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Toxic By Design: Exploring the Relationship of Game Affordances and Negative Behavior

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Abstract. Video games are a globally popular genre of entertainment. Online multiplayer games, in particular, include ways of interacting with players around the world. These ways of interacting can include space for negative, or "toxic behavior," that can significantly impact players who experience such behavior. This paper provides a preliminary literature review of the existing research on toxic behavior in online games. This paper outlines gaps in research in order to support the design of a future study of affordances in two popular online multiplayer games, *League of Legends* and *Valorant*. The literature review and context of inquiry offer initial steps towards a research project studying how to mitigate toxic behavior through design choices.

Keywords: Toxicity · Online Games · League of Legends · Valorant · Affordances

1 Introduction

With approximately 2.96 billion people playing video games worldwide [1], this source of entertainment has become increasingly prevalent in today's society. In addition to their entertainment value, video games have been shown to have positive effects on players across four domains: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social [2]. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, extant literature suggests that many users report a drastic increase in both the time they spend playing video games and the perceived positive effects playing these games have [3]. Specifically, many players perceive video games to play a large role in improving their mood, stress, and sense of agency, while promoting a sense of normalcy during the pandemic [3].