

# Psychology of Popular Media

## **Video Games as Conduits for Radicalization: Impact of Exposure to Extremist Recruitment and Authoritarianism on Sexist Attitudes and Aggression**

Anantha Ubaradka, Christopher J. Ferguson, and Sanjram Premjit Khanganba

Online First Publication, November 10, 2025. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000642>

### CITATION

Ubaradka, A., Ferguson, C. J., & Khanganba, S. P. (2025). Video games as conduits for radicalization: Impact of exposure to extremist recruitment and authoritarianism on sexist attitudes and aggression. *Psychology of Popular Media*. Advance online publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000642>

# Video Games as Conduits for Radicalization: Impact of Exposure to Extremist Recruitment and Authoritarianism on Sexist Attitudes and Aggression

Anantha Ubaradka<sup>1, 2</sup>, Christopher J. Ferguson<sup>3</sup>, and Sanjram Premjit Khandanba<sup>1, 2, 4, 5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Human Factors and Applied Cognition Laboratory, Indian Institute of Technology Indore

<sup>2</sup> Discipline of Psychology, Indian Institute of Technology Indore

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology, Stetson University

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Electric Vehicles and Intelligent Transport Systems, Indian Institute of Technology Indore

<sup>5</sup> Centre of Futuristic Defense and Space Technologies, Indian Institute of Technology Indore

Public and academic interest in far-right recruitment through video games has surged, overshadowing the lesser examined area of far-left recruitment efforts. This imbalance persists despite the limited data on recruitment efforts and subsequent receptiveness for both ideological extremes. To address this gap, the present study investigated the recruitment dynamics of far-right and far-left groups within the Indian gaming community. Additionally, it examined how exposure to extremist content in video games, coupled with underlying authoritarianism, contributed to the development of sexist attitudes and aggression. A total of 395 active video gamers participated in the study ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.84$  years,  $SD = 3.21$ , men = 87.10%, women = 12.90%). The results indicated that far-right and far-left recruitment efforts were infrequent yet notable experiences for gamers. It is also found that far-right exposure positively influenced hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression, often independent of authoritarian predispositions (right-wing authoritarianism). In contrast, far-left exposure influenced these constructs only through left-wing authoritarianism, highlighting an asymmetry in how ideological extremism interacts with individual tendencies. The study highlights the risks of disproportionately focusing on far-right recruitment efforts and authoritarianism over far-left counterparts, which has been a significant pitfall for the field.

## Public Policy Relevance Statement

This study unveils critical insights into the dual dynamics of extremist recruitment within video games, revealing how these digital platforms can serve as conduits for radical ideologies. While challenging the moral panic, it also emphasizes the role of authoritarianism in fostering sex-based prejudice and aggression among Indian gamers, highlighting the differential impacts of far-right versus far-left influences.


**Keywords:** video games, extremist recruitment, authoritarianism, hostile sexism, traditional male role norms


**Supplemental materials:** <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000642.supp>


The rise of digital media has greatly aided the spread of extremism by providing broader networks and engaging tools for effectively disseminating such ideologies (Zhang & Davis, 2024). The ease of access and ability to reach a vast global audience have enabled

extremist groups to infiltrate digital platforms, recruiting members who act as catalysts for message cascades (González-Bailón et al., 2011). Contemporary platforms further amplify appeal through immersive audiovisual formats, such as memes, short-form video,

Andreas Miles-Novelo served as action editor.

Anantha Ubaradka  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7709-1073>

Christopher J. Ferguson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0986-7519>

Sanjram Premjit Khandanba  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6215-7500>

Anantha Ubaradka and Sanjram Premjit Khandanba share equal contribution as cofirst authors. Either of them may have the first appearance in the name sequence in the representation of this work.

The authors wish to express their gratitude to all the participants who took part in the study and individuals who have supported this study by providing critical comments and suggestions. The authors acknowledge all the participants for their time in responding to the survey. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article. The

associated data can be requested by contacting the corresponding author.

Anantha Ubaradka contributed equally to investigation. Sanjram Premjit Khandanba contributed equally to resources. Anantha Ubaradka, Christopher J. Ferguson, and Sanjram Premjit Khandanba contributed equally to conceptualization, methodology, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Christopher J. Ferguson and Sanjram Premjit Khandanba contributed equally to data curation and supervision. Anantha Ubaradka and Christopher J. Ferguson contributed equally to formal analysis.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sanjram Premjit Khandanba, Human Factors and Applied Cognition Laboratory, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, 103 PoD 1C, Simrol 453552, India, or Discipline of Psychology, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, Khandwa Road, Simrol 453552, India. Email: [sanjrampk@iiti.ac.in](mailto:sanjrampk@iiti.ac.in) or [sanjrampk@gmail.com](mailto:sanjrampk@gmail.com)

and live-streamed gaming, which allow recruiters to tailor scripts to the psychological needs of niche audiences (Ismaeli, 2019). While much of the focus in research and media discourse has been on creating and disseminating such content, examining the demand side of this equation is necessary (Hawdon et al., 2019). This requires exploring how extremism proliferates through digital media and intersects with the receptiveness and characteristics of users exposed to such content.

Among the digital media, video games have increasingly become preferred platforms for extremist communication, leveraging their encrypted and interactive environments for recruitment (Holmes, 2015; József, 2022). This trend gained substantial media attention as early as 2007 when the National Security Agency and other intelligence organizations in the United States began monitoring platforms such as World of Warcraft and Microsoft's Xbox Live (József, 2022). Intelligence sources alleged that extremist groups, including al-Qaeda, were exploiting gaming environments for propaganda, recruitment, training, and covert communication (József, 2022). Such investigations highlighted the potential of video games to serve as encrypted channels for communication. This capability was starkly underscored during the aftermath of the 2015 Paris terror attacks, which claimed the lives of nearly 130 people (József, 2022). Early investigations speculated that PlayStation devices could have been used to coordinate the attack, demonstrating how gaming platforms can facilitate secure, decentralized communication (Holmes, 2015). It is also argued that the interactive and immersive environments in video games make them particularly effective in targeting vulnerable demographics such as teens and adolescents (Wells et al., 2024).

Far-right proliferation is the most frequently documented form of extremist activity within video game spaces (Condis, 2018, 2019; M. Conway et al., 2019). Vaux et al. (2021) noted that the relatively lenient moderation policies of certain digital distribution platforms such as Steam have inadvertently conducive to far-right ideological spread, including Neo-Nazism and anti-Muslim bigotry. This affinity of far-right extremists for mainstream video games extends beyond a mutual sense of aggrievement, which also includes the development of homegrown extremist mods to such games. For instance, Khosravi (2017) observed the confluence of gamer culture and White nationalism on forums like Stormfront, a well-known White supremacist platform. An example of this phenomenon was the creation of mods to popular games that embedded extremist narratives, such as Stormer Doom. This particular mod altered the game to portray enemies as caricatures of Jews and communists, exemplifying the hateful ideologies in gaming content. Reflecting on this, King and Leonard (2016) postulated that such modified games might be strategically designed to appeal to younger demographics. In a similar vein, Robinson and Whittaker (2020) observed that these mods served a broader purpose in solidifying community bonds among extremists. They argued that such games functioned as tools for recruitment within groups that were already familiar with the specific symbols, iconography, and ideologies associated with white nationalism (Robinson & Whittaker, 2020).

While there is growing interest in examining extremist proliferation across digital media platforms, research specifically focusing on video game spaces remains scarce. Within this limited body of work, far-right extremism has received the most attention, often overshadowing the potential influence of far-left ideologies. Additionally, much of the existing literature is centered on Western contexts, highlighting the need to explore how extremism manifests across different

cultural settings. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the recruitment patterns of both far-right and far-left extremism within video game environments, specifically contextualized to the Indian population.

## Defining Far-Right and Far-Left Extremism in India

Far-right extremism is commonly framed around exclusionary nationalism rooted in social, ethnic, and sexual identities, often reinforced by narratives of racial or cultural supremacy (M. Conway et al., 2019; Perry & Scrivens, 2019). This ideology typically constructs rigid in-group boundaries by portraying out-groups, such as immigrants, religious minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning individuals, feminists, and other marginalized communities, as existential threats to national or cultural integrity (Jackson, 2019; Scrivens, 2021).

While much of the literature on far-right extremism originates from Euro-American contexts, where white nationalism dominates the discourse, the Indian variant reflects a distinct but parallel trajectory. In India, far-right extremism is characterized not only by stringent nationalism but also by a predominantly religion-based radical movement known as Hindutva. This ideological stance is entrenched in a sociopolitical ambition to establish a Hindu Rashtra, or a Hindu state, within the country (Leidig, 2020). The ascendancy of far-right extremism in India has been instrumental in redefining political discourse, precipitating notable shifts in societal dynamics and inter-community relations (Leidig, 2020). Over the past two decades, far-right political factions, notably the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have embodied Hindutva into their rhetoric, utilizing this ideology to galvanize support and impact India's political landscape (Ghasiya et al., 2023).

The expansion of social media in the 21st century, coupled with the BJP's strategic use of digital platforms, has reshaped the mediatic landscape for promoting far-right extremism in the country (Chakravartty & Roy, 2015; Pal et al., 2016). Since the 2002 state elections in Gujarat, the BJP became the first major political party in India to systematically adopt digital media strategies for electoral success (Pal et al., 2016; Udupa & Pohjonen, 2019). This active engagement has enabled the far-right elements in India to connect with urban, educated youth, primarily the beneficiaries of neoliberal reforms from upper and intermediary caste groups (Ghasiya et al., 2023). This emerging dimension warrants further investigation, focusing on how these ideologies are formed, propagated, and perceived within the niche of video games.

In contrast, far-left ideology in India is represented by Naxalism, a radical communist movement deeply rooted in Maoist principles (Mehra, 2000). The Naxalite activities affect several states across India's eastern, central, and southern regions, collectively known as the Red Corridor (Sharma & Singhal, 2011). While some perspectives classify this agitation as a form of terrorism, it also constitutes a classic example of far-left insurgency (Chadha, 2020). These groups engage in coercion and violence as their principal tactics to enforce compliance, yet they also enjoy significant local support, frequently bolstered by communist political groups (Ghosh, 2023). The far-left movements have recently witnessed increased intellectual participation and sophistication, leading to a substantial influx of scholars and activists in India (Chadha, 2020). Many of these individuals are deeply entrenched in the academic community and continue their active involvement despite allegations that several universities are

being used as operational hubs for far-left activities. Government and media rhetoric labeling such actors Urban Naxals has further pushed them toward privacy-first platforms, complicating visibility for researchers even as the state invokes the label to justify wider surveillance and harsher security legislation (Singh & Dasgupta, 2019).

While far-right movements have long been recognized for their aggressive and coordinated digital presence, far-left factions in India have also begun leveraging digital media to disseminate their ideologies, mobilize support, and critique state policies (Roy, 2024). Because left-wing audiences tend to be more ideologically diffuse and harder to profile than their right-wing counterparts (Boutyline & Willer, 2017; Ramos & Torres, 2020), current counter-extremism frameworks risk missing the subtler recruitment cues and antistate narratives now permeating through far-left channels. A dedicated study is therefore essential as it would fill a clear empirical gap in online radicalization beyond the right-wing template and inform proportionate policy responses that safeguard dissent while addressing genuine security concerns.

### Rationale and Significance of the Present Study

Firstly, much of the current literature on extremist recruitment on digital media remains anchored in Western sociopolitical contexts, limiting its applicability to non-Western settings with distinct ideological landscapes. Such geographic and ideological bias risks overlooking how local grievances and global extremist narratives may intersect within diverse gaming communities. For example, the Indian sociopolitical landscape has long experienced an interaction between far-right and far-left ideological factions, often moderated by centrist yet liberal governments. Yet we still know almost nothing about how these factions adapt their communication to contemporary digital channels.

Additionally, despite video games being increasingly scrutinized as potential vectors for extremist recruitment, existing research disproportionately focuses on far-right proliferations (Consalvo, 2009; Kowert et al., 2022, 2024). This imbalance not only narrows the analytical lens but also reinforces a skewed understanding of radicalization dynamics. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including the prevalence of left-leaning perspectives within the social sciences, which may introduce biases that underplay the potential harms of far-left extremism (Frisby et al., 2023). Although the critical need for balanced scrutiny, far-left-related issues such as antisemitism, support for terrorism, and challenges to free speech and due process have received little attention from game scholars. The political biases of these scholars themselves can lead to such omissions, as they often focus intensively on the far-right, possibly to the extent of creating a moral panic (cf. Bowman, 2015). Therefore, the focus on analyzing the radical recruitment efforts might benefit from a more balanced examination of how various forms of ideological beliefs and attitudes manifest and impact different domains, such as digital media and gaming.

Above all these gaps, a persistent conceptual ambiguity also lingers in this discourse as it remains unclear whether certain gaming subcultures inherently attract individuals predisposed to violence and extremism (Koehler et al., 2023; Kowert et al., 2022, 2024) or whether video games function similarly to other digital platforms as neutral conduits through which extremist content can circulate. Addressing these gaps requires a context-sensitive approach that

considers a wider ideological spectrum under which radicalization unfolds in interactive media.

The present study addresses these empirical gaps by analyzing the recruitment patterns of far-right and far-left actors in gaming environments and players' behavioral and attitudinal responses to those overtures. Specifically focusing on the rapidly expanding Indian gaming market (Lukman, 2023), an arena that remains under-examined in radicalization research (Zeiler & Mukherjee, 2022), this study assesses both supply-side exposure (encounters with extremist messaging) and demand-side susceptibility (ideological leanings, authoritarian attitudes). In addition, it evaluates whether extremist exposure and the underlying ideological dispositions predict adverse outcomes, including sexist attitudes and aggression. By linking recruitment tactics to user characteristics and downstream effects, the study aims to clarify the mechanisms through which extremist narratives may take root in contemporary gaming cultures.

This study is pivotal as it examines whether Indian gaming spaces serve as conduits for extremist recruitment or whether current concerns reflect an emerging moral panic. Either outcome holds scientific and societal value. If credible evidence of extremist activities is identified, the findings would provide the first empirical basis for policy interventions tailored to India's unique sociopolitical context. Conversely, if results indicate minimal or no evidence of such recruitment, this suggests that Indian gaming communities are not currently sites of radicalization. Such a conclusion would help prevent unwarranted media-driven moral panics and reduce the risk of stigmatizing gaming culture. It would also imply that extremist narratives have yet to gain traction within these digital spaces, while also offering a crucial baseline for future longitudinal tracking of ideological shifts, free from premature generalizations.

### Theoretical Framework and Problematicization

The inclination toward extremism is marked by several key indicators, including authoritarian attitudes and self-identification with extremist ideologies (Dinas & Northmore-Ball, 2020; Jost, 2019; Stone & Smith, 1993). Authoritarianism is characterized by three core dimensions: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and adherence to conventional norms (Altemeyer, 1988; Mavor et al., 2010). While authoritarian attitudes can manifest across the ideological spectrum, existing research has predominantly focused on examining right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). It is typically explained within the dual-process motivational model proposed by Duckitt (2001). According to this model, RWA arises from a worldview that perceives the social environment as inherently dangerous, unpredictable, and threatening (Altemeyer, 1988; Nilsson & Jost, 2020). This perception of constant threat triggers a motivational drive to prioritize collective security and societal stability, often achieved through the aggressive enforcement of traditional social order and hierarchical norms (Duckitt, 2001).

The dual-process motivational model posits that prejudice and aggression are key consequences of RWA (Duckitt, 2001). However, the patterns of prejudice and aggression differ from those in the social dominance orientation due to variations in motivational goals (Osborne et al., 2023). While individuals with social dominance orientation exhibit generalized hostility toward outgroups to maintain dominance and group-based hierarchies, those with strong RWA tendencies channel their aggression and prejudice

more selectively (Duckitt, 2001). Specifically, hostility driven by RWA targets outgroups perceived as threats to societal cohesion or undermining traditional social order (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Osborne et al., 2023). For instance, studies have shown that individuals high in RWA often express sexist attitudes, including hostile sexism—which reflects overt antagonism toward women challenging traditional roles (Barreto & Doyle, 2023)—and adherence to traditional male role norms (Levant & Richmond, 2008), which reinforces patriarchal expectations about gender roles (Goodnight et al., 2014; Sibley et al., 2007). These sexist attitudes align with the broader authoritarian narrative that prioritizes conformity and seeks to suppress perceived challenges to established hierarchies (Duckitt, 2001).

There has been less academic attention to the association between left-wing ideology and authoritarianism. This lack of parallel documentation can skew perceptions, fostering a stereotype that negatively targets only the far-right spectrum of extremism. Studies over the past two decades have highlighted that authoritarian tendencies are not exclusive to the far-right (Osborne et al., 2023). Left-wing values can also align with the dimensions of authoritarianism, demonstrating that such attitudes can transcend traditional ideological boundaries and manifest across the extremist spectrum (L. G. Conway & McFarland, 2019; Costello et al., 2022). These studies suggest that left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) is associated with various theoretically relevant criteria, including trait antagonism, low openness to experience, support for censorship, cognitive inflexibility, and retrospective accounts of political violence (Costello et al., 2022; Osborne et al., 2023). It also focuses on status hierarchies and moral absolutism, highlighting its functional similarities to RWA despite differing ideological underpinnings (Costello et al., 2022). Based on this literature, it can be argued that authoritarian attitudes, regardless of ideological orientation, are strongly associated with sexist attitudes and aggression. Against this backdrop, the present study addresses two important research questions (RQs):

*RQ1:* Can exposure to far-right and far-left extremism within video games independently predict the emergence of sexist attitudes and aggression?

*RQ2:* Does authoritarianism serve as the driving force behind how media exposure influences the development of sexist attitudes and aggression?

Several studies conceptualize exposure to extremism as the intersection of recruitment outreach and individual receptiveness. For instance, Taylor and Horgan's process model characterizes extremist propaganda as a mere contact chain, which only becomes influential when a cognitive opening (i.e., heightened receptivity) is triggered by one's ideological dispositions (Taylor & Horgan, 2006). Bouhana's moral ecology framework amplifies this point, arguing that environmental conditions (i.e., recruitment efforts) become criminogenic solely for individuals who are already sensitive to such efforts, so opportunity and propensity are analytically inseparable (Bouhana, 2019). This convergence is further supported by prior work that views online exposure to extremism as a synthesis of external recruitment efforts and internal susceptibility (Hassan et al., 2018; Lee & Leets, 2002). Accordingly, the present study operationalizes extremist exposure as a formative construct,

comprising the degree of recruitment efforts and the corresponding receptiveness.

In response to the proposed RQs, this study investigates whether exposure to extremism in video games independently contributes to aggression and the emergence of sexist attitudes (RQ1). In their systematic review, Hassan et al. (2018) highlight that incidental exposure to, or active seeking of, online radical content predicts stronger extremist attitudes and a greater willingness to use violence even after controlling for preexisting dispositions such as authoritarianism or thrill-seeking (cf. L. Pauwels & Schils, 2016). Extremists can exploit mainstream gaming platforms precisely for that recruitment potential, detailing how chat, streaming, and modification tools normalize hate narratives while rewarding participation with status and excitement (Schils & Verhage, 2017; Sorell & Kelsall, 2025). Additionally, Misogyny is a recurrent pillar of these narratives as large-scale studies of gaming communities reveal that sexist tropes and harassment are routinely intertwined with extremist discourse (Bègue et al., 2017; Hammar, 2020; Kowert et al., 2024; Wells et al., 2024). Collectively, these lines of work enable an assumption of treating extremist exposure as an independent risk factor for both aggression and the formation of sexist attitudes. Building on this, the present study proposes the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* Exposure to far-right extremism directly and positively influences hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

*Hypothesis 2 (H2):* Exposure to far-left extremism directly and positively influences hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

Secondly, it is also plausible that extremist recruitment efforts are selectively directed toward individuals who have already demonstrated a predisposition toward authoritarian ideologies and hierarchical thinking (RQ2). Video games often provide interactive and immersive platforms and serve as echo chambers that amplify these predispositions (Robinson & Whittaker, 2020). In this scenario, there is a possibility that exposure to extremism may not create aggression or sexist attitudes in isolation, but instead, aggression and sexist attitudes are influenced predominantly by underlying predispositions such as RWA and LWA. For example, Lee and Leets (2002) found that youth exposed to online white supremacist content responded differently depending on their initial predispositions toward extremist ideology. Those with preexisting inclinations showed increased susceptibility over time, particularly toward explicit extremist messages, highlighting how dispositional affinity mediates the relationship between exposure and attitudinal outcomes.

Individuals high in authoritarianism are especially receptive to extremist narratives because these messages align with their worldview, thus intensifying the persuasive impact and making the adoption of aggressive or sexist behaviors more likely (Austin & Jackson, 2019; Begany & Milburn, 2002). However, without sustained ideological alignment, the impact attenuates over time, reducing the risk of long-term attitude change or aggression (Lee & Leets, 2002). Thus, it is plausible that extremist exposure does not universally lead to harmful attitudes or behaviors. Rather, it interacts with authoritarian predispositions that serve as a critical mediating factor, determining the extent to which extremist content translates into actual



aggression and sexist attitudes (Duckitt, 2001; Osborne et al., 2023). With these arguments, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3):* RWA positively influences hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

*Hypothesis 4 (H4):* LWA positively influences hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

*Hypothesis 5 (H5):* RWA mediates the relationship between exposure to far-right extremism and the development of hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

*Hypothesis 6 (H6):* LWA mediates the relationship between exposure to far-right extremism and the development of hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression.

## Materials and Method

### Participants

Participants were recruited from the Indian video gaming community using convenience sampling. The recruitment process yielded a preliminary cohort of 410 individuals. They were identified through responses to an interest survey distributed via Google Forms. This survey was disseminated across social media platforms, including Instagram pages and Discord groups tailored to gaming communities. This approach ensured a broad reach to the intended demographic. Eligibility criteria required participants to be active online video gamers, residents of India, and at least 18 years old. After data collection, responses from 15 participants were excluded due to incomplete submissions, resulting in a final sample of 395 active gamers ( $M_{\text{age}} = 20.84$  years,  $SD = 3.21$ , men = 87.10%, women = 12.90%). The study received approval from the ethical committees of the authors' affiliated institutions. Before participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Additionally, the study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and subsequent amendments. A notable strength of this study is its representation of gamers from 29 Indian states, highlighting the geographical diversity of the sample. Additionally, the study includes participants who engage in a wide variety of video game genres, mitigating potential biases that might arise from associating specific extremist ideologies with particular video games.

### Questionnaire

As a few constructs were assessed with single-item or adapted measures, a pilot study was conducted ( $n = 50$  gamers) to evaluate item clarity and face validity.

### Extremist Recruitment Efforts and Receptiveness

Far-right and far-left recruitment efforts were assessed separately using investigator-designed single-item measures. Participants were asked: "How frequently have far-right/ fascist and far-left/communist organizations attempted to recruit you within a video game?" Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 4 = *most of the time*). To measure gamers' positive receptiveness to such recruitment efforts, a similar single-item measure was used: "How frequently have you agreed to join far-right/fascist and far-left/communist organizations when they tried to recruit you within a

video game?" Responses were again collected on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 4 = *most of the time*).

### Authoritarianism

RWA was assessed using a short version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale (sample item: "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn") developed by Rattazzi et al. (2007). Participants responded on a 3-point rating scale (0 = *no*, 1 = *maybe*, and 2 = *yes*). LWA was assessed using a 39-item Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA) scale developed by Costello et al. (2022), with a few items reworded for clarity and relevance in the Indian context (sample item: "India would be much better off if all of the rich people were at the bottom of the social ladder"). Participants responded on a 3-point rating scale (0 = *no*, 1 = *maybe*, and 2 = *yes*).

### Sexist Attitudes

The hostile sexism component was adapted from the 11-item Ambivalent Sexism Scale (sample item: "Women exaggerate problems at work") developed by Glick and Fiske (2018). Participants responded on a 3-point rating scale (0 = *no*, 1 = *maybe*, and 2 = *yes*).

### Traditional Male Role Norms

Adherence to traditional male role norms was measured using the 21-item Male Role Norms Inventory Short-Form (sample item: "Men should not be too quick to tell others that they care about them") developed by Levant et al. (2013). Participants responded on a 3-point rating scale (0 = *no*, 1 = *maybe*, and 2 = *yes*).

### Aggression

Aggression was measured using the 12-item Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire Short-Form (sample item: "Given enough provocation, I may hit another person") developed by Bryant and Smith (2001). Participants responded on a 4-point rating scale (1 = *definitely false* to 4 = *definitely true*).

### Data Analysis

A frequency analysis was conducted to evaluate the prevalence of recruitment strategies and determine the extent to which participants responded positively to such efforts. The hypotheses were tested using partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. Compared with traditional covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM is more flexible and well suited for cases where the data distribution does not follow a multivariate normal distribution (Hanafiah, 2020). Moreover, PLS-SEM is widely used in exploratory research, aligning with the nature of this study (Hair et al., 2019). A two-step evaluation procedure was employed to analyze the PLS-SEM results. First, the measurement model was assessed based on item reliability, internal consistency, and validity scores. Next, the structural model was examined to validate the significance and relevance of relationships among variables and to evaluate the explained variance within the model. The assessment of the structural model adhered to established practices and guidelines relevant to the previous studies (see Maroufkhani et al., 2022).

## Results

### Frequency Analysis of the Recruitment Efforts and Receptiveness

Table 1 presents a frequency analysis of recruitment efforts by far-right and far-left groups and the subsequent receptiveness of participants in video game spaces. The findings suggest that while recruitment attempts by far-right and far-left groups are not alarmingly frequent, they are still notable.

### Measurement Model of the PLS-SEM

Far-right and far-left exposure were modeled as formative constructs, each operationalized as a composite of two single-item indicators, such as recruitment efforts and individual receptiveness. Because these indicators capture distinct, objectively verifiable experiences and are not required to covary, they meet the conceptual conditions for formative measurement. All other latent variables in the model were specified as reflective constructs. Reliability of the test scores was evaluated through standardized factor loadings. Given that some of the constructs utilized a 3-point rating scale, a lower minimum reliability criterion of 0.40 was adopted for this study (Stevens, 2002).

A few items within the constructs exhibited factor loadings below the 0.40 threshold, and those items were subsequently removed to ensure measurement reliability. The constructs also demonstrated high internal consistency, as evidenced by Cronbach's  $\alpha$  scores above .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Far-right exposure was an exception, which showed a marginal Cronbach's  $\alpha$  score of .67. Additionally, composite reliability (rho\_c) scores for all constructs ranged between .83 and .92, providing additional evidence of excellent internal consistency of the constructs.

Furthermore, the measurement model demonstrated satisfactory validity scores across the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted, which determines the extent to which items converge to measure their respective constructs. Far-right exposure, far-left exposure, and sexist attitudes demonstrated strong validity, as these values satisfied the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, the remaining constructs displayed marginal scores for convergent validity (see Table 1 in the online supplemental materials). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio, with the highest observed heterotrait–monotrait value being 0.84. This value falls below the criterion of 0.85 (Kline, 2023), indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs (see Table 2 in the online supplemental materials).

**Table 1**

*Frequency Analysis of the Extremist Recruitment Efforts and Receptiveness*

Extremist exposure	Frequencies (%)			
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Recruitment efforts (far-right)	66.30	21.00	7.60	5.10
Recruitment efforts (far-left)	69.10	17.20	8.90	4.80
Receptiveness (far-right)	66.30	18.50	11.40	3.80
Receptiveness (far-left)	67.60	14.70	9.40	8.40

### Structural Model of the PLS-SEM

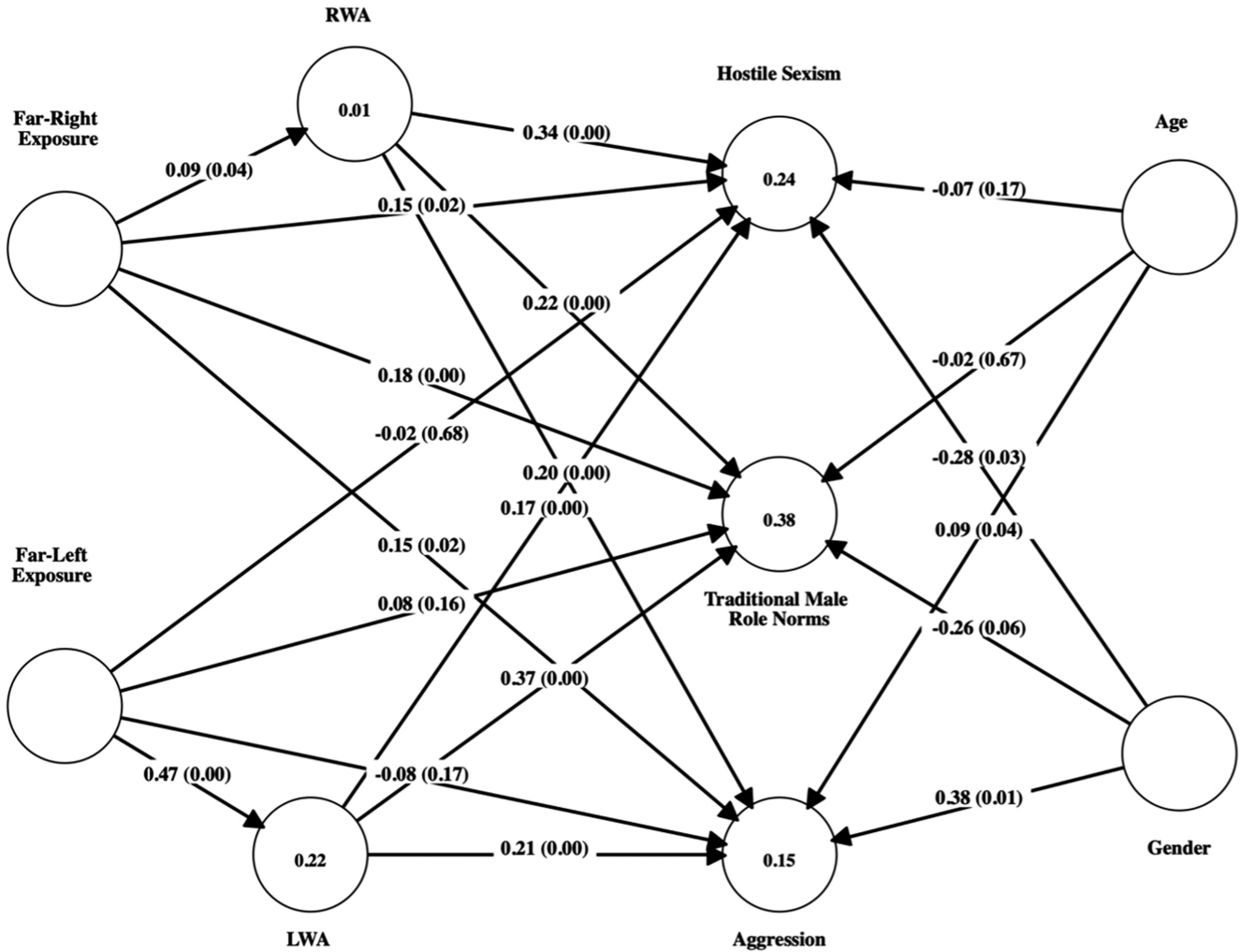
The collinearity issues were addressed using the variance inflation factor values between constructs. The variance inflation factor values for the constructs ranged from 1.15 to 2.3. All values fell below the recommended threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2020), indicating the absence of significant collinearity in the data. Furthermore, the quality criteria of the model, including  $R^2$  and  $f^2$  values, were marginally met, as detailed in Tables 3 and 4 in the online supplemental materials.

Furthermore, the hypothesized relationships within the theoretical model were tested (see Figure 1) using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples (Sarstedt et al., 2022). The results indicated that exposure to extremist content in video games positively influenced corresponding authoritarian attitudes. Specifically, far-right exposure predicted RWA ( $\beta = .09, p < .05$ ), while far-left exposure predicted LWA ( $\beta = .47, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, it was found that far-right exposure in video games significantly and positively influenced hostile sexism ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ), traditional male role norms ( $\beta = .18, p < .05$ ), and aggression ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ), supporting H1. In contrast, exposure to far-left extremism in video games did not predict these constructs, leading to the rejection of H2. These findings highlight the asymmetry in the impact of far-right and far-left extremist exposure on sexist attitudes and aggression. In the context of authoritarian predispositions, RWA significantly and positively influenced hostile sexism ( $\beta = .34, p < .01$ ), traditional male role norms ( $\beta = .22, p < .01$ ), and aggression ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ), thereby supporting H3. Similarly, LWA was found to predict hostile sexism ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ), traditional male role norms ( $\beta = .37, p < .01$ ), and aggression ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ), supporting H4. The exploratory results showed that gender emerged as the most robust predictor of hostile sexism ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ), traditional male role norms ( $\beta = -.26, p < .05$ ), and aggression ( $\beta = .38, p < .01$ ). Men were more strongly associated with hostile sexism and adherence to traditional male role norms, reflecting the persistence of patriarchal attitudes. Conversely, women were more strongly associated with aggression. In contrast, age did not show a significant influence on any of these constructs, suggesting that these attitudes and behaviors are not substantially shaped by generational factors.

The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 2. The analysis revealed that exposure to far-right extremism in video games exhibited a direct and significant influence on the development of hostile sexism, adherence to traditional male role norms, and aggression, largely independent of the mediating role of RWA. While a partial mediation effect of RWA was observed, the path coefficient's  $p$  value was marginal, indicating that the mediating influence of RWA, though present, was relatively weak. These findings partially substantiate H5. In contrast, exposure to far-left extremism in video games did not directly predict the development of sexist attitudes or aggression. Instead, its impact on these constructs was fully mediated through LWA. These findings indicate that H6 is supported, highlighting a divergence in how far-right and far-left extremist exposures operate in shaping these social constructs.

## Discussion

The intersection of video gaming and radicalization has become a prominent area of interest in academic and public discussions,

**Figure 1***Research Framework and the Hypothesized Relationships Between the Variables*

Note. RWA = right-wing authoritarianism; LWA = left-wing authoritarianism.

largely due to concerns that video game spaces may serve as platforms for spreading far-right ideologies. Conversely, a comparative analysis of far-left proliferations within this context has garnered less attention. This disparity not only highlights a potential bias but also

underscores the need for a more balanced examination of how video games may be utilized by extreme extremist groups across the ideological spectrum. The present study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the phenomena of far-right and far-left recruitment efforts through video games, with a specific focus on the Indian gaming community.

The reported experiences of encountering far-right and far-left recruitment efforts in video games indicate a relatively low incidence, with 34% of gamers reporting recruitment efforts by far-right groups and nearly 31% reporting efforts by far-left groups. However, most respondents stated they have rarely or never come across such attempts. Additionally, the frequency of positive responses to joining extremist groups was similarly low. These findings suggest that while extremist recruitment efforts within video gaming platforms are not pervasive enough to create moral panic, they are not entirely absent.

This study also elaborates on the influence of extremist orientation on sexist attitudes and aggression. A key question addressed was whether exposure to extremism in video games was inherently potent

**Table 2***Indirect Effects of Mediation Analysis*

Path	Effect	SD	t	p	Inference
P1 → M1 → DV1	0.03	0.02	2.07	.04	Partial mediation
P1 → M1 → DV2	0.02	0.01	1.85	.06	No mediation
P1 → M1 → DV3	0.02	0.01	1.73	.08	No mediation
P2 → M2 → DV1	0.08	0.03	2.88	.01	Full mediation
P2 → M2 → DV2	0.17	0.03	6.17	.01	Full mediation
P2 → M2 → DV3	0.10	0.03	2.84	.01	Full mediation

Note. Effects refer to the standardized path coefficients. P1 = far-right exposure; P2 = far-left exposure; M1 = right-wing authoritarianism; M2 = left-wing authoritarianism; DV1 = hostile sexism; DV2 = traditional male role norms; DV3 = aggression.



enough to provoke sexist attitudes and aggression or whether such outcomes were contingent upon preexisting authoritarian predispositions. The results demonstrated that far-right exposure was found to positively influence hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression, thereby supporting H1. Despite RWA being the most robust predictor of sexist attitudes and aggression (supporting H3), far-right exposure alone was sufficiently strong enough to predict these constructs. Therefore, it can be inferred that the influence of far-right recruitment efforts on sexist attitudes and aggression did not necessarily require the mediation of underlying authoritarianism, leading to only a partial substantiation of H5. Moreover, prior research has consistently shown stronger associations between far-right media exposure and expressions of prejudice and hostility (see also Anduiza & Rico, 2024; Weiss et al., 2024). Therefore, the direct effect of far-right exposure and its indirect influence through RWA are theoretically grounded and empirically plausible.

The findings are on par with existing studies in demonstrating the influence of RWA on sexist attitudes and aggression (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; Kende & Krekó, 2020; L. J. R. Pauwels & Heylen, 2020). This connection has been elaborated through the lens of the dual-process motivational model (Duckitt, 2001). RWA is characterized by a threat-driven motivation aimed at upholding social security through the enforcement of social order, control, stability, cohesion, and the preservation of traditional values and norms (Sibley et al., 2007). This preference for hierarchical social structures generally characterizes adherence to far-right identity and authoritarianism and relates to individuals' inclination toward attitudes that devalue and discriminate against women (Osborne et al., 2023). As a result, RWA manifests as a learned predisposition that valorizes sexist attitudes and traditional gender roles as part of a broader narrative that seeks to maintain or return to a perceived social order (Duckitt, 2001).

Additionally, it is also noteworthy to highlight the capacity of far-right exposure in video games to positively influence sexist attitudes and aggression. Firstly, far-right ideologies in India often align with culturally embedded norms and stereotypes, such as patriarchal values and traditional gender roles (Hill & Marshall, 2018). These cultural undercurrents predispose individuals to accept or endorse sexist attitudes without requiring the filter of authoritarianism. Video games that incorporate far-right narratives act as amplifiers of these preexisting cultural biases, directly reinforcing and normalizing hostile sexism and traditional male role norms.

Although it is challenging to identify video games explicitly driven by far-right ideologies contextualized to India, several studies highlight similar patterns within the broader gaming landscape. For example, the intersection of extremist recruitment, aggression, and sexist attitudes has been examined through specific games such as *Ethnic Cleansing* (2002), developed by the neo-Nazi organization National Alliance (Robinson & Whittaker, 2020). This first-person shooter allows players to assume the role of a Ku Klux Klansman or neo-Nazi skinhead, engaging in violent acts against minorities to a soundtrack of white supremacist rock music (Souri, 2007). A report by the Anti-Defamation League (Robinson & Whittaker, 2020) regarding the release of *Ethnic Cleansing* highlighted the game's use as "a source of revenue and recruitment," describing it as a "deeply troubling development." Similarly, scholars Paul Bolin and Doug Blandy emphasize that the creators of such games use inflammatory rhetoric and offensive stereotypes to engage players, noting that hate groups reportedly employ these games as tools for recruitment (Bolin & Blandy, 2003).

Therefore, when far-right extremist narratives are embedded within video games, aggression and aggressively toned sexist attitudes may not only be normalized but also celebrated as a means of achieving in-game objectives or defending ideological positions. This reinforcement loop between gameplay and extremist messaging can directly lead to heightened aggression, bypassing the need for an authoritarian worldview as a mediating factor. While this remains a critical area of inquiry, further research is required to analyze specific recruitment tactics employed by extremist groups within Indian gaming platforms. The present study does not delve into the granular details of individual games or the time players spend engaging with these titles.

In contrast to the findings on exposure to far-right extremism in video games, the influence of far-left exposure followed a different pattern. Interestingly, far-left exposure alone was found to have no significant direct effect on sexist attitudes or aggression, rejecting H2. However, it was found that LWA positively and significantly predicted sexist attitudes and aggression (supporting H4) and fully mediated the relationship between far-left exposure and the development of these constructs (supporting H6). This suggests that far-left extremist content resonates primarily with individuals who already possess authoritarian tendencies aligned with leftist ideologies. The findings highlight that while far-right exposure exerts a more immediate and direct influence on sexist attitudes and aggression, far-left exposure requires the presence of predisposed authoritarian attitudes (i.e., LWA) to manifest similar effects. This distinction indicates that recruitment strategies employed by far-right extremist groups could be more universally impactful, targeting a broader audience. In contrast, far-left extremist efforts are more effective in activating individuals who align with their ideological framework.

The influence of LWA in the development of sexist attitudes and aggression followed similar patterns to its far-right counterpart. Therefore, it is conceivable that authoritarianism, regardless of ideology, may shape sexist attitudes and aggression. Such outcomes are often directed toward specific outgroups, reinforce status hierarchies, and rest on a commitment to moral absolutism (Costello et al., 2022). These results, in a way, support the emerging scholarship (e.g., L. G. Conway & McFarland, 2019; L. G. Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2022) that recognizes the predictive utility of LWA alongside RWA. At the same time, our study refrains from making a definitive claim that this line of research should be accepted without scrutiny. The conceptualization and measurement of LWA remain contested, with ongoing debates about whether observed effects reflect a genuine authoritarian orientation or merely ideological content expressed in a more rigid form (Nilsson, 2024). Furthermore, authoritarian attitudes may manifest differently across sociocultural contexts. For these reasons, we position our evidence as suggestive rather than conclusive, emphasizing the need for future studies to replicate and extend these findings with refined measures.

Additionally, our findings contest the longstanding view that authoritarianism is "solely" a far-right phenomenon (Stone, 1980). As Altemeyer (2006) elucidates, individuals who score high on authoritarianism exhibit tendencies such as excessive submission to authority figures, aggressive actions in their name, and a rigid insistence on universal adherence to their rules. These tendencies inherently foster prejudice and aggression, irrespective of whether the individual aligns with far-right or far-left ideologies (Costello et al., 2022; Osborne et al., 2023). The distinction between RWA and LWA may lie less in the psychological mechanisms themselves than in the nature of the authority figures to whom individuals

submit (L. G. Conway et al., 2018, 2023; Costello et al., 2022). When these authorities support existing hierarchies, authoritarianism manifests as RWA, and when they seek to challenge or overturn them, authoritarianism manifests as LWA (Altemeyer, 2006). Thus, authoritarianism reflects a general preference for social conformity and punitive control, which can be mobilized by progressive and conservative worldviews depending on contextual threats and group identities (L. G. Conway et al., 2018; Costello et al., 2022). Taken together, these patterns open an important line of inquiry, inviting future research to examine authoritarianism as a potentially unifying construct whose independent existence may yield greater explanatory power than partisan variants.

## Significance

The current findings challenge overstated narratives of moral panic but highlight the bipartisan potential of video games as platforms for radicalization. In this sense, policymakers should be cautious about exaggerations of a relatively minor issue, particularly concerning policies that may impact free speech in gaming spaces. We express the concern that much of the narrative regarding radicalization, mainly when poorly supported by data, may accomplish little more than to increase prejudice toward gaming communities, which have routinely been (mainly falsely) slurred as violent, sexist, and bigoted in the past decades (Breuer et al., 2015; Bustos-Ortega et al., 2023). Although all communities have issues with unsavory actors, we see little evidence that this is more true for gaming communities than others, including among the very academia that studies this phenomenon (Ferguson & Colwell, 2020). To wit, we are concerned that some game scholars have failed to learn the lesson of past moral panics over gaming (Bowman, 2015) and are repeating a cycle of promoting fear and prejudice toward gamers with little evidence.

Another significance of this study lies in its exploration of the functional similarities between authoritarian dispositions in terms of their direct effects on sexist attitudes and aggression. However, the mediation analyses revealed important differences as well in the pathways through which ideological exposure activates authoritarian tendencies. RWA partially mediated the relationship between exposure to far-right content and the outcomes (i.e., aggression and sexist attitudes). In contrast, the effect of far-left exposure on aggression and sexism is fully mediated by LWA, indicating a more indirect pathway. Far-left content is often framed as reactive in the Indian context, particularly in response to issues such as Islamophobia and systemic injustices (Amarasingam et al., 2022; Sikander, 2021). Such content can activate aggressive tendencies in individuals with strong far-left inclinations. Since LWA uniquely combines egalitarian goals with a willingness to silence or punish ideological foes (L. G. Conway et al., 2018, 2023; Costello et al., 2022), it makes sense that the link between far-left exposure and aggression or sexist attitudes is fully mediated by LWA. Accordingly, we observe that authoritarianism may not be confined only to right-leaning ideologies but can manifest in functionally similar ways within far-left contexts. Our findings also suggest that the observed differences in mediation may stem less from inherent dispositional distinctions between RWA and LWA and more from the nature of the ideological content individuals are exposed to. However, since our study did not explicitly examine the nature or content of ideological exposure, future research would benefit from an investigation into how specific themes or narratives in far-right and far-left content differentially trigger authoritarian responses.

## Limitations and Future Directions

While the present study is significant in exploring extremist recruitment patterns and associated characteristics, it has certain limitations. First, we assessed the recruitment efforts and receptiveness using single-item measures. Although such measures are often critiqued for lacking the psychometric rigor of multi-item scales, several studies have shown them to perform comparably (Allen et al., 2022; Fisher et al., 2016), particularly when assessing behaviors that are infrequent (Vukčević Marković et al., 2021) and unambiguous (Wanous et al., 1997). In our study, where only limited signs of extremism were observed, this approach allowed for efficient data capture without overburdening participants. However, future research can introduce multi-item scales to assess both the intensity and gradations of these recruitment and receptiveness. While our items focused on overt and explicit strategies, subsequent studies can probe subtler, incremental tactics of radicalization. Additionally, we predominantly utilized 3-point rating scales for most questionnaires. While such scales are not typically recommended due to potential reliability concerns, their simplicity proved advantageous in reducing response bias and minimizing participant fatigue.

The cross-sectional design of this study presents another important limitation. While we examined the direct effects of exposure to extremist content on sexist attitudes and aggression, as well as indirect effects mediated by dispositional authoritarian attitudes, the causal direction of these relationships cannot be definitively established. Without temporal sequencing, it is difficult to generalize our results on whether extremist exposure leads to increased aggression and sexism or whether individuals with preexisting dispositions are more drawn to such content. Although we employed appropriate statistical techniques to examine this phenomenon, we strongly recommend that future research adopt longitudinal and developmental methodologies to better capture the temporal dynamics and potential bidirectional influences among these variables. Furthermore, while gender was included in the model as a controlling factor, its robust predictive utility can sometimes lead to misleading interpretations, particularly in studies with disproportionate sample sizes. This study's underrepresentation of women in the sample posed a limitation, so a detailed discussion on gender-specific findings was not undertaken.

We would also like to emphasize the importance of considering the type of video games participants engage with, as some scholars express the concern that certain genres or narratives may reinforce sexist attitudes and aggression (e.g., Kowert et al., 2017). This raises the possibility that exposure to such content could influence even politically neutral individuals, fostering aggressive or sexist tendencies independent of far-left or far-right ideological dispositions. However, the evidence remains mixed. For instance, some studies suggest that even highly sexualized games may have minimal impact on players' sexist attitudes or behaviors (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2022). Therefore, future research should consider the genre and thematic content of video games as a critical variable when assessing the psychological and ideological effects of media exposure.

## Conclusion

This study examined the recruitment dynamics of far-right and far-left groups within the Indian gaming community and how exposure to extremist content in video games interacts with authoritarian predispositions to shape sexist attitudes and aggression. Although

recruitment instances were relatively rare, the findings suggest that extremist groups across ideological spectrums exploit similar mechanisms within gaming platforms. Importantly, far-right exposure directly predicted hostile sexism, traditional male role norms, and aggression, whereas far-left exposure influenced these constructs only through LWA, underscoring an asymmetry in how ideological extremities operate. Additionally, RWA and LWA showed comparable predictive utility for sexist attitudes and aggression. This not only challenges the view that authoritarianism is inherently right-leaning but also points to a broader interpretation that authoritarianism may function as an independent construct, where individuals high in authoritarian traits are susceptible to extremist content regardless of whether it appeals to hierarchical dominance or violent liberation. This opens a critical avenue for future research to clarify whether authoritarianism is best understood as two ideological variants or as a unified psychological orientation expressed through different ideological anchors. Overall, the development of sexist attitudes and aggression through extremist exposure and ideological dispositions appears to be shaped by the broader context of culturally embedded patriarchal norms in India. However, the relatively lower frequency of recruitment efforts and receptiveness observed within video gaming spaces suggests that the mechanisms of extremism operate in similar ways across cultural contexts. Therefore, while the findings highlight the potential of video games to serve as a vector for extremist influence, they do not warrant moral panic or the attribution of a unique or isolated risk to gaming environments.

## References

- Allen, M. S., Iliescu, D., & Greiff, S. (2022). Single item measures in psychological science: A call to action. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 38*(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000699>
- Altemeyer, B. (1988). *Enemies of freedom: Understanding right-wing authoritarianism*. Jessey-Bass Publishers.
- Altemeyer, B. (2006). *The Authoritarians*. University of Manitoba.
- Amarasingam, A., Umar, S., & Desai, S. (2022). "Fight, die, and if required kill": Hindu nationalism, misinformation, and Islamophobia in India. *Religions, 13*(5), Article 380. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/5/380>; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050380>
- Anduiza, E., & Rico, G. (2024). Sexism and the far-right vote: The individual dynamics of gender backlash. *American Journal of Political Science, 68*(2), 478–493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12759>
- Austin, D. E., & Jackson, M. (2019). Benevolent and hostile sexism differentially predicted by facets of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. *Personality and Individual Differences, 139*, 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.11.002>
- Barreto, M., & Doyle, D. M. (2023). Benevolent and hostile sexism in a shifting global context. *Nature Reviews Psychology, 2*(2), 98–111. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00136-x>
- Begany, J. J., & Milburn, M. A. (2002). Psychological predictors of sexual harassment: Authoritarianism, hostile sexism, and rape myths. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 3*(2), 119–126. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.3.2.119>
- Bègue, L., Sarda, E., Gentile, D. A., Bry, C., & Roché, S. (2017). Video games exposure and sexism in a representative sample of adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, Article 245338. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00466>
- Bolin, P. E., & Blandy, D. (2003). Beyond visual culture: Seven statements of support for material culture studies in art education. *Studies in Art Education, 44*(3), 246–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2003.11651742>
- Bouhana, N. (2019). *The moral ecology of extremism: A systemic perspective*. Commission for Countering Extremism. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10079100/>
- Boutyline, A., & Willer, R. (2017). The social structure of political echo chambers: Variation in ideological homophily in online networks. *Political Psychology, 38*(3), 551–569. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12337>
- Bowman, N. D. (2015). The rise (and refinement) of moral panic. In R. Kowert & T. Quandt (Eds.), *The video game debate* (pp. 22–38). Routledge.
- Breuer, J., Kowert, R., Festl, R., & Quandt, T. (2015). Sexist games = sexist gamers? A longitudinal study on the relationship between video game use and sexist attitudes. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 18*(4), 197–202. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2014.0492>
- Bryant, F. B., & Smith, B. D. (2001). Refining the architecture of aggression: A measurement model for the Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality, 35*(2), 138–167. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.2000.2302>
- Bustos-Ortega, M., Carretero-Dios, H., Megías, J. L., & Romero-Sánchez, M. (2023). Sexist attitudes in online video gaming: Development and validation of the sexism against Women Gamers Scale in Spanish and English. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 47*(3), 320–342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843231162837>
- Chadha, V. (2020). Left wing extremism—Challenges and approach. In K. Venkatshamy & P. George (Eds.), *Grand strategy for India* (pp. 93–106). Pentagon Security International.
- Chakravarty, P., & Roy, S. (2015). Mr. Modi goes to Delhi: Mediated populism and the 2014 Indian Elections. *Television & New Media, 16*(4), 311–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476415573957>
- Condis, M. (2018). *Gaming masculinity: Trolls, fake geeks, and the gendered battle for online culture*. University of Iowa Press.
- Condis, M. (2019). Hateful games: Why White Supremacist recruiters target gamers and how to stop them. In J. Reyman & E. M. Sparby (Eds.), *Digital ethics*. Taylor & Francis. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/41372>
- Consalvo, M. (2009). Convergence and globalization in the Japanese video-game industry. *Cinema Journal, 48*(3), 135–141. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0122>
- Conway, L. G., III, Houck, S. C., Gornick, L. J., & Repke, M. A. (2018). Finding the Loch Ness monster: Left-wing authoritarianism in the United States. *Political Psychology, 39*(5), 1049–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12470>
- Conway, L. G., III, & McFarland, J. D. (2019). Do right-wing and left-wing authoritarianism predict election outcomes?: Support for Obama and Trump across two United States presidential elections. *Personality and Individual Differences, 138*, 84–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.09.033>
- Conway, L. G., III, Zubrod, A., Chan, L., McFarland, J. D., & Van de Vliert, E. (2023). Is the myth of left-wing authoritarianism itself a myth? *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article 1041391. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1041391>
- Conway, M., Scrivens, R., & McNair, L. (2019). *Right-wing extremists' persistent online presence: History and contemporary trends*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.
- Costello, T. H., Bowes, S. M., Stevens, S. T., Waldman, I. D., Tasimi, A., & Lilienfeld, S. O. (2022). Clarifying the structure and nature of left-wing authoritarianism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 122*(1), 135–170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000341>
- Dinas, E., & Northmore-Ball, K. (2020). The ideological shadow of authoritarianism. *Comparative Political Studies, 53*(12), 1957–1991. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019852699>
- Duckitt, J. (2001). A dual-process cognitive-motivational theory of ideology and prejudice. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 33, pp. 41–113). Academic Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(01\)80004-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(01)80004-6)



- Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2007). Right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and the dimensions of generalized prejudice. *European Journal of Personality*, 21(2), 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.102/per.614>
- Ferguson, C. J., & Colwell, J. (2020). Sexualised video games, sexist attitudes and empathy towards victims of rape: Correlational evidence for a relationship is minimal in an online study. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 30(1), 16–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.2138>
- Ferguson, C. J., Sauer, J. D., Drummond, A., Kneer, J., & Lowe-Calverley, E. (2022). Does sexualization in video games cause harm in players? A meta-analytic examination. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 135, Article 107341. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107341>
- Fisher, G. G., Matthews, R. A., & Gibbons, A. M. (2016). Developing and investigating the use of single-item measures in organizational research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 21(1), 3–23. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039139>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Frisby, C. L., Redding, R. E., & O'Donohue, W. T. (2023). Ideological and political bias in psychology: An introduction. In C. L. Frisby, R. E. Redding, W. T. O'Donohue, & S. O. Lilienfeld (Eds.), *Ideological and political bias in psychology: Nature, scope, and solutions* (pp. 1–14). Springer.
- Ghasiya, P., Ahnert, G., & Sasahara, K. (2023). Identifying themes of right-wing extremism in Hindutva discourse on Twitter. *Social Media+ Society*, 9(3), Article 20563051231199457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231199457>
- Ghosh, R. (2023). Naxalism: The left-wing extremist movement in India. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 52(2), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppsy202332>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2018). The ambivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. In E. Borgida & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *Social cognition* (pp. 116–160). Routledge.
- González-Bailón, S., Borge-Holthoefer, J., Rivero, A., & Moreno, Y. (2011). The dynamics of protest recruitment through an online network. *Scientific Reports*, 1(1), Article 197. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep00197>
- Goodnight, B. L., Cook, S. L., Parrott, D. J., & Peterson, J. L. (2014). Effects of masculinity, authoritarianism, and prejudice on antigay aggression: A path analysis of gender-role enforcement. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(4), 437–444. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034565>
- Hair, J. F., Jr., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.11.069>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Hammar, E. L. (2020). Imperialism and fascism intertwined. A materialist analysis of the games industry and reactionary gamers. *Gamevironments*, 13, 317–357. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/409>
- Hanafiah, M. H. (2020). Formative versus reflective measurement model: Guidelines for structural equation modeling research. *International Journal of Analysis and Applications*, 18(5), 876–889. <https://doi.org/10.28924/2291-8639-18-2020-876>
- Hassan, G., Brouillette-Alarie, S., Alava, S., Frau-Meigs, D., Lavoie, L., Fetiui, A., Varela, W., Borokhovski, E., Venkatesh, V., Rousseau, C., & Sieckelinc, S. (2018). Exposure to extremist online content could lead to violent radicalization: A systematic review of empirical evidence. *International Journal of Developmental Science: Biopsychosocial Mechanisms of Change, Human Development, and Psychopathology—Perspectives from Psychology, Neuroscience, and Genetics*, 12(1–2), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.3233/DEV-170233>
- Hawdon, J., Bernatzky, C., & Costello, M. (2019). Cyber-routines, political attitudes, and exposure to violence-advocating online extremism. *Social Forces*, 98(1), 329–354. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy115>
- Hill, S., & Marshall, T. C. (2018). Beliefs about sexual assault in India and Britain are explained by attitudes toward women and hostile sexism. *Sex Roles*, 79(7–8), 421–430. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0880-6>
- Holmes, D. (2015, December 9). *Paris Attacks: What kind of encryption does the PlayStation 4 use, anyway?* SecurityWeek. <https://www.securityweek.com/paris-attacks-what-kind-encryption-does-playstation-4-use-anyway/>
- Ismaeli, A. (2019). *Transnational extremist recruitment through social media*. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1535693/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Jackson, S. (2019). *A schema of right-wing extremism in the United States*. JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep19625.pdf>
- Jost, J. T. (2019). Anger and authoritarianism mediate the effects of fear on support for the far right—What Vasilopoulos et al. (2019) really found. *Political Psychology*, 40(4), 705–711. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12567>
- József, S. (2022). Digital terrorism: Communication through online video games. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 15(3), 183–195. <https://doi.org/10.32563/hsz.2022.3.12>
- Kende, A., & Krekó, P. (2020). Xenophobia, prejudice, and right-wing populism in East-Central Europe. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2019.11.011>
- Khosravi, R. (2017). Neo-Nazi gamers are modding their favorite titles to make them explicitly racist. *Mic*, April, 12.
- King, C. R., & Leonard, D. J. (2016). 111 Gaming the racial order: White power identities and ideologies in video games. In C. R. King & D. J. Leonard (Eds.), *Beyond hate: White power and popular culture* (pp. 111–134). Routledge.
- Kline, R. B. (2023). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling*. Guilford Publications. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=t2CvEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Kline+RB+\(2023\)+Principles+and+practice+of+structural+equation+modeling.+Guilford+Publications&ots=sWUDW3fWjN&sig=baccgODsT5gDGF9rOzwY-NgX2Vo](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=t2CvEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Kline+RB+(2023)+Principles+and+practice+of+structural+equation+modeling.+Guilford+Publications&ots=sWUDW3fWjN&sig=baccgODsT5gDGF9rOzwY-NgX2Vo)
- Koehler, D., Fiebig, V., & Jugl, I. (2023). From gaming to hating: Extreme-right ideological indoctrination and mobilization for violence of children on online gaming platforms. *Political Psychology*, 44(2), 419–434. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12855>
- Kowert, R., Breuer, J., & Quandt, T. (2017). Women are from FarmVille, men are from ViceCity: The cycle of exclusion and sexism in video game content and culture. In R. Kowert & T. Quandt (Eds.), *New perspectives on the social aspects of digital gaming* (pp. 136–150). Routledge.
- Kowert, R., Kilmer, E., & Newhouse, A. (2024). Taking it to the extreme: Prevalence and nature of extremist sentiment in games. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1410620. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1410620>
- Kowert, R., Martel, A., & Swann, W. B. (2022). Not just a game: Identity fusion and extremism in gaming cultures. *Frontiers in Communication*, 226, Article 1007128. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.1007128>
- Lee, E., & Leets, L. (2002). Persuasive storytelling by hate groups online: Examining its effects on adolescents. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(6), 927–957. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764202045006003>
- Leidig, E. (2020). Hindutva as a variant of right-wing extremism. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 54(3), 215–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2020.1759861>
- Levant, R. F., Hall, R. J., & Rankin, T. J. (2013). Male Role Norms Inventory—Short Form (MRNI-SF): Development, confirmatory factor analytic investigation of structure, and measurement invariance across gender. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(2), 228–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031545>
- Levant, R. F., & Richmond, K. (2008). A review of research on masculinity ideologies using the Male Role Norms Inventory. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 15(2), 130–146. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1502.130>

- Lukman, J. (2023). India games market report. *Niko Partners*. <https://nikopartners.com/india-games-market-report/>
- Maroufkhani, P., Asadi, S., Ghobakhloo, M., Jannesari, M. T., & Ismail, W. K. W. (2022). How do interactive voice assistants build brands' loyalty? *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 183, Article 121870. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121870>
- Mavor, K. I., Louis, W. R., & Sibley, C. G. (2010). A bias-corrected exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of right-wing authoritarianism: Support for a three-factor structure. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(1), 28–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.08.006>
- Mehra, A. K. (2000). Naxalism in India: Revolution or terror? *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 12(2), 37–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550008427560>
- Nilsson, A. (2024). Antidemocratic tendencies on the left, the right, and beyond: A critical review of the theory and measurement of left-wing authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 45(4), 693–708. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12951>
- Nilsson, A., & Jost, J. T. (2020). The authoritarian-conservatism nexus. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 148–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.03.003>
- Osborne, D., Costello, T. H., Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2023). The psychological causes and societal consequences of authoritarianism. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2(4), 220–232. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-023-00161-4>
- Pal, J., Chandra, P., & Vydiswaran, V. V. (2016). Twitter and the rebranding of Narendra Modi. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(8), 52–60. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44004416>
- Pauwels, L., & Schils, N. (2016). Differential online exposure to extremist content and political violence: Testing the relative strength of social learning and competing perspectives. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.876414>
- Pauwels, L. J. R., & Heylen, B. (2020). Perceived group threat, perceived injustice, and self-reported right-wing violence: An integrative approach to the explanation right-wing violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 35(21–22), 4276–4302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517713711>
- Perry, B., & Scrivens, R. (2019). *Right-wing extremism in Canada*. Springer.
- Ramos, J. M., & Torres, P. (2020). The right transmission: Understanding global diffusion of the far-right. *Populism*, 3(1), 87–120. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-BJA10001>
- Rattazzi, A. M. M., Bobbio, A., & Canova, L. (2007). A short version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43(5), 1223–1234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.03.013>
- Robinson, N., & Whittaker, J. (2020). Playing for hate? Extremism, terrorism, and videogames. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1866740>
- Roy, S. (2024). A querpolitics approach to the far right? Notes from Germany and India. *Political Communication*, 41(6), 1023–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2024.2414262>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2022). Partial least squares structural equation modeling. In C. Homburg, M. Klarmann, & A. Vomberg (Eds.), *Handbook of market research* (pp. 587–632). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4_15)
- Schils, N., & Verhage, A. (2017). Understanding how and why young people enter radical or violent extremist groups. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCIV)*, 11(1), Article 473. <https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.473>
- Scrivens, R. (2021). Exploring radical right-wing posting behaviors online. *Deviant Behavior*, 42(11), 1470–1484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2020.1756391>
- Sharma, S., & Singhal, V. K. (2011). Naxalism: A challenge in internal security of India. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 72(3), 765–772. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858850>
- Sibley, C. G., Wilson, M. S., & Duckitt, J. (2007). Antecedents of men's hostile and benevolent sexism: The dual roles of social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(2), 160–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206294745>
- Sikander, Z. (2021). Islamophobia in Indian media. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 6(2), 120–129. <https://doi.org/10.13169/islstudj.6.2.0120>
- Singh, M., & Dasgupta, R. (2019). Exceptionalising democratic dissent: A study of the JNU event and its representations. *Postcolonial Studies*, 22(1), 59–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2019.1568169>
- Sorell, T., & Kelsall, J. (2025). Violent video games, recruitment and extremism. *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 44(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.2025.2484974>
- Souri, H. T. (2007). The political battlefield of pro-Arab video games on Palestinian screens. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27(3), 536–551. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-2007-031>
- Stevens, J. (2002). *Applied multivariate statistics for the social sciences* (Vol. 4). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203843130&type=googlepdf>
- Stone, W. F. (1980). The myth of left-wing authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 2(3/4), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3790998>
- Stone, W. F., & Smith, L. D. (1993). Authoritarianism: Left and right. In W. F. Stone, G. Lederer, & R. Christie (Eds.), *Strength and weakness* (pp. 144–156). Springer New York. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-9180-7\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-9180-7_7)
- Taylor, M., & Horgan, J. (2006). A conceptual framework for addressing psychological process in the development of the terrorist. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18(4), 585–601. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550600897413>
- Udapa, S., & Pohjonen, M. (2019). Extreme speech|Extreme speech and global digital cultures—Introduction. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 3049–3067. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/9102>
- Vaux, P., Gallagher, A., & Davey, J. (2021). *The extreme right on Steam*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. <https://www.isdglobal.org/Wp-Content/uploads/2021/08/02-Revised-Gaming-Reportsteam.Pdf>
- Vukčević Marković, M., Nicović, A., & Živanović, M. (2021). Contextual and psychological predictors of militant extremist mindset in youth. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 622571. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.622571>
- Wanous, J. P., Reichers, A. E., & Hudy, M. J. (1997). Overall job satisfaction: How good are single-item measures? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(2), 247–252. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.2.247>
- Weiss, P., Koban, K., & Matthes, J. (2024). A narrow gateway from misogyny to the far right: Empirical evidence for social media exposure effects. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2445637>
- Wells, G., Romhanyi, A., Reitman, J. G., Gardner, R., Squire, K., & Steinkuehler, C. (2024). Right-wing extremism in mainstream games: A review of the literature. *Games and Culture*, 19(4), 469–492. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120231167214>
- Zeiler, X., & Mukherjee, S. (2022). Video game development in India: A cultural and creative industry embracing regional cultural heritage(s). *Games and Culture*, 17(4), 509–527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120211045143>
- Zhang, X., & Davis, M. (2024). E-extremism: A conceptual framework for studying the online far right. *New Media & Society*, 26(5), 2954–2970. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221098360>

Received June 16, 2024

Revision received September 23, 2025

Accepted October 8, 2025 ■