# Structure and Gaps of Esport Governance and Path for its Pursuit of Legitimacy Among Traditional Sports

**HAMK**
**HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU**
**HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

**HAMK**
HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Name of Degree Programme                                      Abstract

This thesis identifies the gaps that exist within esport governance and its structure, and proposes a path for esport governance to take to increase its legitimacy among traditional sports. Currently the structure of esport governance is heavily segmented and does not fall under any model that unifies various important stakeholders together. The research question evaluated is "What are the structure and gaps of esport governance and paths for its pursuit of legitimacy among traditional sports?"

As practical research, qualitative methods were used with semi structured interviews being conducted with six participants who have background in esport federation and association work as well as backgrounds as professional coaches and players in esport organizations. The interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach and separated into four themes found from the qualitative data. The analysis demonstrated a strong need for unification in the governance of esports through a combination of legitimization strategies and the creation of new models that are not already existing in the governance of traditional sports.

This thesis concludes with the proposal of a new esport governance model that maintains game publishers as the higher government of esports but unifies them with regional and national federations as representatives of their respective esport titles. This will work to create a connection between the game publishers and the local governments and ensure the growth in legitimacy of esport governance and for their needs to be addressed through a proper chain of communication. The thesis was commissioned by the National Finnish Esport Federation to help understand the structure of esport governance.

# Contents

## Appendices

# 1 Introduction

Sports have been governed by external non-profit organizations since the 19th century and the emergence of these types of organizations have increased the past few years. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is one of the most well-known and established form of governing bodies but despite their high significance, high performance sports have also been shaped by the people creating policies outside of the Olympic movement. Non-governmental bodies like national and international federations are important to the international sport system. (Krieger, 2020, p. 1–6) These entities have been responsible for setting the rules and format of competitions within their sport. This structure does not apply to electronic sports (esports), mainly because of the position that game publishers and developers hold (Abanazir, 2018, p. 117–131). This is a result of the key component in esports being the video game, which depends on the digital operating systems of these corporations (Funk et al., 2017, p. 7–13). As commercial enterprises, game publishers and developers make their decisions and are primarily influenced by profit-oriented intentions (Abanazir, 2018).

Compared to traditional sports, the esports community cannot rely on an already developed system of clubs, associations, federations. Esports lack the organizational and regulatory non-profit mechanisms that are present in traditional sports. A legitimate and recognized governing body has not matched the position that game developers hold. (Heidenreich et al., 2022) Despite this, there are international, continental, and national governing bodies formed and that keep emerging. For example, the International Esport Federation, European Esport Federation, and the Finnish Esport Federation.

Currently in esports there is a loose structure that is dominated by publishers creating a scenario that is wild and fast changing. In traditional sports there is a structure, rules, regulations, and systemic hierarchies containing organizational activities. This is the freedom that kickstarted esport and provided opportunities to develop new and innovative ideas. Through the failure of existing organizations, it has been proven that it is difficult to form an

organization that regulates existing games, tournaments, and publishers all at once. (Abanazir, 2018, p. 117–131) Esports are not suited for the standardized approach that traditional sports hold with a rigid governance model (Peng et al, 2020). The issue that challenges esports compared to the traditional understanding of sport governance is that all regulations in an esport title are subject to the respective publisher.

Given these observations on the systematic governance of esports, there still lacks in detail and in-depth research on the institutionalization of esports, and it is highly important. An initial approach is to examine the institutionalization processes of traditional sports and esports. (Summerley, 2020, p. 51–72) Most of the publications that exist are preoccupied with debating whether esports are sports or not (Funk et al., 2018, p. 7–13).

In this research the author does not directly engage in the debate of whether esports are sports or not. The author of this research considers esport as an economic and social phenomenon that has emerged and grown in size in recent years, and with this emergence there has come various governmental bodies that focus on regulating it. This research is made to better understand what governmental bodies currently exist, the gaps that exist within them, and the methods that are approached to legitimize themselves among all sports.

In the esports ecosystem there are primary and secondary stakeholders (Scholz, 2019, cited in Heidenreich, 2002). Primary stakeholders are game developers, tournament organizers, professional teams and players, providers, and esport communities, and secondary are stakeholders governing bodies, sports organizations, sponsors, the general public, investors, entrepreneurs, media, and shareholders. Esports is multi layered and various genres exist within it, which every esport titles resides in. The most popular esport genres are first person shooter games like Counter Strike Global Offensive and Valorant. (Funk et al., 2018, p. 7–13) Esports operate in leagues and tournaments at the amateur and professional level (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2017, p. 7–13). Esports acquire millions of viewers through live, online, and broadcasts all over the world (Funk et al., 2018). The esports ecosystem is always under constant change and development, which often include new games, publishers, tournaments and leagues, mergers, and acquisitions. The multitude of different players jumping into the

scene and vast amount of new and existing games and genres is often neglected in other studies, but it is a key factor in the difficulty in its governance. (Scholz, 2019, cited in Heidenreich, 2002)

This research focuses on the overall structure of esport governance and how its governmental bodies affect the legitimacy of esports among traditional sports. In traditional sports these governmental bodies have great influence and power over their sport but in esports are eclipsed by game developers. This research pursues the following research question: What are the structure and gaps of esport governance and path for its pursuit of legitimacy among traditional sports? The author specifically focuses on the existing efforts to establish one international governing body and the possible routes that esports governance may take to increase its legitimacy in the near future.

## 2   Theoretical Framework

### 2.1   Video Games and Esports Development

The term video games made its first appearance on November 10th, 1973, in an issue by *Business Week* ("A RedHot Market for Video Games," Business Week, November 10, 1973, p. 212) traced by the 2nd edition Oxford English Dictionary (OED).  The term's definition in the OED is "A computer-based game involving a single player or any number of players" (Chandler & Munday, 2011 p.196). From the invention of the first video game Tennis for Two in October 1958 by physicist William Higinbotham of a game similar to Pong in the 1970s, which was a very simple two plater game where you bounce a ball to each other. To Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO) made by video game developing companies Valve and Hidden Pat Entertainment on August 21, 2012, an online environment where players can play against each other in a match with objectives, rules, and teams. In this time span there has been a lot of technological growth with better devices being released and improved every year.

The potential of video games and their effect on society and how we view competition was met by many organizations dedicating themselves to further advancing technology,

developing games, and expanding the popularity of video games. Some very well-known organizations that have been at the forefront of video game development are Nintendo, Valve, Rockstar, and SEGA, also their game development operations started from 1966-1998 making them some the oldest organizations within video game development. With these organizations taking video game development to the next level, then came the increase of popularity and competitions where players compete in a video game in a tournament where then a player or team wins a trophy, prizes, cash, or a bundle of prizes. With an emerging number of competitions and an increasing number of fans, players, and developers, video games began becoming more competitive with players striving to be the best in the world. The video game community came about the term *esports* for the first time in 1999 during a press release on the launch of the Online Gamers Association (OGA), where the speaker Matt Bettignton compared esports to traditional sports. (Wagner,2006)

Esports' direct meaning is electronic games. The term is defined by collaborative practices that allow players to face their opponents through a digital medium. The first instance of an esport competition was held in 1972 by the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at Stanford University. The name of the event was "Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics" where 24 total players got together and held matches in the game Spacewar! The award for the winner of this tournament was a one-year subscription of "Rolling Stone" magazine and it marked the first instance of an esport event. (Larch, 2022) Competitions in esport remained fairly small with small audiences and limited number of players because of the limitations in technology that were mainly available in institutions and universities.

Many esport enthusiasts consider the first true esport event to be The Red Annihilation, an esport event that took place in 1997 and had over 2000 players participating in one-on-one competitions in the video game Quake. The tournament began online until the players got reduced to just 16, flown to Atlanta, Georgia and were given the opportunity to compete at the Electronic Entertainment Expo at the World Congress Center in front of spectators both online and in person. The winner of this tournament was Dennis "Thresh" Fong, making his mark in history and winning a Ferrari 328 GTS that was previously owned by Quake developer John D.Carmack. This instance was the first time a game developing company organized and

funded a tournament leading to trends in the future where video game developers would organize and fund their own events to Increase interaction. (QuakeWorld.nu, Red Annihilation)

With esports slowly becoming a new industry the money to be won in tournament prize pools is what has progressed the most in the last decade and created most of its media coverage. The growth has been impressive with aggregated prize pools going from $3 million in 2010 to $121 million in 2017. (Richter, 2018) As of August 31$^{st}$ of 2022 the esport title with the largest aggregated prize pool is PUBG Mobile with $12.481.428 (escharts, 2022). This shows the great growth that esports and technology have made over exactly 50 years; from the only PDP-10 computer in a university and winning no cash but a subscription to the Rolling Stones magazine, to a high performing First Person Shooter game being played on a device that fits your hands.

| | Name | Type | Prize Pool | Peak Audience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **PUBG Mobile** | Mobile | $12 481 428 | 90 301 122 May |
| 2 | **Dota 2** | PC / Console | $12 042 668 | 70 790 714 Aug |
| 3 | **CS:GO** | PC / Console | $9 529 816 | 21 1361 022 May |

| 4 | **Rocket League** | PC / Console | $7 283 591 | 36 872 114 Aug |
| 5 | **Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege** | PC / Console | $6 852 992 | 27 271 420 Feb |

Table 1. Top esports games in 2022 by prize money as of August 31st, 2022

The tournaments with the most money in the prize pool have been led by Dota2 and their tournament The International that takes place every year and it is hosted and produced by the game´s developer Valve. Valve holds the top six spots in the all-time prize pool ranking and are seen seven times in the top ten tournaments. The top five prize pools range from $18.43 million to $40.02 million. (Gough, 2022) Citigroup compared these prize pools to traditional sports´ world championships and esports matches up to them quite well and have surpassed many times. For example, there is the: Confederations Cup (Football, $20 million), The Masters 2017 (Golf, $11 million), which are very well-known events and only the Confederations Cup came close to the International 2018 which is ranked only at 3 for esports events all time totaling $25.53 million. Dota2 surpasses its previous prize pool every year and this is because of the unique funding method that Valve has in place. For the championship fans and players of Dota2 buy what are called compendium. It provides the fans and players with exclusive cosmetic items in the game and that money is accumulated in the prize pool. With this method Valve only has had to fund $1.6 million of its price-fund while the rest is crowdfunded by the fans and players.

Another factor that contributes to the growth and development of esports is the increase in viewership. The amount of viewership does not align with the prize pools of tournaments, for example The Mid-Season Invitational 2018 that had a prize pool of $1.37 million with a viewership of 994.093 peak viewers (escharts, 2018) and the PUBG Mobile World Invitational 2022 that had a prize pool of $3 million with a viewership of 421.769 peak viewers. (escharts,

2022) Major sports broadcasting companies are now beginning to broadcast esport events live on TV. Esports has also been broadcasted on TV (Adgate, 2020). The Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) in the United States has exclusively broadcasted the Eleague and their tournaments on television with the finals being televised during prime time on the weekends (Block and Haack, 2020). This goes to show that large companies are ready for esports to enter in the mainstream media and broadcasting, and so are advertisers. With many products that target young males sponsoring heavily in esports it is now a norm to see a list of product categories such as soft drinks, consumer electronics, and insurance companies placing advertisements on esport events and sponsoring teams, publishers, and events. (Adgate, 2020)

## 2.2 Concept of Legitimacy

The pursuit of legitimacy from esport governing bodies is the core purpose of this research. Behavioralists Rowan and Meyer (1977, p. 340–363) say there are great similarities between organizations that deal with the environment and have operations that are alike. This is in result of meeting the same external pressure and social expectations.

The framework of institutional isomorphism is necessary for an organization to obtain and secure legitimacy. There are three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism that can be distinguished: coercive, mimetic, and normative. (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983, p. 147) These mechanisms cannot be measured empirically and instead are depended on case-specific solutions from the implementation of new models into structures (Sahlin and Wedlin, 2013). There is a close relation with legitimacy and support (Suchman, 1995, p. 571). The level of legitimacy is dependent on the opinion of all its stakeholders in concern with all organizational aspects (Ruef and Scott, 1998). Both internal and external interest groups are important when an organization is pursuing legitimacy. Meyer and Rowan (1997, p. 340–363) state that organizations that lack legitimate accounts of activities towards legitimacy have actions that

are negligent, irrational, or unnecessary. The evaluation of activities and the course of action is socially constructed (Díez-Martín, 2021) and created for the views of various stake holders.

"Legitimacy is a perception or assumption in that it represents a reaction of observers to the organization as they see it; thus, legitimacy is possessed objectively, yet created subjectively." (Suchman, 1995, p. 571) For that reason, the activities of an organization being aligned with the goals, perception, and evaluation of all stakeholders is essential for securing legitimacy.

It is uncertain how an organization can go about obtaining legitimacy and securing it (Zimmerman and Zeits, 2002, p. 414). There are counts of various research that highlight how legitimacy is obtained by adapting to existing norms (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p. 340–363). There are three unique strategies that Suchman (1995, p. 571) proposes for gaining legitimacy: 1) conform to existing environments, 2) ensure audience support by selecting a method that is accepted by others, and 3) manipulate the atmosphere to bring about new ideas or beliefs. (Suchman, 1995, p. 571) In a journal article in 2002 Zimmerman and Zeitz propose a fourth strategy: 4) creation of the environment.

| Strategy | Characteristics | Source |
|---|---|---|
| **Conformance** | • Positioning in an existing institutional regime.<br>• Considering demands and expectations of existing structures or influential stakeholders.<br>• Align with already existing norms and rules. | - Meyer and Rowan, 1997, p. 340–363; DiMaggio and Powel, 1983, p. 147; Zimmerman and Zeitz, p. 414, 2002 |
| **Selection** | • Choice of a suitable and favorable geographical environment providing similar scripts, rules, norms, and values. | - Suchman, 1995, p. 571; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002, p. 414 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Manipulation** | • Counter existing cultural beliefs.<br>• Influencing social expectations using strategic instruments of public relations, e.g., lobbying or teaming up with already well-established organizations.<br>• Proactive promulgation of new destructive needs beneficial to the organization. | - Suchman, 1995, p. 571; Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002, p. 414 |
| **Creation** | • Developing new rules and regulations.<br>• Contradict social structures.<br>• Providing new scripts, rules, norms, values, and models for unprecedented new approaches. | - Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002, p. 414; Aldrich and Fol, 1994, p. 645 |

Table 2. Four legitimization strategies in summary.

The pursuit of legitimacy is not confined to only one of these strategies but can be used in combination or individually. Legitimacy is not directly observable and therefore it is faced with challenges in measuring it. (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002, p. 414) Rather than an empirical measurement, measuring legitimacy is closely linked to the actions that are evaluated by an organization´s stakeholders (Heidenreich, Brandt, Dickson, and Kurscheidt, 2022). Legitimacy researchers use quantitative content analysis (Ruef and Scott, 1998) or a combination of qualitative studies and case studies (Rutherford and Buller, 2007, p. 78–92).

## 2.3   Esport Governance Structure

In Esports, the match that takes place between players can take place online or offline and be organized through different bodies of regulation. The competitions can take place locally, nationally, or internationally, and are organized and/or regulated by the community of players through associations, third party event planning firms, game developers, or federations at the national and international level that are rather new but are setting the structure for the future of Esports and its legitimacy as a sport. Esport associations are driven and headlined by players, leagues/team, and the game industry. (Ashton, 2019)

International, Continental, and National esport federations and associations aim for the highest form of legitimacy for esports. Building the foundation to an organization similar to the Global Sports Organizations (GSO) is their objective, which most sports have seen be developed in their respective areas with examples of International Boxing Federation and the International Golf Federation. (Ashton, 2019) Although esports federations are not at this level of standardization yet there are various federations that have more influence governing esport operations in their respective country, continent, and internationally. They are primarily responsible for obtaining recognition of esports as a sport from continental sport's governing authorities. With the most important ambition is being to be recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). (Ashton, 2019) For now, esports is missing a standard governing body that is of the standardization process of a sport. Thus, making it difficult to be recognized by the IOC since it was very segmentally governed. The main reason why the IOC is not recognized by the International Olympic Committee being that their standards are not adequate for Olympic competition, because of the popular game´s affiliation with violence and discrimination.

### 2.3.1    National Esport Association / Federations Goals

All of the selected esport associations and federations work on a national level and their purpose is to govern esport in their respective country. Although their collective purpose is to govern esport within their country, the way that they operate in different countries differ. There is a significant contrast in how esport federations from Asia treat and facilitate for their country´s esport organizations to how other federations around the world treat and facilitate their esport organizations. The Korea e-Sport Association arranges support for the gamers by offering facilities like an e-Sport stadium with a museum and space for competitions and practices. they also take part in organizing seminars, creating norms, and setting rules for the e-Sport organizations, and registering pro players and teams. (Korea e-Sports Association, 2022)

### 2.3.2 Continental/Regional Federations

Continental esport federations are made from the national federations that exist within their respective continent. Their goals are like those in national federations, which are to ensure that esports is seen as a legitimate work and activity (EEF, 2020).

The European Esport Federation (EEF) is the largest continental/regional federation in the world with 44 European members. (EEF, 2020) They declare themselves a democratic organization and their statues that appear on their website, which are approved by the EEF General Assembly include promoting all aspects of esports, acting as the representatives of esports to inform and raise awareness to the public, oversee the growth of esports across Europe, promote responsible play across espots in Europe meaning no match fixing or anything that translates to the integrity of esports being degraded, ensure the access of esports to individuals that cannot access it for certain reasons, ensure that all participants have equal opportunity, promote a structure in esports that bring all together and works cohesively, and uphold relationships within the society, governmental side, all academics , and the economy of esports. (EEF, 2020)

In 2021, The International Esport Federation announced the integration of three continental esports federations as members (Karakolevska, 2021). The federations integrated were: the African Esports Association (AESA), the European Esports Federation (EEF), and the PanAmerican Esports Confederation (PAMESCO) (Karakolevska, 2021). Upon signing these federations, the International Esport Federation unified all continental esport federations that exist thus far. The EEF stated that they believe that the cooperation will bring about the growth of esports internationally and develop the structure among smaller nations. (Karakolevska, 2021)

### 2.3.3 Player Associations and Unions

Players associations are made to protect the rights of players by negotiating collective bargaining agreements with game publishers who are often the league organizers, and to create careers in the industry beyond just competitive gaming (Ashton, 2019). These player associations are by majority funded by players in the competitive scene, but some game publishers have funded some player associations to organize their own esports competitions, an example of this is the Counter-Strike Professional Players' Association (Ashton, 2019). The player associations that exist are primarily focused on a specific esport title, and currently they do not possess the same leverage as legalized labor unions in sports like the NFLPA (Evans, 2019).

Their power and influence are currently limited, but it is important to look back at the formation of player associations and unions of the past that now have cemented themselves in the governance of their sport. In the four major sports leagues in the United States, it took a very long time for associations to form, but their cycle has accelerated with new associations being formed much faster than ever before. (Evans, 2019) The hospitality lab executive director at the International Gaming Institute at UNLV, Robert Rippee says that from past experiences in sport governance esports has good examples of structure to follow (Evans, 2019).

 Now they have the chance to look at other case studies and do it better and potentially do it faster said Rippee cited from (Evans,2019).

### 2.3.4 League and Team Associations

League and team associations work towards building a relationship between third-party game organizers and professional esports team organizations. Their duties include negotiating the playing conditions and payment of an event, creating standardized regulations across multiple competitions, and implement ways of revenue sharing. These types of associations do not exist in the traditional sports we have today. This is a result of the segmented aspects of the

esport industry, where the professional teams employ their rosters in multiple games that are ran by different league organizers, publishers, and event organizers. (Ashton, 2019)

### 2.3.5 Game Industry Associations

Game industry associations represent all of the video game industry as one and not just esport or the video games in each country and are not usually esport focused, but rather they have influence in government relations, intellectual property protection and they work on pitching out for the video game industry trying to find investor and new stakeholders to the mix (Ashton, 2019). They are known more as trade associations that protect the rights of the video game industry and are not subjected to esports, but all video games related manners in trade and legislation. The largest industry association is the Esports Trade Association (ESTA) founded in 2017, and their goals are to promote, protect, and advance the broader interests of the esports community. On their website they state that they want esports to grow sustainably within their industry by conducting projects within esports that ensure its growth in all aspects (ESTA, n.d.).

### 2.3.6 Collegiate Associations

Collegiate associations that aim to represent esports at the college level. Their purposes are to develop the structure and tools needed to advance collegiate esports within the amateur and professional environments. Examples of such organizations are the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) and the Collegiate Esports Association (CEA). The NACE focuses on developing the structure for esports at a college level and on their about part of their website they state to do so by laying the foundation in areas that cover the path to graduation of students and to promote more scholarships and they are now the largest member association in the United States (NACE, 2022). The CEA focuses more on the esport competitions within the collegiate esports environment in the NA student body. They prioritize on having fun and also developing high level players. Alongside their organization of tournaments, they provide their students a place to develop industry skills. (CEA, 2022)

### 2.3.7 Esports Integrity Coalition

The Esports Integrity Coalition (ESIC) which was founded in 2015 with the purpose of regulating against antifraud and prosecuting players/ organizers involved in match-fixing, in-game cheating, and e-doping (MCV, 2017). Since its foundation it has become partners with various betting companies and esport companies to ensure enforcement of policies. Their sole purpose to be enforcers of the policies the author stated above and to educate players to prevent such cases of cheating from happening in the first place. (MCV, 2017)

### 2.4 Issues with Segmented Governance in Esports

The sector of esports is a rapidly growing one with great results over the years. in 2012 global market revenue for esports was $130 million and grew up to $865 million in 2018 with projections made by Newzoo.com, the sector will reach up to $1.79 billion by 2022 (Block & Haack, 2021, p.3) .
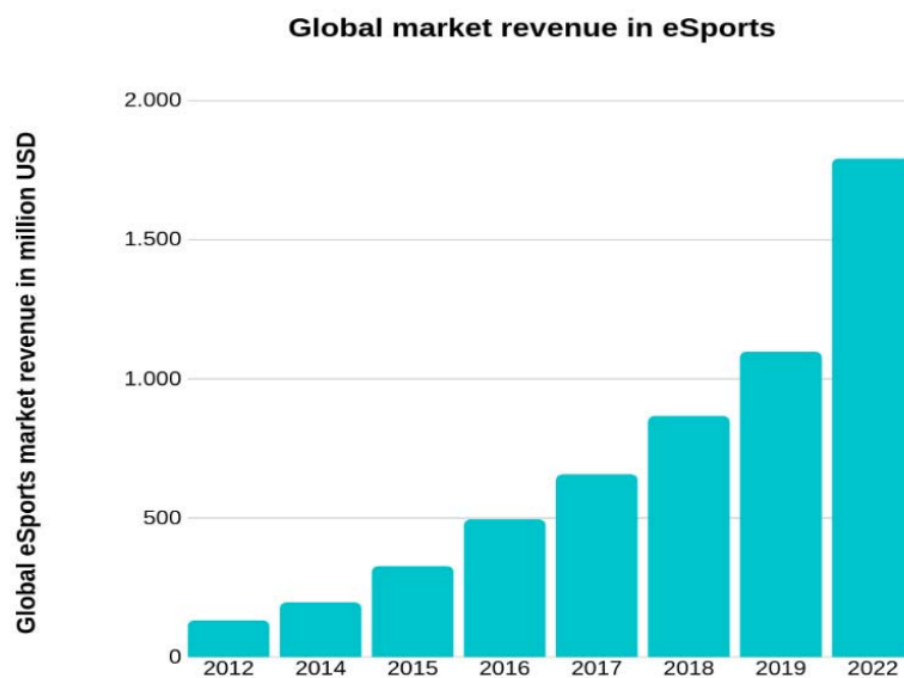


Figure 1**.**     Global esport market revenue (Million USD). *From* "eSports: a new industry"
            Block & Haack, 2021, page 3. Copyright 2021

This growth over the past decade has opened the opportunity for new game publishers and developers, more sponsors, and record setting viewership levels being set every year. Since there is much more revenue in the industry there is a lot more people who want to work and earn money and it shows that there is a bright future for esports, and it will not go away. (*Joost, 2019*)

Although its massive growth there is no governing body that governs all of esports and the main bodies of governance are the game publishers that only look over the scene of their respective games. This has not changed because they are the property owners of their games, currently giving them the most legitimacy to fulfill the duties of a governing body in their own published games. (Joost, 2019) The governance is only for their own events, presentations, and or expositions which do not have any effect towards esports and its legitimacy as a whole (Joost, 2019). This is what separates esports from traditional sports the most as they do not have such governing bodies like the FIA which was founded to increase safety among motor sports. The FIA has much more legitimacy because its actions directly affect the legitimacy of the motorsports which is governs over. (Joost, 2019)

A major difference on how Global Sports Organizations and esport game publishers which are the most legitimate governing bodies in their respective sports at the moment is the way that they operate. GSO´s are there to simply govern the sport, but game publishers are there to make profits from the games they release, and esport is not the main revenue source for game publishers. Most of the costs related to esport events made by game publishers are seen as marketing investments. (Joost, 2019) In general, game publishers have most legitimacy over the game they govern but their ultimate goal is not to govern but to make profits unlike a traditional GSO. It does not mean a game publishers cannot perform to the level of a GSO, but the policies that they may adapt could be bad for the esport but good for the business of the game publisher. In the case of a traditional GSO they are obliged to make policies that help the sport as a whole and not just good for their organization. Ultimately, GSO´s need the partners and support from the sport while game publishers do not need this and can make decisions for their own benefit. (Joost, 2019)

A major issue that esport faces within its governance is that there are no regulations for competitive integrity and or set policies for the care of the players. In traditional sports, the violation of rules that apply to competitive integrity have severe punishable infractions. (Joost, 2019) GSO´s have links with law enforcement agencies like Interpol in order to keep the integrity and professionalism over their sport (Interpol, 2020). There are such violations like match-fixing that have an immense impact on the legitimacy of a sport and the cooperation between sport and law enforcement is a key indicator of the legitimacy of a sport.

Esport game publishers have set their own regulation and policies but with that there comes limitations. There is little to none control over gambling regulations. Since there are so many games and each publisher governs over their own games the regulations set apply only per game. For example, Riot a very well-known game publisher has set rules that there is no gambling allowed between professional players in the game League of Legends (LoL). This is not difficult for Riot to accomplish and control since they govern the majority of the esport scene for League of Legends, but for other games it is not so easy since not all publishers take an approach of control and governance over esports in their games. The game publisher Valve is not very involved in the esport side of their largest games, and their lack of effort has caused some back lash and controversy. (Joost, 2019) In 2015, there was a match-fixing scandal during a professional tournament of CSGO and Valve stated that they are against betting from esports insiders and that they highly frown upon it. Their actions did not match their words as in 2016 another scandal emerged in a tournament for another Valve published game (DOTA2). The tournament "Boston Major" had one of the participating team's analyst placing bets on the outcomes of various matches. This causes a huge public outcry and Valve made no effort to respond to this criticism, and to top it off the manager for the team that the analyst worked for stated that they will not cut ties with the analyst and continue working with him. (Myers, 2018) Valve´s inaction to improve competitive integrity within the esport of the game it publishes is a major reason as to why esports needs a GSO just like other traditional sports have in place.

In addition, there is barely any policies that protect the players, and especially since most of the players are very young this should be emphasized as they are in a more vulnerable position

(Winkie, 2015). Since many are young and are sacrificing their education in order to practice and work more, and this places them in an even more vulnerable position. For example, Jake 'Stewie2K' Yip was very open to ending his schooling in order to pursue more practice (Yip, 2017). The trend of forming "team houses" is also a risk for the protection of the rights and safety of the players. As they have been seen as invaluable towards both the practice and bonding among team members. (ESL, 2014) Also, it adds even more vulnerability towards the players as their employer has control over their living and their salaries, and it leaves the opportunity for abuse of the players (Lewis & Stemler, 2016). Without a centralized, anonymous, and safe reporting mechanism it leaves the chance open for various types of abuse towards the players included abuse even among players themselves.

## 2.5   Key Players in the Future of Esport Governance

### 2.5.1   Competing Organizations in Esport Governance

A supposed gap in the esport ecosystem according to some is the lack of existence of a GSO that will set the regulations for all esport activities and provide legitimacy towards esports and their place among traditional sports. There are exiting organizations in esport that are attempting to achieve this goal but have not gained the support or authority to govern over all of esport and thus create a more controlled, centralized, and organized esport ecosystem.

There is the International e-Sports Federation (IESF), World Esport Association (WESA), and the Global Esports federation (GEF) making the attempts at one day being the GSO of esports or be part of the important pillars that will regulate esports.

| Organization | Goal |
|---|---|
| International Esport Federation | Establish a standardization in esports, provide and continually promote esports and its values (IESF, 2016). |
| World Esport Association | To professionalize esports, and to implement a method for all parties |

| | |
|---|---|
| | participating in a project to have shared revenues (WESA, 2016). |
| Global Esport Federation | Create new competitions and ensure the growth of esorts (GEF, 2019). |

Table 3. Key players competing to be the international governing body of esports

## 2.5.2 International Esport Federation

The IESF was founded in 2008 and the goals that they aim for is to establish a standardization in esports, and continually promote esports and its values (IESF, 2016). The members of the IESF are national esport federations and its structure is close to how a traditional GSO is made. Which in the case for esports it does not work so well because unlike traditional sports, national competitions are not viewed as heavily for esports.

In the IESF there are only two members that actively contribute and work with them. those being the Chinese and Korean federations as their governments force them to work with the IESF (Joost, 2019). In these two countries all brands and federations work with the IESF unlike in other countries where the established esport brands do not contribute with their national or international federations. Empowering these national federations in all of their respective countries and giving their authority will not only increase the legitimacy of esport within that country but on an international level since it would be more recognized to the traditional sport viewer as well as have a clearer line of authority and regulation in the esport ecosystem. Also, it is a crucial step into making the IESF into a legitimate GSO. This advancement in the structure of esport is crucially needed as there is no way that without it the global organization can be effective. (Joost, 2019) The IESF is not just similar in structure to traditional GSO´s but in the way they organize their tournaments as well. The teams need to consist of players of the same nationality and when it comes to gender there is also the division between men´s and women´s teams like in other traditional GSO´s tournaments. The reason they implement similar tournament structure to established GSO´s is in order to increase their legitimacy in the international sports community. (Cook, 2014) This decision was not taken well by the gaming community and after the IESF was questioned for this decision they had a board meeting and decided to change theway of structuring tournaments to allow both men and

women to participate against each other, but there will still remain female only tournaments because according to the IESF:

Esports cannot achieve gender equality and representation without female only competitions to increase female representation at their events (IESF, 2014).

Finally, the IESF has proven that they can work for themselves but not much for the industry of esports as a whole. A major achievement for them recently is their partnership with Alibaba a Chinese corporation. Through their partnership they believe they can bring esports into the Asia Games of 2022. While it does increase the legitimacy of the organization it does nothing to increase legitimacy for the industry of esports. Because it is just an achievement made as a tournament organizer and it is not benefiting the organization as a governing body in esports. Also, esports have been medal awarded games for over a decade in Asia, so this is not a new addition but merely a partnership to organize an event not to govern over it. (Wong, 2017) In the years to come the IESF will make more advancements towards being a legitimate governing body over all esports, but it will take real action and authority for them to do so.

### 2.5.3   World Esport Association

World Esport Association (WESA) which was founded in 2016 by the top 8 multi gaming corporations (Joost, 2019). Their main goals are to professionalize esports, and to implement a method where all parties organizing an event or project have shared revenues and benefit all (WESA, 2016). Their board has two members chosen by the ESL Which gives them more influence than any other individual organization within WESA.

WESA aims to be involved with the best world leading esport brands, and they have had some success already being founded by the top 8 multi-gaming corporations and by having the ESL which has been a prominent player in esports for a long time. this is a method which WESA is using to increase their legitimacy. These efforts have not been entirely successful as one would

imagine when a governing body is being ruled by large corporations. The community of the game CSGO which is the only game WESA is active in have often not held them to high regard and viewed them as a tool for the ESL. (Lewis, 2016)

### 2.5.4 Global Esport Federation

The latest federation to be established in hopes to be the one governing body of esports worldwide is the Global Esports Federation (GEF) a Singapore based corporation backed by a technological giant in China Tencent. The (GEF) stated that esports legitimacy and credibility is promoted by them. Their mission is to cultivate the competition while also developing communities and keep the connection between esports, sport and technology. (GEF, 2019) Their actions reflect that they want to unite Esports and traditional sports in a more unique way than other federations. They seek partnerships with other traditional sport federations in order to collaborate with them and make esport, virtual sport, and sports better for all. Since the launch, several Olympics sport federations have partnered with the GEF and have become member sports such as karate, surfing, tennis, modern pentathlon, archery, taekwondo, and canoeing. An agreement was signed to work with the GEF by the Commonwealth Games Federation alongside the Olympic Council of Asia. (Mackay, 2020).

With multiple organizations attempting to become the main governing body of esports there is still no federation that is recognized by the International Olympic Committee to oversee all esports.

### 2.5.5 IESF and the Olympics

The founding of the IESF set the foundation for the future of Esports governance and its implementation in the Olympic games. After its foundation in 2008 the IESF held the "IESF Challenge" which had a name change in 2010 to "IESF Grand Final", and "IESF World Championship in 2011, and finally "Esports World Championship" in 2013. In the same year the Council of the Olympic Games of Asia authorized the IESF to join the competition of the 4th Asian Indoor and martial Arts games. This was a breakthrough for Esport as they were

entering a competition that was recognized by the International Olympic Committee. Also, in the same year of 2013 the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) recognized the IESF as the responsible party for anti-doping within esports. In addition, in the year of 2014 the IESF acquired a membership of Trim and Fitness International Sport for all Association (TAFISA). Another step taken by the IESF was in 2015 when they invited representatives from various sport associations to speak of Esports and the possibilities of it being more recognized and seen as legitimate globally during huge events like the Esport World Championships. Then, in 2016 the ISEF held the International eGames during the Rio Olympics with the hopes of promoting Esports at an international scale and gain more recognition. Finally, two Esport competitions were held in 2018 before the PyeongChang Winter Olympics by one of the International Olympic Committee's top partners, the Intel Corporation. the obtained the support from the International Olympic Committee as well. (IOC, 2017)

With all these activities under the belt of the IESF they had set a good resume to gain recognition and increase legitimacy thus they began attempting to enter the Olympic Games and have esports recognized by the International Olympic Committee in February of 2016. They sent an official letter to the International Olympic Committee with a request into the Olympic Games which was denied by the executive board by the end of the year. In October 2017 during the sixth international Olympic committee summit delegates discussed the rapid growth of the esports industry and agreed to define esports as a competitive video game, which can be considered a sport. it also stated that the training and preparation as well as the intensity of the training was comparable to the preparation and training of other traditional sport players. The International Olympic Committee stated that for esports to be considered to enter the Olympic games they must follow and not violate any of the Olympics' values. (IOC, 2017)

In 2018 there was another Olympic committee summit where it was discussed having esports as a medal sport in the Olympics once again. During this discussion major issues regarding esports were brought up, and that esports industry is driven by interests rather than by a series of problem like other traditional sports. Considering this it was decided not to include sports as a medal activity in the Olympic plan. (IOC, 2018) These were the major efforts by the

IESF to try and enter the Olympic games with them as the international governing body of the esport competitions which has not been entirely successful.

### 2.5.6   Esports Make it Into the Pre-Olympic Tokyo Summer Games stage

in 2020 during the pre-Olympic Tokyo Summer Games there was multiple Esports competitions admitted into the programs. This was huge worldwide for esports but there was a big question mark when it was announced that there will be no premier esport federation hosting or representing esports during this time which left a lot of people to wonder why.

The esports competition was name the Olympic Virtual Series (OVS) which included 5 games (auto racing, baseball, cycling, rowing, and sailing). In ruling it was stated that each game would be matched up with their respective international federation. Meaning that the World Baseball Softball Confederation, International Cycling Union, World Rowing Federation, International Automobile Federation, and World Sailing Federations would be the ones responsible of overseeing the esport competitions held in each respective game within their sport. Before announcing this the IOC informed both the IESF and the Global Esports Federation (GEF) that neither will be selected as the international federation for esports at this time. (Zavian, 2021)

The International Olympic Committee choosing the federations of traditional sports to oversee their sport in virtual games could be a clue as to what the main governing body of esports shall acquire, which is to join forces with all federations which participate in the Olympic games and thus try and push the agenda of being the one governing body and oversee all esport and virtual sport activities with the recognition of the sport federations themselves. This is something that only the GEF has been working towards with partnerships among multiple already established sport federations. Although the IESF has been around longer they have not been able to pursue any partnerships with traditional sport federations which may be the reason that one day the GEF will be picked over them if there ever is a day that an esport organization is recognized and the main governing body over all esport activities.

### 2.5.7  Sport Professionals Opinion on Esports

There are various factors that play into the public´s opinion over esports which include but are not limited to esports´ teams and athletes, esport communities, leagues, tournaments, publishers and game developers, investors, and the media. Currently, since there is no legitimate governing body for esports that brings doubt into the public and their view on esports and its legitimacy among sports. (Foley & Lardner, 2020) According to Foley which conducted an esports survey, 75% of respondents believe that one of the most significant threats to esports legitimacy and growth are both match-fixing and cheating. Another barrier to esports growth believed by 60%; is the control exerted by a number of game developers, since some esport organizations are opposed to a governing body that would regulate their actions. (Foley & Lardner, 2020)

In 2018, PWC an audit firm surveyed over 400 sport industry professionals from over 42 countries. These results were talked about in the Olympic stadium during an esport conference hosted by the IOC about the status of possible Olympic entry. "Can esports be considered as an Olympic sport?"

 That is the question 28% answered "no" to "because it does not qualify as a sport", another 29% thinks that esports must grow independent from the Olympics. (NBC,2018). Unifying under a single governing body first, is what stated an additional 26.7%, 10.4% agreed that esports joining the Olympic Games should be done as soon as possible. And finally, the last 5.9% preferred to abstain from answering or just didn't have an opinion on the topic. (NBC, 2018)

## Should Esport be in the Olympics
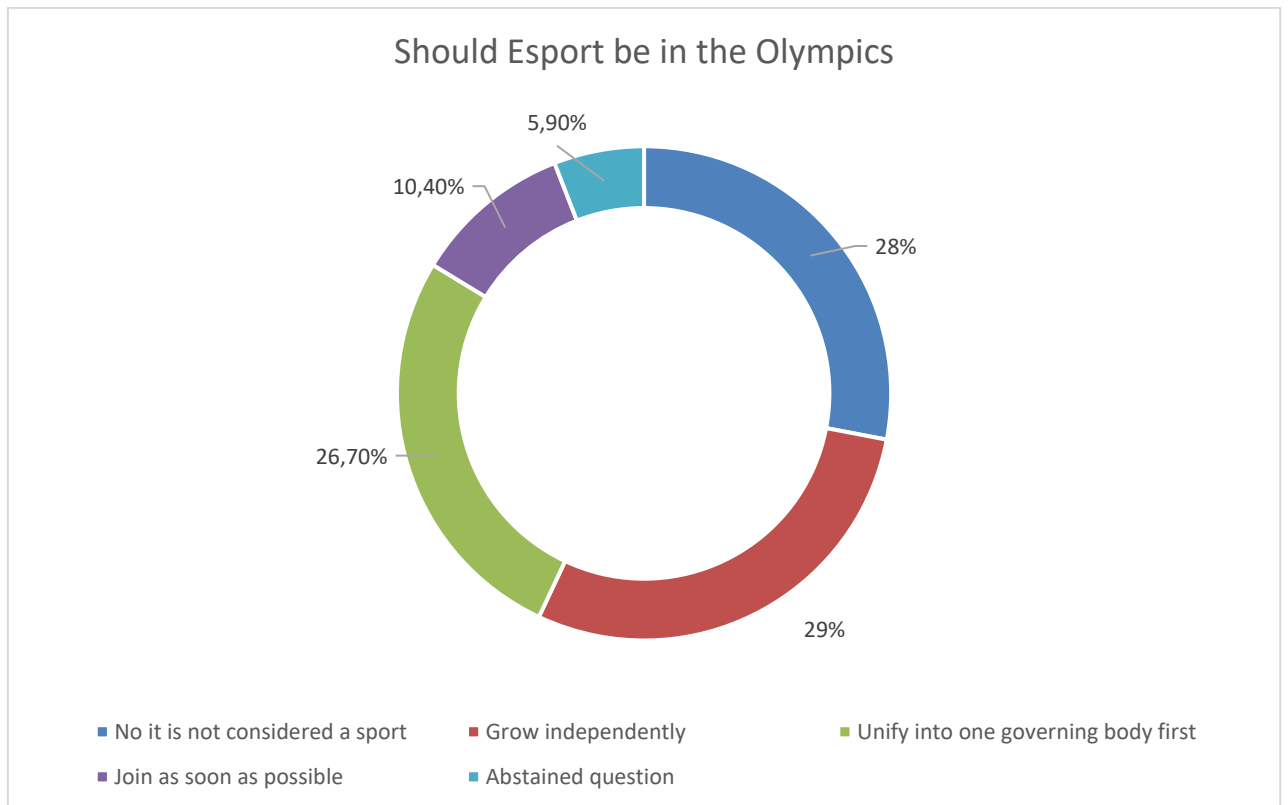


Figure 2.    Should esports be included in the Olympics? Pie chart based on data above

Through what has been presented the author is inclined to look at the options of esports growing independently outside or esports and esports establishing one governing body as the most realistic expectations of what will happen in the world of esports, its legitimacy, and ultimately being a sport within the Olympic plan which would mark them down as globally recognized and legitimate sport.

# 3   Research Methodology

## 3.1   Qualitative Methods

The main objective of this research is to identify the gaps and needs in esport governance and analyze the legitimacy of esports governance and what impact federations have on it.

Research methods in this thesis was qualitative research method. The author chose qualitative methods to have thorough interviews with esport professionals where they were able to explain their perspectives in detail and give a better vision of what is esports governance within their role in esports and how they are affected by it. In a book written by Sharan B. Merriam named Introduction to Qualitative Research she begins by saying that the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. The world of the individual is not the fixed, single, measurable phenomenon that is assumed in quantitative research. (Merriam, 2002) In qualitative research there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. (Merriam, 2002) The significance of qualitative research methods comes from learning the way that individuals experience and interact with their social world. The meaning that it has for them is considered an interpretive qualitative approach. That approach is what has been used within the interviews conducted for this thesis. It is very important to understand the various interpretations of what esport governance is and its implications for each interview since esport governance and its status and progress varies greatly depending on what part of the world the interviewee lives in.

The author has conducted qualitative interviews sometimes named in-depth or intensive interviews. The interviews were semi-structured as the author has a specific topic for the interviewee and questions are more open ended and can be answered differently depending on the interviewee´s interpretation of their social world. For semi-structured interviews the questions may not be asked in the same way or order for the interviewee (DeCarlo, 2018). The author maintained the same order of the questions but the way it is asked may change without differing from the main objective of the question. The way that it is asked depending on the role of the interviewee within esports, for example if the interviewee is part of a collegiate association the question will be picked apart differently than an interviewee that is part of a national esports federation. This was done to better approach the perspective of said interviewee. The purpose of these in-depth interviews was to learn about the thoughts of the interviewees about this topic and hear their perspective about it. The interviews did not have a question-and-answer attitude but instead promoted conversation between the interviewee

and the author with the goal being to gather as much information from the respondent as possible.

An interview guide was made for these interviews for the author to check through all topics which must be addressed during the interview. Interview guides should outline all the issues that the author wants to address, and feels are likely important (DeCarlo, 2018). The guide was made to assure that some important topics are addressed during the interview but not all checkpoints within the guide will always have to be answered depending on the flow of the interview and on the amount of information the interviewee is able to provide there was instances that not all issues are discussed during every interview. The initial question of the interview and the response from the interviewee shaped how the rest of the interview proceeds. In this case the opening question asked the interviewee to address the gaps found within esport governance. Thus, giving the author an idea of what the esports environment is for the interviewee is like and what issues were most important to address during the interview. The in-depth structured interviews made the interview process more challenging for the author since every interview was different in terms of perspective and challenged the author to take each interviewee´s interpretation of their world and organize them into common themes addressed by all. The interview guide was made from the listed questions and noted various points that the author would have liked to have addressed during the response of each question. The guide was structured to address (1) gaps within esports governance, (2) steps needed to increase legitimacy, (3) esport´s stance in the International Olympic Committee, and (4) the future of esports.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted through online video and audio platforms and recorded. With the exceptions of some interviewees that are not comfortable with the English language. These interviewees were instead interviewed by a person that speaks their native language and then translated by that individual. Interviewees had backgrounds in federation and association work, and in various aspects of the esport ecosystem across both professional and amateur work. There was an attempt to also include game publisher stake holder interviews but all attempts to reach interviewees with such background resulted in no answer. This limitation left the author without the perspective of game publishers within the esports

ecosystem, but there were enough respondents with legitimate interest in esport federations and the gaps that exist within esport governance to address all the guideline points of the interviews.

Six interviews were conducted from August 17, 2022, to September 10, 2022, with each lasting between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes. Table # summarizes all interview information.

| Interview | Participating Country | Participant | Description | Duration of interview (in min) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Finland | Esports Federation | Member of executive board | 00:43:33 |
| 2 | Finland | Esports Federation | Member of executive board | 00:32:48 |
| 3 | Canada | Esports Association | Member of executive board | 01:20:22 |
| 4 | Brazil | Sports Federation and Esport Event Organizer | Operation manager in sports and esports | 00:40:36 |
| 5 | Finland | Esport Association | Events manager and esports development in association | 01:01:24 |
| 6 | Brazil | Esport Coach | Former esport athlete and current professional coach | 00:52:03 |

Table 3. Interviewee numbers their role and interview time

## 3.2 Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis has been done for the interviews that have taken place for this research. Thematic analysis is a way to identify reoccurring themes presented within the qualitative data of a qualitative research. The method is used to describe a set of qualitative data and most importantly it is used to create themes based on that qualitative data gathered. (Kiger and

Varpio, 2020, p. 2) According to Kiger and Varpio (2020, p.2) Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that thematic analysis can be used all on its own as a method of analysis or be the foundation to give more depth to other qualitative methods. The author has chosen this method of qualitative data analysis due to the repetition of various themes throughout the interview process and identifying these themes has helped in finding out what paths esport governance may take in the future to increase its legitimacy among sports. In the end of the thematic analysis the author identified which legitimacy pursuit strategy is most suitable for the governance of esports. The strategies for legitimacy in question have been chosen from the ones discussed in the Concept of Legitimacy (2.2) segment of this thesis. For reference the strategies mentioned were conformance, selection, manipulation, and creation and as stated in that segment of this thesis there is also the possibility of a combination of these strategies to be implemented. Meaning that there has not been a restriction made to only choose one but to choose the most adequate approach for the pursuit of legitimacy of esport governance.

## 3.3 Research Findings

There were four unique themes that were identified throughout the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the six interviews. The themes were as follows: esport governance will not be similar to traditional sport governance, governance situation varies on the location, game publishers´ dominance will remain, esport governance will emerge unlike any traditional sport. Through the data collected in the six interviews it was determined that game publishers are what make esports different from traditional sports and that the esport governance will be unique to any other.

### 3.3.1 Esport Governance will not be Similar to Traditional Sport Governance

A view that was shared amongst all interviewee´s was that although sport governance has existed for decades, and it is expected for esports to follow a similar structure it is not something that has been proven to work. Attempts at an international governing body have failed repeatedly mainly due to the nature of the esport industry and its vast difference to

those industries in other sports. Game publishers are most dominant in esports and that is because of the simple fact that they own the property rights to their game. The idea of having an international governing body with the same power as one like the FIFA organization is not well perceived by members of the esport industry whether they are from a federation or association building to become a governing body or from active members of the esport industry such as coaches and payers. Esports is multi layered and does not revolve around one game but multiple games consisted of various genres and it is feared that if a governmental body would have absolute power it would become unjust and with esport game publishers having the property rights of the game it is unlikely that those rights will be given up.

"The Government in some countries want full control of everything but the game publishers have the property rights of their games and there are unjust proposals." (Interview 6, September 2022)

When asked about the possible need of one international governing body in esports interviewee 1 (August 2022) said "We need it, but we don't want it to be like the traditional sports governing body because it have too much power."

In addition, the scene of esports is much more different than those of other traditional sports because of its multilayered aspects it is not possible to fit them all under one governing umbrella. The attempts to do so have failed due to the massive complexity of governing various developers and esport titles and setting rules and regulations that apply to all and do not take away the essential property rights of the game publishers.

"A mistake we are all committing is that we are putting all esport titles in one bag and attempting to bring them all to legitimacy at once. We should have some of them to be recognized. Among all sports we do not see all sports recognized and represented in the Olympic program. Each esport title needs to work towards that legitimacy if they aspire to be represented in the Olympics." (Interview 5, September 2022)

Interviewee 3 (August 2022) believes it is it is the responsibility of the game publishers to seek legitimacy and to create the link between their esport title and the recognition from

organization like the International Olympic Committee. Currently it is difficult to make this link and it is not up to the existing federations but the game publishers themselves.

"Within esports communities you have your splits where you have your competitive and casual players, so it depends on the company making the game to decide if they want to design their game to be more casual or competitive. The issue with that is that it makes the game that its core its built for entertainment which leads some organizations to believe that esports are not a sport and only entertainment, but you can say the same thing for other sports which are at its core entertainment. There is no real way for a video game developer to officially link itself with an official sport organization. For example, there is nothing to link Riot games the developers of League of Legends and Valorant with the international Olympic committee." (Interview 3, August 2022)

To conclude this theme interviewee 3 (August 2022) theorized that the link between these entities could come from player unions that are created by the game publishers or the players themselves and reiterated the point that it is up to the community of players and active members of the sport industry to bring about legitimacy and recognition of their esport titles to these larger organizations such as the international Olympic Committee, but in all it is not a necessity within esports to seek that recognition.

If not in the direction that all sports tend to take globally interviewee 5 (September 2022) mentioned this possible path for esports and their international events. "I believe there will be a big Olympic like event for esports that has some categories and titles. New committees like the International Esports Omnipotent Committee are going to grow and form the example of what an international, and nationally represented tournament should be like and if the pursuit of legitimacy through the IOC stalls this can be a route that esports take."

### 3.3.2   Governance Situation Varies on Location

Due to how young the esports industry is with it just booming for the last decade the local governments around the world are not on the same page when it comes to the laws that apply

to esports in their country. There is a very distinct contrast between the countries that give governmental support to the esport industry and those that do not. In this segment the difference between the Finnish governmental situation and the Brazilian one is identified. They are both big contributors to the esports scene but their local governments act in contrast to each other in many ways. With the Finnish government giving more supporting legislation compared to the one in Brazil.

"We are part of the Olympic committee, so we are part of the sports movement. We have good relationship with the government. Quite good relationship with the cities. Almost every time it is okay, and they want to hear what we want to say to say. We can say our concerns and there is no problem.  We don't get everything we want, and funding is a problem, but we are still in a better position than almost all other countries." (Interview 1, August 2022)

"Currently there is no supporting legislation for esport professionals. They are seen as freelancers in Brazil and there is no existing player unions or workforce unions." (Interview 6, August 2022)

There are also similarities in esport organizations not cooperating with governmental bodies, but their reasons differ from one another. For example, in Brazil esport organizations refuse to be named as sports and join the sports committee in Brazil due to the high corruption of the countries governmental officials that would rid these organizations from rights and they do not have a way for all entities to sit down and discuss how they can all come together, and in Finland esport organizations refuse to work with governmental bodies because they see no benefit from their membership.

"Not all Finnish esport organizations are part of the Finnish federation because they don't see how the Finnish federation can help them." (Interview 1, August 2022)

"Here in Brazil, there is no unity among the organizations that work with E-sports. In the same federation unit, there is more than one entity organizing e-sports competitions. Without a

central organization, without these entities sitting down to talk and come together, in Brazil, I don't see any progress." (Interview 4, August 2022)

These are the accounts from members of the esport community in Brazil and Finland and only give a scope of the differences in government across the globe, but it is a great example on showing that the segmented governance within esports results with vast differences in how they are handled. As the industry keep growing it will be time that tells what happens with these local governments and their cooperation with esports members and supporting legislation for the professionals that reside in the esport scene.

"The esport industry is very young and only time will tell what happens in the future. With the rapid growth of esports and the bright future it has there will be a point when local governments will be forced into cooperating with the esports scene in one way or another and to of course find their way of getting money from it." (Interview 6, September 2022)

According to the data collected there is an emphasis on time and that being the main factor that will determine the path that esports governance will take. Especially with the inevitable growth of the industry in the upcoming years there will be a better defined structure as esports becomes more mainstream.

### 3.3.3   Game Publishers´ Dominance will Remain

There is no doubt that currently the ones that call the shots in the esport industry and the governance of esports are the game publishers of the respective esport titles. From the data collected the opinion on the game publishers differed with three stating that game publishers should have less power and the federations should be the ones regulating esports and the other three believing in the efforts that game publishers have made in the governance of their esport titles and backing their dominance in the governance of the industry. It is important to note that the three interviewees that did not side with the game publishers remaining

dominant are part or have been part of sport and esports federations thus resulting in some possible conflicting interest which is why in this theme the author focused on the facts topic. The key fact to consider in this topic is that esports consists of different games that are created by game developers and since before anything it is a product, it has the property rights to their game.

"Riot Games is kind of like the Olympic committee of their esport and there is no reason for them to feel like they need to reach out to the IOC to make themselves more legitimate. What is more legitimate than the company that make the game itself putting money, support, and managing and in that case, they don't really need anybody." (Interview 3, August 2022)

There have been questions about if the power that game publishers is too much and if it damages the values that their esport must have in order to gain legitimacy among other traditional sports, and according to the data collected it is up to the individual game publisher to make these steps to acquire this legitimacy in their esport titles. There are game developers that received high praise for the way they handle their esport governance and events like Riot Games and Valve from all interviewees and that could be a structure of esport governance that other game publishers that wish to acquire the same type of legitimacy and recognition may follow.

"Most esport tournaments are not sport value oriented but business oriented. The International (tournament by Valve) is one example of one tournament that follows sports values and creates a certain path" (Interview 1, August 2022)

According to Interviewee 6 (September 2022) "I don't see anything that the publishers are not doing for the governance of their sport at the moment. The publishers are already doing a very good job governing their esport and game publishers like Riot have given a lot of support to their leagues and teams and make sure that the teams oblige by the rules and if not they are heavily enforced." This interviewee had the closest connection to the governance of the esport title that he participated in since he was a player and now is a professional coach, and the overall sentiment for the game publishers and their efforts in governance was positive.

### 3.3.4   An Esport Governance model will Emerge Unlike any Traditional Sport

After various failed attempts at an international governing body from international federations and associations it is likely that a form of esport governance will emerge with a structure unlike any traditional sport. A point that was emphasized throughout the qualitative data collected was that the esports industry is very young and with time there will be a governmental body formed that is able to be fair and just for all stakeholders. The current approaches have not worked and there is more to esport governance than what it is anticipated at first glance. Also, the individuals that are attempting to form these governmental bodies have not been an active member of the esport industries as a majority and that may prove why the approach is not ideal to those that exist in the esports scene.

"So far it has not been done properly and people who have attempted to do it are not people who have existed in the esports domain, but there should be a singular overseeing governing body that works with developers to better enable their own esports leagues and things to function and follow. If there was a proper governing body, then these leagues would have a template and guideline. They can enable themselves to grow a bigger audience and make more money on it." (Interviewee 3, August 2022)

None of the interviewees believed that an international governmental body as absolute as traditional sports should exist and that this body should be formed to be more in the likes of a committee where various stakeholders (i.e game publishers, federations, and unions) can discuss topics that affect all and cooperate together in favor of the growth of esports and securing legitimacy in its operations.

"We need a government body, but it should be a place where we can discuss things and with one another for the best interest of esports. "(Interviewee 1, August 2022)

"Esports needs a body but not to necessarily govern all esports but gives a platform where all entities within esports can have a discussion and set the guidelines and structure to esports as a committee. Guidelines which all agree to and sets a structure for any new entities that arise in esports." (Interviewee 5, September 2022)

There were also mentions of esports governance having no international governing body at all and for each esport game publisher to have power over all its esport titles with the idea of having representatives of the regions to be the middle ground between local governments and game publishers.

"I do not think that we need an international governing body in esports. Each esport game publisher should have full governing power over their esport title and having an organization like FIFA in football would not benefit the esports scene. Representation of regions from individuals that have existed in the esports domain would prove to be more beneficial. As time goes on the future of esports will be governments realizing they need to work with game publishers and the game publishers will be the main governing bodies of their respective esport titles."

This brings up many possibilities of what the future model of esport governance can be in the future. With the existence of game publishers in this industry and them being the main stakeholders to the esport titles that exist today there must be a model that includes them as a key component of governance. Thus, signifying that the model of esport governance that is to be created for international efficiency in the future will be much different in structure than those in traditional sports. Simply because in traditional sports there does not exist an entity with the power and influence that game publishers hold.

# 4 Results

## 4.1 Legitimization Strategies

According to the qualitative data collected it was evident esport governance as it is in 2022 has a lot of gaps and the structure is still not complete. The idea that it may just fall under the structure of existing federations and associations in traditional sports has proven to be wrong and ineffective primarily due to the existence of game publishers. The primary stakeholder in esports, and a stakeholder that does not exist in traditional sports at all. This has resulted in the struggle for esports governance to be properly identified by individuals that do not closely follow it and hinder on its legitimacy among traditional sports.

In the Concept of Legitimacy (2.2) segment of this research legitimacy was defined as "Legitimacy is a perception or assumption in that it represents a reaction of observers to the organization as they see it; thus, legitimacy is possessed objectively, yet created subjectively." (Suchman, 1995, p. 571) For that reason, the activities of an organization being aligned with the goals, perception, and evaluation of all stakeholders is essential for securing legitimacy. In this evaluation of the appropriate strategies that must be used to increase legitimacy the author regards the organization as the structure of esport governance. The author presented 4 legitimization strategies proposed by researchers Suchman (1995), and Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002). These legitimization strategies were listed as conformance, selection, manipulation, and creation. From the data collected and the complexity of esport governance and its pursuit of legitimacy the author concluded that there is not one specific strategy that must be implemented into the path esport governance must take but a combination of two strategies. The two strategies that best fit the pursuit of legitimacy from esport governance are manipulation and creation. The manipulation strategy consists of countering existing beliefs, influencing the expectations using strategies such as lobbying or partnering with organizations that have already established their legitimacy, and the announcement of these new implementations and how they will benefit (Suchman, 1995). The creation strategy consists of the body pursuing legitimacy to create new rules and regulations that have not been seen before, also it may contradict social structures that exist in its environment already, and it creates new norms

and values to follow along with the creation of a new model that demonstrates a unique approach (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002).

The author chose these two strategies because of the complex and unique position that esport governance has compared to the governance of traditional sports. The unique standing of esport governance has resulted in failed attempts at international governance and the creation of new norms and models is necessary in order to pursue greater legitimacy compared to the traditional sports governance that have existed for decades.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### 4.2.1 Creation and Manipulation

From the theoretical framework of this research and the qualitative data collected it is evident that the segmented governance approach that esports currently has will not be sufficient in increasing governance legitimacy or the efficiency of governance within esports. The creation legitimization strategy of esport governance must first begin by creating a new model of esport governance where the federations and the game publishers are actively cooperating with each other. Interviewee 6 (September 2022) made various remarks about having representatives within each region that cooperate with game publishers and connect them to the local governments of each country. These representatives can be made up of the national, and regional federations that exist today, or if these bodies are not willing to cooperate with the game publishers and voice the publishers´ needs within each country to the local governments player unions and associations will eventually take over their place and make these federations obsolete to esports so it is a necessity for them to cooperate with the game publishers since they ultimately have all the rights of property for these esport titles and make the final decisions. A form of checks and balances must be implemented into the esport governance model so although the game publishers have final say on most decisions there are checks to the power that publishers have while also respecting the rights to their property. These checks would include agreements such as player health and safety, upholding esport integrity, and the security of professionals within the field of esports. Regardless of what entity takes the lead in being the primary representative for esport game publishers within each region they must uphold those checks with the game publishers with cooperation from both sides. The game publishers are

the ones with the main responsibility to support the creation of these representatives with full cooperation if it wishes to see their esport titles gain more traction worldwide and for their governance to be legitimized.

The manipulation strategy in esport governance can be implemented by observing what has already been done right and building upon it with new implementations into the model and properly announcing them. Taking example of what Valve, and Riot Games have done with the governance of their esport titles is a beginning and an example of what other game publishers should implement if the goal is to increase in legitimacy. Although these game publishers have done well in the governance of their esport thus far and continue to develop it there is no doubt that a greater connection to the local governments is necessary. So, the implementation of this new model and announcement must be done smoothly with transparency to the esport industry as to what role each entity will have and how their efforts and cooperation will enable greater esport governance legitimacy.

### 4.2.2   A New Model

In this segment of the research the author proposes a new esport governance model made up of three layers. First, there are the game publishers that are the key stakeholders of the governance of esport titles. The second layer is made up of the representatives of these esport titles within regions. Finally, the third layer consists of the local governments.

In the first layer there are the game publishers, which the ones responsible for the development and release of the video games that are eventually converted into esport titles. It is important to note that not all video games that a game publisher release will be an esport title. The responsibility of game publishers is to oversee the overall governance of their esport titles and to come with agreements with the chosen representatives to represent their esport title within that country and push for change in legislation and expand on player rights. In this new model game publishers remain the dominant governing body of their esports as it has been before. In addition, publishers have the property rights to these titles, so it is their decision first to cooperate with these next 2 layers of governance.

In the second layer there are the representatives of these selected esport titles by the game publisher and these representatives may be made up of the national, and regional federations that exist today or by player unions that are ultimately made by the game publishers. The main responsibility of this layer of governance would be to closely cooperate with the game publishers to establish what their needs are within that region or nation and develop a connection between the game publishers and the local governments to address these needs. With these two entities closely cooperating it would end the back and forth on who should be the one governing esports within that region or nation and not only creating the connection but possible smooth cooperation of local governments that have been less cooperative with esports. This cooperation would include ensuring a transparent path for esport organizations growing within the region or nation and increased cooperation between existing esport organizations in a country and their country´s federation leading to the creation of national teams that are backed by the game publishers. Which is something that the international esports scene has only seen glimpses of.

Finally, the third layer consisting of the local governments that take care of passing legislation that ensures the growth of esports in their country and expands on the rights of the organizations that are in esports as their profession. The responsibility of these local governments is to listen to the representatives of these esport titles handed down by the game publishers that promote the change of legislation, or the addition of new legislation based on their needs. Also, aid in resources and manpower for the representatives in these federations in order for the esports industry to continue to continue to grow and lay a foundation in academics and amateur preparation.
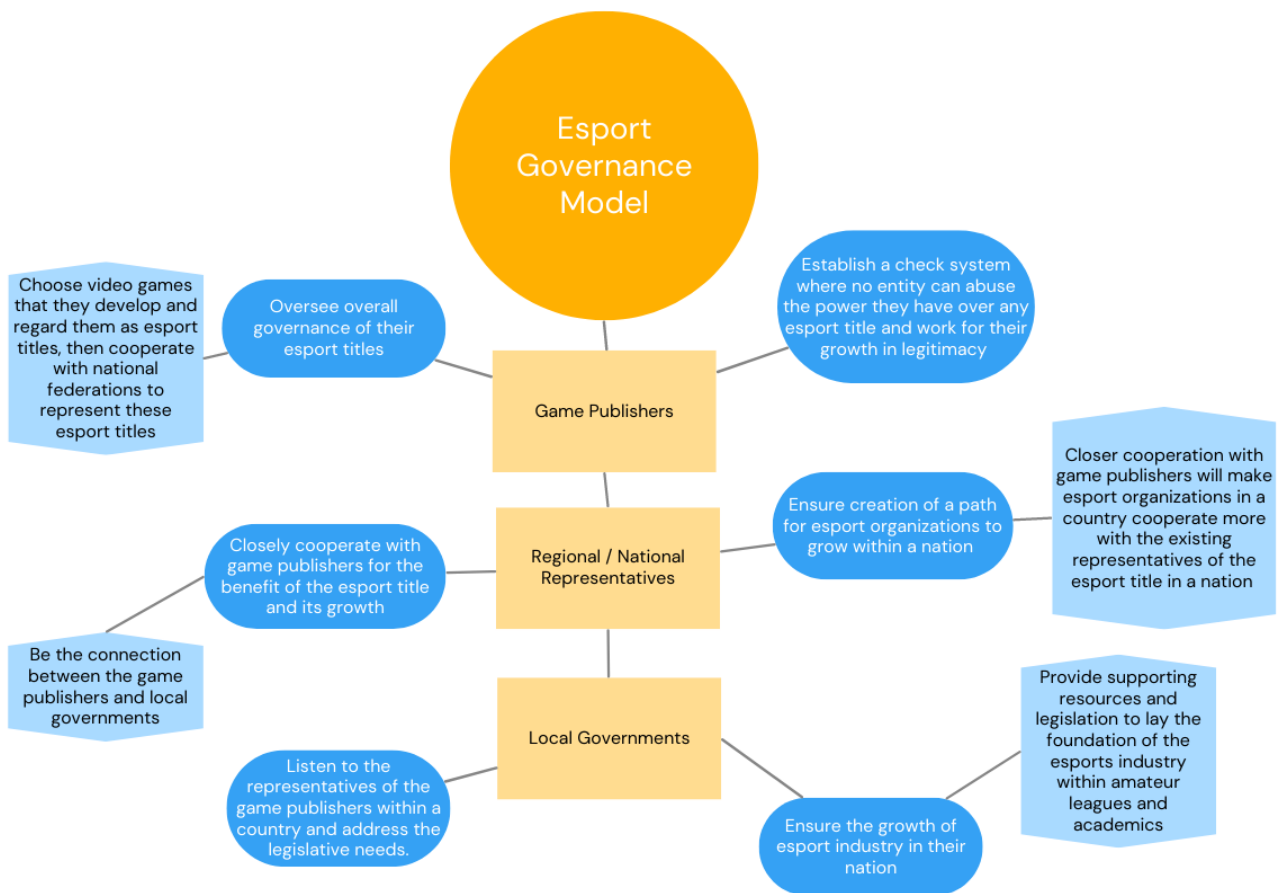
**Esport Governance Model**

Game Publishers
- Choose video games that they develop and regard them as esport titles, then cooperate with national federations to represent these esport titles
- Oversee overall governance of their esport titles
- Establish a check system where no entity can abuse the power they have over any esport title and work for their growth in legitimacy

Regional / National Representatives
- Closely cooperate with game publishers for the benefit of the esport title and its growth
- Be the connection between the game publishers and local governments
- Ensure creation of a path for esport organizations to grow within a nation
- Closer cooperation with game publishers will make esport organizations in a country cooperate more with the existing representatives of the esport title in a nation

Local Governments
- Listen to the representatives of the game publishers within a country and address the legislative needs.
- Ensure the growth of esport industry in their nation
- Provide supporting resources and legislation to lay the foundation of the esports industry within amateur leagues and academics

Figure 3. New model for esport governance

# 5    Conclusion

This thesis aimed to identify all the gaps that exist within esport governance and to find a path of direction that esport governance may take to increase legitimacy among traditional sports. Based on the theoretical framework and the qualitative research done it proved to not be an easy feat to determine a path and that the gaps within esport governance were in abundance and primarily centered around its segmented governance, failed attempts at international governance, and the complexity of the esport industry and its existing stakeholders. The thematic analysis done from qualitative data concluded that the pursuit of legitimacy from esport governance required a combination of two strategies. These strategies were to manipulate its environment by not conforming to existing sport governance structures and implementing new ideas while announcing

them transparently to the public and stakeholders, and the creation of a new esport governance model that instead of separating the bodies attempting to govern esports it unites them and encourages cooperation between them. The new model introduced by the author emphasizes the need for having the game publishers at the top of the pyramid, primarily because the existence of this major stakeholder makes this booming industry so unique to govern and their cooperation with regional and national federations may enable smoother growth of the industry per unique situation and provide a connection between the game publishers and the local governments. The limitations to this research were the little available research on this topic which shows the need of more research and development on this topic.

This research shows that esports is a very young industry that is seeing massive growth and will continue to do so, and the development of a new model of governance is necessary to ensure its stable growth and its legitimacy among traditional sports since it is heading in the direction of being recognized internationally and with time it will see its fruition. It raises the question of what is just in the governance of the esport industry if the game publishers have dominant position and make their decisions for profit of their organizations and if with time there will be a standard regulation and approach for esport titles that wish to be legitimized.

Further research is necessary to determine a more complete a path for esports governance to head towards. The model proposed in this thesis should only be a starting point for other researchers to take note of and expand upon as the complexity of the esports governance has proven to need greater legitimization strategies that also prove efficient in its implications. The question answered from the research is what are the structure and gaps of esport governance and path for its pursuit of legitimacy among traditional sports? The author approached the answer to this question by introducing the structure of esport governance along with the gaps that exist within it in order to choose a path that will pursue higher legitimacy.  The findings in this thesis challenge the existing theory that esports governance should fall on the structure of existing sport governance, and demonstrate that a new model unlike the existing traditional sports one must be implemented in esport governance. The main reason being because of the game publishers and their existence within this industry and one that is most significant since they are the ones that develop and publish these esport titles and have the property rights to them. Finally, the esports industry is very young

and esport governance has just emerged recently so it is unavoidable to have some mistakes in the governance development of esports and with its rapid growth time will tell what direction it will take, but it will not go away and that is for sure.

## References

Abanazir, C. (2018). Institutionalisation in e-sports. Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 13(2), 117–131. Retrieved 8 September 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2018.1453538

Adgate, B. (2020, April 21). Esports is filling the programming void. Forbes. Retrieved 5 June 2022 from https://www.forbes.com/sites/bradadgate/2020/04/21/esports-is-filling-the-programming-void/?sh=66252a48533b

Aldrich, H. E., & Fiol, C. M. (1994). Fools rush in? the institutional context of industry creation. The Academy of Management Review, 19(4), 645. Retrieved 29 August 2022 from https://doi.org/10.2307/258740

American Esports. (n.d.). The history of Esports. The History of Esports – American Esports. Retrieved 29 May 2022 from https://americanesports.net/blog/the-history-of-esports/#:~:text=The%20First%20Signs%20of%20Esports,was%20first%20developed%20in%20196 2.

Ashton, G. (2019, January 3). Governing the wild west - an introduction to esports federations and Associations – Archive - The Esports Observer. ARCHIVE. Retrieved 3 June 2022 from https://archive.esportsobserver.com/esports-federations-intro/

Block, S., & Haack, F. (2020). ESports: A new industry - shs-conferences.org. shs-conferences. Retrieved August 29 2022 from https://www.shs-conferences.org/articles/shsconf/pdf/2021/03/shsconf_glob20_04002.pdf

Block, S., & Haack, F. (2021). ESports: A new industry - SHS web of conferences. SHS Conferences. Retrieved August 29 2022 from https://www.shs-conferences.org/articles/shsconf/pdf/2021/03/shsconf_glob20_04002.pdf

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. Retrieved 15 September 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

CEA. (2022). About - collegiate esports association. About - Collegiate Esports Association. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from https://ceahub.gg/about

Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (n.d.). A dictionary of media and communication. Oxford Reference. Retrieved 27 May 2022 from https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758

Cook, D. (2014, July 3). Update: 'men only' esports rule overturned after Blizzard & Finnish League Step in. VG247. Retrieved 7 July 2022 from https://www.vg247.com/hearthstone-esports-tournament-iesf-men-females-rule-overturned-after-blizzard-steps-in

DeCarlo, M. (2018, August 7). 13.2 qualitative interview techniques. Go to the cover page of Scientific Inquiry in Social Work. Retrieved 7 September 2022 from https://scientificinquiryinsocialwork.pressbooks.com/chapter/13-2-qualitative-interview-techniques/

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. American Sociological Review, 48(2), 147. Retrieved August 29 2022 from https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101

Díez-Martín, F., Blanco-González, A., & Díez-de-Castro, E. (2021). Measuring a scientifically multifaceted concept. The Jungle of Organizational legitimacy. European Research on Management and Business Economics, 27(1), 100131. Retrieved August 29 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedeen.2020.10.001

EEF. (2020). About esports europe. The official website of Esports Europe. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from https://eef.gg/about/

escharts. (2018). Esports teams and events stats: Dota 2, LOL, CS:GO | Esports Charts. Escharts. Retrieved 31 August 2022 from https://escharts.com/tournaments/lol/2018-mid-season-invitational

escharts. (2022). PUBG Mobile World Invitational 2022 / Statistics. escharts. Retrieved 31 August 2022 from https://escharts.com/tournaments/pubg-mobile/pubg-mobile-world-invitational-2022

ESL. (2014, January 6). Team houses and why they matter. ESL Gaming. Retrieved 3 July 2022 from https://www.eslgaming.com/article/team-houses-and-why-they-matter-1676

ESTA. (n.d.). About esta. About ESTA : Esports Trade Association. Retrieved 10 September 2022 from https://esportsta.org/about-esta/

Evans, P. (2019, March 8). How players associations could help improve Esports' infrastructure. Front Office Sports. Retrieved 10 September 2022 from https://frontofficesports.com/players-associations-esports-infrastructure/

Foley, & Lardner. (2020, November). Esports survey report - foley & lardner. Foley. Retrieved 7 July 2022 from https://www.foley.com/-/media/files/insights/publications/2020/11/2020-esports-survey-report1.pdf

France Esport. (2019). France Esport Manifesto. Retrieved 15 June 2022 from https://www.france-esports.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/France_Esports_Manifesto_EN.pdf

Funk, D. C., Pizzo, A. D., & Baker, B. J. (2018). Esport Management: Embracing esport education and research opportunities. Sport Management Review, 21(1), 7–13. Retrieved 8 September 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.07.008

GEF. (2019). About. Global Esports. Retrieved 4 July 2022 from https://www.globalesports.org/about

Gough, C. (2022, July 5). *Top esports tournaments by prize pool 2022*. Statista. Retrieved September 26, 2022, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/517940/leading-esports-tournamets-worldwide-by-prize-pool/

Heidenreich, H., Brandt, C., Dickson, G., & Kurscheidt, M. (2022). Esports associations and the pursuit of legitimacy: Evidence from Germany. Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 4. Retrieved 29 August 2022 from https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2022.869151

Interpol. (2020). E-sports: Keeping crime out of video game competitions. INTERPOL. Retrieved 5 July 2022 from https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2020/E-sports-keeping-crime-out-of-video-game-competitions

Ioc. (2022, May 21). Communique of the 7th Olympic Summit - Olympic News. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved 5 July 2022 from https://www.olympic.org/news/communique-of-the-7th-olympic-summit

Ioc. (2022, May 21). Communique of the Olympic Summit. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved 5 July 2022 from https://olympics.com/ioc/news/communique-of-the-olympic-summit

Joost. (2019, August 11). Esports governance and its failures. Medium. Retrieved 3 July 2022 from https://medium.com/@heyimJoost/esports-governance-and-its-failures-9ac7b3ec37ea

Karakolevska, A. (2021, September 16). IESF continues to unite the world of esports with acceptance of three new Continental Federations. International Esports Federation. Retrieved 9 September 2022 from https://iesf.org/news/6675

Karhulahti, V.-M. (2017). Reconsidering esport: Economics and executive ownership. Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research, 74(1), 43–53. Retrieved 5 September 2022 https://doi.org/10.1515/pcssr-2017-0010

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: Amee Guide no. 131. *Medical Teacher*, *42*(8), 2. Retrieved 16 September 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2020.1755030

Korea e-Sports Association. (n.d.). Korea e-Sports Association | linkedin. Linkedin. Retrieved 7 September 2022 from https://www.linkedin.com/company/korea-e-sports-association

Krieger, J., Pieper, L. P., & Ritchie, I. (2020). International federations and National Governing Bodies: The historical development of institutional policies in response to challenging issues in sport. Sport History Review, 51(1), 1–6. Retrieved 1 September 2022 https://doi.org/10.1123/shr.2020-0005

Larch, F. (2022, May 10). History of esports: How it all began. ISPO.com. Retrieved 3 June 2022 from https://www.ispo.com/en/markets/history-origin-esports

Lewis, R., & Stemler, R. (2016, August 26). The Richard Lewis show #23 NME Chachi. YouTube. Retrieved 3 June 2022 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7PbzMeQqT4&t=1s

Mackay, D. (2020, October 29). Blow for Global Esports Federation as IOC warn olympic sports not to join them. Blow for Global Esports Federation as IOC warn Olympic sports not to join them. Retrieved July 3 2022 from https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1100130/ioc-warn-sports-of-joining-gef

MCV. (2017, March 17). Everything you need to know about the esports integrity coalition. MCV/DEVELOP. Retrieved 5 June 2022 from https://www.mcvuk.com/business-news/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-esports-integrity-coalition/

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to Qualitative Research. Jossey-Bass a Wiley Company. Retrieved 7 September 2022 from https://stu.westga.edu/~bthibau1/MEDT%208484-%20Baylen/introduction_to_qualitative_research/introduction_to_qualitative_research.pdf

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. American Journal of Sociology, 83(2), 340–363. Retrieved 29 August 2022 https://doi.org/10.1086/226550

Myers, M. (2018, November 28). Pro Esports Team Analyst caught betting on his own team's matches, which is somehow legal. Kotaku. Retrieved 1 June 2022 from http://compete.kotaku.com/pro-esports-team-analyst-caught-betting-on-his-own-team-1793025674

NACE. (2022, May 13). About NAC Esports. NAC Esports. Retrieved September 9 2022 from https://nacesports.org/about/

NBC. (2018, September 25). Sports execs oppose esports in Olympics, survey shows - olympictalk: NBC Sports. OlympicTalk | NBC Sports. Retrieved 15 July 2022 from https://olympics.nbcsports.com/2018/09/25/esports-olympics-survey/

Peng, Q., Dickson, G., Scelles, N., Grix, J., & Brannagan, P. M. (2020). Esports governance: Exploring stakeholder dynamics. Sustainability, 12(19), 8270. Retrieved 29 August 2022 from https://doi.org/10.3390/su12198270

Red annihilation. Red Annihilation - QWiki. (n.d.). Retrieved 27 May 2022 from https://www.quakeworld.nu/wiki/Red_Annihilation#Introduction

Rutherford, M. W., & Buller, P. F. (2007). Searching for the legitimacy threshold. Journal of Management Inquiry, 16(1), 78–92. Retrieved 29 August 2022 https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492606297546

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. The Academy of Management Review, 20(3), 571. Retrieved 29 August 2022 https://doi.org/10.2307/258788

Summerley, R. (2019). The development of sports: A comparative analysis of the early institutionalization of traditional sports and E-sports. Games and Culture, 15(1), 51–72. Retrieved 29 August 2022 from https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019838094

Wagner, M. G. (2006, January). (PDF) on the scientific relevance of eSports. - researchgate. Conference Paper On the Scientific Relevance of eSports. Retrieved 1 June 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220968200_On_the_Scientific_Relevance_of_eSports

WESA. (2016, May 25). Wesa (World Esports Association) founded. WESA. Retrieved 5 July 2022 from http://www.wesa.gg/2016/05/13/world-esports-association-wesa-founded/

Winkie, L. (2015, December 8). Retired at 20: A pro gamer's life after eSports. Kotaku. Retrieved 4 July 2022 from https://kotaku.com/retired-at-20-a-pro-gamer-s-life-after-esports-1746907605

Wong, J. I. (2017, April 19). Competitive video gaming is going to the 2022 Asian Games, but it's been a medal sport for a decade. Quartz. Retrieved 7 July 2022 from https://qz.com/963274/esports-are-going-to-the-2022-asian-games-baba-but-its-already-been-a-medal-sport-in-asia-for-a-decade/

Yip, J. (2017, January 8). When you talk too much for Twitter. TwitLonger. Retrieved 4 June 2022 from http://www.twitlonger.com/show/n_1spgstm.

Zavian, E. M. (2021, May 13). Who is snubbing who? esports, the IOC and international federations need to listen to one another closely. Forbes. Retrieved 10 June 2022 from https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellenzavian/2021/05/11/whos-is-snubbing-who-esports-the-ioc-and-international-federations-need-to-listen-to-each-other-closely/?sh=1ec2309488b4

Zimmerman, M. A., & Zeitz, G. J. (2002). Beyond survival: Achieving new venture growth by building legitimacy. The Academy of Management Review, 27(3), 414. Retrieved 29 August 2022 from https://doi.org/10.2307/4134387

Interview Questions and Guide

1. What gaps have you found on
Esport governance?

- Withing their experience
- Industry knowledge

2. Is one international governing body
needed in esports?

- In comparison to traditional sports
- Does it benefit esports?
- Will it bring structure?

3. Should esports be in the Olympic
Program and/or be recognized by the IOC?

- If yes, why?
- If no, why?

4. What advances are needed within
Esports governance to increase its legitimacy
among traditional sports?

- Advances to overall structure
- What entities should be responsible

5. Where do you see Esport governance
going in the next 5 year

Data Processing Plan

The research method used in this thesis was qualitative research methods. The data collected were from interviews that took place from August 2022 to September 2022. The data collected were video/audio files of the interviews that took place online through the video conference application Microsoft Teams and Discord. This data was stored inside the author´s laptop and the only person with access to the data was the author. The security of this data was ensured by having a lock to the laptop and not storing it in any online drive that may be vulnerable. No personal data was collected through the interviews.

Once the research is concluded the data will be stored in a secure folder and will remain for one year in case it may be useful for further research. Once one year expires the data and files will be deleted from the hard drive of the laptop.