FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING IN IN VALORANT GAMING

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ABSTRACT

Online multiplayer gaming has revolutionized the digital entertainment industry, but it has also led to the rise of toxic behaviors, such as cyberbullying. This study, based on Nancy Willard's Taxonomy of Cyberbullying, examines the prevalence of cyberbullying in Valorant's text chat interactions. The research used descriptive quantitative to examine chat logs from 103 gameplay sessions, collected between October 6 and October 26, 2024. The analysis identified 222 examples of cyberbullying across the selected chat logs, with denigration being the most prevalent type. These behaviors included derogatory remarks, explicit threats, and personal attacks, often targeting players' nationalities, gender, and personal identities. On average, each gameplay session contained two instances of cyberbullying, highlighting the widespread nature of these toxic interactions.

The study underscores the need for stronger moderation systems and community guidelines to mitigate cyberbullying in competitive online games. By applying Willard's taxonomy, the research provides valuable insights into the specific forms and contexts of cyberbullying in competitive online games. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on digital communication and underscore the urgency of addressing cyberbullying to foster healthier and more inclusive gaming environments.

Keywords: Valorant, Descriptive Quantitative, Cyberbullying, Nancy Willard Taxonomy of Cyberbullying, Online Multiplayer Gaming

ABSTRAK

Game multipemain online telah merevolusi industri hiburan digital, namun juga menyebabkan munculnya perilaku beracun, seperti cyberbullying. Studi ini, berdasarkan Taksonomi Cyberbullying karya Nancy Willard, mengkaji prevalensi cyberbullying dalam interaksi obrolan teks Valorant. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kuantitatif untuk memeriksa log obrolan dari 103 sesi permainan, yang dikumpulkan antara tanggal 6 Oktober dan 26 Oktober 2024. Analisis tersebut mengidentifikasi 222 contoh penindasan maya di log obrolan yang dipilih, dengan fitnah sebagai jenis yang paling umum. Perilaku ini mencakup pernyataan yang menghina, ancaman eksplisit, dan serangan pribadi, sering kali menargetkan kewarganegaraan, gender, dan identitas pribadi pemain. Rata-rata, setiap sesi gameplay berisi dua kasus cyberbullying, yang menyoroti meluasnya interaksi beracun ini.

Studi ini menggarisbawahi perlunya sistem moderasi yang lebih kuat dan pedoman komunitas untuk memitigasi cyberbullying dalam game online kompetitif. Dengan menerapkan taksonomi

Willard, penelitian ini memberikan wawasan berharga mengenai bentuk dan konteks spesifik cyberbullying dalam game online kompetitif. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada wacana yang lebih luas mengenai komunikasi digital dan menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengatasi cyberbullying untuk mendorong lingkungan game yang lebih sehat dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Valorant, Deskriptif Kuantitatif, Cyberbullying, Nancy Willard Taxonomy of Cyberbullying, Online Multiplayer Gaming

INTRODUCTION

Online multiplayer gaming has transformed digital entertainment, fostering competition, collaboration, and real-time interaction. However, it has also given rise to toxic behaviors, including cyberbullying. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, with a reported 40% increase in cyberbullying due to heightened gaming activity. Competitive games like Valorant, which rely on communication and strategy, often become breeding grounds for toxic behaviors such as verbal abuse, harassment, and exclusion. These behaviors are further fueled by anonymity and high-pressure scenarios, often disproportionately targeting marginalized groups, including female gamers.

Valorant, a tactical shooter by Riot Games, exemplifies this duality. With 19 million global players as of 2024, its popularity among Generation Z has been driven by fast-paced gameplay and targeted marketing. However, its competitive environment often leads to verbal aggression, scapegoating, and harassment, undermining team dynamics and creating hostile experiences.

The impacts of cyberbullying in gaming are significant, leading to psychological distress, social isolation, and reduced community engagement. Despite tools like reporting systems and moderation policies, these efforts are insufficient to curb toxic behavior entirely. Theoretical frameworks like Willard's Taxonomy of Cyberbullying highlight various types of bullying—flaming, harassment, denigration, and others—common in games like Valorant. This research uses descriptive quantitative methods to analyze in-game interactions, aiming to provide insights for more effective interventions. By identifying patterns and behaviors, the study seeks to contribute to healthier and more inclusive gaming communities.

Research Objective

This study aims to describe the types and the prevalence of bullying behaviours among players occur during Valorant gaming sessions.

Theoritical Framework

Cyberbullying lacks a universally agreed-upon definition, but it is broadly understood as engaging in cruel or confrontational behavior through digital platforms (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). While definitions often emphasize factors such as power imbalances, repetition, and malicious intent, there is ongoing debate on how these elements apply in the context of online gaming. Nancy Willard, in her influential taxonomy, categorizes cyberbullying into eight distinct types: flaming, harassment, denigration, cyberthreats, impersonation, outing and trickery, cyberstalking, and exclusion.

This comprehensive framework captures the diverse forms of cyberbullying, ranging from overtly hostile behaviors to subtle manipulative actions. Flaming involves short-lived but intense interactions aimed at provoking anger, whereas harassment entails sustained and targeted attacks meant to intimidate or humiliate. Denigration focuses on damaging a person's reputation through false or harmful information. Subtler forms like outing and trickery involve breaching trust by exposing private information or deceiving individuals. Exclusion isolates individuals by deliberately omitting them from group activities, while cyberstalking involves intrusive, prolonged monitoring designed to instill fear or anxiety. By addressing these behaviors across varied dimensions, Willard's taxonomy provides a nuanced understanding of how cyberbullying manifests in digital spaces, including competitive online gaming environments. This categorization not only highlights the complexity of cyberbullying but also underscores the need for tailored interventions to address these distinct forms effectively.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach to analyze cyberbullying behaviors in Valorant, utilizing numerical data from media, texts, and images to quantify aspects such as sentiment, thematic prevalence, and frequency (Franzosi, 2008). The focus on Valorant stems from its rapid growth and widespread popularity within the global online gaming community, particularly its competitive environment, which serves as an ideal setting to study cyberbullying dynamics. Using purposive sampling, the study examines competitive match in-game chat logs to ensure diverse interactions are represented. Specific instances of toxic behavior are identified from 103 gameplay sessions and analyzed using Willard's Taxonomy of Cyberbullying to classify and understand the various forms of cyberbullying within Valorant’s in-game communications. This method provides a structured framework for drawing

statistically supported insights into the prevalence and nature of cyberbullying in competitive online gaming.

This study examines Valorant's in-game chat, focusing on classifying various forms of cyberbullying using Willard's Taxonomy of Cyberbullying. Building on prior research that categorized FPS discourse into performance talk and game conflict talk, such as discussions on kills, strategies, and accusations of cheating or camping (Herring et al., 2009), this study narrows its scope to analyze how cyberbullying behaviors manifest in Valorant's competitive and interactive environment. By methodically categorizing toxic interactions, the research provides insights into the prevalence and dynamics of cyberbullying in online gaming.

Results and Finding

This descriptive quantitative study investigates the types of cyberbullying present in Valorant's text chat gameplay, employing Willard's Taxonomy of Cyberbullying as a framework. Willard identifies eight categories of cyberbullying: flaming, harassment, denigration, cyberthreats, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking. Through a systematic coding process, four of these types were detected in this research: Denigration, Flaming, Harassment, and Cyberthreats. Experience Related to Identity Changes and Adaptation Experienced by Informants After Becoming K-pop Fans

The identities and adaptations of informants as K-pop fans reflect the integration and assimilation strategies in Berry's acculturation theory. Some Denigration emerged as the most prevalent type with 108 instances, categorized further into subtypes such as character-based denigration, skill-based denigration, cultural denigration, and gender-based denigration. Flaming followed with 89 instances, including subtypes like provocative flaming (e.g., intentionally provoking players to escalate conflicts), mocking flaming (e.g., ridiculing a player's actions or strategies), and dismissive flaming (e.g., undermining contributions or performance). Harassment accounted for 19 instances, encompassing intimidating harassment (e.g., threats of loss or pressure), exclusionary harassment (e.g., ostracizing players with hostile remarks), personal harassment (e.g., targeting specific traits), sexual harassment (e.g., inappropriate comments), and cultural harassment (e.g., discriminatory language based on nationality or ethnicity). Cyberthreats, with 6 instances, were identified as either threats to harm others (e.g., promises of

physical or emotional violence) or threats of self-harm (e.g., comments aimed at eliciting guilt or fear).

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the patterns and dynamics of toxic behavior in competitive gaming, shedding light on how cyberbullying manifests within the socially interactive and high-pressure environment of Valorant gameplay.

Conclusion

The study identified four primary types of cyberbullying present in Valorant gameplay: Flaming, Harassment, Denigration, and Cyberthreats. Among these, Denigration and Flaming emerged as the most prevalent forms of toxic behavior, aligning with the study's expectations of uncovering diverse cyberbullying behaviors within the game. Denigration accounted for the majority of instances, with 108 occurrences, reflecting the frequent use of harmful language and stereotypes aimed at damaging players' reputations or identities. Flaming, characterized by angry and provocative comments intended to escalate conflicts, followed with 89 occurrences, highlighting the intense emotional exchanges common in competitive gameplay. Harassment, involving 19 instances, was marked by targeted and sustained remarks designed to intimidate or humiliate players. Cyberthreats were the least common, with only 6 recorded instances, encompassing direct threats of harm or violence. These findings provide critical insights into the manifestation of cyberbullying within Valorant, emphasizing the need for enhanced moderation and community management to foster a healthier gaming environment.

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