and retaliation (BlackBerry executive wins £400,000 employment tribunal constructive dismissal claim, 2014). While these two individuals were able to get justice and see some accountability brought to their former employers, there are individuals who unfortunately saw no justice or were able to get a satisfactory ending to their trials and tribulations amidst mobbing. Such as, two women who worked for the New Hampshire Division of Child Support Services became the victims of mobbing and retaliation after reporting their supervisor for taking lunch breaks that would last for 2 hours. When the supervisor learned about being reported, she deliberately indulged in mobbing and bullying the two workers. The two women were also attacked by Lisa's clique of favoured employees who pushed the two victims to early retirement from the trauma caused to them through the mobbing efforts (Jeffries, 2020, pp. 173-174). In 2006, another case was of a young waitress in Australia, Brodie Panlock, a 19-year-old girl who committed suicide after being viciously bullied by four male co-workers (Jeffries, 2020, p. 177).

There are also instances where mobbing is seen as a form of tradition, or otherwise, as a way to welcome an employee into the fold, however, they refer to this as hazing, and in 2008, this would lead to the unfortunate suicide of a 17-year-old train builder by the name of Alec Meikle, after other employees of the company did workplace pranks on him, one of which caused him to have a welding accident knowing that it could risk the youths arm to ignite from the misstep. The employees justified their actions by saying they were also treated to similar "jokes" when they were first employed by the company by their senior staff (Jeffries, 2020, p. 179). Furthermore, mobbing is not something that is exclusive to the workplace but is also a dominant problem in the gaming world. In a study by Zajechowski (2022), over half the population of 1400 individuals polled and asked if they participated in online bullying, 55% of them responded with yes, 45% responded with no, and 40% of the victims of online bullying were targeted because of their gender with race, or ethnicity as another form of targeting someone for bullying. In addition, mobbing over here represented a unique aspect that it wasn't necessary for the people involved in the bullying to even know each other, there was effectively dogpiling occurring. One person would start the malicious behaviour toward

another player on their team due to their gender or race, and the other players on the team or the enemy would join in on the bullying without invitation or prompt from the person instigating the bullying. Where the previous instances of mobbing involved someone using their power in a company to follow their actions, bullying in online games requires only a single player to begin a domino effect of bullying toward another player (Zajechowski, 2022).

While video games do have preventive measures to discourage this behaviour in the form of banning problematic players through a reporting system, many people who are on the receiving end of the bullying still face mental health, physical health, or sleep problems from the bullying caused to them (Zajechowski, 2022). With the above study, we can see that mobbing is more closely associated with a domino effect than anything else. It's the opposite of the bystander effect where malicious action from one individual can prompt malicious actions from others towards a targeted individual. Mobbing has a lot of lasting effects for physical and psychological aspects as the victim may not understand the reason for being mopped, in a study by Tatar & Yuksel (2018), it was found that women in Turkey were the major victims of trauma. Many of the women were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Major Depressive Disorder according to the DSM-IV-TR. The studies and instances outlined above have shown that men and women are equally in a disposition of being vulnerable to mobbing, and an element of mobbing relies on power abuse by either a peer or someone with power above the employee, and HR is unable to act against them.

3.4 The Spill over of Professional Misconduct into One's Work-life (or work-family) Balance.

For modern-day individuals, work and family are interconnected (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). One can have a positive or negative interaction with the other and bring it to either location with them. However, for the purposes of this research, the researcher will keep it in one direction, examining how work can influence one's personal life, leading to family life, as this will cover individuals who may not necessarily have friends or family but are happy with their work and happy by themselves. Professional misconduct here is the combination of sexual harassment, mobbing, or bullying. Any individual(s) who participates in any of the behaviours is classified as someone who willingly took part in professional misconduct and as such, is contributing to the harmful effects of impeding the work-life balance of their fellow employee. While the abusers have justification for their actions and are ready to defend their behaviours, they are not the ones who face the actions of their consequences to the victim. We have seen from the previous passages that employees who are victims of professional misconduct, are most likely to quit their workplace, be pushed out of it due to the behaviour, or otherwise commit suicide, but let's look at the psychological and physiological health costs that come from these behaviours as well.

It goes without saying that behaviours stemming from professional misconduct have a significant impact on the mental and physical health of an employee. Talking about sexual harassment first, a study by Mushtaq et al., (2015) found a positive correlation between

nurses in public hospitals who were victims of sexual harassment at the hands of hospital staff, patients, and other people they encountered at the workplace. Nurses in the hospital would report high numbers of depression, anxiety, and stress, all of which are a combination of physiological and psychological effects of bullying. Similarly, in a systematic review by Lever et al., (2019), it was discovered that across forty-five papers, perceived bullying did have associations with mental health problems that led to psychological issues, burnout, depression, and even physical health troubles such as insomnia, and headaches, with bullied staff more likely to take sick leaves at a higher frequency. Lastly, for mobbing, Carnero et al., (2012) also discovered that workers who were the victims of mobbing at the workplace, had greater deficits in mental and physical health, than those who were not victims of mobbing.

As such, we have established that victims of professional misconduct are always going to suffer a combination of physiological and psychological ailments, that can adversely affect their work-life balance, as some of the effects such as depression, and anxiety will undoubtedly spill over into their homelife, leading to a work-life imbalance. This can further create conflicts for these affected individuals at home due to the trauma of the workplace following them, and from the previous examples in the literature, such as that of David Orr (Jeffries, 2020), should the bullying continue outside of the workplace, can also further cause the work-life balance of an individual to decline. This was further confirmed by Chan et al., (2022) where victims of bullying were more likely to face work-life imbalance. In addition, there are also instances where people who were once fond of the field, may entirely exit the industry, particularly individuals who frequently switch jobs in the same industry, only to find the same signs of toxic leadership or significantly stronger than the workplace they just left. A lot of attention needs to be brought to the role of human resources in playing a greater role in preventing incidents at the workplace, (Jeffries, 2020, p. 183). According to another research by Quick and Tetrick (2011), a person's employment (work) can have an impact on their family life, and work-family-conflict. This can be influenced positively and negatively by the employer, depending on their actions. Tepper (2000), with a sample of 390 individuals, also wanted to look at how abusive supervision is and speculated that employees who were treated badly by their bosses would be more likely to report less fairness and experience more work-family conflict. His discovery was that the more equity and justice that was observed in a workplace, the better the work-family conflict in an individual employee, and vice versa. This evidence helps to support the idea that general workplace unfairness could play a role in influencing work-family conflict.

The stress of working in an unsafe environment can have a negative impact on the emergency nurse's physical and mental health. Every day's stress has an impact on their job performance, productivity, and interest in daily duties (Luong & Green, 2023). Workplace abuse and stress have been linked to poorer mental health, including sleep problems, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and symptoms, and psychological distress (Gunnarsdottir et al., 2006; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2016, Gale et al., 2019). Moreover, bullying impacts both the person being bullied and his emotional and physical health, as well as the working environment, which affects coworkers and viewers of the incident. Bullying has a negative impact on workplaces and employee well-being. Bullying can cause depression,

anxiety, sleep difficulties, stress disorder, and other mental diseases in persons (Einarsen & Mikkelsen 2003). People who are bullied exhibit greater degrees of irritability and much higher levels of anxiety than non-bullied persons. Other characteristics associated with bullied persons include low self-esteem, depression, and stress disorder systems (Bowling & Beehr 2006; Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2002; Suggala et al., 2020).

Bowling and Beehr (2006) found that anxiety and depression are opposing behaviours at work that correlate positively, leading to a greater desire to quit. Longitudinal studies show that bullying and stress have a negative impact on the victim's physical well-being, resulting in cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal issues, and other health problems. According to Magee et al. (2017), health concerns seen as a result of bullying included feelings of irritability and/or vulnerability while at work, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem. Similarly, according to a statistic, in 2010, found by the Workplace Bullying Institute, the Human Resources Department only resolved instances of bullying 3% of the time (Namie, 2010), which once again is like the resolution rates of schools for the same phenomenon. As such, we can draw the conclusion that your work life can have a significant impact on your personal life as well and can also affect the family of an employee too. While physiological and psychological health are affected by the workplace, further complications can affect one's personal life, such as their relationship with their spouse, children, partner, or others. It's not uncommon for incidents at the workplace to be the reasons behind divorce, breakups, separations, and more (Bianchi, 2011). Another study Neff and Karney (2009) confirms that workplace stress can indeed play a role in couples staying together.

4   METHOD

4.1 Research Design

The researcher in this study utilized a mixed method research design to use a combination of Quantitative Narrative Analysis, and Qualitative Thematic Analysis.

4.1.1 Quantitative Narrative Analysis

Following a guide from Franzosi (2012), the researcher was able to work on Quantitative Narrative Analysis (QNA) as an approach for operationalizing and quantifying agency. By utilising the SVOs (Subject, Verb, Object) sets of SVOs (Subject, Verb, Object) organized in predictable sequences and where in narrative S are actors and V are acts, QNA organizes the information contained in narrative texts. When the method was first introduced was to assess social actors pertaining to certain acts of social unrest rather than just discussing variable. This served as rationale for conducting QNA as same idea was intercepted for current study

as the researcher intended to identify actors such as company's superiors, HR or any other concerned person involved in professional misconduct. Moreover, the researcher also paired QNA in order to make thematic analysis and coding less complicated as without employing this technique there would have been the need to do excessive coding for assessing the number of times each type of harassment was reported by the researcher which was also a threat to authenticity of thematic analysis as while conducting thematic analysis, we are not concerned with numbers but in-depth analysis and narrative description. In this study QNA was induced, as data was first sought to identify the essence, nature, the words, and content that the participants would repeat about the questions asked during interviews that were put into interview transcripts for the purposes of QNA and Thematic Analysis. Following the script of questions that were a mix of introductory rapport building questions asking about basic identifying characteristics about them such as age, occupation, how long they had been with the company, and if they were married or not, etc. to questions that were directly related to the research, that directly asked them about them witnessing or being a part of professional misconduct in the workplace as a victim.

Further, moving towards QNA specific justification from Franzosi (2012) stating that QNA is known as a technique to identify characteristics of incidents such as actors and actions for which there is no minimum requirement for sample size identified. Moreover, it is also highlighted that saturation point for collecting data is considered as landmark for sufficient data to conduct QNA (Franzosi, 2012) so, the sample size for conducting quantitative narrative analysis fits for this study.

4.1.2 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was done after quantitative narrative analysis. For Thematic Analysis, Braun and Clarke (2021) work was followed. The rationale for conducting a thematic analysis was to identify themes based on repeated patterns found in data collected through interviews and utilize those themes to answer research problems for current study. Thematic analysis intended to analyse different perspective of participants regarding occurrence of professional misconducts, productive solutions to control as well as its impact on their work-life balance   Further, for thematic analysis thorough notes were taken about what they said at the time of the interview to identify and write words that they repeated at the time of the interview, and what was the main theme of the answers they were giving. This way, it was possible to listen attentively to their answers and to identify a theme from the interview at the time by keeping a track of keywords relevant to the topic, and after the interview, keywords, and sentences were pointed out and sorted them within themes relevant to this research.

Braun & Clarke (2021) mentioned the criteria for conducting thematic analysis with at least 10-12 interviews and our sample of interviews was 15 interviews which also qualified for thematic analysis. Both quantitative narrative analysis and qualitative thematic analysis were performed on data retrieved from the participants' interview whereas one was focused on quantitative description for types of professional misconducts and its actors. Whereas the

other was focused on detailed presentation of participants perspectives on the process of professional misconduct and its consequences.

4.2 Participants and Selection

In this study, researcher aimed to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with open ended questions as semi-structured allows researcher to collect data through focused questioning within a pre-planned topic with framework while the order and phrasing of question can be decided as the interviews progresses (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Considering the benefits semi-structured interviews were conducted with video game industry companies that were recognized with the following categories: had high levels of turnover over the past 2 years from news reports, individuals from 2 companies located in the USA, and 2 companies located in Europe were chosen, discriminately find former and present employees at these companies. A participant was chosen from these companies because the company had high reports of professional misconduct, were the main subject of scrutiny in major news stories, participants selected had to be with the company for a minimum of 2 years (before 2021) to qualify for the interview, cut off age for the employee was 35, with the minimum age for consideration being 22 as this is the age where workplace misconduct seems to affect the most (Chinni, 2017). Moreover, it was also convenient for researcher to access these age groups. After the selection of participants employees were contacted on 2 major social media platforms where it would be easy to reach these individuals - LinkedIn and Twitter. Each participant was personally approached with a formal introduction (See Appendix A) of this research's aim and scope, and intention of interviewing them. Once they agreed, an information letter and consent form (See Appendix B) could be forwarded to them to properly make them aware of my intentions, the purpose of the study, and their rights as a participant. Thirty (30) employees of varying ages and genders were approached and narrowed down for final selection to 15 employees. The final tally came to 8 female and 7 male employees who all met the qualifying criteria for my studies mentioned earlier. 7 of the participants were from the United States, and 8 of the participants were from Europe.

Participants who were from the USA and worked for the two companies will be marked as Company 1 and 2, and participants from the EU will be marked as Company 3 and 4. These will represent different individuals working in different companies within the EU and USA.

Table 1: Details of the participants in the study

No.	Age	Gender	Years At Workplace	Company Location	Company Number
IP 1 – B.W	24	M	2	USA	1
IP 2 – I.J	30	F	4	EU	3
IP 3 – P.G	28	M	5	USA	2
IP 4 – H.G	26	F	3	USA	1
IP 5 – K.S	34	M	6	EU	4
IP 6 – F.P	25	M	3	USA	2
IP 7 – E. F	32	M	4	EU	3
IP 8 – J.K	24	F	3	EU	4
IP 9 – L.D	33	F	2	USA	1
IP 10 – M.S	22	M	2	USA	2
IP 11 – G.H	23	F	2	EU	4
IP 12 – B.S	35	F	6	USA	2
IP 13 – C.C	30	F	2	EU	3
IP 14 – S.B	31	M	3	EU	4
IP 15 – Q.Y	25	F	4	EU	3

4.3 Data Collection & Materials

The data collection started with a letter of introduction, and signing a digital consent form, after which the participants were further made aware of their role as a participant before the interview, their rights, and ability to opt out of the study at any time, with the right to data deletion to the point of the thesis being published. The interviews (See Appendix C) were conducted over Google Meet as that was the most requested platform by the participants, and researcher was obligated to comply by their request. Researcher further began with rapport building questions such as asking their name, designation, time with the company, what studios they worked at before joining the present etc, their experiences with that studio versus the present workplace, and later went to main questions outlined in the interview guide at the end of this paper. Questions from interview protocol were basically based on four dimensions, i.e., Dealing with professional misconduct, Experiences, and reactions to professional misconduct, controlling professional misconduct and Harms to work-life balance. All the data that was recorded was using a voice recording software during the

meeting on my personal computer, no video of the participants was captured, and each participant interview is currently labelled with their real-name initials, and 9 of the participants have requested for their initials to be changed for the thesis. Afterwards all the interviews were transcribed by the researcher personally keeping it closely relevant to each participant's true intent within their responses.

4.4 Data Analysis

For data analysis, QNA methods outlined in Franzosi (2012) and thematic analysis from Braun & Clarke (2021) were conducted. The main idea for QNA and thematic analysis is all about reading the content repeatedly and forming your own coding for what is there and assigning them the right label so that you can form a connection between what was said, and what you are looking for through the questions asked during interviews. QNA looked for how many times a word was said by several participants, such as sexual harassment, bullying, or manager, while a thematic analysis presented for attaching their sentiment to the theme, such as when talking about sexual harassment, they would talk about how they felt helpless at witnessing an incident and did not wish to report out of safety for their own job.

For QNA, two main tables were generated, one table depicted the people the employees deemed responsible for the misconduct at all levels (labelled as table 5.1.), as these were names or roles repeated throughout the interviews, and the second table (labelled as table 5.2.) talked about the acts or actions done by the people in table 5.1.

Further, qualitative thematic analysis (labelled as table 5.14.), aimed to identify common sentences spoken by the participants in relation to all of these for generating codes for responses which further categorized under different categories. And finally, 4 main themes were structured such as Dealing with professional misconduct, Experiences, and reactions to professional misconduct, controlling professional misconduct and Harms to work-life balance.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations according to American Psychological Association, and EU General Data Protection Regulation standards have been followed. The participants were fully aware of the nature, purposes, and intent of the study as the researcher briefed them about the purpose of this study through the information letter (Appendix A). Their company name, their name, city, and other identifying details will not be mentioned in the thesis, 9 of the participants requested for their initials to be changed in the thesis, and 6 are okay with us using their real name initials in the thesis, but not to be identified by company name or other ways of being identified by their employer or anyone else. Moreover, participants' exact stories were not reported in analysis only their perspectives were included anonymously. So,

the researcher made sure to practice information requirement, consent requirement, confidentiality and secrecy requirement just as suggested in Good Research Practice manual.

5   RESULTS

The results are based on 15 Google Meet interviews (n=15), that made up 7 male employees, and 8 female employees aged between 22 and 35, the individuals are based across four companies from two different continents (2 in the USA, and 2 in Europe). Both groups of participants were victims of professional misconduct during their past or present employment with the company, and talked extensively about how it affected their professional, and personal life.

5.1 Quantitative Narrative Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the researcher listened through participants responses and identified most repeated words from their responses. This identification was made for two purposes; one was to identify actors responsible for professional misconduct and the second was related to identification of most frequently recorded professional misconduct.

Table 5.1: Employees Deemed Responsible for The Misconduct at All Levels by Participants (QNA Table)

Employees said were responsible for professional misconduct	Frequency
Co-worker	73
Manager	64
Supervisor	32
Project Lead	27
Superior	25
CEO	21
HR	15

Table 5.1. tells us the frequency certain words appeared from participants who were interviewed. The researcher took the word from the transcripts where the employee in the above table would be used in a negative context, i.e., were asked who they felt was responsible for the change in atmosphere at the office, and how it impacted their professional and personal life. One of the participants mentioned that,

"There would be laughter in the office, but at the expense of others - us". IP3

These individuals may or may not have been directly involved in the incident, but they were also aware of the incident and chose to not take action to stop the professional misconduct from occurring or further spreading. Further another participant highlighted that,

"We would see HR eating lunch and talking with the people we reported, we knew their friendship would let them ignore our complaints". IP5

These words were spoken by the participant in context to the role of the employee in a negative aspect because they were either the individual that were the cause of the professional misconduct, or were involved in directly hiding or letting the professional misconduct continue, fully aware that it was affecting the office environment as reflected in a response from one of the participants that,

"They knew they have extraordinary power, and they were proud of it". IP3

Table 5.2: Behaviours Identified by The Participants That Occurred at The Workplace. (QNA Table)

Actions that were recorded as professional misconduct	Frequency
Sexual harassment	67
Sexist jokes	57
Bullying	51
Homophobic jokes	44
Inappropriate physical contact	39
Mobbing	29

Table 5.2. tells us the frequency of times professional misconduct behaviour was mentioned by each interview candidate in summation during the interview. These were words that frequently came up in each question and had a lot of occurrences.
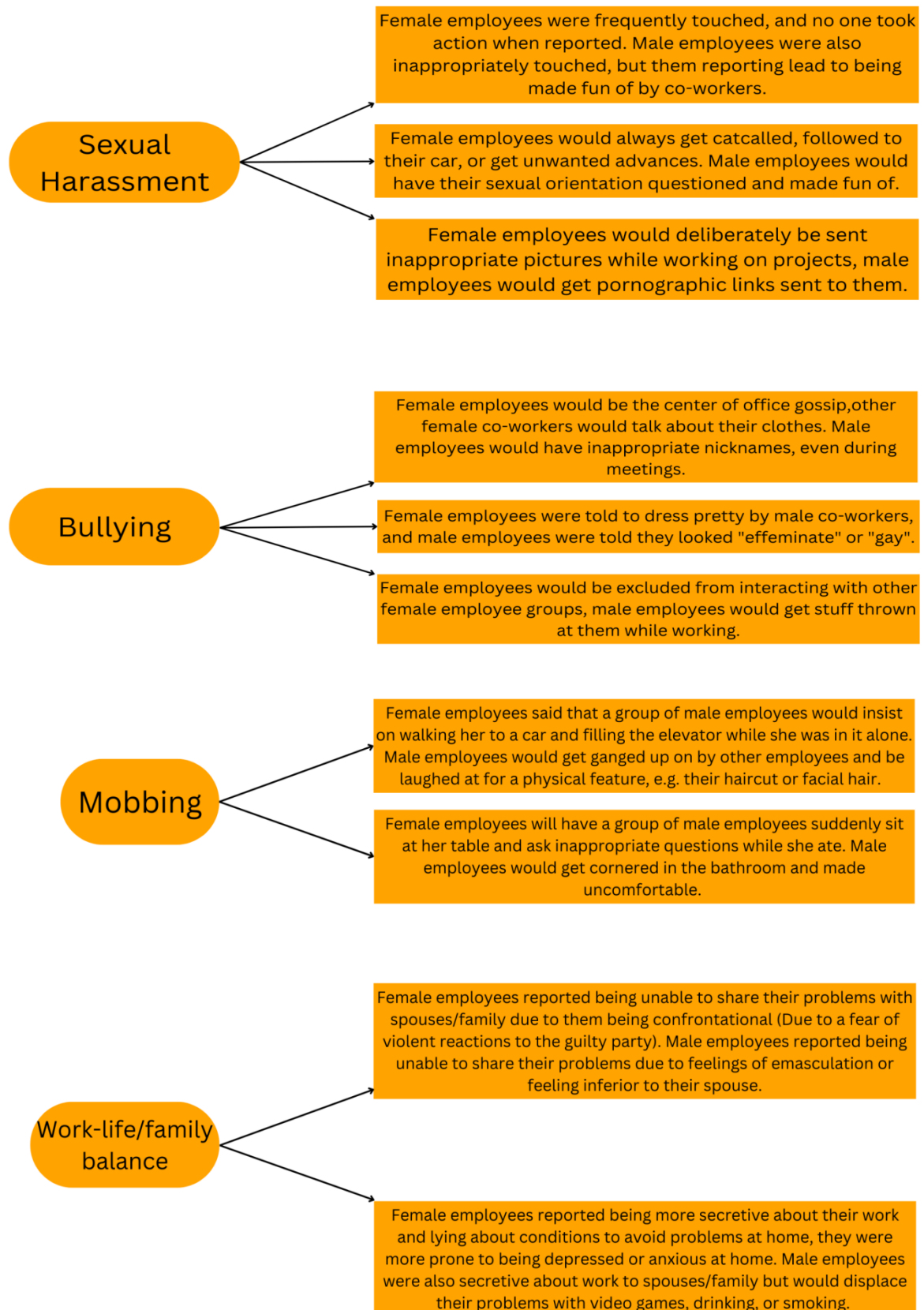
Sexual Harassment
- Female employees were frequently touched, and no one took action when reported. Male employees were also inappropriately touched, but them reporting lead to being made fun of by co-workers.
- Female employees would always get catcalled, followed to their car, or get unwanted advances. Male employees would have their sexual orientation questioned and made fun of.
- Female employees would deliberately be sent inappropriate pictures while working on projects, male employees would get pornographic links sent to them.

Bullying
- Female employees would be the center of office gossip, other female co-workers would talk about their clothes. Male employees would have inappropriate nicknames, even during meetings.
- Female employees were told to dress pretty by male co-workers, and male employees were told they looked "effeminate" or "gay".
- Female employees would be excluded from interacting with other female employee groups, male employees would get stuff thrown at them while working.

Mobbing
- Female employees said that a group of male employees would insist on walking her to a car and filling the elevator while she was in it alone. Male employees would get ganged up on by other employees and be laughed at for a physical feature, e.g. their haircut or facial hair.
- Female employees will have a group of male employees suddenly sit at her table and ask inappropriate questions while she ate. Male employees would get cornered in the bathroom and made uncomfortable.

Work-life/family balance
- Female employees reported being unable to share their problems with spouses/family due to them being confrontational (Due to a fear of violent reactions to the guilty party). Male employees reported being unable to share their problems due to feelings of emasculation or feeling inferior to their spouse.
- Female employees reported being more secretive about their work and lying about conditions to avoid problems at home, they were more prone to being depressed or anxious at home. Male employees were also secretive about work to spouses/family but would displace their problems with video games, drinking, or smoking.

Figure 5.1: Behaviours identified by the participants that occurred at the workplace – the incidents of participants summed up in their respective themes (Thematic Analysis)

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5.1.1 Sexual Harassment

Across the interviews, the participants reported high incidents of the phenomenon occurring at their workplace, even after the safety measures of policies such as whistleblowing being implemented. Participants told about their own experiences at the company, including major ones that were covered by the traditional and gaming press. They stated that the incidents were traumatic and significantly changed the office atmosphere. Some of the companies did go through restructuring or laying off problematic staff, but even that was not enough to stop the incidents from happening again shortly after new staff were brought on. There were still problematic individuals in the company, who started the regiment again.

Employees at the company recalled their own incidents and incidents that happened to their co-workers where they were part of the bystander effect. At one point a participant responded that,

"My boss would forcefully sit beside me during lunch, and in the start, he only talked about what I studied, how I got into the field, but he later started making physical advances to me under the table. I told HR, he was put on 2 months of paid leave" IP2

To this another participant added,

"I once came into the office with a pride shirt on. One co-worker grabbed my butt while I was using the copy machine and said if you wanted to sleep with me you don't have to hide it." IP6

Furthermore, sexual harassment was the most repeated problem as per participants as one of them said that,

"My boss would frequently come to my desk and get really close to my hair. I knew he was sniffing my hair, but I just felt frozen. I couldn't do anything". IP1

They wanted to help, but feared for their own job security or retaliation due to the person committing the sexual harassment being someone who was very well-connected to HR. The employees also said that whistle-blowing was just a placebo, as per response from one of the participants said that,

"I once reported a co-worker for making fun of a co-worker who lost their hair to ongoing cancer treatment to their face, HR emailed me back stating it was not my place to talk for others" IP3

As HR would easily share the details of the complainant to the person being reported, which defeats the purpose of the policy.

Female employees reported catcalling, being groped in enclosed and open spaces without any fear and would also get inappropriate images or emails containing profanity. They also reported being made uncomfortable in the elevator, as can be assessed through this response from a participant that,

"I was always followed from cubicle to my car by a co-worker. He would deliberately stand close to me in an empty elevator, ask me inappropriate questions in the silence, and take pictures of my cars license plates as I drove away" IP4

As when anyone would see her taking the elevator to the car park, male employees would deliberately enter the elevator with her, follow her to her car slowly, and watch her drive away, with many men in her proximity making rude gestures, and others would laugh.

Another participant raised the point of difference in turnover between male and female employee as she said that,

"We had a female CEO always bullying women in the office. She once asked me if it was my 'time of the month' during a company meeting in a conference room when I asked about being paid overtime for an upcoming project. I was told by other co-workers that women don't last long in the company". IP2

Employees also stated that turnover at the company had decreased ever since the major incident, but turnover, particularly for new female employees, and experiences female employees was steadily rising, but not as high before the major incident occurred. Women are still the highest reported victims of sexual harassment across all 4 companies, and the participants also shared their regrets of not doing enough to help victims due to the previously addressed concerns (job security & retaliation). It was common practice in the company for individuals committing the act to work in groups, and anyone who would intervene in their efforts, especially a woman, would become an added victim of the bullying as well, with some incidents going into making her personal life also difficult, by contacting her outside of work hours, or finding her personal social media account and sending inappropriate images and messages.

Male participants also shared their experiences of sexual harassment, by male and female colleagues alike. As one of the participants said that,

"A female co-worker once sat on my desk and said if I don't go on a date with her to make her ex jealous, she would tell everyone that I sexually assaulted her" IP7 .

Male colleagues would frequently send them inappropriate pictures or links to gay porn sites that would have the subject of "found out what you did before coming here" or similar titles. They also reported being physically grabbed in their private areas but complaining to HR only lead to the complaint getting spread as office gossip and the employee being ridiculed as a participant clearly mentioned that,

"I once reported a female co-worker for grabbing my genitalia in the elevator and laughing to HR. HR responded by saying it wasn't a serious complaint that did not warrant an investigation". IP 6

It was also frequent for homophobic jokes and pranks to take place, where one male employee told their story of how they found an adult toy glued to their work desk when they came back from a lunch break, another participant mentioned that,

"I had recently come out as gay to a co-worker, but they spread the word around the office. One day after I came back from lunch and found an adult toy glued to my work desk".IP5

5.1.2 Bullying

As far as bullying was concerned the participants shared their views that gossip and office politics were the biggest reasons behind workplace bullying. Men and women were equally the subject and targets of gossip and politics, whether they wanted to or not. As one participant confirmed that,

"I was new in the office, but rumors and gossip had already spread about me because of me wearing a flashy outfit to make myself feel good. Female co-workers spread word that I do onlyfans on the side, and men said I must be an adult film star after work". IP4.

Moreover, it could be triggered by anything, from a woman coming into office with a new dress, or even just makeup, or a man coming in with a new haircut or shave. Such as one of the participants added that,

"Women would be commented on for how they would dress" - "she is dressing up for a promotion" and men would be commented on "his husband probably did that to him" are a few quick comments participants had to share. IP7

Female co-workers would be the biggest culprits in spreading gossip about other female employees, and male employees would be the biggest culprits when it came to making inappropriate nicknames for other male co-workers at the office, and making sure they stayed, even in a professional environment like a meeting, where the nickname would make the whole room laugh. A woman who wore simple clothes, would get comments of "dressing poor" by her female colleagues, while a man who would wear clothes that were deemed too colourful, would be commented on by male co-workers as "effeminate", "gay" or other homophobic slurs would be used. Female employees who would wear modest clothing, would be told to dress better if they wanted a promotion, and male employees were again part of homophobic conversations with questions like "did your husband dress you up today?".

Lastly, men and women were equally victims of direct bullying, where female employees would try to sit with other female employees, would make the others immediately leave the table, and she would be sitting alone, as the women who walk away laugh at her, and men while working, would have soft and hard objects thrown at their heads at random, with no one taking responsibility to say who threw the object. This was clear through interviews as a participant said that,

"I was working at my desk, and I felt soft objects hit me. I knew giving them attention would be bad and I ignored it, but the following days I would get hit on the head by a pen, a cardboard tube, and the worst one was a small water balloon". IP11

The objects ranged from a fidget spinner to a stapler on one occasion.

5.1.3 Mobbing

Male and female employees equally shared experiences of mobbing occurring, but women were the biggest victims of it. Women would frequently be crowded up on by seven to eight men around her desk, and the men would insist on escorting her to her car for their safety, even when she rejected their help, they would still wait for her to get up and follow her to wherever she went. One of the research participants highlighted this same issue that,

"It was a crowd of four or five men, always keeping me in the centre of a circle, and staring at me. I would try to go into a corner or away from them, but they would just change their stance and still glare at me and laugh". IP12

Female employees equally did the same to other women, where they would all gather on a woman's desk and open the contents of her desk drawer and throw stuff on the floor, including private possessions such as feminine hygiene products for the whole office to see.

Male employees also reported their mobbing incidents where after a new employee came into the workplace, or any new male employee would come in the office, would get ganged up on by six or seven other male co-workers, and they would physically touch their hair, pull on his shirt, and make efforts to try and pull down the pants of the employee while standing, and if sitting, would try and deliberately spill liquids on the clothes if they were sitting.

In another incident, female employees would report eating lunch with a group of men suddenly sitting at her table and asking her personal questions -

"are you pregnant?", "are you seeing anybody? I bet they're not as hot as me", etc. IP13

Male employees would also be made uncomfortable in the bathroom, they would go in alone, and immediately be followed in with four or five other men who would either make attempts to try pull the pants of the employee or pretending to attack the bathroom stall door with their arms or legs threatening to "break down the door". This is the reality for male and female employees on an almost daily basis. Individuals who just want to come into work and earn a salary with peace of mind are unable to do so without being part of a malicious gang on both sides.

5.1.4 Work-life/family balance

When asked about what their family or spouses thought of the situation at work, all of the employees responded by saying they're too afraid of telling their family or spouse about the reality they face every day. As one of the participants added that,

"My father is a gun nut. If he heard about what is happening he will force me to take the gun with me to work to scare them and that is just out of the question for me" IP14

 And the same point was again proposed another participant that,

"My mother is a retired catholic school teacher, she is very strict on discipline and always found a way to blame me for being the victim – 'this happens because you don't go to church' would be her only response to my problems". IP12

Men and women equally report feelings of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, and stress, as some of the other employees continue the activities outside of work as well with prank calls or messages. Female participants said they fear telling family because their father, brother, fiancé, or husband would just go into the office and make the situation worse by confronting her bullies, and male participants shared that they don't want to feel weak or emasculated to their spouse or family, particularly due to their culture as well, where men are not allowed to be weak. As we investigate their exact words it was said by a female participant that

"My family is from India, and when we first came here, my father and mother detested western fashion. He always taunts me how dressing like 'them' (the average American woman) is me asking for trouble as it invites men to assault you". IP9

Men were able to cope with their situation by displacing their issues through video games, drinking, smoking, or other activities, and women would cope with the situation with drinking, smoking, and spending time with a loved one or pet. Women also shared that they are equally reluctant on sharing the reality of their work with friends and family due to how they would respond. Women will fear that their spouse or family will say "this is what happens when you dress like that", or other victim-blaming statements. Men equally said that they will be told "be a man, confront your bullies." "We raised you better" or "I can't believe I'm dating such a coward".

5.2   Qualitative Analysis

The analysis was primarily conducted for each interview question representing codes with their detailed description based on the responses of participants. As discussed earlier, quantitative narrative analysis intended to present data in numeric form related to actors and action involved in professional misconduct whereas it lacked detailed narratives from participants related to different aspects of professional misconduct such as how they felt about it, how they reacted and what is their expectations from higher authorities? All these aspects were important for answering research questions for this study. For this same reason thematic analysis was conducted. Afterwards, thematic analysis, with tables were conducted to create systematic representation of participants' perspectives and to help give a picture of what the individuals experienced through the interview questions, and how they were impacted by the incidents of professional misconduct.

Codes	Description
Reported but no action (P − 14)	Fourteen of the participants tried to contact authority figures and no action was taken.
Not reported (P − 1)	One was able to get a semi-amicable resolution.

Table 5.3 is a two-part question where participants were asked if they were able to bring order to the office environment. Participant No. 2 stated that,

"I was always getting catcalled, having my feminine hygiene products thrown back and forth by men around the office, and women would call me horrible words to my face. I reported all of this to my supervisor. He laughed and said, "they're just teasing you".

Participant No. 7 stated that,

"I emailed HR when one of my co-workers forcefully followed me to my car several times and would take pictures of my car as I was driving away. HR responded by putting him on a paid leave for 2 months."

Just as the participants mentioned most of the time victims of professional misconduct report their problem seeking productive solutions and got ignored due the hierarchy of the office environment.

Table 5.4: Can You Tell Me About the Employee Who Was the Target of The Incident?

Codes	Description
Female (P − 13)	Thirteen participants reported women as the biggest victims
Male (P − 2)	Two participants reported men as the major victims.

Table 5.4 asks participants about the gender for incidents of professional misconduct. Participant No. 4 stated that,

"Our company is notorious for women not making it past seven months of employment. The women who have been there the longest are the ones who are in senior positions, and they actively play a role in the bullying and harassment of female employees. One of my female bosses during a meeting directly addressed a new female employee as "the office tranny" because she had a name that sounded like a boy name. The same employee would resign the next month. It was also common for groups of men and women to gang up together on a woman's desk and ask her questions like "how many men have you slept with so far?" or "I bet you are the slutty drunk".

Participant No. 14 stated that,

"We did have women as victims of all kinds of professional misconduct, but the stuff I have seen happen to men is shocking. The most horrifying was when I once saw a man surrounded by a circle of female employees, armed with tasers and pepper spray. They each took turns in teasing him, spraying him, and laughing until he passed out from the pain. The women were still teasing his corpse to make sure he wasn't faking it. I just saw other men and women cheer them on, record the incident and I was in the back holding back tears."

So, the professional misconduct was not just exclusive for females as at some point male participants complained about being bullied and mobbed which caused be emotional damage.

Table 5.5: Was There an Inciting Incident That Led to Your Departure or Was It More of An Accumulation of Minor Events That Were Not Handled?

Codes	Description
Accumulated problems (P – 13)	Thirteen of the participants outlined how bullying, sexual harassment, mobbing, inappropriate physical contact, sexist, and homophobic jokes were rampant in the company.
Minor problems (P – 2)	Two participants reported minor incidents such as bullying that was not as severe but there would be troubling incidents at least once a month.

Table 5.5 shares how participants perceived a pileup of incidents as their choice to depart from the company. Participant No. 8 stated that,

"It was an on and off again type situation. One week will be trouble free and we would be at peak productivity, the next week will be full chaos with men gathering at a woman's desk out of nowhere and going through her desk drawers and purse. And the week after that, pure silence again. It was a very weird environment, and we never knew why it followed this bizarre pattern".

And participant No. 12 stated that,

"I would always be followed into the bathroom by other men and be called homophobic slurs, they would attempt to pull my pants down, and aggressively knock on the door while I would be in the stall shouting threats like we will break the door down or put their phone under the door stall to take pictures of me. I would always use the bathroom of the neighbouring office as I feared using the company one".

These responses from participants shows the consequences of such incidents as participant developed sense of insecurity while going anywhere, especially alone. Such uncomfortable environments might stunt professional growth and creativity in employees, and this is also a setback to company's reputation.

Table 5.6: Did The Incident Impact Your Perspective of The Company? Did You Think About Switching Workplaces After It Occurred?

Codes	Description
Wanted to switch (P − 10)	Ten of the participants expressed wishes to be able to switch jobs but unable to find jobs that matched their current job.
Able to switch (P − 5)	Five participants were able to find better jobs.

Table 5.6 talks about participants being able to leave the job. During interview participant No. 2 stated that,

 "All of the incidents at the workplace (before being featured in publications, and even after it) have made me feel like a prisoner, I no longer feel like an employee, I feel like a new inmate in jail, ready to be picked on at any time. I have been trying for the past eight months to get out of this place. The industry is currently undergoing a lot of layoffs and downsizing. Competitors are hiring talented and experienced individuals for insultingly low pay. My skills only work in video games, and for movies. I am unable to afford the living expenses of California, so I must find something in video games or just give up. I am hopeful that something opens in the future, but until then, I have to tough it out here."

Participant No. 7 stated that,

"At the time of a contract renewal, I hesitated and asked for some extra time to consider. I cited family problems as the reason and my supervisor understood. My friend called me the next day and offered me a job at his new indie studio funded by a very prominent investor. He says he can match my pay and benefits at my present job within four months, and thankfully our first project did well enough for me to see that promise through and get a hefty bonus. It feels much more liberating to work for a company where I don't have to worry about being followed to my car, the bathroom, or be suddenly surrounded by a group of men or women."

These responses from participants clarifies that if their company remains unable to provide mental peace at the workplace then their employee might leave sooner or later once, they find a way which might create a void in talented resources of company exiting en masse.

Table 5.7: Was This an Isolated Incident or Were You Aware of Previous Smaller Interactions That Were Left Unchecked

Codes	Description
Aware (P – 10)	Ten of the participants heard stories from other friends in the industry but dismissed it as hearsay.
Unaware (P – 5)	Five were fresh graduates and did not know what to anticipate.

Table 5.7 shows us how participants were semi-aware of the incidents that they would be in for. Participant No. 5 stated that,

"I always thought my friends were joking – I would never imagine a workplace in a developed country could have such cruel acts occur. I expected this behaviour from offices back in my home country."

Moreover, participant No. 3 stated that,

"This was my first job and a friend warned me about the company. I thought she was just trying to scare me but on my first day a group of male employees whistled as I walked out of the elevator just for wearing a new dress."

As most employees were aware of such situations before signing their contracts but overlooked which implies that it is quite necessary to do a background check before taking up the job to avoid such experiences.

Table 5.8: How Did This Affect Your Personal Relationship with The Workplace? Did You Feel a Shift in Attitudes and Behaviours After the Incident?

Codes	Description
Unsafe (P – 11)	Eleven participants reported feeling unsafe at work
Optimistic (P – 4)	Four participants reported being optimistic about change to come

Table 5.8 tells us that participants were mostly unsafe in their workplace. During interviews participant No. 10 stated that,

"After a year, I was only able to keep my sanity because of seeing a therapist four times a week. Without her I would have done the unthinkable by now. The bullying has gone down significantly, but I still don't feel safe when I clock in. I always must be careful about going to lunch, opening emails, or even using the bathroom."

Further Participant No. 12 added,

"I heard a rumour that the company was being acquired and we were all optimistic on the senior staff getting severance due to the new company wanting to bring in their own people at a senior level. We are hopeful that the new management we get will not carry on the traditions of their predecessors."

Participants reported feeling a disconnect between their work and how they would look to leave as soon as the workday was over with no interest in pursuing overtime. There were, however, some employees optimistic about change due to the company getting acquired and coming under new leadership.

Table 5.9: Would You Still Recommend Your Place of Work as a Safe Environment to Others? Has The Incident Changed How the Company Works or Not?

Codes	Description
No (P – 15)	All fifteen participants voted unanimously

Table 5.9 shows that all fifteen participants had no confidence in ever recommending their place of work to anyone else. They all told me incidents of how they would actively meet other young talent at conventions who would say phrases like "I can't wait to make video games for a living just like you!". Many of the participants wished they could have spoken to the youth and warned them about the dangers of the industry then. Such as participant No. 4 stated that,

"After our company name came up in the headlines, I still get asked by people at conventions, events, bars, etc. if my company has changed. I always make it a point to tell them as clearly as possible "DO NOT WORK HERE". I try to make sure I have the most serious face and tone to make sure there is no mixed message being sent. I wish someone took the same seriousness toward me three years ago so I could have worked at a better place. I now make it my mission to make sure no one repeats my mistake."

Participant No. 1 stated that,

"My own friends and family still play the games I helped develop. I have nieces and nephews as young as 11 who look at me as a role model and say, "I can't wait to grow up to make games like you!" I laugh and say "it's a boring job. Try to be something more fun, like an astronaut or a scientist." And to my other friends or relatives I tell them that the company is not really hiring, and there are always better candidates, I tell them to apply to better places with better hopes of getting in. I don't mean to hurt their feelings, but I would rather have than to see them suffer like I have".

These perspectives from participants are a great blow to the company's image which needs to be fixed by the company taking proactive measures to improve its image to its most vulnerable employees.

Codes	Description
Meeting (P – 9)	Nine participants reported being part of a major meeting
Email (P – 6)	Six participants reported getting frequent emails from management.

Table 5.10 shows how the company handled incidents. As the interview continued participant No. 5 stated that,

"I saw our company name on so many websites. My friends and family contacted me and asked if I was among the people who talked to the press, and I said no. As much as I wanted to, I never had the courage. We were all called into a big conference room with the CEO himself saying how he was no aware of the incidents that occurred, but he wished how the whistle-blower would have been considerate and instead opted to resolve these internally, instead of making our company look bad. However, we are now looking into all previous incidents of professional misconduct and rest assured we will act upon them. It's been almost nine months since, and the same people who had the highest number of complaints are still working at the company."

Afterwards, participant No. 7 stated,

"I just remember getting a barrage of emails. There was one from HR, one from my manager, and they kept coming in from different departments. All of them were encouraging us to speak up about incidents at the workplace, but some of these emails were coming from the abusers themselves. It was almost ironic of how we are being to report abuse by the people sitting behind these emails – who watches the watchmen?".

All these responses explains that any action such as email or conference was fruitless for redeeming employee from such incidents as they were not long-term measure and the call to action was coming from the people causing professional misconduct themselves.

Table 5.11: Were They Taken Care of By the Company? What Happened to Them?

Codes	Description
No (P − 10)	Ten participants reported no action was taken
Yes (P − 5)	Five participants reported action being taken.

Table 5.11 represents if the people who committed the professional misconduct were punished by management. Participant No. 9 stated,

"How do you report your boss for making several women quit? A former co-worker of mine emailed HR about her boss' unprofessional behaviour, and HR shared her email with the boss, who in turn came to her desk with a printout of the complaint from HR, laughed in her face and said, "next time say it to my face, coward.""

Participant No. 15 stated,

"The only time I can recall the company giving a damn about their own people going out of control is when one of the bullied employees cut himself in the office bathroom. Thankfully he survived, but his husband came shouting into the company the next day saying he will sue the company for all they're worth. The company's legal team settled with him out of court and fired the manager who bullied him, but that same manager is now working at a new studio with better pay and more benefits. I know this because my sister is an art designer and asked me "didn't this guy used to work for you? Why is he here?"."

It was repeatedly pointed that employees considered their office management for prevalence of professional misconduct in their workplace as management hardly initiated any warnings towards the assailant. So, far it has been observed that there is need for restructuring policies for workplace while considering more serious policies to combat professional misconduct and take it with more gravity.

Table 5.12: What Do You Wish the Company Had Done Differently in Handling the Incident?

Codes	Description
Restructuring (P − 14)	Fourteen participants wanted restructuring to take place
Immediate Action (P − 1)	One participant wanted immediate action.

Table 5.12 talks about how the participants wished the company would have handled the negative backlash behind the major incident that put them in the public headlines. Participant No. 11 stated,

"I wanted nothing more than to hear my supervisor was moved to a different branch or one of the smaller offices of our company in a remote part of the world. Firing was never going to be

an option as my supervisor was one of the oldest employees in the building, he was there across so many phases, and he practically laughed and read all HR complaints sitting in their office with them. I just never wanted to see his ugly face again."

Whereas, participant No. 2 reported,

"I would have loved to see the abusers get publicly named and shamed. I wanted their names to come up in google search results when future recruiters would hire them and make sure that not even a mom-and-pop restaurant would ever hire them. These people don't deserve to manage their own lives, much less the lives of others. The stuff they did was heinous and inexcusable, but all the company did was give him a promotion."

Participants barely felt any empathy from their higher officials, rather they left in an embarrassing situation being laughed upon which is an alarming reaction from someone, especially HR, making them culpable in the crime.

Table 5.13: In Terms of Your Life Outside of Work: Did This Incident Negatively Impact Your Relationships? What Was Your Process for Disclosing Information to People Outside the Workplace? With The Stress and Anxiety That Comes from This Subject Matter, I Reckon Your Connection with a Spouse/Family Can Fray.

Codes	Description
Unaware family and spouses (P – 14)	Fourteen participants hid their work life from family and spouses.
Aware spouse (P – 1)	One participant had a supportive spouse.

Table 5.13 tells us about the work-life/family balance of the participants and how they made attempts to make sure their families or spouse would never know what's going on. Nine of the fourteen participants used the phrase "wearing different masks" at home and at work to hide how their work was.

Participant No. 13 stated,

"I come from a very conservative family. My father would laugh at me, and my mother would be ashamed of raising a coward. I feel like my husband knows but he is horrible at keeping secrets, especially from my father. I am terrified of speaking to anyone in my family out of fear of losing respect in their eyes."

Participant No. 6 stated,

"I spent my whole life alone, practically an orphan. My wife is the only reason I keep going. She welcomes me home with a hug and offers me a sympathetic ear whenever I want to talk. She has been my biggest supporter ever since I told her the truth and I owe my life to her."

It is quite evident that professional misconduct causes an emotional unrest in employees which often leads to work-life imbalance especially if their family turn deaf ears to their hardship at workplace. Moreover, individuals are also reluctant to share their feelings with their families pertaining to their fear of being judged.

5.2.1 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Table 5.14 are excerpts from the interviews of common incidents regarding each of the theoretical ideas that are a part of this discussion. Thematic analysis for this research yielded four main themes under which results from this study were categorized such; Dealing with professional misconduct, Experiences, and reactions to professional misconduct, controlling professional misconduct, harms to work-life balance. There were the most common instances that female and male employees at these companies faced, which even when reported to HR, their superior, supervisor, etc. had no action taken. Overall, the findings of the interview corroborated the fact that women are still a functional majority of incidents of workplace misconducts, as in the interviews, participants highlighted that women have it far worse in the company, and management deliberately does not act against the people who continue to disrupt the operations of the workplace.

Table 5.14: Thematic Analysis

Codes	Categories	Themes
Reported but no action, Not reported	Reporting and response from respective person	Dealing with professional misconduct
Female, Males	Victims' gender	Experiences and reactions to professional misconduct
Accumulated problems, Several problems	Nature of problem	
Aware, Unaware	Prior knowledge	
Wanted to switch, Able to switch	Perspective about company	
Unsafe, Optimistic	Relationship with workplace	
No	Recommending company to others	
Conference, Email	Company's immediate action	Controlling professional misconduct
No	Effective results	
Restructuring system, Immediate actions	Employees' expectations	

| Unaware spouse, Aware spouse | Work-life balance | Harms to work-life balance |

5.2.2 Dealing with Professional Misconduct

It was established under this theme that employees felt distressed as majority of them reported their problems to higher authority who turned a blind eye to their situations resulting in unresolved conflicts in work environments which also lead them to feel insecure about their workplace.

One of the participants' response was,

"on my first day of work, a guy asked me for my number. I said no, and he just said he will get it from J at HR". IP5

For this same reason, it also felt useless from employees' perspective to reach out their superiors for help in case of any professional misconduct identified previously i.e., sexual harassment, bullying and mobbing. one participant said that it felt useless to report anyone as stated by an employee

"A group of male employees would frequently go through my bag and look for something to embarrass me. When I went to complain to their boss, he said I had no right to tell him how to lead his employees and made me leave".IP14

5.2.3 Experiences and Reactions to Professional Misconduct

Furthermore, the participants were asked about if they had any experience through any incident regarding professional misconduct directly or indirectly. One of the participant said that,

 "I stopped counting because I am now the office punching bag, and I've come to terms with it"IP 13

Then another one added to this that,

"no matter how much we complain, it does nothing. I've just accepted my fate and am trying hard to find a new job"IP15

So, it was communicated that most of the time professional misconduct was directed towards female employees and such major as well as minor incidents keeps occurring from time to time which yields to the unwavering feeling of insecure environment. Moreover, majority of participant were unaware that they might face such circumstances in their company while joining which is why such incidents greatly influence employee pessimistically to the extent that might to dare to recommend their company to any other person.

5.2.4 Controlling Professional Misconduct

Employees' satisfaction with company's efforts for controlling professional misconduct was also intercepted as most of the time company only called upon immediate conference or forwarded an email to assailant regardless of the severity of the situation which seldom resulted in unattended situation. Moreover, restructuring of company's rules and system was appreciated over immediate action as restructuring was considered as long-term and permanent solution for professional misconduct as it was said that

"I just want some form of vindication or justice"IP10

And another one repeated this added that,

"At most, abusers get away with a slap on the wrist while we are left with trauma" IP4.

5.2.5 Harm to Work-life Balance

This study was also concerned regarding possible influence of workplace environment on work-life balance and here our main concern was influence of professional misconduct which may have adverse impact on personal life of employees. As the participants were asked about this aspect one of them replied,

"The only thing that keeps me going is knowing there is a bottle of beer in the fridge, and my backlog of Netflix shows to watch. I just don't want to do anything else when I get home after a day of this job"IP14

To this another one added that

"I've started smoking again to deal with the stress. I told my wife it's because of stress so that way it's not a full lie". IP6

So, it was established that due to unfavourable workplace environment caused by professional misconducts often yield negative emotion which employees must mask while engaging in personal life specifically if there is no one from their family to support them in their emotional breakdown. They must uphold their emotions which is psychologically, physically, and mentally damaging to employees' well-being in the long run.

6   DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to identify how 15 employees in the video games industry in the USA and Europe perceive their managers responses to incidents of professional misconduct (sexual harassment, bullying, and mobbing) occurring in the workplace and how these incidents impacted their personal life. The analysis and results show that there is little being

done even presently toward reducing efforts of professional misconduct at the workplace, across two different regions. It was also observed that men and women are equally victim to the phenomenon, but women are still the most likely to be higher in reported numbers of victims, as men were the most reluctant to report. Of all the participants I talked to, the women said that they tried to report the incidents at work to their superior, supervisor, HR, and even the CEO, but men made minor efforts to rectify their situation, with most of them only sending a private email to HR that was soon shared with the person they were reporting. When I asked, the 7 male employees stated that they do not trust the system at all, while women said they do believe the system works in some capacity, and they have had some, but not all of their complaints addressed. In addition, all the participants reported their personal lives being greatly affected by their work bullies, that even outside of work, (if) they are stalked by their bullies digitally, or physically, there is no mental peace for these individuals. As such, there is a great disruption to the work-life/family balance of these individuals as well.

The male and female employees also shared their detailed stories with me outside of the incidents that occurred at their companies, and how they were already undergoing private psychiatric treatment for their past and present trauma, and that treatment is what is helping keep them coming to work, otherwise they are ready to quit the industry entirely. They also stated that other game companies have it equally or far worse, where they have friends or relatives working in other studios, where drinking alcohol and doing illegal substances such as hard drugs in board rooms is also a common practice.

The findings of these interviews once again confirm the literature, to show how little the times have changed when it comes to tackling workplace misconduct, even in a post #metoo climate. Where companies do offer the policy of anonymous whistle blowing to protect employees, is just a placebo effect to placate the public and the media. Lastly, when asked if the participants would be willing to speak to media outlets about what is going on at the company, a recurrence of Garrett and Hassan (2019) occurs. The individuals are too scared for their future careers and would rather just leave these companies with the trauma and knowing that the injustice will continue to prevail, rather than risking their own careers and risking retaliation, along with being blacklisted in the industry so that they can never get a job anywhere else. One of the female participants did say she tried to contact a prominent gaming news outlet at one point out of desperation, but she never got a reply, despite attaching proof, and using her work email.

It was also interesting to observe the interrelation of these various acts existing in the workplace, where one can led to the other and introduce the entire office to becoming a place where employees may dread to come due to the work environment, these are primarily catalyzed by bullying, mobbing, and sexual harassment allowing to go unchecked in a workplace and spiraling into a bigger menace.

6.1. Implications
The present study found the existence of professional misconducts in gaming industry.

Moreover, females were found the main victims of such incidents even though to some extent males were also bullied at workplace. It was also found that employees consider such incidents severe to the extent that they even intend to leave their job or some already left. Participants also suggested restructuring company policies for long-term solutions. One most alarming aspect that came to light through this study was that employee who were victim of sexual harassment, bullying or mobbing deemed their higher authorities responsible for such incidents referring towards the fact that most of the time there was no action taken against assailant. This may suggest that organizational authorities are not serious about the well-being of their employees. If such incidents keep rising, then the gaming industry may brace itself for losing talents shortly.

6.2. Generalizability

The present study was based on qualitative research design which was conducted with an in-depth analysis of participants' perspective as the main concern for qualitative data collection and understanding what, why and how's of the problem under consideration. And the small sample of this study does not allow the researcher to generalize its findings for every company in the gaming industry. However, we can apply a theoretical generalization to video game employees working in similar conditions to the ones that were interviewed.

6.3. Limitations and Future Directions

In the present study, researcher only conducted interviews with employees of the gaming industry, so the findings of this study only discussed professional misconduct and work-life balance through employees' viewpoint. Further, it was laborious to find individuals who would participate in the study even with anonymity as this is a subject, they are not very open to talk about. Based on the limitation of this study it can be suggested for future researchers to move a step forward by adding different sources of data such as employers, victims, and their co-workers. Future studies can consider a different research design such as mixed method research which will add to the scope of findings for the purpose of generalizability. Lastly, a comparative study might be appreciated for different work industries.

6.4. Conclusion

In the end, it can be resolved that professional misconduct such as sexual harassment, bullying and mobbing have been excessively reported by gaming industry employees. Moreover, employees' dissatisfaction was also found with the ways company officials such as; manager, co-workers, superior, supervisor, project leaders, CEO, and HR might deal with the situation trivially for this same reason these officials were considered responsible for such incidents and turnover intentions were identified during interviews as some said that they will leave this company once they get the opportunity whereas many of them already left the company where they faced such traumatic situations. It was also identified that employees would be willing to change careers if a better or equal job opportunity would present itself. Many of them have stated that they have been, and still are applying to other companies, nationally, and internationally, in hopes of escaping their city entirely, to never see anyone at the company ever again.

All the participants shared different aspects of personal experiences and incidents at their workplaces, and admitted that the system is still very flawed, and that there is still much to be fixed as you are always at risk of losing your job or retaliation for trying to do the right thing. Whether it's standing up for a co-worker, or just reporting professional misconduct to the company, or even outside authorities, there is always a looming threat over the heads of these individuals, and that uncertainty is what prevents them from acting against their abusers, paired with the trauma these individuals face on a daily level. With no support at work, and a lack of support at home due to the reluctance of sharing their troubles with their loved ones, and confiding their trauma to a it's psychiatrist, is the present state for these participants, as they all had a recurring statement of "we take each day one day at a time". This means that overall, management at these companies is not doing enough to rectify or curb problematic behaviour, despite the massive backlash they faced only months ago for the same behaviour.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION LETTER

Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Mobbing at the Workplace - Master's Thesis Research Project

Hej!

My name is Rizwan Anwer and I am about to complete my Master's thesis within the program "Work Life Studies" at Mälardalens Universitet (MDU), Västerås. My research topic is about **sexual harassment, bullying, and mobbing at the workplace.**

In my project, I aim to understand how these different forms of abusive behavior affect the livelihoods of employees in and out of the workplace.

If you have any experience or second-hand knowledge of incidents happening in your workplace, I would like to talk with you!

- The interview takes place **online,** lasting about 45-60 minutes, depending on your time schedule.
- The interview should be conducted **as soon as possible.** I am flexible and we can conduct the interview when it suits you best.
- Your identity and anonymity are protected at all times.

I would be very thankful for the opportunity to be supported in my research project.

Please contact me via email if you are interested mar21003@mdu.se

BIG THANKS and best regards,

Rizwan Anwer

Master's student in Work Life Studies

Mälardalens Högskola, Västerås

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF CONSENT

Information Letter - Letter of Consent

Dear interview participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study about sexual harassment, bullying, and mobbing in the workplace. I am interested in researching how these behaviors affect employees' health and wellbeing in and out of the workplace. The research will be conducted by an interview via Google Meet, taking between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded.

In the research process, everything you tell me will be handled with highest discretion and confidentiality. . Your anonymity and identity will be protected. After typing up the interview, the audio file will be deleted. When typing the interview, no name or information that can identify your person or internal information from your workplace will be written down.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any point in time.

If you require further information about the study, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisor and the research project leader Lisa Salmonsson (lisa.salmonsson@mdu.se) at any point in time.

Thank you for supporting my research!

Rizwan Anwer

Master's student in Work Life Studies

Mälardalens Högskola, Västerås

I have read the above information regarding this research study and consent to participate in the study.

_____

Printed Name)

_____

(Signature)

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Personal Description

- Introduce/describe yourself
- How old are you?
- How long have you been working here?
- What is your job and responsibilities?
- What does a usual working day look like for you?
- How do you spend your free time and weekends?

Workplace Behaviors

How do employees in the video gaming industry go about dealing with professional misconduct?

- When it happened, did you inform a superior, HR, or anyone to take action? Did you feel they took adequate action?

What experiences do they have of incidents of professional misconduct and how have they acted around them?

- Can you tell me about the employee who was the target of the incident?
- Was there an inciting incident that led to your departure or was it more of an accumulation of minor events that were not handled?
- Was this an isolated incident or were you aware of previous smaller interactions that were left unchecked?
- Did the incident impact your perspective of the company? Did you think about switching workplaces after it occurred?
- How did this affect your personal relationship with the workplace? Did you feel a shift in attitudes and behaviors after the incident?
- Would you still recommend your place of work as a safe environment to others? Has the incident changed how the company works or not?

What solutions do the employees see to be taken by employers to ensure the mental and physical safety of employees in a post #MeToo workplace?

- Were they taken care of by the company? What happened to them?

- Did the company hold a meeting to address the incident? Was it over email, a conference room meeting etc?
- What do you wish the company had done differently in handling the incident?

What are the harmful effects to the work-life/family balance to employees due to professional misconduct at the workplace?

- In terms of your life outside of work: did this incident negatively impact your relationships? What was your process for disclosing information to people outside the workplace? With the stress and anxiety that comes from this subject matter, I reckon your connection with a spouse/family can fray