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The Impact of Toxic Behaviour on First-Person Shooter Players

KAMK · University of Applied Sciences

Abstract

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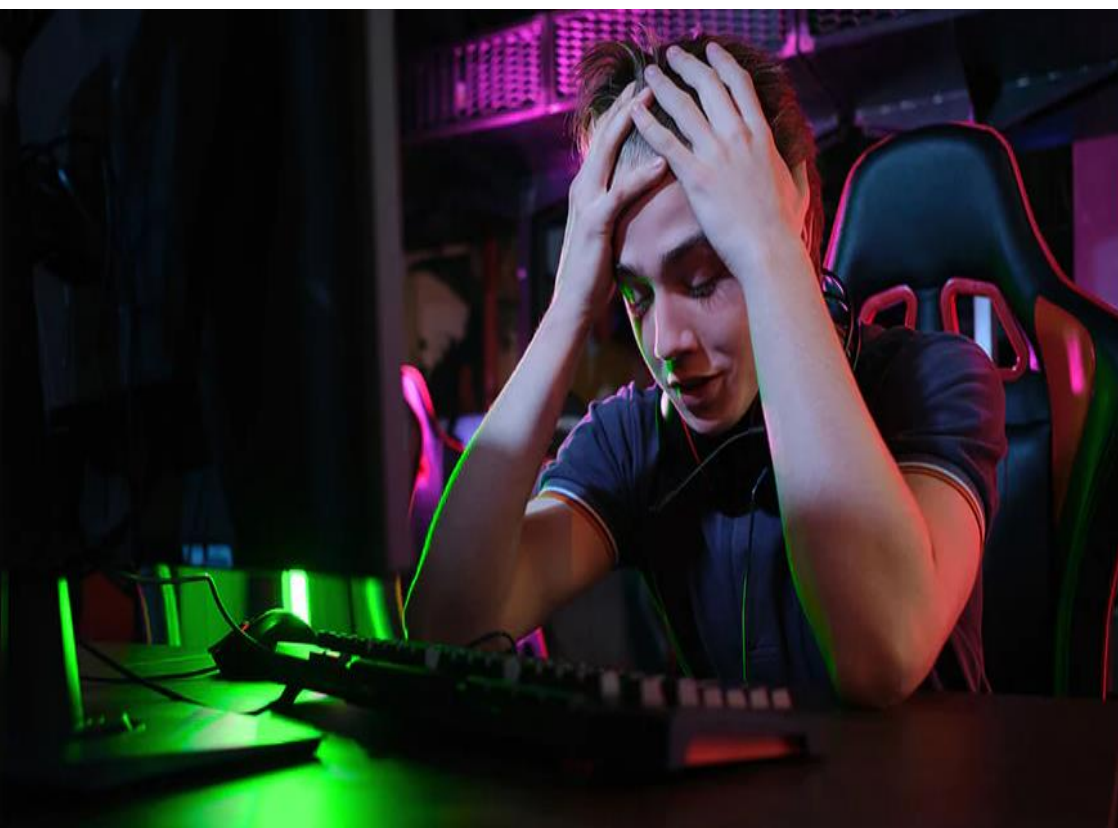
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First-person shooter (FPS) games are intensely competitive, demanding coordination and teamwork, making communication and collaboration indispensable for success in the in-game experience. Nevertheless, toxic behaviour such as flaming, griefing, and sexual harassment, among others, has been displayed by several players to their teammates through the voice and text in chat communication channels which can have a significant impact on players' game experience.

This thesis aimed to discover the impact of toxic behaviour on FPS game players and explore the experience encountered by Kajaani University of Applied Sciences esports degree students. The study was conducted using qualitative research methodology in which data was gathered through interviews with six participants, and the collected data were analysed through a thematic analysis approach.

The results increase the understanding of the negative consequences of toxic behaviour in FPS gaming communities and suggest ways to reduce such behaviours. The study concludes by proposing strategies to create a positive gaming environment, such as improving reporting mechanisms, increasing social value awareness and education about toxic behaviour, and promoting positive communication and teamwork.

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1   Introduction

Gaming environments have evolved into entertainment platforms where gamers can display their strategic abilities and enjoy the shared experience of online gaming. With the development of advanced gaming systems, players can now compete and interact with one another through voice and chat communication channels. Unfortunately, over time, these channels have been used to promote toxic behaviour, resulting in adverse social behaviour among team members in the gaming environment. This behaviour negatively impacts player performance, experience, contentment, and mental well-being. Such conduct may include insulting other players or their family members, expressing xenophobic or discriminatory sentiments based on race, religion or gender, and other prejudiced attitudes (Souza, et al., 2021).

Research has shown that anonymity in online gaming can lead to the development of a toxic and aggressive culture. This is because the anonymity of online gaming allows individuals to engage in behaviours that they may not otherwise show in face-to-face interactions. When people are anonymous, they feel detached and distant from their actions, leading to a lack of accountability for their behaviour. (Zsila, et al., 2022).

Online players subjected to toxic behaviours may be vulnerable to developing psychological disorders like depression, anxiety, and persecutory delusions. Moreover, players who have been victimized may lead to a decline in their interest and motivation and a decrease in their overall enjoyment of the game. In some cases, players may choose to withdraw from the game entirely. (Souza, et al., 2021).

Over the years, there has been more research on toxic behaviour in online gaming across various dimensions. However, this research will focus on the impact of toxic behaviour on the first-person shooter (FPS) game players. This will guide new online players of FPS games on the possible challenges they may face and how to cope with them. Furthermore, it may guide the game developers to need more social and moral value sensitization in the gaming community.

1.1 Research Question

First-person shooter (FPS) games have been designed and programmed where players compete against other team players in competitions. Still, the anonymity of the gaming environment has beset players to show toxic behaviour that is unpleasant to the game environment, thereby creating a toxic environment that is contaminated with verbal abuse, harassment, and depression, among others.

This study aims to focus on answering the research question, how the impact of toxic behaviour affects first-person shooter (FPS) game players by using the experience of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences esports degree students. This question enables the comprehension of the core impacts of toxic behaviour confronted by the first-person shooter (FPS) game players in its environment.

2   Background of the Study

The aim of this section is to evaluate the existing literature related to the theoretical structure that will elucidate and guide the associated research question related to the impact of toxic behaviour on first-shooter game players.

2.1   Esports

Esports, shortened form for electronic sports, is a form of sports, fast developing in the global entertainment industry by which online video games can be played competitively, as an individual or as a team. (Chauhan. N.d.). The internet's emergence greatly enhanced team gaming popularity in esports. However, this launched a change from home-playing video games to sports careers where records are made just as in traditional sports. Esports careers are now built on the professional academic degree, coaching, playing, or steaming in professional esports organizations, esports event organizers, and esports media presenters. The world of esports has evolved tremendously, starting from small-scale competitions, then expanding to nationwide events, and eventually leading to the creation of multi-game leagues such as Major League Gaming. Currently, the industry has multiple games that generate high viewership, often surpassing the numbers seen in conventional professional sports events. (Holden et al., 2020).

As the number of online games and online broadcasting technology increases, esports has emerged as one of the new media industries with the fastest growth rates, where various gamers stream live on multiple media platforms such as Meta (Facebook), Twitch, and YouTube, among other media channels. (Hamari and Sjoblom, 2017). Esports has become a binding domain in the digital economy since online gaming has blended with information technology, which is essential for the expansion of the online game industry into academics, coaching, and athletic career path. Esports has numerous connotations, with no clear universal definition, and esports sits at the nexus of electronic gaming, sports, and media, which aids in comprehending the scope better. Electronic games serve as the basis of esports by acting as the environment for game competition, while sports serve as competitive esports and the tactical skills required to excel in the game, and media is the medium by which esports is broadcast to entertain the audience. (Jin, 2010, p.60).

What makes esports popular today are the tournaments and the prize money at stake, worth billions of cash prizes which are held online and offline where various stakeholders such as game developers, event organizers, sponsors, players, and audiences are the structure on which these tournaments are built. According to Maryville University (2023), describe that esports games are categorized into various tournaments which fall into several categories, such as racing, fighting, sports, digital card, real-time strategy (RTS), first-person shooter (FPS), third-person shooter (TPS), and multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA).

Furthermore, Sacco (2002), in EUNK esports news UK, stated that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had announced an interesting new breakthrough in virtual sports, in which the first-ever Olympic esports week will be held in Singapore from June 22nd to June 25th, 2023. The event is a large step forward in the Olympic movement's promotion of virtual sports, and this demonstrates the organization's commitment to promoting the growth of esports and expanding mutually beneficial engagement with esports athletes.

Since esports is a relatively young form of entertainment, there has been only little research conducted in this study field. In general, there is only some literature on esports, with most research focusing on the phenomenon of its definition, branch dimensions, and future development. (Parshakov, 2019, p.86).

2.2   First-Person Shooter Games

First-person Shooter (FPS) games are types of action-packed video game genre that typically focus on combat using firing weapons from a first-person perspective. Several brand game developers invented various first-person shooter games for entertainment for the game community, which has a huge fan base. The most popular first-person shooter (FPS) games as of today are namely: Call of Duty, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO), Valorant, Apex Legends, and Overwatch 2, among others. Some of these games are used for esports tournaments, Live streaming, and playing pleasant of several individuals regardless of age and gender. (Karlhikenyan, 2022).

However, first-person shooters (FPS) games feature action-oriented game play, with rapid and brutal conflicts that allow players to choose their weapons and characters with different abilities that influence their approach to the game. (Rhee, et al., 2019).

However, there are two main ways to play first-person shooter games: mission mode or multi-player mode. Gamers who play alone typically choose the mission mode, in which they must overcome challenging levels to attain a specific goal. While on the other hand, gamers who want to interact or engage with other players in exchanging tactical experience can engage in multiplayer mode, where they can join a network or server and play in a shared gaming environment. First-person shooter (FPS) games offer various playing options, which include death match, defusing a boob, attack or defend and kill, and last man standing, among others. (Rouse, 2011).

2.3   Toxic Behaviour

According to MMA medical experts (2021), toxic behaviour refers to a range of harmful actions and attitudes that an individual may engage in, which can harm other individuals physically or mentally. This can manifest in numerous ways, such as using offensive language, making threats, vociferating, and other similar behaviours. These behaviours can be harmful, especially in online communication channels, where they can transmit unpleasant sensations to others.

Furthermore, anonymity is often associated with toxic computer-mediated communication (CMC) behaviour. It allows individuals to hide their identities and engage in behaviours they may not display in face-to-face interactions. This anonymity can lead to a lack of responsibility, enabling people to engage in more aggressive and harmful behaviour. (Kwak and Blackburn, 2014).

2.4   Forms of Toxic Behaviour

Several forms of toxic behaviour have been displayed in different dimensions, but in this context, the researcher will discuss the necessary forms of toxicity in sub-sections.

2.4.1   Doxing

According to Mcintyre (2016, p.114), the term doxing was initially used in the 2000s to describe the actions of hackers who compiled people's private and personal information and made it

available to the public without their authorization. In addition, doxing is a term derived from the terms document and tracing. It refers to gathering information on Internet users that they would not want to be known about and need to be made aware they have made available to the public. An effective dox requires gathering data such as a person's full name, date of birth, usernames, email addresses, residential addresses, mobile numbers, personal photos, and online social media handles. (Babak et al., 2014, p.75).

Mcintyre (2016, p.113) also further described doxing as a type of harassment that usually happens when someone obtains private information about a person or a group of people of their mobile number, home address, or social security number and posts it online without their consent, exposing their private information for public view and in return causing or inflicting pain and demeaning their reputation. This information souring is typically obtained through deep internet searches or hacking through emails or social media handles. In addition, Mcintyre stated that doxing stands for posting a person's confidential information online to frighten or scare the victim into believing that the information will be released elsewhere in the future.

According to a study by the Anti-Defamation League (2002), 97 million adults in the United States who play online multiplayer games, 71% have reported experiencing severe online harassment. Figure 1 shows the research results presented by Anti-Defamation League indicate that 29%, 13%, and 22% of American adult gamers experienced doxing in online multiplayer games in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. The data indicates that the respondents witness doxing, such as leaking personal data, frame-ups, and physical threats.
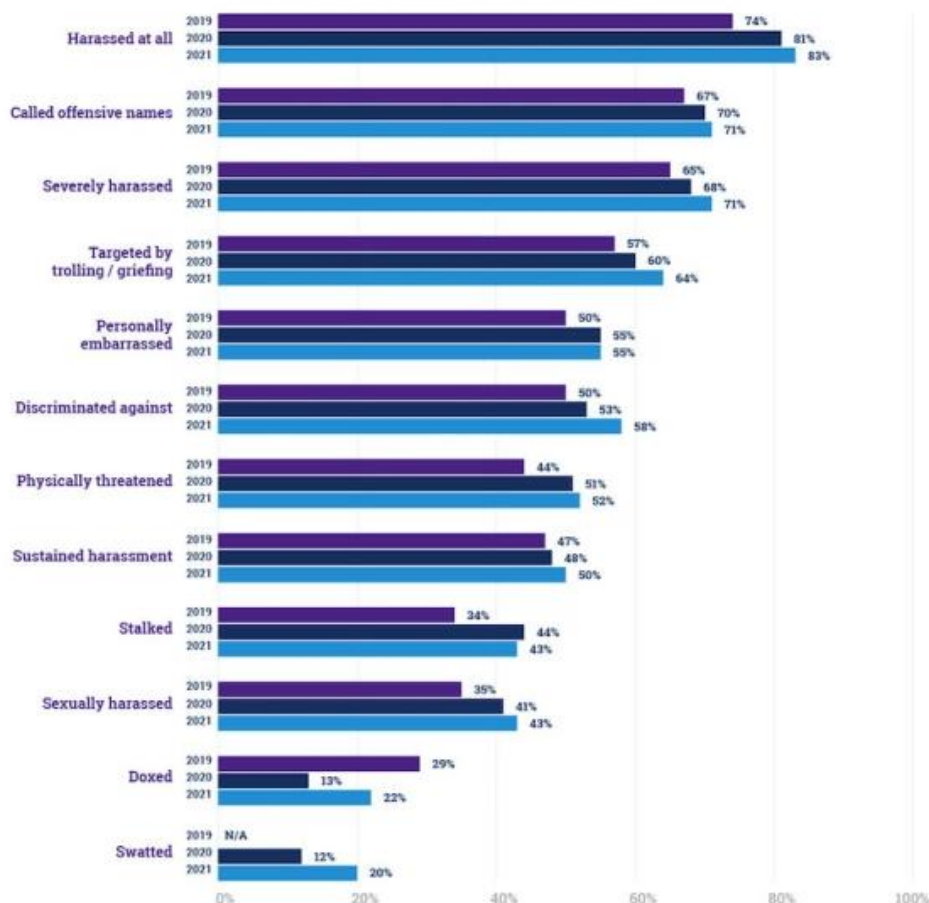
Figure 1. Hate and harassment in game.

Source: Anti-Defamation League 2002.

2.4.2 Griefing

Another form of toxic behaviour in online video games is griefing. It has been described as the purposeful harassment of other players by breaching the regulations or employing undesired tactics to annoy them. (Ryan, 2016, p.87-88). Griefing, as the name implies, can be compared to king-making and is political in the sense that it is game playing conduct that does not aim to benefit the perpetrator. Instead, this form of toxic behaviour is displayed to make their opponent win in every round of the game and make their team member lose the game competition.

Rubin, et al., (2013) stated that when a player chooses to engage in griefing, they do it to annoy their team members, their opponents and this act also prevent both teams from thoroughly enjoying the game, thereby de-motivating the team spirit of other players. However, grieving

should not be undervalued as an infrequent occurrence in online gaming because discussions about it are common among players in the online gaming world.

Also, griefing has been described as cyber bullying in online gaming, and grief players are individuals who take pleasure in upsetting other players. Those involved in this toxic act irritate and exhaust other players' efforts in the game. Occasionally, they even force their team members to abandon without getting to the end of the game play. (Blackbum and Kwak, 2014). It is imperative to note that players who engage in griefing behaviour enjoy viewing other players get irritated and distracted while playing the game rather than playing as the game developer designs the players' roles. (Kishonna, 2014, p.64).

In 2013, a survey was conducted among ten graduate students at the University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Information and Media Studies to determine how often they encounter griefing while playing video games. Table 1 displays the results of the survey, indicating varying opinions among the students about the frequency of griefing during their in-game experiences.

Participant	Gender	Age	Frequency of play (hours per week)	Perspective	Frequency of griefing
E	F	21-25	5 +	Victim	Once every two weeks
F	F	21-25	2-3	Victim and perpetrator	Once in two months
D	M	21-25	5 +	Victim and perpetrator	Once a month
J	M	21-25	4-5	Witness	Once in two months
A	M	26-30	1-2	Victim and perpetrator	Less than once in two months
B	M	26-30	5 +	Victim and perpetrator	More than once a week
I	M	31-35	<1	Victim	More than once a week
G	M	31-35	5 +	Victim and perpetrator	Once every two weeks
H	M	31-35	5 +	Victim and perpetrator	Once every two weeks
C	M	41-45	5 +	Victim	Less than once in two months

Table 1. Interview of participants on demographics and frequencies of play and griefing in order of gender and age.

Source: Rubin and Camm, 2013.

2.4.3   Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to inappropriate sexual approaches and other forms of toxic behaviour that target a person because of their sexuality, including gender harassment, making sexual statements or different types of sexually discriminating remarks, and sexual coercion, which involves compelling someone to engage in sexual activity. In addition, sexist humour, sexist slurs, unwelcome chat or interactive advances, sexual jokes, and comments regarding the attractiveness of female players are all examples of sexual harassment in online video games. (Tang, et al., 2019).

According to many feminist researchers, sexual harassment, reproductive injustices, sexual exploitation, sexual assault, and rape are all forms of toxic behaviour that can emerge from violence against women. This form of toxic behaviour has beset online games esports towards female players and in some cases has forced some of them to quit playing some of the esports games. (Nickle, 2016, p.31). However, this targeted gender-based abuse and harassment are frequently embedded in overt sexual harassment and sexually explicit insults to degrade, demean, or establish dominance over the female gender. The goal of using gender in this manner is to silence the female players, either by victimizing or portraying them as inferior in status or to maintain dominance and regain control over online conversations. (Bailey, 2016, p.39).

Figure 2 shows the research conducted on Twitter and Reddit users indicating that sexism is a significant issue in gaming communities. The data collected indicates a degree of sexism observed in 10 samples of gaming communities used for the analysis. The graph data represents the rate of sexism observed within the several gaming communities, highlighting Dota 2 observed the highest scores of sexist behaviours. In contrast, The Sims observed the lowest occurrence of this toxic behaviour. (Ghosh, 2021).
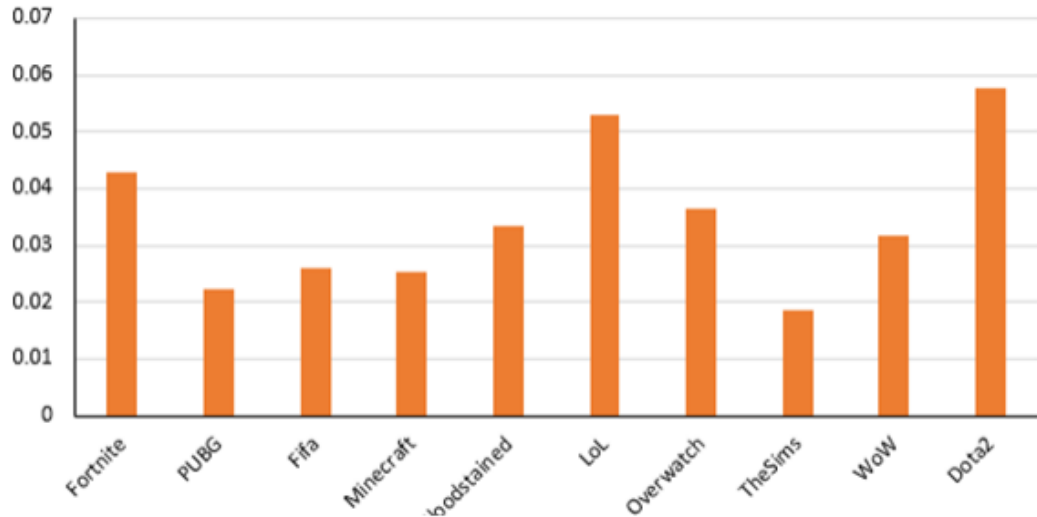
Figure 2. Values for sexism property per game community.

Source: Ghosh, 2021.

2.4.4   Racism

Racism is a harmful behaviour that can take many forms, ranging from apparent displays of aggression and unfair treatment to subtler forms of prejudice and bias. It is a widespread and insidious problem that affects many aspects of society. From its foundation, racism is a destructive form of behaviour that often prevents members of one racial group from benefiting from opportunities or advantages while allowing members of another racial group to reap the benefits of the opportunity given. (Ridley, 2005, p.29).

People can experience certain anonymity on the internet that they might not get during a face-to-face conversation. As a result, people feel more at ease expressing themselves and their thoughts when they are anonymous, as they can do so without worrying about criticism or feeling any form of negative consequences. (Kishonna, 2014, p.35).

Embrick, et al., (2012, p.95) states that video games have grown significantly and are now well-known entertainment worldwide. Some people may not understand that racism is entrenched and systemic in our culture and exists in the gaming environment. In video games, racism can appear in several overt and covert ways. However, the exploitation of game characters in colour or language discrimination in some online video games could negatively be considered overt racism in the game environment. These game characters are frequently reduced to negative

perceptions by some players, describing such characters as weak, incompetent and un-presentable.

These fosters prejudice and discrimination against people of colour and diverse languages, and this kind of depiction may be incredibly detrimental to specific races based on colour and wording. On the contrary, covert racism in video games is more complex and might be challenging to detect in the gaming environment. The lack of diverse characters, cultural appropriation, or even the way specific game mechanisms are constructed can all perpetuate negative perceptions.

Figure 3 below displays the analysis results on Twitter and Reddit users, determining the level of racism in various ten popular video games. It is shown in the results that there is a different level of racism in diverse game communities which affects players negatively. The values show that in Fortnite, there were high rate of racism experienced among other gaming communities, while the League of Legends was the least among the gaming community in observing racism (Ghosh, 2021).
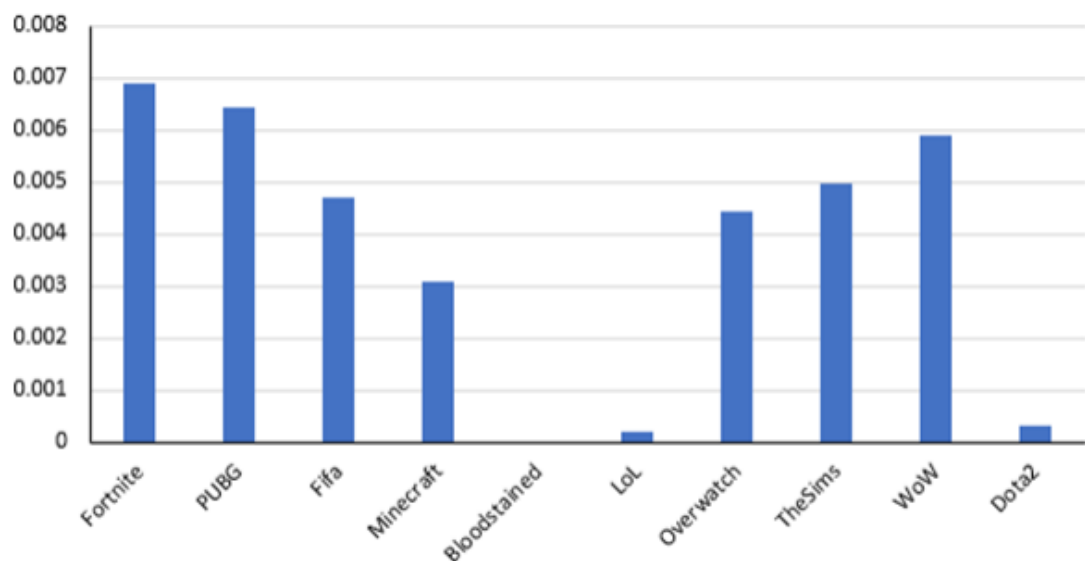

Figure 3. Values for racism property per game community.

Source: Ghosh, 2021.

2.4.5   Flaming

Flaming is a form of toxic behaviour expressed in an aggressive tone. This form of toxic behavior is associated with the gaming communities where online players frequently engage in it, using offensive or aggressive language to express their intense feelings of rage, frustration, or disappointment on certain occurrences in the game environment. This toxic behavior is expressed through voice and text conversations with other game players. Flaming can occur in various forms, such as harassing comments, insults, and vociferation. This form of toxic behaviour is frequently heard by other players when expressed during the game. It triggers several negative factors that affect the experience, well-being, and performance, creating an unpleasant gaming environment for other game players. (Kishonna, 2014, p.39).

According to Thompsen, (1993, p.3) describe flaming as undesirable behaviour in which a person verbally abuses others while expressing deep emotions towards them. The expression of these deep emotions occurs in online gaming with the frustration of players losing the game to opposition team players by defaults of a team player or players leading to vociferating using offensive language. However, flaming can occur in several other online contexts, including live chat sessions, broadcasting programs, and social media platforms, among other online communication channels.

2.5   Effects of Toxic Behaviour

Many online game players are experiencing substantial issues with toxic behaviour. It is worrying that online gaming environments are well-known for having behavioural encounters that are both unsociable and objectionable. Such behaviour can lead to adverse effects on players, including negative impacts on mental health, motivation, performance, and coordination, the transmission of toxic behaviour to other players and other negative consequences.

Poor-skill players are perceived as hindering the team's success in a game and can trigger toxic behaviour from other players. Such toxicity can manifest as insults, verbal abuse, or aggression towards underperforming players. This toxic behaviour can have a detrimental impact on team dynamics and overall performance in-game. Trust and team cohesion are essential components of successful teamwork and toxic behaviour can erode these vital elements and allow team

members to engage in toxic behaviour towards each other, creating distrust, hostility, and demotivation in the gaming environment. (Monge & O'Brien, 2021, p.4).

However, players who encounter toxic behaviour are prone to making errors and not performing to their full potential. In research, Riot Games, the producer of League of Legends, researched the link between toxic behaviour and performance in the game. They discovered a positive correlation between game losses and toxic behaviour, with teams with no toxic players having a 54% chance of winning. In comparison, teams with three toxic players had only a 46% chance of winning. Further analysis revealed that toxic behaviour was linked to negative outcomes and reduced performance indicators. Riot Games used these findings to encourage players to avoid displaying toxic behaviour towards other players. (Monge & O'Brien, 2021, p.2).

Toxic behaviour can harm players, causing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. It can also lead to a vicious cycle where victims become perpetrators, perpetuating toxic behaviour, and making the gaming community even more toxic and unfriendly. Toxicity can cause players to lose interest in the game and quit playing altogether. A survey conducted among 760 MOBA players showed that 12% of them decided to quit playing due to the toxicity they experienced. This can significantly impact the game's popularity and profitability, as a decline in player numbers can result in lower revenue from in-game purchases, which is not favourable to the game developers. (Turkay, et al., 2020, p.2-3).

Online gaming can provide players with a fun and engaging social experience, but unfortunately, it has also become a breeding ground for toxic and harassing behaviour. One specific issue is the prevalence of sexual harassment towards female players. Anonymity often enables this behaviour that online gaming provides, which allows gamers to hide behind a nickname and act in ways they might not live in real life. Male players may use this anonymity to perpetrate acts of toxicity towards female players. The impact of this behaviour on female players can be devastating; for example, they may experience significant psychological distress because of the harassment, negatively impacting their mental health.

According to Souza, et al., (2021), in research carried out on 554 gamers, respondents in Brazil were 111 are female and identified that some male players in the game made sexist comments about the presence of female players. These derogatory remarks include statements like "there is a woman in the game, we are going to lose" Such remarks indicate a lack of respect for women in the gaming community. Moreover, some male players are unwilling to accept losing a game to a female player, indicating that they believe females are not as capable as males in

playing games. This kind of toxic behaviour can severely impact female players, affecting their self-esteem, confidence and being de-motivation.

Figure 4 displays information highlighting how toxic sexual harassment and other negative be-haviours are frequently directed towards female players in online gaming environments. The data indicates that 40 out of 111 female players surveyed reported sometimes experiencing sexual harassment while playing games online, which equates to 36% of respondents. These toxic experiences and instances of harassment can significantly impact female players, prompt-ing some to hide their gender while playing to avoid such toxic behaviour. This highlights the negative impact of toxic behaviour on the online gaming community, creating an environment where some players feel unwelcome. (Souza, et al. 2021).
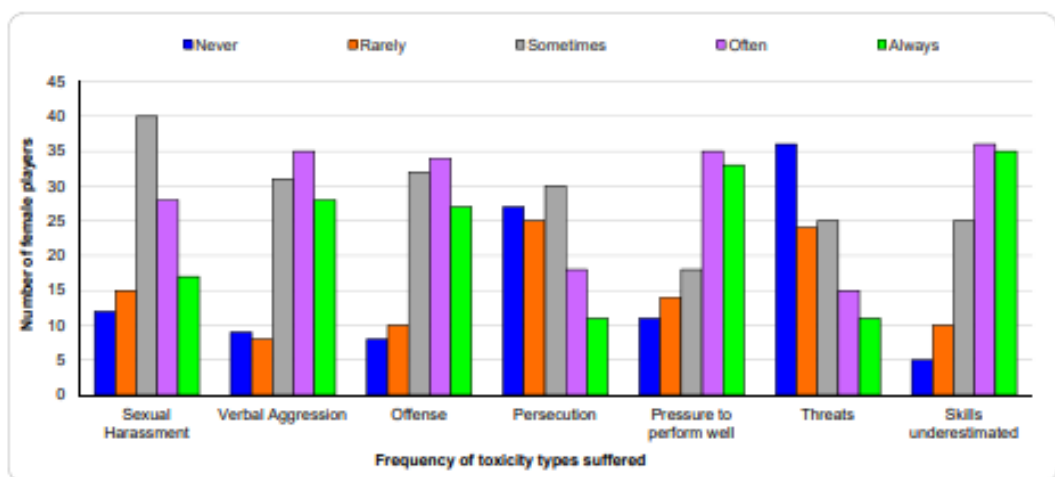

Figure 4. Distribution of the toxicity types experienced by female players.

Source: Souza, et al 2021.

2.6   Esports Culture as a Bridge between the General Esports and Toxic Behaviour

With the rapid growth of esports in recent years, esports culture has become an integral part of the gaming industry. It has become a link between esports, in general, and toxic behaviour, al-lowing players to compete in a structured environment while minimizing toxic experiences.

Esports has been referred to as competitive digital gaming that has adopted the physical charac-teristics of professional sports, with organized events and the potential for financial gain. It en-compasses both professional and amateur gaming, attracting spectators and is overseen by

governing bodies such as the International Esports Federation and Esports World Federation, among others. Unlike traditional sports, esports rely heavily on electronic systems and human-computer interfaces to facilitate game play. Unfortunately, a huge challenge facing the esports community is the issue of toxic behaviour such as flaming, sexual harassment, racism, and griefing, among others. These forms of toxic behaviour inflict psychological and social negative impacts on players. (Turkay, et al., 2020).

Traditional sports are monitored by regulatory organizations that develop and enforce regulations related to various facets of the sports, including the financial aspect, employment contracts, drug usage policies, athlete behaviour, facility permits, sponsorship agreements, safety standards, and game play rules. Nevertheless, esports currently does not have a central governing body to create unified regulations that could guide against toxic behaviour, including other sections of its activities, thereby posing a huge challenge in the sector due to the lack of a centralized governing authority. (Sarah et al., 2021, p.6).

Online gamers use a reporting feature to flag other players for toxic behaviour, an implemented approach by game developers. The reports are then evaluated by either an administrative expert team from a game company or a programmed artificial intelligence system. Riot Games has introduced an innovative reporting mechanism called the Tribunal that motivates players to participate more actively in resolving problems related to harmful conduct. However, a ban which prevents the offender from accessing the game using their account is the most common disciplinary action in similar esports games. Bans can range from a few days to several weeks, and the ban can be permanent in more serious or repeated cases. Furthermore, other forms of punishment in some games may restrict the offender's use of in-game voice or text, preventing actual communication in the in-game play. (Sonam and Selen, 2018).

3   Research Methodology

The experimental segment concentrates on gathering data from interviews held with esports business degree program students of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences who are classified and engaged in playing several first-person shooter (FPS) games. This section entails the collation of primary data conducted through interviews, the method used, and the analytical approaches adopted for this research.

3.1   Collection and Handling of Data

Christel (2004) classifies two types of interviews: focus and narrative. In this research, the focus interview approach was best selected for the interview process. "It is characterized by conversational themes, albeit flexibly, and they could be looked on as a special form of the semi-standardized interview" (Christel Hopf, 2004, p.205).

This interview method gave the researcher the framework to interview six esports business degree students of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences who play several first-person shooter (FPS) games and have experience with the perceived influence and impact of toxic behavior on first-person shooter (FPS) games which serves the basis for selecting the interviewee. This interview process ensures that the data collated is reliable and stays consistent with answering the research question, which is the main aim of the research study.

This interview aims to collect data from six KAMK esports degree students to ascertain similarities in the impact of toxicity based on their personal in-gaming experience. The interview was conducted via face-to-face interactions and through an online discord channel audio call as it suits the convenience of the interviewee. The purpose of recording all the interviews was to make transcription easier and help in the analysis of the collected data. Open-ended questions were used during the interviews to allow for flexibility and gather as much information as possible from the participants.

3.2   Methods

This study uses a qualitative research design. It serves as the most suitable method for this research work.

Qualitative research formulates collecting, analysing, and presenting data using procedures that do not use statistical or numerical analysis. This research method allows researchers to develop a comprehension of non-measurable variables such as individual experiences, languages, histories, and cultures. (Bhangu, et al., 2023).

To gather consistent answers and focus on the respondents' in-game experience with toxicity, it was best to use a semi-structured interview design which will enable the respondent's flexibility, which serves as a primary source of data collection for this research work.

3.3   Analysing the Research

As earlier mentioned, the data collated from the interviewee was conducted through a semi-structured interview with six esports degree program esports students of KAMK, which highlighted a unique insight into the impact of toxic behaviour on the first-person shooter (FPS) games. The data has been collated to reflect each respondent's perspective on the survey questions, and the data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2012, p.57) describe thematic analysis as a systematic method that involves discovering, classifying, and offering insightful explanations of the patterns of meaning or themes that appear in a particular dataset. They further stated that thematic analysis helps researchers to adequately comprehend and interpret shared experiences and ideas by focusing on the content encoded into the data.

By breaking down the responses into more manageable and concise parts, the researcher made it easy for the reader to comprehend the findings, using the thematic analysis method and following the analytical steps used by Braun and Clarke (2012).

While analyzing the data collated, six steps were taken to spot the similarities in the respondents' experience. The first step the researcher made after the interview was conducted was to transcribe the data, which was in the form of audio into text, actively familiarize with the con-

tent collated, observe meaning and patterns that appeared in the data, and make notes of the significant impression given by the respondents. The next step was to generate the initial codes that would be used to organize the data, using open coding in a meaningful and systematic method. The third step was highlighting significant points from the compiled data pertinent to the research question.

The modification of the preliminary themes that had been identified in step three will commence in the fourth step, which will also involve a comprehensive assessment. The fifth step will highlight how the themes have been honed and aim to pinpoint the essence of each theme, while the last step will concentrate on writing, which often acts as the research result in the form of a report.

4   Results

The interview data was dissected into four themes, which are crucial to the study as they demonstrate the impact of toxic behaviour on first-person shooter (FPS) games. The researcher created four distinct interconnected themes to prevent any protrusions in the data. By analyzing the information from these themes, the researcher gains valuable insights into how toxic behavior impact on FPS game players.

The researcher will focus on four themes that emerged from the data analysis, which positively reflect the research question.

Theme 1: Negative Impact on Team Coordination and Performance

All the interviewees mentioned that they encounter various forms of toxic behaviour. They share the thoughts that toxic behaviour such as flaming, griefing, sexual harassment, and trolling, among others, has detrimental effects on their team coordination and performance, which deprive them of enjoying the in-game play. One participant commented, "It negatively affects my performance because I get frustrated for making mistakes while my teammates are berating me, so my performance starts to get worse, and it affects the coordination of my team". Another participant mentioned, "Yes, it does. When a teammate starts trolling or griefing in the game, I play worst same with the rest of the team".

Findings: Based on the interviews conducted, it is evident that the toxic behaviour exhibited by players or teammates can harm team coordination and performance in FPS games. Such behaviour often takes the form of verbal or text-based abuse that is heard and visual to other team members, including making derogatory comments when a player makes mistakes, creating an unpleasant in-game environment for other players. Also, toxic behaviour, such as griefing creates distraction among team members from concentrating on the in-game play, leading to poor coordination and performance. The act of griefing can harm the in-game experience, causing other players to have an unfavorable time, feel irritated and angry, and reduce the overall entertainment of the in-game play. At times, it can even prompt players to abandon the game entirely.

Theme 2: Impact of Toxic Behaviour on Mental Health.

Three out of the six participants shared their thoughts that toxic behaviour has a negative impact on their mental health. They experience stress and frustration from encountering toxic behaviour while playing FPS games, which are unhealthy for their mental health. One of the interviewees specifically stated that "Yes, toxic behaviour affects my mental health. It triggers anger in me that makes me sad for a while, which is not good for my mental health". On the contrary, one of the participants made the clear that "I have been able to create for myself a mindset that players are going to say toxic things about me, and I do not take them to heart because I know people acting in such manner are having the worst time within themselves."

Findings: This clearly shows a divergence of view among the participants regarding the impact of toxic behaviour on mental health. Certain players are emotional when they encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games, and it causes anger and stress that affects their mental health. Such encounters of toxicity can set players' moods in a sad state for the rest of the day and deprive inexperienced players from engaging in certain FPS games that are unfavorable to the game developers. On the other hand, some players believe that toxic behaviour occurs when playing FPS games. However, with their mindset of playing to enjoy for personal interest, encountering toxicity does not affect their mental health because they do not care about any form of toxic behaviour they may encounter.

Theme 3: Impact of Toxic Behavior on Motivation

Motivation is one of the themes explored in this thesis concerning toxic behavior's impact. Four out of the six participants mention that toxicity in FPS games affects their motivation to play. One respondent said, "Yes, it affects my motivation. It makes me play with a team that I know, but it is difficult to find players you can trust to try some matchmaking together due to the gap in skill play, and it upset me a lot". Another participant responded, "Yes, it affects my motivation. I have completely stopped playing CS: GO because of the level of toxic behaviour I had encountered while playing the game". On the contrary, another respondent mentioned that "No, it does not affect my motivation in any way, I play for myself, and I do not care about other teammates' thoughts."

Findings: This indicates a challenge among team members in the in-game which affects their motivation, specifically on the disparity in skill gap among team members. The skill gap makes players contribute unmatched in the in-game. It can raise the exhibition of toxic behaviour from skilled gamers against inexperienced gamers, posing a challenge on players' motivation. The game selection mechanism selects players randomly into a team, whereby there are possibilities

of having novice or fresh players as teammates in-game. However, this has made experienced or skilled players furious and exhibit toxic behavior on mistakes made by unskilled teammates, with the perception of depriving them of the main aim of winning the game and reducing the ranks.

Also, toxic behaviour can make players feel unwelcome and excluded from the game community, which can de-motivate players, especially new players still trying to integrate into the game. Nevertheless, exhibiting toxic behaviour can significantly decrease a player's desire to continue playing a game. As a result, game developers and community managers are responsible for establishing a friendly environment for all players and addressing any form of toxic behaviour that arises within the gaming environment.

Theme 4: Need to Sensitize the Gaming Community

The interviewees shared their thoughts that the reporting system in most FPS games is ineffective and could not serve as an effective measure of preventing toxic behaviour in FPS games if not strengthened. One respondent stated, "I could suggest the game developers establish an effective report system where toxic players' rank is reduced. This will reduce toxic behaviour because most players value their level of rank and will not want it to be reduced at all". Also, some of the respondents believe there is a need to sensitize the gaming community on social and moral values, especially to the young players. One of the interviewees mentioned that "the best way to combat toxic behaviour is to generate more positive feeling around the game itself and the community by publishing tone reports that make the community feel good." In the same vein, another respondent mentions that "to prevent toxic behavior, the game developers are to educate the game community especially the young on how to treat other players through promotional videos."

Findings: Creating a positive environment within the gaming community is vital for its long-term success. To address toxic behaviour in FPS games, a viable solution is to propose to game developers to create a reliable reporting mechanism. This system can help diminish the rank of toxic players by enabling other players to report those who exhibit toxic behaviour, such as flaming, griefing, and sexual harassment, among others. Once reported, the moderators can evaluate the complaints and take necessary measures, such as issuing warnings, temporarily banning user accounts, or lowering the rank of the reported players. This can serve as a preventive measure and motivate players to display more positive behaviour in the in-game environment.

Although disciplinary measures can be effective in the short term, cultivating a positive and welcoming gaming environment is a more lasting solution. This can be achieved by using various strategies, such as releasing tone reports on encouraging positive communication and teamwork, promoting positive emotions against toxicity, and uplift the community's view on the importance of social and moral values the in-game environment.

5   Conclusion

This thesis investigated how the impact of toxic behaviour affects players of first-person shooter (FPS) games by examining the planning, implementation, and the results of the survey conducted. The findings indicate that toxic behaviour, including flaming, griefing, and sexism, among others, creates a toxic atmosphere that negatively impacts on players' overall experience of playing and competing in FPS games. This toxic environment can harm players' mental health and well-being, disrupt team coordination and performance, and undermine the game's fairness and integrity, reducing motivation and entertainment levels and even causing some players to quit gaming.

Toxic behaviour can harm the development and advancement of esports as a legitimate industry. It can damage the reputation of esports and discourage sponsors and investors from getting involved, which could impede the industry's growth. Therefore, game organizations and developers must take a proactive approach to address toxic behaviour. This can include implementing stricter penalties for toxic players, such as temporary or permanent bans from the game, and publicly condemning toxic behaviour through newsletters, adverts, among others, to deter gamers from engaging in such behaviour.

In addition, creating a community-driven approach to fostering a welcoming and respectful gaming environment can be effective. This can involve promoting positive behaviour and social values through newsletters, community events, social media campaigns, and educational resources. It can also involve empowering community leaders and moderators to actively promote positive behaviour and address toxic behaviour when it occurs.

Finally, addressing toxic behaviour and promoting a positive and inclusive gaming culture requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders in the gaming industry. By taking a proactive approach, the industry can create a more welcoming and entertaining gaming experience for everyone involved.

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Appendix 1.

Interview questions

1. How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?
2. What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?
3. What effect does toxicity have on your performance?
4. Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?
5. Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?
6. What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?
7. Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?
8. Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?
9. Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?
10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?
11. Where you content with the report feedback?
12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?
13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

Appendix 2.

Interview 1

    1.   How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

Yes, I have encountered toxic behaviour a lot.

    2.   What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

When I play badly, some of my teammates insult me, they call me name like noob, but when I play very well some of my teammates call me a hacker.

    3.   What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

Yes, it does. When a teammate starts trolling or griefing in the game, I play worst same with the rest of the team.

    4.   Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

No, it does not affect my motivation in any way, I play for myself, and I do not care about other teammates' thoughts.

    5.   Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

No, it does not.

    6.   What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

For me, some players have some issues with home training or psychological issues, I personally had played FPS games for years now, but I have never been toxic while playing these games.

    7.   Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

Never, I have not abandoned a match because of toxicity.

    8.   Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

No, it does not affect my mental health.

    9.   Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

Yes, I have, multiple times.

    10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

None.

    11. Where you content with the report feedback?

No.

    12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

I have not gotten any response before, so I do not know.

    13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

If the game developers can apply harsher penalties like lowering the rank of toxic players, I believe this will help to prevent toxic behaviour.

Interview 2

1. How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

Every time I play Valorant.

2. What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

Sexism, threats, bullying in general.

3. What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

Toxic behaviour goes into my head, disrupts my thoughts and makes me aim wrongly at the opponent.

4. Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

Yes, it affects my motivation very much.

5. Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

Yes, it does.

6. What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

Guys do not like ladies playing the games better off than them because their ego will not let them, and they start displaying toxic behaviour.

7. Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

No, I have never left a match but sometimes I try to surrender, if it goes through it makes me happy.

8. Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

Yes, it does. It makes me play worst in the game and it goes inside my head.

9. Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

I have reported team members often when they become too toxic because I want to enjoy the game.

10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

I sometimes get message that they have gotten penalty but sadly that does not happen too often.

11. Where you content with the report feedback?

Yes, but I wish it would happen more often.

12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

On a gradual process, I will say Yes but there are so many toxic people out there and it cannot be fixed in a day.

13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

It cannot be prevented when the games need to have a communication channel unless there is a good pinging system. It could be much better if the game community is being educated on the need to maintain good interactions among teams while playing games.

Interview 3

1. How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

Everyday especially in Volorant.

2. What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

Flaming and griefing are more common encounters in FPS games. In an in game play my team usually insults me when I do not play the way they want me to play or if I am not performing to their expectation, they get aggressive and start insulting me.

3. What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

It keeps me on a low rank, and I am wasting my time, which is very depressing.

4. Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

Yes, it really affects my motivation. It makes me play with a team that I know, but it is difficult to find players you can trust to try some matchmaking together due to the gap in skill play and it upset me a lot.

5. Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

Yes, it does.

6. What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

People are addicted to a certain sensation; people want to get a win and when they are not getting their win fixed, they start attacking their teammates.

7. Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

I do not abandon match I mute team members from the conversation.

8. Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

Yes, it does, if it is consistent and I get kicked for no reason. I cannot play the game for the rest of the day.

9. Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

Yes, I have.

10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

I never had feedback.

11. Where you content with the report feedback?

Like I said, I never had feedback.

12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

No idea.

13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

Muting teammates from the beginning of the game helps to prevent toxic behaviour.

Interview 4

    1.   How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

I encounter toxic behaviour frequently when I play CS:GO.

    2.   What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

I have teammates who comment on my mistakes by yelling or insulting me or do same to other teammate mistakes.

    3.   What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

It negatively affects my performance because I get frustrated for making mistakes while my teammates are berating me, so my performance starts to get worse, and it affects the coordination of my team.

    4.   Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

Yes, it affects my motivation. I have completely stopped playing CS:GO because of the level of toxic behaviour that I had encountered while playing the game.

    5.   Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

Yes, it does, but sometimes it could be positive when the opponent team player is toxic to its team and gives my team more chances to win the game.

    6.   What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

It is the feeling that a player has played so much that he feels that he deserves to win and have a better rank and other teammates do not deserve to play with him due to their mistake which arise aggressive in him to other players.

    7.   Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

No, I have not abandoned a match before.

    8.   Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

No, it does not affect my mental health.

    9.   Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

Yes, I have.

    10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

I have not received any response.

    11. Where you content with the report feedback?

No.

    12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

I have not received any before, so I do not know.

    13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

I could suggest the game developers establish an effective report system where toxic players' rank is reduced. This will reduce toxic behaviour because most players value their level of rank and will not want it to be reduced

at all. Also, to prevent toxic behaviour, I suggest you play with friends. Friends will not display toxic behaviour towards you.

Interview 5

1. How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

Usually, every time I play FPS games, I encounter some toxic behaviour.

2. What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

It comes in the form of insults in verbal or text communication from my team.

3. What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

Toxicity creates more distractions and stress which affects my performance very badly.

4. Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

No, it does not affect my motivation. I get motivation to play FPS games from myself.

5. Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

No, it does not.

6. What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

7. It could be by the frustration in the game, or it could be the bad feeling outside the game in real life then. Players engage in toxicity due to the fact they do not take responsibility for their actions because they do not play under the real name.

7. Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

No, I have not abandoned a match because of toxicity.

8. Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

I have been able to create for myself a mindset that players are going to say toxic things about me, and I do not take them to heart because I know people acting in such manner are having a worst time within themselves.

9. Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

Yes, multiple times.

10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

Sometimes I get it, and it depends on the game.

11. Where you content with the report feedback?

Yes, the feedback makes me feel good, I feel like there is one less toxic player in the game.

12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

No. I do not think so.

13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

The best way to combat toxic behaviour is to generate more positive feelings around the game itself and the community by publishing tone reports that make the community feel good.

Interview 6

1. How frequently do you encounter toxic behaviour while playing FPS games?

I do encounter toxic behaviour because of the in-game mechanism, because of the verbal communication with my teammates.

2. What forms of toxic behaviour have you encountered?

Sometimes I encounter flaming and griefing.

3. What effect does toxicity have on your performance?

Yes, it does. I want to have some fun time and I start encountering toxic behaviour from my teammates, it affects my performance in the game.

4. Does toxic behaviour affect your motivation?

Yes, it affects my motivation.

5. Does toxic behaviour affect your level of satisfaction gained from playing FPS games?

Yes, it affects the level of satisfaction in the game because it deprives me of my target rank in the game.

6. What are the reasons behind toxic behaviour?

They are weak mental people and do not have the skill to depend on the enemy and they expect team mates to help them more and sometime when players do not get what they want, they become toxic.

7. Have you abandoned a match due to toxicity?

No, I have never abandoned a match because of toxic behaviour.

8. Does toxic behaviour from FPS games affect your mental health in any form?

Yes, toxic behaviour affects my mental health. It triggers anger in me that makes me sad for a while, which is not good for my mental health.

9. Have you reported a toxic team member using the report option?

Yes, I have a few times but I not sure how effect it is.

10. What was the feedback response you got from the report?

No, I did not get any feedback.

11. Where you content with the report feedback?

I am not satisfied because I did not get any. I think technically, it is not possible for the game administrators to analyse every player's voice communication in the game. It will be exceedingly difficult to achieve.

12. Do penalties issued to toxic players reduce toxicity?

I do not think it does.

13. In what way do you suggest toxic behaviour could be prevented?

To prevent toxic behaviour, the game developers are to educate the game community, especially the young, on how to treat other players through promotional videos.