CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. **1. Background**

The purpose of this research was done in regard to the ever-growing significance and meanings given to gaming as a whole. The gaming subculture, at first glance, would only serve to cover individuals who are seen as those who 'play games', however to propose a myriad of other labels would have been proposed already by studies apart from the current. Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG) is a genre of game that focuses more on the online and social aspect of a game. In a sense, you can see MMORPG's as a game attached into a social media of sorts that supports the existence of hundreds even thousands of players all adventuring in the same world. Now, there is a stark difference between Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) and Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing game (MMORPG), Massively multiplayer online role-playing games are games with huge numbers of players that lean into the RPG aspect of the game. RPGs (role-playing games) involve players filling the shoes of a fictional character (that you can customize yourself) in a new and fictional world whilst Massive Multiplayer Online drops the RPG and becomes an encompassing wider genre of games that can still be played with a myriad amount of players (Zalace, 2024).

Within MMORPGs are a variety of activities to do, commonly that of skill-based activities such as Dungeons, Questing, Raids, Crafting, Player versus Player (PvP), Player versus Environment (PvE), and there are also activities that stem from creativity in the arts department in terms of looks and design, such as Furnishing a personal house,

Designing the clothes combination you can use on your character which pays dividend to the amount of customizability of your creation, coloring, and photos. However, the main draw in or end goal of most MMORPG players are the Raids, which are high-skill challenging instanced content involving a limited amount of players within a group to tackle the fights head on. Instanced within this context would be that the event or the activity takes place away from the main world played would normally explore and meet each other in, you are effectively locked in a realm or a zone with no one but the members of the group you are going with. Raids on its own as a highly challenging content was aimed to be the zenith of progression, which was used by the games developers to keep players within the confines of the game to have something to achieve or 'work towards' (Wright, 2020).

The culture within MMORPG's can vary independent to their communities, such is the same outlook in regards to raiding. Raiding is an activity beloved or sought after whilst also having the effect of padding for the players. As such the means to understand the specific behaviours and state of the raiding community will be prevalent in understanding how the game subculture will handle itself. Raiding to explain it in detail however, in practice, is the action of playing in a group of people to master the instance and the included bosses (Raudonat and Marsten, 2018), the reason to this act is often backed up by the heavy need of collaboration within the members to be able to follow and understand the callings and leadership of a 'raid leader' to achieve mastery over the challenge and receive the prizes locked behind the entire raid instance such as loot drops in the form of items, or completion for achievement and glory.

However in a larger view- there is a stigma when it comes to those who play games. Gamers are often seen as belonging to a community that often 'overflows' with toxicity or negative connotation of the 'colorful' language they use that stamp them into the various labelings of either Sexism, Racism, ageism, sexual prejudice, and other abuse stigmas. The most common misconception shows itself within the aspects of health, mental health and physical health, often the violence of video games may show itself may be at risk to your mental health and that the constant posture and hand movements may result in carpal tunnel or 'gamers thumb' because of the lack of movement being so confined in one space in the same position, But, The reality is that the health risk imposed is not to harrowing especially to those who critically think. The reality of mental health also comes in the fact that there are good benefits in the way games can be used to further increase mental health or perhaps some body function based on the movements being done, whilst the most damning part being toxicity within communities might be the main attention drawer, most individuals will rather look for more supportive and accepting groups rather than single themselves out for a specific view (Barna, 2024).

As such, in regards to all the stigma and individual aspect found within a game space, the reality chosen by said individual between real reality and virtual reality, the sense of identity that can be found dependant on the game and spots one might be able to cover or take over within a group on its own as well as the sense of belonging, to finally feel that an individual's actions and personality or skill level has a place to belong in with either 'competent' or same minded individuals is a very important aspect people often 'ignore' over other more problematic scenes which includes such stigmas and negative connotations.

The context that can be found world wide shares much to the negative outlook games and gamers receive- but in Indonesia, such views are also prevalent. Indonesia as it is there is 180 million indonesian gamers logged in which the state of said juvenile or teenagers are at the stage where they are learning about the norms and ways of life and tend to be easily influenced by the environment they find themselves in, which in this context would be the gaming communities that they've beheld themselves to that always sparks the notion that with this comes the problems of gaming disorders, a risk of acts that may breach SARA protocols (i.e racism, sexism, intolerance), as well as increase in their behaviours 'acting out' to be more consumptive and more aggressive in their speech patterns not to mention the Cyber Bullying that is the result of these communities being seen as 'hyper aggressive' (Leqa, 2024).

1.2 Research Problem

However, it seems that in another way, the gaming scene has grown into something that has even affected the surrounding media and has raised its importance to rival the fame of other known media such as movies and music, even intertwining with the two in a more rigorous manner now more than any other time, with more movies being based off of video games coming up at recent times rather than the other way around with how now even movies are based off of created video games(Hellerman, 2024).

Although seen as only a past time, those outside of the know will only see MMORPGS as time-wasters and often deem them 'too miniscule' to matter, however with the placed

number counts as well as the amount of players that can be seen daily, we see how player bases of MMORPG's on their own could rival other communities. This 'miniscule' term that is used to label MMORPG's is slowly being stripped away yet the stigma still stands and yet gives these communities the disregard they receive.

Seeing that the gaming subculture is mostly filled with those who are either working towards a single goal or a similar enough end point, what is known about the community might be less known and only built upon prejudice. The Raiding community is often seen as being toxic, this toxicity breeds the stereotype of elitism, and this elitism often grows in the form of disdain by those outside of the subculture. The toxicity is often found within the high-expectation of 'obedience' and 'compatibility' to work and collaborate with one another as to achieve the mastery and completion of the instance in question. Within raiding, there is a stigma that the restrictions or expectations might be too high which to them would explain the 'elitist' stereotype of those who only deem perfection and lack of breathing room for those who are interested in raiding. The duality that raiding can be 'casual' and 'demanding' is the main consensus that gives less justification towards how those who dabble within the subculture of raiding act the way they do. However the focus is also that there is a discrepancy within the vertical progressions of most MMORPG's and the games that have Horizontal progressions, as the means to achieve and the quality of gear may be the difference in some games, but in others it might be that gear isn't as important as the skills of the gamer themselves.

The reality is that all these places of belonging and skill oriented game play combined with community often becomes a reason that gamers tend to find places where they do indeed 'belong' in, from the groups that are elitist to their core, to the groups that are

more relaxed in their choices- the groups they end up joining becomes a cocoon that forms behaviour and views. The stigmas and prejudice surrounding the gaming community often has its own real world consequences as most has shown and deemed that games on their own are a subject matter that can bring out the worst in people from their toxic communities to their preconceived application of disorders that may lead to health risk and extreme behavioral changes to suit the reality they deemed more 'important'. The constant backlash and doubt when it comes to the positive effects of gaming is often thrown out the window and replaced with a more closed minded view of the activity to be nothing more than a 'time waster' or 'money waster' when it could be seen more as a hobby or a social activity.

1.3 Research Objective

1.3.1 This Research aims to explore the way individuals would see reality and choose their preferred reality between the reality of real world (off line) or the virtual reality of the games they play (online) (how individual interpret reality)

1.3.2 This Research aims to explore an individual's sense of 'Identity' within the virtual scape found within the game. (How Individuals interpret the forming of identity)

1.3.3 This Research aims to explore the growing sense of belonging individuals seek out when playing these games as well as how it would show in their behaviours. (How individuals Interpret the sense of belonging)

1.4 Research Significance

Academic Significance

This Thesis attempts to give a perspective on the general views of an individual whose life is already conjoined with the games and communities they belong in to have a better and clearer view on their sense of reality, their sense of belonging as well as shedding a light to the interactions found within the members of the community they are in when inside the games they chose to play in.

Practical Significance

This Thesis attempts to give a voice to the individuals whose lives are joined together with games, to show how the gaming subculture develops a sense of belonging within a part of a game group, the notions of reality within the community as well as letting outsiders of said communities be given an understanding on the interactions found within the members of the community or between other members of the group.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The Theories that will be used to assist with the overall conceptualization of the research will be;

- Group Polarization Theory

  The Group polarization theory on its own can be seen as a phenomenon where an individual's decision making or experience may shift due to the overall notions of the group they are a part of- with terms of such as 'risky shift' highlighting how these individuals tend to have their choices polarize due to the groups synonymous intentions (Gould and Walker, 2021).

  Within the theory of Group Polarization, it can be used to both infer the notions of reality and identity. When an individual's way of deciding or seeing certain phenomena change due to the individuals within a group they've encountered- it is grounds to determine if their experience within the group would lead to their current state. When concerning Reality, or specifically, the views and interests between the two reality in question being that of the real reality, and that of the virtual reality (or game reality as it can be explained), to understand if the interactions within both realities may have changed or even stirred a new idea or a new perspective for the subject is paramount to understand better the experiences these individuals may have. If an individual might prefer one reality over the other, it is often due to the influence of another party. If an individual shows change within how they perceive themselves, or even how they may think others may perceive them, it is the beginning of a formed identity. As such, the theory will be useful in deciding if such changes have occurred and if the communities

they've become a part of truly did take part in forming said views and creation of such identities. Within the context of the research, the defining theory will be used to view the existence of those who see the game through a casual lense (individuals who only play to have fun) and through the elitist lense (Individuals who enjoy putting effort beyond fun and have expectations on how the game is played) as the two ideas exist within the game (Greenrose, 2022)

- Subculture Identity Theory

Subculture identity by its definition, allows an individual's identification into a social group where they may adopt their semiotic views, behaviours, and their ideologies to fully become one with their chosen subcultures (Winter, 2014).

As the topic stands, understanding individuals' experiences when being a part of a subculture, that being the gaming subculture, or more specifically the MMORPG subculture of Guild Wars 2, the theory stands as an exploration into said forming of identities. The focus on internalized traits and values may reflect towards the culture that the game has made, in specifics- being that of casual and elitist behaviours as a subpart within the grand explanation of the individuals experience and how such views carve their identities. The act of participation and constructs playing a role in said forming identities can be posited to how the games own content and an individuals participation of it may also become the stemming source of any changes and formation of new beliefs and views. As such, the Subculture Identity Theory can be utilized to explore the possibilities and match its wanton urge to explain how participating in subcultures may internalize the

subcultures' traits and plant within the individuals the values of the subculture. As the main culture is that of the causal view, playing a game for fun- the subculture within it are those who put in the effort, the elitists of the game, those who have expectations and are very adamant to abide by those expectations.

- Choice Theory,

The theory of choice, or choice theory, highlights the myriad of needs humans need to fulfil and how their ability to choose and react is maybe based on their surroundings, but they are still able to determine for themselves what actions they decide to do regardless of their surroundings also (Vodopivec, 2014).

William Glasser's Theory of choice, may be utilized in the context of exploring the 'sense of belonging' as a focus. As the theory utilises its reach and identifies 'belonging' as a basic need of emotional capacity and becomes a drive to the decisions we make- it would be useful in understanding the sense of belonging as its own interpreted view, as well as what individuals have done to finally fulfil this emotion of belonging. Sense of Belonging would refer itself towards the need to belong, to be accepted as well as to feel as if such an individual is a part of something. The need to choose, to react towards certain things becomes an indicator to how they develop and how they see their environment. At most, this theory will suffice in the identification of the admittance of a sense of belonging, or even the grounds to the existence of an identity. The choice to to play or form

individual views of the game Guild Wars 2 can be seen by the ability an individual will choose for themselves.

- Identity theory,

Identity theory is explained as a theory that tackles how individuals' identities are related with the roles they have and their role-related behaviours that affect such identities (Desrochers, Andreassi, and Thompson, 2004).

A straightforward theory to better decode the meanings in speech in regards to the forming of identities. The individuals who experience what they have within the groups inside the games, from the people they play with to the communities they interact with, Guilds and Statics as well- to understand what influences their formed identity and see what factors lead to such an identity, or if there even was a forming of identity is the exact utilization needed. Examples of such would be if playing with specific groups of like minded individuals enforces the pre-existing identity to further blossom into a more well-fitted form, or if playing with those who expect a higher standard of skills would push an individual to form their identity on the basis of competency. As the identity within the game of Guild Wars 2 spreads across from both the casual and elite view point, where those who accept the casual identity see the game only for entertainment- easy and mindless, while the elitist mindset would view the game as an activity that needs effort to excel within the contents (Greenrose, 2022).

- The Theory of Belonging,

To feel a sense of belonging, or feeling as if you've finally found your spot within a collective, relational in nature and often shares within it certain similarities (Halse, 2018).

When one becomes a part of a subculture, and continues on to become a part of specialized groups within said subculture, the urge and need to belong or feel as if where they are is where they are needed most becomes a key concept to an individual's growth. The crave a sense of belonging, either for that feeling of social acceptance, or for survival becomes a continuance to realizing how an individual might develop certain senses to belong after prolonged existence within the community. This theory of belonging becomes a way to view how those within the gaming community find their own circle of comfort, where they belong in, within the causal or elite, with the content they choose between PvP and PvE.

1.5.1 State of the Art

1.5.1.1

"A Long Term Study of Popular MMORPGs"

(Feng, Brandt, Saha, 2007)

Their study list has gone through extensive research on the aspects that make an MMORPG popular. The conclusion of the research was that an MMORPG that is successful is determined by its

1. Work load for the players. Player workload ranges from Daily to Weekly with its growth being determinant to how the players retention is kept. The more things to do on a daily basis the more the number of players becomes constant. Weekly workloads are much smaller compared to daily workloads however the weekly workload comes with a spike that shows how much the players are focusing on the game to achieve a specific level of fluidity.

2. How often a Game updates will correlate to how much a player is willing to give their time to the game. The more often a game updates or even given patches and changes the more tentative players are towards the game as a whole.

3. Player Churn and the disadvantages that come with an ever growing playerbase is that those who join later would see themselves being at a disadvantage against others who have played the game for longer. This issue often becomes very prevalent when shown within a game that has a 'vertical' progression system, where the gear and skills increase overtime leading to a 'power creep' of the game

that only serves to empower those who have played longer and makes those who have played later much harder to catch up.

4. A Players individuality also plays a role in if an MMORPG is successful or not, as it becomes a key point to how the player will fare within the game. It is an aspect that can only be known to those playing and can only be observed overtime as to know their behaviours and changes or growths in their behaviours within the game.

These aspects from the study would become an indicator on the healthiness of Guild Wars 2 as an MMORPG as well as become pointers to view how the players within the community fare. Their behaviours and game elements will become a determinant way to better understand how these aspects will morph or sculpt their behaviours moving forward.

A new perspective to bring about based on the already existing work is the focus on behavioural effects that occur towards a large MMORPG. To show the reality of how these 'cultures' function as well as show that within these ever growing sub-cultures are individuals that seek a place to belong in, a sense of belonging within the games or communities they've chosen. In this case the main reality is that Guild Wars 2 as an MMORPG with its big number count can be seen as a place an individual can find a spot they snuggle up into.

1.5.1.2

A guild culture of 'casual raiding' enhances its members' online gaming experiences a cognitive anthropological and ethnographic approach to world of warcraft.

(Snodgrass, Dengah, Howard, 2017)

The study would highlight an aspect of a raiding subculture that takes on a more casual stance rather than hardcore elitism. KOG as their group is called is a 15 man static (constant same people) within the popular MMORPG World of Warcraft (WoW). The study takes in at first an Ethnocentric outlook that results in a few points that made such an activity work.

Real life first: Emerging from past negative experiences of each member, the stance they took when in regards to attendance and scheduling is seen to be more lax, to focus on real life events more so than in game needs. This would count towards any sort of progression that might happen or need to happen within the game be looked upon more so as an activity than a schedule that is required to be followed to a tee. Although they still have not abandoned their goal of mastery and achievements, the way they chastise their members for failures is seen to be more constructive and helpful rather than punitive.

Others first: Their offline/real life lives have given to them characteristics that they brought into the game as a reach out to how they are personally and aiming to benefit them rather than use them for their own benefit. An individual Tessa who is a mother of three is also seen by others and herself as the 'benefactor' that helps prepare the raid team. There is also an aspect of her own motherly experiences that pour into her methods of 'pushing' others to strive for the better by not forcing them, but to motivate them. This is also seen by the individual Vern that often does admit frustration with any raid members

that are lagging behind, but also proudly sees himself to be someone that solves problems with brain rather than brawn (authority).

Collaboration: Leadership or rather, lack thereof, was seen to be something more of a lax or less authoritative aspect, more so just to help guide the group to get their runs in. Progression is often a step within raiding that often ends in wipes and frustration, but with KOG and their relaxed and laid back view on things they tend to view wipes (fails) as mere learning steps. They continue on to jest and joke, to talk about sports and news whilst in the midst of pulling the boss to show that they have competency in what they do, but they still find the time to connect and collaborate with one another to the best of their abilities without an over commanding presence. Everyone knows enough about everyone else's playstyle or weaknesses and strengths that they form a bond or a collaborative relationship that goes far enough to instill trust. They animate their speech with joy and pride when succeeding, they often shout and groan upon failing, but it shows the emotion they pour into their attempts, not the robotic smoothness other raiding parties might expect from members.

Doing good promoting tolerance: The object being KOG would also show that their means of interaction was often pushed to being 'for the better' with positive conversations and in game discussions that may lead to real life effects (such as fellow guild members pitching in to afford a wheelchair for another member who had lost their leg after a car accident). They also shut down any attempt at signs of negative connotation in speech, anything that relates to sexism, racism, homophobia would often be shut down immediately, 'promoting' a safe and supportive environment to speak in. They care.

Still (somewhat) competitive: Although they do play quite often, the members of KOG have been seen to have goals of achievement and rivalry in terms of competitive accomplishments within the guild or outside of it. Some members would say that perhaps the feeling of succeeding in the game is often a feeling they might have never felt outside of it, the feeling of success and pride that comes with clearing 'harder' content, but also keeping with this a still reasonable mindset that looks outside of the box game, and more to their real life as well to balance them. Members often set up reminders or even still have a strong relation to their real life urges even though they sometimes feel the pull to 'play wow 24/7'. The way KOG is run as well as their priorities being quite straight leads to them having respect for each other's time whilst also having the competitive spirit that might rival groups that do spend all of their lives only for the game.

Guild Fragility: Sadly, often groups of this variety will wound up facing infighting or perhaps unexpected changes within their roster that will gut their progress for the long term. A guild that is casual is sadly a guild that aren't too focused on or are only seen as 'stepping stones' for more hardcore groups. The difference in views and wants, the eagerness to compete and the strains that lead to people leaving or only making the group as a whole a secondary entity rather than repaying back the kindness shown also irks the leaders or benefactors of the group. It's just how things are, to give it their all only to be abandoned for something that suits them better.

To see how a guild develops, and the manner of ways a raiding composition can affect the behaviours and views of a group in its entirety based on those who are in it are the building blocks of viewing these subcultures in a more general eye.

The study has shown a good case of how a community laxed and non-elitist with their choices can create a space that is acceptable and enjoyable to many people. This pays more to the ideal reality that not all game spaces individuals run into are toxic or even offensive in nature, and to show that is a main point and a way to better understand and point out how the game space for individuals can become a reality that to them is far more preferred than the real reality we live in on currently from a day to day basis, to show that there is more to the community than just playing a game, but rather a palace that can shape one's identity.

1.5.1.3

Structural Roles in Massive Multiplayer Online Games: A Case study of Guilds and and Raid leaders in World of Warcraft.

(Williams, Broder, and Kirschner, 2014)

In theorizing the unique status of guild and raid leaders, we draw upon the concept of structural role. In its subcultural formulation, structural role referred to individuals whose actions diffuse cultural information across groups of people that otherwise might not have direct ties. Our study found that guild and raid leaders were regularly responsible for the dissemination of information that bore on players' experiences with and within the virtual world of Azeroth. For newer players, guild leaders were especially useful in helping them solve a variety of problems, from finding quick routes to level their character(s) to developing efficient play styles for a particular character class. For more advanced players, guild and raid leaders were often helpful in advising how to set up keyboard

shortcuts or use macros to maximize character performance. We identified other sets of expectations and obligations as well, and in what follows we focus on three aspects of structural roles for players in these positions. First, leaders dedicated extensive amounts of time to mastering their knowledge of the game, its characters, and its players. Second, they engaged in policy-making decisions that affected dozens or even hundreds of players and worked within and among player groups as a type of public relations officer. Such work required leaders to deal with both their own and other players' emotions. Third, guild and raid leaders were instrumental in maintaining a collective definition of the situation that was necessary for success in advanced forms of collaborative play. An interest or willingness to learn the intricacies of gameplay, to take responsibility for players' emotional well-being, and to manage a shared definition of the situation were all basic components of the guild and raid leaders' roles, and guild or raid success was often reducible to the extent to which leaders mastered these components

Within raiding parties there exists a form of hierarchy indeed, leaders taking the top spot and the roles dependent on their jobs will often be favored more compared to others. Those roles are usually determined by their job classification such as tank, healer, and DPS, and their responsibilities will differ in importance.

Tanks are those within the hierarchy who have chosen to play a class that deals with encounter starts and tanking or in layman's terms 'protect' the group from most of the dangers within a raid encounter. Having a tank is integral to the success of the raiding party as it becomes the anchor to survivability and often most people tend to avoid this job as it often comes with added mechanics or dangers compared to other roles.

Healers are those in charge of keeping the raiding party healthy and keep the group alive. Most players don't have any urgency to play this role however it is important to have as without them the group may falter and die out. Healers are often treated within the hierarchy in an odd way, being put on a pedestal whilst also being shoved up with multiple amounts of demands to 'heal more' or 'heal better'

DPS, Damage per second, the damage dealers are the lower rank of the hierarchy, as they only do one thing, and that is to do damage. Although it is important to have to bring down the health of a boss raid encounter and loosing too much of them will result in a wipe (fail), it doesn't put them above healers or tanks as they do not have to deal with the extra mechanics or even troubles that the other roles have to take on.

Outside of the general trifecta, leaders within the hierarchy are often gauged by several criteria:

Knowledge, how much a Raid leader knows about the upcoming encounter, how much they know about the members of their static, how much they know about their own role is the main thing that sets apart a good raid leader against a bad raid leader. Guild Raid leaders are among the most knowledgeable within the group as they become the de facto information broker and call out sayer within interactions with the raid instance, as well as the one burdened with calling if someone is competent enough to raid or not. They need to have a general knowledge and understanding of the trinity of Tank, healer, DPS while also taking into account any possible variations that are hybrids and their effects that might affect the raid at hand.

Emotions, The way a raid leader needs to understand the urge of winning while also keeping with them the means to contain solidarity within the group to ensure success.

Often the burden of emotion comes with the decision they must make when filling out a roster of people, those who are strong and skilled enough to come, those who have to sit encounters out, or even those who are causing trouble to be dealt with. The emotional capacity often leaks out within the instance of the fight, where tensions and emotions are high- it is easy in such a stressful situation to shout and berate but that would lower morale and bring about consequences. There is also the emotion of some people not being able to make it to the raids and having to look for a fill. The emotional aspects of the leader are kept in check and often have to take the high ground among other things to ensure the group stays together and can achieve their goals together.

Action, how a leader is able to manage their team and their static members. Often groups tend to infight or even instigate conflict and the leader is often the one who makes the calls and tries to end and snuff out their conflict. Guild or raid leaders needed to act responsibly, maintaining a vested interest in members' emotions and in the validity of their own positions in order to maintain a collective definition of gameplay. The significance of a shared orientation toward gameplay cannot be overstressed, especially when it comes to advanced forms of collaborative play.

Within raiding groups is a prevalent show of a sense of belonging, accompanied with it the sense of elitism, to compare and measure groups based on often minute aspects such as compatibility and more prevalent aspects such as skill level. The Idea to bring out from this study is to gives a new perspective on how the roles you take on in games tend to bring about your identity within the group, and to try to understand what this new 'identity' is and why it is given so much meaning within the scope of the game and the scope of how they behave.

1.5.1.4

Social actions in MMORPG raiding groups from the perspective of culture-inclusive action theory.

(Raudonat and Marsden, 2018)

Raiding groups are usually built on the basis of guilds and are long-term groups consisting of at least some fixed core members, so (most of) the members know each other. Typically, raiding groups meet regularly at fixed times and to make progress it is important to use the limited raiding time efficiently according to the group objectives. These objectives depend on aspects like the group composition and the achievement orientation within the group: groups with a higher achievement orientation usually have higher expectations about individual performance, the level of progress, and the degree of efficiency than groups with a lower achievement orientation. distinguish for instance "hardcore" and "mediumcore" raiding guilds, raiding about 2-3 or even 5-7 nights per week. Whether raiding time is perceived as efficient therefore depends on the expectations of the members. Raiding groups allocate a certain time to meet and master a boss encounter, i.e. they create a time frame and have a defined goal. For this period, they try to minimize disturbances that are not an immanent part of the game playing process. These disturbances can refer to technical aspects as well as to social conflicts.

Inclusivity within a Guild on an MMORPG is often seen or deemed 'clique' behaviour. Only having a few members and fills that take the place of the usual static members. The way each member interacts with one another in terms of the current conditions rely on various aspects of both technological and situational adaptation- To clear the flow of voices a leader might say 'clear comms' or even have a preferred choice of voice call

applications like Teamspeak for instance. Interactions between the members when in and out of raids are also found to be differing in stature- outside of raid would be the time to ask and jest easier at times, however during raids the conversations usually dim down in exchange for focus between the members who are raiding. Often taking turns explaining or even taking explanations, constantly asking for feedback or adjustments needed to make the next 'pull' easier, and many other aspects of a raid that can be clearly summarised as collaboration.

The aspect of leading and following as well plays a heavy role in how the interactions between members of a raiding party can change their behaviours and means of understanding- if too many members talk over one after the other it will pollute the communication flow thus hindering the progression runs they are aiming for.

In context, The main flow of a static member when finally belonging to a group of raiders is to think of themselves as having a use and keeping up with the other members of the party to feel included in the way they carry themselves. Leadership is more often than not a key element in ensuring a cohesive raiding experience as the raid leader will be the one to call the shots or make decisions that may or may not ask for the agreements of other non-leading raiding members on a certain call. Looting, rolling dice, or even achievements and the beginning of an encounter all relies on the conversations and communicative abilities as well as the ability to listen and understand the shots being made.

1.5.1.5

Social Identity Of Teenagers Playing Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) in Surabaya.

(Yudianto and Darmawanti, 2024)

Self Identification of a player:

It is deemed that after 20 hours spent playing a single sitting of the game, often the teenagers would proudly say that they themselves are now a part of the community or a part of the game that they have decided to play. They find that the 'second life' they found for themselves within the games they choose holds a big meaning to them. The subjects have also claimed that to feel as if they belong in a bigger construct or a bigger part of something makes them feel happy. An interesting answer appeared when they were asked what would happen if they never found the group they formed their second lives in, they would often answer with a tint of confusion, boredom, or even a disinterested notion with the game in question, that being an MMORPG.

Affected behaviour due to the MMORPG in-game group environment:

Within the groups, subjects have declared that they have had their behaviours affected by their group. The way they move, the way they play, their playstyle and how they often act have been shown to follow the way the group moves, the groups ways become their ways. Although not a through-out influence, and that they do say that their behaviours and personal paths did not follow the groups ways in its entirety, it's still a sign of behaviour adaptation formed from constant interaction with one another.

Emotional feeling when playing:

Subjects have deemed that they feel emotional on the games they play with a focus on group objectives and goals. Playing with people they have no real information on in real life alongside the group's unity would result in their emotions intertwining even if they have no prior knowledge of each other. This also dealt with stimulus. Whenever they achieve a goal, they feel happiness, joy, adrenaline and it becomes a positive stimulus for them to keep pushing forward. However, when they failed to achieve a goal of said same instance, they would feel it as a negative stimulus, saddened by the failure or frustration taking over- this often results in them taking in a more 'defensive' state of mind by coping away from the game, such as only saying 'it's just a game' to further their relation or intimacy with the game.

Interpersonal Relationships with Other Players:

From within the group, the subjects showed the interest in interacting with the other players found within their group. Sometimes being put within a group with individuals who may not know eachother often turns into an event-point that starts interaction with one another, it is inevitable of course. As when you are put in a group, with those who have the same mindset, same hobbies, same desires, and interests, this would culminate in a mass interaction of personnel that wants to spread around such interests and chat. They can also learn off of one another, learn each other's strategies, each other's lives and situations, this would further deepen the bond and sense of belonging within the group.

From this it is seen how each interaction event and even desired match would result in the forming of a tightly bonded group. And as such, to bring about a new perspective would be found from the need to show the importance of said identity on a grander scheme of things. Not only in the group but as a whole to be viewed and understood.

1.6 Research Paradigms

This study uses the Qualitative Descriptive Paradigm aiming to understand how the gaming subculture develops the sense of belonging within a part of the group and the notion of reality of the community as well as the interactions found within the members of the community or between other members of the group. Through Interpretive coding, which interprets the results to form a narrative.

According to Margarete Sandelowski in Whatever happened to Qualitative Description? (2000), Qualitative descriptive designs are typically an eclectic but reasonable and well-considered combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis, and representational techniques. In the following sections, described as having typical design features. Qualitative description is especially amenable to obtaining straight and largely unadorned answers to questions of special relevance to practitioners and policy makers.

1.7 Research Assumptions

- Every Individual within the Gaming Community has a need to fit in, to belong, and to find their identity within the games they choose.
- An Individual's Identity is formed through the connections and interactions done within the realities they inhabit.
- Every Individual has their own preferred reality, between spending their time in game or in the real reality.

1.8 Research Methodology

Qualitative Descriptive is the methodology used as it looks on towards the felt experience of the individuals based on the descriptions they themselves would relay from within unexplored scapes of research (Ayton, 2023). Through Interview and observation, to seek out the myriad of experiences from each individual to combine and sift through them and form an idea on the interactions and specifics of communication that turns the events into a cohesive view to how and why reality of the MMORPG players and the Reality of realness often clash, but ideally, one should be able to decide for themselves which one of the realities have more meaning to them.

1.8.1 Research Types

Qualitative, a research type that explains the why and how of human experiences rather than 'how many' and 'how much' (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2022). Qualitative is a preferred research type as the subject of study refers to the views MMORPG gamers of GW2 see reality in comparison to their experiences to the lives they live within the game. We also want to see how the community they've chosen to be a part of have changed or instilled a sense of belonging or even a sense of new reality to gauge what they feel, or what has changed after they've become a part of the subculture. The chosen research type will delve into the content tackling culture of Guild Wars 2 based on the experiences the players have felt or have gone through within the scope of the perceived "Casual" majority view and the "Elitist" Minority view of the game, with the Casual view being the culture of the game, whilst Elitists being the subculture view of the game Guild Wars 2 and how it is played and experienced.

1.8.2 Research Design

Causal Comparative a methodology used to identify cause-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables, To deal with the study of gamers and their individual essence within a group, identifying the cause and effect of how they see themselves and others within games is important to understand deeper on how they interact and view with realities outside of their game (Lawrence, 2023). As some call it as a hobby, some have also made it an integral part of their life- as such, knowing what causes certain beliefs and what turns certain ideals is both an interesting and needed scope to better understand MMORPG gamers.

The Research design of the thesis will undergo the qualitative approach. The Qualitative Approach will be used to understand subjective experiences, beliefs and concepts- where in this case will be used to understand an individual's experience within the MMORPG Guild Wars 2 (GW2) whilst they are in a guild. The experience that will be focused on will be the change in beliefs they may have and the reality they would choose to firmly belong in.

Qualitative Approach is also used to gain in-depth knowledge of a specific context or cultural significance. As the Gaming Subculture is still a subject to 'stereotyping' and also the victim of 'negative views', this approach will be used to gain a deeper knowledge into the subculture, specifically an MMORPG Subculture where the main content and appropriate communities within it center around Raids, Social Interactions, Guilds, Instanced Content, and PvP Centric content.

With the Qualitative Approach in mind, the subject of unfound research, or subjects and ideas to bring to light will be easier to 'bring to light', a main issue as stated before has

always been the negative connotation the gaming subculture has always been a subject to. Seeing as how the outside communities at large have always subjected those within the gaming community to a harsh critique (Insert research here), The focus of this paper and its use of the Qualitative Approach is to record and give a voice to those within the subculture to give a different perspective to how the Gaming Subculture truly is.

The used design of Qualitative Research to be used for this research will be that of the Phenomenology Design. Phenomenology in its own focuses to understand personal experiences from a subjective angle. The reasoning for the use of phenomenology is that the gauge research goal is to see the view of reality within those who play games for a majority of their life and have formed a distinct personality and sense of belonging in the community they've made themselves a part of.

1.8.3 Research Subject

Guild Wars 2 MMORPG players, a guild (Community) that is made up of players of Australian, New Zealand, and South East Asian members all with relatively close time zones with one another. The average age of the members of the guild NORN are 21-31 year old members, most have stable lives but are still committed to the game Guild Wars 2. From this will be taken 5 individuals that will become the interview participants.

1.8.4 Data collection

Primary Data collection (Interview, Observation). The Data will be gathered by choosing 5 members of the higher NORN echelon as interview subjects to be asked the current ongoings, how much their reality is compared to each member, how they view themselves within the group as they do hold a certain amount of power within the guild and the way they feel about the game they have currently put their most amount of interest into. Data collection will be initiated during active hours of the Guild (group) during game time. The Guild's active time follows that of the AEST (Australian Eastern Standard Time), which is +3 Hours to that of WIB (Waktu Indonesia Barat). The active time of the NORN Guild is 3PM-10PM AEST, which would make the time of data collection 11AM-7PM WIB. The Data collected for the work shall be done with the technique of interviews. The writer will summarize an ideal question roster to be asked towards the subjects of the research. The form of the interview will be that of the semi-structured interview design. The main goal of the conversation would be to have a deeper more personal understanding of the subjects' views and beliefs as well as their stories that would give insight into the game reality they've lived in and how much of it has shaped or changed how they view things within the 'real-reality' outside of the game. semi-structured interviews, although not following a defined list, will give an easier insertion into the subjects life, experiences and opinions. The interviews will be held through a video call, whilst not showing the face nor the real names of said players as means of keeping confidentiality. Said recording will then be processed through a transcribing application that will automatically transcribe and prepare a fully typed out

history of answers and questions that can then be used as the primary data for the research.

1.8.5 Data analysis.

The steps taken to analyze the Data gathered through discussion and interview will follow the applicable steps as, 1) Read the Transcripts, 2) Annotate the Transcripts, 3) Conceptualize the Data, 4) Segment the Data, 5) Analyze the segments (Dye, 2025);

- Read the Transcripts

Once the transcripts have been procured, a thorough initial reading will be conducted and notes will be taken to outline any specific patterns within the lines of answers. The main read through will be conducted to not only take notes and affirm the contents of the transcript, but also to find relevant themes to each answer.

- Annotate the Transcripts

Annotation is the process of labeling relevant words, phrases, sentences, or sections with codes. Labels can be about actions, activities, concepts, differences, opinions, processes that are relevant to the study process of the research. Dissemination would come after, an act to spread out the data to log and better understand the flow of the interview with the allocated themeings and patterns.

- Conceptualize the Data

To conceptualize the data means to align the findings of the transcript with the critical theme to use within the research. As the goal of the research is to reveal the importance

of belonging, identity and perceived reality, the data will be used to find specific patterns with these critical themes to form a narrative that supports the intended ideal surrounding the main research problem.

- Segment the Data

Segmentation will help with the process of connecting the results with categories to form a more uniformed and easier to read slate of data to be used to prove the points eager to be brought to light from the research. The result will take the form of a spreadsheet that lists all the correlating information between one another for an easier understanding of the interview result.

- Analyze the Segments

The final step to the process, once the interview has been turned into transcripts and the transcripts be separated and segmented, thus the next procedure would be to deeply analyze and deduce a hierarchy in the more common and frequent appearing opinion or personal experience to form the relevant data to finally be used within the study. Analysis will be done with the idea of Identity, Sense-of-Belonging and Reality being the main points to look out for within the transcript, as it will be used to explain the relevant points and critical themes the research is needed to prove.

1.8.6 Research Setting

Research Will be done within the perimeters of a Guild (group) by the name of NORN. NORN is a guild that mostly houses individuals of Australia, New zealand, and SEA (South East Asian, such as Indonesian, Philipina, Malaysia) Players. The effective time of

activity follows that of the AEST (Australia Eastern Standard Time).

The Norn guild is composed of a majority prevalent Australian player base, all within the working class with various shift times to their real life responsibilities. The age range of said sample of Guild attendants range from the age of 24 - 41 years old.

The research will be conducted during game hours, where the selected interview subject with their consent will have their answers and their participation and identity (in-game) transcripted and used as data for the research.

The interaction will be done online, through the game-space as well as the confines of an application named 'DISCORD' which hosts a plethora of functions from video calls and community interactions among people who are all a part of the community or spaces that they choose to be.

As such, any and all research interactions will have a locale of the online space within the said subgroups of discord 'servers'. In this matter, NORN, the guild which will take center stage during said research, will have its interactions and observation be collected from the discord server that houses all the members.

Study will take place within game-hours, moments within the subjects time where they are seen interacting with the game and its community on a 3 hour to 5 hour long game time session.

1.9 Goodness Criteria

Every research needs a criteria or a scale to prove that the research being done can be trusted, or in another way, to prove the full trustworthiness of said research being done. The examinations that deem the legitimacy and goodness of the research are done to prove the content of the research as well as result in the research being put forth with full responsibility and high credibility. These aspects cover the nuances of Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability.