

# The status of role-playing in video games: A case study on Grand Theft Auto Online from the Islamic perspective

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has developed video games into complex social spaces that go well beyond entertainment. Therefore, it raises new ethical issues with respect to video games from an Islamic perspective. This research examines role-playing in Grand Theft Auto Online (GTA Online) from an Islamic perspective, focusing on cross-gender role-playing (tasyabbuh), and virtual free mixing (ikhtilat). Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study employs an analytical strategy that utilizes descriptive, inductive, and deductive approaches to identify classical fiqh principles, current scholarly opinions, and related fatwas concerning modern virtual gaming. The results demonstrate that online gaming is fundamentally permissible in terms of the legal maxim *al-asl fi al-ashya' al-ibahah*; therefore, its permissibility becomes dependent upon the nature of the gameplay, the player's intentions, and the consequences of their actions. Practices like gender-swapping and free mixing interaction in virtual environments raise ethical concerns with Islamic values related to truthfulness and modesty. This study concludes that although participating in GTA Online is not inherently haram (prohibited), Muslim gamers are required to follow ethical guidelines based upon the *maqasid al-shariah* in order to ensure responsible participation that safeguards faith, intellect, and moral integrity.

**Keywords:** Grand Theft Auto Online, role-playing game (RPG), cross-gender role-playing, free mixing, ethical guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

Entertainment is an important element of human life and an intrinsic part of human nature, inseparable from daily life. It aims to promote mental and emotional balance, reduce stress, enhance psychological well-being, and strengthen social bonds. Throughout history, various forms of entertainment have been enjoyed by people, such as singing, sports, performing arts, and dance, evolving into the modern forms of entertainment we see today. In Islam, entertainment is permissible as long as it does not contradict the principles of Islamic law. Allah has affirmed that all the adornments and blessings He has created are for His servants, but Muslims are reminded of the necessity to avoid anything that leads to moral corruption or harms faith.

Allah says in Al-Quran, Al-A'raf, 7: 32

﴿قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۗ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾

Meaning:

*Say (O Muhammad): 'Who has forbidden the adornment which Allah has brought forth for His creatures or the good things from among the means of sustenance?' Say: 'These are for the enjoyment of the believers in this world and shall be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection.' Thus do We clearly expound Our revelations for those who have knowledge.*

This verse clearly demonstrates the importance of leisure in human life. In Islam, recreation is generally permissible as long as it does not involve anything forbidden, as evidenced by the hadith of Hanzalah (may Allah be pleased with him):

[يَا حَنْظَلَةُ سَاعَةٌ وَسَاعَةٌ وَلَوْ كَانَتْ تَكُونُ قُلُوبُكُمْ كَمَا تَكُونُ عِنْدَ الذِّكْرِ لَصَافَحْتَكُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ حَتَّى تُسَلِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الطَّرِيقِ]

Meaning:

*Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Hanzala, there is a time for worldly affairs and a time for (worship and devotion), and if your state of mind is always the same as it is at the time of remembrance of Allah, the Angels would shake hands with you and would greet you on the path by saying: As-Salamu-Alaikum.*

This indicates the permissibility of certain forms of recreation and leisure, provided they do not lead to sin or cause one to neglect religious duties. Imam Nawawi, when interpreting this hadith which was also narrated with a different wording in Sahih Muslim, explained that we are not required to worship all the time. Therefore, when Hanzalah felt worried that he had become a hypocrite because he was 'negligent' in remembering Allah SWT, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained that there is time allocated for worship, there is also time allocated for world life and having fun with family (al-Zuhayri, n.d.).

Advances in digital technology have led to numerous changes in human lifestyles. Video games have become one of the most popular forms of entertainment, especially among teenagers and adults. This popularity is not limited to Western countries; it is also widespread in Islamic countries. Alongside technological advancements, forms of entertainment have also evolved. Video games have the potential to influence culture, education, and societal behavior (Mohd Rizal and Gunardi, 2025). Modern games, characterized by their interactivity and realism, offer players a profound and impactful experience.

There are many types of video games, such as survival games, racing, simulators, action, role-playing games and many more. Video games have potential benefits on cognitive function, where different video games have different effects on cognitive function, especially in attention ability and visuospatial ability (Huang, H.; Cheng, C, 2022). These games allow players to assume the role of a specific character and live a virtual life within a specially designed fantasy world. Grand Theft Auto (GTA) is a prominent example of one of the most popular RPGs in the world today, due to its ability to provide players with a highly realistic and immersive experience within the game world. However, GTA is also one of the most controversial games, as it allows players to virtually commit a range of criminal acts, such as theft, murder, drinking alcohol, adultery, and others. The absolute freedom to engage in these activities raises questions from an Islamic legal

perspective: are these reprehensible acts in the game considered sins, or are they merely representations that do not entail any legal sin? Therefore, what is the Islamic legal ruling on role-playing in video games from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence? This is a specific study of Grand Theft Auto online. I hope this research will be beneficial to researchers and students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Asma Akli and Halima Boukerurocha (2024) wrote a journal about the impact of video games on children's mental abilities, analysing it from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, which emphasizes the preservation of the mind. Their study focused on how games generally affect children's health, intelligence, and mental abilities. The preservation of mind is crucial in Islam with reference to *Maqasid Shariah*. This implies that when there are detrimental factors that could hinder or disrupt the preservation of mind, it must be stopped before it reaches its balanced state of mental thought and emotion. In Islam, it is allowed to play online games as long as they are moderate, balanced, and do not result in haram or negative effects on one's physical or mental well-being. However, their work did not specifically address the issue of role-playing as a different gender or engaging in romantic simulations through online games. This study aims to analyze the psychological impact of gender role-playing and whether such actions conflict with Islamic rulings.

Ameli (2023) conducted a descriptive-analytical study of the open-world game GTA Online, focusing on its role-playing capabilities. The study explored how GTA Online fosters complex social interaction among players, including gender swapping and intimate virtual interactions. This implies that players can experience games similar to real life. Players can generally accomplish things in Grand Theft Auto that they are unable to do in real life. Additionally, because the game world is a live, interacting environment that is similar to the real world, players can design their ideal life gradually changing the game's action type into the character they want. In the online mode of GTA servers, the server managers announce their need for certain roles through communication channels based on the goals and missions they have set for themselves in the game. After reviewing the goals and the description of the adopted strategies, they select the desired duties and responsibilities from among those who have expressed their interest from various platforms. While the study focuses heavily on the game's mechanics and how they function, it doesn't explicitly address the implications of such an approach for Islamic governance. This study will utilize the research to analyze the potential challenges posed by online role-playing in the GTA with regard to gender swapping and adherence to Islamic values.

Hussain & Griffiths (2008) conducted research on gender swapping in MMORPGs, finding that most players tend to swap genders in games to receive better treatment and escape reality. In relation to gender swapping in online games, some gamers engaged in gender swapping as an experiment. Other reasons for gender switching included the fact that female characters had superior in-game statistics, that some tools were exclusive to female characters, that the class of character was only available in one gender, and that it was merely for fun. In some cases, female characters also tend to get better treatment from men. These results are significant because, in most cases, the player can select the gender of their character and develop other features of the character before starting to play. While their study conducted important research on gender intersectionality in games, it lacked an Islamic legal perspective on the permissibility of such actions. Based on their findings, this study will apply Islamic rulings on this matter, specifically regarding Islamic norms of modesty and interactions between the sexes. It is important to examine the implications of role-playing in such works from an Islamic perspective.

Xinai Sun (2023), in her research paper "Gender Studies in MMORPGs", examined gender representation, identity, and issues of inclusiveness in these games. The paper highlights structural bias and lacks in Islamic legal analysis. The current study will build upon this

foundation by integrating legal concepts such as innate disposition, modesty, and intention to determine whether gender representation in GTA Online crosses legal boundaries.

In their 2018 article, “The Ruling on Gender Reassignment: An Evaluative Study in Light of Maqasid,” Farhan and Mustafa examine gender reassignment from a *Maqasid Shariah* jurisprudence perspective. While their focus is on medical cases, the principles surrounding gender identity distortion and the preservation of natural disposition (*fitrah*) are more relevant to this research. The current study will apply this same *Maqasid Shariah* analysis to gender role-playing in GTA Online to assess its potential conflict with the preservation of identity and natural disposition.

Rizal and Gunardi (2025) examine microtransaction system in Mobile Legends, determining their effects on a player’s behavior, motivations, and engagement with respect to how purchases of virtual items are integrated into the mobile games economy. The researcher also highlights concerns about uncertainty, gambling, and fairness in digital purchasing contracts. Their findings show that virtual environments can still carry ethical and legal consequences in Islam.

## METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative method consisting of three approaches:

### **Descriptive method**

This research employs a descriptive approach to explain and clarify the concept of role-playing in video games, particularly in Grand Theft Auto Online. This approach describes the game's characteristics, content, and mechanics in relation to the role-playing element, thus helping to identify the ethical and behavioral aspects associated with the game, which are fundamental to Islamic jurisprudential analysis. Many academic researchers use the descriptive method and incorporate a range of frequently observed variables to obtain a clear understanding of the subject (Kim et al., 2017). As a scholarly approach, the descriptive method permits flexibility as study findings and research questions develop.

### **Inductive method**

The inductive method is used to collect and analyze legal opinions, fatwas, scholarly writings, and legal sources that address the topic of electronic games, entertainment, and role-playing. Through this method, general principles can be derived by examining specific examples and texts found in the Islamic legal tradition. When conducting inductive research, a researcher gathers relevant details about their topic of interest. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the data, the researcher stops collecting data once a significant volume has been collected (Mohammed, 2024). In this stage, the researcher looks for patterns in the data and attempts to create a theory that explains them.

### **Deductive method**

The deductive method is used to apply the derived legal principles and jurisprudential rules to the case of *GTA Online*. After identifying the relevant legal principles through the inductive method, the deductive method allows for the issuance of specific legal rulings regarding the permissibility or prohibition of role-playing in this game. These deductive investigations provide as an example of how researchers start with prior theories and hypotheses drawn from earlier study before gathering and analyzing data to test their hypotheses (Mohammed, 2024). The results of this research enhance our knowledge of a variety of social concerns and can influence practice and policy in related fields.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition And Concept Of Role-Playing In Gts Online

This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of role-playing in video games, offering an in-depth overview of its principles, mechanisms, and significance in the modern virtual environment. It also delves into the specific concept of how role-playing works, the patterns of cross gender role-playing and virtual interaction, detailing its implication on player behaviors and ethics. This exploration aims to provide a clear understanding of role-playing in digital spaces and evaluate its broader impact on player behavior, identity, and ethics within modern gaming environments.

### Description and Concept of Role-Playing

Role-playing in digital games broadly refers to a type of collaborative play in which players assume a character and carry out the identities, motivations and social behaviors in a fictional world governed by rules and narrative limitations. Based on online Cambridge Dictionary (1999), role-playing game or RPG is a computer game in which players control the actions of characters in an imaginary world. This means, each participant assumes the role of a character that can interact within the games imaginary world, making decisions that shape the story and develop their character in the game.

Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V) is an action-adventure game from Rockstar North and was released in 2013. The game takes place in San Andreas, a fictional land, where the player gets to navigate a richly detailed urban setting, perform missions and engage with dynamic systems like law enforcement, economics, and transportation. This design emphasizes the agency and non-linear exploration of players allowing them to use multiple means to reach entertainment, but as a complex cultural text, connotating contemporary urban life, crime, consumerism, and media spectacle.

For instance, in GTA V, the main role of the police is to make it more difficult for the player to commit a crime, who is the number one enemy of criminals in the game and even the real world. When engaging in a criminal act and completing objectives, it gives the game a more genuine appearance. The degree of delinquency, the severity of the offenses, and the warning notices all influence how the police handle criminals. The player's desired stars are used to determine this feature in the game. The extent of notification and warning increases for more serious and dangerous crimes, and the police's action varies according to this level, ranging from pursuit to the use of firearms and tactics. The call of a helicopter and the armed forces are examples of special forces. Hitting a police car, shooting people and pedestrians, engaging in unrestricted sexual encounters, stealing cars, entering forbidden locations, and taking part in collective crimes like bank robberies are examples of the crimes included in the game (Ameli, 2023).

GTA Online transforms that world into an ongoing multiplayer world in which millions of players coexist live. In this space, a popular sub-mode, role play (RP), has emerged on community-managed servers. In RP, players create a fictional character with particular history, occupations and social roles, and interact according to rules that simulate real norms, institutions and consequences. Moderate regulations are designed to discourage unintentional behavior and to encourage narrative community, turning the game into a collaborative social simulation.

According to Martínez (2024), the online version of GTA V is hosted on multiple servers, both the publishers and fans. In addition to purchasing real estate in the city, players can alter the looks of their vehicles and characters. They are completely free to roam the map and engage

with other players and non-player characters (NPCs) in an open world. The online game centers on a variety of cooperative and competitive activities, including street racing, robberies, thefts, and death matches. There are many other recreational activities that mimic real life, like golf, gambling, scuba diving, and airplane flying.

Role-playing in GTA Online works as a system that operated by players itself, where the player participates in a virtual world by developing fictional characters and playing according to realistic norms, rules, and consequences. RP, in contrast to conventional gameplay, takes place primarily on community servers like FiveM or RageMP that transform the basic game's mechanics into a persistent social environment. These servers provide institutional structures like police, courts, economies, and hierarchies of occupation, that encourage players to take their prescribed roles and to continue telling the story over time (Martínez, 2024). Participation often begins with the creation of a persistent character, based on background, personality characteristics, and social motivations. Players are expected to remain "in character" during interactions, distinguishing in-game identity from their real life. This immersion is codified by server regulations that bar behavior that devalue realism such as random violence.

Different from the standard GTA V game mode which tends to focus on missions, action, and exploration, offering a more role-based and narrative gaming experience, each player is required to play a certain character consistently, complete with background, profession, and apply their respective interpersonal communication. They carry out various activities like everyday life, such as working as a police officer, doctor, businessman, or even a criminal, as well as establishing close social interactions through intense and continuous communication. The community of players of this game has grown rapidly globally, with thousands to millions of players joining special servers that provide various rules of play and their respective virtual worlds, the uniqueness of this game lies in its emphasis on interpersonal communication, where the success of players is determined more by their ability to communicate, improvise, and build social relationships rather than simply relying on technical skills or game mechanics, voice chat and text chat become the main tools for forming connections between characters, this kind of interaction not only strengthens friendships in the game, but also creates a virtual social space that resembles a real society building and maintaining friendship relationships with other players (Veri, 2023).

### **Patterns of Cross-Gender Role-Playing and Virtual Interaction**

In virtual reality, cross-gender role-playing takes place when an individual's virtual character or avatar, is of the opposite sex, and in this scenario the player assumes the characteristics of the opposite sex. Customizable avatars in virtual worlds, social networks and online games have been increasingly developed as a way of projecting a desired identity. People engaging in cross-gender role-playing are motivated by several factors such as curiosity about how it feels to be a member of the opposite sex, the personal preference for aesthetics, a strategic advantage in the game, or a desire to test social relationships in low-risk situations. Online communities allow users to easily take on non-real-life roles and experiment with different identities. As a result, players can express themselves in ways that would not be possible in a real-life environment. This can allow them to step outside the social norms that apply in the real world. The diversity of identities that are displayed in this environment challenges the conventional views regarding the presentation of androgyny.

Every participant can design and act out a fictional character based on their own tastes and creativity. Certain physical and psychological characteristics, such as being big, aggressive, chaotic, or even violent, can be incorporated into this character. In order to preserve story continuity and cultivate connections inside the virtual world they live in, players must persistently and genuinely pursue the roles they play (Putra et al., 2025). The use of realistic rules in GTA V roleplay, which is comparable to real life, is one of its most appealing features.

For instance, players are not allowed to use indiscriminate violence, such as assaulting or murdering other characters without a plot point. When driving, they must follow traffic laws and take care of their fundamental requirements, such as getting food or medical treatment if they are sick or hungry. The gaming environment is intended to be a social simulation that mirrors many facets of daily life, such as communication, making friends, and being mindful of the social roles they play.

According to Hussain and Griffiths (2008), gender-swapping had been very common among the participants. Overall, 57% of gamers reported that they had previously assumed an avatar of the opposing gender, including 54% of males and 68% of females. Numerous motivations for their behavior were found to be multifaceted and highly dependent on both instrumental and experiential factors. Primarily, cross-gender role-play served as a chance to fully immerse in an experimentation of identity, which was not readily available in real life. Players assumed that gender-swapping allowed them to explore an assortment of alternatives in terms of self-description and identity formation. They also described it as an experimental stage of their gameplay since they'd actively test how others behaved toward their opposite-gendered identities in the online platform.

Some participants also approached gender-swapping as a form of adaptation, which may have arisen from the perceived need of adjustment in the dynamics of online social interactions. Female players especially expressed adopting male avatars as a way of avoiding unwanted sexual attention and sexually provocative behavior from other players, describing such behavior as intrusive and unrelated to their reasons for playing. While other participants also adopted female avatars on purpose because women were perceived to benefit from a number of advantages or preferential treatment by other players. Others approached it for pleasure or curiosity simply to check whether living in an alternative identity as a woman or a man would significantly change their interactions with other gamers and alter the gameplay experience. In summary, the research findings indicate that cross-gender role-playing involves more than aesthetics but can extend to the perceptions of safety, social status, and identity experimentation within virtual environments.

When males and females engage in role-playing, exploratory and performance aspects are frequently displayed. By adopting communication styles that conform to societal expectations of what is masculine or feminine, people can test social boundaries between what is considered real and what is an act. These portrayals can strengthen existing stereotypes when game characters are based on overused and exaggerated gender roles. Role-playing across genders may lead to lower trust or cause ethical concerns for some participants due to situations involving deception or romantic relationships, but others use these to foster greater understanding and to see things from other perspectives. The space offered by virtual worlds encourages users to try out different identities. However, this freedom is restricted by cultural norms, social norms and the site's rule of conduct. These identities may concern morality or sex.

As the fundamental element of all player interactions in the online role-playing game GTA V, communication is essential to build positive relationships between players. The way players interact, improvise how they speak, and respond verbally to circumstances all have a major role in the game's success and continuity. The communication style used by each player not only influences the storyline but also shapes the structure of social relationships within the virtual community, creating a richer and more realistic gaming experience (Alfidah et al., 2025). It is essential to comprehend the diversity of communication styles in interactive environments, especially when analyzing how specific communication traits can improve or obstruct interaction between players. The interaction patterns that develop can also be influenced by cultural and social norms among players from different geographic backgrounds. While some players may be more adaptable and expressive in their communication, others may tend to employ more formal language.

Cross-gender role-playing, where a person plays the opposite sex for fun, raises issues concerning the mental health impact, whether the participants gave their consent and to what degree the individuals involved were aware of what was going on. Many who take part in role-plays see this as a way to learn more about themselves, but other people are worried that it could lead to people being deceived, bullied, or hurt. Ultimately, understanding patterns of cross-gender role-playing requires attention by structuring regulations and limitations in the platform.

### **Implications of Role-Playing on Player Behaviors and Ethics**

Role-playing in digital games allows the player to create different identities, to experiment with moral choices, and to interact within simulated social contexts. From a positive perspective, virtual environments can encourage moral thought, empathy, and making decisions as players face ethical dilemmas and consider the consequences of their actions. Role-playing communities are also conducive to collaboration, communication, and problem solving, leading to the development of social behavior such as teamwork, negotiation, and mutual aid (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Role-playing may also provide some players with an alternative space for identifying, feeling, and coping with anxieties that can be managed judiciously (Przybylski et al., 2010).

However, role-playing may lead to problematic behavior and ethical concerns. Games that normalize violence, criminality or manipulative acts may subconsciously deter players from violence or deceptive acts, particularly when successes in the game are linked to morally illegitimate behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). Playing virtual roles that promote dominance or exploitation can occasionally lead to an ethical dispute, and some players find it simpler to balance entertainment with real-world values. Furthermore, harassment, racism, and prejudice can occur in role-playing settings, especially in competitive or unjudged settings. Such initiatives can lead to attitudes of isolation that exclude the weak and promote false stereotypes. Additionally, when gaming becomes more of a habit than a pleasure, excessive immersion can lead to time displacement, academic neglect, or reduced social functioning.

In general, role-playing has complicated and particular effects on behavior and ethics. The influence varies depending on community norms, game design, player motives, and the existence of moral advice either inside or outside the game settings. Role-playing comes with risk of moral disengagement, behavioral normalization of unethical activities, and exposure to negative online societies, even though it may encourage self-awareness, empathy, and social competence. Therefore, to guarantee that role-playing continues to be a positive and morally sound activity, critical involvement from players, parents, educators, and legislators is essential.

### **Islamic Perspective And Scholarly Opinions**

This chapter will delve into the Islamic legal rulings and scholars' opinions regarding gender-swapping (*tasyabbuh*) and free mixing (*ikhtilat*) in virtual environments. It will explore the basic principles of Islamic rulings and how it aligns or differs from these practices in digital platform. By analyzing the mechanism of this modern gameplay, this chapter aims to assess whether it complies with the full provisions of Shariah jurisprudence, focusing on aspects such as *tasyabbuh* and *ikhtilat*. The discussion will provide insights into potential acceptances or concerns from a Shariah perspective, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of these activities in online games within the context of Islamic principles.

#### **Scholars' Opinions on Gender-Swapping in Virtual Environments**

The topic of gender-swapping in online games, where gamers intentionally choose avatars of the opposite gender, is also debated among Muslim scholars. The classical jurists were not faced

with the issue of virtual worlds, but their discussion of gender imitation provides an analogy for this matter. All four schools agree that deliberate mimicry of other gender is forbidden since it declines the customary and *shar'i* boundaries between men and women.

In al-Fiqh al-Manhaji ala al-Mazhab Shafie, the authors explicitly classify such behavior as a major sin based on the evidence (Al-Khin et al., 1992). They state:

*This imitation of the opposite sex by either gender is forbidden; indeed, it is a major sin, as those who commit it are cursed. It is also one of the reprehensible practices that has spread and become widespread among Muslims.*

This ruling draws directly on Prophet Muhammad condemning cross-gender imitation, such as the hadith,

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما، قال: لعن رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - المتشبهين من الرجال بالنساء، والمتشبهات من النساء بالرجال.

Meaning:

*The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) cursed men who copy women and cursed women who copy men.*

Classical jurists considered the curse a strong indicator of prohibition, thus evaluating the act to the level of a grave sin.

Applying these principles to digital contexts, contemporary scholars argue that virtual gender-swapping reproduces the same intentional symbolism, even when performed through an avatar. The issue is not merely graphical representation, but the conscious adoption of gender markers belonging to the opposite sex, especially when such representation persists across gameplay and interaction. From a legal theory standpoint, the analogy is supported because the underlying rational basis (*illah*) which is a deliberate gender imitation remains present irrespective of medium.

However, not all activities in the virtual world are equally significant. Factors like intention and purpose of gameplay, as well as whether it leads to the normalization of prohibited imitation behavior, could determine its illegality. Nevertheless, the fiqh discourses gender-swapping in games as another form of prohibited imitation when it is done knowingly and habitually, which will eventually normalize in real life.

In conclusion the normative framework of classical fiqh is consistent and can be broadly applied across different domains (Gunardi, 2019), including video games. While the classical perspectives obviously do not discuss online avatars, the reason from the rulings on gender imitation leaves no doubt that Islamic law would strongly discourage this type of virtual roleplay.

### **Analysis of Free Mixing in Online Games**

Segregation is the basic principle of how men and women interact in Islam. This means that contract between men and women is generally forbidden in every aspect of life and in all settings, whether private or public, and there are several examples that support the idea that the sexes should not mix.

According to Ibn Manzour (1997) in his book *lissan al-arab*, *ikhtilat* means mixing things or blended.

According to Abdul Karim Zaidan (1993), *ikhtilat* is the meeting between women and men (not *mahram*) in one place, usually resulting to interview one another, or look at one another, or the conversation between them.

Generally, men and women meeting in one place without taking into account of all the Shariah rulings may open the door to immorality. Other definition of free mixing is gathering of Muslim men and women without partition or a designated area for either gender.

Basically, the act of *ikhtilat* between a man and a woman who are not mahram is something that is forbidden in Islam. However, there is a necessity in certain situations provided that it must be guided by *syara'*. This is based on a hadith narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr:

إِنَّ نَفَرًا مِنْ بَنِي هَاشِمٍ دَخَلُوا عَلَى أَسْمَاءَ بِنْتِ عُمَيْسٍ فَدَخَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ الصِّدِّيقُ وَهِيَ تَحْتَهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَرَأَاهُمْ فَكَرِهَ ذَلِكَ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَالَ لَمْ أَرَ إِلَّا خَيْرًا . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَرَّأَهَا مِنْ ذَلِكَ " . ثُمَّ قَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ فَقَالَ " لَا يَدْخُلَنَّ رَجُلٌ بَعْدَ يَوْمِي هَذَا عَلَى مُغِيبَةٍ إِلَّا وَمَعَهُ رَجُلٌ أَوْ اثْنَانِ

**Meaning:**

*Some persons from Banu Hisham entered the house of Asma' daughter of 'Umais when Abu Bakr also entered (and she was at that time his wife). He (Abu Bakr) saw it and disapproved of it and he made a mention of that to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said: I did not see but good only (in my wife). Thereupon Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: Verily Allah has made her immune from all this. Then Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) stood on the pulpit and said: After this day no man should enter the house of another person in his absence, but only when he is accompanied by one person or two persons.*

Based on the hadith above, the jurist of the school state that the association between a man and a woman who are not in a mahram relationship is forbidden because the act is considered to fall into a wrongful act that can bring down a person's dignity and righteousness.

Therefore, the association between a man and a woman that involves meeting in one place to communicate and deal directly is only permitted in certain circumstances such as emergency and necessary situations. In emergencies, Imam al-Nawawi (1392) stated that the prohibition of *ikhtilat* between men and women also includes the chapter on praying together. However, exceptions are made for cases in emergencies such as finding an *ajnabi* woman who is lost on the street, then it is permissible to accompany her on the basis of safety, if the woman is afraid of being abandoned. Necessary affairs involve human transactions related to society and the needs of daily life such as buying and selling, so one must see the *ajnabi* in the transaction business. In addition, situations like working, politics, seeking knowledge, jihad, and serving guest are also related to necessary affairs.

In the context of role-playing in GTA online, *ikhtilat* happens through shared gameplay, chat box, and voice chat using mic in the game. This situation often happens between non-mahram individuals of different genders in online environments. Although the elements of physical interaction between individuals do not directly apply, the rational basis or '*illah*' are used in this matter. Any environment that attracts unnecessary interactions between man and woman may risk the Islamic value of modesty. However, all actions depend on the intention.

According to Ustadha Shazia Ahmad (n.d.), it is definitely improper to engage in any pointless activity with people of opposite genders. Whether you play or converse with them. Because of how life operates, engaging in any activity or forming a relationship with someone of different genders can lead to something bigger and impermissible. Additionally, people typically make comments that are far bolder and more reckless than they would in person due to the nature of online realm, where you do not see each other directly. Islam is determined to get rid of *fitnah*, since it will have negative and detrimental effects on society and the country.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, role-playing in GTA Online involves players assuming a fictional character within the game, where they may experiment on their identity in the game and flexibility in online interaction. Players can create different identities, act out social roles and take part in immersive storytelling that goes beyond conventional gameplay mechanics in GTA Online. While these practices improve immersion and creativity, they also impose ethical and behavioral implications that require careful consideration.

Role-playing in GTA Online faced Shariah issues as there were practices within the game that raise significant ethical concerns from an Islamic perspective. Online gaming shall be subject to the content of game, behavior and purpose of player, by the legal maxim *al-asl fi al-ashya' al-ibahah* (al-Suyuti, 1983). While GTA Online is created as entertainment for the players across the world, the normalization of cross-gender role-playing and unrestricted interaction may eventually lead to identity confusion and uncivilized citizen when the elements of Islamic ethics is abandoned. Although the intention plays an important role in determining players moral accountability, Islam emphasizes prevention of harm (*sadd al-dharai*) to avoid probability of these actions to be put at a disadvantage. Therefore, participating in such gaming practices requires careful ethical awareness, self-control, and adherence to Islamic guidelines to ensure that entertainment does not contradict with Islamic values.

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