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The Influence of Ranked Mode on Toxic Player Behavior in Mobile Legends Among Teenagers in Hemlet West 2, Sentol Village, Pamekasan

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Abstract

Online games have so far had varying impacts on the development of young people in Indonesia. Some of them experience positive effects, but many are also exposed to negative consequences. One of the most prominent negative effects is the tendency to exhibit toxic behavior. The focus of this study is to examine the influence of ranked mode on toxic behavior among Mobile Legends players, particularly among adolescents. This research is a quantitative study using a regression type, with simple linear regression analysis as the technique. Referring to the nature of quantitative research, data collection in this study was conducted through questionnaires distributed to respondents selected using purposive sampling. After data processing, the average score for ranked mode was found to be 95.45, while the average score for toxic behavior was 102.86. Both of these values are considered high, as they are close to the maximum values (107 and 119, respectively). The influence of ranked mode on toxic behavior is evident from the t_{value} of 5.755, which is greater than the t_{table} value of 2.021. This is also supported by a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.005.

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Introduction

The increasingly modern development of life has brought significant changes to adolescents. The rapid advancement of technology and the internet demands that teenagers seek entertainment that not only provides amusement but also offers opportunities for socializing and building communities (Febrianti et al., 2024). Adolescents, whose minds are still highly unstable, are easily influenced by external factors, one of which is online gaming. Online games serve as a source of entertainment as well as a platform for making friends in the virtual world without the need for face-to-face interaction. The combination of these two elements entertainment and ease of socialization naturally attracts teenagers, especially as this phase is often described as a period of identity exploration (Rahmi, 2021). The existence of online games poses a social dilemma, as they can bring both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, they can enhance concentration, serve as a means of generating income, and improve cognitive function (Surbakti, 2017). On the other hand, their negative impacts are varied, including declining academic performance, engagement in inappropriate behavior, excessive spending, and health disturbances (Suprapto & Avida Rizka Amalia, 2023).

As the name suggests, online games can only be played with a reliable internet connection (Rohman, 2019). Several well-known online games fall under different genres such as MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena), MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game), FPS (First Person Shooter), and many more. Within the MOBA genre, we find popular titles such as Mobile Legends, Arena of Valor, Honor of Kings, League of Legends, among others (Fadila et al., 2022). As one of the most popular games in Indonesia, it is common to find people playing this game in almost every neighborhood. According to data from Moonton (the developer of Mobile Legends), the number of players has reached 51 million across the country, spanning all demographics (Lifestyle, 2024).

Due to its roots in the MOBA genre, the gameplay concept of Mobile Legends is not much different from its competitors. Mobile Legends presents a format in which players are grouped into two opposing teams of five members each. Every player selects a hero and works in coordination with their teammates to defeat the opposing heroes in a vast in-game arena (Utami et al., 2022). In any team-based game, strategy

and collaboration are key to winning. Therefore, ideally, each player should maintain effective communication and teamwork, assist one another, and avoid actions that could disadvantage their own team during the match.

However, expectations remain mere hopes without concrete realization. Rather than improving communication and fostering teamwork, Mobile Legends has unfortunately become a breeding ground for disaster due to the abundance of players exhibiting toxic behavior. Toxic behavior is defined as negative conduct exhibited by one player toward another. It does not only manifest verbally but also in various in-game actions such as griefing (deliberately disrupting one's own team), flaming (insulting other players), scamming (engaging in fraud), and cyberbullying (harassment) (Abie & Rosmilawati, 2023). These toxic behaviors are largely driven by intense competition. In Mobile Legends, this is referred to as ranked mode matches. Other contributing factors include frustration, the anonymous nature of the game (not knowing who or where the other players are from), and a tendency to imitate others (Abie & Rosmilawati, 2023).

The ranked mode in Mobile Legends refers to matches in which the winning team earns stars (used to increase a player's rank), while the losing team receives penalties in the form of star deductions (rank decrease) (Agus et al., 2024). The high level of tension in such matches often provokes players to vent their frustration through toxic behavior. Shores et al. have stated that participation in competitive game modes tends to foster more toxic behavior compared to casual modes. This theory applies to all age groups, including adolescents. Adolescence, typically defined as the period between the ages of 10 to 24 (BKKBN), is a critical phase of identity formation (Diananda & Amita, 2019). Due to their unstable mental and physical states, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to being influenced by toxic behaviors.

The theory proposed by Shores et al. is supported by other theorists, namely Dollard and Miller. They complement Shores' theory by adding that when players become overly emotional, especially in situations of defeat, they tend to exhibit toxic behavior as a response to the loss. This theory is referred to as the theory of aggressive behavior (Napitupulu et al., 2016). It is clear that, according to this theory, the urge to behave toxically arises from the inability to manage stress, eventually manifesting either consciously or unconsciously. Implicitly, this theory places full

blame on the individual exhibiting toxic behavior, attributing it to a lack of self-control during difficult situations. However, the thesis proposed by this theory is not entirely accurate, as there may be external factors beyond the player that contribute to the development of toxic behavior. These external factors were later identified by Albert Bandura through his social learning theory. According to Bandura, toxic behavior is not only the result of frustration and emotional instability but also of "imitation" among players. This imitation occurs when a player receives attention from others, causing their speech and behavior within the game to become a reference for fellow players (Napitupulu et al., 2016).

The relationship between toxic behavior and online gaming has been explored in several previous studies. For instance, a study conducted by Andriyanto Hasan et al., titled *"The Impact of the Online Game Mobile Legends on Adolescent Social Behavior"*, highlights this connection. The primary gap between Hasan's study and the present research lies in the specificity of the research scope. Clearly, the present study focuses on a specific component of Mobile Legends namely, the ranked mode and its relationship with social behavior, particularly toxic behavior (Hasan et al., 2021). The results of Hasan's study support earlier theories by concluding that the online game Mobile Legends tends to have more negative effects, particularly on the social and psychological aspects of adolescents, than positive ones (Hasan et al., 2021).

Another study was conducted by Iqbal Nafi'ul Firdaus and Mohammad Thamrin, titled *"The Impact of the Game Mobile Legends on the Social Interaction of Communication Science Students, University of Jember, Class of 2020."* This research also employed a qualitative method, which poses limitations in terms of generalizability. The findings highlight the inevitability of toxic behavior as part of social interaction among Mobile Legends players (Firdaus & Nafi'ul, 2023). The final study was conducted by Iqbal Adnan Anugrah, titled *"Toxic Communication Behavior Among Arena of Valor Online Game Users."* A fundamental gap in this study lies in the different game being analyzed, as each online game varies in difficulty due to factors such as power creep and matchmaking systems. One game may feature low power creep and fair matchmaking, whereas others do not. According to this study, toxic

communication behavior among Arena of Valor players is driven by habitual and emotional factors (Anugrah et al., 2024).

The widespread nature of this phenomenon, akin to mushrooms growing in the rainy season, has made adolescents increasingly susceptible to toxic behavior while playing Mobile Legends. Pre-research observations conducted by the researcher support this notion. Many adolescents were observed using vulgar language and engaging in inappropriate behavior during matches. The possibility that such behavior could damage solidarity and cooperation among players makes this topic particularly worthy of further investigation. Under normal circumstances, toxic behavior typically emerges during ranked mode matches, where players compete for stars and the prestige of victory. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of ranked mode on toxic behavior among Mobile Legends players, particularly adolescents.

Method

This study employs a quantitative research design. Literally, this research focuses on numerical data ranging from data collection, data processing, data interpretation, to data presentation(Rukminingsih et al., 2020). The approach used in this study is *ex post facto*, in which the researcher collects data based on events that have already occurred (rather than being experimentally manipulated beforehand) (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). This approach allows the data to remain natural, as it is not subjected to any treatment or intervention. The sources of data in this research are divided into two categories: primary and secondary sources. Primary data is obtained directly from respondents selected through purposive sampling. Meanwhile, secondary data is derived from literature relevant to this study. These data especially the primary data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and simple linear regression techniques.

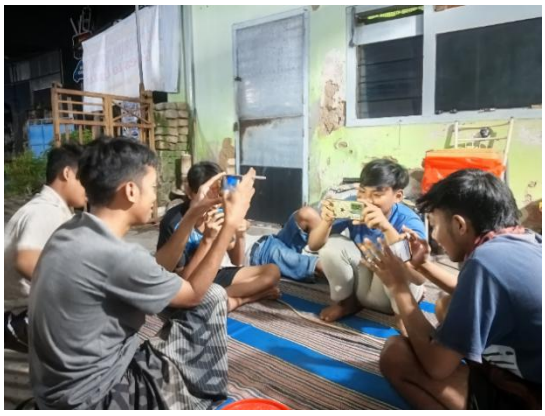
Result and Discussion

As the name suggests, Ranked Mode is a match mode in Mobile Legends that pits five players against another team of five. These players must work together and strategize in order to win the game and earn a star as a reward for victory. Conversely, if they lose, they will receive a deduction of the same number of stars. To

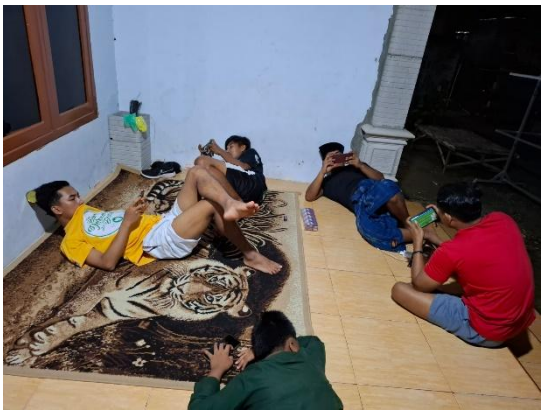
measure Ranked Mode, the researcher employs several indicators, including duration, frequency, attention, and emotional involvement (Isnaeni & Hidayati, 2023).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistik of Ranked Mode Variable

Statistics		
		Ranked mode
N	Valid	42
	Missing	0
Mean		95,45
Median		100,00
Mode		105
Std. Deviation		11,321
Variance		128,156
Skewness		-1,280
Std. Error of Skewness		,365
Kurtosis		,816
Std. Error of Kurtosis		,717
Range		43
Minimum		64
Maximum		107
Sum		4009



Picture 1. Adolescent Playing Mobile Legend



Picture 2. Several Adolescents Playin Mobile Legend

Based on the results of the descriptive statistical calculations above, it can be seen that the mean, median, and mode values of the *Ranked Mode* variable are 95.45, 100, and 105, respectively. The average value, which is close to the maximum score of 107, falls into the high category. This indicates that many adolescents play *Ranked Mode* in the Mobile Legends game on a daily basis. This finding is unsurprising, as it was previously explained that Mobile Legends is currently one of the most popular games in Indonesia. Referring to the theory proposed by Albert Bandura, a game

gains popularity when it is initially played by one person (Arsyad et al., 2024). That individual is then imitated by others who observe them. Moreover, since Mobile Legends is a team-based game, if a team lacks members, they are likely to invite others to download and play. While someone might initially refuse, over time it becomes increasingly difficult to keep refusing and risk being left out or feeling outdated compared to their peers. This has been documented by the researcher through the evidence shown below.

For Mobile Legends players, it is only natural to want to win and improve their level or ranking compared to other players. The motivational drive to achieve and be recognized for their success inevitably pushes players to participate in Ranked Mode. This is explained by David McClelland's theory of achievement motivation (Tri, 2024). Only in this mode Ranked Mode are strategy, skill, and teamwork truly tested in the pursuit of higher rankings. After all, why would anyone play in a highly challenging mode without adequate rewards. When they win, adolescents who play Ranked Mode tend to feel satisfied, acknowledged, and respected within their circle of fellow Mobile Legends players. In some cases, achieving a higher rank also increases the value of their account, making it more profitable if they decide to sell it later.

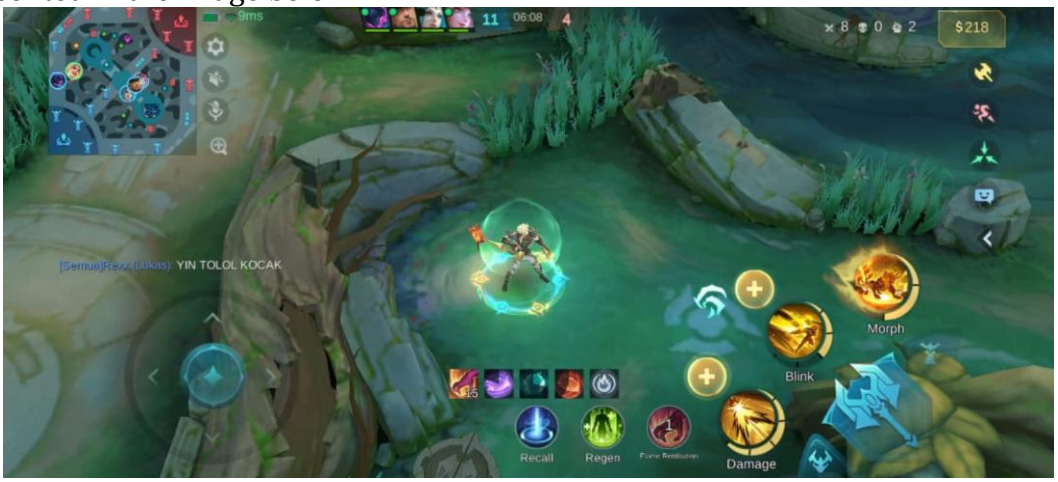
Toxic behavior, by definition, refers to "poisonous behavior." The term "poison" here refers to something that, if left unchecked, can spread rapidly. This term accurately reflects the real-world situation, where toxic behavior both verbal and non-verbal can quickly spread, especially among gamers. Toxic behavior encompasses all forms of negative actions that can harm others. It is not limited to offensive language but also includes in-game actions that disrupt the team and damage the overall gaming experience (Zhu et al., 2022). This toxic behavior is categorized into four types: flaming, griefing, scamming, and cyberbullying.

Table 2. Decriptive Statistik of Toxic Behavior Variable

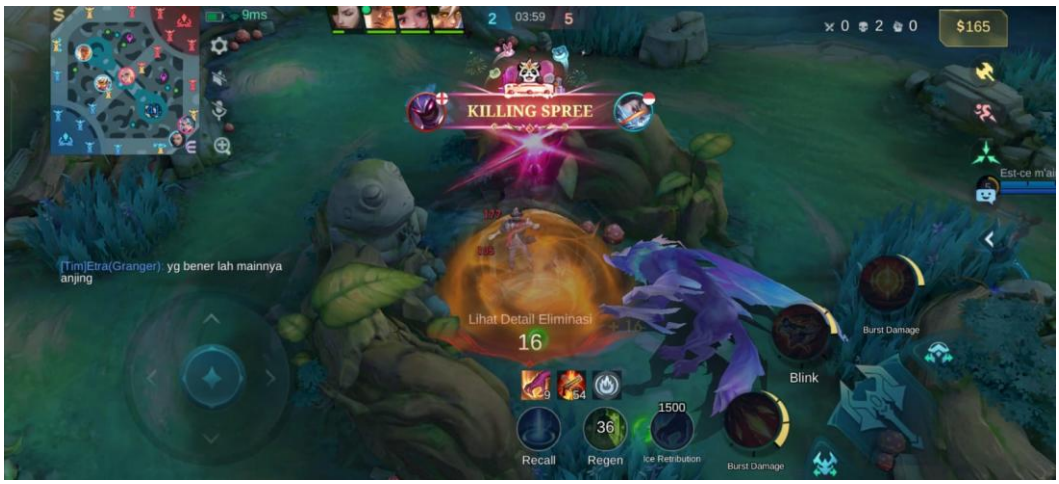
Statistics		
		Perilaku *Toxic*
N	Valid	42
	Missing	0
Mean		102,86
Median		106,50
Mode		111
Std. Deviation		11,306

Variance	127,833
Skewness	-,542
Std. Error of Skewness	,365
Kurtosis	-,833
Std. Error of Kurtosis	,717
Range	39
Minimum	80
Maximum	119
Sum	4320

On the other hand, toxic behavior also shows significant results in terms of its maximum score. The mean, median, and mode for the toxic behavior variable were 102.86, 106.50, and 111, respectively. The average score is considered high as it is close to the maximum value of 119. This measurement follows a criterion-referenced assessment system used to categorize whether a variable is considered high or low (Agama, 2015). The high level of toxic behavior is not surprising, especially considering the previously high frequency of playing in Ranked Mode. Prior theories also suggest a positive correlation between toxic behavior and the frequency of participating in Ranked Mode, whether due to imitation among players or the emotional tension caused by competitive gameplay. Regardless of the reason, toxic behavior being inherently negative can, in fact, be mitigated through stricter social control mechanisms. A study conducted by Irfa and Sumarwan concluded that toxic behavior may emerge as a result of insufficient social control in virtual environments. This lack of control stems from the anonymous nature of players and the absence of real consequences imposed by developers or the community for such behavior (Irfa & Sumarwan, 2024). Several instances of toxic behavior observed by the researcher are presented in the image below.



Picture 1. Example of Toxic Behavior In Game Mobile Legend



Picture 2. Example of Toxic Behavior In Game Mobile Legend

Next, before conducting the simple linear regression analysis (hypothesis testing), the researcher performed a classical assumption test. This test was carried out to determine whether there were any issues related to residual normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and heteroscedasticity in the regression analysis. The criteria for data to pass the classical assumption test are: normally distributed residuals, absence of multicollinearity, no autocorrelation, and no heteroscedasticity (Purnomo, 2016).

Table 3. Result of Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		42
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	,2560010
	Std. Deviation	8,37483054
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,095
	Positive	,095
	Negative	-,075
Test Statistic		,095
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,200[c,d]

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

The table above presents the results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov model. It can be seen that the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value at the

bottom of the table is 0.200 > 0.05. This indicates that the data distribution obtained (for both the ranked mode and toxic behavior variables) follows a normal distribution (Purnomo, 2016).

Table 4. Result of Linearity Test

ANOVA Tabel

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Perilaku *Toxic* * *Ranked mode*	Between Groups	(Combined)	4530,393	23	196,974	4,988	,001
		Linearity	2373,819	1	2373,819	60,118	,000
		Deviation from Linearity	2156,574	22	98,026	2,483	,027
	Within Groups		710,750	18	39,486		
	Total		5241,143	41			

The table above displays the results of the linearity test. This test was conducted to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior. The criteria for passing the linearity test are based on two aspects: *Linearity* and *Deviation from Linearity*. According to the table, the Sig. value for linearity is 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between the ranked mode and toxic behavior variables (Purnomo, 2016).

Table 5. Result of Heteroskedacity Test

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	10,670	7,256		1,470	,149
	Ranked mode	-,046	,076	-,095	-,606	,548

a. Dependent Variable: ABS_RES

Next is the heteroscedasticity test. There are various types of this test, one of which is the Glejser test. This test is conducted by transforming the residual values into absolute residuals and then regressing them on the independent variable. The result shows a Sig. value for ranked mode of 0.548 > 0.05. This result proves that there is no heteroscedasticity problem (Purnomo, 2016).

Subsequently, after the classical assumption tests are successfully passed, the simple linear regression analysis is conducted. This test aims to reveal the influence or relationship between one independent variable and one dependent variable. The results of the simple linear regression test conducted by the researcher are presented in the table below.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,673[a]	,453	,439	8,467

a. Predictors: (Constant), *Ranked mode*

The table above (model summary) shows the percentage of the relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior. This relationship is explained by an R square value of 0.453. This means that there is a 45.3% relationship between the ranked mode and toxic behavior variables.

Table 7. Anova Test

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2373,819	1	2373,819	33,115	,000[b]
	Residual	2867,324	40	71,683		
	Total	5241,143	41			

a. Dependent Variable: Perilaku *Toxic*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *Ranked mode*

Next, the table above presents a Sig. value of 0.000 < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a clear and significant relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior.

Table 8. Coefficients Test

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	38,699	11,225		3,448	,001
	Ranked mode	,672	,117	,673	5,755	,000

a. Dependent Variable: Perilaku *Toxic*

The table above presents the data processing results in the form of constant and gradient values to formulate the relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior. The constant value obtained from the data processing using simple linear regression analysis technique is 38.699, and the gradient value obtained is 0.673. Furthermore, to strengthen whether there is a relationship between the ranked mode variable and the toxic behavior variable, the significance value (sig.) for the ranked mode variable is 0.000 < 0.05. In addition, the t_{count} value is 5.755 > the t_{table} value of 2.021. If a linear equation is then formulated, the resulting equation is:

$Y = a + bX$

$Y = 38.699 + 0.673X$

With this equation obtained, supported by the significance and t-count values, the researcher concludes that there is a relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior. Thus, H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected.

The data analysis conducted by the researcher proves that there is a positive correlation between ranked mode and toxic behavior. This means the more frequently a person plays ranked mode, the more frequently they exhibit toxic behavior. As previously explained, ranked mode is a mode where strategy, skill, and team cohesion are truly tested solely to achieve rank promotion. Under pressured and frustrating conditions, the urge to use offensive language and display aggressive behavior increases (Napitupulu et al., 2016). Whether consciously or unconsciously, players whose frustration and emotional levels have peaked will behave toxically, either verbally or non-verbally.

Moreover, human nature as a learning being (who learns from their environment) also drives someone to exhibit toxic behavior. As explained by Albert Bandura, people who see others (players) engaging in toxic behavior tend to imitate it, especially if there is positive affirmation from others, such as adding excitement or demonstrating dominance in the game (Arsyad et al., 2024). Additionally, the lack of social control is also a contributing factor to why many players display toxic behavior while playing. Social control should be implemented by the community observing the players as well as by the developers. Such social control has been applied by Moonton, the developer of Mobile Legends, by banning accounts caught harming their own team during gameplay. Social control can also be carried out by the community

by reprimanding, reminding, or even physically reprimanding players who use offensive language during matches.

Conclusion

The data analysis conducted by the researcher concludes that the average values for both ranked mode and toxic behavior are high, namely 95.45 and 102.86, respectively. Both values approach their maximums, which are 107 and 119. The relationship between the ranked mode variable and toxic behavior is also explained by the R Square value of 0.453 (45.3%). This finding is further supported by a residual significance value of 0.000 < 0.05, a t_{count} value of 5.755 > t_{table} value of 2.021, and a significance value for the ranked mode variable of 0.000 < 0.05. The direction of the relationship between ranked mode and toxic behavior is indicated by the positive gradient value of 0.673. This means there is a direct positive relationship between ranked mode and toxic behavior. Based on these results, it is stated that H_1 is accepted and H_0 is rejected.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that future researchers expand the scope or at least increase the number of variables studied in order to enrich the body of knowledge, particularly regarding the correlation between social behavior and online gaming. The researcher also suggests that the TIPS Study Program offer lectures on social interaction in the virtual world. Additionally, the TIPS Study Program could collaborate on research about changes in social behavior within digital communities.

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