

# *In[the Hate Booth]: A Case Study on How to Deal with Online Hate Speech*



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**Abstract** In today's hyper-connected world, digital games and online gaming communities occupy a prominent place in the communication system, in social media, forums or Internet communities, where online hate speech (OHS) takes place, frequently and publicly, triggering toxic environments. In this chapter we present a case study based on interviews, distributed in two sessions, to ten participants with 12 and 13 years old, and an experience over the SG *In[The Hate Booth]*, as a counterproposal to address OHS. The qualitative data approaches three aspects: the experiences with OHS, the perspectives about OHS and the possible solutions to counteract OHS. We conclude that OHS is a common complaint from players and a characteristic behavior in game communities. Data shows that even users who don't identify themselves with this behavior accept it as part of online environments and agree that this toxicity continues outside the in-game screen with effects in everyday life. The pedagogical approach, namely through SG, is perceived as a possible measure to counteract the OHS.

**Keywords** Games · Serious games · Online hate speech

## 1 The Game as a Generator of Learning and Meaning

The works of Huizinga and Caillois have broadly shown the relevance of games in culture. Huizinga [1] describes the game as a free and meaningful activity, spatially and temporally separated from the demands of practical life and limited by a self-contained system of freely consented, but mandatory rules, immersing the player in an intense and total mode.

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N. Martins et al. (eds.), *Perspectives on Design and Digital Communication IV*, Springer  
Series in Design and Innovation 33, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41770-2\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41770-2_15)

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Salen and Zimmerman [4] applied and recreated the magic circle concept, initially mentioned by Huizinga, to digital games. According to the authors, the magic circle is the space where the game takes place: playing means entering this magic circle, a limited space with specific characteristics, but with infinite possibilities [4].

Cailliois [5] proposes four fundamental categories to describe the complexity of games: competition, chance, simulation, and vertigo. These categories can intersect and combine in different ways.

Huizinga [1] also highlights the construction of game communities that tend to remain beyond the duration of the game. The members of these communities share the feeling of being in an exceptional situation of sharing something important, of distancing themselves together from the rest of the world and suspending the usual norms. This sense of belonging, manifestly present in contemporary platforms, has allowed for the aggregation and gathering of communities around digital games.

The researcher Celia Pearce [6] observed how the voluntary nature of the game, an aspect already pointed by Huizinga [1], can contribute to lead players to establish a participatory group of collective sharing around an online game, as happens on platforms such as *Reddit*, *Twitch* or *Discord*. Some of the main motivations for the formation of these communities include a sense of pleasure and happiness arising from sharing and collaborating with peers [6].

The emergence of SG brought a new pedagogical approach. SG are specifically developed for educational purposes, to help acquiring some specific concept, skill, or technique, beyond play and entertainment [7] [8]. These games are mainly based on the constructivist theory, emphasizing the experience, the construction of knowledge through argumentation, collaborative work, discussion, and debate. Since the 1980s, when the first SG appeared for military training, the variety of SG has been increasing significantly, not only regarding the type of game, but also regarding the type of skill that is concerned by the game [7].

During a game, the player is an active participant, that makes interpretations of experiences, elaborates, and tests these interpretations, appropriating the given information. In this perspective, the construction of knowledge is not spontaneous, it needs to be activated, in a provocative and challenging practice [9].

Non-governmental organizations, consortia benefiting from public funding, researchers, educators, and politicians have been promoting the use of videogames in education to address complex subjects. Through the narrative and interaction with the game, players are expected to understand that they are active agents, influencing the environment around them. Climate change, water saving, waste separation, health and financial education have been topics of games, through local, national, and European programs that support projects promoting the development of videogames that promote sustainable behaviours.

For its part, the videogame industry has been attentive to the potential of games in education and has presented proposals in various scopes of training intervention [3].

According to Gee [2] immersing an individual in a virtual environment with characteristics of the physical world is one of the most effective forms of learning. Gee highlights how games encourage players to think about different game variables to

solve problems and accomplish goals. When playing, the engagement in the process of problem solving is high, because of the internal mechanics of the game.

Engagement and immersion in the game are achieved through the interaction with game mechanics: the login bonus; levels, rewards, rankings, and scores, as well as immediate feedback.

In this chapter, we analyze the importance of games and the possibilities SG to address a contemporary problem: the spread of OHS on the online communities and its effect on youth. The case study presented analyzes the collection of qualitative data from two sessions carried out with 10 volunteer participants who were interviewed in two moments: before and after trying a SG tackling OHS.

## **2 The Problem: OHS**

The use and dissemination of OHS pervades online platforms in a ubiquitous way. It flows instantly and massively. As a result, OHS has come to be recognized as a serious problem by democratic governments, giving rise to several international initiatives as countermeasures to the problem.

OHS may occur in a spontaneously way, as a reaction to the stress of the game, or in a programmed and strategic way, as a path to extremism and radicalization often as a resource to program attacks within and out of the virtual world [10, 11]. If, on one hand, the individual right to freedom of expression is inalienable and indisputable, it is no less important to underline that the exercise of this right implies responsibility and respect for the Other, ensuring the difficult balance between fundamental human rights.

The committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued in May 2022 [12] a Recommendation on hate speech, including OHS, to assist European States in preventing and combating hate speech within the framework of human rights, democracy, and the law. This Recommendation also highlights the need to ensure legislation addressing OHS and foreseeable provisions for the swift and effective removal of OHS that is prohibited under criminal, civil or administrative law, as well as the mechanisms for reporting the cases of OHS to public authorities and private actors, including internet intermediaries, and rules for the processing of these reports [12].

Misogyny, racism, antisemitism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of alterophobia have various mechanisms for producing victims and causing harm. The concern of democratic governments is precisely the solution to this problem, without harming the values of freedom of expression, seeking a sensitive balance between freedom and equality or inclusion. Wachs et al. [13], distinguished six categories of motivations to perform OHS: (1) revenge, (2) power, (3) joy, (4) ideology, (5) group conformity, and (6) status enhancement.

OHS is based on the use of hostile and malicious speech, directed at an individual or a group of people, motivated by a discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic and/or harmful attitude towards one or more characteristics such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, skin color, national origin, sexual orientation and/

or disability. This phenomenon has gained greater proportion and visibility through the Internet, due to the rapid haste with which it can be disseminated.

The study of the state of the art in this field shows that many youngsters play and use social platforms, from earliest ages to communicate with each other within communities, often without any adult supervision [11].

Sellars [14] surveyed a set of common traits that help defining and identifying hate speech: (1) the fact that it is addressed to a group or an individual, as a member of a group; the presence of content that expresses hate and may cause harm; (2) intent to harm; (3) the public nature of the discourse and, finally, (4) the existence of a context that makes a violent response possible. Citron and Norton [20] defined four forms of response to online hate messages: (1) inaction (2) deletion/suspension of the message and user (3) education (4) counter-narratives.

To define OHS, it is necessary to address human rights. According to the United Nations, human rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which sometimes seems to clash with the definition of hate speech.

In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, [21] every human being is entitled to enjoy the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion or of another nature, national or social origin, wealth, birth, or any other status. In these definitions, human rights are guarantees for all individuals, regardless of their singularities. This, in turn, goes against OHS, which preaches prejudice against human beings who are part of some social minority. Hate speech violates the guarantees and fundamental rights of every citizen. The Recommendation on hate speech [12] underlines its deep commitment to the protection of the right to freedom of expression, seen as the essential foundations of a democratic and pluralistic society.

### **3 The Methodology: A Case Study**

In this study, we intend, in a first phase, to analyze the experience of a group of youngsters on the Internet, regarding the contact with OHS. In a second phase, we propose an experience of a SG about OHS to provoke a reflection and discussion on the effects of hate speech and the possible means to contain it, prevent it or cope with it.

The methodology was based on a case study [15], articulated with a narrative approach that departs from the experiences of youth and, at the same time, requests for participatory action within the community of participants in the case study.

Within the narrative approach, the fiction-based research, using the metaphor, can cause changes in the way individuals relate to themselves and others [16, 18], through a reflective, participatory, and aesthetic process, since the research developed is more truthful, meaningful, useful, accessible, and human [17]. In the SG, this methodology allows the description of the participants' reactions in the face of events and actions.

This is a case study descriptive and instrumental [15], that aims to contribute to the understanding of a broader problem, identifying its roots and wider societal context, as well as its various expressions and different impacts on those involved in OHS experiences. In this case, the experiences described are instruments to understand the effect of OHS on youth and the possibilities of education, namely the use of counter and alternative narratives to understand, face and cope OHS.

This experience is also the basis for the development of a questionnaire to be applied on a large scale, with closed answers, in order to obtain quantitative data from a larger sample.

### 3.1 *The Sample and the Context of the Case Study*

Olhão is a city located in the South of Portugal in the region of Algarve. It is a multicultural municipality, with 33% foreign inhabitants. Its contribution has been important in demographic terms, namely for maintaining a positive migratory balance and for generational renewal, as well as for boosting the regional economy, bridging the labor shortage in certain periods and/or sectors, bringing ideas and investment and adding experience. Of the 17 main nationalities living in Olhão, 10 correspond to European Union countries, 2 to Eastern European countries, 3 to Asian countries, 1 to an African country and 1 to country from Latin American [19].

The community of Olhão is often in the news for issues relating cases of violence. Last January, the community was surprised by a video that circulated on the social network *Instagram* in which a group of 4 students from the school Agrupamento de Escolas Francisco Fernandes Lopes physically assaulted, with extreme violence, a Nepalese immigrant that was returning home from work.<sup>1</sup> Further investigation showed that it was not an isolated case. The circumstance was so outrageous that the President of the Republic decided to intervene by visiting the school, where he did an open class on hate speech and immigration.

This multiculturalism and specific characteristics of the region are important aspects to contextualize the sample, since the participants of this case study are a group of youngsters, living in Olhão and attending this same school, Agrupamento de Escolas Francisco Fernandes Lopes. Schools in Olhão are a mirror of the municipality's multiculturalism, as we can find students of various nationalities. The sample is composed of a group of ten volunteer students aged between 12 and 13 years old of the following nationalities: 5 Portuguese students, 1 Russian student, 2 Brazilian students, 1 Ukrainian student, 1 Indian student. Six of the students identified themselves as boys and four identifies themselves as girls.

Our intervention in this community looks for a change of behavior and empowerment of the participants and the institutions involved. This type of research

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/tres-jovens-de-16-anos-detidos-por-agressoes-A-imigrante-nepales-em-olhao---psp-15831311.html>.

also presupposes that the researcher will proceed collaboratively with the participants (in constructing content, formulating questions, collecting data, and analyzing information).

### 3.2 *The Process and the Implementation*

To implement this case study, we followed Yin's research design and methods [15]. We defined the stages to implement the study: development of a plan of action, definition of the sample, the strategies to promote data collection, analysis, and the report of the experience.

The planning stage focused on identifying the research questions of the study for the in-depth interview with attributes of validity and reliability. It is a time-intensive method in which two interviews are conducted, each one week apart, to allow participants to reflect on what they have shared and to help them reconstructing meaning of their experiences.

The contact with the participants was organized in two sessions and interviews: Session 1 (S1) and Session 2 (S2). The first interview intended to understand the experiences and events leading to the phenomenon under study, such as the experiences with OHS and the strategies used by the participants to cope with the phenomena. After this first interviews, participants were invited to play the SG *In[The Hate Booth]*.

*In[The Hate Booth]* is SG inspired in several examples of OHS. This game is based on a fictional blog signed by two fictional characters and commented by fictional followers. Following the blog entries, it is possible to experience the escalation of hatred.

This interactive fiction game gives the player a written position or situation about OHS and allows the player to enter text-based commands that the computer will respond to, progressing to the next post. In this game, the word takes all the emphasis. The aim is to highlight the power of words, as a starting point of the discussion and reflection on OHS.

Throughout the blog authors' posts, an atmosphere of hatred can be felt in the comments that focuses on various stereotypes: issues of gender, sexuality, nationality, freedom of expression and disrespect for the difference and for the Other.

The levels are the different posts and comments. To advance to the next post, the player should discover a keyword hidden in the text. The hate escalation also progresses with each level. The game is a starting point for the reflection on OHS and its effects in everyday life.

The S2 intended to analyze the experience of the SG and the perspectives for possible solutions to address OHS on games and communities. After S1, we outlined the profile of the gamers in order to extract the essence of their experiences for data analysis. For the case presented here, the phenomenon of the research was to understand the lived experiences with OHS in online communities.

The first interview was based on two main questions divided in groups of sub questions to ease the description of the experiences (Table 1). In this phase, the participants had staggered entry times in the room and the interviews were conducted individually.

After the interview, the experimentation of the game *In[The Hate Booth]* was made in small groups. The group activity provided a space for reflection and collaborative critical thinking, fostering a constructivist learning and thinking environment with potential to build a perspective on OHS and its effects on digital and non-digital life. The pedagogical approach, through the SG, was a facilitator, influencing engagement and mapping the group comments and interactions.

A second approach to the group of participants was scheduled a week after the first session. In this S2, the goal was to promote meaningful discussion and critical thinking around democratic values and participation on online spaces. To this effect a second main question and four sub questions were launched to the groups (Table 2).

**Table 1** The questions and sub questions of S1

Main question	Sub questions
What is your experience with online hate speech?	Where do you experience it? Can you tell a specific episode? How do you react when you see or hear hate speech episodes? Do you follow youtubers or gamers that use OHS? Can you name some examples?
What is your perspective on hate speech?	How do you see haters? Do you have an idea of when hate speech is more likely to occur? Do you perceive a “climate” of hate speech in games or social communities? Where? Which are the consequences of hate speech in everyday life?

**Table 2** The questions and sub questions of S2

Main question	Sub questions
What is the possible solution to counteract hate speech?	How do you evaluate the possibility of using SG to address OHS? What would you suggest to game designers to prevent hate speech? What would you suggest to community managers? What can video gamers (and communities of gamers) do to prevent hate speech?

### 3.3 Results and Discussion

The answers to the first question “What is your experience with online hate speech?” were wide-ranging. All participants reported experiences of OHS, as presented on Table 3.

The reported experiences occurred in different environments, with an emphasis on *Discord*, *Free Fire* and *GTA*. In six cases, the Participants (P2, P5, P6, P7 and P8) revealed to be, simultaneously, victims and aggressors, because when they are attacked, they respond aggressively. The reactions of P2, P4, P5 and P7, shows that toxic environment increases the use of OHS within the community.

The participants’ reports about their online gaming practices consisted of behavioral complaints arising from interactions between players in a particular instance of gaming. OHS is merged with common personal attacks against other gamers, ranging from offences to the performance of the player, as reported by P1, P2, P5, P6 and P8. Some narratives also exposed complaints on racism (P9), sexist speeches (P1), and nationality discrimination (P9). We can find, in these episodes, the 4 common traits established by Sellars [14] to identify hate speech.

Participants reported some names of YouTubers with aggressive, racist, and sexist content in their videos or streaming’s. Live streams can create stars with the ability to influence other players to act on certain types of attitudes. Taspio (5 occurrences), one of the leading figures in the *Epic Games Battle Royale* community, currently averaging 12,000 concurrent viewers on *Twitch*, is in the top of the list. The Participants mentioned the name of YouTubers which are often blocked at some point of their streaming’ sessions, due to the use of OHS which doesn’t comply with the terms and policies of use of the platforms.

The participants reported their perspective on OHS, as represented in Table 4, recognizing communities and online games as places for the dissemination of discrimination speeches and toxicity. The most referred online spaces were *Tik Tok*, *GTA*, *Roblox* and *Fortnite*. Participants P1 and P2 underlined the fact that OHS addresses the avatar and not the person behind it. Participants P1, P2, P5, P7 and P10 find a correlation between the stress of the game, the performance of the gamers and the occurrence of OHS, and this is the most used argument to tolerate and accept OHS as part of the game. There are also two occurrences indicating that OHS can help improvements in gamers performance (P9) and that it can add fun to the game (P8). One participant (P3) indicated a correlation between violent games (like *GTA*) and the occurrence of OHS. Participant P8 related OHS to the number of followers (more OHS generates more followers to the gamers account).

Finally, all Participants (excepted Participants P1 and P10) recognized the effect of OHS in everyday life, highlighting the relation with low self-esteem, isolation, and anxiety. Participant P2 and P10 correlates the effect on everyday life with the familiarity of the aggressor, indicating that if the aggressor is a strange, then OHS has no consequences.

In S1, the experimentation of *In[The Hate Booth]* was the last part of the session. S2 took place a week later with the same group. In Table 5, we summarize the

**Table 3** Answers from S1: Experiences with OHS

Experience with OHS	
<b>P1</b>	
Where	<i>GTA e Discord</i>
Description	“I was insulted when I died. The insults were about the fact that I was a girl, and I didn’t know how to play.”
Reaction to OHS	“I ignore”
Youtubers using OHS	Taspio
<b>P2</b>	
Where	<i>Free Fire</i>
Description	“Someone told me I was a bot”
Reaction to OHS	“I reply back”
Youtubers using OHS	T3ddy e Taspio
<b>P3</b>	
Where	<i>Roblox e Rocket League</i>
Description	“They called me gay and said I didn’t know how to play. I was attacked by a group.”
Reaction to OHS	“I try to beat the aggressors in the game. It is the best answer”
Youtubers using OHS	Pew Die Pie
<b>P4</b>	
Where	<i>Gartic, Roblox, Fortnite</i>
Description	“I was insulted in Gartic, by Brazilian users, because of my nationality (Portuguese).”
Reaction to OHS	“I react with anger”
Youtubers using OHS	–
<b>P5</b>	
Where	<i>Discord e Instragram</i>
Description	“I was insulted because of my performance in the game.”
Reaction to OHS	“I reply back”
Youtubers using OHS	T3ddy e Taspio
<b>P6</b>	
Where	<i>GTA e Fortnite, Free Fire</i>

(continued)

**Table 3** (continued)

Experience with OHS	
Description	“I was playing <i>Free Fire</i> and a boy said that I didn’t know how to play and that my avatar looked like crap.”
Reaction to OHS	“At first, I would get upset and respond badly back. After some time, I gained a certain tolerance for this type of people, so whenever it happens, I simply mock the situation in a sarcastic way. Nowadays, I only answer if the hate speech is against someone else, if it is against me, I just make fun of the situation.”
Youtubers using OHS	Soph and Taspio
<b>P7</b>	
Where	<i>GTA, Free Fire</i>
Description	“In <i>GTA</i> I am frequently insulted. It is the game.”
Reaction to OHS	“I reply in the same tone.”
Youtubers using OHS	MOE
<b>P8</b>	
Where	<i>Discord, Fortnite, Free Fire</i>
Description	“I saw a famous <i>Free Fire</i> YouTuber disguised as a beginner player who was the target of hate speech by another player just because he didn’t have a skin and the player said as much nonsense as possible.”
Reaction to OHS	“OHS is normal because it happens a lot. I think that a person who plays a lot is already used to these offenses and doesn’t care about them.”
Youtubers using OHS	Destiny and FaZe Tfue
<b>P9</b>	
Where	<i>GTA e Overwatch</i>
Description	“Insults against the color of my avatar or my nationality.”
Reaction to OHS	“It makes me want to play more and to be well ranked.”
Youtubers using OHS	Taspio e Zigueira
<b>P10</b>	
Where	<i>Roblox, Discord, Gartic</i>
Description	“Often, my cousin (who has depression because he doesn’t have friends) tried to establish these relationships in online games and he was often attacked. As it we can imagine, for a person with this type of problem it becomes a very complicated situation”
Reaction to OHS	“I didn’t say anything, but I was more careful the next time I stayed there in the same game. I took hate speech as a learning situation to improve in the game”
Youtubers using OHS	Xbox Mil Grau

**Table 4** Answers of the S1: perspectives on OHS

Perspectives on OHS	
<b>P1</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“The OHS can be part of the game. It is part of the learning on the game. When we insult someone based on their skin, we are using the characteristics of the avatar and not the player.”
Occurrences of OHS	“It depends a lot on the type of game and on the player, but it’s common to offend new players who don’t know the game well and judge them for having a low level.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>Overwatch, GTA, Roblox, Fortnite</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“OHS shouldn’t be taken seriously because it’s just a game and it’s just haters.”
<b>P2</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“OHS happens in moments of tension. When we turn the game off, we forget.”
Occurrences of OHS	“The moments of the game that generate more OHS are those that involve more adrenaline or when there are teams.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>Roblox</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“An offense will only really offend the person if the person is familiar or if the offending person is a friend of the offended person. It is almost impossible in a game with a large or medium community to be offended because the improbability of knowing who the player is behind the avatar.”
<b>P3</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“OHS may just be a reaction to moments in the game. You insult someone, but you don’t really want to affect anyone.”
Occurrences of OHS	“More violent games, like GTA, have more OHS.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>GTA, Roblox</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“Not everyone has the same level of sensitivity, but there are people who can be truly affected.”
<b>P4</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“Sometimes games are invaded by groups of haters who act as a group against a certain person. This can affect who is attacked.”
Occurrences of OHS	“When the attack is in groups, there is sometimes the intention to insult certain types of people.”
Perception of a climate of hate	All online games

(continued)

**Table 4** (continued)

Perspectives on OHS	
Consequences in everyday life	“Many gamers use games as a way to escape their reality. If they have a very bad day, it is possible that they will play when they get home, hate speech can, in this way, worsen the emotional state of a player who is not used to it. This can be extreme and can lead the player who has been the victim of this type of speech to do things that are detrimental to their mental or physical health.”
<b>P5</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“OHS is part of the internet and gaming. It doesn’t affect me, and I try to ignore it. Unfortunately, there are bad people everywhere.”
Occurrences of OHS	“Aggressive language is a reaction to the game.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>League of Legends (LoL)</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“It can affect the player both psychologically and physically, it can lower the victim’s self-esteem and lead to mental problems.”
<b>P6</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“For some people being a hater is cool, it’s like being a leader. When I’m in a game with a toxic environment, I try to ignore it.”
Occurrences of OHS	“Hate speech is inevitable, it is present on the internet, on social networks. People like to say things like that to make themselves feel superior.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>Tik Tok e Gartic</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“It can affect the player both physically and psychologically, as it can lower the victim’s self-esteem and make them feel bad about themselves.”
<b>P7</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“All online game communities always have people who practice hate speech.”
Occurrences of OHS	“The insults and aggressive language come at the worst moments of the game or when you loose.”
Perception of a climate of hate	In all online games
Consequences in everyday life	“Gamers transfer these actions to everyday life.”
<b>P8</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“OHS can add more excitement to the game.”
Occurrences of OHS	“Some gamers use hate speech to get more followers.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>Fortnite and Free Fire</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“Being the target of hate speech can be anxiety-provoking during the game and beyond. It can affect who plays and who is attacked.”

(continued)

**Table 4** (continued)

Perspectives on OHS	
<b>P9</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“Sometimes, OHS help us understanding a mistake we did in the game.”
Occurrences of OHS	“Insults come as an instinctive response to the stress of the game and one’s performance”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>GTA</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“It causes low self-esteem”
<b>P10</b>	
Perspectives on OHS	“OHS is an Internet problem and it affects people. In games there is no moderation, often when you are attacked you have to leave the game.”
Occurrences of OHS	“Most of the time it happens when gamers are losing, and they start accusing the others of hackers, or insulting because they are nervous about losing the game.”
Perception of a climate of hate	<i>Tik Tok</i>
Consequences in everyday life	“In offline life, I don’t think there are many consequences, it depends on the person, I don’t take this in a wrong way, because those people who make fun of me have never even seen me in real life, but other people get upset!”

feedback on the experience of the SG, which was mainly described as useful and fun.

All participants were unanimous in recognizing the power of games to learn and the possibilities of SG to address OHS and propose a reflection on the subject. Participant P2 has highlighted the importance of being able to talk about such an important topic in a school environment.

As measures for counteract OHS, there was a wide range of suggestions. Participants considered game designers as the less responsible for OHS. Participant P1 suggested games should be more inclusive, with representative characters; P5 suggested the elimination of expressions of hate from the games; P8 suggested the creation of more SG to address OHS.

Most Participants (P2, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10) indicated that managers should block and ban gamers reported for OHS. Participant P6 suggests that gamers should not be banned, but muted. Managers are perceived as a key figure for controlling OHS, because of their power to block and punish users and also because they are seen as an example of behaviour.

Gamers are seen as the main triggers of OHS. Participants suggest respect, inclusion, and calm in the reactions, as well as the punishment of being expelled of the community and of the game. Participants P3 and P10 were unable to express suggestions to counteract OHS, indicating that they don’t believe that OHS will ever disappear.

**Table 5** Answers of the S2: Solutions for OHS

Solutions for OHS	
<b>P1</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“We can learn a lot from games. It was interesting to see the examples of OHS”
Suggestions to game designers	“Make games more inclusive and representative of all.”
Suggestions to community managers	“Be more active in the moderation, being an example to the gamers.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Be more respectful, calmer and inclusive”
<b>P2</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It loved that we were able to talk about games in the classroom. The game was very amusing. It is a good way to start talking about OHS”
Suggestions to game designers	“I think the designers should be responsible, because they are the ones who have to make a game that doesn’t allow that kind of speech from the outset, not having to take corrective measures after its launch.”
Suggestions to community managers	“Block certain words or phrases from comments.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Leave the game.”
<b>P3</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“The game helped us to learn how to manage situations of hate. I missed some images in the game”
Suggestions to game designers	“I don’t know. I think it is part of the game and we cannot eliminate it.”
Suggestions to community managers	“I don’t know. I think it is part of the game and we cannot eliminate it.”
Suggestions to gamers	“I don’t know. I think it is part of the game and we cannot eliminate it.”
<b>P4</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It was fun to pass the levels as a team and only by reading and searching words. I think we can learn how to deal with situations.”
Suggestions to game designers	–
Suggestions to community managers	“I think managers are the most important. They usually play and enjoy the game, like gamers, but they have the power to silence OHS. I think what they usually do is enough.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Being banned from gaming, it’s like an addiction.”
<b>P5</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“I’ve learned a lot from games, keeping calm under stress, paying attention to details without too much effort, like being a team player, historical episodes, scientific phenomena, geography and much more. This game is a good example for talking about hate.”
Suggestions to game designers	“They can eliminate expressions or language from the game that could be used to offend, not allowing the game to send any message from the player that contains any of these expressions or language.”

(continued)

**Table 5** (continued)

Solutions for OHS	
Suggestions to community managers	“The punishments go directly through the platforms where the games are, and therefore through their managers. The player base is on the platform, hence the accounts (and inventories, as in the case of Steam).”
Suggestions to gamers	“Respect the others.”
<b>P6</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It was fun, I think it is a good idea to use games for education”
Suggestions to game designers	“I think it has nothing to do with the games.”
Suggestions to community managers	“Banning the person from the game is not the best way to end the game, as the person can simply create another account to play, but if the player is muted, he would continue with the false impression that he manages to hurt other players, however no one can hear or read what he writes in the chat.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Gamers should take it easy.”
<b>P7</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“I really enjoyed it; this game is a fun way to put someone in someone else’s shoes.”
Suggestions to game designers	“I don’t think it’s a problem with games, but with the people who play.”
Suggestions to community managers	“In cases of hate situations in these groups, haters should be permanently banned and could no longer access the platforms.”
Suggestions to gamers	“It’s the players who start to incite and start these groups. Those are the ones who should be banned.”
<b>P8</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It was fun and a good moment to talk and experience a subject that is important. I would suggest adding sounds to the game”
Suggestions to game designers	“Create educational games.”
Suggestions to community managers	“Kick out those persons.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Those who create and manage the communities are not to blame for the game having a toxic community, it is the players who make the community toxic with OHS towards noobs, newbies, players who criticize, even if constructively, the game.”
<b>P9</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It is a serious problem, and it is important to talk about it in a funny way.”
Suggestions to game designers	“It is difficult because there is OHS even in non-violent games.”
Suggestions to community managers	“Block trolls and haters.”

(continued)

**Table 5** (continued)

Solutions for OHS	
Suggestions to gamers	“If players don’t use hate speech it will disappear. I think designers and managers already do everything they can to avoid it.”
<b>P10</b>	
Feedback on the SG experience	“It was a good session and make me think about how OHS affects people.”
Suggestions to game designers	–
Suggestions to community managers	“Ban the haters.”
Suggestions to gamers	“Players have to try not to take the game too seriously.”

## 4 Final Considerations

During an online game, a player’s performance can cause a defeat of a team. Players can react aggressively through common and personal insults that are based in some kind of discrimination related to color, gender, ethnicity, and location.

The interviews revealed the acceptance by most participants of toxic environments, even though they claim not to appreciate this kind interaction. This attitude is reflected in the act of ignoring hateful speech rather than confronting it.

The responses of the participants allowed us to perceive that the reactions to occurrences of OHS are mostly inaction or denunciation. However, we also found a large number of responses, not indicated by Citron and Norton [20], who describe an equally aggressive behavior as a reaction leading to an increase in toxicity.

The answers of the Participants allowed to distinguish different motivations to perform OHS. We could distinguish power, joy, group conformity, and status enhancement. There is, however, an attitude of reaction that is not described in Wachs’ scale for perpetration of OHS [13]. Participants confessed to perform OHS as a reaction to the toxic environment of the game or the community.

Almost all Participants recognize that the speeches voiced by the players have a real effect on everyday life and may be impregnated with prejudices that arise in heated moments or frustration. This gives rise to racist, sexist, xenophobic speeches, among others. Toxic comments don’t translate in physical aggression and harm, but they disturb the activities of games and communities. Even those who do not support OHS and suggest that it will never be eliminated.

Conclusions on how players perceive the responsibility for OHS are divided. Few Participants blame the game designers, or the communities’ managers, but most of the elements point to the gamers as the responsible for online toxicity.

The experience of the SG *In[The Hate Booth]* brought a new perspective on the possibilities of education and a pedagogical approach to the problem, within the school, which received the approval of the majority of the participants and was pointed out as a solution to address the phenomenon. While working in small groups,

it was possible to create a sense of community, united by a common goal, based on the SG. This strategy appears to be a useful tool and a starting point in the mobilization against OHS.

After hearing and analyzing the Participants testimonials, it was possible to conclude that there is a need for awareness, in order to curb OHS, since the game and the experiences in the game are proven to be, as pointed by Huizinga, Caillois and Pearce, a constructor of meaning.

This case study intended to analyze the online interactions of a group of young participants and the contact and perspectives they have in relation to OHS. From this first approach, we can understand that this is an issue with effects on youngsters offline and online experiences. The data collected is important to further the research, namely creating a survey by questionnaire, with closed questions allowing to collect data on a larger scale.

Although this study proposes a pedagogical approach, based on the experience of a serious game, further research also needs to analyze more systematically the issue of supervision, parental support and educator's monitoring of youth online experiences.

**Acknowledgements** This publication is financed by national funds through the projects "UIBD/04019/2020 CIAC" and "UI/BD/150850/2021" of the Foundation for Science and Technology.

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