

DIGITAL GAMES, CONSTRUCTION OF HEGEMONY AND CULTURE INDUSTRY¹

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Abstract: Playing games is one of the most important tools for children to use their creativity, to express themselves, and to improve their skills. Educative and effective games are seen as the easiest ways to socialize. Advancements in technology and digital systems have also been changing the quality of games and altering the traditional understanding of the game. Games in digital field, whose scope of setting is expanding every second, are used as new places for teenagers to socialize where they can access to all players globally. Changing definition of public areas is providing encounters in digital world and hegemony of one culture over another is established by means of video games. Digital games as products of culture industry have been bought and sold as new media products; thus customers of these game companies could not get over with the hegemonic effect of these products.

In this study, GTA V, which is the last product of Grand Theft Auto (GTA) digital game series, is going to be analyzed. In this study, it is aimed to convey how the American lifestyle is taught with this game and to show how this game has a role to spread the hegemony of American culture industry internationally. Therefore, this study is comprised of two section. In the first section, the concept of game, its elements, video games, simulation, hegemony, culture industry and types of players that video games establish, occupations of these players are explained. Obtained datas are assessed in means of the creation of hegemonic culture and culture industry. This study tries to explore hegemonic contents established in digital game texts that are created in culture industry. It also tries to show the role of a new occupation field that got emerged from video games, "Game Commentary".

Key words: Hegemony, Culture Industry, Digital Games, Grand Theft Auto V.

1.INTRODUCTION

The game is an activity that has specific rules and organized by person(s) to have fun and spend time either alone or together. Any tools used to play games can be considered a toy. Playing a game was common both among children and adults in Ancient Greek and Rome. Keeping game tools, which had functions going beyond spending leisure times in such communities, in a place that was not specifically reserved for playing games resulted in completely different socialization dynamics. The games that are played at busy areas such as entry of public buildings have become a tool that allows individuals to come across and meet by chance(Bener, 2013, p.11, 193). According to Fink, each game is a vital experiment in which an individual is involved as an active actor in “subject” through toys, and is an area in which the actor does a specific act and that is included in actual world typology of actor. The player plays a role in that area. This is where we need to differentiate the “playing” real person from the person of “role” in the game. The player “conceals” himself/herself with the “role” taken, in a sense, disappears under it, living in the role with specific intensity peculiar to that role. Unlike a psychopath who is unable to differ “reality” from “appearance”, the players are able to take themselves out of the role again because despite being highly weakened, they realize that they are in a “dual existence” during the game. A game is a figurative symbol and act where it interprets itself in the human existence. Games have been a binding force, community-builder, a creative doing and production since the old times. The product is world of games (2015, pp.21-25).

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Huizinga points out that the term *Homo ludens* that means “Playing Man” should be explained with the term *Homo Faber* that means man the maker (2013, p. 13). In other words, the game includes the human (the maker) factor, just rather than a passive playing act. Thus, *Homo ludens* as human the maker must do the playing act within rules involved in the game. The rules that are established by the game determines what will have power of law within the frame of transient world. Huizinga defines the game as “There is order in the game, the game is exactly the order itself” and underlines that each game takes place within its own spatial limitedness. A specific and absolute order dominates within the boundaries of playing area, that is, rules of the game are absolutely mandatory and unquestionable. As soon as the rules are breached, the universe of game will collapse. The player who breaches and fails to follow rules is a killjoy, and the players therefore want to send a killjoy off the game. So, the game creates a limited excellence in the defective world and complexity of life (Huizinga, 2013, pp. 28-29). Within this excellence, experience of game gives individual a fresh power and a specific freedom. In this way, the game has a rehabilitative effect on the modern people of industrial society. However, the factory system in consumption of games presents the possibility of exploiting the playing motive. The game as an area in which individual feels free and enjoys being self-ordained may be a manipulation tool (Fink, 2015, pp. 234-235). Currently, the manipulation area of games has expanded. The main reason for this is that the place where the game is played has changed in terms of time and space and created an area for players in which they are able to determine the time and place on their own. The player now plays the game with games in digital media using the new media. Despite changing tools, the player also enters a certain identification relationship with an avatar either chosen or created by the player in digital games regardless of the type, and fights against obstacles – they may be other players – encountered on the way to the target that is attempted to achieve by such avatar in the game (Binark ve Sütçü, 2008b, pp. 141-142).

Turkish research on digital games has usually focused on detrimental effects of game on children and the youth. The popular wisdom is that digital games contain violence in education, and the digital games are addressed with underlying adverse aspects such as addiction. This study attempted to address digital games as media text with an approach beyond such popular wisdom. For this, the textual analysis of GTA V, the last product of series of Grand Theft Auto (GTA) digital games, was performed. In the first section that is conceptual framework of the study, the concept of game, digital game, hegemony, simulation and culture industry, player types generated by digital games, new working areas (occupations), globalization and neoliberal policies were described in the context of relevant literature review in order to explain findings from the study. In the second section, the GTA V game, subject of research, was analyzed under the main and side characters, places, time and event-setup. The findings of in-depth interview with the commentator of the game were reviewed. The data acquired evaluated hegemonic content created in the culture industry and built in texts of digital games in the context of the role of “commentator of games” in such content as a new emerging employment area with power, domination, cultural hegemony, ideology, myths created, and digital games.

2.DIGITAL GAMES AS CULTURE INDUSTRY AND SIMULATION AREA

A game is a tool for children to reflect their emotions. Children establish links between the dream and the truth more easily through games and familiarize the life by way of games. Thus, a game is an important communication environment. Interaction is at the basic point of digital games as a new communication environment. Through this interaction, the users become the fundamental part of the game, are able to direct games and affect the result of a game (Yengin, 2010, pp. 188-189). According to Fink, “each game, even a hard game of the

loneliest child, has an interpersonal horizon”; in other words, that we live in the game and we do not regard it as an external event indicates that human is the “subject” of the game. The elements of game structure may include meaning of the game, enjoying the game, community of game, and toys as tools of the game. There have currently been changes in the structure of game (toys, fiction etc), but basic elements that allow children to realize themselves have not changed. New communication technologies and internet lie underneath of such change.

Internet is the initial example of global means of communication. It is a communication network developing across the world, in which many computer systems are interconnected as a form of network. Information-based technological innovations brought by information society eliminate the space and continuum. With fast circulating information, data received by individuals is increased day by day. The areas where interaction is increased the most in the information society we have a bombardment of information are the new communication environments. Especially, communication environments have become digital with interaction which is the critical feature of communication process. Conventional communication environments have changed into digital environment, and maintain information communication in new communication environments. Thus, quality of these environments, which carry information and are referred to as “new”, is an important factor in new communication environments (Yengin, 2010, p.54, 188). According to Castells, those networks form the new social morphology of societies; although organization of societies has been in the form of networks and taken place in different times and different spaces, the new technological paradigm enables it to spread over the entire social structure. Being or not being in the network and dynamics of each network against the others are major sources of being dominant in the society and change. Castells defines this new society as society of networks stamping that social morphology is superior over social act (2013, p. 621).

In this new style of society, individuals now communicate in areas where reality is destroyed and a new reality is created. The conditions of created reality conceal the artificiality of reality and attempt to create reality effect. Baudrillard explains this with the concept of “simulation”. “Simulation is to artificially generate an operational format specific to a tool, system and fact by means of a market or computer program in an attempt to review, demonstrate or explain”. According to Baudrillard, production and reproduction of truth, and other types of production that constitute golden years of Economy Politics have lost their meaning a long time ago. It is the “truth” what society has constantly produced and tried to regenerate for a long period of time. “In our day, material production itself has turned into something “*hyperreality*” (2014, p.41). While real and false represent two opposite concepts, simulation eliminates differences between two concepts (Yengin, 2010, p. 19). In especially huge online games, the clans attempt to gain accomplishment together in the game and evolves into communities in an advanced stage, “Turkish, Korean, German, French, Spanish and Russian clans present one after the other, virtual war of clans and strategies to survive/remain in the game develop” (Binar & Sütçü, 2008b, pp. 141-142). Development of such strategies and game industry created for other purposes have gained gigantic dimensions. On the other hand, production of digital games has become an area of simulation in which a culture as “culture industry” dominates over the other in a hegemonic manner.

The concept of *Culture Industry* is introduced and used in Dialectic of Enlightenment by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, representatives of Frankfurt School. According to Adorno, *Culture Industry* is realized by using contemporary technical facilities and economic, administrative monopoly within a plan to produce for masses to consume (Binar & Sütçü, 2008a, p. 33). The Culture Industry has similarities to the concept “hypermarket” used by

Baudrillard in many aspects. According to Baudrillard, “a hypermarket is like a large assembly factory”. While the factory has a “work order” comprising of “successive phases”, in the *hypermarket* “its employees randomly go and return from some part of the work chain to the other”. However, it appears that prohibitions are imposed by a programmed disciplinary order, in which it is hidden under tolerance, providing convenience, and varnish of *hyperreality*, and by an assembly band. According to Baudrillard, traditional capitalist establishments and *hypermarket* that is a different role from the factory are nothing but a model that brings together any forms of social control we will encounter in the future, various functions of body and social life, under one similar roof, and reinterpretation in a vicious circle of all countercurrent flows. The *hypermarket* is the time-place in which entire layout and traffic system of social life is completely produced by operational simulations (2014, p. 107). Digital games are sold in *hypermarkets* to consumers with the created *hyper-realities*.

3.DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL GAMES

A digital game is to visually display the results from interaction of the player in the electronic environment and computer system again in the electronic environment. Therefore, digital games were initially called “video” or “computer” games (Türkiye’de ve Dünyada Dijital Oyunlar Sektörü Hakkında Genel Rapor, 2013). A digital game environment is an environment that allows user to have an idea through visual experience instead of real events. With rich visual content they have, they are able to reduce learning process of individuals (Yengin, 2010, p. 4). Initial reveal of digital games could be dated back to 1940s. Contemporarily, initial examples of digital games were introduced in 1970s and became popular in 1980s. In the first half of 1990s, the industry was extended with use of CDs and three-dimensional game technology, reached 70 billion dollar in 2011, and now has become a huge industry (Türkiye’de ve Dünyada Dijital Oyunlar Sektörü Hakkında Genel Rapor, 2013). Digital games have a large income around the world. In Turkey, digital games began with PC (personal computer) games, written in a foreign country and sold in the market, and console games, then huge online games played for a price or free in internet cafes were marketed, and now a variety of local products have been released into the market. The domestic software industry is focused on large cities, such as İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir, and has a limited production (Binark & Sütçü, 2008a, p. 102).

Table 1 The advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Games (Binark, 2009).

Yararlar (Çevrimiçi olanaklar)	Zararlar (Çevrimiçi riskler)
Access to global information	Illegal content
Educational resources	Foreigners, child abuse
Social networks for old and new friends	Excessive or sexual violence
Entertainment and games	Other harmful or offensive contents
Content production that is created by user	Racist / hate material / activities
Citizen participation / political participation	Advertising / commercial persuasion
The privacy in expresion of identity	Sided / incorrect information (advice, health)
Links with the Community / activism	Abuse of personal information
Technology expertise and literacy	Cyber Bullying, harassment
Career development and employment	Gambling, financial crimes
Personal / health / sexuality-oriented advice	Self-harm (suicide etc.)
Expert groups and fan sites	Invasion of privacy
Sharing experience with remote	Illegal activities (hacking, uploading files)

Digital games write their own story and interactively include the player in the story with their cinematic features, and even make you feel that it intervenes. In real life, simulation games, life platforms and huge online games require the player to make both material and moral investment in the game time and space in a very serious manner. In this context, playing games is gradually turning into a serious even a type of business (Binark & Sütçü, 2008a, pp. 44-48). In this sense, digital games can be categorized “as *Console, Desktop, Online, Multiplayer Online Role-Playing, Mobile, Social, Daily games* by their characteristics in various aspects such as content, technical characteristics, platforms where they are broadcasted and control mechanisms” (Türkiye’de ve Dünyada Dijital Oyunlar Sektörü Hakkında Genel Rapor, 2013).

Digital games have become a significant “meta” in consumption. In daily life, individuals spend long hours playing games, the time spared for games may have different meanings based on the platforms played. Industrially, a share can be allocated to develop games as well as a budget is needed as personal-player (Binark & Sütçü, 2008a, s35). According to Turkish magazines of computer games, digital players are categorized as follows: “A *daily player* is a player that plays a game for a short time of period to spend time in leisure, prefers easy and simple games, and does not regularly log into game. A *rigorous player* is a player that play the selected type of game on the selected platform. *Internet café players* play strategic, military simulation games as multiplayer or play huge online games. The player has to be a member of the clan and spend on and invest in the in-game economy. *Pro gamer* is a player that joins e-sport leagues or various organized tournaments as an individual or as a team among derivations of digital players, and professionally gain income from the act of playing digital games. The virtual career built by the player in the virtual space has also become a career in daily life. *Emus makers* are those who break the code of a closed game hardware media and open the game for use by another game hardware, for example, make a Nintendo game playable on the PlayStation or PC (personal computer). However, Sony and Nintendo have initiated legal action and proceedings against emulator producers and legally prevent such action/production of players. *Mod making* is add-ons by players for the interface in the game. Huge online games have also resulted in new opportunities of career in terms of professional player. A qualified player is called a “*game master*” if they reorganize formation of virtual communities in such games and organize collective events, functioning as a kind of community leader (Binark & Bayraktutan, 2011, pp. 8-24).

Within this scope, important positive effects of digital games on child development can be listed as follows in addition to “online facilities” provided in table 1: “Ability to follow orders given, problem solving, reasoning, hand-eye coordination, development of motor skills, resource management and increase in logistic skills, ability to do multiple tasks at the same time, ability to follow multiple dynamic variables, management of multiple targets, fast thinking, analyzing, decision making, increased skill of strategy and estimation, increased mathematical skills, pattern recognition, increased inductive skill of reasoning, map reading, improved direction finding skills, reason-based decision making, teamwork and increased collaboration, practically increased real-world skills based on simulation, increased technological knowledge and skills, positive effects of fun-based happiness and increased knowledge of reward for doing something, increased creativity, increased self-confidence, physical activities through transaction driven games (Nintendo, Wii, Microsoft Kinect etc), doing exercises, reducing problems, e.g., obesity, and reduced negative impulses such as stress and temper” (Türkiye’de ve Dünyada Dijital Oyunlar Sektörü Hakkında Genel Rapor, 2013). However, besides such “benefits” of digital games, many studies in the literature address harms of digital games. Of these, the “violence” factor is often a research subject.

A research performed for doctoral dissertation by Yengin investigated the violence factor. According to Yengin, change of game environment causes differentiation of violence message in communication environments. The old violence environment passes through digital transformation process with components of new communication applications (digitality, interaction, virtuality, variability) and is transferred to digital-based environments, generating new forms of digital-based violence as a result of such transfer. While physicalism was in the forefront in the former understanding of violence, and physicalism applies to new understanding of violence, but violence takes place within the environment. The new violence is created by users pressing a key. Yengin gives war games as the simplest example of this practice and points out that while human factor was in the forefront in battles in 1950s, remotely steerable weapons are used in 2000s rather than human factor. In the fact of new violence, the practice becomes simple and is realized by gaining meaning with virtual applications. Furthermore, as destructiveness of violence imposed in virtual environments is also virtual, interest in such violence is increased. Those who play such games continue to play although they are shot by a weapon over and over, or they restart the game, so especially children are drawn to growing insensitivity to violence. The fact of violence is presented as a product with fictional games and this spreads over large masses day by day. Users can play act by taking traits of desired character in the fictional world through digital games. They get used to violence practices through social learning and easily put into practice in real life (2010, p. 190). Yengin gives “Flight Simulator”, the most popular game released by Microsoft, as an example of use of violence in digital games in real life. The terrorists involved in September 11 attacks used this game to be prepared for their fatal target. Therefore, since experiences learnt using a shortcut are consumed by individuals, violence content of digital games should be controlled by defined units (2010, p. 4). On the other hand, Binark and Sütçü argue that it is not possible to prevent violence culture that is ready to present in various forms and exists in the “real” area merely by organizing campaigns for use of internet. They indicate that detection of problems needs to be changed in order to “clear” political and social violence acts committed through new media; and it is inner ego what needs to be “cleared” (2008b, pp. 141-142).

Çelen classified different emotions created by video games in children and indicated that games initially limited the sense of suspense and this sense became more complicated in next games and could not be the same for each individual. Çelen gave GTA III of GTA series as an example of games that is endless and have continuously new expansions. In GTA III, what is important is not to win but to achieve optimum and the best rate for killing. Çelen suggests that video games keep the player in suspense and leave in uncertainty, intend to expose despair emotion of player, create sense of catatonia in the player and give sense of satisfaction when player goes beyond limits, and are intended to put the player into a competition with others. “In games played online, the player fears failure of the game more than an individual who plays alone. Çelen underlines that positive or negative excitement experienced, how often individual experience such excitement and how his individual develops a cognitive schema for reactions related to excitement are important for their physical and mental health (2013, p. 316). Digital games are a culture industry in which investments are also made in film industry and accordingly a substantial amount of income is gained. Generally, the produced contents commonly feed on male-dominant militarist, homophobic values and patterns and racist and gendered discourses are put into circulation. Ethnographic field works are needed to present how the player is affected during the time spent in that world, and how and why social networks in real world are transferred to the virtual space (Binark & Sütçü, 2008, p. 59). Thus far, we have tried to describe conceptual background of our study. In the

next section, hegemonic way of production and content of digital games will be evaluated in general and the game of *Grand Theft Auto V* will be analyzed.

4.CONSTRUCTION OF HEGEMONY IN DIGITAL GAMES: AMERICAN SIMULACRUM DIGITAL GAMES

In the industry of digital games, especially game designers are between the sales and profit oppression of publishers on one hand and demands of players/consumers on the other and their desire for esthetics during the negotiation process between the producer and the consumer. Thus, employees of game studio bargain an ongoing basis during the production process between the text in their mind and the product to be sold in the market. In our day, the culture industry increasingly position the children and the youth as the main market and the industry of digital games attempts to position the children and the youth as consumers in the consumption culture in a versatile manner. It creates a consumption culture in a very broad area from playing the digital game, watching the film derived from the game, wearing or drinking images derived from the game. The economy generated in digital games and new areas of consumption become marketing strategies, adverts, virtual shopping and new applications (Binark & Sütçü, 2008, p. 71). With its created simulation, this gigantic industry interactively includes the player and allows the content created by game producers to be ideologically adopted in other culture in a “persuasion”-based manner contained in Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. In his conceptualization, Baudrillard describes Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in the example of Disneyland as follows:

Disneyland is a perfect model where all simulacrum systems are interlocked. This ideological “plot” allows concealing a tertiary simulation event. Disneyland serves to conceal that “real” country “real” America is like a Disneyland. This is like a social structure, which tries to conceal their ordinary daily life does not resemble a jail, builds jails. Los Angeles and America surrounding Disneyland belong to hyperreal and simulation universe not to a real universe. The problem here is to conceal that real does not look like real rather than a deceptive regenerated reality (ideology), and to maintain reality principle. Unreality offered by Disneyland is neither real nor fake. Here... is a scene of deterrence (persuasion) (2014, pp. 26-27).

While Disneyland, a product of culture industry, is a place of simulation, this place is now “networks” in digital games. When digital games are addressed to investigate and analyze as other media outputs and/or products, the production processes (operation of industrial structure) can be reviewed by separating based on consumption practices (practices of playing mass) and text/narrative”.

In this section, the game *Grand Theft Auto V* will be reviewed based on text/narrative and the concept of “game commentator” will be focused, which is included in the operation of industrial structure and considered a new area of employment. In this context, findings of in-depth interview with Burak Şahin, the commentator and also a player of *GTA V*, will be reviewed. Burak Şahin is the builder of the program called “*Burak is in the game*” on the youtube and lives in Diyarbakır. We had an in-depth interview with sound recording with Burak Şahin via Skype including questions on digital games and content of *GTA V*, and this interview was used as findings of study.

5. GRAND THEFT AUTO V: FEATURES OF THE GAME

5.1. RELEASE AND IDENTITY OF GAME

Many games have been debated with violence content throughout the short history of digital games. Furthermore, such debate appears to give added value to brand equity of these games. "Grand Theft Auto" is included in such examples (Bati, 2011). In 2004, Rocstar North released the *Grand Theft Auto San Andreas*, which would be then praised due to ability to freely control the main character, but criticized due to a mode developed by a fan and exposed unused elements in the game; Rocstar North had to release a new version of the game in which such content of the game was completely removed (Sezen & Sezen, 2011, p. 280).

GTA V is open-ended action-thriller and the fifteenth game of Grand Theft Auto series developed by Rockstar North, a division of Rockstar Games, and published by Rockstar Games (Grand Theft Auto V Is Coming, 2013). It can be included in varieties of GTA of which the first one was developed in 1986 (see Table 2). According to Gümüšoğlu, these games were developed being inspired by cops and robbers we played in the backyard of our homes or on an unoccupied land and this was the all inspiration, and the next games fully contain elements of violence (n.d., p. 157). The game was released in 2013 spring for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 (Grand Theft Auto V Is Coming, 2013) (see Table 3). The new generation version of the game with updated graphics was released on 18 November 2014 for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One (GTAV Updates: Online Heists Coming March 10, GTAV for PC Coming April 14, 24 Şubat 2015), (on 14 April 2015 for Windows, and released online 10 March 2015 (GTAV PC: New Release Date, First Screens and System Specs, 2015). The game GTA V has been the most expensive game with a spending of \$ 265 million.

Table 2 Distribution by Year of The Grand Theft Auto Series (Grand Theft Auto kronolojisi, (n.d.)).

Grand Theft Auto Serisi Kurgusal Kronoloji
1961 – Londra, 1961
1969 – Londra, 1969
1984 – Vice City Stories
1986 – Vice City
1992 – San Andreas
1997 – Grand Theft Auto
1998 – Liberty City Stories
1999 – Grand Theft Auto 2
2000 – Advance
2001 – Grand Theft Auto III
2008 – Grand Theft Auto IV
The Lost and Damned
The Ballad of Gay Tony
2009 – Chinatown Wars
2013 – Grand Theft Auto V

The game GTA was first released in 2009 and grossed \$500 million, and GTA V released in 2013 grossed one billion (cited by Çelen, 2013, p. 316). In the game, the player takes the place of a criminal in a city where the player is free to walk around, and is involved in illegal activities including white slave trade, murder, theft, and selling drugs. The game has become in time one of the important brands of digital game history. Elements of violence and sexuality in the game were the subject of discussion and research in various times (Sezen & Sezen, 2011, p. 275). The most important feature of the game that differentiates the fame from

other series is the choice of min character. Each of three characters has different skills and powers in different areas. The tracks of GTA V are broadcasted by 17 different radio stations (Full Tracklist of songs on Grand Theft Auto V Soundrack Revealed, 2013). The players may purchase game money (credit) in real life as well as some accessories and items that they need for the game. It is certainly natural to have vendors in an in-game economy that has such buyers (Binark, 2009). As seen, all processes required by the culture industry are established for the game. The game is sold by hypermarkets from tracks to accessories.

Tablo 3 Grand Theft Auto V Game Features and Cover (GTA V, n.d.)



Basic knowledge	
Title	Grand Theft Auto V
Producer	Rockstar North
Publisher	Rockstar Games
Genus	Açık Dünya – Aksiyon
Platforms	PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC
Release date	17 Eylül 2013 (PS3, Xbox 360), 18 Kasım 2014 (PS4, Xbox One), 27 Ocak 2015 (PC)

5.2. STORY AND PLACE

Baudrillard explains image-specific a variety of stages/steps as follows: “As a reflection of deep reality, the image (has a positive quality because it serves as a kind of ritual), Changing and concealing a deep reality, the image (has a negative quality and is something like a black magic), Concealing the absence of a deep reality, the image (attempts to replace a view, i.e., to be a tool to mesmerize), the image, which is associated with none of the types of reality and only simulacrum of itself, (is now simulation not an image)” (2014, p. 19).

In this context, the story of GTA V was designed as film scenario and is a simulation based on American life style and geography. The player is in the film but as an interactive “actor” and “lives” the scenario in the game environment. Therefore, the scenario was designed as a comprehensive film scenario. All elements in the story are the simulation of the USA’s sociologic, cultural, governmental organization, and cities etc.

Table 4. The Simulation in Games of Real Place

•Oyundaki Mekân	Oyundaki Mekânın Görseli	Gerçek Yaşamdaki Mekân	Gerçek Yaşamdaki Mekânın Görseli
San Andreas		Kaliforniya	
Los Santos		Los Angeles	
San Fierro		San Fransisco	
Las Venturas		Las Vegas	
Vinewood		Hollywood	

In November 2009, the producer Dan Houser gave an interview to The Times to announce that a script of 1000 pages were being written for GTA V (Rockstar rocks star: Dan Houser Full Interview. 2010; Technology, 2009). The game takes place in the state of San Andreas created based on the south of the state of California (see Table 4). San Andreas comprises a city called Los Santos (updated version of the one in the game San Andreas) created mainly based on the city of Los Angeles, and large rural areas. The game has three cities/towns and all of the cities are called Los Santos, San Fierro and Las Venturas, in real, they are adapted versions of Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas for the game. The region called Vinewood in Los Santos looks like Hollywood and film stars live in Vinewood (Gümüsoğlu, n.d., p. 157). Los Santos is divided into two large regions and has tools to turn the game into a narrative with adventure content, such as rivers, oceans, lakes, beaches, farms, and wild animals. The game takes place in real-life places with adventures on land, in air and ocean. The game includes many small events such as riding a jet ski, joining flight challenges (aircraft competitions like a flight school) and off-road competitions, parachute jump, acrobatics, yoga, triathlon, playing tennis and golf, and has three characters, each of them with specific characteristics. Characters can be designed by elements such as tattoo, hair style, clothing etc. by spending virtual money during the game. In the rubbery plan, vehicles, technical teams and new characters can be created. All characters are in the game with their on life style, friends, enemies, and hobbies (Hamza CTZ Aziz @CTZ, 05.02.2013).

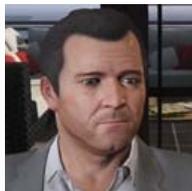
The promotional video of the game released on 17 September 2013 summarized the places, characters, story and fiction in an attempt to draw attention of players using trailers of the game. In the trailer, the game world, “a vivid, enthusiastic and exciteful” adaptation of modern South California, was advertised as very different, very large and very versatile, awaiting for players prepared to be consumed “further”. It is pointed out that the game contains all elements of American lifestyle with adjectives including “suburb life and intact natural habitats, beaches, forests, mysteries and comedy, greed and hypocrisy”. It is attempted to simulate American lifestyle from the content of slanging used in the game to characters and places. The trailer that underlines the greatness of the world of game has attempted to demonstrate that the game has a wide range of elements including “cars to modify, aircraft used to fly, clothing to buy, sports to do, Nirvana to reach, oceans to dive, animals to hunt and to be hunted by, and weird people to meet and become friend”. The player will enjoy accomplishment with “rewards to win” and go on a variety of adventures. It appears that any element needed to have fun is contained in the game. In the trailer of the game, “Each aspect of the game is fluent, amusing and very clear. Anything is very sensitive and joyful from driving a car to shooting, playing tennis to riding a bike. Certainly, these people must have a job as well as enjoy all these amusing activities. These men are a thief besides ordinary life they live” (GTA 5 Tanitim Videosu, n.d.), so “real world of America” was transferred into a simulation area. A universe that is similar to the original one is created in this virtual world. GTA V generates the twin of factors needed for American lifestyle and serves as an area where American cultural hegemony is built. We should indicate here that the characters that are the heroes of the game are critical for the player to identify with game. Therefore, it would be appropriate to describe main characters of the game and their characteristics.

5.3 CHARACTERS

The game GTA V incorporates characters included in previous serious, but has three main characters entirely specific to this game. In the online version of the game, the player may personally identify the main characters. The characters are designed inspired by professional and well-known actors/actresses and dubbed by designed persons. In this context, the game looks like an animation film. The game includes three main characters called Michael De

Santa, Trevor Philips and Franklin Clinton. Each of these characters has different skills and powers in different areas (Hamza CTZ Aziz @CTZ, 05.02.2013). Such skills can be used by switching between the characters. The player switches to the other character by moving away towards a map like *Google Earth* and zooming in on the other character. The shorter the distance between characters, the switching process is also so short (Scammell, 2012). The characteristics of three main characters in the game are important factors for simulation of American lifestyle created in the virtual environment. Digital games, which were introduced after cinema that has a substantial place across Mass Media, are much more effective on the audience through their interactive features. The game GTA V allows to interactively live/watch American lifestyle with its story, places and characters. The game has many characters, but we will review characteristics of three main characters (Michael De Santa, Franklin Clinton, Trevor Philips) that are required for our study and with which the player identifies.

Michael De Santa



Michael(Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.).



Ned Luke(Ned Luke, n.d., 2011)

The character vocalized by Ned Luke is 47 years old and annex-criminal who has made a deal with FIB to give up bank robbery. He is married and a father of two children (boy Jimmy De Santa; girl Tracey De Santa) . He lives on gain from many robberies in the state of North Yankton with Trevor, his ex-partner and one of main characters of the game, and side character Brad. In the story of the game, Ned gives up robbery due to his family and retires and settles in Rockford Hills (simulation of Beverly Hills in Hollywood), a rich district in the city of Los Santos (simulation of Los Angeles) of the state of San Andreas (simulation of the state of California). The character has problems with his wife (*Amanda De Santa*) and children and breaks up with his wife in later episodes of the game. He returns robbery because he suffers from financial difficulties and starts robbery again with the ambitious young man Franklin he has recently met in the city and his old friend Trevor he comes across after a long period of time. Michael who is also fond of cinema and movies wants to be film producer as Solomon Richards, the film producer whom he admires (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). Michael sees a therapist because he is an alcohol addict, and lives in a luxury house that has a swimming pool, tennis court, and pool (Hamza CTZ Aziz @CTZ, 05.02.2013). As seen, characteristics and life of characters represent the lifestyle of high-income group of America.

Characteristics of the Character: Since he is a professional and successful armed robber, Michael is a master in weapons and marksmanship and able to slow down the time using a “Bullet Time” feature during conflicts (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). This feature of the character was designed to make the player feel “excited”, a promised emotion in the game. The game incorporates factors that cause American culture to leak into the life of player in a persuasive manner with use of emotions, and factors of the culture are taught which wealthy upper class is represented by this character.

Franklin Clinton



Franklin(Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). *Shawn Fonteno*(Shawn Fonteno, n.d.)



He is vocalized by the actor Shawn Fonteno (also known as “Solo”). The character is a member of a gang, 25 years old, has no family, was born in South Los Santos and raised by his grandmother. He lives in somewhere near the town of Blaine. He is young, ambitious and smart. He began to sell drugs in very young ages, but was caught red-handed and put in the jail, spending his young ages in the prison. Again, this character has given up robbery. In later episodes of the game, he works for cheater Simeon *Yetarian*, an Armenian owner of an auto gallery with his friend Lamar a gang member. He has taken on kind of usury task. Meanwhile, Franklin meets Michael and soon becomes a close friend of Michael, adopts Michael as his father because he has no family. Michael loves Franklin as his son in time and defines Franklin as “the child he has always wanted to have”. He sees Michael as a way out and hope to escape from the bog of gangs and drugs in the quarter where he lives. For Michael who decides to return robbery, Franklin becomes both a close friend and a business partner in time. With Franklin’s joining Michael and Trevor, the trio is completed and begins to commit big robberies for a large amount of money they are after to make a quick buck (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). From that point, GTA V becomes a real-life simulation with adventures in which the players act in accordance with tasks.

Characteristics of the Character: He is much more skilled in driving a car and riding a motorbike because he is a vehicle thief. We usually see him as the driver who drives the escape car during theft. Therefore, he has the ability to slow down the time while driving in the game (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). This character is the means of the basic objective of the game to make feel emotions of excitement in the game and represented with characteristics of lower-class incorporating elements of American culture.

Trevor Philips



Trevor (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.)



Steven Ogg (Steven Ogg, n.d.)

The character is vocalized by Steven Ogg, a combat pilot and Canadian veteran. He was kicked out of military. He changes into a psychopath drug addict from a war veteran, moves into the province of Blaine of the state of San Andreas and starts living in an old campervan. He gives up robbery and gets involved in business of drugs and weapons. Trevor is a temperamental man who put fear in hearts and the most frightening man of the area and town where he lives. He is literally a psychopath, quick tempered, and displays the extreme show of violence (Grand Theft Auto karakterler, n.d.). The player uses the factor of “violence” over and over in the game and the factor of violence, which is encountered by individual in daily life, is actually represented by this character at the utmost level in the game.

Characteristics of the Character: He is better at flying planes, jets, helicopters and other aircrafts than other characters as he is a war pilot. He is less damaged than the others are where there are such conflicts. Trevor is a psychopath and angry character and able to cause around more damage with special mode of “frenzy”, he losses less lives (it is more difficult to kill this character than to kill other characters in the game) and is skilled at infighting (Yeni GTA V İncelemeleri Yayınımlandı: Yeni Bilgiler, Özellikler, Daha Fazlası, 2013).

In addition to three main characters of the game mentioned above, there are many supporting characters and side characters who are usually with main characters. The number of these characters is increased as the game progresses. It appears that there are more side characters around the character Michael than other characters. Characters are described in the trailer of the game and in a separate trailer in which only characters are introduced in detail. “The game allows for the first time to play with exactly three characters not one”, which offers players s choice to identify with the hero. Michael is a successful bank robber but unsuccessful father, and there is that Trevor; It is better we speak a little about him. What three main characters have in common is that they get together to form the main story and an infrastructure including individual tasks. The players are able to switch to different perspectives. You can view three main characters from the top when they are not on task. You can go down on any point and witness what your new friends are doing at that moment” (GTA 5 Tanıtım Videosu, n.d.), which demonstrates techniques and innovations that can be used by players and supports marketing strategies for “purchasing” with and advertising copy. The game includes promotional videos with trailers in which speaking style of characters, their life, relationships, the way of combat, slang language, and images containing violence are used to represent many elements of American culture that can be experienced by players.

The violence can be used without limits and penalties in digital games. While individuals are punished for violence used in real life, individuals win rewards for violence used in digital games instead of being punished, and this reward is often to have a tool such as a weapon or knife. The violence creates unreal environments and simulacrum messages that cannot be transferred to digital environments in particular. The violence is maintained and exists by incorporating the old violence and improving continuity. Actually, the individual gets used to using violence to show skills when playing the game, this causes to constantly display violence and insensitivity to violence. As with the mass media, limiting violence messages in new communication environments that incorporate both features of mass media and individual communication is an important issue to consider on. Especially, even if age limitation is imposed using coding method when marketing digital products as new communication environment, these games are easily purchased by sellers or can be downloaded on a computer via internet. Thus, both game producers and their marketers and players need to become self-aware about consequences of violence messages(Yengin, 2010, p. 191). Thus, the violence created through heroes of digital games brings with a problem that a how much young person incorporates such elements in real life, but it would be unfair to say that digital games alone create such element of violence. It is necessary to reduce elements of violence such as being exposed to violence, watching violence etc. which the youth encounter in daily life practices. It is not possible to argue that a young person who witnesses violence becomes a person who uses violence only because of digital games.

6.WATCHING THE GAME AND “GAME COMMENTATORS”

Digital games, toys of our day, have become a huge industry in the field. “In order to accurately analyze existence of young citizens in the new media area through industry of

digital games and their relationship with this new industry, it is first necessary to present such network of relationships and diversity and differences of actors with a variety of conceptual means” (Binark ve Bayraktutan, 2011, p. 26). Digital games, which are included in mass media that is communications means of public sphere, function as areas communicated online at global level. The game commentators, one of employment areas of digital games in the industry, appear to gain substantial gains recently. Involvement of youth in the industry of digital games as a citizen is expanding with generation of new areas of employment each passing day. Creation of fans of the game, i.e., “circulation” of the game, has also an influence on the gains achieved by such areas of employment. In this context, characteristics of this emerging area of business are attempted to identify in the findings of in-depth interview with Burak Şahin who plays the game GTA V and creates fans with “*Burak is in the Game*” program on Youtube. Burak Şahin is 19 years old and started to program as a game commentator when he was 16 years old. He has sponsors including Razer, Playstore, Aral Game, Monster Notebook, and AxiTR Bilişim. He has created fans in Turkey with reaching a total of 251 million 227 thousand 615 times of view and 1 million 153 thousand 621 of number of subscribers. In our interview, he told how he started to play digital games and how his family reacted to his playing digital games:

My father is a military man, my mother is a housewife. I could say that we’ve always lived alone. We lived in a village of Mardin, at the border post. I was the only child in the mass housing. My game life started then. There was nothing to do and I got up in the morning and had a drill with soldiers. I had toy guns. I tried to disassemble them though. I could say I had a lonely childhood. There was really nobody around the border post and there was a village opposite the post. It was prohibited to have children at the border post from the village. I assume that I didn’t find anything to amuse myself, or my family wanted me to have fun, therefore they assumed such attitude. My father, actually may family, has always supported me in playing games.

Burak Şahin expressed that he was a single child and had no other children around him to play with, therefore he tended towards games and told how he decided to prepare the program “*Burak is in the game*”:

A friend of mine said... “You talk a lot when you play games”, I really talk a lot when I play games as in my videos. That friend said “You’d be successful if you did this”. That was my starting point, and this is how it’s been going on. I had no one to help me. That’s me who does everything including my graphics and picture-sound editing, and bears any burden.

Burak Şahin underlines that the most important tool to maintain the business of game commentator includes a quality microphone (of quality used by professional sound recording studios), headphones, mouse, keyboard, and computer, and adds that he initially used an ordinary microphone and headphones and he now acquires such materials through his sponsors. He tells that he played games for 6-7 hours a day when he did not go to school, it was him who found his first sponsor, and some companies came with their own offer, and explains the links with his sponsors and advertising companies he works with:

I have 5 sponsors and certainly a separate contract with each of them. I can give details about my contract with *Razer*. *Razer* is the world’s giant, and I made a contract against the equipment I want because with *Razer* one keyboard is TL 500, microphone is \$ 400, and we prepare the advertisements for a certain price. For example, *Playstore* says that I’ll give this game and you’ll shoot its video. Or rather I want the games from them. They instruct me to say in the video that

“You can purchase this game in instalments” And I prepare a video like “You can purchase this game in instalments of TL 5” in the video. It’s me who arranges the videos. There are many companies I make advertisements for, there are companies I continuously work with; for example, I have this *İz Mobil* business. I have lots of work with online games in particular. Currently, I’m individually the largest channel of Turkey, not only in the area of games. There are two channels in front me: Cem Yılmaz and there is that music channel but I don’t really remember its name. Naturally, this is where sponsors and people who come to offer business first review. The rating is more important than sponsors’ choosing me, considering subscription. So, the more you are watched, the more you are successful. I think subscription is not that important, for example, my rating is 25-30 million per month. The more you are watched, the more you have the potential to make advertisements.

As seen, the “game commentator” – a new business district – has become an area that a young child started to amuse himself but later on transformed into “business”. As in television rating, a high rating has been an important factor to take advertisements. Thus, the industry of digital games offers new areas of employment other than production of games. Burak Şahin expresses that he first selects video of games he plays from the games he likes, but sometimes he asks his audience and carries out a kind of poll to decide, he acquires cultural information in the games, for example in *GTA*, *Scarface* the game *Red Ball* makes fun of some things in real life by giving examples. As seen, as an individual who both plays and gains income through playing games, he explains that even “acquiring information” is based on “amusement”. He argues that criticism is unfair which argues that playing digital games creates a new youth weakening the interpersonal relationships:

I’ve played online *GTA San Andreas* in multiplayer mode for a very long time and I got many friends from there. When *GTA V* was released, we’re still playing it and seeing many friends on ‘online’, and you can meet lots of people from there. They are not only Turkish, but there are also foreign people because the game has sound speaking feature and is a very good place to socialize. I’ve met many of my friends from there. For example, there are many names I cannot count now. I have also friends outside. I still see my friends in the social environment but I don’t see my friends outside that much. We also meet. There are people we’ve been friends for ten years, and I also do business with the other one; we develop a game together. There were communities called clan where you could play together. We had lots of meetings and events together. The virtual environment and real life are combined, there is no something separate. They have never been only in the virtual environment.

As seen, the game, as combining factor, gathers the youth together and children that used to play in the “neighborhood” appear to come together in “virtual neighborhoods” where time and place expand. During our research, the game *GTA V* received criticism and the most important issue that has been most debated in American media is the excessive use of elements of violence and sexism in the game. Therefore, we especially posed relevant detailed questions to Burak Şahin during the interview and asked how he was affected by his failure in the games, if digital games caused addiction, and the benefits/harms of digital games. His answer includes:

Actually, there were no many things, or nothing I could say, that I failed in the games, because I usually finish a game I’ve started; and there have been no many things that have affected me a lot so far...I think there are harms, for

example some companies does that on purpose. There was that game called *Hatred* and it was banned on Dream TV though. The major job of the game to kill people. What is the purpose of playing such a game? I really don't understand why they developed such game. You are a character in the game and constantly torture the others. There was nothing else in the game. It had no story, no purpose, only killing people, and you bomb a house of a family and people are killed there, it is nonsense to me, and it is also nonsense they did it only to make money.

We can draw a conclusion from such expression that the violence would be legal if it had a purpose. It is considered that violence that has no reasonable explanation is harmful in the game, and elements of violence are not harmful, which have gains for the game as in the game *GTA V*, and which are dose-adjusted as a real life simulation. Thus, placement of violence in the game as if it were violence elements experienced in normal life shows that hegemonic operation of ideology is realized. In addition, Burak Şahin indicates his thoughts about acts of character *Trevor* who is the character representing elements of violence in the game:

There are times that I've even blocked tortures of Trevor in my videos. There is that part where Trevor tortures, though you feel a kind of disinclined to do that. It is a pretty worse scene. Furthermore, there is a substantial increase in the sexism factor in the game compared to the other games. I think, it was not really necessary though. I am rather after what could be done something frenetic. For example, riding your motorbike up onto a building, for example going on an aircraft with a bike, something like that. But I don't feel like logging in and massacre. Running from the police is exciting and fun. If there is anything that annoys me in real life then I'll take action in real life. I've never done anything like that in the game.

As seen in our interview, elements of violence are considered acceptable as long as they are not used unnecessarily and excessively. In fact, "being exposed to or witnessing" violence is provided by at least the mass media (television etc.) in daily life almost every day. The extent of violence factor in the game, which could be considered a reflection thereof, is caused by such daily life practices. In addition, excitement and having adventures are included in the leading reasons for playing digital games. We asked Burak Şahin, as a game commentator, to indicate the critical features of the game *GTA V*, subject of our research, that differentiate it from other digital games, the differences of the game from other games are described with a form of expression in the advertising copy of the game, which shows us that the game has achieved the desired objective:

GTA V is a very realistic life simulation, it is a fun game with either its graphics or what you can do in the game. You can do whatever you want to do in the game. For example, I can get on a tractor and have a tour around the fields, or I can jump off a plane with a parachute. This is fun and what you want to do. Who could go and fly a plane, then jump of the plane and glide with a parachute? But I can do this whenever and wherever I want to in a game. I've always liked it. Furthermore, *GTA V* offers three different characters, you are not limited to one character. You actually see any lifestyle. In the beginning of the game, especially a character lives in what we call ghetto in poor America. Michael lives in a rich area, Trevor lives in a town, and the game shows you these three lives. You get an idea about those lives and say that if I lived there, I would be somewhere there. They are also nice factors.

As shown by Burak's expressions, the game GTA V offers the fun that is promised in its trailer. In responses to our questions whether the game provides hegemonic operation as culture industry which was the basic assumption of our research, it appears that actions and experience in the universe created in digital games are effective, but in fact there is a hegemony (transferred from movies to game area) that operates intertextually:

I'm not really interested in if the game takes place in America. What I'm interested in is the things offered by the game. For example, there was a game called *Dying Light* taking place in Harran, which normally doesn't exist. There are some who played and became fanatic and there are some who didn't like it. For example, there was a game called *Driver San Francisco*, taking place in *San Francisco*, but it wasn't favored as GTA. The place where the game happens is not important. It is an important factor, but what you could do in the game or what the game offers you is more important to me. Actually, I feel disturbed by, I mean these people can do this and have been doing it for years, for 10 years, the GTA series has been in for almost 20 years. However, there is no such thing in our country. For example, we have a series of *Mount and Blade* produced by Turkish people. Besides that, there are no games that we can play freely and do something. I we developed a game, it'd take place in Istanbul though. It would be very nice but it's not been done yet.

Although it is stated what basically wanted from games is the excitement in the game and what is offered to the players, in the game text of GTA V based on Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas, it is obvious that factors offered by elements of both place, characters, story and culture cannot offer what is expected in a game that has other factors of place and culture. Actually, ideological hegemony created by the factor of intertextuality finds its reflection in the response to the question "What does it offer me?" On the other hand, Burak Şahin takes a fancy to Franklin among characters, who he describes as "trustworthy". So, Burak identifies his character whom he identifies with in the game according to factors such as socioeconomic status, personal traits, etc. Although Burak is currently studying in computer programming, he wants to change discipline and move to Psychology. The reason he puts forth is that "Psychology is a good discipline, it is uncertain what will happen in our country... I want to complete my study in Psychology and have a good job at least." This indicates that he is not sure about the future of what he does now. Although Turkish industry of digital games has an uncertain future, he emphasizes that he has targets:

I hope I will personally do something in Turkey. There are games I'm working on and there are also games I'm currently developing. I will do my best to improve the business of game in Turkey. I will establish a company for this, why should foreign games be not Turkish? Games have started to be Turkish, why should Turkey not develop more games? Games I think are important to people, when people get bored, when people feel sad, for example they want to be in a movie, the games take the first place; because the life there becomes your life and it is your call to do what to do there. This is quite nice. The game should go beyond the world in Turkey. I hope good things are awaiting us in Turkey.

"Digital games are cultural fighting areas where other and alternative cultural production, representative practices and/or life styles could be possible. In Turkey, therefore issues should be considered, including supporting facilities to produce digital games in Turkey and discontinuing to see this industrial product merely as a "game" as soon as possible; long-term

and comprehensive production process; importance of marketing strategies; the content of what is told; what is left outside; and presence of different practices of use. Furthermore, if one wants to exist as a “producer” in this area of culture industry, it is necessary to know global operation strategy for conditions of existence in the global market” (Binark & Sütçü, 2008, p. 207). So, individual can transform from a passive citizen who is acceptable, overseen, protected and looked after, and kept under continuous surveillance into a participating and effective citizen who assumes social responsibility for his/her acts and judgement”. The problem is not playing games or playing, or not letting to play: the major issue is that playing games should take place consciously. In this sense, the Ministry of National Education has duties to develop new media literacy programs and applications and to organize adult education to inform parents and educators about the culture of digital games, facilities of new media, possibilities and risks (Binark, 2009). Therefore, Turkey should generate an industry where the youth would be able to use better the capacity of facilities of new media and facilities would be provided to be in the world market.

7.CONCLUSIONS

A game is an area in which people implement what is in their nature and gives an illusion that human exists as the “subject” universally independent of time and space. In this context, advancing technology or phases that human have historically will not interfere with continuance of basic elements of the game. People use elements of the game such as use of toys as game tools, socialization and enjoy. Even though “toys” as tools used change, people continue and will continue to play games. Digital games create simulations. The youth or children (players) are subject to cultural hegemony in such simulations. In our research, GTA V appears to be a digital game that has an appropriate content in compliance with requirements for being subjected to. Our study agrees that the violence factor in digital games may have different influences on the younger children that have “concrete” thoughts and on the youth that has achieved ability of “abstract” thinking but still have psychological features of adolescence period; but the assumption was based that an individual who encounters violence in real life would not commit an act of violence just because of digital games. What is more important is that digital games appear intended to place hegemonic ideology of those who produce these games as seen in all products of culture industry. As a large industry, since digital games have ideological content and will not leave the audience as “audience” but involves them in the created hyperreality, they are areas where hegemonic construction of culture can be built more effectively. Therefore, it is necessary for Turkey to attach importance as soon as possible to the area of digital games that has become a gigantic industry over the world.

On the other hand, digital games, new game tools and places of our day, also offer new employment/business areas. One of them is game commentators, which appear to function as an area in which a “game commentator” teaches the rules of the game in a funny way as an instructor for the act of “watching” actually to learn the game better. The “game commentator”, which is defined as “showmanship” by the game commentator who has mastered by playing the game and whom we interviewed for our research, appear to be a new occupation generated by simulation places when it is considered in the context of income gained over the world. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate and address this area that is under development with various aspects. In this sense, we hope that our study will serve as a resource for future studies.

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