

Parents of Future Esports Professionals: An Exploration of Parental Attitudes

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INTRODUCTION

Electronic sports (esports) is a growing industry, gaining credibility as a professional sport and career (Meng-Lewis et al. 2021). Specifically, esports is increasing in popularity as a career pathway among adolescents and young adults under 24 years (Bányai et al. 2020). As a multibillion dollar industry, professional players can have a lucrative career through tournament prize money, sponsorships, and generating income through livestreams (Guo et al. 2024). As the popularity of livestreaming has increased, the celebrity status of professional players is comparable to that of traditional professional athletes, such as footballers, tennis players, and golfers (Lehnert et al. 2022). With the fame and success of professional players, it is not surprising there is an increasing interest amongst youth; Newzoo (2024) reports that Gen Alpha and Gen Z (aged 14 to 29) are the most prominent demographic interacting with esports content, with Bányai et al. (2020) reporting the same younger generation showing interest in esports career pursuits. With so much interest from youth, it is crucial to explore parents' attitudes for parental support of children and schools pursuing esports as extracurricular activities or career endeavours. However, there is limited research investigating parental attitudes of esports as a career, and especially in the Australian context. Therefore, we used cross-sectional study design to explore the attitudes of parents towards esports and esports as a career via an online survey, and then implemented an education-based intervention to improve parental attitudes of esports in the context of their children. We hypothesised that the education-based intervention would significantly improve parents attitudes towards esports careers. In addition, we hypothesised that different demographic variables predicting attitudes on esports careers, which in turn would predict different perspectives on gamers. Participants ($N=142$) were Australian residents, aged 24 to

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55 years, with at least one child under 18 years. Participants completed an Esports Attitude Measure, Gaming Stereotypes Beliefs Measure, and Career Ranking Scale pre-intervention and post-intervention; the education-based intervention consisted of an informational paragraph aimed to improve participants' knowledge surrounding esports as a career option for their children. ANOVA models, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, and path analysis were used to test the hypotheses. It was found that an education-intervention significantly improved participants' attitudes towards esports careers. Furthermore, esports attitudes significantly predicted parents' beliefs of gaming stereotypes such as esports as an unattainable career, fear of negative health outcomes, and beliefs players are antisocial. However, parents' age, gender and parents' gaming status (e.g. if parents play electronic games or not) did not significantly predict parents' esports attitudes. Results from the Career Ranking Scale found amongst a variety of different potential careers (e.g., Doctor, Influencer, etc.) parents ranked esports significantly higher post-intervention, moving up by 0.2 of a rank (pre-intervention rank $M=4.93$; post-intervention rank $M=4.74$). Our study suggests parents' attitudes towards esports careers are negative, but can improve when their understanding and knowledge increases. Improving parents' knowledge of the realistic benefits of their children participating in esports teams (e.g., developing skills in leadership, social skills and team-building), and dispelling negative stereotypes is an important first step to encouraging parents to safely support their children's esports and gaming endeavours (Svensson et al. 2024). Future research should further investigate parental attitudes versus the support parents offer to their children to better understand this relationship, including the perspectives of both parents and children. Longitudinal research would also be beneficial to investigate the role education and knowledge for parents can have in supporting the next generation of esports players: our children.

BIO

Kerry Todd recently completed her Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) at the University of South Australia, with her thesis investigating parental attitudes towards esports. Kerry has an interest in parents and children's experiences, knowledge and attitudes towards esports and more broadly, video gaming.

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