

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent decades, the development of information and communication technology has had a major impact on various aspects of life, especially in terms of social interaction. One of the phenomena arising from this development is the expansion of communication in the digital space, particularly through online gaming platforms.

Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang, one of the online multiplayer games that use communication among player. Abie & Rosmilawati (2023) argue that Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang is a MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) game, where players fight online in two or more teams in one arena. Each team of 5 players has the main objective of guarding their base by fighting against the opposing team. In this game, the players can participate in cooperative or competitive communication, depending on the problem. However, behind the social benefits offered, there are some problems in communication. One of them is toxic communication.

Conmy (2008) in Sugiono (2019) states that trash or toxic talk is a form of verbal communication that is done consciously or intentionally by individuals with goals that can be positive or negative. This communication is positive if it motivates as well as entertains, but it turns negative if it annoys as well as frightens, depending on the speaker's purpose. Sugiono (2019) states that it is true that there are various different types of toxic players or of users in video games. These include players who depart from the game (AFK), certain feeders, die repeatedly as well as choose heroes randomly, steal kills, are difficult for one to work with, plus use abusive language (trash-talking). These phenomena have a significant impact on the gaming experience and affect players' mental health.

In addition, the Mobile legend game: Bang-Bang is a game that is easily accessible to various groups, especially among young people. Mattinen and Macey (2018) in Abie & Rosmilawati (2023) argue that the most likely cause of trash or toxic talk occurs due to lack of self-control and immature mental conditions, making it more intensely responsive to provocation and cursing. And tend to be strong in imitating the behavior of the surrounding environment, including the online gaming environment that is full of flaming and cursing.

Most of the previous research on toxic communication in online games such as Mobile Legend: Bang Bang has mostly highlighted the psychological aspects, especially the impact on players' mental health (Sugiono, 2019). Some studies have also explored game dynamics, including negative behaviours such as trash-talking (Abie & Rosmilawati, 2023). However, these studies tend to analyze player behavior in a broad population without considering the specific characteristics of a particular community. There is still a gap in the literature that discusses academic and social contexts in depth, especially related to toxic communication in educational environments such as among State Polytechnic of Bengkalis students.

Based on observations in the field, it is known that many students from various majors and study programs actively play the Mobile Legend. When researchers were in the midst of the players, it was found that there was communication that contained toxic elements, as well as the use of special terms that appeared when they played together. This communication is interesting to study further because it reflects the unique interaction dynamics between the players.

This phenomenon is an important basis for research focusing on State Polytechnic of Bengkalis students, given the high popularity of this game and the intensity of interactions created during play. To date, not many studies have specifically examined the causes of toxic communication influenced by student group dynamics, campus environment, or local culture. In addition, there is still a lack of exploration of strategies to prevent and handle toxic communication in student communities. Therefore, this study aims to identify the triggering factors

and impacts of toxic communication among State Polytechnic of Bengkalis students, as well as provide recommendations for effective and applicable solutions.

The phenomenon of toxic communication in *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* is considered worthy of investigation because it represents a form of harmful communication that remains widespread among players despite the game's immense popularity. A survey-based study conducted by Alamsyah, et al. (2023) revealed that, based on 15 survey questions administered to *Mobile Legends* players ranging from children to adults, 90% of the respondents demonstrated a tendency to engage in toxic communication, with the most common form being the use of offensive or abusive language during gameplay. This finding is supported by another quantitative study that examined the level of toxic behavior among *Mobile Legends* players in Ranked mode, which reported that toxic behavior was categorized as high. The high prevalence of such behavior is a matter of concern because toxic communication has been shown to negatively affect players by reducing team cohesion and overall game performance, while also posing risks to their psychological well-being, including increased stress levels and reduced self-confidence (Sugiono, 2019). Therefore, although *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* is one of the most popular online games, its popularity is accompanied by a high incidence of toxic communication that can negatively affect players both individually and collectively within a team. This condition indicates that the phenomenon deserves further investigation, particularly within university student communities, which have received relatively limited scholarly attention.

In addition to the empirical evidence, the selection of this research topic is also motivated by the researcher's personal experience as a member of the *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* player community. As an active player, the researcher has repeatedly witnessed and personally experienced toxic communication while playing with fellow students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis. These experiences encouraged the researcher to investigate why toxic communication continues to occur despite its negative impact on team performance and players' psychological well-being. Furthermore, as a student of the English for Business and

Professional Communication Study Program, the researcher considers toxic communication to be a relevant communication phenomenon to examine, rather than merely a gaming or psychological issue. The absence of previous studies specifically investigating toxic communication among students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis further strengthens the rationale for selecting this research topic. Therefore, this study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the forms, causes, and experiences of toxic communication among students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis while playing *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang*.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background that has been described, the problems to be answered in this study are:

1. What are the forms of toxic communication used by students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis when playing Mobile Legends: Bang Bang?
2. What causes players to do toxic communication when playing Mobile Legend online games: Bang-Bang?
3. What are the factors and impacts of toxic communication when playing online games Mobile Legend: Bang-Bang?

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This study analyzed instances of toxic communication among State Polytechnic of Bengkalis students; the number of subjects was limited to 65 people to enable in-depth data collection through a qualitative approach. This research is also limited to the Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang game played by the students; the main focus of this study is toxic communication that arises through the use of harsh words and verbal abuse during in-game interactions, as well as behaviors that intentionally harm the team, such as going AFK, feeding, or choosing heroes arbitrarily without considering team dynamics.

1.4 Purpose of Study

Communication between players in the Mobile Legend game: Bang-Bang often gets more attention both from the surrounding environment and from social media, because it contains many negative elements that need to be studied further. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the forms of toxic communication used by students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis when playing Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang.
2. To analyze the causes that lead players to communicate in a toxic manner while playing Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang.
3. To examine the specific factors that influence toxic communication, as well as its impacts on players and their social interactions during Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang gameplay.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research provides valuable understandings for these parties here:

1. Game Developers: This study helps developers to fully understand the root causes as well as impacts of toxic communication for creating features that reduce such behaviors with an aim to improve the overall player experience.
2. Online Game Moderators: The findings of this study are expected to provide guidance on managing and fostering healthier interactions within the Mobile Legends community, as well as assisting in the development of more effective moderation and support strategies.
3. Mobile Legends Players: The research raises awareness about the negative consequences of toxic communication, motivating players to adopt more positive behaviors and engage in collaborative, respectful gameplay.
4. State Polytechnic of Bengkalis student who play Mobile Legends: This research encourages students who are active MLBB players to reflect on

their in-game behaviors in order to cultivate teamwork and sportsmanship, which may extend beyond gaming into their academic and social lives.

5. For Future Researchers: This study here acts as a foundation for more further research into toxic communication in online gaming. Researchers can fully understand its psychological, social, as well as cultural implications, in addition to its impacts on online communities.