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Exploring Parental Involvement in Esports: Perspectives from Parents and Children

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of Master of Philosophy

By Rebecca Elizabeth Main

September 2025

Declaration

I declare that the contents of this thesis are entirely my own work, and that the document was composed by myself under the supervision of Dr Hee Jung Hong and Dr Sungkyung Kim and the experimental studies within this thesis were all approved by the University of Stirling cross-faculty ethics committees, and procedures were conducted as they were approved.

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Abstract

Esports are organised competitive video gaming, with millions of global participants. Despite its growing popularity esports remains a contentious topic in households, particularly the role of parents within esports. Parental concerns towards esports such as health concerns, academic balance, and career uncertainty are often legitimate. Parents play a critical role in shaping young players access, attitudes and engagement within esports. Integrating parents into the esports ecosystem can provide benefits which include improving player well-being, sustainable participation and stronger support structures. Excluding parents may reinforce misunderstandings, limit opportunities for young players, and hinder the ecosystem's social legitimacy. This study, therefore, examines not only why parental involvement matters, but also the roles parents currently occupy within esports, and the forms of support needed to enable constructive engagement. Parents often express negative views of esports, such as reduced academic performance, and unhealthy lifestyles. These views can create conflict within the parent-child relationship. Previous research has mainly focused on either children's or parents' perspectives without addressing the importance of exploring both, to fully understand the parent-child relationship. To understand this relationship, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was identified as a useful framework. Applying this theory to esports helps explain how both parents' and children's intentions influence esports participation. TPB is widely used within sports; however, its application to esports remains underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the parent-child relationship among children who engage in esports, to capture the perspectives of both parents and children, and to identify the support they need to make parents part of the esports ecosystem. Eighteen participants comprising of both parents and children contributed to the study, who were interviewed separately (10 males, 8 females). All participants were based in the UK at the time of data collection. Interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide, based on

insights in the relevant literature and research questions. All interviews were transcribed and used for reflexive thematic analysis. The results revealed two distinct sets of perspectives from parents and children. From the children's point of view, gaming is used as a tool for social interaction. Children's perspectives also included peer pressure, different approaches to gameplay by gender, parental control, and awareness of the negative aspects of gaming, these were identified as significant experiences and insights. This finding indicates that esports plays a complex role in children's lives. From the parents' perspectives on children's engagement within esports, the findings demonstrate their focus on control, concern, and the need for educational support, and these were identified as significant. Parents expressed a need for an educational support to help understand the phenomenon of esports, since they were aware of their knowledge gaps and wished to learn more about esports. The children expressed a strong desire for their parents to receive educational support to understand esports, which is an original finding. Using the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour illustrates that parents are gatekeepers and have a direct impact on their children's engagement in esports. Therefore, the findings from this thesis highlight the importance of parents moving beyond passive observation, as their active involvement can encourage a more supportive environment. The result of the thesis provides significant implications for both literature and practice, by expanding our understanding of parents' and children's perspectives and needs, and by offering empirical evidence to inform the development of educational interventions for both groups.

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Acknowledgements

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And finally, to anyone who thinks they cannot do it trust me, you can.

"No matter what, you keep finding something to fight for"

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

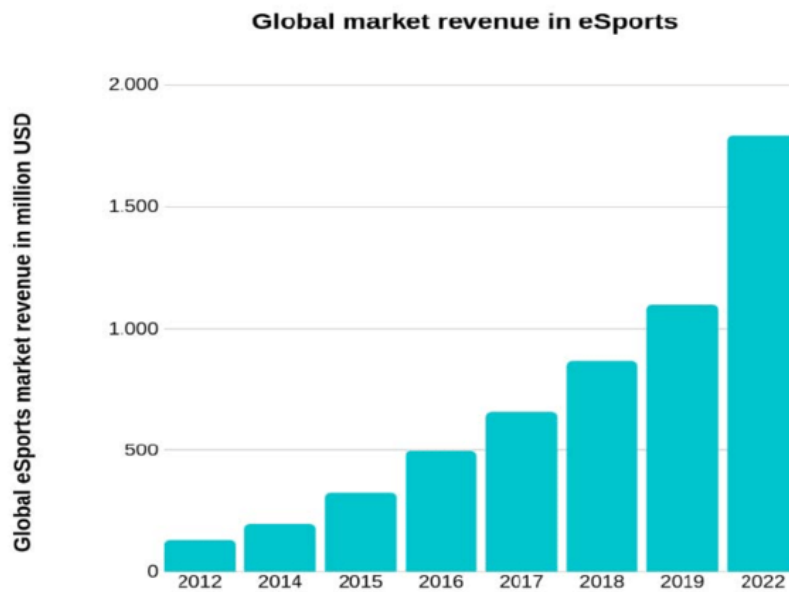
The introduction will demonstrate the history and growth of esports, determining the importance of the parent-child relationship and explaining why the parents' role within esports is important. The introduction also explains the role of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the influence this framework can have within esports, finally explaining the overall aim of the research and the research questions.

Video gaming is a popular leisure activity amongst children, adolescents, and adults (Perrin, 2018). Video games have changed throughout the decades, and have developed into co-operative and competitive gaming, with massive multiplayer online environments. The creation of these online environments means individuals simultaneously can compete with other players within the games (Banyai et al., 2019). Recently, video gaming playing has become professionalised, with players making a career in competitive gaming (Hussain et al, 2011). This type of gaming is culturally known as electronic sports (esports). This means that esports can be a hobby, sporting activity, or can also be considered an individual's job (Caillois, 2001). Esports is a new development of gaming, and it is more popular among the gaming communities, particularly with adolescents (Yuchun et al., 2022). Globally, there are now 3,534 million individuals that define themselves as exporters.

The recognition of esports has been growing; in 2018 1.6 billion people were conscious of esports, this increased to 1.8 billion in 2019. Over 443 million people play esports and follow esports regularly (Block & Haack, 2021). Figure 1, below shows the growth of the esports industry:

Figure 1

The growth of esports industry (Block & Haack, 2021)



The growth of live streaming, viewership, engagement and gaming investments are influencing the esports market. This growing revenue has meant many career opportunities have increased within esports, such as game organisers, developers, researchers and professional gamers (Craig, 2024). The attraction of esports benefits and prize money have made esports a professional career choice among adolescents. As esports has gained popularity, there are many other esports careers that individuals wish to pursue, other than professional gaming. These careers opportunities can be casters (individuals that provide live commentary) coaches, psychologists, event managers and so on (Craig, 2024). Adolescents aspire to seek a career in esports for many reasons, for example, motivated by high earning potential, the respect of fame, to increase gaming skills and community building (Hamari & Sjoblom, 2017).

Parental Roles

Adolescence comes with physiological changes (ovarian and testicular secretions) and physical changes (appearance of sexual characteristics). These biological shifts are

associated with heightened emotional intensity (Dahl, 2004). In early adolescence, youngsters are more negative and experience fewer positive emotions therefore, adolescents go through emotional regulation (Silk et al., 2003). The hormonal and physical changes of puberty are linked to emotional instability during this stage. Adolescents are facing new developmental tasks and parents have an important role in navigating this new expansion (Worthman et al., 2016). These heightened emotions also affect parents as sensations are complex (Robbinson, 2007).

Parents are not observers of adolescent emotional episodes; they are active emotional coaches. Through their responses of support or dismissive behaviours, parents model strategies for managing the intense feelings of the adolescents. If parents acknowledge these emotions and maintain warmth then their adolescents will develop stronger emotional regulation skills. This can strengthen the parent-child relationship, however, if this is not managed correctly, then this can create relational strain (Larsen & Collins, 2009). Steinberg (1990) stated that the emotional climate of the parent-child relationship revolves around three key dimensions: involvement, control, and autonomy. Successfully navigating adolescent emotions requires parents to reconsider each of these dimensions, while remaining supportive. Overall, adolescence is a period where biological and emotional development reshapes family relationships. Clear and supportive parental involvement is central to helping adolescents negotiate this complex stage successfully.

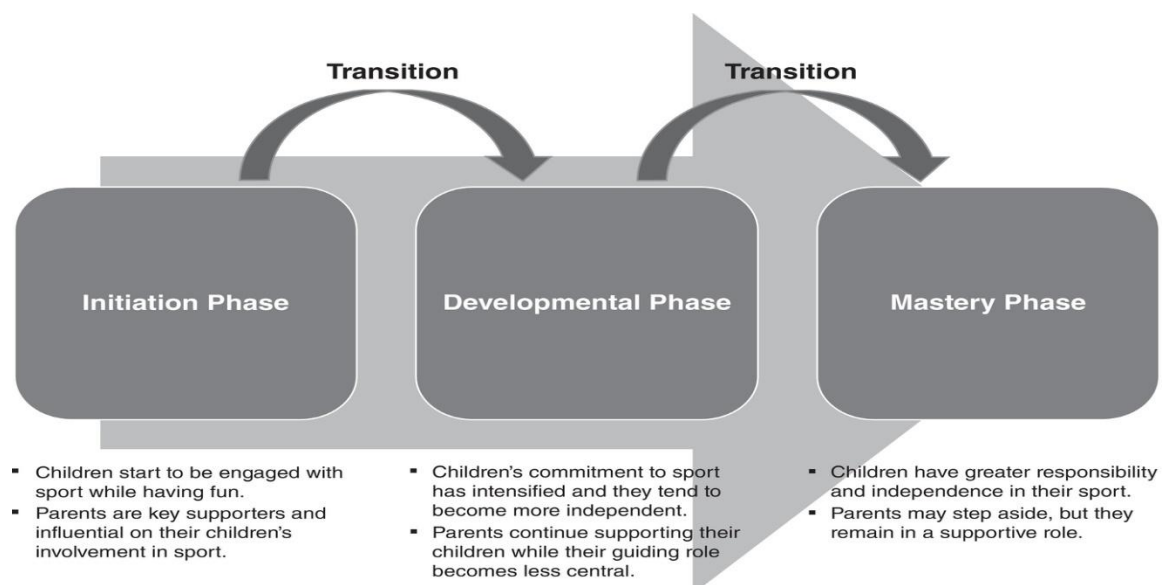
2.10 Parental involvement in sport

Sport participation within childhood and adolescence is associated with a number of benefits such as physical, psychological and social changes. Engagement in sports can improve cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal development, healthy weight and reduce long-term diseases (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Sports participation is associated with

enhanced self-esteem, lower anxiety levels and greater life satisfaction (Eime et al., 2013). From a psychological perspective sport offers opportunities for the development of teamwork, leadership skills, and resilience (Holt et al., 2017). Evidence suggests that sport involvement in youth predicts continued physical activity into adulthood and is associated with positive developmental trajectories, particularly if supported by parental involvement (Côté & Hay, 2002). Participation in sport plays a vital role in the holistic development of young people, it supports not only physical health but also mental wellbeing and social growth. Encouraging regular, inclusive, and enjoyable sporting opportunities can have lasting positive impacts that extend far beyond childhood. Salmela (1994) developed three distinct phases, these are initiation, development and mastery and highlights that sport participation is meaningful for adolescents development.

Figure 4

Descriptive Model of Career Development with Three Phases based on Salmela (1994). Note from Hong (2025, p19)



The initiation phase, children become engaged with sport through the influence of their parents, often children in this phase are motivated into sports to have fun and enjoyment. Parents are influential as they play a pivotal role in introducing their children to sport, shaping their children's sports career development. The development phase is where the nature of the parent-child relationship evolves. Children become more independent and parents roles decrease; however, the support continues to be important. The mastery phase, is where the children have greater responsibility for their training and performance, demonstrating commitment to achieve enhancement. As this independence grows, parents adopt an outsider role yet will provide emotional support when needed (Bloom, 1985; Salmela, 1994; Wuerth et al., 2004). The transitions between these phases are marked in parental involvement and the athlete's developmental needs. As children progress in their sporting career, they are likely to encounter increasing demands and challenges therefore, they require more support to overcome these. At this time parental support becomes crucial in helping athletes cope with these stressors and strive towards peak performances (Stambulova, 2003). The positive impact of parents in youth sport is evident.

Motivation within sport is important, as it can drive children to take part in sporting activities (Robbins et al., 2013). Motivation encompasses social, environmental, and psychological factors and can shape the behaviours and attitudes of young athletes (Mallia et al., 2019). Parents are the social agents that shape their children's participation in sport throughout the years (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Motivation in young athletes refers to internal and external drives that make them participate, show enthusiasm and put effort into a sporting activity (Roberts & Treasure, 2012). Motivation plays an important role in shaping attitudes, behaviours and determination in young athletes (Martin et al., 2017). Parents contribute to this motivation and are the primary social agents shaping their children's experiences within sports (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Parents play a significant role in sports

socialisation and provide emotional, financial and organisational support to their children (Holt & Knight, 2014). Research has shown that parenting styles, and relationships help young athletes at different stages of their sporting journey and therefore, it is evident that parents have a significant influence on various sporting activities.

Parental involvement includes time (attending practices), energy (instructional assistance), and money (purchasing equipment). Parental involvement within sports performance is important as encouragement and support play an essential role in children's motivation, sport careers and performances. Parents who are supportive have more positive parental-child relationships. Parents who put too much pressure on their children and their sporting performance, have a reluctant relationship. The children who have a reluctant relationship are often unwilling to share their sporting experiences. Parents try and inspire their children within their sports; however, too much pressure can lead to emotional and psychological effects on young athletes (Sinha, 2024). This pressure can cause performance anxiety, stress and decreased enjoyment within their sports (Christofferson & Strand, 2016; Witt, 2018). Certain levels of pressure can boost motivation; however, parents must drive for a balance between motivation and expectations (Marsh et al., 2015). Children, therefore, place a great importance on their parents' involvement. (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). As such, the role of parents within their children's sport involvement and career development is well-documented within research and literature. It is evident that parental involvement in sport can be either supportive or add pressure depending on the parent-child relationship, and the stage of the child's sporting career (Wuerth et al., 2004; Salmela's, 1994). As Salmela's (1994) model of career development (see Figure 2) shows, parents have significant roles across each key phase of children's sport participation and athletic development.

Sport can create positive relationships between peers and strengthen family communication, parents can be active participants in their children's sport (Dorsch & Smith,

2014). Neely and Holt (2014) examined the relationships between parents and children by addressing two questions what benefits do parents perceive their children gain through sports programmes and how do parents think their children attain these benefits. The results showed that all parents thought their children gained personal, social and physical benefits and that sport participation allowed their children to explore and build positive self-perceptions. Parents stated that they had seen social benefits as their children developed friendships, worked in teams and learnt respect for authority. Parents were the most important role in reinforcing these values at home. This study, however, has limitations the researchers did not gain children's perspectives; by gaining children's perspectives it would create a balanced view on sport participation and the benefits. Despite this, Neely and Holt (2014) research, not esports specific, showed the importance of the parents within their children's sporting commitments.

2.10 Parental involvement in esports

Sport literature provides a valuable foundation for understanding parental involvement in esports, particularly when examined through developmental, and psychosocial frameworks. Youth sport has demonstrated parental behaviours that can shape children's motivation, enjoyment and long-term engagement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Applying these insights to esports, suggests that parents function as gatekeepers and socialising agents. Parenting within esports is important, as it is argued that parent and child conflicts arise when children start gaming. Parental-child conflict may emerge when children begin gaming, however, this is not the sole reason to emphasise parent's importance in esports participation. Parents function as gatekeepers, parents regulate access to time, and financial resources, all of which is necessary to sustain esports engagement (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Parents are also social agents who shape children's attitudes towards competition, effort and the legitimacy of esports being an

organised activity. Parental behaviours can influence motivation, enjoyment, persistence and well-being, parent's also play a critical role in guiding healthy gaming habits and online safety. Therefore, parental involvement is central in not only preventing conflict, but also supporting developmental, motivational and regulatory processes that underpin children's esports participation.

Adolescents participation in esports is unique and is motivated by a combination of social, recreational and aspirational factors. Esports traditional begins in digital environments, with young adolescents engaging in home gaming, peer networks and online multiplayer platforms (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). Participation within esports often occurs with casual play (social gaming); organised competitive play (ranked games) and extends into digital platforms enabling community engagement (Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008). Young people who engage in esports do so for both intrinsic (enjoyment) and extrinsic reasons (professional careers). Participation patterns shape contextual factors such as parental attitudes, access to technology and cultural perceptions of gaming (Ryan et al., 2006).

Esports can offer developmental benefits such as teamwork, strategic thinking, and emotional regulation under pressure. Understanding adolescent esports participation, therefore, requires a multidimensional lens that integrates both digital culture and sport-based developmental frameworks (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006). The extent to which these potential benefits are realised is not automatic; rather, they are shaped by the social environments in which participation occurs. Drawing from youth sport literature, parents represent a central component of this environment. As primary socialising agents and gatekeepers, they influence access to participation, the meaning adolescents attach to esports, and the motivational climate surrounding engagement. Thus, examining parental involvement

is essential to understanding not only participation patterns, but also how developmental outcomes in esports are facilitated, constrained, or transformed within the family context.

Esports participation can be significantly influenced by parents perceptions and often creates concerns within parents. Parents views esports with worry, which is combined by fears around screen time, addiction, exposure to inappropriate content and negative social behaviours (Granic et al., 2014). These worries are heightened by the societal nature towards gaming and esports. Parents may impose restrictions or express disapproval which can lead to conflict with their children and parents can view esports as a recreational activity (Knight & Holt, 2014). Research in traditional sports states that parental involvement is grounded in open communication, understanding and support, rather than control which can happen within esports (Knight & Holt, 2014). Parents play a complex role within esports and understanding parental involvement requires developmental and motivational frameworks, while comparing this to traditional sports contexts. In esports parents often act as gatekeepers and influence technology access and attitude towards esports (Gentile et al., 2011). When parents are involved in the early stages of engagement within esports, parents can provide support, purchasing equipment and balance screen time and academics, this would mirror traditional sport beliefs (Harwood & Knight, 2015).

Cumming et al. (2007) research explored the notion of playing games and time displacement in other activities, using 1941 children, between the aged of 10 to 19 years. Data was collected using twenty-four time-use diaries, to be filled out on a random weekday or weekend. These diaries were used to determine time spent playing games, activities with parents, doing homework and time on sports. The results revealed that gamers spent 34% less time doing homework compared to non-gamers. Cumming et al. (2007) argued that gamers negatively spent less time on sporting activities or time with their parents. This study used

self-reported diaries, and it could be argued that the information filled out could be incorrect and therefore, does not accurately represent the relationship between gamers and parents.

While some studies have reported that gamers have experienced conflicts with people around them, they are very few studies that have explored parenting issues in depth. Skoien and Berthelsen (1996) research found that 10% of parents reported experiencing conflicts with their children due to gaming. This was due to the buying of games, and the parents worries on the age restriction of the purchased games. While the rest of the parents reported no conflicts with their children. Parents and children tend to hold different opinions on gaming (Nikken & Jansz, 2006). A case study by Aarsand (2007) explored the relationship between a grandmother and her grandson on understanding how much time is required to finish a game level. The grandmother stated that she gives a certain amount of game time to her grandson, showing no interest in the game he played, the grandson had to stop playing after his allotted given time. The grandson, however, tried to explain that the amount of time he spends gaming was based on “task-bound reasoning” (how long it takes to finish a mission in a game), and he wanted to complete the task before he stopped gaming. Aarsand (2007) explored the dynamics of grandparent-grandchild relationships, focusing on the growing expectation that children form close and independent bonds with their grandparents in order to make these relationships more active and less passive. Grandparents still tend to approach their grandchildren’s gaming activities with the same attitudes of parent’s emphasising time limits and control.

Parents restrict their children’ gaming as they believe that their children are playing too much, this can lead to parental-child conflict. Restrictive game time is also associated with parents who feel unsuccessful in maintaining gaming and academic responsibilities (Schneider et al., 2017). There are several factors that may influence the parent-child relationship such as attachment styles, parenting styles and parent’s perceptions of their

children's hobbies. These differences are important as they may shape how parents respond and interpret their children's gaming behaviours, as well as how children perceive parental restrictions. Therefore, it is important to examine both perspectives of parents and children within esports to better understand how each group views esports participation and how these perceptions influence the parent-child relationship.

2.11 The Esports Ecosystem and Key Stakeholders

Examining Scholz (2020) esports ecosystem, one of the key stakeholders are the players that pursue esports, therefore, the insights from these key stakeholders (children) and the key relationships they have (parents) is essential for the esports and ecosystem world. Parental engagement within the esports ecosystem plays a critical role in fostering both individual player development and broader industry legitimisation. (Svensson, 2024). Parents who develop an informed understanding of esports are better positioned to provide meaningful emotional support and to promote a balanced lifestyle, mitigating the potential risks associated with excessive gaming. Moreover, such engagement contributes to the ongoing destigmatisation of esports, which is frequently mischaracterised as a non-productive or frivolous activity. Recognising esports as a legitimate domain of competition and career development can facilitate improved familial relationships, grounded in mutual respect and understanding of the child's aspirations (Svensson, 2024). Beyond the immediate family context, parental involvement may also contribute to the broader normalisation of esports, aligning it more closely with the social and cultural legitimacy traditionally afforded to conventional sports. As familiarity with the industry increases, parents may assume more active roles as spectators, organisers, mentors, or investors, which enhances the diversity, sustainability, and socio-cultural integration of the esports ecosystem. Informed by the literature on traditional sport and the phenomenon of esports, the role and involvement of

parents is important and remains underexplored. There is clear rationale for investigating parental involvement, with the aim of generating evidence that supports the previous finding and extend existing frameworks (Hong, 2023: Salmela, 1994)

1.2 Research Aims

Parental views and involvement differ within esports. Parents' involvement within esports is limited, as parental perceptions of esports are more negative, there is a worry of the effects of esports such as addiction, poor academic performance, and poor social skills (Granic et al., 2014). Parents are concerned about their children pursuing esports as a career, as they are worried about job stability, profitability, sustainability and the sedentary nature of esports (Jiow et al., 2018). Horn et al. (2012) argues that parent's play an important role in their children's involvement in activities. Parents need to play an important role in their children's esports participation, however the parental-child relationship within esports is relatively unexplored.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the parental-child relationship to those children who engage in esports, gaining the perception of both parents and children, and to identify support that both parents and children need to make the parents part of the esports ecosystem. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do parents and children construct and interpret their experiences of participation in esports?
2. How do parents and children describe the challenges and barriers associated with esports participation, and the coping strategies they employ?
3. What support and/or guidance do both the child and parent need to facilitate the child's participation in esports?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature Review

Chapter 2 will demonstrate the role of esports, firstly defining esports, this involves explaining the different definitions, defining esports players, history of esports, global esports cultures, support needed for esports players, esports players health and wellness and finally esports career processes. This chapter will also explain the esports ecosystem and will demonstrate the arguments surrounding the system, for example the lack of parents within the system. This chapter will also explain parental attachment and the importance of the parental relationship within sports. Demonstrating the critical role parents play. It will then explain the esports parental relationship. The chapter will show theoretical frameworks that were not used in the thesis and the reasons why. The chapter will then explain the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the uses of it within the thesis and finally reiterate the aim and questions of this study.

Esports research primarily examines players, their participation in competitive gaming, and the complex interplay between players, and organisations. While existing studies explore the impact of competitive video gaming and often seek to position esports within traditional sport paradigms, research frequently overlooks critical dimensions related to player wellbeing. Notably, that of the parental-child relationship, which is underexplored within the literature (Reitman et al., 2019). This study aims to address this gap by examining the role of the parental-child dynamic in the context of esports participation and development.

2.1 Defining Esports

Nothelfer (2022) stated that esports cannot be defined by the games, rather the ways that an individual engages with them. There is difficulty defining esports due to many complex reasons, esports is a new phenomenon that is rapidly evolving; it is always changing

due to new technological advancements and new video game releases. Esports are ruled by several governing bodies and is studied in several disciplines (e.g., sport, business, art, etc.). Finally, esports vary across different titles and platforms, this includes consoles such as PlayStation 5, Xbox, and PC.

In the late 1990s, esports replaced phrases such as competitive gaming or video tournaments (Scholz, 2019). Since the term esports was created there have been several attempts to define it (Formosa et al., 2022). Systematic searches revealed many search terms such as *esport*, *electronic sport*, and *e-sport* (Jenny et al., 2024). From the systematic searches there have been efforts to define esports and identify features to develop a broader definition. Jenny and Besombes (2025) argued that by combining common elements found across definitions, it is possible to establish what constitutes as an esports player. Starting with *Who* – esports involve human players, who are active participants. *What* remains unclear. While definitions refer to video games and most definitions state playing video games. There are some definitions employed such as “electronic systems”, “technological apparatus” and “human-computer interfaces”. These terms can raise questions of what qualifies as a game in esports. Different game levels are not discussed, as they tend to be descriptive, therefore are overlooked. In terms of *How*, definitions refer to individuals playing games competitively, what remains unclear is what that entails, for some it is regulated competitions, and rules, for others, this is regulated tournaments with rules internal and external. When competing with friends on a hobby level there may be game rules, such as best out of five, therefore, it is unclear that “competition” is considered for esports. *Where* – definitions of esports do not define where esports should occur in physical places or entirely online. Finally, why most individuals play esports for social interaction, competition and entertainment (Steinkuehler & Lee, 2020). Providing a universal definition of what constitutes as an esports player is a challenge. Defining esports involves a range of characteristics, including players’ skill levels,

participation in organised competitions, and engagement with gaming communities. Due to this complexity based on an understanding of the difficulty involved in defining esports, and the exploration of a range of definitions, this thesis adopts Nothelfer et al.'s (2025) definition “an organized and codified competition between human players using video games” p. 11). This definition works best for this thesis as there are different elements to gaming such as online, offline play and multiplayer mode. It also includes all levels of players, and different types of esports games.

The spelling of esports is always evolving within the industry and is always being debated, there is no universal spelling (Formosa et al., 2022). In Asia esports is spelled as *e-Sport*, in Europe it is spelled eSport, however, the spelling of *esports* is more prevalent in Western culture. The definition and spelling of esports is influenced by cultures and societies; therefore, it is unlikely that there will ever be a universal acceptance on the definition of esports (Scholz, 2019). This thesis will follow the spelling established by Nothelfer et al. (2025). Specifically, esports will be written in lowercase within the body of sentences, while Esports will be capitalised at the beginning of sentences. This spelling will be used, as it is consistent with broader academic and professional usage, where esports is becoming an increasingly treated acronym.

2.2 Defining esports players

While it is difficult to establish the universal definition of esports, many researchers have also tried to define and categorise levels and types of esports players. There are different types of esports players, Whalen (2013) stated that esports is an umbrella term used to describe video game competition, to define esports all levels of players must be considered. Hedlund (2021) identified five types of players. These include: competitive (i.e., gamers that are motivated to explore new games and competitions); casual (i.e., overlooked gamers,

however has increased diversity particularly for females gamers); casual-social (i.e., play to form friendships and connections); casual-fun (i.e., plays esports for emotional release and enjoyment); and casual competitive (i.e., balance gaming with competitive gaming, plays esports for socialization and positive emotions; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2019).

Scholz (2024) has stated that there are tiers of esports playing. These involve professional esports (these are tier 1 – defined as players who prioritise esports); semi-pro (tier 2, high-level gaming with professional structures); amateur (tier 3 this includes clubs, teams, and enables players to compete together regularly); and casual (tier 4 is competitive gaming that features some form of competition). Therefore, esports players can consist of professionals, aspiring players, those who play for leisure with friends and those who play as a social activity, showing a different range and *status* in esports (Egliston, 2018; Taylor et al., 2009). Hong (2023) uses terms professional, semi-professional, and amateur to classify esports players, professional players are full-time, top tier, and are part of a professional team. Semi-professionals engage in high-level gaming, alongside professional players, semi-professional tend to be part of a talent group. Amateur players are esports enthusiasts, they tend to be part of clubs, and teams. Hong (2023) also states that esports players classifications, depends on players self-perception. The terms that Hong (2023) used correlated with Hedlund's (2021) classification of players where professional parallels with competitive (full-time esports players). Semi-professional includes competitive and casual-competitive (part-time esports players), and amateur corresponds to casual-competitive, while considering player's self-definitions. Through this examination it creates a deeper understanding of different definitions and identifies shared aims and connections. Hong (2023) analysis contributes to the discussion on esports and offers a more informed discussion among researchers and stakeholders. Figure 2 illustrates the different types and levels of esports players.

Figure 2

Types and Levels of Esports Players (Hong & Wünsch, 2025)

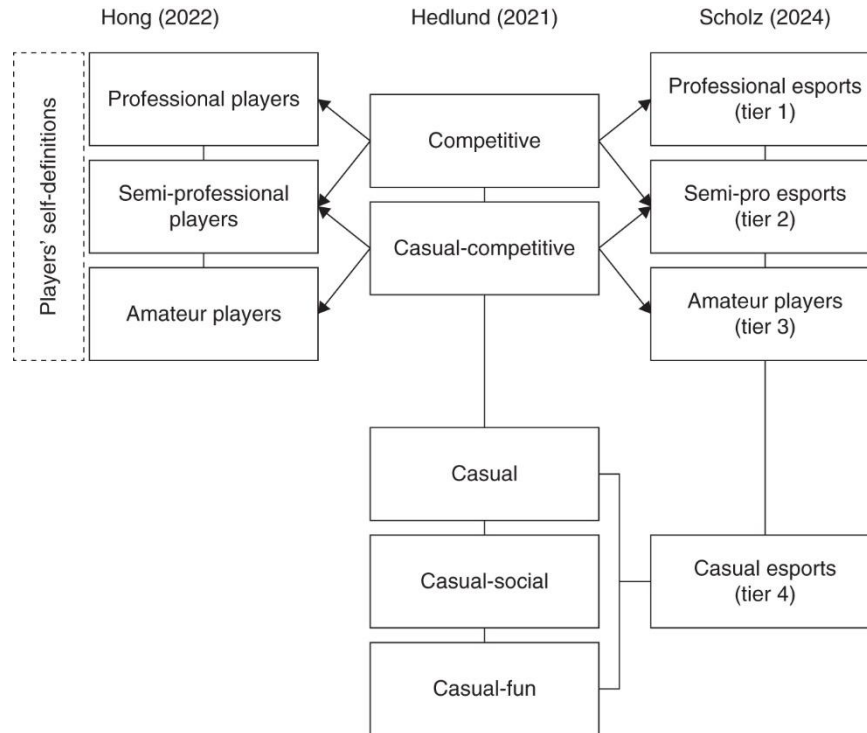


Figure 2 illustrates the different classifications of esports players as shown in the prior literature (e.g., Hong, 2022; Hedlund, 2021; Scholz, 2024). This study does not adopt a formal tier-based categorisation of players, as this was not central for the thesis. The focus of the research is adolescents who engage in esports, and the parental relationship. The age group for this research means that most players will fall within amateur, or causal level. Esports engagement is treated as part of the adolescents lived experiences, rather than being defined by competitive rank. By adopting this approach, it aligns with the study's aim to explore the parental-child relationship.

2.3 History of Esports

Esports has a long history and evolving history dating back to the 1950s. However, it was not until the early 2000s that esports gained popularity. The development of esports has been influenced by various factors such as technological innovation, economic investment, and digital infrastructure. Jin and Besombes (2025) summaries a comprehensive overview of the global esports landscape, categorising the esports evolution into three distinct periods: the emergence of personal computers (PCs) and internet; the emergence of streaming services; and the emergence of mobile esports. Each of these phases reflects a significant shift in technological capabilities and user engagement, contributing to the expansion of the esports industry.

The pre-history and early development of esports (late 1950s to early 1990s), this time period laid the foundation for what would become a global phenomenon. Jin and Besombes (2025) stated that the socio-cultural construct of video game competitions happened between 1958-1972. The first know video game, *Tennis for Two*, was developed and is regarded as the origin of esports, this allowed individuals to spectate and to follow the game match (Larch, 2023). During The 1950s and 60s, the societal culture of the Cold War and “Space Race” meant that many individuals were interested in exploring space. This interest was reflected within video game development. Video game developers were portraying space within games, and these became a dominate genre (Jin & Besombes 2025). The socio-cultural environment continued in the 70s and 80s, and the public feared a war breaking out (Huddsy, 2013). *Spacewar!* became an influential game developed in the 1960s. This game allowed two players to take control of spaceships and destroy each other while avoiding a star that pulls the ships with its gravity (Udaygiri, 2022). Although *SpaceWar!* was not available to the public, it inspired *Computer Space*, in 1972. Interestingly, in 1972 Stanford University hosted

the first known esports competition, where twenty participants competed and the winner won a one year's subscription to the Rolling Stones magazine (Larch, 2023). This event is often cited as a landmark moment in the formalisation of competitive gaming.

In 1973-1983, the Golden Age of Arcades and High Scores happened. North American shopping malls saw an emergence of video games. These arcade cabinets made it possible for the general public to play video games (Larch, 2023). One of the earliest video games was Pong (1972), this helped establish the viability of arcade gaming. Sea Wolf (1976) was introduced, where individuals could record high scores, and Asteroids (1979) expanded this further by allowing players to personalise their high scores using their initials. The success of these games paved the way for titles such as Pacman, Space Invaders and Donkey Kong (Jin & Besombes 2025). During this time competitive gaming began to emerge. In 1974 SEGA organised All Japan TV Game Championships, this competition was held in Japanese arcades. The US held Atari's National Space Invaders, which attracted over 10,000 participants and featured players playing Pac Man and Centipede (Jin & Besombes 2025). By the 1980s arcade venues were popular within American shopping centres (Kocurek, 2015).

The period of 1984 to 1994 saw a rise of the home gaming consoles, this was a significant shift and saw the video game industry moving away from the public space of arcade games into domestic environments (Jin & Besombes, 2025). Consoles such as Magnavox's Odyssey and the Atari 2600 played a role in this transition. The 1980s saw a crisis in the video gaming industry, despite the industry downturn, Nintendo revitalised home gaming with the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and the iconic character Mario (Jin & Besombes 2025). Building on this success, Nintendo organised the Nintendo World Championships in 1990 and again 1994, establishing a large-scale competitive event in the US.

The 1990s witnessed a significant increase in competitive gaming, alongside new technological advancements in control devices for PCs (Jin & Besombes 2025). The creation of the mouse facilitated the development of early first-person shooter (FPS) games, while the keyboard enabled players to perform a wide range of actions. Due to these technological advancements, this created the emergence of real-time strategy (RTS) games. Titles such as StarCraft and Warcraft III were created (Jin & Besombes 2025). The Red Annihilation tournament within Las Vegas attracted hundreds of participants, and established the first gaming league in the US, which was a local area network (LAN; Jin & Besombes 2025). These two events transformed video game competitions into regular and organised events, laying the groundwork for esports as a legitimate and professional career (Taylor, 2012). These events meant that a career in esports was possible.

Despite the growth of the esports industry in the 2000s, the industry remained unstable and faced challenges. Key factors included unpaid salaries for players, unfulfilled prize payouts, and limited support from game publishers for the organisation of official competitions (Jin & Besombes, 2025). These issues contributed to the withdrawal of several organisations leaving the esports sector, the most notably was the Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL). This decline persisted into early 2010s, and popular games such as Quake III and StarCraft were losing their popularity (Jin & Besombes, 2025). The release of League of Legends, Counterstrike and Global Offensive ushered a new era for esports. These games quickly became central to the esports ecosystem and revitalised the industry (Jin & Besombes 2025). The rise of streaming platforms such as YouTube and Twitch expanded the reach of competitive gaming. These platforms made competitive gaming accessible for all, allowing anyone to broadcast their gameplay, watch live gameplay and contribute to the visibility of the esports sector (Jin & Besombes 2025).

Mobile esports emerged as a significant role in competitive gaming in the mid-2010s to present. With the widespread use of smartphones, a portion of the gaming population transitioned from PC-based platforms to mobile gaming (Jin & Besombes 2025). Some titles that are played on mobiles are PUBGMobile and Arena of Valor. Mobile games have played a crucial role in the development of the esports sphere, particularly in internet infrastructure, however they may not be supported (Murko, 2022). The user-friendly interfaces of mobile games enhance their suitability for esports spectatorship as the audience can follow the competitive matches on their mobile devices (Niko, 2020).

2.4 Overview of Global Esports Cultures

Esports within Asia has great significance, starting from the beginning of the early 1990s. Esports in East Asia are particularly prevalent, the generation of gaming revenue comes from China, Japan and South Korea (NewZoo, 2022). Popularity of esports within this region has created the 2018 Asian Games. Then in 2023 the Asian Games became an official medal event (Jin & Kim 2025). While esports are popular in each of these regions, each region has significant differences.

2.4.1 Japan

Japan is regarded as one of the earliest countries to develop a gaming culture. The Japan esports culture began as arcade fighting games (Tekken and Street Fighter), and these types of games are still dominate in the Japanese esports market (Jin & Kim 2025). Japan demonstrated what gaming consoles can do, from socialisation to cultural activity such as Cosplaying (dressing like a video game characters).

Gaming in Japan is widely accepted and respected and laid a foundation for competitive gaming and the development of the current esports format (Jin & Kim, 2025). This esports market has produced several well-performing games in this genre, such as “Tokido” Taniguchi, Naoto and “Haitani” Haitani, Shinya (Jin & Kim, 2025). Japanese companies publish fighting games such as Capcom, and SNK, in terms of consoles companies have produced Nintendo, Sega and Sony. Game reviews tend to come from game subscription on gaming systems, for example PlayStation Play Store (Jin & Kim, 2025). The Japanese government on esports is mixed. The Japan’s Act of Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations states esports prizes cannot exceed 100,000 yen (Jin & Kim, 2025).

The government have not established policies related to esports and Trade and Industry has acknowledge the potential of esports and is currently exploring strategies for its promotion and development. Despite the country’s console roots, Japan significantly supports PC-based esports such as Valorant (Jin & Kim, 2025).

2.4.2 China

The Chinese government has made efforts to transform China into a digital, infrastructure and economic leaders. Therefore, it shares a developed esports industry and has received support from digital companies, such as Baidu (Yu, 2018). Esports were recognised as a legitimated sport in 2003, and the government has promoted esports as a source of national pride and a crucial element in youth culture. In 2016 the government encouraged esports by classifying it as part of the leisure industries and The Ministry of Education approved esports as an undergraduate degree major (Yu, 2018). Regarding, video games China has produced many popular video games such as Honor of Kings. China has hosted a number of esports events and tournaments, for example League of Legends (LoL)

competitions. The most popular genre among Chinese gamers is multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) with LoL being the popular title play. In 2019, China became the biggest esports market, this exceeded the United States and South Korea, gathering \$189.2 million in revenue (Statista, 2023a), in 2023 this increased to \$445.2 million.

There are about 560 million individuals that engage in esports, this equates to around 70% of China's population (Soo & Lee, 2018). Compared, to South Korea the percentage of females is higher, and esports fans are highly educated, for example 42.5% have graduated from a 4-year university course (Jin & Kim 2025). Interestingly, Chinese parents, medical professionals and educators are concerned about the effects of gaming. Despite the fact that 42.5% of esports fans are highly educated, there remains societal tension. As esports is often perceived to conflict with traditional values that prioritise academic success (Jin & Kim, 2025).

China has a stable foundation for esports, and the government has invested resources to develop esports particularly in cities such as Hangzhou and Shenzhen (Jin & Kim 2025). public policies are aimed at limiting gaming time for children, this is reflected by the concerns of gaming addiction and the impact that gaming has on young people. This situation highlights the complex relationship between China's official support for esports as a national industry and the broader societal concerns regarding its influence on youth culture and academic performance (Jin & Kim, 2025).

2.4.3 South Korea

Korea was influenced by Japan's arcade culture; however, it developed its own esports culture. In the 1990s the country established high-speed internet and established massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) played on PCs in public spaces (Hjorth,

2007). Internet cafes became central and offered spaces where individuals could rent a computer and play games together. Blizzard Entertainment in 1998 utilized the PC platform and released StarCraft. This quickly became a cultural phenomenon and meant children and young adults were playing together (Jin & Kim 2025).

The esports industry developed greatly and gained popularity through esports broadcasts and the creation of tournaments (League of Legends (LoL). Esports teams developed (Gen.G) and players became interested in watching competitions and creating fandoms (Jin & Kim 2025). The Korean government supported the rise of esports and created the Korean esports Association (KeSPA), founded in 2000. From there the government also recognised esports as an official sport (Jin & Kim 2025). For Koreans the fans are devoted to their teams and players and have challenged decisions made by top management. This creates a bottom-up structure, and also social co-creation between fans and teams (Jin & Kim 2025).

Esports across the regions of Asia are expanding and reshaping the sociocultural landscape. The advancements of internet, widespread electronic devices, and the accessibility to esports, is gathering greater recognition to larger audiences. As technological advancements increase Asian esports will once again redefine how society engages with esports and will leave a socio-cultural impact (Jin & Kim 2025). Korean esports have directly affected global esports culture. There is a difference, for example male gamers dominated esports and the gaming culture. Although female viewership has risen according to Rito Game in 2020 46% of esports fans were female in Korea (Jin & Kim 2025). Creative development has shaped Korea esports and will continue to do so.

2.4.4 Esport within Europe

Esports within Europe is recognised for its sports-like competition, offering career opportunities and leisure (Koskimaa, 2025). Competitive gaming is reflected in local area networks (LAN) and events that are held in sporting areas (Jenny et al., 2018). In the 1980 and 90s the earliest gaming scene was dominated by PCs, this created LAN parties where individuals brought their own computer to designated locations and played games with each other over LAN (Koskimaa, 2025).

2.4.5 Sweden and Norway

In the 1990s the first LAN party was organised in Sweden; it was known as DreamHack, which was brought together by computer aficionados for multiplayer gaming. The Gathering in Norway was a significant event in 1992 and became one of the biggest LAN parties. These gatherings within these countries created a foundation for LAN culture in Europe and inspired future events such as Insomnia Gaming Festival in the UK. The games created the growth of first-person shooter (FPS) and Counterstrike (Taylor, 2012). DreamHack in particular has become a major esports tournament organiser and brand in 2012 and untied with Major League Gaming and Electronic Sports League. These events mean players can bring their own equipment and join hundreds of other players. There are also esports competitions with prize money (Koskimaa, 2025). DreamHack is still a major esports tournament brand and has held events in school cafeteria's to large competitions. In 2002, DreamHack ran two events, one in the summer of June and winter in November (McCauley et al., 2020).

As of 2024 DreamHack, still create competitions, with live concerts, and seminars on various aspects of esports. Many tournaments are showing media personalities and trends

within the digital culture and are leading esports to be recognised and seen as part of the entertainment industry, the same way sport and athletics are (Koskimaa, 2025).

2.4.6 Germany

In the 1990s competitive gaming teams formed the German Clan Liga (DeCL), this was where the first professional teams emerged. Electronic Sports League (ESL) was founded in 2000 and is still grounded in Cologne. ESL is an esports organiser and produces video games competitions worldwide (Koskimaa, 2025). ESL was till the mid-2010s one of the largest esports organisations and one of the oldest still in operation. The largest and most popular tournaments are ESL One and Intel Extreme Masters. While these tournaments are in different location around the world, they are the most prestigious tournaments. ESL is a key organisation in developing global esports cultures and organising national championships, such as ESL UK Premiership (Koskimaa, 2025).

Interestingly, despite ESL popularity is merged with DreamHack and esports platform FACEIT, a company owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) combined to form ESL FACEIT Group (EFG). ESL and DreamHack still work together and are known to promote diversity, such as working closely with female legends to make events safe and do not include male gamers. Both companies also invest in ESL Impact League to promote visibility for female teams (Koskimaa, 2025).

2.4.7 France

In 1999, "LAN Arena" an amateur competition was established, and recognised itself as must-attend event in Europe for Quake players, reach under 1,500 players in 2002 (Le Monde, 2002). After this event the LAN Area changes its name to Ligarena and created Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC) in 2003 (Koskimaa, 2025). The organisation held is

first competition in 2003, with 300 players competing in four different games, held in Poitiers. The games were CS, Unreal Tournament, Quake 3 and Warcraft III.

In 2005, 52 countries associated with ESWC, and global finals were held in Paris. ESWC Masters, was organised in Paris in 2005, these brought together hundreds of players into tournaments, the Final World Cup was held in California. From these several competitions have been held all over the world, from California to Greece (Koskimaa, 2025). Since 2019, there have been no ESWC tournaments or competitions.

However, the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund (PIF) in 2023 took command and relaunched under the name of Esports World Cup (EWC). Looking at the success since the relaunch of this organisation, France has been the most successful and among the top ten esports dominating in Europe (Koskimaa, 2025).

2.4.8 The US

Esports in the US comes from livestreaming platforms and significant investments of video game publishers (School & Stout, 2025). Popular games include First-Person Shooter (FPS), Multiplayer Online Battles (MOBA), and fighting games. However, one of the most popular games to come from North America and is influenced by its developer is Super Smash Bros. This game is closely related to its grassroots of community events and local tournaments, such as Smash Con, from 2015-present (School & Stout, 2025). Individuals that attend these tournaments still play on Melee on Cathode-Ray Tube (CRT), the Nintendo GameCube, emphasising the game's enduring legacy and cultural specificity. The North American esports scene is linked to industry and culture, which influence each other, meaning esports is not easy to categorise in NA. (Keogh, 2023). The esports development in NA is shaped by factors that are continuously involving such as media formats, toxicity concerns and governance issues (School & Stout, 2025). As esports has gained in popularity

it has attracted attention from policy makers and media. This has resulted in significant developments impacting the rights, livelihoods, and enjoyment of players, professionals, and broader community stakeholders. One of the major areas that esports has grown is the incorporation into secondary and higher education. Esports programmes are unique and emerging across NA. For schools that do not have a traditional athletic programme, esports are being introduced to expand student engagement and talent. These programmes are often designed to provide inclusive opportunities, emphasising the potential of esports as a holistic ecosystem that supports students beyond just gaming (Keogh, 2023).

NA is also home to esports organisations such as Major League Gaming (MLG) developed in 2002. MLG was the first to use “professional gaming” rather than “esports” (Kane 2008). The name MLG gained popularity in 2006 when it televised a professional gaming league such as Halo 2. During the early days of YouTube, MLG maintained a strong presence, sticking with console games such as Call of Duty 4, Modern Warfare and Halo 3 (Crenshaw 2016). MLG continued to dominate until the creation of Twitch, where it lost popularity, and in 2016 Activision-Blizzard acquired MLG. The relationship between traditional sports and esports in North America is significant. Many sporting teams have experimented and invested in esports, for example Dignitas owned by the Philadelphia 76ers, and the Golden State Warriors has featured in League of Legends. These sporting leagues have also worked parallel with game publishers and have supported esports, for example NHL (National Hockey League) World Championship, and National Football League’s (NFL) (Rappaport & Bennett, 2020).

2.5 Support Needed for Esports Players

Esports attract a global audience, not dissimilar to sports. Esports have fans, teams, sponsorship and career opportunities (Taylor, 2012). Players within professional esports

teams are expected to act professionally, follow rules and guidelines; these are established by organisations to maintain a positive image of the teams and players (Hong & Wünsch, 2025). Players are expected to participate in tournaments, events and leagues and they are also expected to engage in YouTube, producing videos, social media to interact with fans, and media appearances (Hong & Wünsch, 2025).

It is, therefore, important to mention the support that esports players need during their career even when starting as an amateur or being a professional player. By discussing the support that players need it will encourage significant growth and make the esports ecosystem more stable. While esports is a new phenomenon, it has many similarities with traditional sports such as fans, teams, and career opportunities (Taylor, 2012). As esports has gained in popularity, many young people are considering esports as a career (Smith et al., 2019). As esports grows, players can face cognitive challenges, which can include mental stress, the need to communicate effectively within a team, cope with physical and psychological stressors (Himmelstein et al., 2017). It is recommended that esports teams have social and emotional support for players (DiFrancisco-Donoghue et al., 2019). The importance of support for players within esports is vital, the industry needs to make sure that all players are receiving support (Hong, 2025). It is crucial to acknowledge the challenges that esports players are faced with, from illnesses, injuries, and burnout. Research needs to examine what teams and stakeholders need to provide in order to ensure the well-being of esports players, from all levels, particularly as esports popularity increases.

Existing literature within esports focuses on institutional support for professional teams and players. For adolescent players, parental support plays a significant role and young esports players will rely on parental, financial and emotional support, balancing gaming with education and family responsibilities (Taylor et al., 2009). Parents can also influence gaming time, access to equipment and shape attitudes towards esports as a legitimate pursuit or

recreational activity. Young people are considering esports as a career pathway (Smith et al., 2019) therefore, examining parental involvement becomes important. Better understanding of how parents perceive esports and how they support or restrict their child's engagement is essential. This thesis, therefore, shifts the focus from organisation-level support to family context and explores the parental-child relationship.

2.6 Esports Players Health and Wellness

Traditional sports have incorporated sport science to enhance the athletic performance of athletes and to prevent the risk of injuries. In contrast esports have only recently explored the benefits of this (Migliore, 2025). Coaches, trainers and teams play a critical role in players health and wellbeing. By adopting the same awareness and practices employed in traditional sports, the esports industry can promote health and performance for all players. There are factors that can impact an esports player ability, and it is important that the esports industry is educated on these factors (Migliore, 2025). Several factors can affect esports players ability to perform at a high level; therefore, it is important that all stakeholders, and parents are educated on these determinants (Migliore, 2025). A concern for parents is the sedentary lifestyle that is associated with esports. Engaging in regular exercise can prevent the effects of prolonged inactivity, such as muscular pain, and poor posture.

Team Liquid, who is a professional team, engage regularly in physical activity and have found enhanced cognitive functions, reduced stress levels and improved sleep quality (Migliore, 2025). They are two main exercises that are beneficial for esports players these are aerobic (increasing the heart rate) and anaerobic (tones muscle mass). Esports players face challenges in engaging with physical activity due to long training hours; however, incorporating some form of exercise can have a profound effect on their gameplay. Research supports that short bouts of cardiovascular activity conducted before and during the breaks

in competitive play can enhance their cognitive functioning and improve game performance (DiFrancisco-Donoghue et al., 2021; De Las Heras et al., 2020).

Physical activity can lower blood pressure and decrease health conditions, it is essential for esports players to engage in physical activity to maintain good physical health, therefore, exercise is a crucial part of esports training (Migliore, 2025). Migliore (2025) recommends that esports players engage in warm-up routines before gameplay, take regular breaks that include short periods of physical activity, and participate in team-based exercises. These practices not only enhance well-being and foster team cohesion but also help counteract the stereotype that esports are sedentary, a perception that often concerns parents. Migliore (2025) stated that esports players should warm up before gaming, have breaks during gameplay with short bouts of exercise, and team-based exercise all of which can improve well-being and encourage team building. This would also help combat the stereotypical viewpoints that esports is sedentary in nature, which is a main concern for parents.

It is not just physical health that can affect esports players, but also mental and emotional pressures as well. Long hours and repetitive motions take a toll on the esports physical body, leading to fatigue and potential injuries. As well as physical strain, esports players can experience pressures from internal sources as well. Tensions between teammates, academic obligations and family commitments are demands that can interfere with essential activities such as sleep, exercise and social interactions (Pereira et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). Stress is a major issue that has been well documented in traditional sports, and esports players face the same issues. Despite this, support structures available to the esports players and families are lacking and parents express concerns over these stressors.

Health concerns play a significant role in shaping parental attitudes towards esports as parents perceive it as sedentary. Parental concerns focus on screen times, sleep disruption, academic interference and exposure to violence within the games (Pereira et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022). When parents view esports as unhealthy they may adopt more controlling or limiting behaviours. Interestingly if parents have increased awareness of training routines, and well-being support within esports organisations, this may help reshape parental perceptions (DiFrancisco-Donoghue et al., 2021; Migliore, 2025). Recognising and addressing the physical, mental, and emotional challenges that esports players face, including illness, injury, and burnout is essential. The industry must ensure that comprehensive support is available to help players maintain their overall well-being (Hong, 2025). This in turn will help the parent's and their understanding of esports.

2.7 Esports Career Process

Scholz (2024) categorised esports players using this classification, Tier 1 = Professional Esports Players; Tier 2 = Semi-professional Esports Players; Tier 3 = Amateur Esports Players; and Tier 4 = Casual Esports Players. In order for players to become professional they must decide on what game they will become professional with; casual esports players (Tier 4) decide this. There are many esports titles such as Overwatch, League of Legends (LOL) and Global Offensive (CS: GO), all of these games require players to acquire in-game levels before becoming competitive. This is to ensure that all gamers have experience before taking part in high-stakes participation (Fisackerly & Hwang, 2024). Although gamers compete in competitive matches, this does not mean that they want to become professional players, as is the same with traditional sports. Children and adults that play in recreational leagues do this as it provides a competitive environment to participate in

their sport. Both individuals that play sports for a professional career, and esports players must start at a young age (Lee, 2022).

Esports players that are competitive and gain ranks early enough attract attention to organisations while they are minors (Kang & Kim, 2025). This is the same with sports, when an individual becomes competitive, the extent in which they take their gaming seriously, is dependent on dedication. An esports player will spend time outside of competitive matches, either in free play or offline to improve esports strategies and motor skills (Lee, 2022). Players will also spend time watching YouTube videos to learn strategies, and to level up game knowledge, learning these skills is crucial to esports players development, as they progress from a casual player to a competitive player (Fisackerly, 2025). The higher the rank of the player, and the more they know they are within the competitive esports scene, the greater the chance they will be approached to join an esports organisation or team. (Fisackerly, 2025).

The age of esports players can vary generally their ages tend to be young; the average age of an esports players tends to be 20 years old (Lee, 2022). The earnings of players are reflected in their skills level, and players earnings can be divided into four different groups: winnings, streaming, sponsorships, and salaries. The average retirement age for players is late 20s or early 30s, for many players this can arrive early (Lee, 2022). This can be due to forced retirement, such as when their game becomes irrelevant (for example, a title no longer played as an esports game, like the Overwatch League), physical deterioration, burnout from mental stress, or the choice to pursue careers outside gaming in less intense environments. (Lee, 2022). Most players when they retire move onto coaching, scouting, and team management related roles.

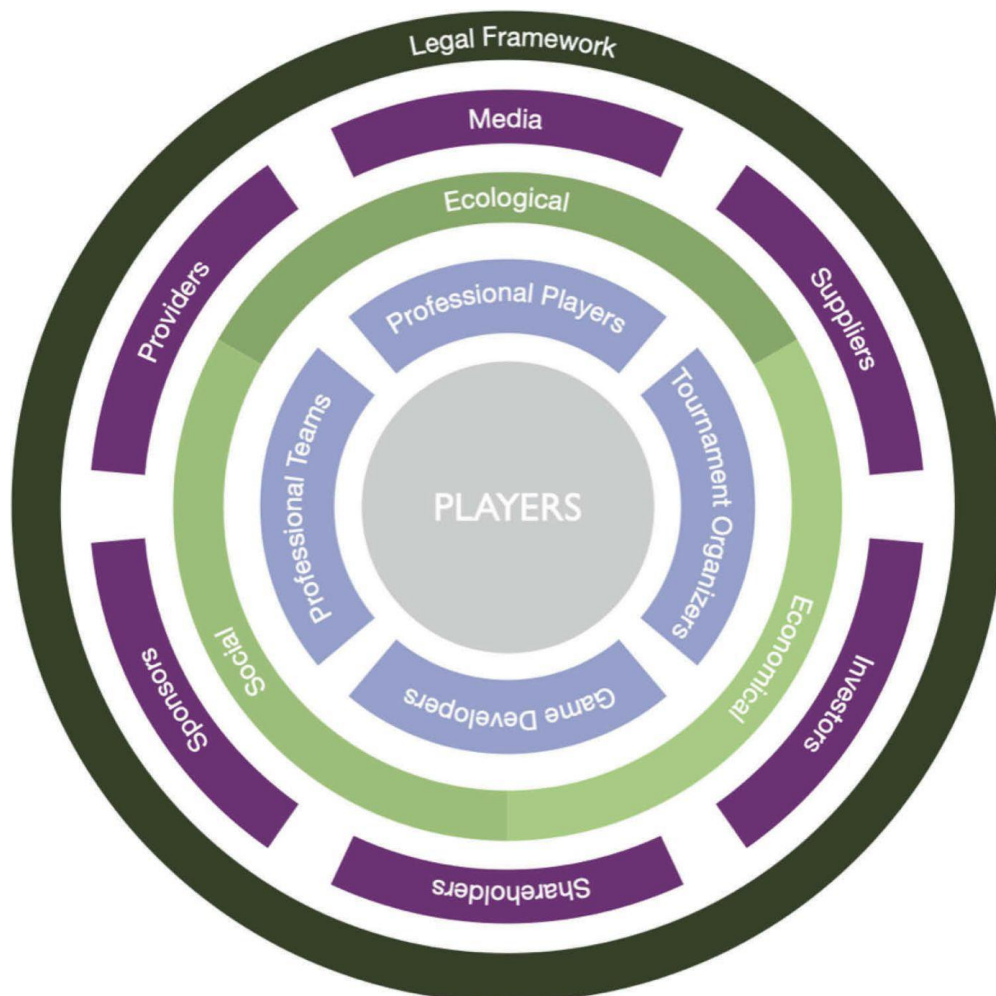
Developmental pathways occur during adolescence, at the time that players are still living at home and are dependent on parental support. Parents are important for esports players, as they are key agents for balancing esports and other commitments (Kang & Kim, 2025). Given the short career span that esports players have parents need to act as decision-makers on their children's career security. Parental attitudes towards career legitimacy may significantly shape whether their children should be encouraged or restricted towards their esports aspirations. Understanding parental perceptions is essential when examining the parental-child relationship, as parents are not minor figures, rather central stakeholders in shaping their children's opportunities, well-being and careers.

2.8 Esports Ecosystem

As esports gained in popularity, this created an opportunity for researchers to study esports players and the systems within this phenomenon, one such system is the esports ecosystem. Ludwig et al. (2020) explained there is an esports ecosystem that runs the business and includes several different features. The structure includes franchises and teams, tournaments and leagues, broadcast and media, fans, brands and investors, game developers, players, and video games. Each separate part of the system has its own features that are then interwoven together in order for esports to succeed (Scholz, 2020) as shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Categorisation of the esports ecosystem (Scholz, 2020)



Scholz (2020) discusses the esports ecosystem and, argues that individuals can create their own media content. The digitalisation and globalisation of the industry is primarily based on the socio-cultural phenomenon of people playing video games with strangers through the internet. The ecosystem within esports is changing continually, which makes esports uniquely different and challenging from traditional sport. The ecosystem has various stakeholders and is an interwoven network (Scholz, 2020) that revolves around the player,

target audience, and customer. Peng et al. (2020) argued that they are certain actors, such as international and national esports associations that are not included in Scholz (2020) esports ecosystem and therefore argues that shared governance esports or a network administration organisation (NAO) is the way forward. According to Peng et al. (2020), the esports networks are dynamic and subject to change, due to the complexities associated with esports. Provan and Kenis (2008) stated that a share governance network, can grow in size, while maintaining efficient management, allowing several stakeholders to participate and address individual interests and fairness. Peng et al. (2020) further emphasised that a sustainability esports model would be beneficial and should protect all interests and rights of stakeholders and their dynamics, arguing that esports networks are not governed effectively. By investigating esports stakeholders and their dynamics, the researchers found that power concentrated within game publishers. As other stakeholders' power increases, fragmentation occurs within the esports governance framework. Esports governance is evolving towards a network organisation. Peng et al. (2020) research highlights that Scholz (2020) ecosystem is not substantially, and stakeholders need to be incorporated transforming the ecosystem into a more structured NAO.

Parents within sport provide feedback and can influence their children either positively or negatively. Parental influence on their children's sport has shown enhanced enjoyment and successful careers; however, children's perceptions can differ as they believe that parental over-involvement can create burnout and less enjoyment (Fredrick & Eccles, 2004). Wylleman (2019) argued that parents, coaches and teammates play an important role in an athlete's career development. Parents' support is significant, and parents should be incorporated in the esports ecosystem (Scholz, 2020), but parents are not included. In Hong's (2023) study, esports players from professional to amateur were interviewed and many participants mentioned parents. For example, a professional player discussed how parental

support helped them achieve their goals; an amateur player mentioned that their parents were supportive if they understood the repercussions “*if it gets out of hand*” (pp 6). Some participants mentioned that they had to work hard to get their parents to appreciate their esports careers. For example, one professional recalled that their parents did not initially support their career. However, once they saw the potential of esports, they became more supportive. Hong (2023) argued that parent’s limited understanding could be a challenge for players, the research argues that players stated that parental support is important, though, many other players found it difficult to make their parents understand. Hong (2023) research, has limitations, parents were not part of the research. The research was focusing on the need for support for esports players, it was therefore, still important to gain both perspectives of the players and parents.

Parents, however, are not part of the esports ecosystem and the parental relationship with esports players can affect participation. It, therefore, is important to investigate the relationships of both children and parents regarding esports playing. As the development of esports and the growth in popularity will mean that the esports ecosystem will change. The composition of stakeholders will grow, with the parents being part of the ecosystem, similar to that of a sports ecosystem (Scholz, 2020). Recognising parents as integral stakeholders within the evolving esports ecosystem, much like in traditional sports, is essential to understanding and supporting the holistic development of young participants.

2.9 Parental attachment

Parents play a fundamental role in shaping their children's lives and overall development, with significant implications for their engagement in various domains, including both traditional sports and esports. The influence of parental involvement can substantially impact a child's motivation, skills development, and participation in these

activities (Lac et al, 2013). Parental attachment is the level of parental responsiveness towards their child (Bowlby, 1988). Through these bonds children have a healthy working model of themselves and others around them, those children with secure attachments develop skills that help regulate their emotions, and those with insecure attachments cannot regulate emotions (Grossmann et al., 2008). The formation of attachments comes from three key processes trust, communication and nonalienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Trust is maintaining the importance of family ties, commitment and loyalty to the family (Ramirez et al., 2004).

Communication regards the child's activities and parental knowledge (Lac & Crano, 2011). Non-alienation towards the parent promotes feelings of acceptance, conversely alienation stems from the parental rejection of the child (Dwairy, 2010). Achieving secure attachments to both parents can result in greater social capability, if the children suffer from inadequate attachment, then the child will engage in risk behaviours, such as substance use, and aggression (Bell et al., 2000). The quality of attachment to both parents plays a crucial role in shaping a child's social development. Research has focused on unhealthy attachment and problematic gaming, it is argued that this can lead to gaming addiction (Pandey, 2024). Another research focuses on parent-child communication and the significance of positive parent-child interaction to control gaming addiction (Pandey, 2024).

One of the factors that parents are worried about with esports is the addiction to gaming and the sedentary behaviours associated with esports. It is argued that if parents have secure attachments, then they can control their children's gaming habits, as previously mentioned parents and children hold different views on gaming and there are several factors that can affect the parental-child relationship, from attachment styles, parenting and observations of their children's hobbies. This is why it is important to examine the

relationship of both the parent's and their children within esports to gain a perception of what the parent and child both think in relation to their esports gaming.

Brody et al. (2005) research investigated Strong African Families Programme (SAAF). The researchers developed an intervention to help parents develop emotional bonds with their children through “involved-vigilant” parenting. This parenting styles involves high levels of emotional support, rules and monitoring. Before this “involved-vigilant” intervention was put into action, parents saw their children conducting anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse. Following the intervention, the researchers saw improvements in the parental-child relationship. Particularly during the ages of five to twelve. The researchers argued that when parents effectively monitor their children during this age bracket, then their children develop their own self-control. A limitation of the research is fathers did not participate. It is important for the children -parent relationship to have both sides involved. While Brody et al. (2005) research is not esports or gaming focused; it shows the critical role of the parent-child relationship.

Attachment theory provides a useful lens for understanding how parents perceive esports. Attachment quality shaped through parent–child relationships may influence parents' attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioural control, all of which are key components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). These mechanisms, in turn, may shape children's participation in esports. In this sense, attachment theory does not operate as a standalone framework but may function as an antecedent construct within the TPB model. Integrating attachment theory with TPB, therefore, deepens understanding of the parental decision-making processes.

2.10 Esports Player Parental Support

Parents or family members can support their children's esports hobbies. Most parents have grown up misunderstanding esports, due to media misconceptions on gaming and esports. Parents, being present and open-minded will help both the parent's and their children (Meissner, 2025). It is important to set healthy habits at a young age and learn children's interests; this will help the parents to use tools to assess the appropriate video game based on the age of the child. (Brown et al., 2022). Pan European Gaming Information (PEGI) and The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) will help with this; parents can also look at the synopsis and genre of the game to decide if the game is appropriate (Meissner, 2025).

Another tool that parents can use is to limit screen time, and communication within gaming, for example limiting offensive language. Parents should also play with their child and engage in esports; this means helping them celebrate their wins and help them through their losses. They can also learn game lingo and gameplay basics, which can be a support for their children. (Meissner, 2025). Parents also need to encourage a routine such as making time for schoolwork, playing outside, healthy eating, exercise and developing good sleeping patterns (Meissner, 2025). Parents may focus on negative stereotypes about esports; it is important to lessen these concerns. Parents may question their children pursuing esports though esports, like other sports have many benefits (Lee & Steinkuehler, 2019). Esports are social: require teamwork: form friendships: gain emotional learning: improve visual and cognitive skills (Dekker & Slotboom, 2023).

Parents are not alone, and there are many internet websites where they can gain help and understanding, staying in communication with their child and offering support across their esports career. Despite the importance of parents, they are not part of the esports ecosystem. Triantoro et al. (2019) argued that the role of parents is crucial in educating

children. Adolescents' identity comes from their environment and as they become interested in games. The study investigated that if parental supervision does not exist, did it have an impact on their children becoming addicted to gaming. The researchers measured parental supervision as family communication and monitoring the children's gameplay. The results indicate that if parents do not have control over their children's gaming, then it has negative impacts on family relationships. The research had a small sample size and used quantitative research methods, rather than try to account what the participants felt.

Dong (2018) research investigated Korean parents and social tensions and meanings around gaming. Interviewing thirteen Korean parents around gaming and their views on technology and learning. The parents stated that they found conflicts and negotiations with their children through hyper competitiveness within gaming. The parents argued that play reflects pressures, concerns and anxieties within their children. The results illustrated that Korean parents have a complicated understating of esports, compared to the UK parents who have a better understanding.

Anderson and Dill (2000) aimed to investigate the effects of violent video games on aggressive thoughts, behaviour, and worldview, while also exploring the roles of gender and trait irritability. Participants played video games in three sessions, completing affective, worldview and cognitive questionnaires after each session. Although the researchers also measured in-game frustration, the results for this variable were statistically insignificant. The findings from the questionnaires indicated that state hostility was influenced by both gender and irritability, with higher irritability scores in men, and greater state hostility reported by women. Anderson and Dill (2000) then conducted two experiments. The first used four different measures of aggression and found that violent video games were positively associated with aggressive behaviour and were a strong predictor of future delinquency,

particularly among males. Furthermore, this experiment revealed a negative correlation between violent video game play and academic achievement, such as increased likelihood of failing tests.

The second experiment examined whether the graphical quality of violent games affected levels of aggression. Anderson and Dill (2000) concluded that violent video games promote the idea that aggression is a suitable strategy for conflict resolution. They argued that repeated exposure could shape long-term personality traits and that frequent engagement with violent gaming could normalise aggression in social interactions, potentially increasing aggressive behaviour over time. Their study can be criticised as it did not investigate if long-term exposure to violent video games, rather than short-term led to aggressive behaviours. Kutner and Olson (2008) argues that long term exposure does not affect aggression behaviours, rather through their research they found that M-Rated games such as Call of Duty can help adolescents forget about their problems, help them relax and feel less lonely, especially when playing together, their research only used surveys which cannot determine correlation and causation.

As previously highlighted with Granic et al. (2014) and Jiow et al. (2018) parent's involvement within esports is limited, as parental perceptions are the worry of addiction, poor academic performance, and poor social skills. Horn et al. (2012) argued that parents play an important role in their children's involvement in activities, parents need to play an important role in their children's esports participation and the parental-child relationship within esports is relatively unexplored. It is important to identify parents' experiences and perceptions on their children playing esports. Esports have negative stereotypes and concerns which means parents are cautious about esports participation and might actively discourage (Svensson et al., 2024). Esports have benefits; however, lack of parental support means children have a higher risk of missing out on positive benefits (Holt & Knight, 2014). This is why

investigating parental viewpoints is important to make parents support esports participation and for their children not to miss out on the benefits of esports.

Research on esports participation and how esports players feel has been conducted (Wong et al., 2021; Hamari & Sjoblom, 2017; Leis & Birch, 2021). There is limited research on esports players speaking about their parental involvement, and how this affects them. Children and adolescents are wanting to become esports players and become more involved in the esports industry. There is, however, growing issues on parental involvement and how it can affect esports participation. Nilsson and Lee (2019) investigated factors and pressures that affect esports players to gain a better understanding for those who wish to take part in esports in the future. There were five interviews conducted, three were current players, one was a former player that is now a coach, and an individual who is a coach and never been an esports player. The interviews involved asking about pressures with parents, teams and how they felt before and after tournaments. The results illustrated that before starting their careers all participants stated that their parents were negative about their possible esports career, stating such things as wasting his time, unhealthy and short life span. The participants also stated that even though their parents were negative about it, it did not stop them from trying to break into esports. The findings highlight what barriers esports players can face from their parents; from this research parents are concerned about the lack of economic support that their children could experience when pursuing esports as a career. Their findings only examined the players' perspectives, not the parents' perspectives. It is evident that parents play a crucial role, and it is important to identify parents' experiences and perceptions on their children playing esports.

The COVID-19 pandemic has to be briefly mentioned when speaking about esports. It is argued that the pandemic helped promote esports, particularly with socialisation. Hong

(2021) explored the impact of COVID-19. In the study a former manager of a national esports team reported major changes during the pandemic, this was an increase in gameplay.

Through social distancing and quarantine many individuals played games and became social through online platforms. Esports also quickly adapted to placing competitions and training online. Hong (2021) highlights that although esports promoted socialisation during the pandemic, it did not address the persistent concern regarding its sedentary nature. This view was echoed by parents, who expressed concern about the physical inactivity associated with gaming.

2.11 Theory of Reason Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) investigates individuals' attitudes and intentions that lead to a certain behaviour, it is argued that human behaviour is not made up of attitudes and motivations, but it is a series of correlated factors. TRA argues that they are collection of factors that influence behaviours, and these intentions are determined by attitudes and subjective norms (Xiao, 2019). Beliefs are formed by individuals who believe that performance of an action can bring a desired outcome such as social recognition (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). TRA has four main positions, these are Belief: Attitude: Subjective Norm and Intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Belief is that an individual will have a conviction that a behaviour will lead to a consequence, for example esports are sedentary in nature, therefore, the individual will hold that belief. Attitude is the individuals positive or negative evaluation of a behaviour. TRA argues that attitudes are functions of beliefs, for example to predict an individual's attitude towards esports, then a person's belief towards it would need to be investigated. If an individual thinks esports would lead to a positive outcome, then they would have a positive attitude towards it and vice versa (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Subjective norms involve important people in a person's life, and if these people would want them to perform this behaviour, for example what would a family member think of the individuals esports playing. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined two types of subjective norms; one is injunctive norms which are what people think other people think they should. Descriptive norms are an individual's perception of what other people think they should do. Subjective norms, include everyone important in that person's life. Finally, Behavioural Intention is the willingness to perform a behaviour. The limitations of TRA are there is contradictory information between attitudes and norms. TRA relies on a high importance and intent behind a behaviour. TRA argues that behaviours are not always a conscious process of intentions and some behaviours take place spontaneously and as such these intentions are not studied within TRA. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) changed perceived behavioural control to the belief that spontaneity is a performance that someone is capable of performing (Rossi & Armstrong, 1999).

2.11.1 Achievement Goal Theory (AGT)

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) concentrates primarily on the coaches and little attention is given to the parents within AGT, coaches are key agents within children and sporting climate. AGT argues that individuals judge their own ability and define success in their accomplishments, and this helps understand individuals' motivational processes (Duda, 2001). Hardwood et al. (2010) argued that an individual's ability can be high or low depending on their performance and how they are judged by others. This is reinforced by task vs ego involvement, where goal states are determined by individuals' success in achievement environments. AGT argues that individuals develop fixed ideas of their abilities, and the perception of this can affect an individual's motivation (Nicholls, 1989).

Depending on the individual's view, they can either be task-involved (high levels of enjoyment) or ego-oriented (greater social recognition) to achieve their goals (Bardach et al., 2020). Achievement goals are determined by complex interactions between goals and climate, which are created by parents and coaches. Evidence suggests that high level of task orientation can be linked with a range of positive cognition and behavioural outcomes, where ego orientation is associated with less positive outcomes (Hardwood et al., 2010). AGT does not focus on cross-cultural goals and tends to concentrate on Western countries. It is important to focus on cross-cultural goals, and the relationship of coaches can change culturally (Gong et., 2001). AGT is valuable in identifying motivations, however, it does have weaknesses. The research is promoted in improving skills as good and performance goals such as beating others as bad, some research has shown that a mix of mastery goals and performance goals are effective. Striving for high-level mastery performance can lead to higher anxiety and burnout due to “high achiever syndrome”. AGT is simplistic and rigid between mastery and performance goals and neglects high performance behaviours and their outcomes. AGT also focus on the athlete coach relationship and rarely focuses on parents. AGT and TPB are frameworks that try and understand human behaviour, AGT explores individuals and how they are motivated in a climate. TPB focuses on how intentions lead to behaviours focusing on attitudes, norms and controls (Chazan et al., 2021).

Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is the primary framework used for this thesis; it is informed by the extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and address limitations that the alternative approaches have. TRA provides a foundation for understanding the role of attitudes, subjective norms and behavioural intentions, however its assumptions of volitional control limits the parental regulation of esports engagement. The addition of behavioural control within TPB renders it more suitable for examining parental decision-making, such as monitoring, regulation and behavioural management. Achievement Goal

Theory offers insights into motivation and goal orientations within sport; it mainly focuses on athlete-coach dynamics and is not equipped to explain parental intentions. While TPB offers a more direct framework on understanding how parents form intentions regarding their child's esports participation.

2.11.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) are behaviours that are influenced by intentions, these are determined by three factors, attitudes, subjective norms and behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms are social pressures and expectations of others and how much an individual values these expectations. Behavioural control is how an individual feels performing a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). TPB assumes that individuals act according to their attitudes, subject norms and behavioural control. Parents have an important role in influencing and guiding their children's involvement in activities (Horn, 2012). TPB explains behavioural performance, the theory states that an individual's behaviour, normative and control beliefs are influenced by attitudes (attribute of that behaviour), norms (individual approve/disapprove of behaviours) and behavioural controls (obstacles) (Ajzen, 1985). In the context of children's engagement in esports, both attachment style and the TPB may serve as crucial factors influencing their participation and continued involvement. TPB will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Adolescents within academics and social aspects demonstrated beneficial and deleterious outcomes (i.e., goal setting, academics and time distribution), subjective norms (i.e., parents and peers) and barriers and facilitators (i.e., balance between academics; Wong et al., 2021). Perceived behavioural beliefs are the potential outcomes for participating, that can have a beneficial outcome or a deleterious outcome. Deleterious outcomes are where the participants saw obstacles that they will face. Perceived behavioural control, is a factor that

may facilitate or impede participants performance (Wong et al., 2021). Finally, normative beliefs are social pressures and norms. This type of social pressure (e.g. parent, peer's, teachers) comes from significant individuals or groups (Wong et al., 2021). Parents are important within children's lives and play an important role guiding structured activities, which helps with development (Holt et al., 2014). Gortari (2019) study with students in a Nordic High School who were involved in an esports programme, saw a majority of parents (58%) express no opinion, or parents who disagreed with the esports programme completely. These views from their parents meant that their children quit esports, parental views on children's esports are relatively unexplored and it is clear from research previously highlighted that parental attitudes are important particularly towards esports.

While Wong et al. (2021) research is important it focused on Hong Kong students only and did not gain the views and perspectives of the parents. Wong et al. (2021) research only focused on interviewing young adults and did not interview parents. The results of Wong et al. (2021) showed that the young adults' parents have stated to them, that they thought that playing *video games* meant spending less time on their studies, and as such they may raise their concerns to their children or control their children's behaviour. This highlights the need for further investigation on parental support and its impact on esports players' behaviour and performance, as parental support and involvement in esports remains limited in literature. However, their findings only examined the players' perspectives, not the parents' perspectives. Since it is evident that parents play a critical role in their children's behaviour, it will be important to identify parents' experiences and perceptions of their children playing esports, which will provide broader insights into esports.

Research has only focused on one side either the children's perceptions or the parent's, however, it is crucial to gather both the opinions of the parents and children to identify skills and support that both the parents and adolescents can use. The use of TPB and how it can explain the parental – child relationship. TPB is an individual's intention to perform a given behaviour. The intentions are the motivational factors that can influence a behaviour, such as how hard individuals are willing to try, and how much effort they are planning to use, the behavioural intentions should be under a volitional control i.e. if the individual is willing to perform or not perform the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Numerous studies have used TPB to predict physical activity and intentions and behaviours within sports, however very few studies have used TPB within esports, and yet adolescents' behaviours and intentions are influenced by pressures that can affect intentions and behaviours (Hagger et al., 2001).

This is highlighted by Svensson et al. (2024) who argued that parental attitudes to their children's esports participation using the framework of TPB needs to be investigated. The researchers argued that due to negative stereotypes about gamers, parents are hesitant or actively discourage esports participation. Svensson et al. (2024) argued that parent's attitudes are mostly negative, and their perceived behavioural control is due to the lack of knowledge about esports, while their subjective norms are mixed and seem to be becoming more positive. Parents influence their children involvement in structured activities and aim at promoting positive development, parental support plays a critical role in children's esports participation, without this support children may quit esports. Svensson et al. (2024) argument showed that although existing research provides some insights into parental support and their children's esports participation, more understanding is needed to understand these attitudes, particularly using the framework of TPB.

Physical activity is particularly important for adolescents, and the exercise habits that are developed at an early stage are maintained throughout their lives. Adolescents that have a positive attitude to physical activity are more engaged in exercise (British Heart Foundation, 2012). Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is widely used to predict human behaviour and physical activity (Brickwell et al., 2006). To predict and explain health-related behaviours it is important to researchers and professionals, that a variation of social cognition models exist, which show the importance of health behaviours. TPB is one of the most widely tested models that influences health-related behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). TPB is popular within sports research as it has operationalised guidelines on how to measure, analyse and develop interventions (Sutton, 2002).

TPB states that behaviours and intentions are shaped by individual's attitudes (attributes of that behaviour), subject norms (would a significant person approve or disapprove of that behaviour), and behavioural controls (obstacles that may inhibit behaviour). These are known as direct predictors of behaviour; however these have their own determinants called salient beliefs, these are behavioural normative and control. Perceived behavioural beliefs, are the potential outcomes for participating in a behaviour. This behaviour can have a beneficial outcome or a deleterious outcome and relate in this case to esports. Deleterious outcomes are where the participants saw obstacles that they will face while playing esports. Perceived behavioural control is a factor that may facilitate or impede participants performance.

Finally, normative beliefs are social pressures and norms that interfere with esports. This type of social pressure (e.g. parent, peers, teachers) comes from significant individuals or groups. In this context, parents are the biggest social pressure that the participants faced, with them stating that their parents disapproved of their esports playing. Wong et al. (2021)

study involved esports students and asked what factors the adolescents faced when playing. Participants highlighted that they faced difficulties balancing academia and playing esports, and this tended to cause conflicts with their parents. Parents argued that they spend a considerable amount of time *playing video games* and less effort on their academics.

Adolescents within academics and social aspects demonstrated beneficial and deleterious outcomes (i.e., goal setting, academics and time distribution), subjective norms (i.e., parents and peers) and barriers and facilitators (i.e., balance between academics; Wong et al., 2021). Perceived behavioural beliefs are the potential outcomes for participating that can have a beneficial outcome or a deleterious outcome. Deleterious outcomes are where the participants saw obstacles that they will face. Perceived behavioural control is a factor that may facilitate or impede participants performance (Wong et al., 2021). Finally, normative beliefs are social pressures and norms. This type of social pressure (e.g. parent, peer's, teachers) comes from significant individuals or groups (Wong et al., 2021). Parents are important within children's life's and play an important role guiding structured activities, which helps with development (Holt et al., 2014).

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meant spending less time on their studies, and as such they may raise their concerns to their children or try to control their children's behaviour. This highlights the need for further investigation on parental support and its impact on esports players' behaviour and performance, as parental support and involvement in esports remains limited in literature.

Wong et al.'s (2021) findings only examined the players' perspectives, not the parents' perspectives. Since it is evident that parents play a critical role in their children's behaviour, it will be important to identify parents' experiences and perceptions of their children playing esports. Research has only focused on one side, either the children's perceptions or the parent's. It is crucial to gather both the opinions of the parents and children to identify skills and support that both can use. TPB is an individual's intention to perform a given behaviour. The intentions are the motivational factors that can influence the behaviour, such as how hard individuals are willing to try, and how much effort they are planning to use. The behavioural intentions should be under a volitional control i.e. if the individual is willing to perform or not perform the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

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Parents influence their children's involvement in structured activities and aim at promoting positive development, parental support plays a critical role in children's esports participation, without this support children may quit esports. Svensson et al.'s (2024) argument showed that although existing research provides some insights into parental support and their children's esports participation, more understanding is needed to realise these attitudes, particularly using the framework of TPB.

The thesis is underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) since this theory explains behaviour through the relationship of beliefs, intentions, and actions. For this thesis, TPB offers a robust lens to explore the parent-child relationship regarding their children's engagement in esports. Children's participation in esports, and parental involvement are shaped by the evaluation of esports (attitudes), perceived social expectations (subjective norms), and perceptions of capability, resources, and constraints (perceived behavioural control). This study encompasses both the children and parents' perceptions of esports. Subjective norms are the perceived social pressures from significant others in context to this thesis, these perceived social pressures could be from family members, sporting culture, and societal discourses surrounding esports. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is applied in quantitative research to predict behavioural intentions through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural controls (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) emphasised that these constructs are shaped by underlying behavioural, normative, and control beliefs, which are formed through individuals subjective interpretations and social experiences. Qualitative research is valuable for TPB as it would explore these underlying beliefs in greater depth and allow the research to examine how individuals interpret experiences, and how social relationships are formed around attitudes and perceptions. This thesis aims to understand how

parents and children make sense of esports participation within their relational and social context. A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring the meanings and beliefs that inform TPB constructs.

TPB therefore, is not employed as a predictive model rather a conceptual and interpretive framework that explores meanings, perceptions and interactions of the parental-child relationship. TPB focuses on beliefs, social influences, and perceived control, which supports the thesis aims of capturing the perspectives of both parents and children and identifying the support required to integrate parents into the esports ecosystem.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the parental-child relationship to those children who engage in esports, gaining perception of parents and children, and to identify support that both parents and children need to make the parents part of esports ecosystem. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do parents and children construct and interpret their experiences of participation in esports?
2. How do parents and children describe the challenges and barriers associated with esports participation, and the coping strategies they employ?
3. What support and/or guidance do both the child and parent need to facilitate the child's participation in esports?

Chapter 3

Methodology

3. Methodology

This chapter will outline the different philosophical approaches, and the approach the researcher selected. Following the philosophical approaches, methodological approaches that were applied to the present thesis will be presented and discussed. Demonstrating the initial themes found for both the parents and children and also demonstrating the importance of reflexive analysis within the thesis.

3.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of being, it examines the nature of reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), or what is possible to know about the world (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Ontology is concerned about the questions relating to things that exist. It is the assumptions that individuals make and the nature of their reality (Richards, 2003). Bryman (2008) introduced the concept of “social ontology” stating that research concerns the nature of social entities and these social entities can be objective, which can exist independently from social actors or social constructions which are built from views, actions and understandings of individuals in society. Ormston (2014) argued that ontology is whether or not a social reality that exists independently forms individual ideas and understandings. Ontology, therefore, is concerned about beliefs about the nature of reality and what exists.

3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge (Hetherington, 2019). It is the general assumptions of what individuals make about the nature of knowledge (Richards, 2003). Crotty (1998) argued that it is a way of observing the world and making sense of it. Bryman (2008) defined epistemology as issues that concern the question of what should be regarded

as knowledge. It is concerned with the knower and the known (Holmes, 1986). Epistemology is what can be known, on knowledge of truth and reality, epistemology is to explore what individuals believe and what the individuals recognise (Ababneh, 2020).

3.3 Research Paradigms

3.3.1 Positivism

Positivism is the belief that there is factual knowledge, and this is gained through observations, the role of the researcher is limited through data collection and interpretation. The researcher distances themselves from the research and the findings tends to be quantifiable (Collis 2010). Positivism researchers do not have any human interests, rather it focuses on facts (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). The positivism approach often uses theory to develop hypotheses and researchers used tight methodological approaches in order for replication to be repeated in the future (Wilson 2010).

There are also positives and negatives to positivism. The disadvantage to positivism is that it relies on experience and does not take into consideration other factors that can affect the research, and the findings are descriptive and can lack insight into important issues (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). The positives, however, is that there are no research bias as it relies on figures and large data sets which can be generalised (Ababneh, 2020).

3.3.2 Realism

Realism argues that research is independent from reality. Realism can be put into two groups critical (i.e., individuals experience sensations that do not portray the real world) and direct (i.e., views the world through how individuals sense it; Sanders et al., 2012). Critical realists argue that individuals senses get in the way of research, while direct realists accept

that the world does not change, therefore, focuses on one group or organisations to investigate. (Novikov et al., 2013). Critical Realism also argues that reality is limited, and approaches to facts and regularities are critical. Therefore, reality is not constructed through knowledge, rather interpretations and frameworks that operate the world (Paal 2021). Critical realist's would seek to understand the underlying relationships between leadership and employee motivations, using data to understand social issues (Paal 2021).

Naïve Realism argues that there is only one reality, and it does not change or is affected by the situation where it exists. Researchers perceive that reality reproduces and reflects exactly what it is, therefore, experiences, identities and emotions are insignificant (Saadi 2014). Naïve Realism means the research can understand the world objectively, and rejects the idea that individuals focus on attitudes, because these can be distorted, which can lead to separation from the real world (Bryman 2008) A researcher that uses Naïve Realism acknowledges that objects exist independently and overlooks perceptions, this can mean that gathering a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon could be missed (Hennink et al, 2011).

Structural Realism argues that they are scientific theories and structures that helped shape reality, for example a structural realist who is investigating employee motivation would argue that leaders and their followers are actors, and their actions can be explained and predicted by motivation theories (Ormston et al., 2014). For structural realists motives, value, and perceptions of individuals are taken as given and are not part of the research (Paal 2021). Realism argues that there is an objective reality, while esports is based on multiple constructed realities, for example stakeholders thoughts, and players opinions. Due to this realism was not adopted for this study.

3.3.4 Interpretivism

Interpretivism involves the research interpreting elements of their study, on the assumption that reality is socially constructed. Lewis and Thornhill (2012) argued that these social constructions (language and shared meanings) create reality.

Interpretivism related to the philosophical position of idealism, and is used to group approaches such as constructivism, and phenomenology together and rejects the idea that the world is independent of awareness (Wilson, 2010). When researchers use the interpretivism approach then the researchers are social actors and to understand the difference between people and focus on meaning (Wilson 2010). Interpretivism researchers will use data collections such as interviews, and the meaning of their research is shown towards the end of the research process. For example, interpretivists will find meaning in their interviews and show how these results are important to their research (Collis et al., 2014). There are positive and negatives to interpretivism. The disadvantages are that data gathered can be impacted by the researchers personal views and therefore, the reliability of data can be challenged (Brown, 2006). The advantages of interpretivism are that data gathered have a level of validity and the study aims for trustworthiness and honesty (Allan & Randy, 2005). Since the present study is to explore the experiences and perspectives of both parents and children surrounding esports, the research adopted interpretivism as they intended to identify and understand the meanings of participants' lived experiences.

3.3.5 Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory; it is the explanation of the nature of knowledge and how individuals learn. Understanding is created by individuals experiences and knowledge, and it is argued that individuals construct their own knowledge through

interaction of what they believe and activities that they come into contact with (Ültanır, 2012). An example is a teacher guides learners to question and challenge their own ideas and form opinions and conclusions on those ideas (Cannelle & Reif, 1994). Constructivism is where individuals explain an object differently, and constructivism observes that reality being formed (Jones et al., 2002). Therefore, the constructivist theory is that individuals do not find knowledge rather they construct it, it is a theory of knowledge and learning in which individuals generate their own knowledge to tackle problems (Glassersfeld 2005). Constructivism argues that reality is not out there, and it cannot be accessed objectively, rather it assumes that reality needs to be understood from the individuals themselves (Saunders 2009). By doing this you ask questions that would gain greater insights into individuals and how they interpret reality.

3.3.6 Researchers Philosophical Approach

For this research, an epistemological constructivism approach was taken, with an interpretivism ontological approach. Interpretivism involves the researcher interpreting elements of their study, and that reality is socially constructed. The researcher is a social actor and investigates the difference between people and focuses on meaning. After the interviews, interpretivists researchers will find meaning within the interviews and demonstrate how these results are important to their research. Constructivism is based on the nature of how individuals learn and argues that individuals create their own knowledge through activities that they come into contact with.

Individuals involved in esports have created their knowledge through the views of esports, therefore, their reality can change of esports rather than accepting that reality does not change. An epistemological constructivism approach was also taken to investigate the child-parental relationship within the phenomenon of esports, constructivism does not assume

“reality is out there”, rather it needs to be interpreted and understood from the individuals themselves. (Kivunja et al., 2017). There are *“realities”* of esports, however, the complexity of the parental-child relationship means that individuals views need to be understood, and how both the parent and child understand the world of esports needs to be investigated. By using the epistemological approach then it will investigate what can be known.

Epistemological approach works best for this research, using qualitative research methods to gain the participants lived experiences of their parental- child relationship and the phenomenon of esports.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

The thesis uses The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991). TPB proposes that behaviours are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. TBP is traditionally used within quantitative research. In family settings decision-making is often negotiated with family members and structures, rather than through perceived control. This, therefore, limits TPB explanatory function where social identity, power and emotional interdependence significantly influence behavioural outcomes. Despite TPB limitations it is valuable for this thesis as it offers constructs that align with the research questions, investigating attitudes and perceptions of esports. TPB is used to offer a foundational framework for analytical clarity and examining intention-based behaviours, how these are produced and negotiated denotes that it is well suited for qualitative research.

Youth esports participation is not formed in isolation, parents play a significant role in shaping attitudes, establishing expectations in relation to esports and regulating opportunities. TPB was utilised to examine how attitudes related to esports are constructed, interpreted and challenged within the parental-child relationship. TPB is used as an informative lens, rather than interpretive, therefore was employed as a structuring framework for this thesis.

Interview questions are organised through TPB, and provide analytic categories as participants thoughts are examined, which makes this thesis unique. The interview questions employed align with TPB constructs, for example Attitudinal beliefs – what are your thoughts on esports?. Normative beliefs – what do your parents think? and finally Control beliefs – what helps or prevents your participation in esports?

3.5 Research Design

Qualitative research design was adopted to encapsulate the parent-child relationship and the dynamics surrounding esports participation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore lived experiences, beliefs and meanings associated to esports by the parents and their children. By conducting qualitative research, it creates an in-depth exploration of TPB and identifies emotions, and narratives from participants.

3.6 Participants

Participants were selected using snowball sampling. The researcher used snowball sampling as it is a technique that is used when the population (participants) are hard to identify. Snowball sampling was effective in this research as children were interviewed who pursue esports, therefore, it was important to use relationships with individuals who can help recruit others. The first initial recruitment involved participants being contacted through email. Work colleagues were then asked through word of mouth, where a few participants were selected. Emails were sent to various high schools to also recruit participants.

Participants were from the same family unit, however, were interviewed separately, with each interview treated as an independent account. This approach was adopted to enable sincere discussion of sensitive issues surrounding esports, including future aspirations, time

investments and legitimacy of esports. Parents and children share a common familial context, their opinions, however, were understood as different. The narratives from both parties were treated as analytically, meaningful and offering insight into esports participation.

Interviews with the parents and children were conducted separately, which supports an open discussion on esports and their opinions. The participants that had autism and ADHD, interview protocols were adapted to accommodate their thoughts. Adaptations included: (a) providing interview questions in advance to allow processing time (b) shorter questions (c) turning off the camera and (d) allowing for longer pauses for response time

Parental support was permitted when the child requested it to accommodate communication. While parents occasionally provided contextual information, the children's responses were prioritised analytically and any parental contribution during the children's interviews were treated as perspectives rather than children's subjective experiences. During the data analysis stage, the children's and parents data were coded separately this allowed differences to be preserved. While an unaccepted challenge these methodological decisions reflect an ethically grounded and reflexive approach to researching esports participation within neurodivergent family contexts.

There was an inclusion criterion, participants required had to be between the age of 10-18 (children) and 30 and above (parents): aware or play esports. Younger children are those within the age bracket of 10 to 14, and the older children are those 14 and above. Exclusion criteria if the children did not want to take part, then interviews did not go ahead and also if they were not aware of esports. For ethical consideration parents were defined as any family member that is actively aware of esports and their children's gaming hobbies, this was a criterion for this study. There was a total of 18 participants, that contributed to the study (parents 8 and children 10). The participants were given a code to remain anonymous,

therefore, participant 1 and 8, had two children that wished to take part in the study. Both genders were included within the study, both children and parents (10 males and 8 females). The sample included both male and female participants (10 males, 8 females), though gender balance was not a primary sampling criterion. The study prioritised family units where children actively participated in esports, and gender diversity emerged naturally through snowball sampling. While gender was not a central analytical category in this study, future research might explicitly examine how mothers view esports compared to fathers and if there is any gender differences within their opinions. All participants were based in the UK at the time of data collection. All participants were recruited from the UK, reflecting both practical constraints (e.g., researcher location) and contextual consideration. To strengthen the methodological transparency of this study, clarification regarding sampling is provided. The focus on UK participants was both practical and contextual. The researcher was based in the UK; this enables manageable access to participants and ensures ethical procedures aligned with UK safeguarding and research governance. Esports participation is shaped by national structures, and digital infrastructures (Jenny et al., 2017), therefore focusing on UK-based families allowed for coherence in analysing esports within a specific sociocultural setting. Gender balance was not a predetermined sampling quota, snowball sampling prioritised family units within active esports engagement. This resulted in the composition (10 males, 8 females) which reflects the natural recruitment patterns within network-based approach rather than exclusion.

Participant information is in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Participant Information – Interviews Conducted Separately

Interviews	Participant Codes	Sex	How They Were Interviewed	Duration	Additional Information
Interview 1	Parent 1	F/F/F	Teams	42 minutes	Child (1-1)
	Child 1-1			(Parent)	had a cold and
	Child 1-2			35 minutes	was losing her
				(Child 1-1)	voice
				30 minutes	Child (1-2) did
				(Child 1-2)	not speak
					much as she
					plays sole
					games (puzzle
					games)
Interview 2	Parent 2	F/M	Face-to-face	42 minutes	Child (2)
	Child 2			(Parent)	Did not speak
				30 minutes	much, despite
				(Child 2)	probing etc
Interview 3	Parent 3	M/M	Face-to-face	40 minutes	Child (3)
	Child 3			(Parent)	wanted to be a
				40 minutes	pro gamer, so
				(Child)	had a lot of
					information to
					share
Interview 4	Parent 4	M/M	Face-to-face	30 minutes	Both
	Child 4			(Parent)	participants

				15 minutes (Child)	were Korean and there was a language barrier (but both give good information)
Interview 5	Parent 5 Child 5	M/M	Face-to-face	48 minutes (Parent) 30 minutes (Child)	Parent (5) had worked in the esports industry
Interview 6	Parent 6 Child 6	F/F	Teams	20 minutes together	Child (6) did not speak (autistic); therefore, parent answered for them and herself
Interview 7	Parent 7 Child 7	M/F	Teams	30 minutes together	Parent (7) and Child (7) interviewed together – child (ADHD), therefore

					parent spoke
					for them and
					herself
Interview 8	Parent 8	F/M/M	Teams	40 minutes	Both children
	Child 8-1			(Parent)	played esports
	Child 8-2			30 minutes	– parent was
				(8-1Child)	knowledgeable
				30 minutes	
				(8-2 Child)	

3.7 Data collection

Date was gathered through semi-structured interviews, guided by relevant literature and TPB constructs which allowed flexibility for participants to raise issues of personal significance. Interview questions followed esports participation (attitudinal beliefs): parental, expectations (normative beliefs): perceived facilitators and barriers to esports participation (control beliefs): and involvement in esports (intentions). By using TPB framework this create a guide for the interview questions. The interview questions and TPB constructs were used as theoretical prompts, rather than predefined categories, this allowed participants thoughts and feelings not to be constrained by the theory. Interview guides were developed separately for parents and children to allow comparison and interpersonal analysis.

After ethical approval, the participant recruitment process began. This recruitment started with the researcher approaching the sports department within Stirling University and sending out an email, asking if any individual wished to take part. From this email there were two responses, these participants were sent an information sheet which detailed the purpose

of the study, their participants rights, confidentiality protocols and anonymity. It was also important to give an information sheet and consent form to their children as well. Both of the participants were given two weeks to state if they want to take part.

Once the participant expressed an interest then a time, date and location was set up. Before the start of each interview, it was explained to both participants what the purpose of the study was, children were also given the opportunity to express if they wished their parents to be present during their interview. Both participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions if needed. After these first initial interviews, several emails were sent to local schools and colleges, and work colleagues were also asked to take part or suggest other participants. From these requests participants were selected, four interviews were conducted via Teams. These interviews were conducted this way due to location differences and traveling distances for the both the interviewer and interviewee. The rest of the interviews were conducted face-to-face; this was because these participants were geographically closer. The rest of the participants were interviewed in a private room within Universities across the UK, for example, the University of Glasgow private study rooms within the library. All participants signed a consent form, both parent and child (Appendix 1). The parents also signed an additional consent form for their child (Appendix 2), after reading the information sheet (Appendix 3). The interviews conducted via Teams are stored on a password protected OneDrive in line with the ethical procedure, and the face-to-face interviews are stored on a password protected laptop and phone, that only the researcher has access to.

Institutional ethical approval was obtained prior to conducting semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was developed based on insights from the relevant literature (e.g., Banyai et al., 2019; Yuchun et al., 2022; Hamari & Sjoblom, 2017; Frosch et al, 2019; Svensson et al, 2024; Aarsand 2007; Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Wong et al., 2021; Holt et al., 2014; Gortari 2019; Svensson et al., 2024; Hong, 2025; Scholz, 2020; Hong 2023; Lee &

Steinkuehler, 2019; Hamari & Sjoblom, 2017; Leis & Birch, 2021) with the research questions and framework, this create a guide for the interview questions. There were two different sets of interview guides, one for parents and the other for children. The interview guide for parents centred around: (a) Background information about the parent-child relationship (e.g., as a parent, when did you first become aware of esports, and are you concerned at all about your child playing esports too much or even pursuing an esports career?) (b) perceptions of esports (e.g., what were your thoughts when your child started gaming in general; probing – was this negative/positive, did their views change when they decided to do esports?, etc.) (c) key support that parents provided to their children (e.g., what support have you provided or not provided to your children? And why, why not?), and (d) need for support (e.g., what support do you think you need to properly support or manage your child's behaviour in the esports context?) For the children the interview questions followed a similar pattern, the key questions for the children focused on (a) start of gaming (e.g., when did you first hear about gaming? What games/esports have you played? Which one is your favourite), (b) family relationships (e.g., what were your family/parents/sibling thoughts when you started gaming in general?; probe – was this negative/positive, did their views change when you decided to do esports? Etc.) (c) roles parents play (e.g., what role do your parents play in encouraging/discouraging your participation in esports?;probe – do they show interested/no interested, why do you think this is, do you feel pressure from your parents etc.), and (d) support needed (e.g., how would like to improve the situation/perceptions in this regard? Any support do you need to play esports while being in a good relationship with your parents, schoolteachers, peers, or siblings?). Interview questions can be found in (Appendix 4). Interviews were held either face-to-face or via Teams, and all interviews were audio-recorded following participants permission.

3.8 Data saturation

Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved. Saturation was assessed through ongoing analysis during data collection, following recommendations by Braun and Clarke (2006), whereby data collection stopped when no new themes emerged. The decision to conclude recruitment at 18 participants (8 parents, 10 children from 8 family units) was made collaboratively with the supervisory team after reviewing coded transcripts. Data saturation was assessed iteratively throughout data collection and analysis. After the interviews no new codes were emerging, and the interviews were reinforcing existing themes. Recruitment continued for several additional interviews to confirm thematic stability across both parent and child datasets. Saturation was therefore, determined not by numerical threshold alone, but by the repetition of patterned responses and the absence of novel conceptual categories during coding. This process strengthens the credibility of the claim that the sample size was sufficient to address the research aims.

3.9 Data analysis

TPB constructs (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and intentions) were used as an analytic lens during the later stages of data analysis, rather than at the priori coding stages. This enabled identification of themes that aligned and extended TPB, particularly in relation to parental gatekeeping and power dynamics.

The results sections will illustrate themes that are organised in relation to the constructs of Theory of Planned Behaviour, examining how young esports participants and their parents conceptualise commitment to esports. Attitudes, perceived norms and behavioural controls are explored across the children and parents. Themes are presented to

highlight the constructs of TPB, however, also reflect complexity and intergenerational relationship within esports.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve participants insights. Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the qualitative data. Reflexive thematic analysis is a flexible interpretative approach that identifies and analyse patterns of themes in a data set (Braun & Clarke 2019). Reflexive approach emphasises the researchers role in knowledge, and codes presented signify the researchers interpretations of patterns across the interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis reflects the researchers analysis at the three main points within their research, the dataset, theoretical assumptions, and analytical skills of the researcher (Braun & Clarke 2019).

Braun and Clarke (2020) argue that methodological theoretical assumptions should be addressed when conducting reflexive thematic analysis. These are either essentialist versus constructionist epistemology, experiential versus critical, and inductive versus deductive analysis. A theoretical stance that the researchers take is normally determined when the study is first conceptualised, however, the theoretical stance may become striking during the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Essentialist researchers focus on the understanding of the relationship between language and communication, for example language reflects meanings and systems (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). Constructionist researchers view language as a social production of both meanings and experiences (Burr, 1995).

A constructionist epistemology, which is the theoretical framework of this thesis, has implications regarding reflexive thematic analysis and the distinctive information within the analysis. The criteria of a theme is noteworthy and is present repeatedly within the data. Experiential is understanding data with the examination of a given phenomenon by a participant, investigating meanings and experience ascribed to the phenomenon from the

participants. Critical frameworks are reflective analysis of participants opinions; therefore, they analyse patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2014). A researcher who adopts a deductive analysis will wish to produce codes that are pre-specific to their theoretical framework.

While keeping in mind the reflexive thematic analysis, there were steps informed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were also followed. *Step One* involves reading the interview transcripts several times; and absorbing the interviews complexity and nuances. The researcher read the interview transcripts multiple times, noting initial reactions and thoughts. The researcher paid attention to assumptions, and questions why this stands out, which can stop potential bias (Delve & Limpaecher 2024). *Step Two* involves reflexive initial coding with awareness. This is where the researcher begins the initial coding process, however, always questioning why parts of the text stand out. The researcher documented the codes and stated their reasoning within a word document. *Step Three* involved developing initial themes; this is where the researcher used their analytical insights. Identifying patterns that help answer the research questions, by looking for connections and narratives (Delve & Limpaecher 2024). *Step Four* involved reviewing the themes found. This required the researcher taking their dataset and examining their perspectives and how these perspectives shape the researcher interpretations, this has be done several times to allow reflexive thematic analysis. *Step Five* involved defining themes, each one was made clear, well-defined, and made connections to the research questions. *Step Six* is reporting the findings, it involved clear theme descriptions, and reflexive insights. Finally, to maintain reflexive analysis it is important to link back to your research questions, and to use work colleagues to view the reflexive thematic analysis, to maintain trustworthiness within the data as well (Delve & Limpaecher 2024).

3.10 Trustworthiness

In order to make the sense of the reality that the participants experienced and discussed, researchers develop credibility through engaging, observing and triangulation (Bedos, 2009). Engaging with participants and asking about their experiences. Observing for the researcher is to keep an open mind and recognise personal biases. Triangulation involves the approaches which can help validate the research findings and enhance credibility of the research (Gunawan, 2015). Researchers also follow transferability, dependability and confirmability. Transferability research findings can be generalised, this means that researchers will detail participants, procedures and the study's environment to enhance potential for transferability (Haq et al., 2023). Dependability involves the researchers documenting approaches, techniques and procedures for the data analysis. This dependability allows other researchers to reproduce the study (Eryilmaz, 2022). Confirmability is where the research findings are objective and remain unaffected by the bias of the researchers. In order for this to happen researchers use peer debriefing and peer checking, by using this peer checking it means that colleagues and experts validate the researchers interpretations and ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln et al., 1985). To ensure the credibility and integrity of the findings, this thesis adheres to the principles of trustworthiness, incorporating a reflexive approach throughout the research process. This involved ongoing critical self-reflection, transparency in methodological decisions, and careful consideration of the researchers positionality in the interpretation of data, and therefore, the research adopted two critical friends to look at the themes and provide their reflexive approach.

To ensure trustworthiness and rigor, the researcher conducted initial coding in a reflexive and iterative manner. Based on the initial codes identified during this process, the researcher also identifies the initial themes. From this stage, one peer PhD student and the

lead supervisor as critical friends (Lincoln et al., 1985) reviewed the initial themes in the first round of the discussion. Based on the discussion, the researcher revisited initial themes, reflected, and updated the themes. Following that the researcher had another discussion session with the lead supervisor to consider the updated themes and share insights from each other. As a results, the themes were finalised after the second session of the discussion. This analytical process demonstrated reflective engagement with the data and engagement with the analytic process itself (Braun & Clarke 2019).

Qualitative research needs to included credibility and trustworthiness. To ensure the credibility of qualitative research then there requires to be involvement, observation and triangulation through documentation and peer debriefing (Ahmed, 2024). Establishing trustworthiness within qualitative research is important as it is critical for future research and advancing knowledge in research. The measurement of trustworthiness enhances the reliability of qualitative research; therefore, these measures of trustworthiness are encouraged and critical evaluation by peer briefing is important (Ahmed, 2024).

Another important aspect of research is reflexivity. This reflexivity is the analysis of the research judgment and practices towards the research and how these practices may have influenced the research (Finaly 1998). For the research all judgements taken were peer-reviewed, therefore the research has been examined to make sure that judgements and data are correct. For this thesis the themes found within the transcription of the interviews were reviewed by two critical friends to establish trustworthiness and reflexivity.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Results

Chapter 4 will explain the results, identifying the themes and sub themes found. Using identifiable quotes from the participants, to support themes and the sub themes shown.

Children's themes and sub themes are presented first and then the parents. Younger children are those within the age bracket of 10 to 14, and the older children are those 14 and above.

Two main themes, each with three sub-themes, were identified because of the data analysis process. The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 4. The children's themes will be presented first. Throughout the analysis children and parents were analysed separately to gain the differences of esports between what a parent may think, and what their child may think. By doing the analysis separately it will show the important significance of the parental child relationship within esports.

Table 2

Children Theme: A thematic map

Themes	Sub-Themes
Social Interaction	▪ Peer Pressure ▪ Different Approaches to Gameplay
Parental Control	▪ Balance and Reward - Health and Well-Being to Stay away from Esports.
Awareness of Negatives of esports	

4.2 Children's point of view

4.2.1 Social Interaction

The theme of social interaction was apparent within the analysis of the data from the children, with socialisation and peer pressure being highlighted. Participants emphasised a significant role of playing esports as a critical form of social interaction among peers, in particular during the global pandemic. It was observed that playing esports is a crucial way of interacting with their friends, which allowed them to effectively socialise. Playing esports serves as a great way of socialising and spending leisure time, in the meantime, the participants also experience peer pressure.

The children perceived that playing games is a natural and easy way to connect with their friends when they are not available to hang out with their friends in person. Thus, they continue their interaction and socialisation after school or evening time by playing esports with their friends. With regard to this, C2 noted, "When I couldn't see my friends, but I still like got to speak to them and so gaming was good from that point of view". C8-1 also shared the similar view, "Me and my friends had time, and when we weren't going out we enjoyed games together". As previously mentioned, while the data was collected in 2023, interestingly they highlighted their experience of gaming during the COVID-19. C1-1 highlighted, "Definitely when we're all just stuck in the house, it was like constant, like pretty much all day. Just being on a call and like having 6 people in the same thing and all playing together". In this way, they could overcome boredom and frustration caused by the global pandemic, which was proven positive. This indicates playing esports in a way to be their coping strategies, beyond the initial function of social interaction and socialisation.

In terms of time spent on gaming during the global pandemic, parents also shared their experiences and views on this particular period: "Well, I think through COVID and that,

it was the only they are communicating with friends” (C2). During this unexpected circumstance, it appears that parents also accepted the way of children interacting with their friends via gaming. Likewise, other parents, such as P6, also shared the similar perspectives: “In a way Covid was a positive thing as he was in primary 7 at the time and he didn't have a mobile phone, so it was a way of him connecting at the time with his peers.” Beyond the role of playing games in social interaction and socialisation, it is evident that the overall experience of playing esports during the pandemic was perceived as positive by both children and parents. COVID-19 was helpful for the children in maintaining friendships through esports and gaming. Apart from the specific circumstance like COVID-19, many of the children still used video games to speak online, particularly when the weather is bad, or peers live far away from home.

4.2.1.1 Peer Pressure

From the analysis, peer pressure was more apparent in male participant's, with children stating that they started playing esports because their friends were playing. This was demonstrated within “My friend made me participate in the esports game. He was so happy like play games together. He was like finally you and I play game together” (C8-1). An interesting finding within the analysis is that the young male participants usually started watching games on YouTube and Twitch, because their friends had before, moving on to playing the game, this is supported more by “Like my friends would be watching it. So, it would influence me to start watching it, then playing the games” (C2). The different type of games also changed depending on friends “I went on to play Fortnite cause my friends were playing it” (C7). While it is clear, as previously shown that socialising is an important aspect to the children, male participants have stated that they use bad language and can make fun of each other, and sometimes these arguments can become a bit personal “We sometime get a bit too personal” (C7).

A female participant was also aware of this fact and has stated that she has seen male friends within school fallout and be more aggressive towards each other “Negative things especially for the boys and like big groups where it’s like the pressure where you’ve got to be really good” (C1-1). Participant C1-1 response was interesting, as she was playing with her boyfriend who lived far away, however, she would play sometimes by herself to improve game skills so he would not make fun of her and therefore, experienced some peer pressure herself “I practice sometimes on my own so I can be better. So, he doesn’t make fun of me when we play together. So, like I try to improve” (C1-1). The male participants expressed peer pressure either to start gaming or play a new game, it is clear, that female participants in some way also feel peer pressure. From the data analysis females are very aware of the stereotype of male gamers, as highlighted in C1-1 quote, however, females can also be competitive in gaming for example as C1-1 stated she plays alone so that way she can improve her skills to impress her boyfriend. Peer pressure is not just connected to male participants; females also can feel the peer pressure of improving gaming skills.

4.2.1.2 Different Approaches to Gameplay. Throughout the analysis there were clear differences between male and female participants in their approaches to and experience of game play, with females stating that gaming is a more enjoyable experience, as shown “But for us it is more a social aspect, we just laugh and giggle about games” (C1-1). While speaking with C1-1 she also mentions that she has seen boys having fallouts in games, however, for the girls it is more social “.... Do you wanna come play this game? And then you just got like an excuse to like sort of chat to each other” (C1-1). C1-1 also mentioned that playing games with her boyfriend was more of a social aspect, for example discussing games, and exam preparation. For male participants they did admit that they do chat to each other, but they are more competitive and discuss the game more as shown in “So, we discuss gameplay with each other and like the competitive elements” (C5). Participant C7 also stated

that they explain game strategies and when these strategies were not working then personal fights occurred within the game group and they spent longer trying to win the game “I mean we might spend like a bit too much time on it” (C7). An interesting aspect of this analysis was that both the females and males were aware of their behaviours when gaming, as shown in the above quotes. While esports games have socialisation aspects for the children, there is clear side effects to these socialising approaches for example, the peer pressure to start esports and the pressure for the male participants to take the gameplay seriously.

4.2.1.3 Parental Control and Support

It is evident that parents play a crucial role in their children’s life’s. Throughout the analysis parents were mentioned, the children spoke how parents control their gaming in some form, some participants mentioned that when they were younger their parents had a control device. While at the time, when they were younger this was frustrating, now that they are older they admit that without this device they would have had no control, as emphasised in “Before my parents did that control thing, I couldn’t control myself” (C4). While these control devices were mentioned, the children also stated that their parents would control their gaming in some form, such as doing homework or other chores. The children believed that parents do this because their parents do not understand esports and are being dismissive of esports, as demonstrated by “I do my schoolwork before going online – I think it helps when my parents are a bit dismissive of esports” (C7).

While parents are mentioned in some form of control, either through control devices or chores, the children also discussed how they believed parents do not fully understand or support esports “I don’t think like they encourage it, but they don’t like discourage it, they are like down the middle” (C2). The viewpoint from the children is there is a lack of understanding of their gaming habits and esports, and from this lack of understanding parents must control their gaming. An interesting observation from the children was that while these

control devices were frustrating, if these devices were not implemented at a young age, then they would have had no control over their gaming, which could have become worse as they got older. Two sub-themes emerged from the parental control and support.

4.2.1.4 Balance and Reward. The children all mentioned that parents would prefer that they completed their homework and other chores before they started gaming, as emphasised by C4 “They still let me play, after I do my homework and other stuff. I need to do homework” (C4). Children also commented that if they do these chores then gaming, therefore, their esports hobbies were treated as a reward “So, it’s like a reward, so you actually do the work, and you have something to look forward to” (C1-1). However, this viewpoint of balance and reward changes depending on the age of the participant, for example C3, being just the on the age range of 12 stated “Be balanced, like balance like study.... and if I study then I can play the game, have balance kind of thing” (C3), it is also worth noting that C3 was Korean and there were noticeable cultural differences which will be discussed later.

While parents set the rules of doing homework and chores, the sub theme of reward and balance changes as the participants become older, with older participants stating that they study first and then play games. During the socialisation of gaming, they discuss what they have studied or learnt, sharing tips and advice during exam season. If this is due to the previous control device implementation when they were young, this is something that needs to be investigated “When I get home, I am doing my school stuff and then I will go to the gym and then maybe game – I have a good balance now I need to work harder to gain good grades” (C2) “I am likely to be okay let’s do revision, some homework and then we can play” (C1-1).

4.2.1.5 Health and Well-Being to Stay away from Esports. It was clear from the analysis that the children stated that their parents would prefer if they did some form of sport, as parents worry about their health and the sedentary nature of esports as shown in C5 “My mom and dad like to see me exercise more, so they prefer kind of sport more, like cause sport keeps you healthy and stuff like that” (C5), this is emphasised more in C3 “My dad worries about my health problems, so he worries about that” (C3). The stereotype of gamers and esports is still part of society and can be seen within the data analysis with parents supporting sport activities more as shown in “Doing a sport such as rugby or football and getting paid to do that is okay but not a pro-gamer. Sport is more active and more famous and more reliable” (C3). However, cultural differences are illustrated again where the view of esports is different “In Korea my country, many like high school or teens like to become pro-gamers because it’s like honour and like money and I don’t need to study” (C3).

From this sub-theme, from the children’s point of view, there is an emphasis on education being important and sport that is not sedentary being important also. Parents observed the sedentary nature of esports and how they would prefer their children to focus on their academics, as emphasised in the above quotes. Exercise is also important to the parents and parents would like to see their children exercise more as it is “reliable and active”.

4.2.1.6 Awareness of Negative Aspects of Esports

While the children mentioned that the parents control their gaming habits, such as doing homework and chores, the children are aware themselves of the negatives of esports. The children mentioned how addictive esports can be and how if they started playing esports they would not be able to stop, as emphasised in C6 quote “Addicting, if I played esports game, never stop like I could play all day” (C6), with C2 strengthening the notion of esports being viewed as addictive “Like people get liked addicted and it just ruins their whole life...” (C2). The participants also mentioned that their view of esports players is that the game takes

over their life and that esports players do not have a healthy life balance “They always practice and just discuss the game, it’s too hard, like they always practice and don’t sleep well” (C2). An interesting view that came from Participant C3, this participant wanted to become a professional esports player, however, his career path changed, and he became very aware of the negatives that esports has created “Just sit at like monitor and keyboard and it likes impact on my health like physical. No, it’s not good for my health, and obviously you can see the positives, you can see the communication stuff, but even then, we can curse and lose our minds” (C3).

While being aware of the negatives of esports, the children also mentioned that parents need help and more support, to assist their children who pursue esports “Yes, parents need to have a say but also need to be aware of the problems within esports to full support their children” (C2). Many children commented that parents were dismissive about esports, with one parent commenting that it is like drama “I kind of likened it too, when I was at school and I wanted to do drama, like it's probably not like a subject. I'm not gonna become an actress” (P7). The child of Participant P7 also stated,

When I started doing the esports course, my parents mainly said that it wouldn’t be useful, and I kept explaining that I wanted to do it – it took a while which was annoying, they were dismissive. They need more help understanding it and that it is more than just gaming (C7)

There are numerous aspects of esports that children find enjoyable, particularly the social dimensions of playing together and engaging in discussions about gameplay—an experience that gained heightened significance during the COVID-19 pandemic. As children grow older, their engagement with esports evolves, often shifting towards a more complex negotiation between gaming and academic responsibilities. Many children perceive this

balance as one they have autonomously developed. In contrast, parents tend to establish strict boundaries around gaming from an early age. While it appears that many parents remain reluctant to fully accept esports, children express a belief that greater parental understanding of the esports domain is essential to more effectively support their interests and choices.

4.3 Parents's point of view

Three main themes, with four sub-themes, were identified as a result of the data analysis process. The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 5. The children's themes were presented first. Throughout the analysis, children and parents were examined separately to look at the differences of esports, between what a parent may think, and what their child may think. By doing the analysis separately it will show the important significance of the parental child relationship within esports.

Table 3

Parental Themes: A thematic map

Themes	Sub-Themes
Parental Control Over Gameplay	
Parental Concerns About Esports	▪ Violent Content as a Parental Concern ▪ Parental Concerns about Excessive Gaming ▪ Inappropriate Language Use
Need for Educational Support	

4.3.1.1 Parental Control Over Gameplay

Parental control was the first theme identified within the data analysis for parents. Parents identified and emphasised the notion of controlling their children's gameplay. This

control aspect is not dissimilar to what their children stated, where parents have control devices to monitor gaming. For the parents it is the belief that when their children are younger, they have no control over their gaming. This changes as they become older, as the children take control over gaming and focus on academics. Parents control their child esports playing as highlighted: “We worried because he didn’t have control by himself, so if we just leave him around the whole day, he will just game” (P4). Many of the parents spoke of these control devices but have struggled to use them: “There was a parental control on it, but it was so restrictive, and it did not really work” (P3). The overall opinion of parents is that they need to control their child: “I mean as parents, we try to control him” (P4). As the children become older then the parent’s attitudes to control changed: “He can do some time management, so I trust that he can control it” (P4). This is also emphasised more by P3 “He is getting older. So, he can recognise the reality of gaming” (P3).

This viewpoint was also demonstrated within the older children as well “I have study and go to the gym and stuff like that, like live my life not just play the game, it’s not for me. You need to have that balance kind of thing” (P3). While this is important aspect that the parent’s mentioned, they also showed their concerns even when their children became older: “I don’t like them staying awake with it sometimes, however they are in control with what they’re doing” (P2). Parents control their children esports gaming, this can either be through control devices on mobile and computers, or by asking their children to complete some chores before their start gaming. An interesting aspect of this response for the parents, is that it applies to their children when they are younger, there seems to be some trust developed as the children grow up. This is not dissimilar to the children’s responses as shown in P2 quote. Parents want balance between studies, activities and sports before giving gaming as a reward.

Parents use esports gaming as a form of reward, however, there is a time limit on this hobby: “My wife she gives kind of reward, if he does you know homework or getting some

books and reading done and then she gives like 30 minutes per day” (P4); “Once my children finish their homework and then everything they need to do like practising piano, home exercises, then she will grant an hour of game time” (P3). Physical activity is also important for parents as their views of esports were sedentary in nature: “I want him to make some balances. So physical activity and brain activity” (P3). Parents also put a strong emphasis on academics “Must do his homework before he goes onto games, it is really important to me that he does his homework first and his other subjects” (P7). This is also emphasised by “They still let me play after I do my homework and other stuff. I need to do homework” (C4). Parental control within the analysis was interesting, for parents this control comes from the ideas of academics and physical activity being important. This can be related to the viewpoint of esports being an isolated sport “esports are quite isolating, because you are maybe kind of sitting on your own, speaking into headset” (P3) and due to the viewpoint that esports are sedentary in nature. Therefore, parents need to control their children to make sure that they are doing what is best for their children, for parents it is more a form of discipline and doing what is best for their children and their future even when they are older. Another interesting aspect, however, came from a child who was older “With sport you have more of the physical side rather than just sitting and doing nothing really” (C2). It is clear that as the participants become older then their viewpoints of esports and gaming alter, and they agree more with their parents and will study and exercise more.

4.3.2.2 Parental Concerns about Esports

Parents have observed esports games to control their children’s gameplay. The findings demonstrate that the parents were worried about what can be related to the control that parents have over their children. Parental observation emerged as a significant theme, reflecting the considerable time and effort parents dedicated to monitoring and engaging with their children's participation in esports. This involvement was found to have both beneficial

and potentially adverse implications. Parents are very aware and observe children's gameplay, particularly the content of the gaming as observed in: "So, some content my wife she noticed, not you know, helpful for him. So, my wife she you know stop him watching it and tell him it is not appropriate for his age" (P4). Therefore, there is a clear concern about gaming and the content within gaming: "But their focus is on playing games, they forgot about their reality. There is a difference. There's the crisis" (P4). This is expanded more with "I still think I was on him a bit. I do try and keep my concerns to myself, but you do worry, and you want them to understand" (P2). It is clear that parents are concerned about esports, from how much their children focus on their gaming, to the content of games due to reasons, which will be discussed in the following sub-themes.

4.3.2.3 Violent Content as a Parental Concern. The content of video games is important to parents and the affects it can have on their children and on their mental state. The parents spoke of the violent content that can be shown in games, from blood going across the screen in a final kill, to bodies being scattered in a certain way during the gameplay and the gore that can be shown during a kill:

- "Sometimes when I look at the monitors it looks very cruel and bloody. Yeah. Bodies. It doesn't look good" (P4). This is emphasised more by

Violence game or shooting games or Japanese samurai games, something like that it is not nice. Playing game is like a very exciting, but, negatively exciting to mental health. Yeah. So, they feel when they have to face situations to express those violent ideas (P5)

When interviewed parents mentioned the violence in key games, such as Call of Duty: "Call of Duty, the more violent one" (P1). This is emphasised more in P5 quote, who stated that he does not want his child playing violent video games, rather more of a relaxed game:

“As long as they are not very violent, and good for his friends. I don't know what examples of the games I can suggest, but some games are more like detective games, some make children think and choose the right answers, so I like that kind of game rather than just killing people” (P5).

It was clear from the interviews that violence within esports is a large concern for parents: “As long as they are not very violent” (P3). The violence in games is important, and this seems to be when parents want to put filters on games and limit the game time as well. It seems that parents could accept esports, as long as the games were not violent and more puzzled based as emphasised in the previous quote by P5:

I just some of the games were a little bit violent or use bad language, so there were like filters you could put on like which would limit that. So as long as you had the filters on and as long as he didn't spend too long on it, I didn't mind. (P8)

For the children, the violent graphic nature of games was not a concern for them, rather it was those individuals, that overreact to the games they were playing. The children believed that those players that are addicted to video games will become more violent towards their computer or physical objects, as they believe that obtaining the high score in the game is all they have, and when they become frustrated, that is when the person acts out:

Maybe some people like just to like to overreact to playing games, someone might feel like the game is my life. Like it's my everything, so if I like to lose it tears them down and they feel like bad, and might become violent so breaking their computer or hit something (P3)

The children are very aware of the violent nature of gaming and esports; it seems that the children are not concerned or worried about the excessive violence, and rather just finishing the mission or gaming level.

4.3.2.4 Parental Concerns about Excessive Gaming. As well as the violence of violent games, many parents mentioned the long hours that esports players and their children spend on gaming. This was also mentioned if the children had talent or not, within gaming. One parent stated that if their child has the talent to be a pro-esports player then even he is not sure if he could support it, as he has previous knowledge of esports players and their gaming hours:

If he has got the talent, then I'm not quite sure whether I can support it, because I know how tough it is just becoming a professional esports player, I know Korean players they practise more than 20 hours a day (P5).

An interesting aspect of the long hours, came from the children of P5, who wished to be a pro-gamer, this child was concerned about the number of hours he put into gaming and the risk to his academia:

I wanted to be a pro-gamer, but I want to live a life, you know, I want to live my life. I want to like see and feel the world; you know, feel the art, and learn. I think when becoming a pro gamer, you're constantly gaming, and it's not good (C3).

An interesting observation from the above participants is that they were both very aware of the time esports gaming can take, for C3 this realisation came as he was older, and he learnt that he needed to make a choice. Parents are aware of the anti-social parts of gaming, but during the interview process seemed resigned and accepting that their child is going to game:

We trying to give them more time for exercise and then do some kind of instruments, you know, things like the piano or violin, but he's not interested in the, you know, exercise, you know, learning instruments, he's more interested in playing games (P4)

P4 admitted that despite trying to have their child interested in other activities, gaming is still the first thing their child wants to do. One of the children disclosed that the parents realised they enjoyed gaming and therefore, as long as they do not spend a lot of time on esports, parents allowed them to game anyway “My parents, realised we enjoyed the game, but do not spend a lot of time on it” (P8-2).

4.3.2.5 Inappropriate Language Use. As well as the long hours many parents also witness their children using bad language: “So yeah, sometimes we are a bit surprised in the language as no one in the family uses that language, but their children know about the language” (P5). This became a concern with parents, and they have used some filters to try and control bad language from the games: “Some of the games were a little bit violent or use bad language. There like filters that you could put on that. So as long as you had the filters and he didn’t spend too long on it, I don’t mind” (P7). Parents also observed that this language use was not the typical behaviour from their children and that bad language could be the start of other negative behaviours as supported by P4:

With that kind of reality and they’re speaking to each other, just kind of say impulsive thoughts, you know our son doesn’t mean that kind of thing, but that can be a bit concerning for you. They sometimes forgot their patience. Very negative (P4)

Parents also spoke about these behaviours occurring when their children play with their peers, emphasised in: “We sometimes see him using bad language that he has learn from games, when he plays with his peers” (P5). This was also apparent in the children as well with one of them stating, “I would become angry or curse and like fight with my friends, she looked at the bad things, I know” (C6). Inappropriate language use is a concern for parents, particularly when they see their children playing with their peers, which the children seemed to be aware. As the children became older it is clear that they also can see the negative

behaviours coming through from gaming. While it was previously mentioned that peer pressure within children is a concern, it is clear that inappropriate language use is another peer pressure that children face, that parents are aware of as emphasised in the above quotes.

4.3.2.6 Need for Educational Support

Parents are willing to learn more about esports, not just about the gaming dynamics, also the different careers within the esports industry. Interestingly the children's perspectives are in line with this and stated that parents need more help understanding the industry. One parent who has two sons agreed that parents should be involved and believed that sons should be watched, particularly when it comes to gaming: "Parents, knowing what they're doing, and listening to what their boys are doing is important" (P4). There was an agreement from all parents that they should be involved in esports in some way: "Yeah, I think parents should be involved, I mean I don't know how to get the message across for the parents or the children.... Commonly enjoy it and have that kind of connection" (P4).

When speaking about the esports ecosystem most parents were aware of the system and believed strongly that parents should be involved within this system: "I would feel as a parent more support is needed, and I would want to understand fully why and what my kids can do. Parents should be part of the ecosystem" (P2). Participants also believed that general education for parents is needed, this was due to technology becoming advanced and more help is needed for parents: "I don't think there is enough education on it. I think like some people never played games. I mean they don't know the risks such as predators, hackers and all the rest of it..." (P3). When C7 was probed about the education for parents it was stated, "I think that support would help us" (C7).

While all the parents mentioned that they need more help understanding the phenomenon of esports, they also believed that children need to be educated as well. Parents

agreed that they need education on esports they also believed that their children need it as well. When the parents were probed about this, it did not seem to be about the education of esports, rather educating their children: “Maybe, parents need to be more engaged and take some corrective actions, if necessary, I am not an expert but family time, play board games together or sports, do brain exercises but mainly make sure children can control” (P3). This is supported more by P7: “I think that’s a good idea, break away from gaming and having a good and clear balance and I also think that would help with the esports industry, as well to make parents understand and show it can be more than gaming”. Interestingly, one parent mentioned that both themselves and their child received the necessary education should their child wish to pursue esports as a career: “Being a gamer is not guaranteed and mean you can’t just become a gamer, but with more education and supportive systems, then I think I could see the careers and become more supportive of it” (P7).

Although parents framed this as their children receiving greater educational opportunities, it is evident that they continue to seek control over their children's engagement with esports activities, and parents wished to understand more effectively their children and esports through education.

4.3.2.7 Cultural Differences

During the initial scope of the study, cultural differences were not part of the literature review, as the scope of the study was to focus on parental relationships within esports. During the interview process nine Korean individuals were interviewed due to data collection. During data analysis it was clear that there were significant cultural differences, which needed to be presented. The cultural differences started with the children stating how esports became very popular, with internet cafes therefore, it is common for children to game at these esports cafes, as demonstrated by P3: “When my son meets his friends he usually goes to their PC room in Korea”. This is supported additional by “We were doing the same thing in

Korea, which was typical situation to play online games together, visit the computer café for games” (C8-2). C4 also shared this view:

My friends when in Korea, we have like gaming rooms, so like PC, games, food, drink and so on. If we go there is six hours of playing, so, like, just like, sit and, like, play game, play games (C4)

For the United Kingdom (UK) participants, it is common for computers and gaming consoles to be in households: “With my son he has a computer in his room, it was down here but, it is now in his room as he became older” (P7). While gaming rooms are common in Korea, and their children game in these rooms, parents are aware of the positives of esports. Nevertheless, these parents have stated that they cannot support esports as a career. Esports is popular within Korea and parents are aware of the long hours, and unhealthy lifestyle that esports players face. As emphasised by P3:

I am not quite sure whether I can support because it can be tough becoming a professional esports player, I know Korean players that practice more than 20 hours a day. They you know play game and just eat at the computer desk and sleep on it (P3)

For the Korean parents they see more of the positive aspects, such as socialisation: “It bring him to enjoy new experiences, compared to Korea. So, he misses Korean friends. Playing esports, he can meet Korean friends that are so far away” (P4). The parents, however, still worry about certain aspects of esports such as violence, and the sedentary view of esports “Exercise more, he is doing Taekwondo and playing football, and tennis during the week, so we are keeping up the exercise. He's more interested in playing games” (P4).

For the children esports was positive and traditional in Korean culture “In Korea my country many like high school or teens like to become pro-gamers because it's like honour and like money and I don't need to study” (C3). While sports are still more favoured, most

families owned a computer, and when gaming became popular, they generally accepted it: “It was really boom to play online games in Korea like here a lot of people play traditional sports, but in Korea most families had a desktop, and the internet started to spread out” (P8).

Throughout the data analysis process, clear cultural differences were identified. Korean parents generally showed greater support for esports; however, despite this supportive attitude, parents still expressed concerns about the sedentary nature and long hours associated with esports gameplay. The Korean culture was also aware of the esports ecosystem, compared to the UK parents who were not.

The Korean parents still agreed that parents need to be involved within this system, in the similar manner of the UK parents.

Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think in the parents should be involved, when we play games together, he also enjoyed himself and we have kind of connection when we're playing the game together. So yeah, that's what I noticed there, so yeah parents should be part of it (P4).

This view did not change for the children as well, with both the UK children and Korean children agreeing that parents need to more involved “Yes, actually the do need to be involved and parents need to trust and believe in their children” (C3).

Chapter 5

Discussion

5. Discussion

Chapter 5 will explain in detail the importance of the results shown. Linking back to the previous research mentioned. Firstly, the aim will be presented again, before five key findings are presented.

The aim of the thesis was to provide an understanding of the impact of parental relationships, with their children who pursue esports, gaining both the perspectives of parents and children. Through semi-structured interviews with both parents and their children, the results have shown both children and parents have different views on esports. Both parents and children can agree on some aspects, for example the need for educational support. By collecting both opinions together, it shows the clear differences and similarities that both children and parents think of with regards to esports. By gaining these perspectives it shows a clear argument of why parents should be part of the esports ecosystem and strengthens the need for an educational intervention for both the parents and children. These unique findings will be discussed in more detail.

Previous studies within esports have either investigated the parents negative viewpoints on esports, and how educating parents on limiting screen time will help them understand the world of esports (Meissner, 2025). This thesis is novel in its dual focus on children who actively pursue esports and their parents. It gathers the children's perspectives on their enjoyment of esports and their relationships with their parents, while also capturing parents' views on esports and their experiences of raising children who pursue it. By incorporating both perspectives, this study provides a more comprehensive account of the parent-child relationships in the esports context, moving beyond prior work that has focused solely on adolescents (Wong et al., 2021; Hong, 2022; Holt & Knight, 2014).

Linking back to Scholz (2020) esports ecosystem, the key stakeholders are the children that pursue esports in this context, and therefore, the insights from these key stakeholders (children) and the key relationships they have (parents) is essential for the esports and ecosystem world. Parental engagement within the esports ecosystem plays a critical role in fostering both individual player development and broader industry legitimisation. Parents who develop an informed understanding of esports are better positioned to provide meaningful emotional support and to promote a balanced lifestyle, mitigating the potential risks associated with excessive gaming. Moreover, such engagement contributes to the ongoing destigmatisation of esports, which is frequently mischaracterised as a non-productive or frivolous activity. Recognising esports as a legitimate domain of competition and career development can facilitate improved familial relationships, grounded in mutual respect and understanding of the child's aspirations, which Svensson (2024) argued. Beyond the immediate family context, parental involvement may also contribute to the broader normalisation of esports, aligning it more closely with the social and cultural legitimacy traditionally afforded to traditional sports. As familiarity with the industry increases, parents may assume more active roles as spectators, organisers, mentors, or investors, which enhances the diversity, sustainability, and socio-cultural integration of the esports ecosystem.

From the results of the present research, they present practical and theoretical implications that need to be considered, which will be discussed later. There were five key findings presented in the results, which are central to the discussion in this chapter: (a) *socialisation*, (b) *control*, (c) *awareness of esports*, (d) *need for education support*, and (e) *cultural differences*.

Socialisation revealed a positive perception of esports for both parents and children, particularly during COVID-19. Parents were aware of the positives of esports during COVID-19, such as friendships remaining and bonding happening. *Control* was mainly viewed as negative. Parents tend to control their children's gaming from an early age and do this through a variety of ways. The children are very aware of these parental controls and express frustration at these controls. *Awareness of esports* both the children and parents mentioned the negatives of esports, for example sedentary nature. Parents tend to be more negative, focusing on violence, excessive gaming, and inappropriate language. Regarding *Need for education support*, both the children and parents argued that more education is needed to fully understand the world of esports, which presents strong implications for the esports industry, its stakeholders, and practitioners. *Culture difference* was clear throughout the analysis. Five of the participants in the study were of a Korean background, and their perspectives revealed culturally distinct attitudes toward esports.

5.1 Socialisation

Parents and children identified that playing esports was beneficial for socialising. An observation that needs to be taken into consideration is the COVID-19 pandemic, during this time social distance rules were enforced, for all individuals in society. Different forms of communication were needed, for example, Teams, Skype and headset devices. For many children at the time, this was the only way to communicate with friends outside the Teams set-up within education. COVID-19 also saw an increase in gaming devices, as the world went back to "*normal*" these devices are still being used, and therefore children are still using them to communicate out with school environments. Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is investigating children's viewpoints before COVID-19, and how they considered what their gaming practices were and how their opinions have changed on gaming after the pandemic. Is communication the same or different is Cummings et al.

(2007) research more valuable before COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic changed how society viewed gaming, original gaming was viewed as recreational activity. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that digital gaming became tools for maintaining social connections and emotional wellbeing. It is, therefore, important to investigate gaming views post COVID-19. Interestingly, the children in the present study argued that esports is a critical form of communication and even after the pandemic the socialisation of esports was still there. Parents also agreed that during and after COVID-19 esports has been beneficial for their children in forming and maintaining friendships. In addition, two participants who were involved in an esports programme within high school and have seen the benefits that communication created when playing esports games, such as communicating effectively to express team tactics. The participants also noted that clear and collaborative communication not only improved gameplay outcomes it also contributed to a sense of bonding and unity within the team. This was supported by Fletcher et al. (2020) whose study found that esports involvement positively impacted relationships and built confidence in young people. This is also supported more by a previous study that identifies the socialisation of esports with many participants also stating that esports created a sense of belonging and social networks (Wong et al., 2021). It is shown in the results that children do feel some form of peer pressure, it was clear that this did not stop them gaming. Rather it encourages socialisation, to follow through within the school environment, as it means they are part of a group activity. This is once again, supported by research in which esports can improve communication and social relationships (Steinkuehler, 2023: Fletcher et al., 2020: Wong et al., 2021). While the previous research demonstrated the benefits of esports it provided only one perspective. It remained unknown whether parents and children share the same views, hence the importance of this study.

For parents, similar experiences were reported during COVID-19. They explained that the pandemic made online communication with friends essential and in this context, they became more accepting of esports. Despite this, parents are apparently worried about poor social skills when it comes to gaming (Jiow et al., 2018). As demonstrated in the results, the children do not lack poor social skills when it comes to esports, rather esports can advance their social skills. This research reiterates that educational support is clearly needed for the parents. Hong (2021) discussed esports during the COVID-19 pandemic and presented evidence suggesting that it was beneficial for socialisation. For instance, in their study, a formal manager for a national esports association stated that he saw two major changes during the pandemic: an increase in playing time and an association with sport. He argued that social distancing and quarantine contributed to increased time, playing games and these games created social engagement for individuals to interact with each other. In addition, the pandemic disrupted traditional sport, as many individuals were unable to train or compete. By contrast, esports adapted quickly by shifting events to remote formats, which placed it in a much stronger position than traditional sport during lockdown. However, it is important to note that Hong (2021) also argued that COVID-19 might not have been beneficial for esports, particularly given society's view of esports as sedentary, which is an issue also raised by the parents in this study.

An interesting fact that needs to be taken into consideration is what happens when the children become older. The participants admit that homework and exams become more demanding, and they tend to spend less time gaming. One noteworthy finding among the older children is that during gameplay their conversation focusses on academics and studies rather than on game tactics. Cummings et al. (2007) argued that children aged 10 to 12 years (the same age range as in this study) spend more time playing games and less time on studying. The findings in this study showed that while they still enjoyed games as they

became older, their conversations were not solely about gaming. Instead, the topics extend to their studies, which is a significant finding of this research.

5.2 Control

Parents and children discussed the forms of control that are placed in order to limited esports playing. An interesting observation that came from the older children was an acknowledgement that if parents did not put into place some form of control device or doing household chores when they were younger, then the children would have no control over their gaming habits. These findings are supported by Muppalla et al. (2023) who argued that children's reliance on screen time, has raised public health issues as it might harm cognitive and social-emotional growth. Their research examines the effects of screen time, their results showed that there were beneficial and detrimental effects. Excessive screen time can affect academic performance and have detrimental effects such as the rise of sleep disorders, depression and obesity. Conversely, screens can improve education and learning. Muppalla et al. (2023) research illustrated that reducing screen time can improve interactions between children and their parents. Parental controls can reduce negative impacts on screen time and promote healthy development and well-being.

For parents, the control changes depending on the age of their children. For the younger children, parents rely on control devices, which limit game time. This often involves children having to complete household tasks before they are allowed to play games. In response to this, the younger children described feeling frustrated, as there were times when they wanted to complete certain tasks in the game, but their parents did not understand or listen to them. In this regard, the case study by Aarsand (2007) supports the frustration the younger children were feeling. The case study focused on a grandmother and her grandson, with the grandmother limiting his gaming time, which caused the grandson to experience frustration. Thus, their findings are in line with the findings from the present study that

support the younger participants experience on limited game time. From the parents' point of view, they believed that their younger children would spend too much time gaming. To prevent this and avoid gaming addiction, they required their children to do household chores and control their gaming time. Prabandari and Rahmiaji (2019) research on family communication indicates that when parents do not have control on their children's game usage then it has negative impacts on family relationships. With regard to this, a novel finding within the results in the current study came from a Korean parent, whose child wanted to become a professional esports player. The parent admitted that he was aware of the long hours of gaming, while the parent supported their child in the career process, they still sought to control their child's gameplay but at the same time engaged in open discussions about gaming. Dong (2018) research investigated Korean parents and their understating of esports and digital learning. The results illustrated that Korean parents have a complicated understating of esports, compared to that of UK parents who better understood esports. When an esports player is just starting out, gaining experience, competing, and learning to cope with both winning and losing are important parts of their development. Parental support is needed throughout the different stages of esports participation, as illustrated by the Korean parent who endorsed their child's views. Cultural differences are noticeable within the results and will be discussed later.

Interestingly, as the children became older, they experience less frustration, and parents do not control their gaming as much. This is due to the older children developing their own control over gaming. As previously mentioned, the older children use headsets and gaming to discuss exams and academic progress. This indicates the older children are managing their own gaming habits, which reduces the need for parental intervention. Gaming has become an academic tool and a platform to discuss academic work. Steinberg (1990) reported that during the time of adolescence parental-child conflict is higher as the parents

need to control their adolescents time management. The research, however, does not reflect the results shown in the present study, as many of the older children control their own time and control their gaming time as well. It could be argued that the parental control that was conducted when there were younger has had a lasting effect on them as they became older, and the older children believed that they had developed their own control.

The role of parents is particularly important in relation to this finding on control. Brody et al. (2005) argued that during the ages of five to 12 parents monitor their children, yet children gain more control of their behaviours. For this thesis parents control their children, through control devices or household chores. The children accepted this lack of control and did not take control of their behaviours; therefore, this thesis did not align with Brody et al. (2005) research. It is also important to mention Wong et al. (2021) which does not align with these results. Wong et al. (2021) research showed that parents thought gaming meant less time on their studies. It is clear to see that children regulate gaming time and focus on academic studies. Parental control during early childhood serves as a mechanism which enables adolescents to exercise responsibility. Parental control should not be solely viewed as restrictive or negative, rather it can be understood as adaptive and a regulation that supports children and adolesces within esports, that gradually fosters autonomy as the children become older.

5.3 Awareness of esports

Both the children and parents mentioned the negatives of esports, such as its sedentary nature and the risk of gaming addiction, as well as positives, including increased socialisation and problem-solving skills. It was noted that parents tended to view esports more negatively, particularly highlighting concerns about game violence, inappropriate language, excessive gaming, and its sedentary nature. Thus, the results in this study illustrated that parents are concerned with the violence and bad language that their children

can use while playing esports. In this respect, Anderson (2004) argued that research on violent video games indicates that individuals may develop violent feelings and behaviours and display increased antisocial tendencies. Kutner and Olson (2008) argued that cooperative game play with aggressive games, such as Call of Duty, decrease aggression within individuals. While the violence and bad language is a concern for parents, their children were not concerned. Rather the children spoke about how sometimes they can get personal but, remain friends and discuss game tactics. Given these conflicting perspectives, it has been argued that negative stereotypes of esports originate in the media. Before discussing the stereotypes of esports, traditional sport needs to be discussed. Sport is seen as being healthier and not sedentary compared to esports, therefore once children become interested in sport parents invest money and emotional care (Baxter-Jones & Maffulli, 2003). Parents engage in their children's sport participation, playing a vital role by developing emotional connections to the sport, management strategies, and experiences (Dorsch et al., 2009). From the results shown in this research parents would prefer that their children did some form of sport, and view that esports can be isolating, and gamers just sit and stare at a screen. Peasa et al. (2017) argued that a common stereotype of esports players is that they sit in front of a screen all day without moving. The parental perspectives in the present study reinforce this stereotype of esports. This is further supported by Jiow et al. (2018) who argued that parents are worried about their children pursuing an esports career due to job stability, profitability, sustainability and the sedentary nature of esports. It is clear that the stereotype of esports plays an important role in shaping parents' perceptions. In a similar manner, esports is viewed by society as lowering school grades, and causing sedentary behaviour (Tavinor, 2009). Conversely this does not support the results of the present study.

While the children were not asked specifically about their grades, the children mentioned that they freely study for their exams and prepare for the academic year. For the

children aged 14 and above (older children), they stated that playing esports did not affect their studies, and rather they would prefer to complete these studies and to discuss exam preparation during game time. While not being dismissive of the parents' concerns about esports, their awareness seems to be coming from the views of the media, and this is where the importance of parental education intervention needs to be developed. The children are aware of the sedentary nature of esports, and many mentioned that they would not pursue a career within esports due to that viewpoint. It was observed that the children were also aware of the negative stereotypes of esports. Discussing esports with the children, they also mentioned their parents worry about them being sedentary, for the younger children they would do some form of sports in order to make their parents happy and gain some gaming time. For the older participants age 14 and above, they exercised without being asked, as it became part of their routine. This finding is supported by Nilsson and Lee (2019) where professional players talked about the pressures that comes from the parents, the results in the present study showed that parents are negative about esports particularly with it being viewed as unhealthy. Both parents and children acknowledged the positives and negatives of esports. Children focused on the positive aspects, such as socialisation, but as they grew older, they began to recognise their parents' concerns, particularly the sedentary nature of esports. For parents, the main concerns were the use of bad language, exposure to violence, and the lack of physical activity. Parents did acknowledge the social benefits that esports can offer.

5.4 Need for Educational Support

Throughout the data analysis it was clear that parents and children have differing views on esports. Children who were part of the esports programme at school found it difficult to explain its importance to their parents. Their parents regarded the esports programme as merely a fun extracurricular activity, much like drama classes. For the other children, esports was viewed as a hobby. Parents expressed their concerns regarding esports

and all parents agreed that more education is needed to help them understand better the nature of esports. As previously mentioned, parents are not included in Scholz's (2020) esports ecosystem. Ludwig et al. (2020) argued that the esports ecosystem functions as a business in which each component has distinct features, yet all are interwoven. In Scholz's (2020) model, players are placed at the core, as shown in Figure 3. Despite the centrality of players, parents are not considered within the ecosystem. This omission is significant, as parents represent a fundamental relationship that directly affects players and, therefore, they should be recognised as an important stakeholder within the esports ecosystem. This is supported by Hong (2023) research who also suggested that parents play an important role within players lives.

Parental encouragement and informational support have a positive influence on a child's sporting experience. In contrast, excessive pressure or criticism from parents can result in the child disengaging or withdrawing from the sport, as supported by Fredrick and Eccles, 2004.

Taking the findings in traditional sport into account, Fredick and Eccles (2004) argued that parental influence on children's sport can show enhance enjoyment and successful career paths and parents are part of the sports ecosystem (Wylleman, 2019). It could be argued that parents are not considered part of the ecosystem due to the lack of research on the parent-child relationship, which highlights the significance of this study. Neely and Holt (2014) demonstrated that although not esports specific, sports parents thought their children gained personal, and social benefits, the same social benefits that the children expressed within the results.

Turman (2007) also argued that parents play an important role in their children's perceived competence and self-efficacy, and parenting styles are important when

investigating the relationships between children and parents. These tools are not educational rather they follow the rules that the parents have already made, for example limiting game time. This is clear when looking at the results in the present study, children perceive gaming as social, fun and possible career opportunities but are reluctant to express these views and rather follow the rules, as parents perceive esports a certain way.

Meissner (2025) argued that parents can be educated themselves on esports by using tools such as Pan European Gaming Information (PEGI) and The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). However, these tools are not educational rather they follow the rules that the parents have already made for example limiting game time. Meissner (2025) also argued that parents should help celebrate their children's wins and engage in esports language; as well, they should focus on exercise, schoolwork and playing outside. This creates more barriers to the children engaging in esports. According to Granic et al. (2014) and Jiow et al. (2018), parental involvement in esports is limited, as parents are primarily concerned about issues such as esports addiction, poor academic performance, and weak social skills. This supports the present study somewhat, parents are concerned about esports addiction and academics; however, they could also see there are social skills to esports. Horn et al. (2012) argued that parents play an important role in their children's activities. The parent-child relationship within esports remains relatively unexplored.

As Svensson et al. (2024) noted, esports carry negative stereotypes and concerns, leading parents to approach participation cautiously and in some cases, to actively discourage it. Throughout the data analysis, when asked if parents needed help with understanding the esports ecosystem, they agreed that they need to be more educated in understanding esports and the different roles within esports. The parents believed that this would help them better understand esports and why their children are interested in it. Parents expressed uncertainty

about how the message could be effectively conveyed. Nonetheless, all agreed that more education is needed. For the children, they all expressed that they wished parents understood esports and the careers within it and were less dismissive of esports as a career.

The children interestingly expressed that they were also educated on esports and their parents thoughts on esports to better understand the roles their parents play. It is clear that an educational intervention for both parents and children is needed. It is important to recognise that many esports players join gaming communities from a young age, and some may even leave school early to pursue a career in esports (Martin, 2019). While parents in this study did not speak in detail about the need for esports-specific education, they did express a desire for their children to better understand their concerns. Parents wanted children to be informed about the realities of esports and the reasons behind their worries.

Even though parents did not explicitly mention formal education for their children, the findings suggest that young players would benefit from being educated both on parental concerns and on the challenges, they may face within the esports environment. As esports continues to grow in popularity and more esports-related courses are introduced into the education system, there is potential for greater awareness and understanding among both parents and children.

5.5 Cultural Differences

It is particularly important to mention the cultural differences within the results. Culture differences between UK and Korean participants are important as esports is socially acceptable within Korea, parental attitudes play an important role in shaping children's experiences within esports. As previously mentioned, esports are popular in East Asian countries, and the most gaming revenue comes from South Korea (NewZoo, 2022). This is supported by the results shown, as all of the Korean participants mentioned the popularity of

esports within their country. Both the children and adults spoke about going to internet cafes with friends, this is supported by Jin and Kim (2025), who illustrated the growth of popularity for esports in South Korea, and argued that elementary school children and adults were playing games with each other, due to the popularity of internet cafes.

This demonstrates the socialisation process that the UK parents recognised as well. The Korean parents are very aware of esports, teams and the players, many have argued that they played in internet cafes when they were younger, as they wanted to play the latest esports game that their favourite players were playing. As the parents had children of their own, their perspectives changed and argued that they could not support it as a career. Parents are concerned about the short career span typical of professional esports players, as most retire early. This combined with the potential risk of esports interfering with academic performance, can make parents hesitant to fully support their child's involvement in competitive gaming. Another point to consider is that Korean parents did not acknowledge alternative careers within esports, focusing instead on the possibility of their children becoming professional players. This further illustrates why parental education interventions are important, as these views are not dissimilar to those of parents in the UK. Another interesting aspect was the experience of one parent whose son wanted to become a professional esports player. When his child was younger, the parent dismissed the idea and, similar to parents in the UK, used control devices to regulate his son's gaming. When the son became older, he mentioned the possible career opportunities, as well as what teams he could join as a pro-gamer, the father became supportive. This aligns with the research by Nilsson and Lee (2019), who showed that parents changed their mind once they were aware of the opportunities of esports. This is supported more by Hong (2023) research where players argued that parents found their esports careers difficult to understand. However, when the parents saw the potential of esports, they became more supportive. From the son's

perspective he did state that his dad was more supportive of his career choice after he presented evidence of what career he could do. The son stated that his mother was less supportive and discouraged him from pursuing a career in esports. As the son grew older, constant gaming became overwhelming, and he explained that he wanted to live his life. He never stated a desire to pursue another career in esports; his ambition was solely to become a professional gamer.

All UK participants reported that they did not believe their parents would support a career in esports, citing parental concerns over excessive gaming and its potential impact on academic performance. In contrast, the Korean father expressed support for his son's choice once he became aware of the diverse career pathways available within the esports sector. This is also important to educate the children and parents, if parents are aware of the career opportunities within esports, then they could discuss the other opportunities for their children. This would help with the formation of attachment, trust, communication and nonalienation (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The communication that parents could provide for esports could play a critical role in their children's development (Pandey, 2024).

For children, esports is regarded as an honour, and becoming a player is seen as a desirable career. It is, therefore, not surprising that many aspire to this path, given the growing popularity of esports reported by Jin and Kim (2025). The Korean children spoke about the social aspects, noting that their friends were happy when they began playing together, which is similar to the experiences of children in the UK. The younger participants also spoke about their frustrations of the gaming controls that their parents put in place. Some Korean children expressed that their parents were supportive of their esports choices as the parents were knowledgeable about esports. The UK children expressed frustration that their parents controlled their gaming and did not understand why they wanted to complete a level. The older participants expressed that their parents understood their esports hobbies, at the

same time, their parents still wanted them to engage in some form of exercise, similar to parents in the UK who were concerned about the sedentary nature of esports.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) behavioural intentions are shaped by attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls. Each theme identifies with one of these constructs. Socialisation is directly linked to attitudinal behaviour of TPB. Both the parents and children reported positive perceptions of esports, particularly during COVID-19, both mentioned maintaining friendships, and social contacts. These benefits contribute favourably towards esports and within the TPB construct this would increase the likelihood of engagement. Awareness of potential harms such as sedentary behaviour illustrates how these attitudes are formed through perceived advantages and disadvantages. This aligns with TPB assumptions that behaviours results from the evaluation of outcomes.

The theme of Control is linked to perceived behavioural control. Parents strategies particularly in early childhood shape the children's perceptions of autonomy and self-regulation. The younger participants expressed frustration which suggests lower perceived understanding over their esports behaviour. As the participants became older, they demonstrated self-regulation skills and required fewer parental oversights. These shifts support on TPB proposition that behaviour is more likely when individuals perceive greater control over their behaviours. Interestingly, parental regulation in early childhood functioned as a support, which became internalised as personal behavioural control within adolescence.

Parental concerns about Violence, Excessive Gaming and Inappropriate language reflect subjective norms within TPB. Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressures from significant individuals. Parents are primary caregivers that shape children's gaming behaviours through expectations and judgments. The perceived cultural differences

demonstrate how normative beliefs are socially and culturally embedded. Korean parents have more nuanced and aspirational view towards esports, illustrating how normative environments differ across cultural settings.

The Need for Educational Support highlights the foundation for attitudes and norms, with both the parents and children stating that greater education about esports is required. TPB behavioural beliefs underpins attitudes and normative beliefs which emphasises subjective norms, a lack of knowledge shapes and misinforms attitudes which exaggerates concerns about esports. By improving education parents and children can adapt behaviours, which would lead to a more balanced attitude and alter intentions towards esports engagement. Finally, cultural differences reinforce TPB flexibility across contexts. TPB is often criticised for individualistic orientation, the findings suggest that behavioural intentions regarding esports are embedded within cultural frameworks. Parental norms, cultural expectations and perceived careers all interact with attitudes and perceived control to shape intentions.

The findings underpin TPB by positive and negative attitudes of esports and how this influences engagements. Parental expectations and subjective norms shape esports and how it is perceived and regulated.

5.6 Research Questions Answered:

Research Question 1:

How do parents and children construct and interpret their experiences of participation in esports?

The findings demonstrate that parents and children view esports participation in distinct and overlapping ways. For children esports is a social space, during COVID-19 esports became not just a recreation activity rather an essential tool for maintain friendships and emotional wellbeing. After COVID-19 esports retained the communication function, children emphasised teamwork, communication, and belonging, this reinforces previous research that highlights esports capacity to enhance social connections (Fletcher et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2021). As the children become older there is a shift and a demonstration of a more balance view of esports. Gaming communication while remaining important shifts towards incorporating academic topics, integrating educational priorities rather than displacing academia. This challenges previous research that assumes that gaming undermines academic engagement (Cummings et al., 2007).

Parents view esports through a risk-oriented lens, parents are concerned about sedentary behaviour and exposure to violence and inappropriate language. These views reflect the societal view of esports stereotypes (Jiow et al., 2018; Peasa et al., 2017). Parents nevertheless acknowledge the social benefits particularly during Covid 19 which suggests that their views on esports is not necessarily negative however, more cautious. Children emphasise connection and opportunities, while parents highlight protection and regulation.

In relation to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) the findings answering the first research question illustrate clear differences in attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural controls between parents and children. As mentioned children's attitudes towards esports are predominantly positive with social meaningful experiences. These strong positive

attitudes from the children underpin the intention to participate in esports. Regarding subjective norms children were influenced by peers, and esports activities were a group activity embedded within school environments, which reinforced a sense of belonging.

Parents demonstrate a more negative attitude, parents are concerned about sedentary behaviour and violence, these attitudes reflect a more societal and media driven view. Parental subjective norms are more influenced by public viewpoints rather than gaming culture. Perceived behavioural controls also differ between the children and parents. For example, older children demonstrate self-regulation and a sense of control over their gaming habits. Parents, on the other hand, exerted control through time restrictions and monitoring devices, over time this control transition is internalised regulation.

Investigating this through the TPB lens, esports becomes a negotiated behaviour, shaped by attitudes (positive vs cautious), different normative influences (peer culture vs societal stereotypes) and shifting views of control (parental regulation vs adolescent regulation).

Research Question 2

How do parents and children describe the challenges and barriers associated with esports participation, and the coping strategies they employ?

The challenges identified were parental control, societal stereotypes, and uncertainty on career legitimacy. The younger participants reported feeling frustrated with time restrictions and conditional access (completing chores). Parents justified these measures as safeguards against screen time, and potential gaming addiction, which aligns with the public concern on gaming (Muppalla et al., 2023). Interestingly, for the older children frustration decreased and self-regulation increased, demonstrating autonomy in managing time and balancing academic demands. This suggests that parental control contributes to later self-discipline, which contradicts previous research that suggests adolescence intensifies parent-

child conflict (Steinberg, 1990). Career progression was also a challenge. The children involved in the school esports programmes struggled to communicate esports and their career choices within esports to their parents, who often viewed it as an extracurricular hobby. One barrier relates to societal stereotypes of gaming. Parents are concerned about violence and the sedentary nature of esports, this reflects the dominant media arguments (Svensson et al., 2024). The children did not perceive these risks, for the children in-game conflict did not damage friendships. The key barrier seems to be societal stereotypes rather than behavioural dysfunction.

Coping strategies differed across the age groups. For the younger participants parental rules, such as doing physical activity were conducted in order to play esports. For the older participants self-regulation became important with parents reducing control as children demonstrated responsibility. For some parents they engaged in open discussions, and suggested negotiations rather than authoritarian control.

Linking back to TPB, challenges are factors that weaken or constrain behavioural intentions. Parental control mechanisms involve time limits, chores and monitoring. For the younger participants limited autonomy reduces their perceived behavioural control leading to frustration. As the participants became older their perceived behavioural control increased through self-regulation, the results show a developmental shift in which behavioural regulation moves from external to internal management. Attitudinal conflict is a barrier, and parent's risk-focused attitudes, which are shaped by societal stereotypes create tension with their children's positive attitudes towards esports. This, however, does not affect their children's intention to participate within esports, as the participants' subjective norms (peer influences) are too powerful.

Career aspirations are also illustrated within the TPB framework. The participants that considered esports as a career, their intentions were influenced by positive attitudes (enjoyment), however constrained perceived barriers such as job instability and parental scepticism could affect their career aspirations. Coping strategies can be interpreted as mechanisms to restore behavioural alignment, such as children engagement in academic discussions to reduce parental concern; increase physical activity to counteract sedentary stereotypes; and parents gradually reducing control when children demonstrated responsibility.

Research Question 3

What support and/or guidance do both the child and parent need to facilitate the child's participation in esports?

The results clearly indicated a need for an educational support system for both the children and their parents. The children expressed a desire for parental understanding, and for their parents to be less dismissive of their esports aspirations. Interestingly, the children acknowledged the importance of understanding their parents' concerns. Therefore, educational support for children should include awareness of health management, career realities, and communication strategies for discussing esports with adults.

Parents spoke about their lack of understanding on esports and the ecosystem and expressed a desire to learn more. The parents stated that they need guidance on career pathways, time management strategies, and the structure of esports. Scholz (2020) ecosystem does not include parents as key stakeholders, however this thesis highlights the necessity that parents need to be formally recognised as key stakeholders within the esports ecosystem.

The results show that educational support is needed, this is connected to the TPB framework in three ways attitudes; subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

Firstly attitudes, parental attitudes are influenced by societal stereotypes, and an educational intervention could provide balanced information on social and cognitive benefits, career pathways, and health strategies within esports and esports playing. Secondly, subjective norms parents are not included in the esports ecosystem, despite being primary agents in their children's lives. Recognising parents as key stakeholders may shift normative expectations surrounding esports participation. Finally, perceived behavioural control, both the children and parents require guidance on how to balance esports and parental worries. Children require education on time management, health and career realities. Rather than relying solely on restrictive approaches, parents may require a structured framework to effectively manage their children's esports participation. Significantly, older participants demonstrated high perceived behavioural control which challenges assumptions that esports participation reduces self-regulation. This suggests that supporting parents early on within esports participation may foster later autonomy and extend TPB by highlighting developmental progression in perceived control.

By applying the framework of TPB, it reveals that esports participation is not a leisure choice, rather shaped by behaviours such as competing attitudes (opportunity vs risks); differing subjective norms (peer culture vs societal discourse); and shifting perceptions of behavioural control (parental regulation to adolescent self-regulation). The thought of esports is not the problematic behaviour rather misaligned beliefs. Once attitudes become more balanced subjective norms are more supportive and perceived control becomes more internalised. This thesis extends TPB, by demonstrating behavioural intention within digital youth cultures which is co-constructed within family systems and develops over time.

Chapter 6

Theoretical and Practical Implications

6. Practical and Theoretical Implication

This chapter will discuss the practical and theoretical implications, linking back to Theory of Planned Behaviour and the practical inference of an educational intervention. This chapter will also demonstrate limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the parental-child relationship to those children who engage in esports. The research questions focused on exploring the perspective and experiences of both parents and children, what challenges, barriers and coping skills both have identified, and what support/guidance do both the child and parents need to facilitate the child's participation in esports.

The findings of the thesis suggest that both children and parents share both similar and different experiences and perceptions of esports, for example both parties mentioned the social aspects of esports, and the sedentary nature of esports. This is significant because previous research has examined either the parent or child's perspective. Previous studies have highlighted that parents mainly hold a negative attitude towards esports while children view esports as a meaningful experience and a skill-based activity. This thesis reveals that parents and children can share experiences and understanding of esports when mutual engagement happens, this suggests that esports can create a connection rather than conflict. This also contributes to our understanding of TPB by showing how subjective norms and attitudes are constructed within the family systems. When parents participated and began to understand their child's esports, their attitudes shift, and their influences can help reinforce their children's behavioural intentions. These shared experiences can act as a mechanism to foster

healthier long-term engagement and reduce stigma both within families and in wider social contexts.

The thesis clearly demonstrated that parents are aware of their own knowledge gaps and are willing to learn, which has not been reported in the previous studies. However, it is important to note that parents struggle to understand the concept of esports while previous research has focused on the parental point of view and their struggles to accept esports as a career, due to job stability and short-term careers. In this context, the findings in this thesis found that parents are willing to learn more about esports, which is unique as previous research treated parents as passive observers. Thus, a more educated parental population in terms of esports would be beneficial for existing stakeholders in the esports industry to establish initiatives. For example, such stakeholders who can take advantage of well-educated parents, this would help with educators who wish to integrate esports into schools, as well as esports organisations who need community support, and policy makers who are looking at development frameworks for youth participation. These key findings contribute to expanding our knowledge of parents' clear needs for educational support, which appears significant from the children's perspective as well. Such educational support will help parents to fill their knowledge gaps on esports. It should be highlighted that previous research has not acknowledged this, as there is very little research conducted from a parents point of view of esports. It will be critical to consider adding parents as primary stakeholders along with other existing key stakeholders within the Scholz's (2020) ecosystem such as professional team, event organisers, publishers as proposed by Hong (2023). This is because the thesis highlights the importance of involving parents into the conversations of esports and not to treat them like passive observers, rather as active stakeholders. By showing the knowledge gap and the parents willingness to learn, this thesis addresses a critical oversight in the existing literature. Linking back to Scholz (2020) ecosystem, it would therefore, be beneficial for parents to be

included within an updated version. As esports will continue to evolve within education and professional domains, parents will become key stakeholders, and therefore revising this ecosystem would be key in supporting a sustainable ecosystem.

The findings of this thesis clearly provide new insights as existing research tends to overlook either the parental perspectives or the child perspectives within esports. This thesis identifies that negative parental attitudes stem from a lack of knowledge on esports rather than outright disapproval. This insight provides a valuable entry point for stakeholder engagement, where education is encouraged, and initiatives can be used to promote understanding and acceptance.

Importantly in line with the chosen theoretical framework, the findings of this thesis are novel. Parents are gatekeepers of children's access to activities, shaping opportunities and constraints. Parents acting as gatekeepers, is an area that has not been explored within esports, parental influence is crucial in shaping esports engagement particularly as esports players start young. This is a key insight to understanding behavioural decisions that parents make, if parents act as gatekeepers, then this can shape their children's esports participation. In regard to the theoretical framework Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) informing and supporting parents, this would positively influence the parents attitudes, their perceived social norms and control. This in turn would increase their behavioural intentions and would increase a healthy and balanced involvement in esports, which would in line with traditional sports. By adopting these initiatives, it will support a sustainable and inclusive esports ecosystem. Therefore, if parents are better informed and supported, this would encourage a healthy involvement, promoting balance, talent and dismantle stereotypes about esports. Overall, it should be highlighted that to the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to apply TPB to the esports context, which demonstrates its applicability. This has broadened our understanding of the key actors' behaviours and perceptions.

As highlighted earlier, the thesis uniquely investigates both parents and children's perspectives, which existing research has rarely done. By exploring these viewpoints, the thesis uncovers shared values as well as points of misunderstanding, which can develop more effective engagement strategies. For example, it bridges the gap between generational perceptions, which can lead to stronger communication and increased support in esports. The application of TPB is used within sports psychology and it shapes sport interventions. TPB has not been used within an esports concept. In this regard, the study design is considered unique, as it applied TPB and in turn can possibly help to shape esports interventions. TPB also offers a valuable interpretive framework, which allows for a holistic analysis of esports participation. This framework adds academic depth and practical value to TPB studies in the content of digital youth culture. By acknowledging the influence of stereotypes raised by both parents and children, this thesis supports the idea of a more respectful, supportive and inclusive esports ecosystem. By understanding these perspectives, it allows for more family-centric esports strategies that will prioritise the player wellbeing and long-term development growth. This dual perspective approach strengthens the academic validity of this thesis and also highlights the need for family-inclusive approaches in developing a healthier, more sustainable esports ecosystem. By acknowledging the shared views and concerns of both groups, future interventions can be more targeted, empathetic, and impactful.

Children are not passive participants in esports; this thesis demonstrates that children are aware of the risks and misconceptions around esports. Previous research fails to ask children their views around esports, particularly focusing on benefits of esports, and rarely asking the negative perceptions of esports. This challenges the stereotypes of children being unaware of the negatives of gaming and highlights the needs for parents who can advocate for esports. Children without parental support within esports often feel misunderstood and discouraged, leading them to quit, even if they are skilled. This shows that parental support

should not be optional, however it should be a rather critical component of long-term participation and mental wellbeing. By parents being involved and informed, the wider public perception of esports can evolve as a structured and legitimate field. This will mirror how traditional sports gained legitimacy and public support. Ultimately, this integration would support healthier engagement, improved understanding, and a broader acceptance of esports as a viable and enriching activity for young people.

As emphasised earlier, it should be further highlighted that children are not passive participants in esports. They are critically aware of misconceptions, and cultural narratives surrounding esports, rather children are active agents within esports, which should be considered when understanding their behaviours. Accordingly, without parental support, children may feel misunderstood and discouraged, which may lead to negative consequences. From the perspective of TPB, this emphasises the critical role parents play in shaping attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control that influence children's intention to play esports. Thus, once again, by educating parents and having them informed on esports this will reshape societal perceptions and position esports as a structured and legitimate area. Importantly, the findings imply that parental involvement in esports is not merely beneficial, but theoretically foundational to fostering sustainable youth participation and wider cultural acceptance.

As demonstrated in the findings, parental involvement is a key factor in children's engagement, performance and persistence, reinforcing the critical role of parental involvement in their children's activities, from academic, athletic and recreational. While parental influence has been acknowledged in youth development, its role in esports remains underexplored. In this context, this thesis offers a novel contribution by highlighting parental attitudes that have significantly affected the children's participation in esports, highlighting a key area for academic and practical attention. Within traditional sports, familial support is

essential for sports to thrive. Likewise, increased parental understanding and public narrative around esports can be reshaped and can be moved away from the perceptions of it being a “waste of time”, towards a legitimate structured developmentally beneficial pursuit, which can address the significant gaps in both literature and practice.

6.2. Practical Implications

The results indicate that parents need support in understanding of the phenomenon of esports. The parents expressed a desire for education on the advancements of technology, and the various career opportunities within the esports industry. Additionally, parents believed that children also need to be educated as well, since they perceived that children need to understand the potential risks associated with esports, as well as learn the importance of taking regular breaks and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Therefore, an educational intervention could be developed for both parents and children to encourage their understanding of esports and mutual acceptance between parents and children. This would cultivate a healthier and more sustainable esports ecosystem. In order to create this intervention, there are many parties that need to be involved. Firstly, it is important to identify parents who have children that play esports. This would potentially have to start within educational institutions that have developed an esports programme, targeting children that are participating in this programme, and their parents. Based on Scholz’s (2020) categorisation of esports ecosystem, it is considered that all key stakeholders such as players, teams and game developers, should be part of this intervention. This would give insights for the game developers on what needs to be tackled regarding parental concerns on violence and language fears that the parents mention within this thesis. Also, this would also help players, teams and developers redefine their roles within the ecosystem. Through the educational platform stakeholders can collectively explore the most effective ways to communicate this information. For example, they can utilise Facebook forums, dedicated classes or written guides, books or other formats.

By empowering parents with knowledge, the ecosystem as a whole would benefit from a greater understanding, stronger relationships, and more informed participation.

Secondly, children would need to be actively involved within the development of the educational intervention, so they can give perspective and offer insights on what they believe their parents need help to understand. It is important also to identify the needs of children to inform about the interventions. In this context, it is clear that scholastic authorities will play an important role in developing educational initiatives. As the players and teams will be integrated within the esports world, they can offer advice and help for the children to understand their parents' concerns and address any concerns the children may have.

It should be noted that even when such educational initiatives have been developed, it may be more important to timely implement and constantly monitor the effectiveness of the interventions to continue redefining and enhancing.

Parental educational interventions could take several forms, schools who have an established esports programme could host in-person or virtual workshops, introducing parents to the structure of the esports industry, pathways to higher education and employment, safeguarding considerations and strategies to support balanced gaming habits. These sessions could be short online modules, downloadable guidance booklets, and discussion forums where parents can share concerns and experiences. A co-designed format combining presentations, panel discussions with players, and Q&A sessions, this would allow parents to engage critically rather than passively with the information they receive.

Content expertise could be drawn from esports organisations, youth workers, digital wellbeing specialists and industry representatives. Game developers and professional teams could contribute insight into career structures, community guidelines, and safety mechanisms. Psychologists and digital professionals could address concerns relating to screen time, online

communication, and wellbeing. Children and young players should also be consulted during the design stage to ensure material reflects their lived experiences, and addresses areas of misunderstanding between the generations.

Ongoing evaluation would be essential to ensure effectiveness. This could involve pre- and post-workshop feedback surveys, interviews or focus groups assessing changes in parental understanding and family communication. Clearly outlining format, leadership, stakeholder collaboration and evaluation processes, the proposed intervention becomes a feasible and structure initiative, rather than a general recommendation. This would enhance its practical application and long-term sustainability.

6.3. Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this thesis provides valuable insight into the parental-child relationship to those children who engage in esports, limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations primarily relate to participant composition, sample size, and recruitment challenges. Future research should aim to address these limitations and strengthen the depth of the findings.

6.3.1. Limitations

While the participants in this thesis have sufficiently shared their experiences and insights and the saturation meant (Saunders 2017), the sample size was considered relatively smaller than planned, due to recruitment issues encountered during the participation phase. The original sample size planned was 20-20, several obstacles emerged. If the sample size reached 20-20, the researcher considered it would have provided a broader understanding and insights into the r parental and child relationship. A bigger sample may offer an in-depth evaluation of the parents point of view in terms of interviewing both parents, not only one parent per family. This is because there were notable differences between fathers and mothers although this was beyond the scope of the study. Mothers tend to adopt a more

controlling stance regarding their children's gaming habits, while fathers tend to be more lenient, although still enforcing boundaries. Interviewing both parents from each family would provide a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of familial attitudes towards esports.

Another limitation of this study would be related to the researcher's interview technique. While the researcher has practiced and conducted pilot interviews, interviewing children was relatively challenging, since it was difficult to keep their attention and make them share in-depth accounts, which may be challenging at their age. Therefore, it is considered significant to build a rapport with young participants. For example, in the context of esports, researchers could build a rapport with children by playing esports together before conducting interviews. This would allow the children to show off game skills, reduce bias, and provide engaging interview experiences, which would help reduce possible anxiety within the children. Similarly, researchers can have an opportunity to observe the participants and identify their interests and focuses, which can be considered in order to better facilitate interviews.

Finally, the young participants in this study play esports as their hobbies. While their insights into the topic was very valuable, the findings are inevitably limited because children at other levels, semi-professional and professional, may have different experiences and insights into the relationship with their parents. Thus, future research would be beneficial including participants from across all levels of esports, to provide a broader insight into the topic. This would allow a comprehensive understanding of parental attitudes and support depending on the child's level of engagement, rather than parents and children who view esports as a hobby. This would be beneficial for the children and parents who are involved in esports programmes, as these parties will have more information on the different careers and levels of esports.

6.3.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the limitation of the study and insights from the researcher, the first recommendation for future research is to expand the age range beyond 10- 18, with a focus on individuals aged 14 and above. While the age range provided gave valuable insights, especially in comparing younger and older children's perspectives, it would be beneficial to focus on older adolescents and young adults. This is because, these older individuals are more likely to reflect critically on their experiences and articulate the impact of esports in greater depth, from the experiences of those involved in conducting interviews in this study. Previous research into esports (Barney & Pennington, 2023) has focused on older participants and has shown these participants to reflect critically. While the younger children still offered valuable insights, older participants seem to have knowledge on societal and parental views.

The perspectives provided by those children in the esports programme within their school was valuable and offered a new perspective for this thesis, and how these children view esports. While individual interviews work well for this study, as mentioned earlier, it was challenging to lead them to apportion more accounts. In this context, a recommendation would be conducting focus groups for this target group, as the children in this study stated that being part of a team was beneficial for them and esports. Therefore, having these children gathered together to speak of esports and the benefits they have seen being part of this course, could offer a more nuanced perspective.

A final consideration would be shifting the theoretical framework. While the TPB offered useful insights into behavioural intentions and social influences, future research could explore the role of stereotypes using TBP, examining societal attitudes towards esports, this could offer a richer understanding of the barriers and facilitators within this domain.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

7. Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the main points of the thesis and draw the final arguments together. The aim of the thesis was to investigate the parental-child relationship to those children who engage in esports. To gain the perception of parents and children, and to identify support that both parents and children need to make the parents part of the esports ecosystem. The parent-child relationship within esports participation remains unexplored, despite the growing popularity of esports. In response to address the significant gap in literature, the thesis illustrated key points within the parent-child relationship.

A central finding was children being aware of the risks and narratives surrounding esports and gaming, which previous research overlooked. The children also expressed a strong desire for their parents to receive support in understanding esports, which they believed would be helpful for them to communicate with their parents about esports. Previous assumptions argue that parents are negative and passive towards esports, however, the central finding from the thesis demonstrated that parents and children shared not only the negative aspects of esports but also did have willingness to learn and utilise esports in a more positive manner. In particular, it was interesting that parents clearly perceived that they have knowledge gaps understanding esports and wish to learn more about esports in order to support their children. As a result, this thesis challenges the previous research and the longstanding stereotypes of parents being only negative and unsupportive. Instead, the findings highlighted the needs for mutual education and engagement, to support a healthy and sustainable esports participation.

The thesis was also unique in applying Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in the context of esports, this framework has not previously been used within esports. TPB has provided a lens into understanding parental attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural controls, which can influence their children's motivation to participate in esports.

The thesis shows that parents act as gatekeepers, shaping motivations, and opportunities while parental constraints can have a significant impact on their children's engagements in esports.

Importantly, the findings highlight the need for educational interventions aimed at parents and children. The educational interventions should address concerns about addiction, health and academic performance for the children. It should for parents highlight career opportunities, social benefits and skills developments associated with esports. Such interventions should also highlight parents becoming meaningful stakeholders in the ecosystem to make them more engaging and responsible for their guidance and support for their children. While there are cultural differences with UK and South Korean, parents can also share similar concerns, and this suggests that global educational strategies may have a universal relevance.

The key findings, which significantly contribute to expanding the body of knowledge in esports are considered impactful. Based on the findings from the present thesis, future studies should explore family dynamics at different levels of esports involvement, which would further provide practical strategies to support young players. Since the findings highlight the importance of parental involvement within esports, this should not be an option, rather essential. Through informed, and family-centric approaches can the esports ecosystem evolve?. By reshaping and changing the ecosystem public perceptions of esports can be positioned as skill-based and socially valuable for young people, rather than a form of entertainment.

Finally, the thesis shows the importance of parents not being passive observers, rather active stakeholders in the ever-growing world of esports. Parental involvement is beneficial for creating a more supportive and informed environment for young players engagement in

esports, by doing this then esports and the development of structures will align with traditional sports.

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Appendix 1

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Participant Consent Form (Parents)

Participant number [Insert]

Research Project Title: Investigating esports, and the role of the parental relationship with the children/adolescents that pursue these interests

Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understood the: information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw one month after the interview, before analysis is complete, without giving a reason, and without any penalty. I understand that beyond when data analysis has started and results are finalised it may not be possible to remove my data from the study.	
I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous	
I consent to being audio recorded and visual recorded	
I understand how I will be used in research outputs. I am aware that I will not be named in the transcriptions or the research thesis	
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication with anonymity	
I am also aware that I can withdraw at any time during the interview and one month after the interviews are complete	
I agree to take part in this study	

Name of Participant**Signature:****Date:** [Click here to enter a date](#)**Name of Researcher****Signature:****Date:** [Click here to enter a date](#)

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Participant Consent Form (Children/Adolescents)

Participant number [Insert]

Research Project Title: Investigating esports, and the role of the parental relationship with the children/adolescents that pursue these interests

Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that taking part in the interview is voluntary	
I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous	
I consent to being audio recorded and visual recorded	
I am aware that I will not be named in the transcriptions or the final project	
I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication with anonymity	
I am also aware that I can withdraw at any time during the interview and one month after the interviews are complete	
I agree to take part in this study	

Name of Participant

Signature:

Date: Click here to enter a date

Name of Researcher

Signature:

Date: Click here to enter a date

Appendix 2

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Participant Consent Form (Parents Behalf of Children)

Participant number [Insert]

Research Project Title: Investigating esports, and the role of the parental relationship with the children/adolescents that pursue these interests

Please initial box	
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I consent that my child/adolescent can take part within the project	
I understand that my child/adolescent participation is voluntary, and they have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project	
I understand that my child/adolescents responses will be kept anonymous	
I understand and consent for my child/adolescent to be audio recorded and visual recorded	
I give permission for my child/adolescent be quoted directly in the research publication with anonymity	
I have also made my child/adolescent aware that I can withdraw at any time during the interview and one month after the interviews are complete	
I agree for my child/adolescent to take part in this study	

Name of Participant (your child/adolescents name)

Signature:

Date: [Click here to enter a date](#)

Name of Parent:

Signature:

Name of Researcher:

Signature:

Date: [Click here to enter a date](#)

Appendix 3

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Participant Information Sheet

1. Research Project Title

Investigating the parental relationship with their children/adolescent who play esports.

2. Background, aims of project

Research has addressed parental perceptions and the focus on the negative effects of video gaming and esports. Research has shown that parents' are concerned about their children pursuing it as a career as they worry about job stability, profitability, and sustainability. While in sport research parents are more supportive and show little concerned about their children/adolescents pursuing a career in sport. However, athletes in all sports, at all levels, can face many stressors, a few examples are academic demands, injuries, and pressure from coaches. Research has not focused on esports and the difference in the parental relationship within each.

I am a MPhil Student from the University of Stirling. I am inviting you to take part in our study, which will include a 1 to 1 interview. The interview will consist of a series of questions about the participants' involvement within esports

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you have been identified as someone whose child/adolescent takes part within esports. The reason that you have been asked to take part, as research has shown a difference within the parental relationship, and the researcher

wishes to explore this phenomena. Your child has been requested to take part to gain a different view on their participation of esports and what difference they perceive

4. Do I have to take part?

There is no requirement to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you are entitled to withdraw your participation one month after the interview without the need of explanation, there will be no penalties, simply inform the researcher of your decision to withdraw. If you do wish to withdraw from the study, I will not ask you for any more data.

All information within this study is completely confidential, no names will be used within the study. The researcher is the only person who will know whose data is who's.

You will be given this information sheet to keep and also be asked to sign a consent form and give verbal consent.

5. What will happen if I take part?

You will be asked to complete an interview. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes, please remember that depending on the nature of discussion, the interview may take slightly longer.

The researcher appreciate that there may be difference of opinions, between the child/adolescent and their parents. To avoid any discrepancies in views, each person will be interviewed separately. The transcripts will use different codes in order that participants will not be identified within the final report

Please be advised that interviews will be recorded for data analysis procedures, if you have any objections to this, please inform the researcher prior to the interview to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to ensure accurate analysis of the data.

6. Are there any potential risks in taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks in taking part in this study. However, it is completely understood that sensitive information may be disclosed throughout the interview and may lead to upset from the participants. Please be assured that the researcher will do their absolute best to ensure that the participants are comfortable and feel at ease through their interview. If you wish I can send the interview questions in advance

7. Can I withdraw from the study?

Yes, as the interview is conducted you can withdraw at any time. You have up to one month after the interview to withdraw any data that you have given

8. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There are no direct benefits to you taking part in this experiment, however, will be informed of findings after study is finished.

9. What happens to the data I provide?

Personal and confidential information will be stored anonymously on the researchers University account which is password protected. Your data will be kept for the duration of the study, once the study is complete, all data will be securely destroyed.

You will be asked for permission to use direct quotes; however, anonymity will still be in place.

10. Recorded media

The data will be recorded, via audio and visual apparatus. This will be used for transcribing the data to ensure that the information provided within the study is as accurate as possible. These recordings will be kept on the researchers personal computer which is password protected.

11. Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

If you would like to discuss the research, your main contact will be researcher Rebecca Main-rem3@stri.ac.uk and you can also contact the dissertation supervisor Dr Hee Jung Hong

heejung.hong@stir.ac.uk. You will be given a copy of this information sheet to compete, thank you very much for your participation.

Appendix 4

Esports Questions

Parents

1. How is your relationship with your child in general?
2. What do you think your child likes to do the most in general?
3. As a parent, when did you first become aware of esports, and are you concerned at all about your child playing esports too much or even pursuing an esports career?
4. What were your thoughts when your child started gaming in general (probing – was this negative/positive, did their views change when you decided to do esports etc).
5. Does your child play esports with their peers or alone? Have you identified any positive or negative aspects of playing esports from your observation?
6. What is your general reaction or behaviour when you see your child playing esports? Why?
7. What support have provided or not provided? And why, why not?
8. Have you discussed esports with other parents? E.g., your concerns, explore how others control/manage their children, sharing experience, etc (if not, will you consider doing it? what parts have you discussed with them, why is that etc)
9. Do you understand/support why you child play esports and what benefits do you think they believe they get from playing esports? E.g., fun, escapism, killing time, positive distraction, socialising, coping mechanism. etc. (probe – if you can't see the positives why etc)
10. What are the negatives of esports you see as a parent? (probe – why do you see these negatives etc)
11. Do you feed into these negative aspects when your child plays esports? (probe – why do you feel that way, is there anything that can change your thoughts on that)
12. What support do you think you need to properly support or manage your child's behaviour in the esports context? (Do you think your child feel your negative aspects/perceptions on esports and they are influenced to some extent?

Any other comments would like to add?

Interview Questions:

Esport Children Questions

1. When did you first hear about gaming? What games/esports have you played? Which one is your favourite? (probe – level, amount of time, balance between leisure and school etc)
2. When did you start playing esports and how many hours per day you play?
3. What do you enjoy the most when playing games/esports?

4. What is the main reason that you play gaming/esports?
5. What were your family/parents/sibling thoughts when you started gaming in general?
(probe – was this negative/positive, did their views change when you decided to do esports etc)
6. What positive aspects do you feel you have learned from taking part in esports?
(probe – why is that a positive, in what way has this changed your behaviour if any etc)
7. Do you play esports with your peers and if so, do you both share the same positive experiences?
(probe – what positives do you see, can your parents see any positive etc)
8. Do your parents understand/support you when you play an esports game, and do they support the positives you experience?
(probe – if they don't support how does this affect you, if they do you support you how does this affect you etc)
9. What are some of the negative aspects you feel?
(probe – does this stop you from gaming/doing esports, do you think this happens in regular sport situations etc)
How have you tried to address the negative aspects?
In this regard, do you need any support? What support do you need?
10. Do your parents help with these negative aspects, or do they not understand?
(probe – why do they not support you, do they not understand etc)
11. Do esports cause more positives/negatives or vice versa ?
(probe – why more positives, why more negatives etc)
12. What role do your parents play in encouraging/discouraging your participation in esports?
(probe – do they show interest/no interest, why do you think this is, do you feel pressure from your parents etc)
What role do you wish for your parents to play a role in your participation in esports/gaming?
(E.g., appreciation, recognition, encouragement, etc.)
13. Do other parents or schoolteachers or any significant others (e.g., siblings, peers) thoughts and behaviours have an effect on your participation within esports?
(probe – what behaviours affect you in this way etc)
14. What is the general reaction from your parents? Why did you think your parents reacted this way?
(Probe – does this want you to stop pursuing esports
What are your general thoughts/behaviours when they react?
How would like to improve the situation/perceptions in this regard?
Any support does you need to play esports while being in a good relationship with your parents, schoolteachers, peers, or siblings?)

Any other comments would you like to add?