eSport and Philosophy Behind: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Introduction: Sport proliferating all over the world and became an inevitable phenomenon. eSport rising rapidly since the beginning of the new century, especially since the industrial revolution 4.0, beyond esports' disagreement as a branch of sport. eSport arises being a trend and millennial lifestyle that can provide a new paradigm in sports fields. eSport is a necessity in a world that increasingly emphasizes the digital basis in everyday life. This research tries to complement the study of eSport from a philosophical perspective. The study of philosophy in eSport intends to provide a philosophical perspective that seeks to explain the nature, questioning the issue of eSport critically to obtain fundamental knowledge of the reality of eSport phenomena. In the field of sports, several concepts require a deep understanding. The concept becomes a mental representation of a phenomenon abstraction based on symptoms perception as captured by the five senses.

Objective: This research aims to provide an approach to the philosophical basis of eSports development.

Method: This research is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The method in this research is a literature review.

Results: The results showed that eSport reflects the basic philosophical concepts of materialism, pragmatism, and existentialism seen in the material's substance impact in various fields of human life and eSports players' motivation.

Keywords: eSport; Digital; Philosophy; Virtual

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digitalization in the era of industrial revolution 4.0 changed the movement and interaction of humans. Digitalization creates many sports changes and presents a new perspective in sports with the emergence of a new sport associated as electronic sports (eSports). Internet connectivity allows us to play with people around the world or identified as Online Multiplayer. The presence of eSport was greeted enthusiastically by various ages, and in a brief time, eSport gained popularity, especially among young people. Since being more than a video game, eSport has grown into a recognized sport and has even presented tournaments at world-class sporting events such as the Olympics and the Asian Games. In the Asian Games, held in Jakarta in 2018, the eSport competed in six...
competitions, namely League of Legends, Pro Evolution Soccer, Arena of Valor, Starcraft II, Hearthstone, and Clash Royale(1).

At the beginning of its emergence, eSport was headed in developed countries such as South Korea, America, and the European region because eSport needs sophisticated and adequate network equipment and systems support. However, in its development, eSport is also multiplying in developing countries; even many world-class professional eSport players come from developing countries such as Indonesia. Various facilities and eSport training and development centers build specifically to support the promotion of eSport. Likewise, the number of spectators for the eSport tournament has increased significantly every year(2). In Indonesia, eSport already has an official association known as IeSPA (Indonesia eSport Association). This association was initiated by the gaming community from several circles, including game providers, game forums, and several gaming clans in Indonesia. The eSport association in Indonesia is under the supervision of FORMI (Indonesian Community Recreation Sports Federation) and has received recognition from the world-class association IeSF (The International e-Sports Federation)(3).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, human interaction and virtual media were so close that the world of electronic games is currently the fastest-growing entertainment sector(2,4–6). A combination of the development of entertainment technology and art are preferred by the wider community. Indeed in developed countries, technological developments in the gaming industry are often one of the main economic forces, for example, in Japan and the United States(2).

The presence of eSport as a newly introduced sport brings up controversy and debate. Many people assume that eSport is not a sport but only a video game with sophisticated visual and digital packaging. eSport is considered not fulfilling the aspects and requirements of sports because there are no aspects of human physical skills displayed(7,8). eSport is rejected as a sport because not "humanistic" sufficient. After all, there is no direct physical contact between humans, besides unreal, virtual interactions. eSport is considered not to contribute to human development because it fewer sports governance characteristics and more limited body control involvement. The production, creation, ownership, and promotion of esports are not under the supervision of a stable and sustainable institution. eSports is only limited to computer games, but does not qualify as a sport(7,9).

On the other hand, the basic idea of the assumption that eSport can be categorized as a sport is regarding the competitive nature similar to sports in general, and eSport athletes also carry out high-intensity preparation and training like another sports(8). Besides, eSport also has an institutional system that follows the Olympic sports organization regulations (4).

Regardless of the controversy over eSports as a sport, eSport has a high interest. eSport is considered not to contribute to human development because it fewer sports governance characteristics and more limited body control involvement. eSport allows us to play with people on the other side of the world in real-time without being blocked by geographic barriers. This innovation cannot ascertain in traditional sports, so eSport has become popular among millennials quickly (10,11).

The world's eSports tournaments have a strong fan base with a broad audience, both those who watched the tournament live and those who watched it via live streaming via Youtube and Twitch. Many of the world's professional gamers have even created Youtube channels to show live playing skills to the audience. The more grown-up eSports nowadays even penetrate several big football clubs to have an eSports team; one of the big football clubs with an eSports team is Manchester City. In 2016 Manchester City recruited a young 18 years old to become a FIFA division eSports player(12).
As a part of human life, sports reflect a real human's viewpoint from the perpetrator's mental movement (13,14). Ideological concepts believed by the players influence in-depth involvement in a sports field. This research tries to complement the study of eSports from a philosophical point of view. The study of philosophy in esports proposes to provide a philosophical point of view that seeks to explain the nature of, critically question, esports issues to gain essential knowledge of the eSports phenomenon's reality. This study aims to provide an approach to the philosophical basis of eSports development.

METHODS

This study intends to review all philosophical studies regarding eSports and sports published in various scientific journals. The literature data collection includes research from various databases on search engines such as Google Scholar, Researchgate, tandfonline, and reputable journals indexed by Scopus. The keywords used in the literature search are * philosophy *; * eSport *; * online competitive game *. Searches for data regarding keywords and abstracts as authors may use synonyms for the term eSports, such as video games or competitive games.

Search results for reputable journals with the theme of eSports became known in 2002 through a sociological approach(15) and experienced significant developments in the following years. Even though eSports is a topic widely discussed in various science fields, the philosophical approach is still quite limited in its search. This paper attempts to provide an overview of eSports' philosophical approach by elaborating on the various literature sources found.

RESULTS

The study of philosophy in sports is a part of sports history in Greek times; it was near the gods' offerings on Mount Olympus. At the beginning of its emergence, sports' religious nuance made sports have a profound meaning as a form of movement of the human soul(16). There is a confidential relationship between sport and ancient philosophy (17). Motion and play as the core of sports discussing in various theories, start from Socrates, Plato, Wittgenstein to Kant theory. Bernard Suits's The Grasshopper has become a classic book in discussing sports philosophy, widely reviewed by various scientist until now (18).

eSports is a new sport gaining popularity with advances in technology, but play eSports primary material is not entirely bizarre. Specific eSport discussions within a philosophical approach are challenging to found in many literature studies. However, various studies on eSports reflect philosophical thinking. As the mother of science, philosophy provides a guideline for rational behavior and life choices. From the various literature ascertained, eSports reflects the basic concepts and philosophy thoughts.

<table>
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<th>Philosophical View</th>
<th>Basic Concepts</th>
<th>Implementation in eSports</th>
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<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>The concept of materialism judgments that the existence of something recognized when it materializes in an object. All things consist of matter, and all phenomena are the result of material interactions. The matter is considered the only substance.</td>
<td>Substance material is present in devices used for sports support, combat, craftsmanship, and competitive play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Pragmatism explains that the basis of the truth is by resembling the practical results.</td>
<td>Economic impact, Political impact, Social impact, Identity development, Impact in education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existentialism</td>
<td>Existentialism emphasizes everything to humans and everything that accompanies them. Humans are considered a being who must exist or be active with something around them and study the way humans work when they are in this world with awareness.</td>
<td>Motivation in exploring the eSports athlete profession, Independent personal</td>
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DISCUSSION

The concept of materialism judgments that something recognized materializes objects for its existence. The uniqueness of eSport is devices in the form of real objects. Still, the game virtually, which does not materialize in real combat, but the games and battles in eSport are real, specifically in the form of competitive digital games in public places(19,20).

eSports’ occupation as a sport itself is controversial because eSports are considered less “human” and do not present a physical match as a fundamental part of an activity in the sports category (21,22). On the other hand, eSport requires particular expertise, especially in motor and cognitive abilities, and skills, especially knowledge of specific tactics, show that eSport is an activity that requires real effort (7,9,10,19). This argument shows that the game’s technicality, the materialism aspect of eSport, is not fulfilled. Still, when viewed from the expertise in playing matches, supporting tools and the eSport athletes themselves fulfills the materialism aspect.

The concept of materialism is closely related to the concept of pragmatism, as seen in the impacts resulting from eSport. eSport contributes to the country's economic growth on a macro-scale(4,23,24) and the micro-scale(3,25). eSport, originally only considered a form of video gameplay that harmed its player, developed into a potential industry and has become a commercial activity with high investment attractiveness (26). eSport is also known as an emerging and rapidly growing electronic game industry that has turned a video game that was originally just entertainment into an encouraging job since the early 2000s (2).

Starting from playing video games as a hobby in spare time, it gave rise to a new job to play games professionally as an e-Athlete or Professional Gamer (Pro Gamer). A Professional Gamer can get a sponsorship fund of $100,000 just by participating in a game tournament; if they win, they will get an even bigger income (3). The inclusion of various sponsors who support eSport competitions is proof that this sport give a beneficial economic impact (22,24,27).

eSport has brought changes in modern human life. Several eSport studies also show that eSport pragmatically, apart from contributing to the economy, is also related to politics because it involves security, control of resources, and technology that impact political decisions (18,28). eSport also impacts cognitive development and mental toughness (29), and has an impact on social life by strengthening social relations both in the real world and in the virtual world through gaming communities (26,27). eSport also has an impact on the development of athletes and official identities in eSport (30), increased participation in the world of entertainment (31–33), even impacting the world of education with the emergence of outstanding schools with curriculum that accommodate eSport (11,34).

Pragmatic concepts strongly characterize the presence of eSport. Pragmatism does not emphasize objective truth, but contributions and benefits responded directly (13). Modernism, which demands rapid movement, favors objects or actions efficiently and can produce results felt directly. The intense pressure on eSports to be recognized as a sport on an international scale is inseparable from the thought and reality that eSport has encouraged economic changes—the useful aspects of eSport influence numerous human life aspects. Judging from the social, economic, educational, and political impacts of eSport, it appears that the concept of pragmatism binds strongly to the presence of eSport.

Video games and various types of virtual games often perceive negative labels because of poor communication and social interaction, a tendency to violence, addiction, depression, and abnormal behavior contrary to regular norms in society (35–37). However, in its development, competitive video games, later known as eSports, began to be recognized as positively impacting their players. Recognition of the positive impact of eSports includes increased self-confidence, empathy, and increased nationalism among eSports actors (38–40).
Sport offers self-existence rather than a world which is entirely built on pure and abstract reason. eSport relies on individuals trained in competition; this work presents a thick self-description extraction from the perpetrator's life experiences(41). An eSport game can involve and play by more than hundreds of millions of active players worldwide. This figure shows that eSport can fulfill basic human psychological needs and passion for competitive, social, and exploratory reasons(42,43).

Existentialism encourages eSports athletes to choose virtual competition according to their inner passion, not merely a boost of economic motivation or responsibility for the institution. Within playing eSports, a person feels that he is living life according to his will. The philosophy of will as the basis of existentialism met in eSports players who carry out sports activities full of passion as a natural impulse. The motivations that arise in eSports players or athletes are born from the desire to show themselves.

While the public's perception that eSport is negative, players continue to carry out their choice with full of awareness. The eSport game shows humans their existence even though not everyone fully acknowledges it because of the nature of the virtual world's matches. However, it must be admitted that the virtual world is now a real reality, with billions of people connected to it.

CONCLUSION

eSport was exhibited as a phenomenon that accompanies the industrial era 4.0, where human reality is on two sides of the real and virtual world. During the controversy eSports as sports because of its virtual scenery, this sport has a real impact on real human life. eSport has experienced rapid development in the last two decades from being considered to impact negatively, transforming an encouraging industry with high investment attractiveness.

The trend and popularity of eSports is an implication of philosophical thoughts. This paper explains the study of eSport philosophy for materialism, pragmatism, and existentialism by looking at the substance of the material, the impact in various fields of human life, and eSports players' motivation. The philosophical approach provides a perspective that human behavior philosophical thinking is influence. It also explains that even sophisticated technology will eventually find its way back to philosophy as the mother of science.

REFERENCES


