



## SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND GAMING PROFILE OF DOTA-2 ESPORTS PLAYERS IN HARYANA

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### Introduction

Esports are organised video game competitions.<sup>1</sup> These matches often occur between professional players (either one-on-one or in teams) within the context of online leagues or tournaments that can be aired on television, streamed online, or staged in front of a live audience. Through computers or game consoles, Esports players compete against one another in a virtual environment. It's crucial to note that not all video games fall within the Esports umbrella. Esports are computer or video games that are competitive in nature, have fixed matches, and call for a specific skill set.<sup>2</sup> Esports also include a variety of genres of various computer games completely differing from each other.

Esports has experienced tremendous growth as a form of entertainment during the past ten years, becoming one of the biggest entertainment sectors. Computer games have become immensely appealing as a result of this commercial association, which has given them a platform where they can be compared to traditional sports.<sup>3</sup> Esports viewership and professional earnings have reached levels comparable to those of traditional professional sports, even though the category of Esports as sports is still up for debate.<sup>4</sup> The gaming sector is approximately two-thirds the size of the film sector and larger than the music sector. The number of persons actively participating in video games is projected to be 2 million, significantly more than those actively participating in traditional sports. Tens of thousands of people who enjoy video games also participate in professional competition in a variety of Esports tournaments.<sup>5</sup>

Esports contain different disciplines, which are simply different computer games.<sup>6</sup> Although in general any computer game that allows playing against another could be a possible discipline in Esports, there are certain core games, which are most popular even from a worldwide perspective. Main genre of esports include a). Simulation, b) Real time strategy, c) role playing games, d) Action Games, e) Multiple online Battle Games and f) First person shooting games.

Despite having the world's largest youth population, India's esports industry is still under-developed. There are number of reasons for these challenges, primarily being economical, technological, sociocultural, political and psychological. Further due to technical reasons Esports players a rare sample in India.<sup>7</sup> While gaming is growing in India, the number of professional or semi-professional Esports players remains a small subset of the overall gaming population. There is no centralized or comprehensive database of Esports players in India. Many players operate independently, or within informal networks, often without official team affiliations, making it

difficult to identify or contact them for studies. Gaming as a career is still not widely accepted in Indian society, especially among older generations, which may cause players to underreport or hide their identity as Esports professionals. Esports players are distributed across multiple cities and online platforms (e.g., PC, mobile, console), adding to sampling challenges.

It is for these reasons we aim to explore the sociodemographic and game related features of the elite sports players in Haryana.

## Methods

**Study participants:** A total of 40 individuals in the age group of 18-25 years were approached for the participation in the study. We recruited using convenient sampling from Esports cafes from Gurgaon, Faridabad, Rohtak and Sonipat using a cross-section research design. The survey period lasted for 4 weeks. Only those players who (i) had competed in one or more state/national level sports or esports event in last one year, (ii) practicing minimum of one hour/day (iii) fluent in English and (iv) provided informed consent were included. This study was approved by the Institute Ethics Committee. All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study.

**Data Collection:** The Information was collected using a specially designed questionnaire focusing on gender, age, academic qualifications, occupation, relationship status, devices used by Esports players, information regarding participation in competitive gaming, the average time spent playing sports/videogames and other characteristics related to gaming.

**Data Analysis:** The obtained data were coded for the statistical analysis and the Statistical Analysis was done using IBM and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0 for the analysis of the quantitative data. Descriptive methods, means and standard deviations were used for finding the average age of Esports athletes and Median and Interquartile Range were used to analyse the socio-demographic details and background data sheet details of the participants.

## Results

All of the esports players interviewed were Male with half of them currently pursuing their under graduation. All of them were employed with 31 currently in a relationship. (Table 1)

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of esports players**

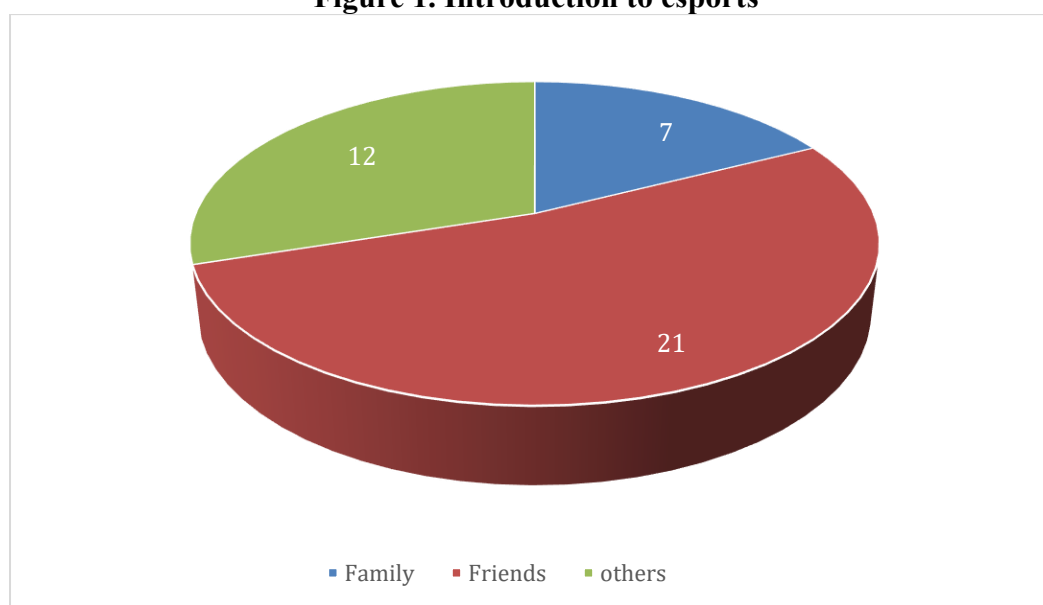
Variable	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	40 (100)
Education (In years)	
Pursuing UG	20 (50)
Graduate	20 (50)
Employment status	
Employed	40 (100)
Relationship status	
Single	9 (22.5)
Dating	31 (77.50)

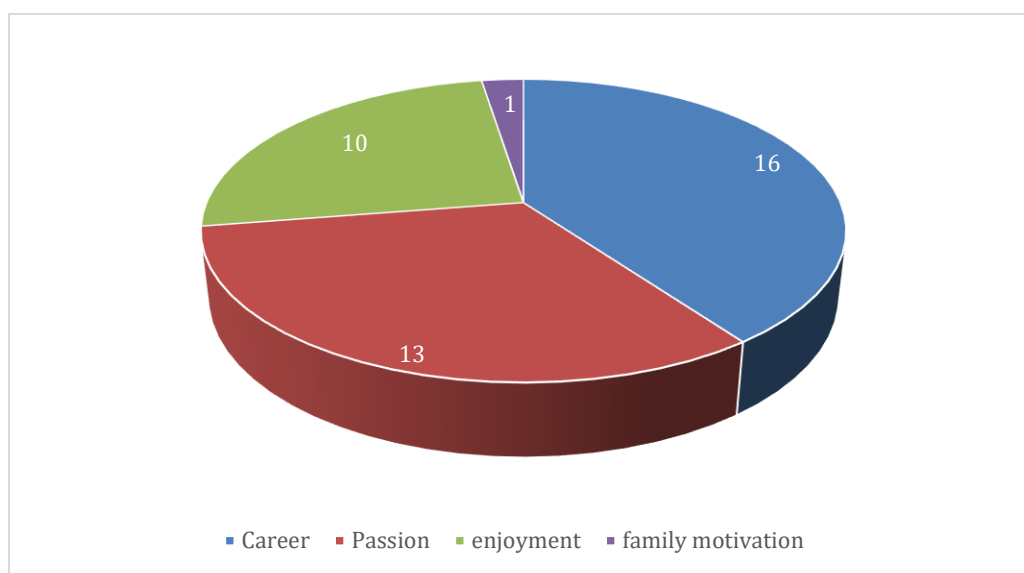
All of the esports were involved in playing DOTA 2 as esports genre on computer devices. Seventy five percent of the sample spent greater than 30 hours during the weekdays engaging in esports related activities with other ten percent spending time between 10 -30 hours. During the weekend, close to 60% of the players spend 30 hours or more in esports related activities. Majority of the sample (60%) reported participating in multiple tournaments several times a month. (Table 2)

**Table 2. Playing Characteristics of esports players**

Variables	Frequency (%)
Type of esports played DOTA 2	40 (100)
Device used Personal computer	40 (100)
Cumulative time spent on sports or video gaming in hours (weekdays) <10 10-30 >30	2(5) 10(25) 28(70)
Average time spent on sports or video gaming in hours (weekends) <10 10-30 >30	6(15) 11(27.5) 23(57.5)
Frequency of participation in the tournaments in the last year Did not compete 1-2 3-5 Several times a month	1(2.50) 8(20) 8(20) 23(57.50)

In figure 1, Esports athletes have reported the highest influence of peers in terms of introduction to both Esports  $n=21$  (52.50%) followed by the influence of advertisement through social media  $n=12$  (30%). In Figure 2, 40% ( $n=16$ ) of the Esports athletes engaged in competitive gaming because of career, 32.50% ( $n=13$ ) for passion, 25% ( $n=10$ ) for enjoyment and 2.5% ( $n=1$ ) because of family motivation.

**Figure 1. Introduction to esports****Figure 2. Reasons for competitive gaming**



## Discussion

Given the popularity as well as clinical implications of online gaming highlighted by their recent inclusion as a separate clinical entity, it is imperative to understand the various factors associated with these conditions. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the socio-demographic and gaming characteristics of esports players from a specific state of India. As Highlighted above, esports present a rare sample in Indian conditions due to variability of esports genre, variations in the equipment's used and lack of clear -cut definition over what includes competitive gaming.

The geographical location from where this sample was taken represents areas where young adults are likely to be users of online gaming and opportunities for engagement in esports. Predominant male sample in our study highlights that esports continue to be a male dominated discipline. This has been highlighted in several international studies. Decades of research on gender in the context of technology and computer gaming clearly present that women and other minority individuals in these settings have remained oppressed.<sup>8</sup>

All of the players were involved in playing DOTA 2 which is a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game, in which two teams compete to attack and destroy the enemy base, while defending their own.<sup>9</sup> Each Team is composed of 5 players, with each playing a unique character (hero) from a large pool of characters. As players accumulate resources, they can customise their characters with abilities and in-game items. DOTA 2 is one of the most esports genre across the globe.

Participants in our study reported significant hours engaging in esports related activity with over 60% reporting spending more than 30 cumulative hours during weekdays and weekend respectively, in addition to being employed. Esports players are involved in physical activities including moving fingers across a keyboard and moving a mouse around. argues that Esports players are physically engaged in different ways, as professional players. Esports players also follow intense practice regimens in order to train their hand movements, improve reaction times and their muscle memory.<sup>10</sup>

Champion teams of various Esports tournaments report that they practice more than twelve hours a day for months together without any significant breaks. Literature suggests that Esports players were exposed to acute physiological stresses during competitions, which were comparable with the top athletes from other sports.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is clear that Esports athletes put in efforts to train as well as go under a certain level of acute strain which is somewhat comparable to traditional sports.

Further, recent developments suggest that acceptance of esports has been growing among school and colleges. Certain Esports players have been granted visas from the US immigration services, acknowledging them as internationally recognised athletes and thereby treating them equivalent to athletes from other sports. In addition, Esports has also been added to numerous intercollegiate athletic departments, further enhancing its acceptance.<sup>12</sup>

However, there are challenges which risk the future Esports as a global sporting activity.<sup>13</sup> The challenges of utmost concern include practice of betting, match fixing, doping and software hacking. Match fixing, doping and software hacking are used by players to obtain undue advantages and outperform their opponents. Gambling and skin betting on other hand, are often carried out by Esports consumers and spectators. Although there is scarcity, available literature suggests that younger people (particularly underage) are much likely to be involved which may further enhance their risk for future gambling disorder.

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