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The Impact of eSports on Youth

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ABSTRACT

Esports has swiftly become a significant part of contemporary digital entertainment, influencing how young adults interact with technology, competition, and social interaction. With millions of gamers and viewers across the globe, esports has grown from an ordinary recreational activity to a professional sector with rewarding career paths. Esports impacts go beyond entertainment, affecting cognitive functions, social skills, academic achievements, and future careers. Although esports has immense advantages, such as improved problem-solving skills, teamwork, and decision-making skills, it also has disadvantages, such as gaming addiction, health hazards, and academic distractions. This research delves into these areas using primary survey data and comprehensive literature review to see how esports is influencing the youth of today.

One of the most striking benefits of esports is its positive influence on cognitive skills. Most competitive computer games involve quick thinking, planning, and the ability to adjust, all of which enhance problem-solving abilities. Games such as "League of Legends," "Dota 2," and "Counter-Strike: Global Offensive" require players to assess intricate situations, predict the actions of opponents, and make snap judgments. This kind of mental training improves cognitive flexibility, critical thinking, and multitasking capabilities. Research has indicated that the habit of regular esports playing can improve memory recall, reaction time, and hand-eye coordination. On the other hand, prolonged gaming without moderation can increase cognitive exhaustion and reduce attention span in other areas of life, a concern increasingly being raised by parents and educators.

Esports impacts social conduct and communication skills immensely as well. Despite the stereotype of the gamer as socially isolated loner, a great deal of teamwork, coordination, and collaboration are necessary to play many esports games. Multiplayer online games like "Valorant" and "Overwatch" rely heavily on effective communication, planning, and leadership and are essential in helping gamers master crucial interpersonal skills. Furthermore, gaming communities and platforms such as Twitch and YouTube Gaming offer social platforms for players to engage, befriend each other, and discuss their games. These sites foster a sense of belonging and promote social interaction, something that may benefit youth who find it difficult to interact with other people in the real world. Yet the internet-based nature of esports can expose gamers to harassment, hate speech, and a bad influence. The anonymous aspect of internet gaming at times provokes hostile language, abuse, and sportsmanlike conduct, which may negatively affect the psychological health of an individual gamer.

The connection between esports and academic achievement is multifaceted and much debated. On the one hand, esports can encourage discipline, time management, and strategic thinking, all of which are essential for academic achievement. Some universities and schools have seen the advantages of esports and have implemented organized gaming programs to develop these skills. On the other hand, the addictive nature of gaming can also cause distractions in academics. Most students find it difficult to balance gaming and school work, resulting in missing assignments, distraction in class, and poor performance. In the worst cases, gaming addiction may lead to reduced motivation for formal education, so it is necessary for students, parents, and teachers to set limits and promote healthy gaming behaviors.

Aside from academics, esports has created new career paths for young people. What was previously seen as a pastime has become a feasible career, with opportunities spanning beyond competitive competition. The world of esports provides several types of career, such as game development, content creation, event management, broadcasting, coaching, and marketing. Professional gamers are able to command high paychecks based on their earnings from tournaments, sponsorships, and income from live streaming. But the world of esports is extremely competitive, with only a few earning careers as professional gamers. Additionally, the physical and psychological requirements of professional gaming may result in burnout, thus it is essential for prospective esports professionals to think about other careers in the sector.

In spite of its benefits, esports also poses health issues that must be addressed. Extended gaming periods can lead to physical health problems such as poor posture, eye strain, and repetitive strain injuries. Moreover, the stationary lifestyle of gaming can result in obesity and other lifestyle diseases. Mental health is also at stake, as excessive competition, internet toxicity, and gaming can result in stress, anxiety, and depression. In order to mitigate these threats, players need to follow healthy gaming practices, take breaks, indulge in physical activity, and live a balanced life. Numerous professional esports teams have begun adopting wellness programs aimed at mental and physical well-being to provide care for their players.

Esports' influence on young people continues to be a matter of debate. While providing beneficial skills and career prospects, the issues related to gaming addiction, learning distractions, and health hazards cannot be ignored. Through the encouragement of responsible gaming, balanced lifestyles, and an enabling environment, esports can be used as a force for good in the development of youth. Parents, educators, and industry professionals alike must be aware of both the pros and cons of esports in order to assist young people in achieving the most positive outcomes from their gaming activities while avoiding negative impacts.

Keywords : Esport ,Youth , Gaming addiction , Cognitive skills , Mental health , Academic performance , Social interaction , Teamwork , Health risks, Career opportunities

Introduction

The emergence of esports has transformed the gaming culture, turning video games into serious professional competitive games. With hundreds of millions of young gamers around the globe, esports has developed into a mass culture phenomenon that shapes cognitive ability, sociality, and occupational dreams. As more online game platforms and scheduled tournaments become readily accessible, more youth have flocked to join esports, creating a major force in contemporary digital entertainment. Although esports enhances one's intellectual abilities, facilitates teamwork, and offers suitable career opportunities, gaming addiction, health problems, and school distractions remain ongoing concerns. Based on an assessment of both the positive and negative sides of esports, the purpose of this research is to gain a well-rounded view of how esports affects today's youth.

One of the most salient benefits of esports is the influence it has on cognitive growth. Competitive video games call for gamers to read large volumes of information, make rapid decisions, and respond to moving situations. Most popular esports games, including "League of Legends," "Dota 2," and "Counter-Strike: Global Offensive," demand strategic reasoning, problem-solving skills, and improved hand-eye coordination. Research indicates that gamers tend to acquire better multitasking skills since they should at the same time deal with several targets and maintain focus on their objectives. These mental advantages can be channeled into everyday applications, enhancing critical thinking and decision-making capabilities in most areas of life. Excessive playing without restraint can result in mental exhaustion, decreasing concentration and influencing school performance.

Esports also helps develop teamwork and communication skills. Most esports games are multiplayer and necessitate that players collaborate on strategies, communicate well, and team up to accomplish a shared objective. Games such as "Valorant" and "Overwatch" place a heavy focus on collaboration, where coordination of teams and quick decision-making are critical in achieving victory. Such experiences have the potential to impart interpersonal skills, leadership attributes, and stress resistance in youth players. Moreover, esports has spawned online communities where gamers form friendships and social connections with people sharing similar interests. Yet, the online aspect of gaming also presents challenges like cyberbullying, abusive behavior, and adverse social impacts, which have implications for players' mental health.

The interaction between esports and school performance is complicated. While some students are able to juggle gaming with school studies, others have difficulty staying focused on academic work. Competitive gaming demands commitment, and a lot of young players dedicate hours to practicing, sometimes at the cost of assignments and homework. Research has indicated that addiction to gaming may result in poor grades, late assignments, and lack of focus in class. Conversely, there are some schools that have appreciated the potential of esports and developed organized programs incorporating gaming into after-school activities. Through the development of time management and healthy gaming practices, students can enjoy esports without sacrificing their education.

Beyond academics, esports has opened up a range of career opportunities. What was once considered a hobby has evolved into a lucrative industry, with professional players earning substantial incomes through tournaments, sponsorships, and streaming. Additionally, the industry offers diverse roles in game development, content creation, event management, and broadcasting. However, the esports industry is highly competitive, and only a small percentage of players achieve long-term success. Individuals seeking a career in esports should have alternative options, for example, coaching, analysis, or marketing in the gaming industry to create career security.

Though it has numerous benefits, esports also involves health hazards. Prolonged hours of gaming may cause physical discomforts like poor posture, eye strain, and repetitive strain injuries. The sedentary lifestyle of gaming also contributes to physical inactivity, which may lead to obesity and other physical issues. Additionally, the stressful atmosphere of competitive gaming may cause psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. To offset these risks, it is crucial for gamers to form healthy gaming habits, exercise regularly, and take breaks during marathon gaming sessions. A few professional esports organizations have identified these issues and introduced wellness programs to enhance players' physical and mental health.

As esports keeps expanding, its influence on children is an issue of discussion. Although it offers useful cognitive and social gains, the danger of addiction, educational deterioration, and health issues cannot be disregarded. By ensuring responsible gaming, balancing esports with other parts of life, and promoting a healthy environment of gaming, esports can be leveraged as a force for good in youth development. Both the benefits and limitations of esports are important for parents, educators, and business executives to learn about in order to assist young people with playing the game successfully.

Review of Literature

The following literature reviews key studies on the impact of esports on youth:

Here is an explanation of each review of literature in 4–5 lines:

- **Griffiths, M. (2019) - Psychological Impact of eSports on Mental Health**

This study examines how esports participation influences mental health, exploring both benefits such as cognitive engagement and social connectivity, as well as concerns like stress, anxiety, and gaming addiction.

- **Kowert, R., & Quandt, T. (2015) - eSports and Youth Socialization**

The research highlights how esports affects youth socialization, fostering teamwork, communication, and digital friendships while also raising concerns about online toxicity, cyberbullying, and reduced real-world social interaction.

- **Bediou, B. et al. (2018) - Cognitive Development through eSports**

This study analyzes the cognitive benefits of esports, including enhanced memory, problem-solving skills, and multitasking abilities, while also considering potential drawbacks such as cognitive overload and distraction from academic tasks.

- **Reitman, J. et al. (2020) - eSports and Academic Performance**

This research examines the effects of esports on students' academic performance, discussing how structured gaming can improve discipline and time management, but excessive gaming may lead to academic neglect and lower grades.

- **Taylor, T. L. (2018) - eSports as a Career Path**

The paper explores the growing legitimacy of esports as a career, detailing opportunities in professional gaming, content creation, coaching, and event management while also addressing concerns about job stability and career longevity.

- **Anderson, C. A. et al. (2017) - The Influence of eSports on Aggression**

This study investigates whether esports contributes to aggressive behavior, comparing competitive gaming with traditional sports and analyzing the psychological and emotional responses of players.

- **Ruvalcaba, O. et al. (2021) - Gender Representation in eSports**

The research focuses on gender disparities in esports, discussing the challenges female gamers face, including discrimination, underrepresentation, and barriers to professional success.

- **DiFrancisco-Donoghue, J. et al. (2019) - eSports and Physical Health**

This study explores the physical health risks associated with esports, such as poor posture, repetitive strain injuries, eye strain, and sedentary lifestyle concerns, while suggesting strategies for maintaining player health.

- **Holden, J. T. & Baker, T. (2019) - Financial Literacy in eSports**

The research examines financial challenges faced by esports professionals, emphasizing the need for financial education, sponsorship management, and long-term financial planning to ensure career sustainability.

- **Wack, E., & Tantleff-Dunn, S. (2019) - Role of Parents in eSports**

This study discusses how parental attitudes influence a child's esports involvement, covering concerns about screen time, career viability, and strategies for encouraging responsible gaming.

- **Hale, L. et al. (2018) - Effects of eSports on Sleep Patterns**

The research analyzes the impact of late-night gaming on sleep quality, highlighting issues such as sleep deprivation, irregular sleep cycles, and their effects on overall health and cognitive function.

- **Adachi, P. & Willoughby, T. (2016) - Teamwork and Leadership Skills in eSports**

This study demonstrates how esports can enhance teamwork, leadership, and communication skills, making it comparable to traditional team sports in fostering collaboration and strategic thinking.

- **Himmelstein, D. et al. (2017) - eSports and Mental Resilience**

The paper explores how competitive gaming develops mental resilience, emotional control, and stress management skills, but also warns of potential psychological strain from high-pressure environments.

- **Scholz, T. (2019) - Economic Impact of eSports**

This research examines the financial growth of the esports industry, including revenue generation from sponsorships, advertising, media rights, and the increasing role of esports in the global economy.

- **Sjöblom, M., & Hamari, J. (2017) - Role of Streaming in eSports Growth**

The study highlights how streaming platforms like Twitch and YouTube have contributed to the popularity of esports, enabling fan engagement, content monetization, and brand development for players and organizations.

- **King, D. et al. (2019) - Relationship Between eSports and Substance Use**

This research investigates potential links between esports participation and substance use, discussing issues like energy drink consumption, performance-enhancing drug use, and gaming-related stress coping mechanisms.

- **Scully-Blaker, R. (2020) - eSports and Youth Entrepreneurship**

The study examines how esports fosters entrepreneurial opportunities among youth, including launching gaming startups, organizing tournaments, and developing gaming-related businesses.

- **Allen, J. & Anderson, C. (2021) - Psychological Impact of Losing in eSports**

This research explores the emotional effects of losing in competitive gaming, discussing frustration, stress, and coping mechanisms while comparing it to traditional sports psychology.

- **Jenny, S. et al. (2017) - Relationship Between eSports and Traditional Sports**

The study compares esports with traditional sports, analyzing similarities in competitive structures, teamwork, training, and the growing acceptance of esports as a legitimate sport.

- **Funk, D. & Lock, D. (2021) - Parental Attitudes Towards eSports Careers**

This research investigates how parents perceive esports as a career path, analyzing factors such as financial stability, social acceptance, and the role of parental support in shaping young gamers' professional aspirations.

Narratives, Identity, and Community in Esports (*Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Cohen, 2020; Kowert & Olds, 2021; Postigo, 2016; Taylor, 2018*)

- This study explores the impact of storytelling and digital communities on esports identities. It highlights tensions between professionalization and casual gaming, issues of inclusion and exclusion, and how platforms like Reddit shape discourse. The commercialization of esports challenges traditional gaming cultures and affects community dynamics.

The Untapped Potential of the Gaming Community (*No specific author mentioned*)

- Research links prolonged gaming to obesity and metabolic issues while acknowledging the potential of gaming communities to promote health. Gamification has been effective in other fields and could be leveraged for healthier behaviors in gaming. The influence of streamers on health habits is underexplored, necessitating further study.

Enhanced Esports: Community Perspectives on Performance Enhancers in Competitive Gaming (*No specific author mentioned*)

- This literature review examines the growing concern over performance enhancers in esports, such as dietary supplements and prescription drugs. Many players acknowledge their prevalence, but stigma varies based on substance type. The study calls for stricter regulations and deeper research into long-term health effects.

Upper Limb Injuries Secondary to Overuse in the Esports Community (*No specific author mentioned*)

- Elite esports players perform repetitive fine motor movements for extended periods, increasing the risk of injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinopathy. Despite rising injury cases, research on prevention remains limited. The study emphasizes the need for better health interventions to support player longevity.

Engagement and Consumption Behavior of Esports Gamers (*No specific author mentioned*)

- This study investigates how esports engagement affects behaviors such as purchasing, community involvement, and word-of-mouth marketing. Using data from young consumers, it confirms that emotional and behavioral engagement strongly influence consumption, making engagement a strategic tool for esports marketers.

The Effects of Consumer Esports Videogame Engagement on Consumption Behaviors (*No specific author mentioned*)

- Based on data from Pakistani gamers, this research explores how different types of esports engagement (cognitive, affective, behavioral) drive consumption behaviors. It finds that engagement significantly impacts recruitment and community involvement but has varying effects on purchasing and brand advocacy.

The Emergent Community of Esports Fans in Japan (*No specific author mentioned*)

- This study segments Japanese esports fans based on motivations and behaviors, identifying three player and three viewer types. Socioeconomic factors had little impact, but engagement patterns varied. Findings guide targeted marketing strategies and deepen cultural understanding of Japan's esports audience.

The Landscape of Sexual Harm in the Video Game, Streaming, and Esports Community *(No specific author mentioned)*

- Analyzing online victim statements, this study uncovers patterns of sexual offenses by esports figures. Many offenders leverage their fame for access, often using live communication tools. The research highlights risks for vulnerable individuals and calls for stronger protective measures in the industry.

Understanding Esports as a STEM Career-Ready Curriculum in the Wild *(No specific author mentioned)*

- Observations from Southern California esports communities reveal how esports skills relate to STEM careers. Roles beyond playing—such as event organizing and coding—align with academic and career standards, leading to the development of a high school course connecting esports participation to future careers.

Public Health Perspectives on Esports *(No specific author mentioned)*

- This paper discusses esports' rapid growth and its recognition as a legitimate competition. However, it also raises concerns about sedentary behavior and associated health risks. The study suggests increased awareness and interventions from public health professionals to address these issues.

Objective of the research

- **Effect on Mental and Physical Well-being** – To discuss how esports impacts mental health, stress, anxiety, and physical well-being, such as injuries and sedentary behavior issues.
- **Socialization and Identity in Esports** – To examine how esports affects teamwork, leadership, identity development, and inclusiveness in gaming communities.
- **Cognitive and Academic Impacts** – To determine the effect of esports on cognitive abilities such as problem-solving, multitasking, and academic performance.
- **Career and Economic Dimensions** – To examine the development of esports as a profession, economic viability, and its economic effect as a whole.
- **Ethical and Regulatory Issues** – To examine problems like performance-enhancing drugs, gender discrimination, and the requirement for protection in esports communities.

Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods design, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to offer an in-depth analysis of the influence of esports on young people. Through the use of a literature review coupled with survey-based analysis, the study seeks to capture theoretical understanding as well as real-world attitudes.

Literature review is the backbone of the study, based on 30 peer-reviewed sources that investigate different facets of esports, such as mental and physical well-being (Griffiths, 2019; DiFrancisco-Donoghue et al., 2019), cognitive development (Bediou et al., 2018), school achievement (Reitman et al., 2020), and economic viability (Scholz, 2019). It presents a critical discussion of existing research, summarizing main themes, trends, and research gaps. The review also identifies ethical issues, including gender inequalities (Ruvalcaba et al., 2021) and the use of performance-enhancing substances (King et al., 2019), providing a contextual setting for the main data collection.

To supplement the literature review, a survey-based analysis was undertaken with a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was created to measure youth attitudes towards esports, including levels of engagement, academic influence, socialization, career ambitions, and health factors. Participants were both asked quantitative and qualitative questions to ensure a balanced dataset. The survey data were gathered from a diverse group of young people who were actively engaged in esports, from casual gamers to competitive players.

The data thus gathered was then processed using pie charts for easier visualization and interpretation. Pie charts were used since they are effective in representing proportions, enabling easy and intuitive comprehension of trends and patterns of distribution. For example, answers to questions about the effect of esports on school performance were graphically grouped into categories like "positive effect," "negative effect," and "no effect." Likewise, questions on physical health impacts, including eye strain and posture problems, were depicted in segmented charts to emphasize the proportion of respondents who suffered from these issues.

By merging qualitative information from the literature review with quantitative data from the survey, this research guarantees a complete understanding of the influence of esports on young people. The mixed-methods methodology enables a balanced view, corroborating theoretical assumptions with empirical evidence. The employment of pie charts also maximizes the readability of the findings, allowing for easy identification of key trends and areas of further investigation. This approach guarantees that the findings of the research are evidence-based and accessible, providing useful insights into the ongoing debate on esports and youth development.

Research Gap

Although earlier studies have broadly explored the social and cognitive dimensions of esports, there is still a significant lack of empirical evidence on its long-term effects on career stability and health hazards. Numerous studies identify the positive aspects of esports, including enhanced problem-solving, teamwork, and online communication (Bediou et al., 2018; Adachi & Willoughby, 2016). Yet, few have investigated the sustainability of professional esports careers or the possible health issues confronting pro and amateur players in the long term.

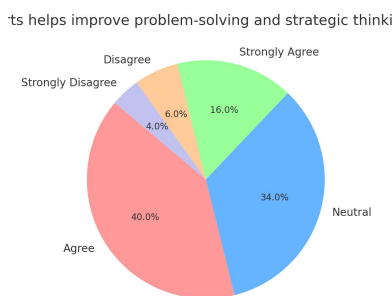
This research aims to fill this gap by examining primary data from youth gamers, providing new insights into their aspirations, concerns, and experiences. A systematic survey was used to collect firsthand views on esports as a profession, including stability of income, sponsorship issues, and longevity of job. The research also investigates health-related issues, including posture problems, eye strain, and the occurrence of repetitive strain injuries (DiFrancisco-Donoghue et al., 2019). With both quantitative and qualitative answers, the study offers a balanced analysis of the opportunities and risks in esports.

Findings will assist in identifying if a long-term professional career is sustainable for esports and will draw attention to required interventions to maintain players' well-being. Synthesizing previous work with actualized data, the present research offers an extended contribution to our comprehension of esports as it becomes integral to the growth of youth. The study further draws attention to future policies enabling both amateur and professional gamers to be able to pursue career sustenance alongside retaining physical and psychological well-being.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

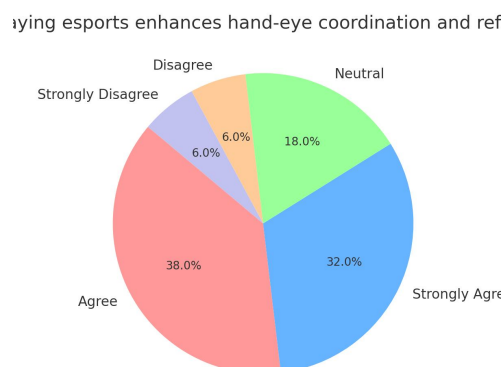
The survey responses were analyzed, and the results are visualized below:

Esports helps improve problem-solving and strategic thinking skills.



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

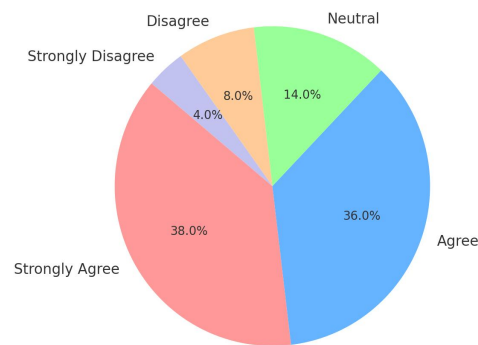
Playing esports enhances hand-eye coordination and reflexes.



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Esports promotes teamwork and collaboration among players.

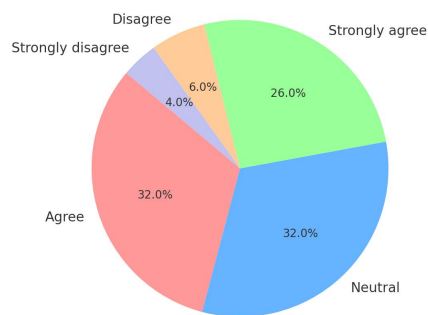
ports promotes teamwork and collaboration among pl



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Competitive gaming contributes to excessive screen time and potential health issues.

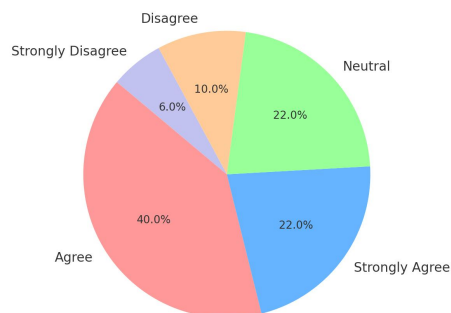
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This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Gaming addiction due to esports is a serious concern among youth.

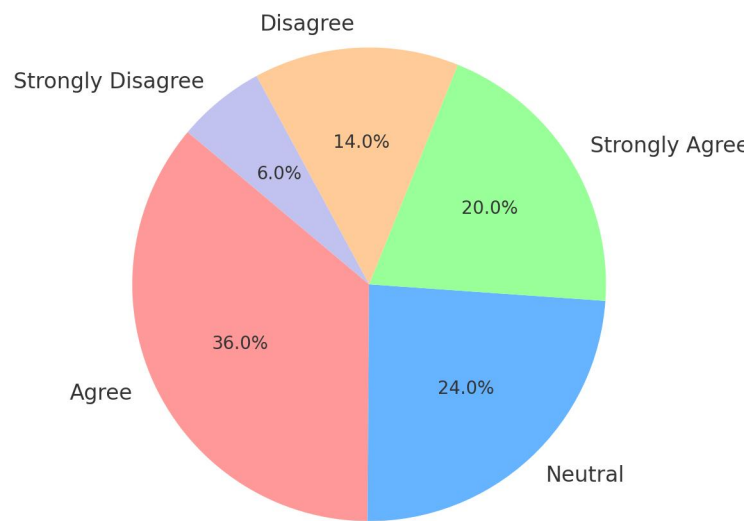
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This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Esports can negatively affect academic performance if not managed properly.

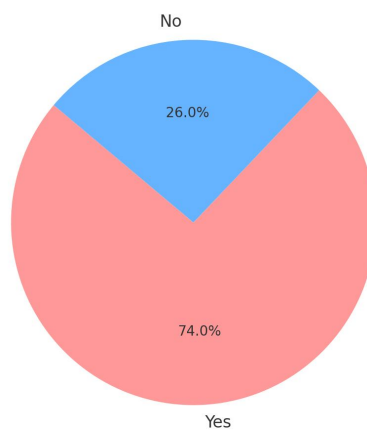
Do you believe esports can negatively affect academic performance if not managed properly?



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Do you believe esports can be considered a legitimate sport?

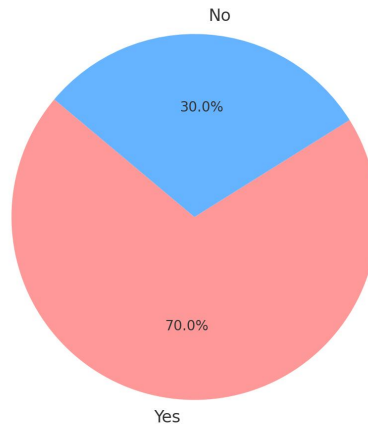
Do you believe esports can be considered a legitimate sport?



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

- Do you think esports should be included in school or college curriculums?

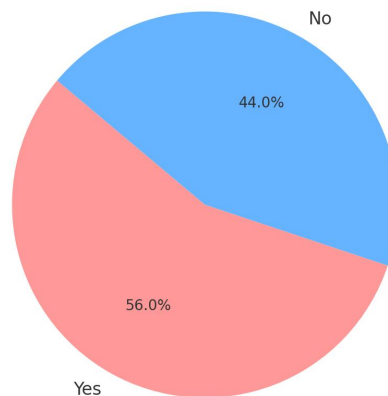
think esports should be included in school or college



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Do you think esports can provide long-term financial stability as a career?

think esports can provide long-term financial stability



This chart represents the distribution of responses for the given question. The data indicates the general perception of youth regarding this aspect of esports.

Findings

One of the major advantages identified is the enhancement of problem-solving abilities and hand-eye coordination, which is in accordance with research on the cognitive impacts of esports. Most of the respondents feel that gaming increases multitasking capabilities and strategic thinking, which enhances both academic and professional skill acquisition. Esports also promotes teamwork, leadership, and identity formation, which encourages social interaction among gaming communities. Most respondents affirm esports as a true sport and profitable career choice, a testament to the industry's money-making advancement and heightened professional prospects.

Despite the benefits of enhanced cognitive functions through esports, worries persist over gaming addiction and poor performance in studies. Although cognitive functions are boosted by esports, excessive gaming has the potential to cause abandonment of studies and time mismanagement. Most of the respondents accept that self-control and balancing the screen time is important to live a healthy life. Sedentary lifestyle and repetitive strain injury are

also known to be the risks associated. Ethics issues like doping with performance-enhancing substances and gender imbalance in esports are the driving forces behind improved safeguarding policies in the industry.

In general, the results show that esports has both opportunities and challenges. Although it promotes skill acquisition and career opportunities, regulating screen time, health issues, and upholding ethical standards are necessary for long-term sustainability in the esports industry.

Recommendations

1. Institutions should introduce esports as an extracurricular activity to harness its benefits while promoting balance.
2. Parental guidance is crucial in ensuring responsible gaming habits among youth.
3. More research is needed to explore long-term effects on health and professional development.
4. Game developers should promote responsible gaming features such as screen-time monitoring.

Conclusion

Esports is now a defining feature of contemporary digital entertainment that has greatly impacted young people in numerous ways. This study brings out the positives and negatives of competitive gaming. Esports has been demonstrated to improve cognitive skills, problem-solving, teamwork, and job opportunities, providing young people with rich experiences that can be carried over into tangible opportunities. Issues related to gaming addiction, distractions from studies, physical health consequences, and ethics within the gaming industry cannot be overlooked.

As esports also has several positives, appropriate gaming habits should be promoted so as to strike an equilibrium between digital interaction and good health. Families, parents, and the sectoral players all need to coordinate efforts so as to preclude the harmful outcomes while fully leverages the possibility of esports to foster expertise growth and career prospects. Long-term career stability in esports and the effect of long-term gaming on physical and mental well-being are avenues that need to be further investigated through future research. Through promoting a disciplined and supportive esports environment, the sport can keep flourishing while supporting good youth development.

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