



## e-Sports: Playing just for fun or playing to satisfy life goals?



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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** e-Sports is an area of the game scene, in which computer game players specialize in a specific game, form game teams (clans), compete together in tournaments and meet at so-called LAN (Local Area Network) parties. The objective of this study was to compare the different types of e-Sports players from the perspective of their personality traits and explicit motives and to compare e-Sports players with casual players in selected life goals.

**Methods:** A questionnaire assessing life goals (Pöhlmann & Brunstein, 1997) and basic personality traits (Personality inventory KUD, 1986) were administered to 108 e-Sports players and 54 casual computer game players.

**Results:** In the group of e-Sports players, only clan leaders significantly differed in life goal power from those who were not members of any clan. Significant differences were also found between e-Sports players and casual players in terms of life goals affiliation and diversion.

**Conclusions:** e-Sports seem not only to be about playing computer games, but can also serve as a means of satisfying the need to belong. They do this by creating friendly relationships through membership in game teams and participation in LAN parties, or satisfying the need for power by upholding a position of a game team leader and determining its course of action.

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## 1. Introduction

Playing computer games is a very popular way of spending leisure time. The ability to play against human opponents, which is the main aspect of multiplayer computer games, contributes to its appeal. According to the [sc2ranks.com](http://sc2ranks.com) website, the strategic game StarCraft 2 has over 1 million players in Europe alone. The enormous increase in the number of players has led to the acceptance of computer game playing as a mainstream activity (Williams, Yee, & Caplan, 2008). In computer games, in a similar way to sports, it is possible to distinguish between competitive playing and occasional playing. The area of game playing in which the player's goal is to continually advance, regularly train, compete, and participate in leagues and tournaments is termed as e-Sports. It is important to emphasize that "e-Sports as a phenomenon deserves to be investigated purely for its influences on society and culture" (Wagner, 2006, p. 3). So far, there have been very few studies which have dealt with the demographic characteristics, playing style, identity or motivation of e-Sports players for playing (Jin, 2010).

### 1.1. Definition of e-Sports

In one of the few previous studies, Wagner (2006, p. 3) has defined e-Sports as "an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies". e-Sports represents a kind of a merge between electronic games, sports, business and media. It is necessary to point out the ongoing debate about whether it is possible to regard e-Sports as a kind of sport or not. Competitive gaming has some similarities with sports, such as regular training, team work or the perfect execution of tactics planned in advance (Hutchins, 2006). The term e-Sports itself is often replaced with other terms such as: progaming, ESport, cybersports, cyber athletics or competitive gaming. e-Sports is a phenomenon of mostly younger generations. An average player of e-Sports is between 15 and 25 years old and trains 3–4 times a week for 2–4 h (Müller-Lietzkow, 2006; Topalov, 2007). In contrast to casual players (casual gamers), e-Sports players mainly focus on one game, in which they specialize, train regularly and participate in LAN (Local Area Network) or online competitions. Many e-Sports players are members of game clans. These are organized teams of players that regularly train together and participate in leagues and tournaments (Griffiths, Davies, & Chappel, 2003). The game clan usually consists of a leader and other members. The role of the clan leader

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is to build the game team by recruiting new players, eliminating inactive players or those who have been involved in misconduct, setting player rosters for matches, devising game tactics and communicating with sponsors.

### 1.2. Personality traits of players

Most of the previous studies have been focused on the personalities of game players in general or on players of Massively multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPG). Many studies have found that there are differences in the personalities of the players in connection to playing different game genres (Borders, 2012; deGraft-Johnson, Wang, Sutherland, & Norman, 2013; Johnson, Wyeth, Sweetser, & Gardner, 2012; Orr, Ross, & Orr, 2012; Tekofsky, Spronck, Plaat, Herik, & Broersen, 2013; Williams et al., 2008; Zammito, 2010). One of the studies, which focused on the dynamics of the guilds (a guild is a version of a clan in the MMORPG environment), seem to think that the players' behavior in the online world is parallel to their physical world, in which the degree of group activities is similar to that in the online world (Seay, Jerome, Lee, & Kraut, 2003). Thus, more sociable people should form more relationships in the online environment too.

### 1.3. Motivation of e-Sports players

Studies which have focused on e-Sports and LAN players have found that players' most significant motive was the motive of sociability, followed by the motive of fun, and only then by the motive of performance (Frostling-Henningsson, 2009; Hobler, 2006; Jansz & Martens, 2005; Müller-Lietzkow, 2006). For half of the players, victory in the league or tournament was not found to be important at all (Müller-Lietzkow, 2006). e-Sports and LAN parties' players are predominantly motivated by the desire for social contact, for which the party creates suitable conditions (the opportunity to meet other players, cooperation between them and mutual communication) and less by the desire for competing and winning.

### 1.4. The present study

Demetrovics, Urbán, Nagygyörgy, et al. (2011, p. 823) state that "we have to consider that these applications (online games) satisfy basic and concrete human needs in the conditions of our modern society". For instance, to satisfy the need to belong (according to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs), players can communicate with each other during the game, or form game teams for social interaction purposes (Teng & Chen, 2013). Thus, if games do not just serve the purpose of entertaining the player, and can be perceived in a broader context as a space that is able to satisfy the needs of the player, then it is also possible to expect different personality traits and motivation characterization of players specialized in a particular playing style.

Therefore, the aim of the current study was to examine the existence of differences between various types of e-Sports players; specifically clan leaders, clan members, non-members of a clan, solo players and team players. The differences in life goals of intimacy, affiliation, power, diversion and achievement as well as the personality traits of dominance and extraversion were examined. In addition, it aimed to look at the existence of differences between e-Sports players and casual players in the specified life goals.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Procedure and participants

The study sample consisted of 108 e-Sports players with an average age of 20 ( $SD = 3.27$ ) and 54 casual players with an average

age of 23 ( $SD = 5.44$ ) playing two real-time strategy games. The e-Sports players consisted of 39 players of the game StarCraft: Broodwar and 69 players of the game WarCraft 3. Out of this, 44 players (solo players) preferred one-on-one games (1v1) and 64 players (team players) preferred playing with a team mate against the same number of opponents (2v2 etc.). In terms of the structure of the players, there were 21 clan leaders, 49 proper clan members and 38 who were not members of any clan. The players were of Slovak and Czech nationality as players from both countries play in common e-Sports leagues and tournaments. The players were asked to fill in a questionnaire directly on Battlenet or they were contacted via email. The questionnaires were administered online. Casual players were deemed as players who did not play any computer game professionally, played games for more than 2 h per week and did not play any MMORPG games. Casual players were recruited by non-randomized occasional sampling.

### 2.2. Measures

The personality inventory KUD is used for the basic personality dimensions which are activity, stability, dominance, rationality and extraversion (Personality inventory KUD, 1986). The inventory consists of 80 items, 16 items for each dimension. Respondents answer on a three-level scale (I agree; I do not know; I disagree). In this study only the dimensions of dominance ( $\alpha = 0.721$ ) and extraversion ( $\alpha = 0.752$ ) were evaluated. Dominance is characterized by imperiousness, self-assurance, independence, authoritative-ness and aggression. Extraversion is characterized by cooperation, gregariousness, openness, sociability and communicability.

The questionnaire GOALS assesses general, long-term life goals (Pöhlmann & Brunstein, 1997). Respondents are presented with 24 goals pertaining to six major life domains: intimacy, affiliation, altruism, power, achievement, and diversion. For each goal, three attributes are rated: importance, attainability, and degree of success at attainment. Each of these goals' attributes is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). In this study, only the attribute of importance (which goals are desirable and valuable for the person and indicate the strength of his/her commitment to a goal) for the life goals of intimacy ( $\alpha = 0.743$ ), affiliation ( $\alpha = 0.805$ ), power ( $\alpha = 0.760$ ), diversion ( $\alpha = 0.818$ ) and achievement ( $\alpha = 0.757$ ) was evaluated.

## 3. Results

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the different types of players in the life goals of affiliation, achievement, dominance and power, as well as the personality trait of extraversion in clan leaders, clan members and those not members of any clan. There was no significant effect of the different types of players on affiliation ( $F(2, 105) = 0.387, p = 0.680$ ), achievement ( $F(2, 105) = 1.396, p = 0.252$ ), dominance ( $F(2, 105) = 1.362, p = 0.261$ ) or extraversion ( $F(2, 105) = 1.540, p = 0.219$ ) at the  $p < .05$  level for the three conditions. The results of one-way ANOVA testing differences between clan leaders, members and not members of any clan in power are presented in Table 1.

There was a significant effect of the different types of players on power at the  $p < .05$  level for the three conditions ( $F(2, 105) = 3.211, p = 0.044$ ). The results of the post hoc comparisons are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1**  
Results of one-way ANOVA for the life goal power by different types of players.

	Mean of squares	df	F	p
Power	3.710	2	3.211	.044

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