GENDER STEREOTYPES IN VIDEO GAMES: A STUDY OF PLAY STATION AND XBOX AMONG STUDENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF JOS

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

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DECLARATION

I, Julbyen Nimnan LAR, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Gender Stereotypes In Video Games: **A Study Of Play Station and Xbox among Students of Department of English University of Jos" has been written by me in the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts under the supervision of Dr. V. B. Lagwampa and Prof. M.I. Umar–Buratai.** The information derived from other literatures has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. There is no part of this dissertation that was previously presented for another degree.

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CERTIFICATION

The dissertation entitled "Gender Stereotypes in Video Games: A Study **of Play Station and Xbox Among Students of Department of English University of Jos**" has been written by me in the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of M.A (Development Communication) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and it is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, Mr. N.V. Lar and Mrs. Y. Lar for believing in me.

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I am grateful to God Almighty for the gift of life and His unending love and grace. I greatly appreciate my supervisors Dr. V.B. Lagwampa and Prof M.I. Umar-Buratai for their patience and support in giving direction and depth throughout this research. I also acknowledge the contributions of Late Prof Z. O Jenkeri, with whom this dissertation started, may his soul rest in perfect peace with the Lord. To all my lecturers in the Department of Theatre And Performing Arts, thank you for all these years of grooming.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to identify gender stereotypes in popular media, specifically those portrayed in video games, and why it is important for video game users to recognize stereotypical portrayals. To achieve this, ten (10) most popular games available in Nigeria were selected and used for analysis. Students were randomly selected from the target group and two hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to gather more data on the subject matter, interviews were also conducted to this end. With the use of Social Learning Theory as a lens for analysis, media depictions can be further understood and analyzed as learning material for helping young people and adults alike to understand and accept themselves as individuals rather than seeing themselves within the mirror of the society. The gender images under investigation are mass produced and distributed in many countries across the world. Accordingly, the implications of exposure to the images and themes characterized in video games take on global importance. As such, the goal of this study is to shed light on the impact of exposure to the stereotyped portrayals of video game characters on video game users. This study has shown that New Media has an influence on how people view gender issues. This is largely because it is pervasive and also considered as one of the most powerful influences on people. In other words, media insinuates messages into our consciousness at every turn. It is therefore, imperative to note that this study found that all forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. It was also discovered that gender stereotyping is commonly used in media to enhance character traits and create humorous situations. It is therefore perceived that when stereotypes are overwhelmingly present in media forms, viewers internalize them and go further to replicate them.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Gender stereotype is a perception or image that people have about other gender whether right or wrong. This reflects in roles and attitudes or behaviour that people ascribe to other gender in virtually all spheres of human endeavour. Video game, as an entertainment platform is not left out in this regard. In actuality, there is a clear indication of role formation and models according to how gender is perceived. This however, portends and portrays certain gender in a particular characterization. The purpose of this study is to review female characters as portrayed in video games and to ascertain possible influences on gender roles and gender based perceptions especially by youths in Nigeria.

1.2 Background of Study

This study investigates the possible effects of exposure to gender stereotypes and sexualized video game characters on individuals' gender attitude, beliefs and gender based perception on youths in Nigeria. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura1999:13) is used to explicate the process through which mass media images influence gender-related beliefs and self-concept. Although this study is based in Jos, Nigeria, the findings are of consequence to scholars, parents, gamers, and the gaming industry not only in Nigeria, but also abroad. The gender images under investigation here are mass produced and distributed in many countries across the world. Accordingly, the implications of exposure to the images and themes characterized in video games take on global importance. As such,

the goal of this study is to shed light on the impact of exposure to these characterizations on young adult users

Video Games are becoming popular among computer literate and elite youths, mostly those in the urban settlements and it is gaining more recognition over the years. Gaming is undeniably there, and it is one of the major methods of entertainment alongside movies and music. It is, however, still growing so far as forms of entertainment are concerned.

As computer technology continues to pervade every facet of life, the study of video games and their content becomes more relevant. According to Twentyman (2008:12), "a recent study showed that 90% of adolescents, both male and female, think technology (including video games) is "cool", and so they regularly make use of it and they discuss about technology with friends."

In the last 20 years, video games have become one of the most prevalent forms of entertainment for children and adults. It is tempting to believe that video games are strictly in the domain of children and teens, as opposed to adults. However, the Entertainment Software Association (2006) found that 69% of gamers were over the age of 18 and that more women over 18 (30%) played than boys under 17 (23%), (Entertainment Software Association 2006:2).

In United States of America alone, sales of video games as at 2004 stood at $10 billion (NPD Group 2005; Annual U.S. Video Game Sales). In the same vein, an estimated 70% of America's youth has at least one game console in their home (Roberts et al. 1999).

Additionally, nearly 80% of children regularly play video or computer games; children between the ages of 2 and 17 play an average of 7 hours a week (Gentle and Walsh 2002). It is also pertinent to note that large populations of youth all over the world have access to video games. As a matter of emphasis, a 2014 Super Data Research study found that men and women enjoy video games. Women compose 57.8 percent of the mobile market, 53.6 percent of the RPG market and 50.2 percent of the PC market (including social games) (2014: 5). The study found that men make up 66 percent of MMO (massively multiplayer online) players, 66 percent of FPS (first person shooter) players and 63 percent of digital console players(Conditt 2014:13).

As early as the 1980s, researchers had begun to consider whether videogame play is addictive (Dill & Dill, 1998). In view of this, Egli and Myers (1984:21) stated that certain "compulsive" behaviors were associated with video game play. They found that about 13% of the adolescents they surveyed sacrificed other activities and compulsively invested money and time in gaming. In addition, Braun & Giroux (1989:101) called video games "the perfect paradigm for induction of 'addictive' behavior." This shows that playing videogame is addictive in nature. Further implying that the culture is not to be taken for granted as it is even growing in leaps and bounds.

As a fast growing media in the world today, what is worrisome is the aspect of portrayal of game characters. This is because researchers have found that gamers (children, youth & adult) consider video characters to be role models (McDonald and Kim 2001). They opine that video game characters have the potential to shape players' perceptions of gender roles.

Through social comparison processes, players learn societal expectations of appearances, behaviors and roles. For instance, particular players, especially those in the middle school-age, have self-described their characteristics in reference to their favourite characters in video games. This occurs as a result of continues exposure to images that the media considers as the 'ideal' and also how immersed in the game an individual becomes**.** Players also compare themselves to their favourite characters in terms of strength, height, and abilities, and where the strength, height or abilities of the character, is missing, this feeling is capable of making players feel that they are not as 'good' as the character, which could be damaging to their self-esteem (McDonald and Kim 2001:62). This implies that these video game characters may serve as role models for the ideal behavior and characteristics in some players.

The appearance of video game characters, roles and abilities of characters is analyzed in this study, as previous research indicates that youth often consider fictional characters to be role models (McDonald and Kim 2001:69). If youth see video game characters as role models, then the roles of these characters must be examined, including any physical strength that they might have. Additionally, characters in video games will be examined in terms of their appearance, as other forms of media have been shown to influence self-esteem and body perception (Bessenoff 2006; Morrison et al. 2004), understanding how characters appear in video games is also important. Therefore, both roles and appearance will be examined.

Additionally, researchers have recently begun to focus attention on stereotypes in video games and the adverse effects of these characterizations (Brenick, Henning, Killen,

O'Connor, and Collins, 2007; Burgess, Dill, Brown, & Collins, 2007; Dill et al., 2005; Dill & Thill; Scharrer, 2004; Walsh, Gentile, Van Overbeke, & Chasco, 2002; Dill et al 2007). The portrayal of women in video games has been the subject of academic study and controversy since the early 1980s. Recurring themes in articles and discussions on the topic include sexual objectification and sexualization of characters as well as the degree to which female characters are dependent from their male counterparts within the same game. Exposure to sexualized media representations of women in television and magazines was alleged to reduce male compassion towards women and reduce females' perceptions of their desire and suitability for various vocations (Burgess, et al 2007).

The rise of video gaming indicates that youths in Nigeriawouldhave access to this form of media. They can buy and download games on their phones and laptops/computers from shops and several online sites. Although an average Nigerian youth is faced with such challenges as lack of adequate internet facilities and poor electricity supply; meaning that they hardly go on line via internet to play online games. Those who can afford to do so are charged very high rates as a result of this. However, there are other platforms highly utilized by Nigerian gamers. These include the personal computers, game houses where there are various arcade games, personal consoles, handheld gaming devices, ipads and mobile phones. This means that the Nigerian gamers are also being exposed to such media content. With the youth experiencing so much game media, it is important to examine the messages presented in video games and the game magazines that many players purchase. One understudied area is the gender differences in the portrayal of video game characters.

Not unlike other media, video games offer a narrow range of roles to female characters. Overall, research suggests that when female characters appear in video games they most often serve as victims or prizes(Provenzo1991:8) and occupy stereotypical gender roles such as brazenly sexualized beings and objects of sexual desire (Miller and Summers2007:737).Glaubke, et al.'s (2001: 14) work examined the content features of video games and demonstrated that "female sexuality is often accentuated with highly revealing clothing" ;underscoring the prominence and perpetuation of the sexualized image of females in video games. Further, Beasley and Standley (2002:23) found that 70% of female characters in Mature-rated video games and 46% of female characters in Teen-rated video games were depicted with abundant cleavage, 86% of female characters were portrayed wearing clothing with low/revealing necklines, and 48% of female characters were dressed in outfits with no sleeves. This is in contrast to only 22% of male characters represented in clothing with no sleeves and 14% of male characters wearing clothing with low/revealing necklines. Moreover, females were twice as likely as males to be shown wearing revealing clothing. In addition, the vast majority of female characters have been found to be non-playable, meaning that they cannot be played by the gamer (Miller and Summers2007:739).These statistics invariably show that video games have a measurable influence on gender roles and gender- based cognitions. It further implies that individuals who are constantly exposed to stereotypes as portrayed in video games are susceptible or capable of imbibing its strong influence.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

As the popularity of video games increase**,** the tendency of the profile of the gamer is likely to shift as well, reflecting the wider variety of consumers that play videogames

today. According to Walsh et al. (2005:24) “The image that comes to mind when picturing a video gamer should no longer be that of an adolescent or even teenage boy”. This is because women and adults now play video games in greater numbers as well. Thus, the effects of video ‘game play’ on both men and women should not be trivialized. However, the growing `popularity of this medium has provoked concern regarding the potentially harmful effects of playing video games. “It is assumed that gender stereotypes in digital games create unrealistic hypersexualised portrayals of both men and women in terms of the character’s physical appearance, behaviours, and personalities as such raising serious concerns”. Reinhard (2006: 4)

In view of the above assertion, it is obvious that these portrayals may have a certain level of effect on all video game players irrespective of gender and age bracket. Be that as it may, youths are mostly affected because they are the main consumers of this type of media. Due to the interactive and repetitive nature of these games, players usually pay close attention to story line and characters, including their physical appearance because each player is to assume an avatar and play as the character of his/her choice. Therefore, video games that contain stereotypical portrayals of characters are liable to reinforce gender stereotypes. When such stereotypes are internalized, they can have negative influence on players by making them develop stereotypical ideas about the opposite gender in terms of their roles and appearance.

This is most worrisome owing to the growing entertainment demands and how often many young literate people in video gaming activities in Nigeria and the world over, indulgence

in this pastime due to possession and access to digital media forms such as computer, ipads, and mobile phones.

1.4 Aim of Study

The aim of this research is to review gender stereotypes and portrayals in video games in order to ascertain possible influences on gender roles and gender based perceptions on youths in Nigeria.

1.5 Research Objectives

In view of the above aim, the following are the specific objectives of the study

- To study the prominent gender stereotypes and sexualized images of women as portrayed in video games in a bid to call the attention of player to such images.
- To assess the stereotyped portrayal of game characters in terms of physical appearance, attire and abilities in order to address this issue.
- To examine the potentially harmful effects of some video game content
- To suggest possible ways through which the issue of gender stereotypes can be controlled or reduced in media content and to make recommendations.

1.6 Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

1. How do video games present images of women?
2. What are physical appearances, attire and abilities do video games portray?
3. What are gender stereotypes and how have they affected video game users?

4. In what ways can the issue of gender stereotypes be controlled or reduced in video games?

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of Study

Due to the nature of this study, students would be chosen randomly from the Department of English, University of Jos for the purpose of gathering primary data for this study. The reason for this choice is predicated upon convenience and closeness to some game facilities around the campus. Based on the above stated, the researcher is of the opinion that this study would find relevant answers in order to achieve its purpose.

Play station and X-Box were used in the study. Play Station is a video console or gaming brand developed by Sony Interactive Entertainment in 1994. The initial version of the console represented a significant improvement in terms of graphic quality over the existing cartridge players of the early 1990s. Play Station or PS is in direct competition with Microsoft's X-Box which is also a gaming brand developed in 2001. Both gaming brands offer a wide variety of interactive games ranging from online games to consoles and they are very popular among video game players. The choice of the selected games in Play Station and X-box video games is because they shed more light on gender stereotypes apart from being two most popular video game consoles in Nigeria. However, for the purpose of this research therefore, the researcher examined gender portrayal/stereotypes as contained in ten (10) selected games in Play station Franchise and X-Box games including *Super Mario(2005), Tomb Raider(2009), Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volley Ball(2011), Grand Theft Auto(1999) ,Mortal Kombat (2004), Resident Evil (2002) FIFA(2006), Halo(2002), Need For Speed(1996), and NBA (2005).* The choice of the 10 selected games

in predicated on the availability of a wide range of video game characters to be used for the purpose of analysis.

1.8 Significance of Study

This study is of significance because the gender images under investigation here are mass produced and distributed in many countries across the world. Accordingly, the implications of exposure to the images and themes characterized in video games take on global importance. Also, in the world of New Media in relation to media usage among youths particularly among university students in Nigeria, video games are gradually becoming some of the most maximized forms of entertainment, whether played on the computer, internet or mobile phones. This is apart from the fact that gender stereotypes in New Media and most especially in video games are fast generating a wider debate and therefore, it is important that this study be embarked upon in order to provide relevant information in addition to discussions in various quarters.

The outcome of this study is important and relevant to certain groups of people including parents and advocacy groups apart from adding to the body of knowledge. These groups of people include communication scholars, among whom there is a call for understanding media and the impact it has on the audience and society at large. This study serves as contribution in the direction of showing how video games reinforce gender stereotypes, as well as influence on the players. Also, Nigerian video game developers, game station owners/ stakeholders, educators and media practitioners, feminist activists would benefit from this study due to its' importance in setting the stage for response to the impending questions bordering on the influence of video games on the players especially the youths.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

There are several literature that are related and relevant to this study that we need to review in order to have a clear picture of what contributions other scholars have made as well as the existence of gaps that need to be filled especially by this study. In view of this, we find that scholars such as Strasburger (1989), Calvert (2001), Bessenoff (2006), Morrison et al. (2004),Provenzo (1991), Heath, (1984), Ward et al. (2005), McDonald & Kim (2001), and Reinhard (2006) have written extensively on gender stereotypes in video games and media ,thus some of their ideas would be presented in this research. Others who have made inputs on participatory and development communication include Bordenave (1994), Whadka, (2000); Stuart & Bery (1996), Inkeles & Smith (1974), and Melkote, (1991). Accordingly, this review is presented in two segments. The first segment focuses on various studies on video games (history, culture, types) and gender stereotypes. The second segment reviews works of scholars on media, participatory communication and development communication. This review is essential in exploring the relationship between gender stereotypes in video games, media factors and variables which would invariably enhance the focus of this work.

2.2 History of Video Games

A video game is an electronic game that involves human interaction with a user interface to generate visual feedback on a video device (Anderson 2006:15). The word video**,** in video game traditionally refers to a raster display device. But following popularization of

the term "video game", it now implies any type of display device. The electronic systems used to play video games are known as platforms. Examples of these are personal computers and video game consoles. These platforms range from large mainframe computers to small handheld devices. Specialized video games such as arcade have gradually declined in use. Video games have gone on to become an art form and industry(Lipson & Brain 2009:3).

The first video game ever was created by William Higginbotham in 1958 (Brent 2006:17). The game was called *Tennis for two*. It was created and played in a Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York. More than fifty years ago before either arcades or home video games existed, people waited in line in Brookhaven laboratory to play this game which was a simplified tennis game. It is unmistakably the forerunner of the modern video games. It was first introduced on October 18th, 1958 and was played on an analog computer and used an oscilloscope for a screen. The purpose of this invention was to liven up science exhibitions when the head of the Brookhaven laboratory realized how static and non-interactive most science exhibitions were.

After the *Tennis for Two*, came *Space War*, which was created in 1962 by Steve Russel. *Space war* was the first game intended for computer use. The game was generally considered the first shooter game. It spread to several other mini-computer installations and reportedly was used as a smoke test by technicians on new systems before shipping. In 1962, Ralph Baer wrote the first game played on a television set, which was called *Chess*. This was considered as the official first video game because it had a video display (television set), directly displayed via modification of a video signal and as such, that is

what is known as a video game. In 1971, Volan Bushnell, together with Ted Dabney, created the first arcade game. It was called *Computer Space*, based on Steve Russel's earlier game *Space War* (Wolf 2007:33). The arcade game *Pong* was created by Nolan Bushnell (with help from Al Alcorn), a year later in 1972, Pongwas released as a home video game. In the same year, Magnavox, under the name of "Odyssey" was released in May and it was the first home video game console (Anderson 2006). In1976, Fairchild released the first programmable home game console called The Fairchild Video Entertainment System (Michael 2009). Later on, it was renamed "Channel F", which was one of the first electronic systems to use the newly invented microchip. On June 17, 1980, *Asteroid* and *Lunar Lander* became the first two video games to be registered on the copy right office by Atari (Wolf 2007:5). After the video game industry crashed in 1984, the video game industry rebounded with a new generation of technological advances, beginning with the release of the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in 1985 and also *Super Mario Bros*. At this time, interest in the video game as a cultural artifact was also on the rise, resulting in hot circuits. Around this period came the coloured arcade games with the emergence of games like *Pac-man* and *Donkey Kong*. Video Games then began to be produced in disks, cassette tapes, and ROM cartridges. The 1980s brought with it, technically innovative and general redefining games developed and released in the first few years of the decade including Adventure games. Some examples includes: *The legend of Zelda* (1986), *Dragon Slayer* II (1985), *Beat'em up* (1984), *Prince of Persia* (1989), *Dragon Warrior* (1986), *Final Fantasy and Metal gear* (1987).

The 90s was a decade of transition from raster graphics to 3D graphics. Handheld gaming began to become more popular through the decade due to the release of Nintendo *Game*

Boy in 1989. Home consoles gradually became more popular. (Ceruzzi 2003:12) During this period, adventure/survival games became the most patronized. These include; *Alone in the dark, Sonic the hedgehog, Star craft, Resident Evil* to mention a few. Adventure games continued to evolve with various series bringing graphical interaction, and the creation of the concept of "point-and-click" gaming. Around 1989, when Nintendo released its handheld console (Game boy), other rival companies followed suit and released their own hand held games including games like *Sega, Game Gear, and Atari Lynx*. In 1994, three new console games were released in Japan: The Sega Saturn, The Play station and the PC FX. (Ceruzzi 2003:18)

Mobile phones became video gaming platforms when Nokia installed *Snake* on its line of mobile phones in 1997 with Nokia 6110. Soon every major phone brand offered "time killer games" that could be played in very short moments, such as while waiting for a bus or while on a bus. Mobile phone games earlier on were limited by the size of the phone screens, low memory and processing power, as well as the drain on the battery. In 2001 Xb0x was created by Microsoft cooperation, and then *Grand Theft Auto III* was released. This resulted in popularizing open world games by using a non-linear style of game play. Console gaming largely continued and the trend established by the Play station was towards increasing complex, sophisticated, and adult oriented game play. Most of the successful sixth generation games were rated 'T' and 'M' (teenagers and mature) by their producers. For instance *Halo and Resident Evil*. However, as affordable broadband internet connectivity spread, many publishers turned to on-line gaming as a way of innovating massively multi-player on-line role playing games. Games like *World of war craft, Ever quest and Ultima online* emerged.

By 2003, a wide variety of mobile games were available on Japanese phones, ranging from puzzle games (*Sudoku),* and virtual pet titles (*Snake)*. More advanced phones came into the market for example the N-series smart phone by Nokia in 2005 and the iphone by Apple in 2007 with a strong addition to the appeal of mobile phone gaming. From 2006-2008, came Nintendo Ds Lite and Nintendo Dsi, and in 2009 the Nintendo Dsi XL was released. In 2005 came the Xbox 360 and then in 2006/2007, Sony released Play station 3 in Europe. In 2008 social network games began gaining mainstream popularity following the release of "Happy farm" in china. The most popular social network game is *Farm Ville*, which has over seventy million active users worldwide (Donald 2006:23). Other social network games include *Yo Ville, Mob Wars, Mafia Wars,* and *Frontier Ville.*

The new decade has seen the rising interest in the possibility of next generation consoles being developed in keeping with the traditional industry model of five-year console life cycle. The focus for new technologies is likely to shift into motion-based consoles and peripherals, such as Nintendo Wii. Microsoft Kinect, and Sony's Play Station Move. The Play station 4(PS4) is an upcoming video game console from the Sony computer Entertainment, billed as the successor to the Play station 3. It moves away from the cell architecture, specifically X86-64. The idea is to make video game development easier on the next generation console, attracting a broader range of developers large and small.

2.3 Video Game Culture

Video game culture is a form of New Media tradition that has been influenced by video games. As computer and video games have increased exponentially in popularity over time, they have caused a significant influence on popular culture. This culture has evolved

in time, particularly in connection with internet. Games played directly on the internet are generally called on-line games or gaming. Games such as real-time strategy, racing games, Card games, Sport games, can all be played online. Online gaming has drastically increased the scope and size of gaming culture, although this has much to do with the usage of the Internet itself as a communication medium. Online gaming grew out of games on bulletin board systems and on college mainframes from the 1970s and 1980s Flew and Humphreys (2005:45).The internet allowed gamers from all over the world to play games together with ease. Online gaming has spread from its initial computer roots to console gaming as well.

Video gaming is relatively young sector in Nigeria. However, due to the country's fast growing mobile market, video games are rapidly growing in popularity. The Internet gaming is fast becoming popular among the literate class basically because of the availability of internet facilities at their disposal. With the advent of telecommunication and its ubiquitous nature and also a growing penetration of smartphones, many Nigerians have access to online facilities most especially on their mobile phones. Apart from online games, offline games are found as well on all mobiles phones which are available to a large majority of Nigerians. Therefore, gaming is at high degree in terms of indulgence and awareness. It is also noteworthy to state that game houses are predominant features in the Nigerian society. Today, every major video game house employs the use of the internet or online gaming, which offers diverse games to a teeming population of gamers.

Furthermore, this research explores video games as a New Media practice, not in isolation but as part of a broader media transformation related to the development of current digital technology. This in essence suggests that video games have become an integral part of the digital universe with impending influences and contributions to development in virtually all spheres of human endeavour. This is because with the level of game concepts and features, various aspects of human behaviour can be affected.

Similarly, video games are a product of hybridization process between audio visual media forms and game cultures. The audio visual essence is a booster to traditional video game conceptualization and it is obvious that this innovation is the paramount platform on which the present gaming concept finds its exciting interest. However, video game is rapidly gaining popularity among urban and literate children and the youth. The experience of audio-visual consumption and aesthetic pleasure is enhanced by interactive and game amusement components not found in previous audio visuals genres such as cinema or TV. In fact, video games situate 'play' at the core of audio visual experience, introducing innovative changes in audio visual production and reception patterns. These concepts introduced a new relationship between subject and representation that goes far beyond the "spectatorship" position, pointing to a playful relationship images that may be useful to understanding new forms of media practices. Thus Video games as a New Media practice can be seen as an exponent of greater change not only regarding how media are produced and consumed but also in the way leisure is organized and its role in everyday life.

According to Terry Flew (2005: 108), "the global interactive games industry is large and growing, and is at the forefront of many of the most significant innovations in New

Media". Interactivity is prominent in games such as *World of War Craft*, *Play Station*and *Grand Theft Auto* to mention few. These games, allow for users to establish relationships and experience a sense of belonging that transcends traditional temporal and spatial boundaries (such as when gamers logging in from different parts of the world interact). 'On-line games can be used as an escape or act out a desired life' (Wolf 2001). It is quite amazing how game users become so attached to these inventions-with some people living their lives through it. New Media have created virtual realities that are becoming virtual extensions of the world we live in. With the creation of these video/virtual games, people have even more control over this virtual world, a world where anything that a participant can think of can become a reality.With the rapid convergence of all media types into a digital form, video games are also beginning to affect, and be affected by traditional media forms. The constructed meanings in video games are more influential than that of the traditional media forms. The reason is that gamers interact with the audience in a dialogue of emotions, action, and reaction.

The interactivity means this occurs to a depth that is not possible in the traditional media forms. However, it must be noted that while most video games are designed for entertainment, they reflect the values and the popular ideology of the culture in which they were created.

2.4 Classification of Video Games

Video games like most other forms of media may be categorized in to genres based on many factors such as method of game play, types of goals, art style and more. Ever advancing technology and production values related to video game development have

fostered more life-like and complex games which have in turn introduced or enhanced genre possibilities (e.g. virtual pets), pushed the boundaries of existing video gaming or in some cases and new possibilities in play. Video games are classified into three broad categories namely: casual, serious and educational games.

Casual Games

These games derive their name from their ease of accessibilities. They are typically distinguished by their simple to understand simple rules; lack of commitments, quick grasp of rules. They are games targeted at or used by a mass audience of casual gamers, and can have any type of game play, and fit into any genre. They frequently support the ability to jump in and out of play on demand. Casual games as a format existed long before the term was coined and include video games such as solitaire or Minesweeper which can commonly be found pre-installed with many versions of the Microsoft windows operating system. Casual games are most commonly played on personal computers, mobile phones (Wolf 2007:20). They can also be found on many of the on-line console system download services example of which are XBOX LIVE, Play station Network or Wii Ware.

Serious/Applied Games

These are games that are designed primarily to convey information or learning experience of some sort to the player. They are mostly simulation of real life/world events or processes designed for the purpose of solving a problem. Some of them may even fail to qualify as a video game in the traditional sense of the term. Although some of them can be entertaining, their main purpose is to train or educate users. (Rice 2007:18) . These games are typically designed to be played by professionals as part of a specific job or for skills.

They can also be created to convey socio-political awareness on a specific subject. Serious games can be applied to areas such as the military, government, educational, and corporate areas (Corti, 2006:24).

Educational Games

These are games that are designed to help people to learn about certain subjects, expand concepts, reinforce development, understand a historical event or culture, or assist them in learning a skill as they play. This brings focus to relevant and important current issues that can be addressed and the use of video games to educate and spread knowledge in a new form of media.WWW.nobelprize.org uses games to entice the user to learn about information pertaining to the Nobel prize achievements while engaging in a fun to play video game. There are many different types and styles of educational games all the way from counting to spelling, to games for kids and games for adults. Some of these games do not have any particular targeted audience in mind and are intended to simply educate or inform whoever views or plays the game.(Reynolds 2009:4)

2.4.1 Interactive Dimension of Video Games

Researchers have shown that video games have the potential to be more influential than other forms of media because of their engaging, interactive and repetitive nature (American Psychological Association 2006). For example, in the game *Grand Theft Auto* which is an 'M' (mature) rated video game brimming with gang violence, nudity, extremely coarse language, drug and alcohol abuse. This is not a game for the younger audience; however, they have access to it due to its availability on various platforms including the internet. While interacting with this game, the player can choose the behavior

of the character of his choice. An instance of this is when the player can make his character have sex with his girlfriend and then dismiss her or have sex with a prostitute and then kill her (Braithwaite 2007). Because the game is interactive in nature, the player chooses these behaviors, which is different than other forms of media, such as movies, in which the individual is merely watching a character carryout these behaviors. Simply put, watching someone shoot another person is different from shooting the person yourself (using the video game controller trigger). Controlling the action gives the player the opportunity to engage in behaviours (via the video game) that he would or could not normally engage. Exposure to such negative content therefore can impact their perception of the world especially where the player in question is a young adult. If faced with a similar decision outside the virtual world, the individual might recall and imitate this experience. The near virtual reality quality of many current games likely compounds these effects. Many games are so realistic that it is difficult to tell whether one is watching a movie or a game. Watching a cartoon character of previous generations is likely a different experience than watching a realistic looking character of the present time. Indeed, many new games (e.g., The Guy Game) include actual video clips of topless women. Other games (e.g., Street Racing Syndicate) portray real-life porn stars as main characters, and many (e.g., Playboy Mansion) allow the player to undress the women characters. Being able to interact with characters in this way is likely a different experience than simply watching a movie. Understanding the messages that games send (e.g., the gender norms regarding appearance and abilities) is important as a first step in later determining the influence of games on children and youth. Whereas the research above is general to media, other research is more specific to video games.

2.5 Gender Stereotypes

A Stereotype refers to one group's generalized and widely accepted perception about the personal attributes of members of another group (Ashmore & Boca, 1981; Dates & Barlow, 1990). A stereotype is a belief that may be adoptedabout specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things, but that belief may or may not accurately reflect reality. Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as the biological characteristics of women and men. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life (Wijk and Francis 1999:5). When people automatically apply gender assumptions to others regardless of evidence to the contrary, they are perpetuating gender stereotyping.

Traditionally, the female stereotypic role is to get married and have children. She is also to put her family's welfare before her own; be loving, compassionate, caring, nurturing, and sympathetic; and find time to be sexy and feel beautiful. The male stereotypic role is to be the financial provider. He is also to be assertive, competitive, independent, courageous, and career-focused; hold his emotions in check; and always initiates sex (Bessenoff 2006: 233). These sorts of stereotypes can prove harmful; they can stifle individual expression and creativity, as well as hinder personal and professional growth. They could also have implications for the development of gender roles and attitudes. For instance, males exposed to this stereotypic portrayal of females as helpless sexual objects might adopt negative attitudes toward women. Similarly, it may affect female's perceptions of how they should act.

However, in video games, the roles of female and male characters have been found to be quite different (Dietz 1998). Females are frequently portrayed in a sexy role or as a sex object in the games (Dietz 1998; Ivory 2006; Scharrer 2004) reinforcing gender stereotypes and potentially impacting attitudes towards women (see Ward et al. 2005). In addition to a sexy portrayal, women's attire in the video games reinforces sexual stereotypes (Beasley and Collins Standley 2002). Women are generally portrayed as less clothed than men, with females wearing smaller tops (Beasley and Collins Standley 2002; Scharrer 2004), and clothes that accentuate their sexuality (Beasley and Collins Standley 2002:279). Descriptions and portrayals of characters in games are also different for males compared to females. Females are portrayed as more attractive than males (Ivory 2006; Scharrer 2004) while males are portrayed as more muscular and powerful than females (Scharrer 2004). In sum, content analyses of video games and video game advertisements have consistently found that women are underrepresented, more frequently sexualized, more attractive, less powerful, and dressed more scantily than men (Beasley and Collins Standley 2002; Dietz 1998; Ivory 2006; Scharrer 2004). The portrayal of video game characters is especially important because researchers have found that children consider video characters to be role models (McDonald and Kim 2001).

The representations of women in media and other popular culture outlets play an important role in creating and reinforcing gender roles in society. "A role is a set of behaviours assigned to a given status, whether that status is race, age, class, gender or any other category to which an individual is assigned and judged against. While these roles can serve as a social behavior guide, there is also a risk that the socially constructed norms can be

restrictive or repressive to the effected status. Status and role rigidity combine to create stereotypes for different socially constructed groups" (Lindsay,2011:203). Although stereotypes can sometimes be based in part on "truths" about a given group (when people notice the few examples that fit the stereotype and overlook the ton of examples that do not)they can serve as a mental shortcut which allows us to make quicker decisions or aid in assessing situations. Stereotypes more often than not promote untrue and often derogatory depictions of the groups they represent (Myers, 2008:54). These stereotypes are further perpetuated and reinforced through social institutions such as the media, religion, schools and the government.

Furthermore, given that a large number of Nigerian youths and students both male and female have access to different kinds of digital devices including video games, mostly role playing games, there is a high tendency of exposure to negative content, in these games, which further reinforces gender stereotypes . This could influence them because media content plays a social and psychological role, and can also provide a way in which children and adults can take on different roles that are important in the formation of their behavioral pattern. This is because, through the media, people can receive good, timely and useful information, entertainment e.t.c but there are also negative sides of the media which are harmful to users. Example of this is stereotypes. Unfortunately, most of the media we are exposed to do not show people in a realistic way. Thus, the presence of hyper-sexualized portrayals in games may impact the level and extent to which a player engages with the game in one of two ways, dependent upon the sex of the player. Women may be dissuaded from playing games if they do not feel they can identify with the character due to her

sexualized behaviour and appearance, while men can be interested in playing if they feel the portrayal is attractive.

This then could constitute a problem for the players especially the females if they are constantly exposed to such images of the 'ideal' body type which in most cases is curvaceous and impossibly thin, this could impact her perception of what the female body should look like, hence making her feel inferior if she does not look that way. On the other hand, such images can create a mental picture for the male players of what to expect in the appearance and behavior of the females. Also, the Nigerian cultural and religious beliefs system encourages morality thus, frowns at the exposure of body parts either by males or females which some video games promote by the rampant display of scantily clad female game characters also, being exposed to Sexualized portrayals can influence how a man responds towards women

In line with the above stated, Reinhard(2006:14) opines that "Gender stereotypes in digital games create unrealistic hyper-sexualized portrayals of both men and women in terms of the characters' physical appearance, behaviours, and personalities, and this has raised concerns." Today, most of the stereotypical imagery we see of women and girls are those that have turned females into examples of a highly specific kind of beauty and as sex objects, and men as very muscular heroes. The vision of beauty we see in the media is also characterized by lots of artificiality: the dangerously thin bodies, the flawless skin created by air-brushing, and the unnaturally sized and shaped breasts. Women are portrayed as an object of someone else's sexual desire rather than a sexual being in their own right. In this context therefore, it is important to address the fact that general stereotypes do not only

contribute to the status quo in terms of women's roles but also promotes imbalance in the portrayal of male and female roles in the society.

For the purpose of this study therefore, we will be looking at the general gender stereotypes based on appearance and behaviors of both males and females, females portrayed as sex objects or prizes, absence of female characters, females as victims while the males are portrayed as heroes and the possible effects these portrayal in video games can have on the audience or target group for whom the games were designed.

2.6 Videogame as New Media

Most technologies described as "New Media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, and interactive. Examples are the Internet, websites, video games, computer multimedia, and mobile phones e.t.c. It holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content (Calvert.2011). Another important promise of new media is the "democratization" of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content. Good examples of this include; Yahoo, Ask, Google, Bing e.t.c which are online search engines, combining Internet accessible digital text, images and video with web-links, creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community of editors and donors for the benefit of non-community readers. Facebook, Twitter, Badoo, Linked-in e.t.c are also examples of the social media models, in which most or all users are also participants.

New Media has become a daily routine in people's lives affecting the way we live and the way people live around us. Information comes to us and is given at lighting speeds. The exchange of ideas and images is of primary importance in considering the potential for these media forms, as anyone, who has access to an electronic communication device can access information or make information available to others. With the advancements of New Media people can obtain all information they need from any website. In some sense, people feel that New Media has made the world a smaller place to live. Face-to-face interaction is becoming less and causing attention deficits.

Today, there is a tremendous ability for individual users who write, paint, report, educate, etc. to make connections to one another in a way that might allow them to circumvent the conventions of institutional and closed opportunities. New Media itself is neutral new technology evolving all the time. It is up to the user as to determine whether to use it positively or otherwise.

Characteristics such as being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial make video game an aspect of new media. What then is 'new media'? It lacks a singular definition being that several scholars have given various definitions to it. In view of the foregoing, it is pertinent to examine a few of the definitions in line with the objectives of this study. Rice (1984:46) defines New Media as: "Communication technologies that enable or facilitates user-to-user interactivity, and interactivity between user and information." This definition replaces the one-to-many model of the traditional mass communication (print and broadcast) with the possibility of the 'many-to-many' digital web of communication. Interactivity can therefore be considered a term for a

number of new use options evolving from the rapid dissemination of Internet access points, the digitalization of media, and media convergence. Thus the convergence of new methods of communication with new technologies, where any individual with the appropriate technology can now produce his/her on-line media and include images, texts and sounds about what ever he/she chooses, has brought about a shift in the way we interact and communicate with one another. This interactivity which now goes in hand with New Media is present in some programming work, such as video games. Interactivity can be considered as a central concept in understanding New Media, but different media forms possess different degree of interactivity, even some forms of digitized and converged media are not in fact interactive at all, this is according to Tony Feldman.

Video games are one of the most significant inventions of new Media and they, like most other forms of media may be categorized based on many factors such as method of game playing, types of goals, art, style and more. According to Terry Flew (2005:101) "the global interactive game industry is large and growing, and is at the forefront of many of the most significant innovations of new media."

Ever advancing technology and production values related to video game development have fostered more life-line and complex games which have in turn introduced or enhanced genre possibilities, pushed the boundaries of existing video gaming or in some cases add new possibilities in play. Digital games, as they are widely known, are a new form of media where users interact and highly engage with the plot and objective of the game.

Flew (2008: 101) states that "…unlike 'lean-back' type of media such as television, film and books, digital games place users into a productive relationship." In other words, a user is engaged to have relationship where he or she serves to create own text every time when engaged. A,G Bells quoted by Aritjit (2008:7) also adds:

> …as consoles become more and more common, then eventually computers will become as available as the television set. If so, it is very likely that future generations will use them in their leisure time to interact with game playing programs.

In relation to the relationship user/players of video games develop with video games, the newness of this New Media form and their interactive nature makes Turkle (1984: 60) to assert that:

> Video games are a window onto a new kind of intimacy with machines that is characteristic of the nascent computer culture. The special relationship that players form with video games has elements that are common to interactions with other kinds of computers. The holding power of video games, their almost hypnotic fascination, is computer holding power

As earlier mentioned, video games are becoming more common, among digital media consumers this could be due to the difference between this and traditional media forms which have mainly one directional flow of communication between sender and receiver, this however lacked the user feedback and interactive quality provided by the New Media forms and in this context, the video games.

Funk, (1993:86) puts it thus:

> Games are the first new computer-based media form to socialize a generation of youth in a way that traditional media forms have not in the past because they straddle the technologies of television and computers, electronic games are a channel through which we can investigate the various impacts of new media and the technologies of convergence

The video game is unlike any media that comes before it. Being the first to combine real-time game play with a navigable, onscreen digenetic space; the first to feature avatars and player-controlled surrogates that could influence onscreen events; and the first to require hand-eye coordination skills, except for pinball; this was much more limited and not as complicated.

The special relationship that players form with video games has elements that are common to interactions with other types of computers. The games demand skills that are complex and differentiated. Some of them begin to constitute socialization into the computer culture: where there is interaction with a program and players learn what it can do, thus get used to assimilating large amounts of information about structure and strategy by interacting with a dynamic screen display. When one game is mastered, there is thinking about how to generalize strategies to other games.

2.7 New Media and Behaviour Change

New media has the potential to influence many behavioural social norms including self-esteem and body image (Bessenoff 2006:239; Morrison et al. 2004), gender identity (Calvert 2001:16), and sexual behaviors (Strasburger 1989:2517). For instance, Women who are exposed to images of "ideal" (e.g., very thin) women in the media report increased levels of body dissatisfaction, negative mood and depression and lower levels of self-esteem as compared to women who are not exposed to these images (Bessenoff 2006:239).

Media consumers are mostly ignorant or honestly unaware of the content they are continuously presented with, hence it could be agreed that they are innocent victims of all

sorts of media content both negative and positive because one would be wrong to claim that all media content is negative. Therefore as clearly stated by the above scholars, the media does have a level of influence on its consumers both male and female and it also has the ability to shape behaviours in individuals.

In line with the above assertion, Anderson and Dill (2000:788) opine that;

> Behaviours from the media are often times considered appropriate behaviors by adults and children. Those behaviors are then interpreted into everyday life. It only stands to theoretical reason that video games would have a similar impact into lives as one would identify with the characters in video games.

As video games have gained recognition and acceptance, people are exposed to more and more advanced games containing lifelike characters that they may relate to. They are now left with the choice of either to accept stories told by these games through the characters or otherwise. Given that most individuals are not readily aware of the potential effect of some media on their behaviour, the task is to examine the potentially harmful content of video games as a form of New Media.

2.8 Gender Portrayal in Video Games

Video games reflect characters according to realities in the society. By this statement, we mean that characterization in video games is not elusive; gamers can relate the characters in video games to what is obtainable in their world. It therefore means that video game producers or designers approach game characters in relation to genders or stereotypes. For the purpose of this segment, it is important to state that stereotype is a belief that may be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things, but that belief may or may not accurately reflect reality. Gender stereotypes are simplistic generalizations

about the gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, and rarely communicate accurate information about others. When people automatically apply gender assumptions to others regardless of evidence to the contrary, they are perpetuating gender stereotyping.

Furthermore, it is observed that gender stereotyping is commonly used in media to enhance character traits and create humorous situations. (Heath 1984:247) When stereotypes are overwhelmingly present in media forms, viewers internalize those messages of gender, making it difficult to counter stereotypical behaviour. These stereotypic messages can affect society by communicating normative behaviours and shaping individuals' attitudes toward women (Ward et al. 2005:150). The portrayal of video game characters is especially important because it has been found that children consider video characters to be role models (McDonald and Kim 2001). These messages could be particularly influential for young children who are currently developing their attitudes and expectations. For example, video games that portray men as heroes and women as victims might impact the way game players view gender roles. Females might interpret this portrayal to mean that they lack the ability to be a hero or take care of themselves, while males may feel they supposed to appear as strong as the game characters. Such could lead o various dissatisfaction with the body in both males and females.

Just as the media has the potential to impact females, it also has the potential to influence males. Men who view images of "ideal" (e.g., muscular) male actors and models have more negative body images and are more likely to try to gain weight or use steroids . Additionally, males who are exposed to unrealistically muscular action figures

(representing characters on television) report more negative attitudes toward their body image than males exposed to action figures with normal muscle mass. Thus, media images affect both males' and females' in behavior, body image and self-perception. (Monica. K. Miller 2008)

The stereotypes contained in video games, also have implications for the development of gender roles and attitudes. For instance, males exposed to this stereotypic portrayal of females as helpless sexual objects might adopt negative attitudes toward women. Similarly, it may affect female's perceptions of how they should act. For instance, females may get the impression that women are helpless and need to be rescued by men. In addition, female gamers may find it discouraging that female characters and heroines are fewer than male characters and heroes. Both male and female characters might take this to mean that women are insignificant or incapable of being a hero. This means that women will have to idealize male characters or endorse the more stereotypic female portrayals (e.g., the female acting as a supplemental character that helps the male hero).

Stereotypical gender portrayal in video games cannot be over emphasized. Beasley and Stanley, (2002:04) opine that; "Male characters have been designed to appear strong and muscular, whereas female characters are portrayed as slim, voluptuous beings scantily dressed to accentuate their sexuality."

It has been assumed that most video game players are males, hence, video games have been described as a male domain, and we have a condition currently where modern technology is seen as a male 'thing'. The roles of females with respect to games and

gaming culture, have developed into stereotypical expectations and they are not expected to want to play, nor to be any good at it. In line with this, Justin Cassell and Henry Jenkins (1998:45);

> Too often, the study of computer games has meant the study of 'boys' playing computer games. In fact too often the very design of computer games for children has meant computer games for boys' (the proof being, as Jenkins mentions further reflections, Nintendo's "Game Boy

In addition, Reinhard (2006:15) states 'the behaviors and personality characteristics assigned to female characters in digital games usually render them subordinate to male characters'

This is such that they stereotypically carry the characteristics of beauty, submission, materialism, stupidity, and inferiority. This often results in boys perceiving female characters as 'damsels in distress' or 'love interests'. Moreover, the paucity of female characters in team sport games also fosters gender inequity by misrepresenting the image and membership of women in certain arenas.

It is no secret that young adult men make up the majority of video gamers. A study in 2009 found that 60 percent of gamers were male, and the average age of players was 35. Although the gender gap has narrowed considerably in the past 30 years, video gaming is still in many ways a male-dominated medium. Male influence can be seen throughout the industry. Women make up less than 12 percent of game designers and programmers, and those who do enter the field often find themselves facing subtle and not so subtle stereotyping. The issue of gender stereotypes in video games has existed since the early days of the medium.

The predominance of male characters in the video games also raises the concern that video games are made by males and made for males. Boys get to choose a male leading character to play in almost all the video games yet girls hardly can find a female leading character as an avatar to represent themselves in the game, which might make girls lose interest in video games in the first place.

In line with this Hartmann and Klimmt (2006:20) opine that;

> The disproportionate gender representation and the gender role stereotyping of game characters might be the reason why girls dislike video games and fewer girls than boys play video games.

Contrary to the general belief that females dislike video games, this research aims to prove that video games are not a male only pastime. Although a fairly large percentage of males play video games more, females also enjoy playing video games so it is not appropriate to assume that only males play. In fact over the years, the gap has been considerably narrowed as more games have been designed and more females are picking interest in playing either as male or female characters.

Terry flew (2005:406)suggests that the appeal of role playing games lie in the idea of escapism, and the ability to assume the role of someone or something that is a fantasy in real life. He notes that '…for some women, [they] enjoy adopting what they feel to be an image of femininity more acceptable or desirable than their real world body…'

This is what he calls "identity tourism", a form of hopping from one person to another, for which there usually is a stereotypical discourse associated with the protagonist. This is seen in the case of males who assume the personas of the female gender, and the

character's representation of her gender being overly sexualized and/or passive, "…this tends to perpetuate and accentuate existing stereotypes of women." Terry (2005:406)

This however, does not mean that the gender stereotyping in video games is only geared towards the female gender, it cuts across both genders. In most games as contained in this research, men are constantly portrayed, as abusive, homicidal, head-shaved warriors with little remorse or resentment of their actions. They are also portrayed as super muscular (with big biceps) and sometimes over emphasized groin area and also with perfect bodies. Some have claimed that video games in general are designed by males for other males and tend to feed the masculine fantasies of control, power and destruction (Provenzo, F. 1991:8-9). The men are portrayed as fighting and beating up other characters for incentives or rewards which in some cases is a woman. Is this to say that there are no normal men who enjoy doing other than being violent, or always fighting for a woman?

2.9 Video Game and the Concept of Participation/Development Communication

Video games can be situated within the domain of participatory communication. This is because most of the games try to reinforce characteristics that foster social values and adherence to certain characters that bring about creativity, constructivism and positivism. Apart from the fact that some negative features especially that relating to female gender, has been sometime portrayed as unfavourable, the key aspect here is that players tend to emulate the courageous game characters and alter their real life character to suit theirs. Therefore, development of consciousness and attitudinal change are two important factors that development carries along on its journey. Video games are communication instruments, where, various information, is passed across to the players and as it is widely

known, communication is central to development. This aspect is essential in the sense that this study reviews the various gender portrayals of characters in video games, in order to measure possible influences on gender roles and gender based perceptions.

Scholars have opined that video games are platforms whereby players are afforded the opportunity to solve social issues which they habour in their minds. Howbeit, this is done through the instrumentality of entertainment. Video games are designed in such a way that they give room for interaction between the user and the electronic interface. They showcase real life activities and social yearnings which constitute social issues begging for attention. Through engaging in the games, the player finds his or herself attempting to resolves this issues which in turn sets the tone for critical thinking and consciousness. This in actual fact brings about social changes which often times can be positive or negative as the case maybe. This practice is similar to certain development communication strategy which utilizes the strength of theatre to address social issues such as The Forum Theatre as practiced by Augusto Boal (1987) and Freire (1972a).

Be that as it may, scholars and practitioners conceived participation by emphasizing on its instrumental value of facilitating development programmes (Bordenave, 1994; 42 cited in Whadka, 2000; Stuart and Bery, 1996). Other practitioners view participatory communication as a means of transformation which gives emphasis to empowering people so that meaningful social changes can occur. This is rather relative to the concept of video games in the society. Invariably, game houses are considered as social rituals, which people indulge in. it provides and an enabling environment for players and in some cases the audience entertainment and room to discuss various issues such as heroism, resilience,

stamina, etc. game houses are not only for entertainment but also learning through conversations.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Learning Theory which was formulated by Albert Bandura in 1986 and it argues that:

> People learn from each other through observing, imitating, and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory explains how human behaviour can be shaped by continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences.

This theory emphasizes that the social behaviour that we display socially is learned primarily by observing and imitating actions of others. It is derived from constructing meanings and knowledge from social influences. It goes further to suggest that social influences, including the media have adverse effect on people. However, as people are continually learning and constructing meaning throughout their whole life from communication within their community and now, through the internet, the theory implies that there are types of learning wherein direct re-enforcement is not the casual mechanism, rather the so-called social element can result to the development of new learning among individuals. It is to assume therefore that social learning theory is concerned on observational learning process among people.

This theory is important to the study of Gender Stereotypes in Video games in the sense that it would showcase the influences of how stereotypes of female are portrayed in video game. This is to corroborate the concerns of scholars who have argued that images of gender stereotypes in video games as well as images on other media can influence young

people. This is based on the assumption that people learn from their environment and seek acceptance from the society by learning through influential models.

Furthermore, Social Learning Theory is predicated upon certain models such as:

i) Live model: this is where the model could be an actual person demonstrating the desired behaviour.

ii) Verbal instruction: in this case an individual describes the desired behaviour in detail, and instructs the participant in how to engage in the behavior and

iii) Symbolic: it emphasizes that modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, Internet, literature, and radio. This type of modeling involves a real or fictional character demonstrating the behaviour. In this context therefore, video game characters are grouped under the symbolic models because they are non-living but the player interacts with them virtually in the cause of gaming and receives prompt feedback, this could stir emotional, imaginative and psychological responses.

Consequently, this theory suggests that playing such video games have the tendencies to stimulate certain behaviors in players because the player is an active participant as opposed to a passive observer as the case may be in other traditional media as film and television.

The social learning theory also thrives on the advancement of new technology and to back this assertion Elder (1981:5) puts it thus:

> Social and technological changes alter, often considerably, the kind of life events that become customary in the society. Indeed, many of the major changes in social and economic life are ushered in by innovations of technology.

It is imperative to note that technological advancements provide new and innovative methods to create a social learning environment. One aspect of technology is the ability to interact and observe others either directly or indirectly thereby picking elements that contribute to the behavioral formation. By so doing, "…human expectations, beliefs, emotional bents and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by social influences that convey information and activate emotional reactions through modeling, instruction and social pervasion." Bandura (1989:12)

Social learning theory suggests that a combination of environment (social) and psychological factors influence behavior. It further outlines requirements for people to learn and model behaviour which includes:

i) Attention and retention -that is remembering what one observes,
ii) Reproduce -the ability to reproduce the behavior that one has seen and
iii) Motivation -for the individual to want to adopt a certain behavior.

Since the above given factors, according to Bandura's Social Learning theory- the determining factors of how an individual learns new behaviors, it can be argued that video games users can possibly form certain characters and or model certain behaviors due to the continues interaction they have with the games and consequently the characters and how they are portrayed in the games, either negatively or positively. Some behaviour acquired from game characters or media content as a whole can be considered to be negative if they go against cultural/traditional and religious beliefs of the society. For instance the display of explicit content that is portraying nudity or sexual activity in an open way as is done is some game content, through open display of mostly female body parts, is unacceptable in

both Christianity and Islam which are the two major religions practiced in Nigeria. By Nigerian religious standard, it is morally wrong to expose one's body and this applies to both male and female genders. In fact in the Nigerian society as a whole, decent dressing is encouraged among both male and females and doing otherwise is frowned upon. Nevertheless, some game content have positive effects on users, games like simulation games using in teaching various health topic and also other educational games used in schools to teach students. Given that this study explores the elements of sexuality and gender stereotyping present in video games, we will take a look at the social learning theory from a perspective from which to understand sexual media effects.

As earlier discussed in this work, Bandura's theory focuses on the impact of observational learning on behavior. Factors that enhance observational learning are the status of the model such as attractiveness, power, popularity etc, the possibility of performing any of the observed behavior, and the type of reward associated with the modeled behavior. Video gamers that simultaneously observe interact and engage virtually in sexual behavior and being exposed continuously to stereotypical game context, are more likely to perpetuate or engage in similar behaviour if future situations present an opportunity. Overall, evidence indicates that frequent and involved exposure to sexually oriented content within any form of media could directly be associated with greater acceptance of stereotypical and casual attitudes about sex and gender portrayal in general.

According to Anderson & Bushman (2001:5)"Video games are more interactive and repetitive in nature. The elements of interaction and repetition are proposed to make them even more influential". Thus active participation with video games is likely to heighten

one's attention to it and one's feelings of identification with the mediated models. This makes for a fertile environment for learning to occur, given the assumptions of social learning theory. In applying the social learning model to gaming, what becomes clear is that the features of video games and game play may be likely to enhance the potential for learning over less interactive media. Therefore the first step to take is to determine if the content of the game could influence the behavior of the user and to do this, one has to know what exactly is contained in any given game, and how it could affect the user. If there is no negative content it is unlikely to trigger any negative behavior or influence. If there are negative content such as violence and inappropriate sexual display, racism and stereotypes, the entire content would have to be investigated.

Learning continually occurs through social interactions and influences from the community, media and the internet. People determine how these influences will affect them based on their inner thoughts. Through social interactions, learning will occur and meaning will be constructed. There are numerous opportunities for people to enhance their learning through social interactions online. Global networking and creating/ interacting with educational games could also enhance social learning because; social learning is ever increasing with the continual advancements of technology and online communications.

Spending so much time in the virtual worlds, playing games and generally socializing within different virtual communities or groups, can affect the social learning abilities of especially young minds and the behavior of youths who involve in such. It is from the constant exposure to the interaction in these games/ virtual world as well as through

television and newspapers that people pick up most of their characteristic traits. These behavioural traits learned, continues throughout adulthood.

For instance Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008:581) opine that "Being exposed to sexualized portrayals can influence how a man responds towards women". This assertion could be true as social learning theory states that, people learn social behaviour primarily from observing and imitating the actions of others in which case it could be human or symbolic models. These are potential influences of social learning patterns seen in people. Due to the interactive nature of Video games, they provoke a range of emotional response like frustration, anxiety, elation even sadness. But the same can be said about other forms of media the public is presented with. But the interactive nature of video games makes it the media form, which is capable of eliciting the deepest response.

This study adopts the social learning theory due to its appropriate explanation of media effect and the influence on its users therefore giving a solid background to this study. The theory explains how people's behaviour can be influenced by different models, live, instruction and symbolic model any of which could be promoted by the media including, television, radio, internet and literature. It also provides a framework for the research to be critically analyzes and elaborates on the power of the media and its content on users as the basis by giving an understanding of the role the media plays in influencing the society.

Social learning theory, relates to the case study such that as a significant part of youth culture today, there are multitudes of media content at the disposal of people. The social importance of games in our society is larger than ever, with almost every computer /ICT compliant person aware of it. Games consoles and games are extremely popular among

university students and youths as elite youths as well. Therefore, gaming is undeniably there, and one of the major methods of entertainment alongside movies, and music. Social learning theory thus gives a basis for the study of how the continuous use and possible imitation of various models derived from media content can influence or affect the behaviour of users.

After discussing Video games as a form New Media, possible effects of video game usage on users and gender stereotypes in video games, providing examples and different perspectives in an attempt to give this study proper direction, the focus of this thesis has been properly established.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research adopted both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This mixed approach is necessary when trying to articulate opinion, belief and attitude in-deptly as well as measure views from a cross section of respondents. This forms the pattern of this study**.** The use of qualitative methods including observations can challenge assumptions about specific phenomena, as well as variations and contradictions. Questionnaire which is a quantitative tool would be necessary in determining the types of games as well as game characters portray. Furthermore, the quantitative techniques to be deployed in this study provide invaluable information gender stereotypes in video games.

In a wholistic sense, the use of quantitative methodallows for greater objectivity and generalization in the statistical sense of findings beyond the phenomenon understudy, while the qualitative allows for in-depth and detailed understanding, or elucidation of the participants, as well as their perceptions and beliefs (Gill & Johnson, 2002).

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. Additionally, it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research interviews according to Steiner (1996:135) ‘Seeks to describe the meaning of

central themes in the life and world of the subjects'. It is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations. This research method will be adopted in this study to investigate the phenomena in study of selected students of English department of University of Jos. This is important to the research because it seeks to understand and establish that media content have possible effects on users, and also because it is important to know the number and percentage of the sample size based on sex and age group, in order to carryout this research. Also, according to Aliaga and Gunderson (2000:2) 'Quantitative research is 'explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods in particular statistics. The first element is explaining particular phenomena.' This is a key element of all research, be it quantitative or qualitative. When we set out to do some research, we are always looking to explain something. Therefore, as quantitative research is essentially about collecting numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon, particular questions seem immediately suited to being answered using quantitative methods. The questions about: how many people are affected by a certain phenomena and the percentage of the individuals affected. This research would implore the use of questionnaires a quantitative research tool in order to find out how video game users are affected by the stereotypes therein.

3.2 Research Design

The study made use of the descriptive survey design (Cohen & Manion, 1986). The reason for the use is that it permitted the drawing of inferences. It also serves to uncover and integrate data, and then pinpoint the interrelationship among variables. It also allows for

data collection and analysis from sample of the population selected to represent the whole population of English department.

3.3 Instruments for Data Collection

This study employed three main research instruments for data collection. These include; interviews, observation, and questionnaire to aid in effective data collection. The rational in interviewing is to understand the answers given by the participant.

Interview Method

Interviews are conversations between two people or more where one person (interviewer) poses questions to another person (interviewee) or some people (interviewees), with a view to obtaining information (Gill & Johson, 2002). Also McNamara (1999:2023-2051) states that

> Interviews are particularly useful for getting a story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow up to certain respondents to questionnaires for example to further investigate their responses.

Interviewing stems from the desire to know more about the people around us and to better understand how the people around us view the world we live in. At the heart of interviewing research therefore is an interest in other individual's stories because they are of worth. Hence, the researcher will use this method to gather more data from random people in game houses and also friends and acquaintances who play video games.

The Questionnaire Method

A questionnaire is a formalized set of questions for obtaining information from the respondents. The overriding objective is to translate the researcher's information needs into

a set of specific questions that respondents are willing and able to answer. While this may seem straight forward, questions may yield very different and unanticipated responses. A questionnaire is the main means of collecting quantitative primary data. It enables quantitative data to be collected in a standardized way so that the data are internally consistent and coherent for analysis. The questionnaire designed for the study contains valid questions that are meant to give insight to people's views about gender stereotypes in video games. To this end therefore, two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to participants who constitute the sample size.

Observational Research

Due to the nature of this study, another important research method used is the Observational research. Observation is one of the oldest and most fundamental research method approaches. 'It involves collecting impressions of the world using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about phenomenon of interest. In observational research therefore, researchers pay attention to the actors or participants in a setting, collecting socio- demographic and descriptive information, trying to determine who the people are. Observers attend to what people say the words they use, accounts and explanations they give of their behavior, and the personal and social meanings and the attitudes and beliefs that are revealed through their talk. Relationships between people both individually and within groups of people and organizations, are explored. Although observational research can be employed on its own, it is often used with other methods such as interviewing, and document analysis. In pointing out the strength and weaknesses of these research methods, Mckechine, L (2008:574-576) states that "observation is very dependent on the ability of the observer

(reflected in the idea of research as instrument), it is subject to observer bias that occurs when researchers channel both their observation and interpretation of data through what they know". He also adds that 'observational research is well suited to both the discovery of new information (theory generation) and the validation of existing knowledge (theory confirmation) it is therefore important for the researcher to be as objective as possible.

The researcher observed participants, from two game houses at different locations, and at different times. The main aim of this is for the researcher to ascertain the age range and sex of the people that go into the games houses and also to gather information about the most popularly played games. This would help to balance the gender difference of game players within this given environment. From the results of the findings, the researcher hopes to gain more insight into the kind of people that play what kind of games. The advantage of this kind of research is that the researcher would appear unnoticed, will attempt to mix in with the crowd while noting as much as possible. The interview, involved speaking with the managers (or any individual in charge at that time) of the game houses, about ten minutes of their time was requested in order to ask questions relevant to the research. Useful information about the most requested or most played games was be obtained.

All data will be collected and collated and presented in subsequent chapters of this research. While there is room for errors in carrying out such a research, it offers the researcher the opportunity to see firsthand what kinds of games the youths are involved with and also the game content and the choice of characters they prefer to use.

Content Analysis

As such, content analysis was used. Content analysis is the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables and themes (Julien 2008:121). It is a commonly used method of analyzing a wide range of textual data, including interview transcripts, recorded observations, narrative responses to open ended questionnaire items, speeches, and media such as drawings, photographs and video.

As the name suggests, content analysis is used to investigate the content of the mass media. In other words it is used to explore the content of various media (books, magazines, TV, film e.t.c) in order to discover how particular issues are presented. At its most basic, content analysis is a statistical exercise that involves categorizing some aspects or qualities of people's behavior and counting the number of times such behavior appears (a sample content analysis might involve counting the number of minutes men and women appear on screen in a programme).

It helps us to build up a picture of the patterns of behavior that underlie (and are usually hidden from view) the social interaction portrayed in the media. "Content" denotes what is contained and content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a message. Broadly, content analysis may be seen as a method where the content of a message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content (Nachmias and Nachmias 1976:6). Furthermore, content analysis falls in the interface of observation and document analysis. It is a method of observation in the sense that instead of asking people to respond

to questions, it 'takes the communications that people have produced and asks questions of communications' (Kerlinger, 1973).

Therefore this would be significant in this research based on the focus of the study, it would enable the researcher to have a clear picture of the content of this media form which is video games, and then subsequent analysis through examining and observing the content of the selected games within the context of this study and also responses from questionnaire.

3.4 Sampling Technique/Size

At the time of this research, the total number of students in English Department (ED) was two hundred and fifteen (215). Hence, this study made use of random sampling technique whereby, two hundred (200) respondents were chosen to represent the total number of students, and purposive sampling technique to select the number of games contained in Play station (PS) and Xbox which is vast. Play station alone, contains about 2418 games spread across Play station 1, 2, 3, and 4, while Xbox contains 968 games, most of them quite popular. The reason for choosing these two game consoles is because they are two of the most common and popular games in Nigeria. That means they are easily obtainable and a lot of game users in Nigeria, have either played, own, or would choose to play any of them given the opportunity. Thus it was determined that a sample of the most popular of these two games (Play station and Xbox) would be the focus of this study, in the context of how they could influence the users.

Also, a number of Nigerian online stores (www.jumia.com.ng/games-consoles, www.tradestable.com, www.ventures-africa.comwww.konga.com) were visited, to have a general idea of games they have in store for sale. While doing this, the researcher will also check the individual rating for each game considering the demand for the games. Then a list of 10 most popular Play station and Xbox games will be made, after which all the game covers and as many as possible articles about the games would be downloaded from the internet. The game related articles chosen contain a sufficient amount of information and pictures of the various characters and how they appear in the game; lengthy articles will be specifically chosen for this purpose. The reason for this is to examine what the games contain, as it would be almost impossible for the researcher to play all selected games, what kind of pictures are used for the game covers, and how the game characters are portrayed to see if the male and female genders were both equally represented and how they were both portrayed.

During the data collection, considering the fact that many of the games appeared on the list of more than one site, each chosen from PS and Xbox recurred as the most popular games on the sites. The most recurring game titles will then be selected for the final content analysis. After obtaining this data, each of the game reviews will be read through; some of them would also be downloaded from the internet.

The criteria that is used for the selection of the video games in analysis is generally the most popular Play station and X box games based on the player's recommendation and the response. And also based on the information that will be gathered from the game houses visited as to which games are more popular, hence the most likely to be played.

Furthermore, in order to evaluate the roles of women generally, the researcher classified the games as follows: games with no female characters at all, female characters portrayed as sex objects or prizes-this is based upon the physical appearance of the female game characters in terms of dressing, over exaggerated body parts and also females leaving with the male character who is usually the winner at the end of the game., females as the victims(mostly in this case, the female has been kidnapped), female character in a lead role or as hero- based on whether the female character is portrayed in a lead role in the game or not.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study data collected from respondents would be subjected to descriptive analysis. The descriptive data analysis allows for the explanation of key data collected in line with the objectives of the study. It gives room for data to be explained in clear and understandable terms. Also, it helps to summarise data, while also revealing clear trends, pattern, perceptions, emotions or issues which may be embedded within the collected data and analyzed qualitatively.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the observations and analysis of findings on video game content in order to properly assert that video games contain gender stereotypes. Hence, the data collected from the interviews, virtual research, questionnaires and observations will be used as the basis for this analysis. It is therefore imperative to take a brief look at video games and what they represent.

For the purpose of this analysis, 10 games were selected from a wide range of other games contained in both Play station and Xbox respectively. The selected games have also been categorized into three wide categories namely; sports, action/adventure, and fighting/shooting games. The game selection was done considering mainly games that include human characters in order to enable the analysis of the game characters in terms of: gender, their physical appearance dressing, and character abilities. The questions driving this research are same as the objectives of the study, they include:

- To study the prominent gender stereotypes and sexualized images of women as portrayed in video games in a bid to call the attention of player to such images.
- To assess the stereotyped portrayal of game characters in terms of physical appearance, attire and abilities in order to address this issue.
- To examine the potentially harmful effects of some video game content
- To suggest possible ways through which the issue of gender stereotypes can be controlled or reduced in media content and to make recommendations.

A total of Two hundred (200) copies of questionnaire were administered in Department of English (ED). However, out of the total number distributed, one hundred and eighty eight (188) were returned and twelve (12) were either unreturned or lost to inaccurate filling of questionnaire. In essence, 94% of the total population was used to draw conclusions on the entire population of the students in English Department. Thus, one hundred and eighty eight (188) response rates which represent 94% of the sample population will be used. At the time of data collection and collation, the department comprised of about 215 students from 100 to 400 levels.

4.2 Data Representation and Interpretation

Section A- Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

AGE

17-21	90	47.9%
22-26	77	40.9%
27-31	21	11.2%

A study carried out in University of Jos

The demographics for the age range is as follows; 90 (47.9%) respondents were within the age range of 17-21, 77 (40.9%) respondents were within the age range of 22-26, while 21 (11.2%) respondents were between the ages of 27-31. The data obtained shows that video game players cut across a wide age range, although the younger population indicated more interest in this form of media thus are likely to spend more time indulging in this to pass time, it also suggests that video game are enjoyed by the older population as well.

LEVEL

Level	Response	Percentage
100	50	26.6%
200	58	31%
300	43	23%
400	37	20%

(*A survey carried out in University of Jos*)

The above is the representation of respondents according to their levels; 50 (26.6%) respondents were 100 level students, 58 (31%) respondents were 200 level students, 300 level students were 43 (23%) and 37 (20%) respondents were of 400 level students. This implies that respondents cut across all levels in the university although they occur more among the 200 level students, all other levels have a fair share of responses.

SEX

Male	112	59.6%
Female	76	40.4%

Out of 188 respondents, 112 (59.6%) were male, while 76 (40.4%) respondents were females. Although males have a larger percentage of respondents who play, it also shows that females do indulge in game playing as well, hence it debunks the concept that video games are strictly within a male domain.

Section B- Basic Information about Video Game Play

1. Do you play video games?

A. Yes	169	89.9%
B. No	19	10.1%

The above table shows that out of 188 respondents, 169 represents 89.9% of the sample size confirm that they do play games while 19 respondents which represent 10.1% of the sample size, say they do not play games. This shows that of all respondents, a larger percentage do indulge in video game playing, this proves that video games are indeed more common than may be known.

2. What Platform do you Use to Play Video Games?

A. Mobile phone	83	44.1%
B. Console	32	17%
C. Arcade Games	8	4.2%
D. Computer	65	34.57%

For the platform or what means or device they use to play video games, 83 respondents which represent 44.1% of the sample group play on their mobile phones,32 (17%) play on consoles,8 (4.2%) respondents play arcade games, and 65 (34.57%)respondents play on computers. This shows that a larger percentage(44.1) have on-the-go access to games, meaning they can play almost at any time, 34.57% play on their computers,17% play on personal consoles or in game houses, while a lower percentage of 4.2% play Arcades Games which are not so popular within Jos metropolis.

3. How often do you Play Video Games?

A. Everyday	60	31.9%
B. Twice a week	34	18.1%
C. Once a week	11	5.9%
D. Once a while	83	44.14%

The frequency of play reflects that 11 respondents(5.9%) play video games once a week, 34 (18.1%) respondents play twice a week, 60 (31.9%) play every day while 83(44.14%) respondents play once in a while. This shows that a larger percentage of 44,14% of game

players admit to playing once in a while, 31.9% play every day, while a lesser percentage of 5.9% and 18.1% play once and twice in a week respectively. Although a larger percentage plays once in a while, a fairly large percentage does play every day. This shows that a significant number of people play games on a daily bases hence are exposed to various media content daily.

4. How much time do you spend Playing Video Games?

A. as long as possible	116	61.7%
B. 1 hour	33	6.9%
C.30 minutes	33	17.5%
D. 15 minutes	26	13.8%

26(13.45%) respondents gave their game play time for 15 minutes, 33(17.5%) said 30 minutes, 13(6.9%) play for one hour while 116(61.7%) play for as long as they can. This signifies that a larger percentage of game players estimated at 61.7% given the opportunity, would play for as long as they can, while lesser percentages of 13.8%, 17.5%, and 6.9% would play for 15 minutes, 30 minutes and one hour respectively.

5. What kind of games do you play?

A. Action/Adventure	42	22.3%
B. Sports	30	27
C. Shooting/Fighting	27	14.3%
D. All Of The Above	89	47.3%

In this research, video games have been categorized into three broad types namely; action/adventure, sports, and shooting/fighting games. The response for type of games played, 42 (22.3%) respondents prefer Action/Adventure games, 30 (15.9%) went for Sports games, 27 (14.3%) prefer Shooting/fighting games and 89 (47.3%) respondents

actually play all of the mentioned games. This indicates that a larger percentage of respondents 47.3% enjoy playing all above listed genres of games, 22.3% enjoy mostly Action/Adventure, while a lesser percentage of 15.9% and 14.3% would rather play sports and Shooting /fighting Games.

6. Who do you think plays more Video Games?

A. Males	127	67.5%
B. Females	17	9.04%
C. Both	44	23.4%

In terms of gender, 127 (67.5%) agree that, males play games more, 17 (9.04%) said females play games more, while 44 (23.4%) said both males and females play games. This indicates that a larger percentage of males estimated at 67.5% play games more, 23.4% shows that both males and females play games, while 9.04% say females play more video games.

7. Do you consider Video Games to be entertaining?

A. Yes	173	92.02%
B. No	5	2.65%
C. Don't Know	10	5.3%

173 (92.02%) find video games entertaining, 5 (2.65%) do not, while 10(5.3%) do not know if video games are entertaining. A significant percentage 92.02% of respondents, find video games entertaining , while a lesser percentage of 2.65% and 5.3% do not find it entertaining and do not know if they are entertaining or not. This implies that respondents who find video games to be interesting are more than those who do not, meaning a larger number of youths consider video games to be interesting.

8. Do you consider Video Games to be distractive?

A. Yes	141	75%
B. No	37	19.6%
C. Don't know	10	5.3%

In the aspect of video games being distractive, 141 (75%) agree to this, 37 (19.6%) disagree and 10 (5.3%) do not know, this indicates that video games qualify as a form of distraction based on the response of 75% of the sample size, while 19.6% disagree,5,3% do not know if video games are distractive.

Section C- impact of Video Games on gamers

9.Do you think Video Games can possibly enhance or influence your psychological development?

A. Yes	125	66.5%
B. No	34	18.1%
C. Don't Know	29	15.4%

The above table represents the result for the psychological influence on the players, 125 (66.5%) respondents said yes, 34 (18.1%) chose No, while 29(15.4%) do not know. From this data, 66.5% of respondents agree to the possible psychological influence of video games on its players, while a lesser percentage 18.1% disagree to this, 5.4% do not know about this. It should be noted that the influence of the any media content could be immediate or otherwise, it is however mostly unconsciously accepted.

10. Would you say some Video Games contain some elements of gender stereotypes?

A. Yes	A. 118	62.8%
B. No	34	18.1%
C.Don't know	36	19.14%

In gender stereotypes contained in games, 118 (62.8%) agree, 34 (18.1%) disagree, while 36 (68%) do not know. In this case, 62.8% confirm that video games do contain elements of gender stereotypes, 19.14% respondents do not know, while a lesser percentage 18.1% do not agree that video games contains elements of gender stereotypes. Going by the above results, it is clear that a certain percentage of people are indeed aware of gender stereotypes in the society, and perhaps how this also reflects in media content.

11. Do you agree that Video Games are addictive?

A. Yes	156	83%
B. No	16	8.5%
C. Don't know	16	8.5%

In the addictive nature of video games 156 (83%) respondents said they are addictive, 16 (8.6%) say they are not, while 16 (8.5%) respondents do not know. Here a considerable large percentage 83% confirm the addictive nature of video games, while lesser percentages of respondents 8.5 and 8.5% say they are not addictive or they do not know. In this case it would be rather impossible to get ardent video gamers otherwise called 'core gamers' to admit to the addictive tendencies of videogames. However the above result still gives a clear indication of this.

12. Would you say some Video Games contain some adult /sexual content?

A. Yes	134	71.2%
B. No	32	17.02%
C. Don't know	22	11.7%

Response for sexual content contained in some video games are as follows, 134 (71.2%) respondents said Yes, 32 (17.02%) said No, while 22 (11.7%) respondents said they do not know. Based on the responses gathered, a larger percentage 71.25% confirms the possibility of sexual content present in some video games, 17,025 however do not agree while 11.7% do not know about this. The percentage of the responses implies the actual presence of sexual content in video games.

13. Do you agree that some Video Games contain scenes and characters that could appeal to your sexual senses?

A. Yes	128	68%
B. No	34	18.1%
C. Don't know	26	13.8%

128 (68%) respondents agree that some video games do contain scenes and characters could appeal to one's sexual senses, 34 (18.1%) disagree, while 26 (13.8%) respondents do not know if this is true or false. A larger percentage 68% however, confirms that games do contain scenes and characters that could appeal to one's sexual senses.

14. **Do you agree that female characters in most Video Games are designed to dress more provocatively than male characters?**

A. Yes	149	79.3%
B. No	15	7.97%
C. Don't know	24	12.8%

In the above data representation,149 (79.3%) respondents agree that female game characters dress more provocatively than male characters, 15 (7.97%) respondents disagree, while 24 (12.8%) do not know. Based on the percentage of respondents, a larger

percentage 79.3% agrees to this, only 12.8% respondents did not admit to this or otherwise, while 7.97% respondents do not agree that female characters dress more provocatively than male characters.

Roles of Characters in Video Games

15. Are there Video Games where the main character's target/ quest are to rescue a damsel in distress?

A. Yes	137	73%
B. No	22	11.7%
C. Don't know	29	15.4%

In the above table, 137 (73%) respondents say the aim of some video games is to rescue a damsel in distress, 22 (11.7%) respondents do not agree, 29 (15.4%) say they do not know.

16. Do females assume the same heroic roles as the male characters?

A. Yes	95	51%
B. No	69	37%
C. Don't know	24	12.8%

In playing heroic roles, the table above indicates that 95 (51%) respondents agree that both males and females can assume heroic roles, 69 (37%) do not agree that females assume same heroic roles as male characters, while 24 (12.8%) do not know if females do assume same heroic roles as male characters.

17. Are there more male or female characters in Video Games?

A. Male	109	58%
B. Female	11	5.9%
C. I don't know	68	36.1%

The above table shows that 109 (58%) respondents said there are more male characters than females in video games, 11 (5.9%) said there are more females than males in video games and 68 (36.1%) are not certain which gender is represented more in video games. The overall response to this question implies that male characters outnumber the female characters, which means the players are more likely to play as male characters due to the availability of more male than female characters.

18. Between male and female characters, which is represented in a more hypersexual way in Video Games?

A. Male	36	19.1%
B. Female	127	67.5%
C. Don't know	25	13.29%

In hypersexual representations, the above table indicates that 31 (19.1%) respondents say males are represented more hyper sexually in video games, 127 (67,5%) respondents say females are more represented hyper sexually while 25 (13.29%) do not know which is represented in a more hyper sexual way. A higher percentage of respondents say females are represented more hyper sexually than males, this implies that based on what they have seen while playing, they have come to such a conclusion.

19. Which character would you prefer to play?

A. Male	139	74%
B. female	49	26%

For the character preferred, 139 (74%) respondents would prefer to play as male characters, while 49 (26%) respondents would rather play as female characters.

20. Do you think Video Games are designed more in favour of males or females?

A. Male	90	48%
B. Female	19	10.1%
C. Both	79	42%

The above table indicates that 90 (48%) respondents think video games are designed mostly in the favour of male players, 19 (10.1%) respondents believe that video games are designed more in favor of the female gender, while 79 (42%) respondents think both male and female genders are favored in video game design.

4.3. Data Analysis/Interpretation

Eliciting views from people have resulted in a lot of data which has been analyzed in this section according to the objectives of the research which include: to study the public image of women generated by the media particularly video games**;** to assess the portrayal of game characters in terms of physical appearance, attire and abilities; to explore the various gender stereotypes and their possible effects on video game user

However, it is important to note that most responses are based on individual game preference. It is worthy of note that most of the questionnaires were filled by males who actually play video games more than females who play video games. Out of two hundred questionnaires given out about 188 were duly filled and returned while 12 were not returned at the time of data collation. Of the returned, 112 (59.6%) were filled by males who play games, leaving the remaining 76 (40.4%) which was filled by females.

The age range of those who answered the questions was more within the range of 17-21(47.9%) and 22-26 (40.9%). This is useful when considering the age range of most video

game users. The results indicate that females are likely to spend less time playing games than males each day. The males are likely to play for longer periods of time each day, which has been approximated to about two hours (61.7%) each day for males who own consoles and computers and more for those who play on their mobile phones, while for the females it's been estimated to be a lot less maybe because of different preferences in past time and the general lack of interest in video games.

The implication of this is that the females may be less core-gamers otherwise known as 'casual gamers' who actually play games but not very much or not as much as their male counterparts. This, however, could be as a result of many factors such as lifestyle, or limited playable female characters because most of the playable characters may not suit the female individual choice. From the data collected, it was found that most of the male game players either own consoles or a computer which is the platform through which they play their games, while the females mostly play on their mobile phones and few on computer.

For the games mostly played, most respondents favored all the categories including the action/adventure, sports, shooting / fighting games at 47.3% genre with games like GTA vice city, and sports games such as FIFA and NBA, Soccer Pro Evolution, and NBA males also prefer racing games like Need for speed and Formula 1 racing. Obviously these are only a few games mentioned as there are so many other games in Play Station I, II, III and IV and the Xbox series. The games were categorized in genres of sports, action/adventure, racing and shooting/ fighting games, to make work easier.

The game character either male or female most likely to assume a lead role, results show that 70.2% responded that the male character was most likely to assume such a role though they had varied reasons for saying so while 16.5% went for with females. 74% also admitted to using male characters due to various reasons including mostly because that was all that was available to choose from and because in most cases the female characters are not designed with the same abilities as that of the male characters, 26% comprising mostly of females chose female characters. Their reasons were that they did not play games with characters in them, or that the characters were all pretty much the same and they would rather play as females. The most obvious thing about the choices is that males prefer to play as male characters, with the exception of males who sometimes choose to play as female characters due to their sexual and attractive qualities and sometimes just for the fun of it; females prefer to play the female characters in most cases except for a few female players who chose to play as male characters. Though female characters do exist in games, but in general, they are exploited sexually in physical appearance, mannerism, and movement, and they usually conform to stereotypical female abilities, where they are quicker and more agile, but weaker than their male counterparts. This could be related to the choice of game character because; in some very popular games all the characters are male with no female playable characters. Meaning that even games where the females appear, in most cases they only play supporting roles to the male characters hence they are not playable.

An estimated response rate of 48% agree that video games seem to favour the males more in the way of design and characters, while 42% say it favours both genders. 67.5% agree that females are presented in a more hypersexualised way than the males while 19.1 say the

males are more hypersexualised. 58% said there are more male characters than females. Responses given for the open ended questions, (which character would you prefer to play male or female? Please state your reason) are rather interesting. Those who said they would rather play male characters said this is so for various reasons which include; 'females are weak', 'male characters are more likely to win', 'they are always the heroes', 'they represent me in some way', 'because they are presumed to be agile naturally', 'they appear to be more challenging', 'because I am used to it', 'because females play foolish parts', 'because the males play better roles than females', 'because the male character is believed to be strong', 'I feel more comfortable and assured with a male character', 'males play more important roles', 'the villains are always large in size so I need a match', 'because they are fast and strong and my models', 'a lead role suits the male' amongst other reasons. The most recurrent reason however was- 'the male characters tend to be more active and have more capabilities so they always win'. On the other hand, the reasons stated by females why they would rather play as females include: ' *she is mostly being saved',' females also do well in games but predominantly because'; 'I am female, I would not know how to play as a male'*.Fewmales who would prefer to play as a female character gave reasons as follows: *'because they are beautiful', 'they are more attractive', 'I enjoy playing as a female character', 'because it is very exciting to see a female winning at the end defeating a male', 'because they are soft', 'because females also do well in game's,' they are attractive therefore make the game interesting', 'so I have something cute to see whenever I play', 'because they are sexy'.*

The above responses represent video game players' perception toward game characters both male and female in action/adventure and shooting/fighting games. It is clear that most

responses were in favour of the male character in terms of role play in games. However, the same cannot be said for the female game characters. The responses are based on the stereotype that females are weak hence cannot be a matched with characters male. While this could be in some ways true, the performance of a character during game play depends largely on the player's ability to control that character. Although by design, the female characters may not posses as many abilities as their male counterparts, they should be able to win as well. This means that the chances of a female character winning over a male depends on the players control, and if the player chooses to play and win as a female character, not to play as the stereotypical weak character. The above suggests that such gender stereotypes, though hardly said out loud, do exist in our subconscious. Various media content people are exposed to have the power to help build gender identity, societal expectations and behaviour.

4.4 Analysis of Selected Video Game, Characters and Game Contents

On the social effects of video games on players, only minimal attention is paid to the role of video game content as a moderating variable. When the content of video games is studied in an experimental or survey framework, most often it does not go further than to make basic distinction between realistic and nonrealistic games. This research however, focuses on the investigation of elements of gender representation in video games with focus on stereotypical content therein and their possible effects on shaping players gender roles behavioural pattern.

In view of this therefore, it has been noted that video games are replete with sexual content. As previously mentioned in chapter two of this research, Bandura's social learning

theory focuses on the impact of observational learning on behaviour. Factors that enhance observational learning are the status of the model (attractive, powerful, popular, etc). thus video gamers who simultaneously observe elements of gender stereotypes and engage via proxy in sexual behaviour in a game context, with such behaviours being rewarded or suffering no serious negative consequences, are more likely to accept existing gender stereotypes which video games reinforce, or are more likely to engage in similar behaviour if future situations provide the opportunity. The effect of sexual content in the media on users has begun to accumulate significantly. According to Bandura (1977) that:

> Overall, evidence indicates that frequent and involved exposure to sexually oriented media is associated with greater acceptance of stereotypical and casual attitudes about sex, with high expectations about the prevalence of sexual activities and of certain sexual outcomes, and even occasionally, with great levels of sexual experience.

4.5 Portrayal of Female Characters Video Game

It is interesting to note that, in the game samples contained in this research, only a few portrayed females as heroes or as action characters, whereas the male characters always appear as the heroes and the best playable characters, this reinforces the stereotype that females are mostly physically weak or should be seen as weak compared to males . Also one might note that in many instances, these female heroes were dressed in stereotypical female colors like pink for instance *Princess Peach* of *Super Mario* suggesting softness of females. Also in *Grand Theft Auto,* the female characters were portrayed as prostitutes; players could pay to have sex with them and then kill them after the act and get back their money. *Dead or Alive Xtreme volley ball,* is a game developed on the Xbox platform, it is a deliberate departure from the other *Dead or Alive Series* which are mainly fighting

games. It is the first in the series to be rated Mature (M) due to the content of the game such as, the very revealing swimsuits worn by the characters, some of the female characters- Lisa, Ayane, Christie, Helena paraded around almost naked, with over exaggerated breasts, small waists and big hips only clad in skimpy and revealing bikinis, the player now has the power to zoom in (i.e. enlarge the images) and view from any angle. This representation portrayal objectifies females as sex toy or object for male satisfaction. Although this game was rated "M" there is every possibility that under aged children might have access to it, because in fact, there is a wide range of inappropriate media content which further reinforces gender stereotypes available on the internet these days. Similarly the famous Lara Croftof *Tomb raider*, who has been criticized for her unrealistic breast size, was claimed to personify "an ongoing culture clash over gender, sexuality, empowerment, and objectification". She is however, one of the few examples of a female lead character, but again, she is portrayed in a over sexualized manner, with shorts and boots and a very tight tank top revealing her body. Revealing clothing or scantily clad attires, thigh high boots to lay more emphasis, would not serve the purpose of a fighting role which these characters are designed to play.



Image 1. **Lara Croft***Tomb Raider. Source:retrogamer.com*

The powerful role of the female heroine is diminished by the emphasis on her physical feminine appearance. In particular, it is the sexualization of female characters in video games that seems likely to negatively influence video game players' perceptions of self and women in society. Furthermore, exposure to sexually objectified women and girls in video games would be expected to influence social perceptions about gender and women



Image 2. **Jill Valentine***Resident Evil (iii).*



Image 3. **Jill Valentine**. *Resident evil*

Jill Valentine of *Resident Evil* appears in all the series as a co-protagonist, she is always dressed in a figure hugging body suit, and in *Resident Evil III* she was dressed in thigh high boot, a bustier and mini skirt. This attire accentuates the body parts of the characters, and the attire with the short skirt (image 2) is also very revealing.





Image 4. **Candy Suxxx***Grand Theft Auto* image:5***Katalina. GTA.source:edgeonline***

In terms of physical appearance **Candy Suxxx** and **Catalina** of *Grand theft auto,* also appear in scanty clothing and clothes that accentuate certain body parts, their body parts are also exaggerated like that of the other mentioned female characters, Lara Croft, Jill valentine etc as shown and discussed above.



Image 7: **Kitani**.*MortalKombat*



Image 8: **Jade.***Mortal Kombat.*

Source:retrogamer.com

Kitani *and* **Jade**of *Mortal Kombat* even after series of character modification they still appear in high heels to play fighting roles, this raises the question of whether these attires are comfortable for the purpose of combat or if the female characters have been purposely designed to appear in a certain way, they are always designed to appear attractive.



Image 8. **Lisa** . *Xtreme Beach volley ball.*

When exposed to the above sexualize portrayals, the possible effect on gamers may be, to adopt beliefs and standards that are in line with these sexualized portrayals, resulting in the desire to be like the characters (among women) and to judge self and others based upon the characters (among both men and women). Although it could be the case that exposure to images of strong, powerful female heroines in video games may empower girls and women through these characters, these could communicate unrealistic standards for women.

This could also suggest that some female characters in the selected games are by way of their appearance, designed to satisfy the sexual fantasies of the male game players by being portrayed as eye candy. This portrayal also shows that the characters from the imagination of the male gamers mainly find expression in the virtual world. One could see this as one

of the many methods used by video game designers, producers and marketers to push their products out to the intending buyers. The real question therefore is have they succeeded? It can be said that they have, because based on this research, it has been discovered that female body parts mainly the breasts and the buttock and hip areas, are being paraded indiscriminately in games and other forms of media whether the character is a primary character or not, the fact that she appears in the game or during the course of this game in that light is significant.

4.6 Portrayal of Male Characters Video Game.



Image: 9 Johnny Cage Mortal Kombat source:retrogamer.com

Johnny Cage (image 9) of *Mortal Kombat*, who is one of the most recurring playable characters, plays the role of proficient fighter. He is properly dressed in appropriate attire fit for the role of a typical American action movie star which he plays in the game. He represents strength and is properly dressed. This portrayal is in contrast in terms of dressing of **Jade** and **Kitana** who also play fighting roles in the same game.



Image: 10 **Chris Redfield**

Chris Redfield (image 10) is one of the playable characters of the game *Resident Evil*, again his dressing looks more appropriate for the role he plays compared to that of **Jill Valentine** (image I & ii above) who is also a playable character.



Image: 11. **Claude**



Image: 12 **Terry Sheridan**

Claude (image) of *Grand Theft Auto*, Terry Sheridan of *tomb raider* and almost all other male characters of the game appear fully clothed unlike the female characters except for **Jeffrey Cross** who appears topless.

Accordingly, video game portrayals of the female body, for example, may be used to help form an individual's social and moral standards about gender-appropriate dress, ideal female body-type, and even evaluations of female (self) worth. It is the symbolizing capability that allows one to observe and cognitively organize mediated symbols so they having meaning for that individual. Further, Bandura (1986) argues that media messages are a powerful source of information in our culture, greatly expanding consumer's exposure to issues, images, and phenomenon they would otherwise never encounter in their daily lives. The pervasiveness and unique role of media in both reflecting and

creating culture (Bandura1986) suggests that media may be an important source of learning about gender norms and values.

4.7 Gender/ Character Representation

Basically, of the games included in this study, a higher percentage of the characters were males and male characters were more often the playable characters as compared to females. Males appeared more frequently as heroes of the games, and had more weapons and abilities than the females. Females on the other hand were more often supplementary characters. It is paramount to point out that the portrayal of males as powerful and muscular and females as attractive, sexy and helpless could have implications for self-esteem and body image whether consciously or unconsciously.

Video games offer a narrow range of playable parts to female characters. Overall, research suggests that when female characters appear in video games they most often serve as victims or prizes (Provenzo1991). Considering the scarcity of females in video games, the mere presence of a prominent female video game character may trigger attention and serve as a motivator for individuals to adopt congruent gender-related beliefs (Bandura1986)

The most recurring trend in video games is the complete absence of female playable characters in some popular games. For instance, the nonexistence of female soccer and basketball games among the sporting video games *FIFA* and *NBA*. Where would this leave female game players who are interested in using female avatars, and even the male gamers who would like to play the female avatars, and does this mean women are not involved in sporting activities? *Halo*, initially was devoid of female characters, but after a while, the

game was ‘improved’ upon and female characters were later added. Including female characters in this game was initially not technically possible; therefore playable female characters were not included. Another common portrayal of women in video games was the woman as the victim or as the proverbial ‘damsel in distress’. Example of this ‘damsel in distress’ is in *Super Mario*, where the objective of the game is to save the princess Peach, who had been kidnapped, and the player would be rewarded if he succeeds.

4.8 Findings from Interview.

Interviews were conducted at two different game houses ‘The Game spot’ and ‘Game House’ both located around Anguwa Rukuba . The reason for the choice of venue was so that those to be interviewed would be actual video gamers. Few individuals who were present at the time and willing to cooperate were interviewed including the manager of ‘The Game spot’. The first interview was carried out on the 22nd of November 2014 which was a Saturday, and the second took place on the 10th of December 2014. A total of 7 (seven) people were interviewed. The aim of this interview is to avail the researcher the opportunity to gather more firsthand information and at the same time observing the group of people in terms of age, and gender who patronize the game house.

The views of different gamers from the interviews vary and they are as follows; most of the males agree to playing games as much as they can, for reasons ranging from the need for entertainment and convenience as some of them own video game consoles, while others have friends who own consoles mostly Play Station. They therefore, do not necessarily have to pay at game houses to play. However, a few admitted to having visited various game houses at one time or the other to play mostly soccer. In their opinion, the female

counterparts hardly visit game houses for the sole aim of playing games. No female admitted to having paid to play any video game at any given time, instead they mostly preferred to play on their mobile phones, games that sometimes do not contain human characters or card games on their computers or laptops, their reason being that they have other things to do as leisure than visiting game houses, more so, the predominant games played there are soccer games and they are less inclined to it. Overall observation indicates that the age group more likely to visit game houses are young boys within their teenage years estimated between thirteen to sixteen years, this does not however exclude the older gamers. This could be because some of them own their own consoles**.**

It was discovered that, males favour sports (soccer) more than adventure, the reason for this is, most of them prefer to compete against another person rather than playing solo against the computer, this way they have more fun, while playing adventure/shooting games, they mostly say they would rather play as male characters except in games where the main character is female though some of the female characters have equally good abilities, likewise Females when playing games with human characters would rather play as females for the simple reason that they are female.

The responses of the interviewees are as follows; on character portrayal, some of the male interviewees claim to have not noticed any serious stereotyping, while majority agree females are indeed portrayed in a more sexualized way than the males. When asked what they think about the appearance of female characters, some of them said they were indifferent about it because these are just games, while others said they barely take note of the female dressing as they are fully concentrating on the aim of the game, others admitted

to actually appreciating the females' appearance stating that they 'spice' up the game, and they just generally like them being there though they would hardly ever play as females. The females on the other hand think that in the few games they have come across or even played, some female characters are designed to look too artificial, and seem to have been designed that way for the pleasure of the male gamers. This shows that although the female characters appear in a games, their strength, speed, intellect, and independence does not come to fore, instead their sexuality is the defining feature, relegating their status to that of objects to be gazed upon. In other words, their role is tied to their sexuality and body.

Since the video game industry has been a male dominated medium for the most part of its existence, characters have been strictly designed from a man's view point which has led to many colourful and varied male characters, with few and over sexualized female characters. It is true that there are also male characters designed to look attractive, however, they are not usually made with the female gaze in mind instead they seem to have been created in that way to make the male gamers feel good playing such characters.

4.9 Discussion

The 10 video games examined; *Super Mario(2005), Tomb Raider(2009), Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volley Ball(2011), Grand Theft Auto(1999) ,Mortal Kombat (2004), Resident Evil (2002) FIFA(2006), Halo(2002), Need For Speed(1996), and NBA (2005) i*n this content analysis represent the most popular titles in Play Station and XBOX series available . Among the entire sample all sport games in the selected games- *FIFA* and *NBA* ignored female representations altogether. Furthermore, if one combines this lack of

representation, these games demonstrate how little women are valued or recognized in this society. This project attempts to shed more light on the portrayal of female characters in popular video games as overwhelmingly stereotypical when they are presented at all.

Based on the findings, it is clear that the portrayal of characters in video games is stereotyped that male characters are heroic, sometimes intellectual, admirable and powerful while the female characters were in general considered to be sexy, cute, vulnerable, hyper sexualized and victims and the females display less of the positive attributes even when they are cast in heroic roles. There is a high level of marginalization of female characters in video games and also lack of importance to game play, except of course for the pleasure of the male gamers. The majority of female characters in video games are more likely than male characters to be cast in minor roles as opposed to major parts of the game progression for instance in *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volley Ball*, Grand theft *Auto* and *Need for Speed*. Even when there is a main female character, they are more likely to share their status with a male character, thus down playing their importance. Even when primary female characters are available, game players of both genders are most likely to select male characters. Wholisticaly, 75% of the questionnaire respondents prefer to play as male characters. In fact the vast majority of female video game characters are non-playable characters who exist mainly as part of the virtual environment or as aids to the main male character.

It may be argued thus that even though these female characters are sometimes depicted as primary characters, they represent negative role models of women at the same time, teaching that the contributions of women are somehow subordinate to, or less important

than, those of men based on the roles they play. This is because even when they appear they are typically overtly sexualized and portrayed wearing promiscuous dress and engaging in seductive acts . Notably, however, these characters are often high status, powerful characters, such as the heroic figures more commonly associated with men. Although this type of female character fits the normative characteristics of an action hero (i.e. male action hero) by demonstrating strength, speed, intellect, and independence (Richard and Zaremba2005:283), her sexuality is her defining feature, relegating her status to that of an object to be gazed upon. In other words, her role as an action hero is tied to her sexuality and body. These depictions of women are detrimental to both male and female players in as much as both may internalize these expectations and accept the idea that women are to be viewed as weak, victims or damsel in distress for instance in *Super Mario*, and as sex objects *GTA*. More specifically, from the perspective of social cognitive theory, it is expected that playing the sexualized female character will result in lower self-esteem and self-efficacy than playing the non-sexualized female character or no video game at all.

Although in recent times, female heroes have emerged in the video game world; they now appear in leading roles as tough and competent females in a dominant position for instance Lara croft in the *Tomb raider* and Ada of *Resident Evil*. However, these characters are portrayed in a stereotypical way even as the heroines they represent: female features were exaggerated by sexy attire and thin bodies. For instance since her introduction in 1996, the character of Lara Croft from the *Tomb Raider* series in particular has been criticized for her unrealistic breast size; Lara was claimed to personify "an ongoing culture clash over gender, sexuality, empowerment, and objectification", this means that although her

character is considered one of the best females characters in video games, she also represents the stereotypical ideal of a woman based on her physical appearance. Princess Peach through much of the *Mario*series is also an example of such. A recurrent representation of women in fantasy settings is the "woman warrior" dressed in unrealistically scanty armor. They feature armor designs which have been described as 'metallic lingerie', largely consisting of small decorative plaques that reveal large portions of the body leaving the character scantily clad.

Considering it has been argued that there is no problem with having sexy looking women in games, because the males say that the male characters are just as attractive, the difference comes at the level of exploitation of these looks, or actions, and the lack of 'personality' qualities. It is also interesting to note that while all groups say the female characters are attractive and sexy, or hyper-sexualized, the same cannot be said for the male characters (although the males are more inclined to think they are sexy) – therefore, if this argument was to stand, females would have to find male characters attractive too. If there was true equality between the characters, then female characters would not be recognized purely as beautiful, over sexualized, and perhaps bitter, dangerous or maltreated, but public opinion would change to see them in a new light, or to give greater variation to them. To sell games to women they need to find what females want from a character – preferably female characters, as we have already seen that they prefer to choose females (cute classic characters aside) where they can. In this respect, females are unsatisfied by a perpetuation of existing stereotypes that keeps gaming under the label of a young male hobby, which is perhaps immature. The lack of depth in characters does nothing to change this.

Even if the individual accepts the notion that video games are not real, he or she will still not challenge the ideas, stereotypes and characterizations presented in them. Therefore may be more likely to accept the traditional views of women found in these video games. It can thus be argued that though females are sometimes depicted as primary characters, they represent negative role models of women at the same time, teaching that the contributions of women are subordinate to, or less important than those of men. These negative depictions are detrimental to both male and female game players in as much as both may internalize these expectations, and accept the idea that women are to be regarded as weak, victims and sex objects.

Video games are created by people who have been influenced by their immediate societal norms and hence societal stereotypes which have been in existence for a long time. Based on the findings of this study, video games seem to further reinforce gender stereotypes in their contents by reenacting the said stereotypical gender roles. These stereotypes have in one way or the other influenced people such that, they now believe and adopt them in their belief system and thought pattern, this has led to depiction or portrayal within media forms. Why is it acceptable to have female game characters portrayed in scanty clothing in games and sometimes almost nude, while in reality, society as a whole would frown at it as being morally wrong? This is because most people do not consider video games as an important gender defining platform. However, the gender stereotypes under investigation here are mass produced and distributed in many countries across the world, therefore the implications of exposure to the images and themes characterized in video games take on global importance.

Howard (1998:237) opines that:

> As such, gaming and its significance on the youth culture of today is often underrated, meaning that potentially damaging messages are allowed to pervade the medium. Perhaps because it is less attractive to an adult than to a youth market, the video game culture is often overlooked as a media source that peddles particular kinds of messages to the young about what it means to be male or female, what it means to relate as gendered beings, and ultimately what it means to be human.

Video games seem to have gained worldwide recognition and are more common than they were in the last ten years. What is more? They are gaining more and more recognition in Nigeria therefore; they should not be ignored.

Although most of the video games obtainable in Nigeria do not originate from here, they seem to have flooded the market and are becoming increasingly popular by the day. However, of recent a couple of local game developers have emerged with Nigerian designed and developed games namely: *Okada Ride* and *Mosquito Smasher class fight and kidnapped* - games created by MALIYO. These games are an adaptation of the already existing *Angry Birds*, also GAMSOLE another local game designer created *Bird Republic* which is another adaptation of angry birds. They also created a game titled *Lagos Traffick.*

The other common games available in Nigeria are undeniably not designed, developed or produced locally they are still being patronized by the local media consumers thus, have a high potential to influence game players because they have been widely accepted. Though the locally developed video games are yet to gain wide recognition, it is hoped that they would eventually and gradually gain acceptance and finally get into the market, perhaps locally and internationally. In *Mosquito Smasher and bird republic*there are no human

players, while in *okada ride,class fight, and kidnapped* where there are human characters, the males characters out number females characters.

In conclusion, video games, like the television and other forms of mass media, have become agents in the development of identities in people. It is apparent from the results of this project that the image of the woman depicted in video games is stereotypical. Based on previous research and the small scale study compiled in this research, it is clear that gender was portrayed in an unequal way. Even though the proportion of female characters appearing in video games is increasing, female characters still appear in stereotypical roles. They appear predominantly as minor characters, who are to be rescued or assistants to the leading male character. This on its own re-enforces the already existing gender stereotypes in the society, hence, can contribute to individual gender role differences. The portrayal of the female game character is consistent with the stereotypical mass media female character. The attire and body image of the female character is more often than not portrayed as very sexy, yet male characters are portrayed in normal or over masculine way. As a special type of media figure, game characters might also influence its users. As it is found that stereotypical gender roles are prevalent in video games, it is very likely that these stereotypes may influence video game users.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Video games are just as important as any other New Media form in the formation of self as movies and books could be, due to their nature of forcing the player to merge two worlds, where the character becomes the self, as his/her character's actions are controlled . This is made possible through virtual world interaction, in other words, it is a direct reflection of the player's own identity at that time he/ she is playing. Hence we can say that Video games, like any other media form have the power to change the way we look at issues in general. Gender is one of those issues. During the cause of this research, gender and stereotypes has been a major concern hence the focal point of this work.

This research therefore attempted a study of ten popular video games available to the Nigerian youth, taking particular note of the stereotypical portrayals of characters both male and female. The study also noted and analyzed the physical appearance of characters in terms of body structure, dressing, and roles.

The background of this study focuses on video games as a growing part of New Media, and its potential effect on its users. Reviewed in the study are, New Media, Video games as part of New Media and gender stereotypes in video games. To some degree it is clear that video games have become an incredibly influential medium based on the fact of the number of people interested and involved in playing them. Due to this extreme popularity, the examination of the representation of gender within the games warrants attention. Hence gender stereotypes have been of major concern and a focal point of the research.

Although stereotypes can be based sometimes on truths about a given group and can serve as a mental short cut which allows us to make quicker decisions, or aide in assessing situations, they more often than not, promote untrue and often derogatory depictions of the groups they represent. These stereotypes are further perpetuated and reinforced through social institutions such as the media, religion, schools and the government. Stereotypes and the accompanying prejudices are used by the controlling power in order to maintain the upper hand socially, economically and intellectually.

The research tools used in the study include; Questionnaire, Interviews, and Observational Research in order to gather relevant information for the study. Interview was conducted for several game players/ owners and managers of two different game houses located within Jos metropolis- "Game spot" and "The Game Place" at different times respectively, based on their observations on the activities that take place in the game houses they oversee, and very useful information was gathered from both interviews. Useful data was also gathered from the use of the Internet and several books.

5.2 Key Findings

- Females are likely to spend less time playing games than males each day, and males are much more likely to play for longer each day. The implications of this is that the females may be less hard-core gamers, otherwise known as 'casual gamers' who play, but not very much.
- Sometimes the appeal video game characters have on gamers is inappropriate. This appeal is considered immoral within the Nigerian religious context.

- Males are more likely to own a game console, while 0% of females own one, this could be as a result of preference and because females are less inclined to find video gaming as a good pass time activity
- Female game characters do exist, but in general they are exploited sexually in appearance, mannerism, and movement, and often persist in talking in high soft voices, and usually conform to stereotypical female abilities, where they are quicker and more agile, but weaker than their male counterparts.
- Some of the conceptions and characters derived from the games are based on historical stereotypes that are irrelevant in the society today.
- Gender stereotyping is not perpetuated by only males, females also partake in this.
- For both sexes, to play as their own sex is preferable, male players tend to choose male characters or aliases, and most females prefer to choose female characters (where they can) due to the unavailability of female playable characters.
- Although gender stereotypes are contained in video games, some players are either not aware of it, or they accept it as the norm.
- Exposure to sexualized images of women in video games (among female players) discourages females from playing and may translate into reducing confidence in their ability to succeed in the real world.

5.3 Implication of Findings

Among game enthusiasts, it is commonly argued that negative gender stereotypes in the media do not matter because they are just harmless entertainment. Given that some youth, especially males gamers, may not understand that negative media content can have negative effects, then it follows that they do not understand why such content has

detrimental effects. The key media theory, discussed below, explains why negative gender stereotypes in the media are harmful. This theory explains both how and what we learn from the stories popular video game characters tell about gender.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, stresses the processing of symbols in making sense of one's social environment. For example, children learn about issues such as aggression and gender identity through exposure to media figures that model these concepts (Bandura and Bussey 1999). Both the Cultivation Theory and the Social Cognitive Theory, therefore, articulate how unreal symbols in the media contribute to users' conceptualization (e.g., about gender roles and relationships) and that these concepts then influence people's real life behaviors, thoughts and feelings.

In conclusion, even youth without a high current personal exposure to video games agree about what the typical video game character is like. In other words, video game characters and their common, stereotypical portrayals of gender are part of general popular culture for youth and this makes it important to be understood.

Though older generations are not attuned to video game culture, video game characters alongside cartoon and comic characters are icons in today's youth popular culture. Character images tell blatantly sexist stories about gender, and research is just beginning to reveal and analyze those stories. The vision of masculinity video game characters project is that men should be powerful, dominant, and aggressive. The story video game characters tell about femininity is that women should be extreme physical specimens, visions of beauty, objects of men's heterosexual fantasies, and less important than men. Since video

games are popular with youth and since the popularity of video games is growing, it is important to understand them as an agent of socialization. People get information about video games and video game characters from sources other than the games themselves. Information is gotten from Video game magazines, television shows, video game commercials, movies, and Internet video game sites are other sources for information about video games.

5.4 Limitations

- One primary concern is that not all the games were watched or played, thus the researcher was limited to the information and pictures that were present in the articles downloaded from the internet. As a result, not all characters in the 10 selected games were analyzed. In order to analyze every game character, it would be necessary to play the entire game. Even then, all characters might not appear, as many games require players to make decisions that impact the game's direction (i.e., a player makes decisions that affect whether or not another character appears).
- Many new games take a great deal of time to complete (some over 100 h of game play). Purchasing all 10 games would be quite expensive. Thus, time and cost restraints make articles the ideal and convenient choice for analysis.
- Distribution and collection of questionnaire proved difficult and quite a number was not returned for analysis and others were not answered correctly.
- More research on this field is required

5.5 Conclusion

The results of the current study revealed significant gender differences in the portrayal of video game characters putting male characters at 58% and females at 5.9%. The study also shows that males at 51% are more likely to be heroes and main characters, while women 37% were more often supplemental characters men are generally more playable characters than the female characters. Males used more weapons and had more abilities than women. 73% of male characters were more muscular and powerful, while females were more attractive, sexy, helpless and innocent. 79.3% Females wore more revealing clothing on both the upper and lower body.

Previous research on the effects of other media indicates that media messages can be harmful in a number of ways. For instance, exposure to "ideal" males and females can negatively impact self-esteem and exposure to negative images of women is associated with endorsement of gender stereotypes. Video games could have even greater impact than other media because of their interactive nature. Thus, it is important to understand the messages conveyed in these games, in order to someday understand their impact on behavior and attitudes. Future research needs to address how video game characters have changed over time in games developed in Nigeria as well. Also, much more research needs to be conducted in order to determine the impact that video games have on players' body image, role expectations, attitudes toward women, and sexual stereotypes. While much research is still needed, this study provides evidence that there is a bias in gender portrayal of characters in games, and such portrayal further reinforce gender stereotypes, thus have the potential to influence game users behavior and though pattern.

5.6 Recommendations

Media content influences the way we perceive reality and also contributes to shaping gender roles. Despite their crucial role in our developing society, women are not represented in the media according to their number, to their social involvement, to their real life. The media in general continue to depict public life as a male domain and even insignificant factors may contribute to strengthening or perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes and stereotyped attitudes. Today's social changes make it an evidence that the traditional role model associated with women is no longer appropriate and realistic as real life is showing more and more active women playing a lead role in society. This evolution should be more appropriately reflected in the media. All this therefore, calls for an in-depth study of the public image of women generated by the all media forms. Based on the above stated, the following are recommendations of this study:

- Media must create transformation of women's images by presenting more positive aspects of these with an express view of modifying them. In line with this there should be occasional workshops organized to bring together women media personnel in touch with women activities and other professionals.
- The media is becoming more powerful and complex therefore, it is essential to reestablish a balance in order to secure respect for women's dignity and rights. In order to impose restraints on gender stereotypes and sexist images in various media forms, and in the world of publicity in general, measures, mechanisms and bodies should be put together to regulate the content of media.

- We should individually strive to expose stereotypes, help children and youths alike, learn to recognize them, and encourage them to move past such to see each individual's strengths, interests, and characteristics.
- Promotion of diverse and balanced images of women and men in media determines the future roles in society of the young generation. An eye should be kept on the representation of women as objects of sexual desire.
- Considering the harmful effects of negative gender stereotypes on self-perception, especially with young people and their perception of gender roles and relations in society, all players in media companies including journalists should be made aware of their socialresponsibilityand best practices should be promoted.
- Owners and managers of media corporations could also be encouraged to promote codes for gender sensitive media communication, which would be more effective and sustainable than if the topic is promoted by individual journalists
- There needs to be more research and studies on the gender impact of new media technologies, in order for public authorities to define their response to possible problems.
- Upcoming Nigerian game developers should be encouraged to tell the Nigerian story as it is obtainable in the country using video games; perhaps this could attract a bigger market both locally and internationally.

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APPENDIXES

Check List

This questionnaire contains series of questions that are designed to test your knowledge of Gender Stereotypes and Portrayal of Women in Video Games and how it impacts you. The questions are centered on video games played during leisure time. The purpose of this exercise is to generate data for my MA research in the Center Of Excellence For Development Communication in the Department Of Theatre And Performing Arts Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Please note that all information will be confidentially treated.

Instructions: please answer the following questions as accurately as possible by ticking the appropriate answer of your choice.

Age (17-21) (22-26) (27-31). **Level**: 100 ( ), 200 (), 300 ( ), 400(). **Sex**: Male ( ), Female ()

1. Do you play video games?

(A) Yes (B) No

2. What platform do you use to play video games?

(A) Mobile phone (B) Console (C) Arcade (D) Computer

3. How often do you play video games?

(A) Every day (B) twice a week (C) Once a week (D) once in a while

4. How much time do you spend playing games ?

(A) As long as possible (B) 1hour (C) 30 minutes (D) 15 minutes

5. What kind of games do you play?

(A) Action/Adventure (B) Sports (C) Shooting / fighting games (D) All of the above

6. Who plays video games more ?

(A) Males (B) Females (C) BOTH

7. Do you consider video games to be entertaining?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

8. Do you consider video games to be distractive?

(A) yes (B) No (C) Don't know

9. Do you think video games can possibly enhance or influence your psychological development?

(A)Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

10. Would you say some video games contain some elements of gender stereotypes?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

11. Do you agree that video games are addictive?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

12. Would you say some video games contain some inappropriate adult /sexual content?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

13. Do you agree that some video games contain scenes and characters that could appeal to your sexual senses?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

14. Do you agree that female characters in most video games dress more provocatively than male characters?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

15. Is the aim of the hero sometimes to rescue a damsel in distress?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) Don't know

16. Do females assume the same heroic roles as the male characters?

(A) Yes (B) No (C) don't know

17. Are there more male or female characters in video games?

(A) Male (B) Female (C) Don't know

18. Between male and female characters, which is represented in a more hypersexual way in video games?

(A) Male (B) Female (C) Don't know

19. Which character would you prefer to play? (A) Male (B) Female. Please state your reason _____

20. Do you think video games are designed more in favour of males or females?

(A) Males (B) Females (C) Both Why do you think so?

_____

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. If you have any query regarding the questions, please do not hesitate to contact the person collecting this data.

LIST OF GAMES USED IN THE ABOVE ANALYSIS

GAME	GENRE	DEVELOPERS
1. Grand theft auto (1997-1999)	Action/Adventure	DMA Design
2. Resident evil (1996-2016)	Action Adventure	CAPCOM
3. Tomb raider (1996-2009)	Action adventure	EIDOS Interactive
4. Mortal Kombat(1992-2004)	Action	Midway Games
5. Halo (2001-2010)	Adventure	Bungie
6. FIFA (1993-2015)	Sports	Electronic Arts Sport
7. Super Mario Bros (1985-2013)	Adventure	Nintendo R&D4
8. NBA (1995-2010)	Sport	Electronic Arts Canada
9. Need for speed(1994-2016)	Sport	Pioneer Productions
10. DOA Xtreme beach volley ball(1996-2016)	Sport	Team Ninja

Name of character	**Game**	**Platform (Play station/ Xbox)**
• Sniper wolf	Metal gear solid	play station
• Jill Valentine	Resident evil	Play station/ Xbox
• Ayane	Dead or Alive Xtreme volley ball	Xbox
• Tanya	Call of duty	Xbox/ play station
• Kitana& jade	Mortal combat	Xbox/ play station
• Lara croft	Tomb raider	Play station/ Xbox

• Cortana	Halo	Xbox
• Tina	Dead or Alive	Xbox
	Xtreme volley ball	
• Candy Suxxx	Grand theft auto	play station/ Xbox
• Lisa	Dead or alive	Xbox
	Xtreme beach volleyball	

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