# TOXIC BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE GAMES: AN INVESTIGATION THROUGH GAME RETELLINGS

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# TOXIC BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE GAMES: AN INVESTIGATION THROUGH GAME RETELLINGS

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## ABSTRACT

TOXIC BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE GAMES: AN INVESTIGATION THROUGH GAME RETELLINGS

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Online gaming is a means of entertainment for millions of players around the world and a social media that connects people. Still, a pattern of toxic behavior has been observed, posing a significant problem in multiplayer online games. The purpose of this study was to take a closer look into toxic behavior by Dead by Daylight players and how it was reflected and discussed within the community through video retelling on YouTube. The study collects data on how the content creators view and discuss the toxicity in the game through game mechanics, player psychology, and cheating. A literature review was conducted to identify different types of toxic behaviors and mechanisms for coping with such behaviors. The themes and concepts that emerged as a result of the literature review formed a theoretical framework for the analysis of the qualitative data collected in the study. The study provides a comprehensive discussion of toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight, analyzing the perspectives of the content creators, who primarily serve as the voice of this community. For this purpose, in the study 26 (6-hour long in total) retelling videos discussing toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight game produced by YouTube content producers were examined and analyzed within the theoretical framework of toxic behavior in online games.



KEYWORDS: Toxic Behavior in Video Games, Dead by Daylight, Video Game Retellings, Multiplayer Online Games

# ÖZ

ÇEVRİMİÇİ OYUNLARDA TOKSİK DAVRANIŞ: OYUN YENİDEN ANLATIMLARI ÜZERİNDEN BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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Çevrimiçi oyun dünya çapında milyonlarca oyuncu için bir eğlence aracı ve insanları birbirine bağlayan bir sosyal medyadır. Diğer taraftan, toksik davranış modelleri çevrimiçi oyun dünyaları için önemli bir sorun olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir çevrimiçi çok oyunculu oyun olan Dead by Daylight oyuncularının toksik davranışlarının, YouTube üzerinden paylaşılan yeniden anlatım videoları yoluyla topluluk içinde nasıl yansıtıldığını ve tartışıldığını daha yakından incelemektir. Çalışma, içerik oluşturucuların oyun mekaniği, oyuncu psikolojisi ve hile yoluyla oyundaki toksisiteyi nasıl gördükleri ve tartıştıkları hakkında veri toplar. Farklı toksik davranış türleri ve bu tür davranışlarla başa çıkma mekanizmalarını belirlemek için bir literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Literatür taraması sonucunda ortaya çıkan tema ve kavramlar, çalışmada toplanan nitel verilerin analizi için teorik bir çerçeve oluşturmuştur. Çalışma, Dead by Daylight oyunundaki toksik davranış hakkında, esas olarak bu topluluğun sesi olarak hizmet eden içerik yaratıcılarının bakış açılarini analiz eden kapsamlı bir tartışma sunar. Bu amaçla, çalışmada Dead by Daylight oyununa ilişkin içerik üreten YouTube içerik üreticilerine ait ve oyundaki toksik davranış pratiklerine yönelik tartışmalara yer veren, 6 saatlik 26 video incelenmiş ve çevrimiçi dijital oyunlarda toksik davranış pratiklerine ilişkin oluşturan analitik çerçeve bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Oyunlarda Toksik Davranış, Dead by Daylight, Video Oyun Yeniden Anlatımları, Çok Oyunculu Çevrimiçi Oyunlar

I dedicate this study to every player who has experienced a toxic player in their lobby and felt frustrated or annoyed when facing a player who can bring these types of feelings into the game world. I also dedicate this study to all toxic players who, I pray, have found the errors of their ways and have made positive changes. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, who gave everything they had to ensure I would have the opportunity to study abroad. Their efforts and struggles have allowed me to pursue my goals and ambitions since my childhood.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Since the rise of online gaming, multiplayer online games offered players around the world a chance to interact with one another. With the positives of online games, and as seen in many other different environments where people can interact with each other, negatives like toxic behavior will find their way into the arms of certain individuals. In this case, toxic behavior is an issue to discuss in multiplayer online games due to the everlasting obstacle that players deal with when playing video games. No matter how much research is being put into toxic behavior, a gap that still needs to be filled is exploring different examples of toxic behavior in different games. Even though it might be related, each game offers game mechanics that give players a toxic environment to dive into. This research will aim to study several different types of toxic behavior and their coping mechanisms as discussed in the literature. Then, the focus will be put on the game Dead by Daylight, an asymmetrical horror multiplayer online game, where a pattern of toxic behavior throughout its community is seen. These toxic behaviors will be discussed through video game retellings on the YouTube platform.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Toxic behavior in online gaming is an important problem in this growing and huge industry. According to Kwak (2014), exploring negative behaviors in multiplayer online games is important and key due to the influences it sets on the experience given by the game and through user satisfaction. Even though the research done around toxic behavior is rich, a gap is found when exploring these sorts of negative behaviors from players specifically in games in general. The main problem in this research is to study what encourages toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight through video game retellings on YouTube, and to see what provokes toxic behavior in this certain community, alongside coping mechanisms provided by content creators when discussing encounters of toxic behavior in their video game retellings.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study explores how different types of toxic behaviors were reflected and interpreted within online game communities. For that purpose, we focused on the Dead by Daylight community and analyzed the video retellings of players' content related to toxic behavior in the game. This was done within the context of the theoretical framework we built from the literature review. The content creators who play Dead by Daylight are the voice of their community, and their video game retellings will be used as data to reflect the agenda of the game's community when discussing toxic behavior.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The questions guiding this study were: What are the reasons behind toxic behaviors in different fields in general, and in gaming in specific. After that, I divided this questions into the following sub-questions.

SQ1: What is the reason behind toxic behavior in online games?

SQ2: What are coping mechanisms for toxic behavior in online games?

SQ3: How are the toxic behaviors and coping mechanisms within the Dead by Daylight community reflected and discussed in the video game retellings on the YouTube platform?

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to take the problem of toxicity and dissect it from different perspectives in games in general, and then focus on one game that is known to have a toxic community. I chose to study the toxic behavior found in the game "Dead by Daylight", where up to May 2022, I have played over 2,360 hours, which gives me a perspective of the community, a common understanding of the mechanics of the game and the different ideologies that certain players.

It is also important to note that Dead by Daylight is a game discussed in relation to toxic behavior. Deslauriers et al. (2020), researched toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight and how it is perceived by the Game's Official Subreddit Contributors. As well as Armstrong (2021), who discussed different ways to avoid being toxic in Dead

by Daylight, and Tikkakoksi (2021), who discussed toxic behavior as perceived by players in the game. Toxicity in Dead by Daylight has always been a day-to-day issue in the community, and the significance of the research is to study how these video game retellings discuss toxic behavior in the community.

### 1.5 Definitions

This section includes terms I have used in this study, including acronyms and terms that have special meaning in the context of the study.

Toxic Behavior: These sorts of behaviors from a toxic person can cause stress, unpleasantness, being constantly uncomfortable with their action, or feeling bad about yourself in their presence (WebMD, 2020).

Coping Mechanisms: strategies that people use to manage difficult and painful emotions, as well as strategies for people to adjust to stressful events to help them maintain their emotional well-being (GoodTherapy, 2018).

Frustration Tactics: These sorts of tactics can be used by players through game mechanics to cause frustration in other players, which can lead to the other player playing badly or gaining an advantage over another player.

In-game actions: They are actions used by players inside the game world to activate an action that can be seen like shooting, crouching, walking, running, activating an ability and so on that can cause a reaction.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

The literature review will discuss different aspects of Toxic Behavior that are found in different environments. Starting with explaining what toxic behavior and anti-social behavior is, then diving into the different types of toxic behaviors and research done about them through Digital Media, Workplace and Leadership and in Online Games, then looking at different coping mechanisms for each of the different types of behaviors.

### 2.1 What is Anti-Social and Toxic Behaviors?

**2.1.1 Anti-social behavior.** According to MayoClinic (2019), anti-social behavior falls under the spectrum of personality disorders, and is defined as a person who has no regard for what is right and wrong and tends to ignore the feelings of others over their own. They continue to explain that a person with anti-social disorder or behaviors tends to manipulate, treat others harshly and alienate others with no guilt or remorse, and such actions are presented by being disrespectful, sense of superiority, heavily opinionated, and continuously violating the rights of others by intimidating them and being aggressive. In addition to that, according to the World Health Organization (2009), anti-social disorders are included in the International Classification of Diseases under the category of dissocial personality disorder, which also identifies the person as someone who often blames, and has no concern for the feelings of others and have a “low threshold for discharge of aggression". Moreover, The American Psychiatric Association (2013) specifies in their book “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” that anti-social patterns are shown through violation and disregard of the rights of others, and continues to give other symptoms such as deceitfulness and constant irresponsibility. Furthermore, they explain that the anti-social disorders can begin during childhood or early adolescence and will continue into adulthood, and that such patterns can be referred to as psychopathy, sociopathy, or dissocial personality disorder.

**2.1.2 Toxic behavior.** According to Manhattan Medical Arts (2021), toxic traits can be identified through unsupportive and unpleasant behaviors such as being manipulative, judgmental, controlling or self-centered. In addition to that, WebMD (2020) continue to explain that toxic behavior can cause stress and unpleasantness, as well as being constantly uncomfortable by toxic actions and feeling bad about yourself in the presence of the toxic individuals. However, according to Canossa et al. (2021) toxic behavior has no standard definition, and can be explained as anti-social behavior, trolling or cyber-bullying, which draws a relation between both anti-social behavior and toxic behavior, as they both derive from one another, even though they are both defined as different behaviors. Toxic behavior varies from one source to another, a person who is considered toxic in an office workplace varies from a person who is toxic in a relationship, which is explained by Manhattan Medical Arts (2021) as the following, a person who is toxic in the workplace can have a passive-aggressive attitude and tends to hinder productive and healthy environments for the workers through being competitive, naggers, and mean-spirited people who demean and even raise their voice on their co-workers. As for in relationships, Manhattan Medical Arts (2021) continue to explain that such relationships that involve toxic behavior can lead to both physical and emotional damage to the other receiving end, and such behaviors can be seen through violence, abuse, and harassment. Shores et al. (2014) add that this kind of behavior is considered unsportsmanlike, and depending on the community, there are different types of toxic behavior that fall under the category. AConsciousRethink (2021) adds several other types of toxic behavior that have not been discussed yet, such as lying and being dishonest, being cruel and mean to others, being selfish, cheating, being overly competitive which leads to arrogance, being insincere, acting and playing like a victim, participating in drama, being a perfectionist and trying to please others might be toxic behavior that individuals might use in their everyday lives that might lead to a toxic-self. Toxic behavior is seen throughout many different sources and environments, and in this literature review, it will be discussed throughout social media and online communities under the term Digital Media, toxic leadership and toxicity in the workspace under Toxic Leadership and toxicity in online multiplayer games, as well as coping mechanisms for each of the discussed terms brought up previously in the literature review.

## 2.2 Anti-Social and Toxic Behavior in Digital Media

When looking into digital media, toxic and anti-social behavior happens on different platforms online through social media and online communities. According to Leavitt (2016), an online community is a group of individuals who share a common interest online and are able to socialize with one another through different set of tools that are offered to them. There are many online communities that are spreading positivity and awareness through different types of digital media like eBooks, blogs, articles, and social media platforms. But there are many other communities or individuals who are spreading negativity and toxic behavior towards certain individuals online through forms of toxic behavior like hate messages or cyber-bullying. This section will explain how toxic and anti-social behavior is seen on social media and in online communities through several platforms.

**2.2.1 Social media.** According to Austin (2018), who is a professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, platforms like Instagram can have a harmful effect on a teenager's mental health since the platform can lead a false narrative through manipulating their users about reflecting their interests and experiences. She continues to explain that Instagram's algorithm is designed to keep user's attention, as well as to push teens towards toxic content and that every additional minute someone spends on the platform, regardless of the impact it has on the health of their users, equals profit. Lin et al. (2016), held a study to 1787 US young adults from 19-32 years of age, with an objective to see if depression and anxiety are associated with social media. The results of the study show that the users who spend more time on social media are subject to both depression and anxiety symptoms due to cyber-bullying, crooked views of people and their lives, and feeling like it is a waste of their time. Which is supported by Raynes-Goldie (2018) who states how Facebook and other social media platforms confront the user with expectations of happiness and instant connection with others, but hits the user with the reality that it affects the mental health of the consumer. Moreover, according to Donnelly and Kuss (2016), Facebook and Instagram usage correlate with symptoms of depression, which is supported by Twenge et, al. (2017), who states that time spent on screen activities significantly correlate with more depressive symptoms, as well as risk for suicide-

related outcomes. Other literature work stand with this standpoint from different point of views, such as using Facebook for longer time is associated with lower self-esteem, (Kalpidou, 2011) as well as being lonelier, (Song et al., 2014) and heavily correlated with body image issues. (Tiggemann and Slater, 2013). This is supported by Gordon (2021) who states that with all the positives of social media, it also has its downsides, such as contributing to depression, anxiety and loneliness which makes people feel isolated and alone, feelings of inadequacy about life and appearance, self-absorption that can lead to self-doubt and self-hatred, and how social media can be used as an unhealthy coping mechanism due to the fact that people use social media when they are feeling down, lonely, bored or trying to distract themselves from unpleasant feelings. In addition to that, even though Social Media and Commercials appearing on TVs are different, advertisements (ads) that are seen on Facebook and Twitter hold the same volume and are common between both, Kilbourne (2015) discusses how advertisements and TV commercials can lead to a toxic environment for the viewer. She continues to explain how women and girls compare themselves to images of idealized female beauty that are shown in advertisements, which is shown as tall, slim, and light-skinned, with digital changes to make the models have more unrealistic proportions.

**2.2.2 Online communities.** An online community is a community whose members interact with one another via the internet, through which members share a certain interest, which can be a football team, video game, a streamer, a YouTube channel, and so on… Being in an online community introduces the user to many different possibilities of people, some of which can be toxic. Leavitt (2016) explains that many communities online have toxic communities, and their goal is to spew hatred, prejudice, and violence, and cover up their toxicity by implying the statement "freedom of speech". On the other hand, research was held by Duggan (2017) with Pew Research Center in regards to online harassment. The survey was held to 4,248 U.S adults with an objective to study whether or not these individuals have experienced online harassment through various online communities. The findings show that 41% of Americans were personally subjected to toxic online behavior such as physical threats, harassment over a sustained period, sexual harassment, or stalking, but 66% have witnessed this sort of behavior being directed at others. The study continues to

explain how such actions are affecting mental, and emotional stress, reputational damage, and even fear for one's safety due to online communities and their toxic behavior through harassment. Which is supported by Bertazzo (2021), who provided a survey through Pew Research Center, 4 years after the first release, and was conducted online to over 10,000 U.S Adults, and explains how online harassment isn't growing, but becoming more severe through offensive name-calling, purposeful embarrassment of another individual, stalking, threats, harassment over a period of time and sexual harassments. The research continues to explain that the introduction of new sites and platforms is creating new spaces for people to be harassed, and that 41% of the harassment being dealt to users is from two different platforms including social media sites, forums, emails, texting applications and gaming communities. Hinds (2020) states that platforms should create standards and hold people accountable when they are being toxic online, since little accountability exists, she continues to explain that online personalities and streamers are regularly attacked and all that they can do is block the offender, which opens up more space for online bullies to dox and harass these users since no real punishment is being reinforced for the bullies. This is supported by Jhaver (2021), who is an assistant professor in Rutgers University, who states that toxic communities have no boundaries, and that platforms should consider focusing more and being proactive in identifying toxic people in their communities and sanctioning them based on their actions.

## 2.3 Anti-Social and Toxic Behaviors of Leaders in the Workspace

Just like social media and online communities, each workplace might have a toxic leader, a boss that is in charge of the office or an employee that the victims works with, who holds such toxic and anti-social behaviors which might lead to several effects on the victim. This section will explain the different types of toxic leaders and toxic leadership, as well as the causes of toxic leaders, theories behind their toxic behavior and effects of their toxicity on their employees.

**2.3.1 Types and causes of toxic leaders.** Toxic Leadership is a type of leadership that is destructive to the team and to the workplace (Waters, 2021). Pelletier (2009) adds that toxic leadership occurs in an environment with a toxic leader who harasses,

belittles, or frightens another person which causes undue stress or pressure, and leads to decreased performance or undesired behaviors, and adds that toxic leader's actions might include angry tantrums, public ridicule, favoritism and inconsiderate actions. This is supported by Frost (1999), who offers two types of toxic behavior, the first is taking action by leaders that create pain and suffering to others, and the second is showing compassion leading to reduced performance. Egan (2004) reports different types of toxic leaders, and adds that there are three other types of toxic leaders, such as accidental, destructive-narcissistic, and psychopathic leaders. Accidental toxic leaders are those who are unaware of the toxic effects they have on others, but when confronted they would apologize for their wrong doings and behaviors (Egan, 2004). Destructive-narcissistic leaders are those who portray themselves as superiors and possess self-importance causing leaders to manipulate and exploit their employees (Egan, 2004). Psychopathic leaders are those who bully their employees for the fun of it and lack feelings of guilt or empathy (Mathieu and Babiak, 2016). This is supported by Phillips (2017), who explains that psychopathy encompasses traits relating to manipulating employees and poor behavioral control, as well as narcissism which is a feeling and need of entitlement, self-love and need for admiration by the toxic narcissistic leader. According to Egan (2004), such leaders are dangerous due to the fact that are lack insight on their actions and are unwilling to change. Olive and Cangemi (2015) add that showing compassion versus taking corrective measures may end up with worsening undesired leadership trait. According to Shantz et al. (2014) toxic events may exist in different forms like emotional abuse or mistreatment, as well as incivility or aggression (Ben-Sasson and Somech, 2015). Waters (2021) adds more types of toxic leadership traits, such as frequent lying or inconsistent expectations such as gas lighting which is a type of psychological manipulation that involves a person making another person question their own memory or judgment, as well as the inability to listen to feedback and are not willing to hear constructive criticism, arrogance and believing they are always correct. Waters (2021) continues by stating more types of toxic leadership which are hierarchy, thinking they are important, discrimination towards the employees such as sexism, ageism, racism, homophobia, and more, lacking confidence in their work and finding it difficult to trust their subordinates and being incompetent.

There are many causes behind Toxic and Anti-Social Behavior by toxic

leaders, Einarsen et, al. (1994) suggests that frustration-aggression and social interactionist are two types of causes behind the toxicity of leaders. Frustration-aggression is derived from frustration due to the stressful work environment and social interactionist refers to the unconstructive work environment. Zellars et al. (2002) add that organizational citizenship behavior is another cause, and explain it as employees who tend to make the work environment less toxic. This can provoke toxic leaders. (Adams, 2014). Adams (2014) adds that such organizational-citizenship behavior can be viewed as weak and easy targets in the eyes of a toxic leader. Iftikhar and Qureshi (2014) add that relationship-based factors can play toxic events such as social climate, leaders personality and conflict within the workplace. Which is supported by Clarke (2014) who defines such conflict as opposing desires, deadlines, incompatible goals, pressure and tensions that are traits that can be caused by toxic leadership.

**2.3.2 Theories behind toxic leadership.** According to Morris Jr. (2019), the theories explored are not straightly correlated to Toxic Leadership but are somewhat related when explained. The four theories discussed, according to Jerido (2014) are Karl Marx's theory, Feminist Theory, elitism theory and interpersonal theory.

To begin with Karl Marx's theory is related to social classes and the divides them into two, the first being the high class, or as he calls them "the bourgeoisie" who own the mean of production, and the second class, being the working class. Morris Jr. (2019) explains it as the first, having dominance over subordinates to secure advantages of authority, which can be toxic, and the second one being the organizations and employees working under a leader who might have toxic attributes.

Second is the feminist theory, and it revolves around male privilege in the workplace. According to Jerido (2014) masculine privilege see others to be vulnerable and susceptible to being bullied, in which a man feels superior to women. Croft and Cash (2012) add that this type of behavior is accepted by toxic leaders. According to Theodouro (2022) some important issues women still face in the workplace are pregnancy discrimination, where women are treated unfairly due to pregnancy, childbirth or a medical conditions related to their pregnancy, sexual harassment such as sexism, pay-gap and equal pay, where women are paid less or racial discrimination.

Third is Elitism theory, and according to Morris Jr. (2019) the elitism theory consists of a class who dominate the workplace politically. Moreover, Domingues,

(2013) explains that these toxic events depend on how toxic leaders view status in organizations and depends on their desire to be in control.

Fourth is the interpersonal theory, which is an interpersonal incompatibility between two persons (Morris Jr., 2019). Reich and Hershcovis (2011) believe that these types of relationships are an inescapable reality for those working in the certain organization. Qureshi et al. (2014) argue that these conflicts are related to Elitism theory due to the fact that the toxic leader challenging the affected employees.

Such theories discuss the hierarchy, arrogance and dominance issues that toxic leaders deal with when it comes to the employees in the workplace. Even if these theories are not always viable, but they can be a reason behind the psychological dominant features in toxic leaders.

**2.3.3 Effects of toxic leadership on employees.** A research was conducted by Oladapo and Banks (2013) and state that 45% of participants experienced workplace bullying and 75% of them witnessed at least one event of workplace bullying, which decreased performance, lacked job satisfaction and had employees fear for their jobs. In addition to that, a questionnaire sent out by Shaw (2020) was made in order to study negative effects of toxic leadership and bullying in the workplace, findings show that toxic leadership led to negative outcomes such as workplace deviance, lower job satisfaction, lower self-esteem in employees, negative attitudes and psychological stress. Phillips (2017) surveyed 1200 people and is a part of a research team at Alliance Manchester Business School stated that toxic leaderships effects included depression and burnouts, psychological distress and counterproductive work behavior. She adds that, workplace bullying emerges as mediating mechanisms held by toxic leaders or workplace bullies that end up affecting the employees job satisfaction, wellbeing and counter productivity (Phillips, 2017).

## 2.4 Anti-Social and Toxic Behaviors in Online Games

Video Games have increased in popularity throughout the last couple of years, especially with the arrival of online gaming that started connecting people from every corner of the world regardless of age, race or gender. But with every positive is outweighed by a negative. Nowadays, toxic behavior and anti-social behavior

dominates online games. According to ADL (2020), 53% of online multiplayer players experienced some form of toxicity, with a majority of it related to race/ethnicity, religion, their ability status, gender or sexual orientation. 41% of females and 37% of LGBTQIA+ online multiplayer players were harassed due to their gender or sexual orientation, and roughly 31% Black and 30% Hispanic/Latina online multiplayer gamers experience harassment due to their ethnicity or race. Moreover, 25% of Asian-American online multiplayer gamers experienced harassed due to their identity, 25% disabled people were targeted due to their disability, and lastly, 18% Jewish gamers and 25% Muslim gamers were subject to harassment due to their religion (ADL, 2020). When looking at games such as League of Legends, Counter Strike: Global Offensive, Overwatch, Dota 2 and Dead by Daylight, we see a pattern of toxic behavior that, according to Tang and Fox (2016), is being normalized by the community on the long run and eventually becomes acceptable behavior. Shores et al. (2014) explains that toxic behavior in online games include sending offensive messages or intentional aid of opposing teams, which is supported by Kwak et al. (2015), who adds that cyberbullying, cheating and harassment are other terms that fall under the toxic behavior term. Moreover, grieving is another term, and is explained as a player who derives their enjoyment from performing actions that detract the enjoyment of the game by other players (Mulligan and Patrovsky, 2003). This is further explained by Achterbosch (2013) who explains that grieving is when a player intentionally disrupts another player's game experience for their own personal enjoyment or material gain, leading for their team to lose. Märtens et al. (2015) adds that profanity can be used in ironic or humoristic ways as well, rather than straight-forward remarks. In addition to that, another term goes to "trolling" which is a term that refers to intentionally provoking or antagonizing players (Thacker and Griffiths, 2012).

**2.4.1 Types of toxic behavior in online games.** According to Kou (2020), a study was held regarding team-based toxic behavior and the reasons behind it in League of Legends, a multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) game published by RIOT Games, with findings explaining that five reasons behind the toxicity in this online game are communicative aggression, cheating, hostage holding, mediocritizing, and sabotaging. This section will explain the toxic behaviors that toxic players might do online, and the effects of toxic behaviors on the victim.

***2.4.1.1 Communicative aggression.*** Communicative aggression involves threats, harassment, offensive naming, or flaming of other players. Such aggression can be seen through racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks, which can be seen in Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, where Žemlík, (2017) gives an example of how gamers flame Russian players due to them underperforming or not speaking English, which can be a source of aggression. Žemlík (2017) adds that these actions are proceeded by spewing insults towards the player's skill and since they know that they are Russian players, they will probably make fun of their country as well or curse them in their own language. That kind of aggression is seen through sending hostile and insulting messages or by voice communication. Voice communication is essential in some games since it strengthens the level of relationship and trust between the players that play together (Williams, Caplan, and Xiong, 2007). Some players will find reasons to turn an important game mechanic into their own toxic scenarios. Also, other communicative aggression can be seen through auditory and visual cues in order to disturb and annoy the player such as pinging in League of Legends (Kou, 2020) or in Dead by Daylight, where many visual cues or playing styles can be considered toxic and are called BM-ing (Bad Manners). Such bad manners are specified as tea-bagging, which refers to the act of repeatedly crouching, or sandbagging which refers to intentionally moving towards a teammate in the hope that the killer will target their other teammate instead of them (Deslauriers et al., 2020). Other examples of bad manners are face camping and hitting survivors on hook as killer, which refers to killers standing in front of a hooked survivor and hitting them, which means they are targeting them and not allowing them to escape (Deslauriers et al., 2020). Such actions where seen when toxic players wore the Leatherface "Black Face Mask" and camped streamers of color, in order to be racist towards them and target them (Stewart, 2022). Krishnaswamy (2021) adds flaming and game rage, which refers to a person becoming upset and abusing others, as well as grieving in which a player becomes frustrated and decides to directly disrupt the other players' game, hate speech, which refers to abusive behavior under forms of racism, sexual discrimination and so on.

***2.4.1.2 Cheating.*** According to Consalvo (2007), the act of play offers both order and disorder, and that some players are encouraged to be rebellious and

disorderly in their behavior when a part of a play. Which opens up to the topic of cheating. Cheating is an act of dishonesty and is described by various actions designed to go against rules in order to gain an unfair advantage. In online games, cheating is considered to be toxic behaviors due to the cheater gaining an advantage over the other players which tend to ruin the fun and fairness in the game. According to Kou (2020), there are three ways of cheating, which are scripting, smurfing, and rank boosting.

*2.4.1.2.1 Scripting.* Scripting refers to using an outside program or game feature to automate certain actions or behaviors such as wall-hacks or aim-bots for Counter Strike: Global Offensive which greatly enhance the efficiency of the cheaters in-game actions. This is supported by Žemlík (2017) who talks about how Counter Strike: Global Offensive hackers are always creating new programs whenever Valve discovers their program, which allows hackers to use their program by paying and gain access to the hacks.

*2.4.1.2.2 Smurfing*. Smurfing *is a term used in gaming to describe a player in an online game who creates a new account to play* against low-ranked players (IDnow, 2020), not only is smurfing difficult to detect, but it creates unfair matches and ruins the competitive experience (Kou, 2020).

*2.4.1.2.3 Rank Boosting*. Rank Boosting is an unethical practice which is performed by a higher-ranking player who plays on a low-rank account in order to boost their rank, and in exchange get paid (Computerhope, 2021).

Moreover, according to Yan and Randell (2005), several categories were identified as common cheating forms, which fall under cheaters or hackers abusing the system or cheating in order to get what they want. The 15 categories stated by Yan and Randell (2015) are:

*2.4.1.2.4 Exploiting misplaced trust.* When a hacker tampers with the in-game client program and access sensitive game states which are not available for anyone (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.5 Collision.* When hackers work together against honest opponents in online games. (Yan and Randell, 2005). This is supported by Smed et al. (2006) who adds that collusion is a problem in multiplayer online games that do not allow players to share knowledge or resources with other players.

*2.4.1.2.6 Abusing the game procedure.* It refers to the player disconnecting themselves from the game system when they are going to lose which overturns game

results (Yan and Randell, 2005). An example for this is when players disconnect from Dead by Daylight when the killer can perform a “mori” on them. A mori is an ability a killer can bring into the game that can allow them to instantly kill a survivor after they’ve reached second stage on hook.

*2.4.1.2.7 Virtual assets.* It refers to trading in-game items for real money and never delivering the payment (Yan and Randell, 2005), which is considered as spam trades.

*2.4.1.2.8 Exploiting machine intelligence.* It refers to using AI systems to play instead of the player (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.9 Modifying client infrastructure.* The cheater can modify the client infrastructure such as device drivers in his operating system in order to change the graphic settings, which give the hacker an unfair advantage (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.10 Denying service to peer players.* The cheater can delay the opponent’s responses by flooding their network connection (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.11 Timing cheating.* It refers to when a player delays their own moves, until they know other opponent’s moves (Yan and Randell, 2005). This is supported by Baughman and Levine (2001) who believe this term is also called “suppress-correct” which allow the host to gain an advantage against opponents by dropping update messages that are not dropped by the game.

*2.4.1.2.12 Compromising passwords.* It refers to a cheater compromising the victim’s password, and having access to data. Many game clients provided guidelines on selecting passwords and protection of their users (Yan and Randell, 2005). This is seen as an example on the Steam platform.

*2.4.1.2.13 Exploiting lack of secrecy.* Cheaters can eavesdrop, insert, delete or modify game events that are transmitted by the network, especially when packets are shared in plain text format. Cheaters will have an easy access to it (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.14 Exploiting lack of authentication.* Authentication in games is important, and if proper security mechanisms are provided by the game, cheaters can collect passwords of legitimate players by setting up an alternative game server and stealing their accounts (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.15 Exploiting a bug or loophole.* This form of cheating exploits a bug or loophole in the program of the game or in the design (Yan and Randell, 2005). This

type of cheating can give players an unfair advantage or bug the game for some people, for example, in Early March of 2022, A perk called “Wake Up” in Dead by Daylight had a bug that allowed the user to equip it and upon using it, it would disconnect and crash the game for the killer, giving the survivors a win. As well as another perk called “Object of Obsession” that had another bug that allow players to put another “aura-reading perk” and it would allow them to see the killer at all times, leading to a wall-hack scenario.

*2.4.1.2.16 Compromising game servers.* Cheaters can tamper with in-game servers and gain full access to host systems (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.17 Internal misuse.* This refers to a game operator or an employee who has access to system administration, and they can gain access to files and modify game database on their own terms (Yan and Randell, 2005).

*2.4.1.2.18 Social engineering.* This revolves scams and fake links that ask the player to change their password or gain free items (Yan and Randell, 2005).

***2.3.1.3 Hostage holding.*** Holding the game hostage refers to purposefully preventing the game from ending (Kou, 2020). Such actions that are considered as Hostage Holding are slugging and leaving survivors to die on the ground in Dead by Daylight as the killer stands near their body. Slugging in Dead by Daylight is explained as leaving a survivor laying on the floor (Deslauriers et al., 2020). Even though this mechanic is a strategy in the game, but players tend to be toxic when they slug a survivor and stand on top of them, nodding their heads and waiting for the survivor to bleed out, which takes 240 seconds. Other examples of hostage holding is shown in League of Legends and the mechanic to surrender, which is subjective and depends on the match. When smurfing occurs and low-ranked players want to surrender due to the match being unfair, the smurf players will vote against surrendering, which will deny the match from ending (Kou, 2020). This is related to sub-section “2.3.2 Theories behind toxic leadership”, due to smurfs deriving entertainment in the expense of low-ranked players and denying the match from ending.

This term is popular in multiplayer game Dead by Daylight, where cheaters or toxic players hold the game hostage and disallow players from playing the game. Such examples can be seen on Reddit or Twitter, where players complain about how some killers or hackers were able to abuse game mechanics and keep them hostage unless

they disconnect from the match.

***2.3.1.4 Mediocritizing.*** Mediocrity is a person that is not very good at something. In online gaming, mediocrity revolves around a player who is trying to learn the game or a new character in the game. People might have a negative attitude towards this, due to the player not being good enough, and usually it correlates with games that have a ranking system and in competitive games. Blackburn and Kwak (2014) give an example about a common insult in online gaming, the word "noob" or "newbie" implies a lack of ability in playing a game, and it is used to call out poor play or a form of trash talk.

Such criticism can be used towards teammates or opponents. This type of behavior is considered to be negative attitudes from players to others, due to the players' interest in winning (Kou, 2020), Competitive players will hold a negative attitude since it lowers the winning chance and will face toxic behavior due to the player's little knowledge in the game or because of reasons such as grieving, refusing to surrender or not playing up to expectations. Trying out a new character and not knowing how to play them can subject the opposing team or your own team to be toxic towards the player.

***2.3.1.5 Sabotaging.*** Sabotaging in video games refers to playing poorly on purpose with intention of losing the game. (Kou, 2020). Jenna (2021) states that players sabotage their teams on purpose to make a name for themselves or to upset other players and ruining their experience, of which they get a kick out of it. Sabotaging in online games includes subtypes that fall under similar categories which are: Blatant Sabotaging, purposeful inactions, Leaking information, Surreptitious Sabotaging, Intentional feeding and Soft inting. Kuo (2020) and Jenna (2021) agree on the types of sabotaging in online games, and explain them as the following:

*2.3.1.5.1 Blatant sabotaging.* Kuro (2020) explains that Blatant Sabotaging, denotes ways of eliminating and decreasing the team's chance of winning on purpose. It is carried out by purposeful acts by players in order to ruin others experiences. Which decreases or eliminates a team's chance of winning the game (Jenna, 2021).

*2.3.1.5.2 Purposeful inaction.* Purposeful inaction is a type of blatant sabotaging and is carried out when players rage quit, leave the game or are AFK (Kuro,

2020 and Jenna, 2021). Which give an unfair advantage to the opposing team.

*2.3.1.5.3 Leaking information.* Leaking information is another type that falls under blatant sabotaging, and is explained as undermining teamwork that is unknown to the opponent team (Kou, 2020). Which is supported by Jenna (2021), in which she refers to leaking information as intentionally getting killed by the opponent team.

*2.3.1.5.4 Intentional feeding.* Intentional Feeding refers to when a player intentionally gets killed by the opponent team (Kou, 2020 and Jenna, 2021). That can be done by grieving or mediocritizing on purpose in order to be toxic (Kou, 2020). Soft inting is also considered to be a sub-title for Intentional Feeding, and is explained as intentionally throwing in order to lose.

*2.3.1.5.5 Surreptitious sabotaging.* Surreptitious Sabotaging denotes situations where players go out to intentionally carry out poor performance but pretend to try in order to not be perceived as toxic players. Which is related to Intentionally feeding, but in this situation, they are actually playing the game (Kou, 2020 and Jenna, 2021).

**2.4.2 Effects of toxic behavior in online games.** Despite Toxic Behavior being a broad subject with a lot of different scenarios, players are affected in a similar way. Dibbel (1994) states that being a victim in an online game will make the player experience emotional and psychological problems like anxiety and low self-esteem and that victims of harassment may also be discouraged from playing the game altogether (Blackburn and Kwak, 2014). Tang and Fox (2016) state that such toxic behavior might get normalized on the long run and perhaps victims might become perpetrators themselves. According to Birk et al. (2016), players might feel excluded socially from the game which led to worse effects, higher hostile cognition and lower enjoyment and motivation when being effected by Toxic Behavior. According to a study held by ADL (2020), the impact of harassment seen in multiplayer games saw that 16% of gamers who experienced a form of harassment felt less social and 14% felt isolated. Moreover, 12% took steps to reduce risks to their physical safety and 11% had depressive or suicidal thoughts due to the harassment and toxicity they witnessed.

## 2.5 Coping Mechanisms for Anti-Social and Toxic Behaviors.

Whenever a person faces anti-social or toxic behavior, there are several ways

for the victim to cope with this behavior, depending on the case at hand, there are different strategies that the victim might use to their advantage. According to GoodTherapy (2018), there are 5 types of coping mechanisms, the first being support, which in this case is when a person gets to talk about stressful events with a supportive person, it can be effective to manage stress. As well as seeking external help and support rather than self-isolating since it can greatly reduce negative effects (GoodTherapy, 2018). The second being relaxation, such activities can help people to cope with stressful situations, such as meditation, muscle relaxation or other calming techniques like sitting in nature or listening to music (GoodTherapy, 2018). The third being problem solving which helps the individual dealing with toxic behavior focus on identifying the problem that causes stress and developing a solution to manage with it and solve it (GoodTherapy, 2018). The fourth being humor which may help maintain perspective and prevent situations (GoodTherapy, 2018). The fifth being physical activity: such as activities like running, yoga, swimming and so on can serve as a natural and healthy form of stress relief, which helps cope with stress or traumatic events through physical activity (GoodTherapy, 2018).

**2.5.1 Coping mechanisms for digital media users.** To begin with, five recommended coping mechanisms for digital stress are shown through findings by Weinstein et al. (2015) and are the following, people should communicate directly and confronting the problem, getting help from others such parents, friend or legal authorities. This is supported by Aldwin and Yancura (2004) as social support mechanisms. Weinstein et al. (2015) adds that cutting ties with anyone who is involved in helping with the digital stress and ignoring, avoiding or trying not to worry about situations that might cause such problems. Research was done by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) about coping mechanisms, and found that problem-focused coping is more likely to produce a positive outcome, which is explained as allows them to avoid a problem rather than trying to deal with it. On the second hand, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) spoke about another coping mechanism, emotion-focused, that allows individuals to divert their attention from stress temporarily. But can cause more stress experience more stress for the individuals on the long run (Chang, 2012). Aldwin and Yancura (2004) add two other coping mechanisms, the first being religious coping, which contains elements of problem-focused, emotion-focused and social support and allows the victim to the use

religious beliefs or practices to cope with stressful life situations (Pargament et al., 2005). The second being, meaning making which refers to trying to see the positive or meaningful aspects of the situation (Aldwin and Yancura, 2004). This is supported by Park (2010) who states that the process of making meaning leads to better adjustments within coping mechanisms.

**2.5.2 Coping mechanisms for toxic leaders.** Morris Jr. (2019) provides different theories to how employees and organizations can deal with toxic leaders. These theories provided different solutions and methods to cope with such a toxic environment under a toxic leader and are explained briefly as the following: The first theory is called "Betrayal Trauma Theory", and it is described as when coping with sudden betrayal from a superior, since the employees trust in their leader is critical to organizational success (Chughtai et al., 2014). Such actions can be coped with by reducing or removing all trust in the leader or the organization the employee is dealing with (Akhtar and Long, 2015). The second theory is called "Cognitive Theory of Trauma" and it revolves around the affected employee in breaking down the event and making sense of what happened (Szasz et al., 2011). The third theory is called "Conservation of Resources Theory" and in the case of a toxic leader, affected employees may shut out coworkers and those willing to help them cope with the toxic situation (Fontinha et al., 2012). This leads to creating feelings of exhaustion, job insecurity, and inability to find other employment (Alarcon et al., 2011). In addition to that, Vitkova and Zabrodska (2014) state that victims need to use different strategies to deal with mobbing, such as active and passive types. In active strategies, victims choose to be confrontational way to eliminate toxic behavior, as for passive strategies, victims will give in to toxic behavior because they lacked the means to deal with this behavior (Glambek et al., 2015). Karatuna (2015) states that employees affected by toxic leaders might blame themselves, avoid contact or avoid workplace areas that are common to these toxic incidences, in which the affected employees would minimize reoccurrence with the toxic leader or would rely on confrontational strategies such as ignoring methods of provoking the leader, standing up to them, threatening them or letting them know of their toxic behavior.

A study was held by Olafsson and Johannsdottir (2004) and was done by 398 participants which stated that seeking help, avoidance, assertiveness or doing nothing

are four strategies these people faced. Sarıçam (2014) adds that forgiveness is another coping strategy. To begin with Dauber and Tavernier (2011) state that seeking help is a coping mechanism due to asking friends or coworkers assistance. Which is supported by Simons and Sauer (2013) who advises that seeking help might be the most appropriate form of coping. Additionally, Richardson (1995) defines avoidance as ignoring by withdrawing or suppressing the employee's feelings and avoiding the topic. Morris Jr. (2019) considers this as a passive coping strategy, and is believed to be a fight or flight mentality coping mechanism. (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2011). Moreover, Simons and Sauer (2013) state that assertiveness is another source of coping if taken as a form of confrontation, it is effective as a coping mechanism since it stops bullying, but Bushman and Huesmann (2010) argues with this standpoint since assertive victims may become aggressive when confronting their toxic leader, and it might result in verbal insults, shouting or intimidation. Olafsson and Johannsdottir (2004) add that another mechanism is doing nothing, which considered to be the most stressful method to cope with toxic behavior which will lead to worsening the negative effects caused by the toxic leadership. Lastly, Morris Jr, (2019) adds forgiveness as another stress reducing strategy, and makes it easier to move on from situations. Webster et al. (2014) state that forgiving people was best suited to cope with workplace bullying due to exhibiting skills of communication and resolving conflicts.

**2.5.3 Coping mechanisms for online games.** It is important to note that in online games, players, communities and the developers are trying to find ways to deal with toxic behavior. Even though some of the methods are similar, Türkay et al. (2020) explains and divides it as the following:

To begin with, Chesney et al. (2009) and Cook et al. (2018) state that players will use developer's systems to cope and deal with toxic behavior, such as muting, blocking and reporting since it solves the toxic encounter. They continue to explain that when dealt with griefers, victims might become toxic themselves.

Cote (2017) gives 5 harassment-coping strategies that female gamers face, such as: leaving online gaming or playing single-player games, avoiding strangers and playing with friends, camouflaging gender and hiding their usernames or using gender-neutral names as a way to minimize toxicity towards them, emphasizing skill to show harassers that they are good at what they do and out-performing the harassers, and

assuming more aggressive personalities which is a double-edged sword, since harassers might become more offensive when females start talking back.

As for communities, whether big or small, Slovák et al. (2017) states that the community will team up when issues like toxic behavior happen, and will report the harasser or toxic player through in-game or in forums. Which will provide enough evidence for the moderators to act upon these infractions and ban or mute the players who are being toxic. Slovák et al. (2017) provides an example in their study that shows how providing detailed lists of rules will reduce toxicity, as seen in Minecraft servers. Türkay (2020) adds that smaller the community are easier it is to be managed and moderated.

As for developers, Türkay (2020) states game companies gathered resources and created regulations in hope to create a healthier community, by providing several systems that will help in catching toxic players, reporting them and making the game better for everyone.

***2.5.3.1 Reporting and punishment.*** the reporting system is found in every online multiplayer game, and serves to help players report others who have committed a toxic behavior, cheated or were hacking. Examples from League of Legends' flagging system, which helps players report others (Kou, 2020) and (Kou and Gui, 2021) which are:

-Negative attitudes like grieving or giving up.

-Verbal abuse like harassment or offensive languages.

-Leaving a game or afk-ing, which refers to a player who stays idle or doesn't perform actions in the game.

-Intentional Feeding, which refers to a player who is getting killed on purpose.

-Hate speech, which is similar to verbal abuse but includes racial slurs, sexism or homophobic slurs.

-Cheating, when players are using third party programs to gain advantages.

-Offensive or inappropriate names of players in the match.

All these report systems are provided as well with a bar that asks the reporter to explain what happened, in order for the team to get additional context. When a report comes through to games such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive from in-game, the game is recorded and watched from an employee who will see whether or not such

actions were done. As for games like Dead by Daylight, the reporting system, offers:
- “Harassment: Communication Abuse” for insults, intimidation, hate speech or harassment.
- “Intentional Gameplay Abuse / Trolling” like taking the game hostage, body blocking or working with the killer.
- “Exploits” for players who are exploiting bugs, errors in the game or obtaining cheats.
- “Unsportsmanlike” for afk-ing, rage quitting, being idle or disconnecting early in the game.

In Dead by Daylight, reporting doesn’t act upon the reports unless it was in pre-game or end-game chat. Hacking in-game will need the player to provide footage of the hacker through tickets on the official page, as well as their name, tag or steam profile.

***2.5.3.2 Muting, avoiding and blocking.*** Muting in online games is found in most multiplayers games, such as in Counter Strike: Global Offensive, players can mute others on their teams or mute opponents in case they are being annoying or harassing them, which helps in avoiding conflict. Kou (2020) states that in Overwatch and Dota 2 there is a system that allows players to avoid others, so that they do not appear in future games, which is related to blocking a profile in order not to play against them.

***2.5.3.3 Restrictions and penalties for leaving.*** In Dead by Daylight, there is a disconnect penalty where players who disconnect from a match. Each time a player disconnects from a match they will be get a 5-minute ban, leveling up to a 10 minute, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour, 3 hours, 6 hours, 12 hours, 24 hours, 48 hours and finally 72 hours, which can help in preventing players from disconnecting and ruining the game for others. Kou (2020) states that in League of Legends, chat is disabled in the settings for new accounts to avoid toxicity, but this can be enabled in settings. Kou (2020), gives another example of how Overwatch overwrites the term “gg ez”, which stands for “good game, easy” into premade messages like gee whiz! That was fun” in order to eliminate and restrict toxic chat.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

In order to study the causes and effects that toxic behavior has in video games, I performed a content analysis collected manually from content creators who play Dead by Daylight. I opted for a qualitative research approach which deemed to be necessary in order to study and understand how these content creators deal with and discuss toxic behaviors in the game and in the community, in order to grasp how and why such toxic behaviors are accepted and are considered to be within the community's norms.

The timeframe of which the video retellings are taken from is 2019 towards 2022, which is the same time that I have played Dead by Daylight and been a part of its community. I watched several different video retellings from content creators during this time and have over 2,360 hours on the game.

### 3.1 Research Design:

In order to study toxic behaviors, I chose to watch video game retellings made by content creators on the game Dead by Daylight from their respective YouTube channels. Content Creators point of views are crucial due to the fact that they are the voice of their community and they discuss certain aspects that are viewed by thousands of players online in their separate communities through the use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, or Twitter. The videos I chose to watch explain several toxic encounters in the game and how they are received by the community and in the video retellings. After that, compare these ideas to how the literature discusses and defines toxic behavior to see whether or not it these video retellings fit to the scientific understanding of toxic behavior. This research design is an experimental design, in order to check whether or not the point of views of content creators through video retellings on the topic of toxic behavior are similar and agreed on to that of the literature. Due to the fact that their opinions are seen and heard upon through their entire community as well as through people who watch their videos. It is important to note, that in this research design the main focus is not around the opinions and the

thoughts of the content creators through their video retellings and noting them as important or as right or wrong, the main interest is about how they reflect and perceive it and whether or not it relates to the literature review.

## 3.2 Data Collection

**3.2.1 Background information.** In order to understand the game and its background before discussing the upcoming subsections, background information and the core game mechanic in the game should be explained in order to allow further understanding about the game.

To begin with, Dead by Daylight is an online multiplayer survival asymmetric (1v4) horror game developed and published by Behavior Interactive and is now considered to be the Warner Bro's of Horror Games due to the game licensing a lot of horror franchises and characters from those certain movies, series or video games like Michael Myers and Laurie Strode from Halloween, Leatherface from Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Amanda Young "The Pig" and Detective Tapp from Saw, Leon Kennedy, Jill Valentine and The Nemeses from Resident Evil and so on… The core game mechanic of Dead by Daylight is the following, 4 survivors spawn into the trial, and they are tasked to finishing 5 out of 7 generators in order to power up the exit gate and escape, but they have to be cautious about the killer, who their main objective is to chase survivors off of generators and sacrifice them to the entity by killing them. As of March 2022, Dead by Daylight has 30 survivors and 27 killers, after welcoming a new chapter, "Chapter XXIII: Sadako Rising" which welcomed a new license from the "Ring" movies, Sadako Yamamura, also known as The Onryo in-game and new survivor Yoichi Asakawa, who appears as a young child in the movies. Each character or killer has 3 unique perks that can be leveled up to three tiers, and can be attainted and used on other survivors or killers. In total there are 104 survivor perks and 93 killer perks (up-to-date March 2022). In addition to that, both killer and survivors can get add-ons to help them out during the trial, for survivors, they can get items such as med-kits, that can heal them, flashlights, that can be used to blind the killer, toolboxes, that can help with fixing the generators faster or sabotaging hooks that killers use to kill survivors, keys, that can be used to open hatch or to attain aura-reading abilities, or maps, that can be used to track generator, totems or exit gate placements. As for killer,

add-ons help them with several things depending on the killer, such as enhancing and boosting specific aspects of the killer's abilities or powers in the trial. Up to date, Dead by Daylight has crossed a new major milestone in their lifetime, now having over 50 million players across all the platforms it is available on, such as PS5, Xbox Series X/S, PS4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PC and Mobile. Even though Dead by Daylight is not a competitive game or is involved in E-Sports or worldwide competitions often, the game implements a ranking system called "Grades" and comes in five qualities and divided into four levels each, being Ash (IV-I) Bronze (IV-I) Silver (IV-I) Gold (IV-I) and Iridescent (IV-I). Each month on the 13th, all ranks reset back to Ash IV, which gives the players an opportunity to grind their way back to Iridescent I. Killer and Survivors have different Grading Systems, ranking up in survivor doesn't rank the player up as killer.

In order to study different toxic behaviors that Dead by Daylight might use to their exposal, a study done by Deslauriers et al. (2020) explains several different types of behaviors that some players deem to be toxic. Since this study is being held in 2022, a lot has changed or remained the same in the game, and will be reviewed in Table 1. Some behaviors that are viewed toxic by players in Dead by Daylight are Camping, Tunneling, Body blocking, Rush Unhooking, Slugging, Tea-bagging, Nodding, Flashlight Clicking, Rushing Gens, Killers Smacking Survivors on the Hook, Sandbagging, pre-game and end-game chat, overpowered or meta perks, or overpowered or meta add-ons.

*Table 1: Behaviors and Mechanics That Are Perceived as Toxic from The Community and Their Definitions.*

| Behavior / In-game Mechanics | Definition |
|---|---|
| Camping | Camping is a strategy done by the killer which revolves around the killer standing in front of a hooked survivor and not moving, in order to secure the kill. |
| Tunneling | Tunneling is a strategy done by the killer which revolves around the killer chasing and focusing on one person who got unhooked in order to secure the kill. |

*Table 1 (continued)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Body Blocking | a) When killers intentionally stand at a certain place to block access to survivors trying to save a teammate (usually basement, considered as camping).<br>b) When survivors try to be altruistic and try to body block the killer from hooking another survivor.<br>c) When survivors block other survivors in a corner intentionally and not move. |
| Rush Unhooking | Also known as survivors farming other survivors from the hook, or unhooking when the killer is close by, giving the killer a chance to chase the injured survivor who just got unhooked. |
| Slugging | Slugging is a strategy done by the killer which revolves around them downing a survivor and leaving them on the floor rather than hooking them. |
| Tea-bagging | Tea-bagging is done by repeatedly crouching as survivors, can also be done by two killers. |
| Nodding | Nodding is done by both survivors and killers, which refers to one of the sides nodding their heads at the opposing team. |
| Flashlight Clicking | Flashlight Clicking is done when survivors have a flashlight and they continuously click it in order to attract the killers attention towards them or away from another survivor. |
| Rushing Generators | Doing generators is the main objective that survivors are tasked to do when entering a match, and in some cases survivors end up finishing generators faster than usual. |
| Smacking survivors on hook | This is done when a survivor is on hook and the killer keeps hitting them while camping them. |
| Sandbagging | This is done when a survivor runs with the killer towards another survivor in order for the killer to chase the other teammate. Might be intentional. |

*Table 1 (continued)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Pre-Game and End-Game Chat | This refers to the communication tool given to PC players at the pre-game and end-game chat. |
| Overpowered or Meta Perks | This refers to survivors or killers using overpowered or meta perks during the game. |
| Overpowered or Meta Add-ons | This refers to survivors or killers using overpowered or meta add-ons during the game. |

**3.2.2 Data collection tools.** In order to study how toxic behavior revolves around Dead by Daylight, data was collected and gathered from content creators' video game retellings on YouTube. According to Bernstein (2016), a video essay is a piece of video content that advances in an argument and is considered to be a new form of commentary. Moreover, Consalvo (2003) states that video game fans have been creating walkthroughs or detailed chronological descriptions to guide other players to successfully complete a game through videos made online. Consalvo (2003) continues to explain that the presence of retelling suggests that fans are interested and invested in the games narrative, and will go to great lengths in order to keep the narrative alive. This is supported by Mukherje (2016) and Eladhari (2018) who state that retellings play a significant role in understanding how several video games' narratives work and are key factors in critiquing interactive narrative systems. In addition to that, retellings reveal fruitful aspects of the relationship between the narrative design of the videogame and the players experience when playing the game (Sezen and Sezen, 2022).

When collecting data from different videos, I chose to study 26 videos from 9 different content creators who play Dead by Daylight, who do videos about in-game scenarios that involve narratives and retellings related to toxic behavior in the game and posted as videos on YouTube. The content creators are shown in the Table 1. Data of gameplay was collected as well in order to back up some evidence regarding issues found in the subsection "4.4 Cheaters in Dead by Daylight". The videos related to the subsection are found in Table 3.

*Table 2: List of the Content Creators Used and The Video Count of the Videos That Will Be Discussed About*

| Content Creators | Subscribers Count (Up to May 5th, 2022) | Video Count |
|---|---|---|
| Scott Jund | 187k subscribers | 4 |
| Dowsey | 136k subscribers | 1 |
| SpooknJukes | 87.6k subscribers | 8 |
| DyllonKG | 27.3k subscribers | 1 |
| Raging_Ryuga | 16.7k subscribers | 1 |
| Das Food | 7.14k subscribers | 2 |
| Choy | 8.48k subscribers | 4 |
| ManFaceJay | 6.85k subscribers | 2 |
| AbsolvedLive | 2.06k subscribers | 3 |

*Table 3: List of Content Creators Used as Supporting Evidence Regarding Issues Concerning Cheaters*

| Content Creators | Subscribers Count (Up to May 5th, 2022) | Video Count |
|---|---|---|
| Dead by Daylight Official Page | 918k subscribers | 1 |
| Otzdarva | 766k subscribers | 1 |
| Questioned Turkey | 195k subscribers | 1 |
| CoconutRTS | 86.5k subscribers | 1 |
| PotatoLegion | 85.6k subscribers | 1 |
| jbug | 27.4k subscribers | 1 |

***3.2.3 Data collection procedures.*** When collecting the data, I started by searching for several different content creators who play Dead by Daylight, and checking if they have any content related to discussions about toxic behaviors in the game and in the community. After gathering different videos from different content creators, I watched them and pinpointed important remarks around their viewpoints, discussions and retellings regarding encounters of toxic behavior in the community and in the game's mechanics.

***3.2.4 Data analysis procedures.*** After watching the videos and gathering several points of view and discussions made by the content creators through the video retellings, I analyzed my results by comparing how these video game retellings form a common understanding around toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight. The ideas presented form examples of toxic behavior and coping mechanisms for the community and to people who face toxic behaviors and do not know how to cope with them. The analysis in the findings will be looked upon to see if they relate to the literature review, in order to form discussions whether or not these video retellings analyze toxic behavior as the literature does.

## 3.3 Limitations

While the research produces useful insights regarding the toxic behavior in Dead by Daylight, the main limitation of this study is examining one online platform (YouTube), which can restrict the understanding of toxic behavior within the community of Dead by Daylight since there is a lot of other platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, and Twitch. Another limitation is the scarcity of research done about Dead by Daylight, as well as discussions made about toxic behavior and ways to cope with it. Additionally, there is only male content creators discussing toxic behaviors in Dead by Daylight, as seen in Table 2. When searching YouTube, I couldn't find any female content creators discussing toxicity as forms of retelling, as well as considering that some of the content creators might be sponsored and have different motivations. Lastly, in order to get the content needed, I focused on the most popular content creators and most viewed content regarding this topic.

# Chapter 4

## Findings and Discussions

In order to begin reviewing the video game retellings regarding toxic behavior, I chose to work on several videos found on the platform, YouTube, and conclude relating ideas that I found when these content creators discussed the issue of toxicity in Dead by Daylight, where it comes from, their point of view on it and a way to cope with it if available.

### 4.1 In-Game Actions

When discussing in-game actions in a video game, certain actions are activated when a player clicks a button which leads to a change in the game world. Moreover, in the situation of Dead by Daylight, when referring to Table 1, all actions presented under Behavior / In-game Mechanics are considered to be in-game actions. SpooknJukes (2021a) believes that most of the behaviors explained such as tea-bagging, clicking flashlights, rushing generators, camping, tunneling and many other in-game mechanics are not toxic. AbsolvedLive (2022a) agrees with the previous statement, explaining how such in-game actions are not toxic. In-game actions like these are heavily debated in the community since some actions might lead to situations referenced in subsection “2.4.1.3 Hostage holding”, where slugging or camping can be considered under that category, under subsection “2.4.1.5 Sabotaging”, where body blocking and sandbagging can be considered under that category or under subsection “2.4.1.1 Communicative Aggression”, where flashlight clicking or smacking survivors on hook can be considered auditory and visual cues done in order to disturb and annoy a player. Such in-game actions can cause the player to get frustrated or angry, which can lead to hate messages or false reporting incidents in the game after post-game chat is opened for PC players or console direct messages (SpooknJukes, 2019, 2022a). This is referenced in subsection “2.4.1.1 Communicative Aggression”, such as threats, harassment, offensive naming, or flaming as well as racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks. This is supported by ManFaceJay (2022a) who explains those in-game mechanics are called “frustration tactics” and that these tactics are not personal attacks

made by the player on the other team but are just simply gameplay mechanics that are tools given from the game and can be used to make the other team frustrated (ManFaceJay, 2022b) It is important to note that such frustration tactics can be seen as toxic behaviors for some players in the community, which is problematic, and can cause others to feel provoked when playing the game. This can be seen in a video done by SpooknJukes (2019), who received hate messages in post-game chat due to him purposefully tunneling and camping to provoke examples of how these frustration tactics lead to hate messages. Such gameplay is toxic due to him purposefully wanting to provoke others and ruin their fun. Moreover, ManFaceJay, (2022b) states that such tactics are used when players get the upper hand in the game, since the player knows they are in a good position. For example, survivors might perform actions such as tea-bagging or flashlight clicking after a pallet has been dropped since they are safe from the killer momentarily, which in that case, killers might consider that as toxic or might get frustrated. On the other hand, such tactics might make the other player play badly. This is supported by ManFaceJay (2022a), who provides a game review where an anonymous streamer was playing well up until the other team started using in-game mechanics to frustrate the killer, after that the killer started messing up and spewing hate comments and insults such as racist and homophobic insults. Such in-game actions can be seen as annoying or toxic to some, but to others can be seen as time-wasting mechanics that can give the opposing team the upper hand (Choy, 2021a). This is supported by Scott Jund (2020a) who states that some in-game actions should not be viewed as toxic, like tea-bagging at pallets or survivors clicking their flashlights at killers to grab their attention from another survivor, these survivors are wasting their time rather than creating distance or doing generators. This works well for the opposing team as well, when killers camp, it gives the other team the upper hand to finish generators, or when someone is getting tunneled, killers are wasting map pressure. So, these “toxic” traits that people talk about, can be beneficial rather than be considered as toxic in-game mechanics. Which is true and can be favorable for the opposing team as shown with the examples given.

According to Scott Jund (2022), in-game actions can be viewed in two different ways, the first being wanting to win the game, so a player playing as killer might end up camping in order to win, with the intention of wining. The second being the intent of someone trying to make the other feel bad or upset, and usually such actions are

taken towards end-game chat, which is toxic. This is explained as going out of your way to make someone feel bad, with no benefit to yourself. Which refers to section "2.1.2 Toxic behavior.", where toxic individuals will go out of their way to annoy anyone. Scott Jund (2022) continues to suggest that toxicity only happens outside of the game in post-game chat or in direct messages, when people harass and insult others, making things personal. AbsolvedLive (2022a) explains how people take it beyond the scope of the game to insult the person when it has nothing to do with the game, which can be seen in many of this streamers videos where streamers insulted his appearance (AbsolvedLive, 2022b, 2022c). Such reactions from players are toxic and leaves a question regarding why in-game frustration leads to people insulting others when it has nothing to do with the game. Scott Jund (2022) states a way to cope with the toxic behavior is if you deny a reaction to bullies and their toxic behaviors, it does not give the toxic individual a positive reaction, which prevents them from being satisfied or getting a funny response out of it. This might lead to toxic individuals stopping with toxic behaviors due to the fact that they are not getting anything out of it. Which helps people cope with toxicity in the game due to ignoring toxic people. This has been suggested by Scott Jund (2020a), who states that ignoring players trying to annoy you and preventing them from getting the satisfaction for free takes away the power of these toxic players who want to laugh at others. This is related to subsection "2.5.1 coping mechanisms for digital media users." and "2.5.2 coping mechanisms for toxic leaders.", where different references from the literature review suggest that ignoring and avoiding the source of toxic behavior might help the person dealing against it. Another way to cope with these mechanics that are viewed to be toxic by the community, is to remember that Dead by Daylight is just a game (SpooknJukes, 2021a), which is a straight forward mechanism and has personally helped me deal with frustration when it comes to Dead by Daylight. When putting aside frustrating events and focusing on enjoying the game, such actions will not affect the player as much when they percieve these actions as not toxic. The coping mechanisms explained can help players who get harassed and insulted due to their playstyle and can be added to Subsection "2.5.3 Coping Mechanisms for Online Games". This can give a new perspective to players dealing with toxicity due to their playstyle since many people play the game differently and each has their own opinion, which will be discussed in subsection "4.2 Player Entitlement and Player Psychology".

### 4.2 Player Entitlement and Player Psychology

When discussing toxic behavior related to in-game mechanics and actions, Scott Jund (2021a) states that people have lost sight on what toxicity really means, and that a game like Dead by Daylight doesn't have the most toxic community out there. Scott Jund (2022) adds that each person has their own opinion about what is toxic behavior. Which is debatable since there is a definition of what toxic behavior is in literature, and that such a statement is not valid and is ignoring the fact that these behaviors might be considered to be toxic to many individuals. AbsolvedLive (2022a) adds that the word toxic is quite frequently thrown around and that some situations in the game are not really toxic, which adds to the debate whether or not these in game actions are really toxic or not. Scott Jund (2021) continues to explain that a problem in the game is people are making up their own rules and calling things toxic, which is entitlement. According to Cuncic (2021), entitlement is a personality characteristic that is based on the belief that the persons deserves special treatment or recognition, or as Scott explains it, people make up their own rules in this game, and get mad when people do not follow these rules (Scott Jund, 2021). Based on that opinion, there is an issue related to game mechanics when rules are not set. This sets a gap between what the player has in mind and what another player has in mind. This creates difference in expectations between different players, which leads to player entitlement. Furthermore, Scott Jund (2021) explains how the community entitlement created two rule books, being known as the survivor rule book and the killer rule book, and how each side believes and are entitled to their own rules. The two rule books are famous within the community, and is heavily based on people who only main one role, the killer or the survivor side. Scott Jund (2021) gives an example about in-game actions, like slugging and tunneling are against survivor rule books, which means for entitled survivor mains, that is toxic. As well as flashlight clicking or generator rushing, such actions are against the killer rule book, which means for entitled killer mains, that is toxic. In two videos made by Das_Food (2022a) and Das_Food (2022b), the content creator discusses different examples of The Survivor Rule Book for Killers and The Killer Rule Book for Survivors, where he shows a set of different examples related to entitlement in the game when it comes to one side, for example, when it comes to the

survivor rule book, killers cannot use a set of perks like “Hex: No One Escapes Death”, how killers are not allowed to camp under any situation, or how strong meta-builds are prohibited (Das_Food, 2022a). As for killers, survivors can’t run second chance perks such as Dead Hard or Decisive Strike, survivors should never click their flashlights, blind the killer or teabag them (Das_Food, 2022b). Which is heavily entitled, SpooknJukes (2021b) gives an example of how entitlement works in the game, when killers choose a simple perk like “Lightborn”, which allows the killer to be resistant to getting blinded by flashlights, this can be boring, not fun and can ruin the experience for some entitled survivors, and toxic end-game chat can occur when one side is trying to have fun and try out new things. Scott Jund (2020a) talks about how entitled players need to be empathetic about the other side, and that will lead to a lot less hostility, especially when there is a severe lack of understanding towards the other side, each side does not understand the struggles each side has. This is a core example of why the community might be considered to be toxic. In regards to the previous comment done by Scott Jund, this can solve the important issue of entitlement in the game, since each side has their own struggles during a match, and players might result in playing in a certain way to win.

It is important to relate these previous ideas presented with Salen and Zimmerman's concepts of “Discernable” and “Integrated”. In the Discernable Concept, the results of game actions are communicated to players in a perceivable way, when discernibility is found in a game, it possesses a building block for meaningful play and allows the player to know what happened when they pressed buttons and took actions, which gives an outcome (Salen and Zimmerman, 2003). As for integrated concept, Salen and Zimmerman (2003) discuss the relation between action and outcome in the game world, since an action taken by the player does not only have an immediate significance to the game, but also affects the experience of play at some point in the game. If players do not perceive the game actions as stated in the discernibility concept, then it creates a problem related to game design. This relates to previous ideas presented in the video retellings and can argue with the point of views above. Since if players can’t perceive actions and consequences of them as toxic, then there is a game design flaw that should be reviewed and worked on in order to have meaningful play. Also, there is an importance in how each action has consequences and affects the experience of the players, as presented in the integrated concept. People should be well

aware of the situation at hand, and this can be a new way to raise awareness about in-game mechanics to the developers in order for them to notice that the game has a design flaw and needs to be reviewed.

According to DyllonKG (2020), he starts by asking why players get so involved and frustrated when these "toxic" mechanics happen. To begin with, people are motivated to do things through self-determination, and the theory states that human behavior is driven by the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Pang, 2017). If those needs are met, people enjoy activities more, even in gaming. Where competency refers to executing tasks and mastering one's skills, autonomy is having control and relatedness is when you relate to things (Pang, 2017). In a study done by Stuart (2015), he talks about how people play video games to feel in control over a situation. According to DyllonKG (2020), in a game like Dead by Daylight, since it is a multiplayer game that might be considered competitive to some, there is no sense of control. Which is supported by Scott Jund (2020b), who states that Dead by Daylight is not a balanced game and there is no equal playing field which is due to many different circumstances, especially when a player is feeling helpless in a situation where they can't do much and the other side has an advantage or an easy way out of it. DyllonKG (2020) continues to explain how the players competency, skill and autonomy gets challenged and says how some actions in Dead by Daylight like tea-bagging or flashlight clicking can be a source of mockery towards the other side, and connects it to human ego, which is referenced by Przybylski and Ryan (2014) who explain how the sense of frustration can lead to rage-quitting, intense feelings and anger, as well as when people have no control over the outcome of a game can lead to aggressive feelings, which relates to competency. These researches and articles relate to Dead by Daylight due to the fact where situations in the game can either be in control of one team, in some cases the player can have control and in others, the player's skills and competency can be challenged. Raging_Ryuga (2021), adds that performance anxiety and expectations might be a reason towards frustration and being upset in a game, where some players or streamers have the need to perform well in all their games and will get frustrated and become entitled to win. Which is understandable due to some player having high expectations of their gameplay and want to succeed during the matches. DyllonKG (2020) says a way to cope with such frustration due to lack of control is letting go of the feeling of wanting to win and control every game, which

helps the player accept the outcome of the game. The more the player lets go, the easier it gets for the player to ease their frustration and enjoy the experience. According to Raging_Ryuga (2021), people need to try to find a way to just play and focus on their own performance, rather than others. Players need to care less about winning and about situations that are out of their control, such things would remove the frustration from inside the player. Raging_Ryuga (2021), continues to explain that when people start focusing more about enjoying and having fun in the match rather than the end result, it will make the player enjoy matches more, keeps them positive, stops creating arguments at end-game chat, and most importantly it helps the player in seeing game actions as the opposite of toxic. The coping mechanisms discussed in this subsection can help a frustrated or a player with high expectations and can be added to Subsection "2.5.3 Coping Mechanisms for Online Games" which can give a new perspective to players dealing with such frustration due to trolls or toxic people.

In addition to that, SpooknJukes (2022b) references a match containing a toxic streamer who had a god complex and an ego problem, which heavily relates to the player's psychology and to their entitlement. This video, as well as other videos on SpooknJukes channels (SpooknJukes, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e), explain how toxic streamers or players are entitled to their own ideas and terms when playing the game. The streamers would go out of their way to insult and harass others due to how the other person is playing for different reasons such as frustration, or as explained by Raging_Ryuga (2021), when streamers get salty or and need to perform well in order to keep their viewers happy. SpooknJukes (2022b), states that the problem with toxicity has nothing to do with playstyle or how people play the game, which is debatable due to the fact that such actions can provoke toxic encounters, so it makes it a problematic mechanic that can cause toxic behavior within the community. SpooknJukes (2022b) adds that it has to do with how people treat each other and how seriously they take the game, which is seen in other videos when people go out of their way to belittle and insult others (ManFaceJay, 2022a; SpooknJukes, 2022a, 2019). Which surely is a main source of toxic behavior in online games and is referenced in subsection "2.4.1.1 Communicative aggression", and is considered to be an important aspect to focus on when discussing aggression done by players to one another. Such actions as well can be related to section "2.3 Anti-Social and Toxic Behaviors of Leaders in the Workspace." Where a lot of toxic traits from toxic leaders can be seen

within entitled players who believe they're right and think they're better due to them being entitled to their opinions and their gameplay styles in the game Dead by Daylight.

### 4.3 Cheaters in Dead by Daylight

Cheating and hacking has always been a problem in online games, and that can be seen in subsection "2.4.1.2 Cheating", where there are countless ways for people to cheat and hack when it comes to video games. Choy (2021b) got the chance to speak with hackers and cheaters who play Dead by Daylight in order to ask them why and how they do it and if the developers "Behavior Interactive" are doing anything to stop it. Surely, the developers have worked on fighting against the hacker epidemic since the game launched back in 2016. Still, a lot of hackers emerged during the hacking epidemic when it happened in 2021, up until mid-2022, which is an issue seen in many games and doesn't make the developers look bad since cheating is found in every online game out there. Choy (2021b) shows clips from other streamers like Umbra, AngryPug and CoconutRTS where they faced a hacker in their lobby and it ended up with them being held hostage, forcing them to disconnect and receiving a DC penalty since they were not able to escape. Choy (2021b) shows a chat he had with an administrator of a hacking service that provides cheats for players who play Dead by Daylight. The cheater explains that they are proving a point to the developers that they are stronger than them and that some players got to play for 100-150 hours before they got banned. The hacking administrator continues to explain how these hackers are stream sniping and being able to get into lobbies with streamers. The cheater goes on to say that they have a queue checker for both survivors and killers, and that it is not hard to queue against a streamer most of the times, and that no matter what streamers do to hide their lobbies, the hackers will always find a way to get into their lobbies and play against them. This provides a list of reasons why people dislike hackers and cheaters, and gives insight on how toxic behavior in gaming, in specific hacking, can lead to disadvantages for players who are not cheating, and can ruin the fun and fairness in the game, as concluded in subsection "2.4.1.2 Cheating". Lastly, the hacking administrator says that the reason behind hacking is until the developers do something about it (Choy, 2021b). This is debatable since the hackers are trying to get

rid of a problem by adding a new problem, this is not fun for the majority of the people, and can ruin player satisfaction. Gameplay against hackers can be seen in many different videos online on YouTube, such as Dowsey (2021) where the streamer states that hacking in Dead by Daylight can come in forms of teleporting killers, instant heals, speed hacks, wall hacks and so on, and ends up showing gameplay against hackers who he faced. Dowsey (2021) adds that they are a duo since they also appeared in a match against another streamer called PotatoLegion (PotatoLegion, 2021). This provides proof to the hacking administrator (Choy, 2021b), who stated that it is easy to find streamers whenever they want. Many other streamers provided gameplay against hackers on YouTube such as (Otzdarva, 2020; jbug, 2021; QuestionedTurkey, 2021; CoconutRTS, 2021), where they queued up with a hacker in their game. Upcoming game changes were made to Dead by Daylight, (Dead by Daylight, 2022), regarding the hacking problem in the game in a live stream, and the developers were working on ways to prevent such problems and explain that their silence is due to the fact that when discussing cheats and speaking about the changes, cheaters will find a way to prevent the changes and create new cheat mechanics to exploit new systems, so remaining silent is a way for the developers to fight against this cycle. This deemed successful for a while and a wave ban was made by banning many hackers in Dead by Daylight (Choy, 2022a). This lasted until a new wave of hackers and bots found a way to infiltrate the game system (Choy 2022b). Which concludes the fact that hackers will always find their way into the game and making it impossible for developers to maintain the situation unless precautions are taken and actions are made from the developers. So, as explained by cheaters, action should be taken by hackers in order to let the developers wake up and realize that their game needs fixing (Choy, 2021b). Surely, cheating in a game is toxic, but was the hacking intentional to cause toxic encounters as explained by the hacking administrator? As seen from the interview made by Choy (2021b), hackers wanted to raise awareness on the situation of the game and succeeded by making Behavior Interactive, the developers of Dead by Daylight, work on a solution for cheating, which was being worked on during the timeframe before the live stream on January 2022 up until the wave ban happened.

# Chapter 5

# Conclusions

## 5.1 Conclusions

It is important to note that when relating to the literature, we see that many actions found in Dead by Daylight's mechanics are considered to be toxic when used, which allows players and toxic individuals to use them at their own will, especially when there are no rules in the game that specify whether or not in-game actions are problematic or toxic. When looking at video retellings, the majority of the content creators state that these in-game actions are not toxic, and do not see them as problematic issues. These video retellings are viewed by thousands of players, but it does not mean that every viewer of these videos agree with these statements, but these opinions have an influence and a resonance in online game communities. When relating to the literature, we see that these actions cause toxic behaviors, and even within the game, they lead to toxic encounters, which is problematic and can cause frustration and anger to many players. Even if these actions are built into the game, when relating the findings section to the literature review, we can conclude that those in-game mechanics are problematic when taken to extremes and made purposefully to annoy others, which lead to the toxic community that Dead by Daylight has. We can conclude in this study that even though these mechanics are free to use by the player and are tools given by the developers for the player to use, they are a source of toxic behavior due to them causing toxic encounters, and in that case it should not be ignored due to the fact that it can cause emotions of anger, frustration or toxicity within the community of the game. Also, developers should be well aware of their game design features and mechanics when it comes to causing toxic behaviors, especially when the game mechanics are problematic and lead to toxic encounters within the community.

As for the cheater epidemic, the developers need to focus on in-game updates regarding hackers and update their game occasionally regarding bugs, exploits and anti-cheats in order to keep their community safe and free of hackers. Surely hackers will always find a way to penetrate the system and find exploits, but always working

on improving the game and the system will help the game move forward and grow in different aspects, especially when toxicity is an issue in the game.

Toxic behavior will always be a problem in gaming in general, and in the world in specific. But actions can be taken to cope with such problems, and it is important for people to sympathize and know their actions can cause consequences no matter the situation at hand. The reason behind the study was to explore different types of toxic behaviors in general and then find solutions and coping mechanisms from the literature and from the internet, and when it came to gaming, as many games provide the same scope of toxicity, it is important to note that people should battle toxicity in order for it to not be as powerful as it is.

In order to clarify some of the conclusions found in the findings section, it will be reviewed in Table 4.

*Table 4: Conclusions from the findings and discussion section*

| Points given from the findings sections from video retellings. | Conclusions and Discussions related to these points. |
|---|---|
| The majority of content creators state through their video retellings that in-game actions are not toxic and that players should not see in-game mechanics as toxic due to them being game mechanics. | When relating to the literature, we see that many of these behaviors are classified as toxic behaviors. Also, if players cannot identify actions and their consequences as toxic, then there is a design flaw in the game, and that creates different expectations to each player. Game designers should be able to identify which game mechanics trigger toxic behaviors among players and how these affect the player community. |
| Content creators state that the game has no rules and that's the reason behind entitlement issues, which can lead to a lot of false expectations within the game and can lead to toxic encounters | When relating this to the discernible and integrated concept by Salen and Zimmerman, we conclude that actions taken by the player do not only have an immediate significance to the game, but |

*Table 4 (Continued)*

| | |
|---|---|
| especially when players ignore the fact that some actions can cause consequences within the game mechanics. | also affects the experience of play, and that if players can't relate, then creates a problem related to game design within the game itself. |
| Hackers state that their actions are acceptable due to them raising awareness that they are better than the developers. The hackers want to see change being done to the game since they believe that the developers do not care about their own game. | When relating to the literature, it is still considered as toxic behaviors, there surely are other ways to deal with situations than ruining players' experience.<br>Developers need to monitor the community and release updates regularly in order to keep the community safe. |

After relating the video retellings to the literature review, we conclude that in Dead by Daylight, toxic behaviors are within the community and due to the game design itself. The game design elements trigger toxic behaviors through gameplay and between the community, thus affecting the gameplay experience of players due to in-game actions being perceived as toxic. The developers should be well aware of the situation that is leading the community into more toxic behaviors, and change should be made to the core game mechanic and to the gameplay experience that is being offered to the players, in order to keep the game updated regularly and to prevent certain toxic.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Further research should be conducted about games in specific when dealing with toxic behavior, due to the fact that the literature and research is rich in discussing toxic behavior in multiplayer games. But in specific, each game can contribute to new ways of understanding toxic behavior and coping mechanisms can vary from different sources of online games. Even though they can be related, each game and genre can offer a new approach to understand toxicity as a whole, offering new examples and

point of views of players within different communities in general, and content creators when discussing certain aspects about the game through video game retellings in specific.

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