



The gaming world is UNNECESSARILY UNKIND TO WOMEN

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

“Besides being bombarded with the ‘go back to the kitchen’ jokes, I’ve had to face people suggesting that I have a large following only because I am a female. As if my abilities are not enough to account for the following.”

According to a survey, 41 percent of gamers in the United States in 2020 were females. While that number might seem fair, this resemblance to balance has only been achieved in recent times, and the ratio of female gamers in the Bangladeshi gaming community is not even close to this aforementioned number.

It was only in 2022 that the first-ever all-female team represented Bangladesh in the Global eSports Tournament. And it was just in February 2023 that the first female-only eSports competition was organised in the country. Any casual female gamer in Bangladesh would agree that the number of female gamers in this country is painfully low.

There are multiple factors that have contributed and continue to contribute to this gender disparity. The game-developing companies are, to a large extent, to blame for this. Until very recently, most of the commercials launched by these companies saw young boys playing video games. Their marketing strategies target males by specifically portraying them as the ideal demographic to enjoy their content.

Moreover, there is a noticeable lack of proper female representation in video games. Only five percent of all video game



Sometimes, a female gamer’s skill level isn’t even the reason why they become the target of gendered attacks. For instance, 18-year-old Sanjida Afrin (handle: Littolpotat), a video game streamer who has a large online following, relates, “Besides being bombarded with the ‘go back to the kitchen’ jokes, I’ve had to face people suggesting that I have a large following only because I am a female. As if my abilities are not enough to account for the following.”

It can, therefore, be hypothesised that the problem, in the eyes of the male gamers targeting female gamers, is not that they are unskilled but simply that they are females.

“Female players usually get patronised a lot at first too,” says Sahiba Tasnia Tanushree, an A level student who plays *Valorant* casually. This patronisation is a result of the male players working on the assumption that a female gamer cannot play.

Another acute problem is the fact that many female gamers become victims of harassment and unsolicited romantic and/or sexual advances. Speaking on this topic, Sahiba further added, “When the other players find out I’m a girl, they turn insanely friendly which, a lot of times, can be borderline creepy. As a female gamer, you get hit on a lot, regardless of how well you play.”

The internet’s characterisation of female gamers as “e-girls” or “gamer girls” is in large part accountable for this propensity of male gamers making unwanted advances. These terms carry negative connotations as they are often used to suggest that a female gamer is unknowledgeable about games and is playing solely for the attention of other male gamers. The propagation of this image of a “gamer girl” combined with the hypersexualised representation of female characters in games means that many male gamers think it is okay to make untoward comments towards female gamers. If a female gamer refuses these

advances, they can become the butt of violent verbal abuse.

Taking all of these aspects into consideration, it is no wonder that many women turn their back on gaming. In the past, the situation was particularly bad as female gamers were few and far between. These problems seem to be mitigating recently, albeit slowly.

Rimsha Iqbal (handle: Uzzieboozie), 23, has represented Bangladesh internationally in multiple tournaments as an eSports athlete. According to her, “In the past, I faced a lot of bias and lost many opportunities due to the numerous obstacles presented before me due to my gender. However, the eSports scene for women is evolving and we feel more welcome now. Many organisations are making an active effort to be inclusive of women in eSports tournaments.”

“I would definitely say the biases have decreased since I first started streaming,” Sanjida Afrin echoes.

Saying that the bias against women in the gaming world will lift soon is wishful thinking. The gaming community has long been toxic to female players and despite continuous protests, the discrimination against women continues to some degree or another. The gaming world still has a long way to go before it can consider itself to have male and female gamers on equal footing. That being said, it is a source of optimism to know that at least some measures are being taken to address these long-standing issues.

References:

1. Wired.com (June 14, 2019). *Female Representation in Video Games Isn’t Getting Any Better*
2. National Centre for Biotechnology Information (September 1, 2018). *Representation of Women in Video Games: A Systematic Review of Literature in Consideration of Adult Female Wellbeing*
3. International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction (July 23, 2018). *Female Gamers’ Experience of Online Harassment and Social Support in Online Gaming: A Qualitative Study*

Zaima is a struggling student, a failed guitarist and a poet in need of better poetic ideas. Send her your sympathies at zaima2004adrta@gmail.com

Why buying books in English medium schools is needlessly expensive and wasteful

AZNEEF CHOWDHURY

In many Bangladeshi English medium schools, students have to pay prices upwards of BDT 15,000 to simply buy their textbooks for the year. In O levels and A levels, the cost of buying academic textbooks is even higher and can reach as high as BDT 30,000 in some instances. Keep in mind, these numbers do not factor in the costs of stationary or supplementary books. For students to buy books at such prices is financially burdening and unnecessarily wasteful.

For the most part, the prices of these books are justified due to their superior print quality and costly import process. Whilst this would be a valid argument in any other situation, due to a lack of adequate syllabus material, the vast majority of English medium students often end up relying on note sheets and supplement books instead of said textbooks, rendering this (often forced) investment useless.

“I know for a fact that I barely touched some of my textbooks during my A levels. There was almost a disconnect between what the teachers and students wanted and the books that we were made to use. We used some of these books only to learn one chapter and basically threw away the rest of it,” shares Noushin Ahmed*, a high school graduate.

These new textbooks often go untouched throughout the entire school year and can pose significant environmental repercussions. Paper recycling mills are far and few in the country, and a lack of accessibility means that most of these textbooks are incorrectly disposed of once the academic year is over. Paper waste takes up valuable landfill space and contributes to acid

For starters, schools could implement a system to reuse books from previous years for teaching during classes. Not only would this significantly reduce the overall costs and waste generated, but it would also help students nurture the habit of taking care of books for future use.

rain, becoming an environmental hazard.

Such practice can have negative effects on the students, too. Buying textbooks every year diminishes the habit of taking proper care of one’s books, and presents books as disposable and temporary, which it unequivocally is not. Additionally, this tradition of buying books every year contradicts these educational institutions’ climate initiatives, and to some extent, reduces the concept of climate activism to a gimmick in the students’ minds.

This problem, however, is one with many solutions.

For starters, schools could implement a system to reuse books from previous years for teaching during classes. Not only would this significantly reduce the overall costs and waste generated, but it would also help students nurture the habit of taking care of books for future use. Since syllabus content changes only slightly once every three or four years, these books could be used for an extended amount of time until they become outdated.

Digitising said books are also a viable alternative.

“PDFs can work pretty well instead of books, and many people do actually end up using PDFs while studying for A Levels,” remarks Adrita Zaima, a high school student at a reputed English medium school in Dhaka. Additionally, schools could keep buying physical textbooks as an option for students who absolutely need one.

*Names have been changed upon request

Reference:
[compostingwithredworms.com](https://www.compostingwithredworms.com) (July 21, 2023) *Environmental Impact of Paper Waste.*

