



Aalto University

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## **Privacy Notice – Dark Souls and Depression: Analyzing Player Narratives on Uplifting Videogame Experiences on Reddit**

This privacy notice describes how your personal data will be used in the research study as a participating individual.

### **1. What is being studied in this research study and the purpose of processing personal data**

This research study examines a phenomenon where players of Dark Souls – a popular commercial videogame series – describe their experience with the games as having helped them cope with and overcome mental health issues, such as depression. The phenomenon appears to be widely recognized in popular discourse, but there is a lack of academic discussion of the phenomenon. On Reddit – a popular social news website and forum – one can find a considerable number of discussion threads where players narrate their personal experiences with Dark Souls and depression, describing for example how the game “saved” or “changed” their lives. The objective of the research study is to use these Reddit discussions as a source of qualitative data, and to employ thematic analysis or content analysis to examine why Dark Souls may have such an uplifting or therapeutic effect on some players.

The research is funded by the Research Council of Finland (339350).

### **2. What personal data is processed in the research study**

The following type of data will be collected from Reddit discussions and processed in the study:

- Bodytext of submission (both original post and and its comments)
- Submission date
- Submission title (title of the original post)
- Username (both original post and its comments)
- Upvote score (the number of upvotes for the submission)
- Subreddit name
- URL (link to the discussion thread, e.g., <https://www.reddit.com/r/<subreddit>/comments/<submissionID>/title>)
- SubmissionID (unique identifier of the original post’s author)
- CommentID (unique identifies of a commentor)
- ParentID (to which submission or comment is the comment a reply to)
- AuthorID (a user’s unique identifier)

#### **Special categories of personal data (sensitive personal data)**

In addition, the following special categories of personal data are processed:

Data concerning health

Our focus is on how players describe their videogame experiences on Reddit in relation to mental health issues, namely depression. Thus, the data is likely to contain some descriptions concerning mental health. However, we are not looking at depression from a medical perspective, but rather how players' themselves use the term in relation to their gameplay experiences.

**Personal data is collected from the following sources:**

From the participant: Reddit messages written to the following subreddits: DarkSouls, DarkSouls2, DarkSouls3, bloodborne, eldenring.

### **3. Processing of necessary personal data and removal of the direct identifiers from the data**

The research study only processes personal data that is necessary for the purpose and execution of the study. The research data is processed during analysis phase of the research in a manner, that your Reddit username is directly identifiable to the researchers. Whereas the study is not interested in individual users, an identifier is required to determine which messages have been written by the same user. Given that the messages themselves are easily findable via search engines, and the content of the messages should not be modified, the data cannot be satisfactorily anonymized or pseudonymised. The study also preserves various metadata identifiers which make it possible to record the hierarchical structure of the data, so that individual comments and replies can be connected to the correct discussion threads. If the data were fully anonymized, the research team could not comply with possible requests related to the use of research participants' data, as we would no longer be able to locate the individual data.

To minimize the collection of data that is not necessary for conducting the research:

- Submissions that are not related to the Dark Souls videogame series and do not contain players' descriptions of the game's relation to the topic of depression or other mental health issues are deleted. Also, comments that have not been posted under such submissions about Dark Souls and depression in one of the relevant subreddits are deleted.
- Data is not reported on an individual level, but rather we are concerned with identifying and reporting recurring topics and overarching themes and patterns within these player narratives.
- No direct quotations of messages are reported in the study, and we take measures to ensure that any paraphrased quotations cannot be traced back to the original messages using online search engines.

Identity (Reddit username) of the individual research participant will not be disclosed in a scientific publication or other research results to be published.

### **4. Legal basis for the processing of personal data**

The legal basis is scientific research, a task in the public interest.

## 5. Sharing personal data

Research data containing your personal data is shared with the following parties:

**Independent controllers:** None

Research data which consists of your personal data, may be transferred to a third party, such as scientific publication, for peer-review process or for other purpose, which is mandatory for scientific publishing or validation of the research results.

Research data containing personal data is retained for research data to be used for further scientific research in the same scientific discipline or in other disciplines that support this research study. Research data may also be transferred to other universities or research organisations as part of further research projects.

**Processors:** None

## 6. International data transfers

During the execution and analysis phase of research, research data containing personal data will not be transferred to non-EU / EEA countries or international organizations. However, as part of the scientific publishing process, it might be necessary to transfer the data outside EU/EAA for publishers or peer reviewers for verification of research results, as such parties may be located outside EU/EAA area. However, it is exceptional that scientific publication process would require transferring data regarded as personal data.

## 7. Storage and protection of personal data

**Protection of manual material:** No material in physical form is produced or stored as a part of this study.

**Information processed in IT systems:** Your personal data is processed and preserved in secure IT systems, which are approved by Aalto University and suitable for personal data. Access to all computers and IT systems are protected by username and strong personal password. Access to IT systems containing personal data is technically restricted in a manner, that only researchers participating in the study and persons necessary for the implementation of the study have access to your personal data.

## 8. Retention and deletion of personal data

### Deletion during and after the study

Research data containing personal data is retained for research data to be used for further scientific research in the same scientific discipline or in other disciplines that support this research study. Research data containing personal data is deleted after five (5) years since the last publication where this research data has been used and exploited.

## 9. Rights of the research participant

According to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a data subject has the right to:

- receive information on the processing of their personal data
- right to access the personal data collected and processed
- right to rectification of inaccurate personal data
- request that the processing of personal data be restricted
- object the processing of personal data
- right to erasure of personal data if the conditions of Article 17(1) of the Data Protection Regulation are met and processing is no longer necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest or for scientific research or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1)

If the research purpose does not require, or no longer requires the identification of the data subject, the controller shall not be obliged to obtain further information so that the data or the data subject may be identified only for purposes to enable the data subject to exercise his/her rights. If the controller is unable to link the data to a particular data subject, the data subject does not have the right to access or correct the personal data, object the processing, or delete the personal data. However, if the data subject provides additional information that allows their identification from the research data, the rights will not be restricted.

## 10. Contact details of the controller

The controller of this research study is Aalto University Foundation sr., operating as Aalto University.

### Person in charge of the research study

Questions regarding the conduct of the research study may be addressed to the person in charge of the study: Jaakko Väkevä, +358503092448, [jaakko.vakeva@aalto.fi](mailto:jaakko.vakeva@aalto.fi)

### Data Protection Officer

If the research participant has questions or requests related to data protection or the processing of personal data, the research participant should contact the Data Protection Officer of Aalto University: tel. +358 9 47001 (exchange), [dpo@aalto.fi](mailto:dpo@aalto.fi) .

In this data request service, you can request the exercise of your rights under GDPR from Aalto University as the controller <https://datarequest.aalto.fi/en-US/>.

If a participant of the research study feels that his or her personal data has been processed in violation of data protection legislation, the participant has the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority, the Data Protection Ombudsman's office (read more: <http://www.tietosuoja.fi> ).