



SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF MOBILE LEGENDS ESPORT ATHLETES

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the social behavior of Mobile Legends esports athletes in the UKM Esport of STKIP Pasundan Cimahi. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with photovoice and semi-structured interview approaches. The population consisted of 15 athletes, and five main team members were selected as samples using purposive sampling. Data were collected through photo documentation and interviews to describe the athletes' social behavior both within and outside the team. The results indicate that social behavior within the team is reflected in cooperation, emotional support, and strategic communication during practice and matches. Conversely, social behavior outside the team shows limitations in social interaction due to intensive and unstructured training patterns. The conclusion of this study is that high training intensity can restrict social interaction outside the team while strengthening social solidarity within it.

Keywords: Social Behavior, Esport Athletes, Mobile Legends, Photovoice

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has had a major impact on the sports field with the emergence of Electronic Sport or Esports. Esports is a form of sport that makes video games the main means for structured and organized competitions (Kurniawan, 2020). One of the branches Esports the most popular in Indonesia are Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, a team-based game that demands cooperation, communication, and strategy between players (Zilfah, 2017).

Acknowledgments Esports as one of the sports in Indonesia is based on its ability to hone the physical and intellectual aspects of players. This is due to the demands of a high level of concentration as well as relatively long game durations in esports (Adha Septiana, 2023). Mobile Legends Esports Included in the category of team electronic sports, where each team is made up of a number of athletes who must collaborate and interact intensively to achieve victory. Team sports or team sports are a form of sport that plays a role in developing individual social skills. This happens because team sports create social situations that provide opportunities for individuals to interact with others (Pedesaan et al., 2024).

This phenomenon is not only developing in the professional realm, but also reaching the academic environment, including the STKIP Pasundan Cimahi campus. On

this campus, there is an Esports Student Activity Unit (UKM) which is a forum for students to develop their interests and talents in the field of esports, especially in the Mobile Legends game. However, the training activities carried out by the athletes are often unstructured, with long hours of training until late at night.

Outside of the team's training schedule, these athletes also often play individually as a form of entertainment or additional training. As a result, most of their free time is also spent playing Mobile Legends. This leads to a lack of time to socialize in their social environment. This type of training pattern has the potential to affect students' social behavior both inside and outside the team environment.

Social behavior is a form of mutual interaction between individuals and their environment that reflects the values of cooperation, empathy, and the ability to adapt socially (Luthfi et al., 2019). In context Esports, social behavior becomes important because the success of a team depends heavily on the ability of the players to communicate, support each other, and work together to achieve a common goal (Surbakti, 2017). However, high play intensity and a strong competitive environment can also lead to social isolation, lack of time to interact with family, and changes in communication patterns outside the digital world.

Previous research has shown that online gaming has a dual impact on social behavior. On the one hand, online games can improve the ability to communicate and work together (Arsini et al., 2023). However, on the other hand, excessive play intensity can degrade the quality of social interaction and give rise to negative behaviors such as verbal aggressiveness (Nadiya et al., 2023)

Therefore, this study is important to examine how social behaviors are formed in esports athletes, especially in the context of higher education environments.

The purpose of this study is to describe the social behavior of Mobile Legends esports athletes in the Esports UKM STKIP Pasundan Cimahi. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of a campus esports coaching program that is more balanced between student achievement and social life.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to describe the social behavior of esports athletes in depth. Approach Photovoice used to explore the social experiences of athletes through photos they took themselves, The social behavior indicators that are the focus of the documentation are social behavior within the team, social balance, and emotional expression. Photovoice is a participatory visual approach that is used to

overcome individual and group problems through the use of photos and written narratives (Suprpto et al., 2020). Semi-structured interviews are conducted to understand the meaning of each social situation they experience.

The research was carried out at the STKIP Pasundan Cimahi Esports UKM. The study population consisted of 15 active athletes, and five people from the main team were selected as samples using purposive sampling techniques. The selection is based on their involvement in both campus and external practices and tournaments.

Data was collected using two main instruments, namely photovoice documentation and interview guides. Photographs are used to depict athletes' social activities in the context of training, team communication, and interactions outside of the team. Interviews were conducted in depth to interpret the social meaning of each photo as well as delve into the athletes' personal experiences in maintaining their social relationships.

Data is analyzed through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the data was maintained through triangulation techniques (comparing photos and interviews) and participant discussions to ensure the appropriateness of interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Behavior in Esports Teams

The results of the study show that the social behavior of athletes in the Mobile Legends UKM Esports team STKIP Pasundan Cimahi is characterized by strong cooperation, open communication, and emotional support between its members. Based on the results of photovoice and interviews, strategy discussion activities are important social moments for the team. Discussions not only serve as a forum for developing game tactics, but also as a means of building mutual trust and collective responsibility.

Every team member has an equal opportunity to express their opinions. Even quieter members feel valued and listened to, which fosters confidence and increases a sense of belonging to the team. This reflects an inclusive culture, where two-way communication and mutual respect are the foundation of interaction (Hamdani, 2024).

This atmosphere of equal discussion is in line with Max Weber's instrumental theory of rational social action, that social action is carried out with a clear and rational purpose, in which case victory becomes the main goal that motivates their collective behavior (Rachma, 2022). However, their behavior also shows an element of value-oriented social action, where solidarity, empathy, and togetherness are values that are held together.

These values are formed not only through technical practice, but also through reflective and evaluative habits that are carried out collectively. This awareness grows along with the shared experience of dealing with defeats, minor conflicts, and the successes they achieve in tournaments.

In addition to strategy discussions, positive social behavior can also be seen from athletes' ability to manage emotional expressions when facing defeat. They show social maturity by not blaming teammates, but rather making defeat a learning process. This attitude shows a high level of emotional intelligence, as described by Santrock (Sun, 2024), that proper management of emotions is part of social intelligence that plays an important role in interpersonal relationships.

These findings show that social dynamics within Esports teams are not only limited to the technical aspects of the game, but also serve as an effective social learning process. Intensive interaction within the team forms a supportive environment that encourages social adaptation, courage to speak up, and leadership formation. Thus, the activities in Esports can be seen as a form of social exercise that fosters communication, cooperation, and emotional management skills (Jenny et al., 2017).

2. Social Behavior Outside the Team

In contrast to the behavior within the team, the social behavior of athletes outside the esports environment shows considerable variation. The high intensity of training causes some athletes to spend more time in the digital world, resulting in less social interaction in the real world. Some athletes, however, show a tendency to be more introverted or introverted in social behavior. They rarely participate in social activities outside of the team and prefer to do activities in a limited environment.

However, not all athletes show the same pattern. Others still try to maintain social balance by setting aside time to gather with friends or family outside of the training schedule. Activities such as hanging out at a café, eating together, or just having a casual conversation are ways for them to manage competitive pressures while strengthening social bonds.

This phenomenon shows two poles of athletes' social behavior Esports: increased internal team solidarity, but reduced external interaction outside the team. This can be explained through Bronfenbrenner's theory of social ecology, that individual social behavior is influenced by interactions between environmental systems such as family, peers, and formal communities (Muhammad, 2023). When more time and energy is absorbed in activities Esports, then social relations in other environments can be marginalized.

In general, involvement in the world of esports poses challenges in maintaining social relationships outside of the team. Most athletes face time constraints and a lack of understanding from the surrounding environment, especially from friends who don't know the world of esports in depth. However, the athletes also showed reflective and adaptive capacity in responding to these changes. They learn to manage priorities, maintain communication, and accept that the social relationships formed must be in line with their development.

Thus, the social behavior of esports athletes is paradoxical, strong internal solidarity can actually go hand in hand with external social isolation. Therefore, it is important to have social and psychological coaching so that athletes maintain a balance between digital activities and real social life.

3. Social Balance

The social balance in this study illustrates how athletes maintain social relationships outside of competitive activities. Based on the results of photovoices and interviews, non-technical activities such as gathering in cafes, eating together, or chatting before matches are important means of building harmony and relieving emotional tension. This simple activity is done consciously as a form of respite from a busy training routine, as well as reflecting the awareness that the success of the team is not only determined by technical ability, but also by the quality of the interpersonal relationships between members.

Some participants explained that togetherness outside of the training session has strategic value to strengthen emotional bonds and maintain the psychological stability of the team. These activities create a supportive atmosphere that helps them cope with the pressure of competition. Participants who tend to be quiet, admitted that they felt accepted and appreciated in this relaxed situation because there were no performance demands. Social interactions like this build a strong sense of belonging and strengthen social identity within the team.

These findings are in line with Baron and Byrne's theory that a positive social environment can increase an individual's emotional resilience (Richmond, 2015). In addition, according to Vygotsky's view, daily interactions in a supportive social environment are a means of social learning that strengthens empathy and solidarity (Colliver & Veraksa, 2021). Thus, social balance can be understood as a form of affective action, where non-competitive interactions have an emotional and strategic function in maintaining the social stability of the team.

Overall, the social balance that is built among the athletes shows that they are able to integrate the competitive and emotional aspects in a harmonious manner. Healthy social relationships outside of the game have a direct impact on team performance, morale and cohesion on the arena.

4. Emotional expression

Athletes show positive abilities in managing and expressing emotions, especially in post-match situations. When the team loses, it still shows an attitude of supporting each other and not blaming each other. Gestures such as shaking hands, hugging, and giving encouragement despite disappointment are a reflection of emotional maturity formed from togetherness and the value of solidarity in a team. . This is in line with Weber's theory of affective action, in which social action is triggered by sincere and spontaneous emotions in response to a specific situation, such as disappointment, empathy, or togetherness (Rachma, 2022).

The esports athletes of STKIP Pasundan showed that although the competitive gaming world often triggers high emotions, they are able to respond to it with positive social behavior. Team support is the main factor that prevents the emergence of toxic behaviors such as blaming each other or exploding in anger. Instead, they create a supportive and open emotional atmosphere, allowing each member to feel welcome even in a stressful situation.

The indicators of emotional expression in this study show that the athletes are not only technically developed, but also socially and emotionally. Their ability to manage emotions in the face of failure shows a good level of social maturity. A supportive team environment is an important factor that encourages the birth of healthy social behaviors, including in terms of emotional expression. This reinforces that in the context of esports SMEs, character formation and social behavior go hand in hand with technical training, and is an integral part of the process of becoming a fully functional esports athlete.

5. Implications for Social Development and Esports Coaching

The findings of this study have important implications for the development of esports in the higher education environment. Esports activities have proven to be an effective means of developing social skills such as communication, empathy, and leadership. However, a balance between competitive and social aspects must be maintained so as not to create social isolation or excessive emotional distress.

Esports UKM programs in college should not only focus on improving technical skills and game strategies, but also on building social character through non-competitive activities, such as emotion management training, team building, and collective reflection after

matches. Well-scheduled workouts, adequate rest time, and inclusive social activities can strengthen an athlete's emotional well-being and performance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social behavior of Mobile Legends esports athletes at the STKIP Pasundan Cimahi Esports UKM is formed through two main dimensions, namely social interaction within the team and outside the team. In teams, social behaviors develop positively through cooperation, emotional support, and effective communication. However, outside of the team, the high intensity of training and unstructured play patterns limit social interaction with the surrounding environment.

However, some athletes try to maintain social balance through recreational activities outside of the gaming world. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of the role of educational institutions in designing esports coaching programs that pay attention to the balance between achievement and social welfare of students.

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