

## Chapter 2

# Esports Involvement and Its Effect on Student College and Career Readiness Factors

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This research explores how esports involvement affects college and career readiness factors of students aged 14-24. These factors include student academic performance, attendance, individual view of future outlook, observation of student learned soft skills as a result of esports, as well as the sense of involvement on campus. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, esports helps build a sense of community, aids in character development, and helps increase participation and engagement for students; furthermore, esports also allows for opportunities to explore STEM-related fields (NFHS Parent's Guide). As this is a major cause for the support of esports in education, the research aims to explore these concepts and its validity through individual students.*

## **SCHOLASTIC ESPORTS ON THE RISE**

The rise of gaming culture throughout the past decade combined with multiple lifestyle brands and esports organizations becoming more relevant, has brought together an abundance of individuals whose interest has spread from just gaming to watching competitive gaming or esports. With the immense increase in attention in front of the public, businesses, competition, and scholastics have become the focus. Now there are over 2.7 billion gamers in the world (Wijman, 2020). Almost 35% of the world's population are gamers, North America is only 7% of the total amount of the world's gamers. The average age of a video game player in the US is between 35-44 years old but living in the basement is an old stereotype that really does not fit that perpetuated misnomer. Gamers are adults who connect with friends and build relationships. 64% of U.S. adults are gamers, 41% of players are women. Gaming is becoming more mainstream than ever, "but the numbers also tell us how vital video games have become to mental health and peace of mind" (Takahashi, 2020, para. 3). If we drill down further almost all teens in the US 12-17 years old play video games. According to the PEW Research Center: "Fully 99% of boys and 94% of girls play video games" (Pew Research, 2008, para 4). Younger teen boys are the most likely to play games, followed by younger girls and older boys. Older girls are the least "enthusiastic" players of video games, though more than half of them play. Some 65% of daily gamers are male; 35% are female. What about money? Well gaming on mobile, console, and PC is a \$160-billion-dollar industry worldwide (Wijman, 2021). According to Forbes, global revenues of the esports industry in 2018 are predicted to reach \$1 billion, increasing 38 percent from 2017 (Evans, 2020). By 2023, the game market will surpass \$200 billion. Mobile gaming is almost half of all gaming due to access to phones across all regions in the world. Console leads over PC due to cost and more entry-level games. Even before Covid-19 video game revenue was bigger than movies and music combined (Stewart, 2019).

## **A GROWING INDUSTRY FOR PLAYERS AND STUDENTS**

Gaming offers the least expensive entertainment. In a recent study, the quantified cost per hour of various forms of entertainment was researched. The average cost per hour for gaming services is much cheaper than the cost of a book and even more competitive relative to the cost of entertainment giants Netflix and Spotify (Clinton, 2020). Traditional gaming is a game you buy one time and play, and then may buy the newer release like the Call of Duty franchise compared to SaaS-like gaming is more like a subscription-based games such as World of Warcraft that has monthly fees or even Fortnite and League of Legends which are free to download and play but have in-game cosmetic purchases. Let us look at careers. The US video game industry accounts for nearly 429,000 jobs across all 50 states (Ggarzon, 2020). Economic output and jobs could also be under-calculated based on what metrics are used and public data, however esports and gaming careers are like traditional sports careers. The young women and men who comprise the esports world are more than the gamers. There are several different pathways and roles that must be filled for esports to continue to thrive (NASEF). Organizations like Hitmarker list the available internships and jobs in the gaming and esports industry, as well as online gaming social networking platforms such as eFuse.

The esports industry is calculated by a group of academic leaders to be \$24 billion dollars (Ahn, 2020). The esports industry may be far larger and possibly more economically influential than previously reported, which in turn would explain the rise of esports in both the popular zeitgeist and investment

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