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Causal Model of Factors Influencing Decisions to Become an E-Sport Player

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Abstract

Background. The athletes must possess internal drive and external pressures, such as environmental factors to navigate them through or overcome various obstacles on their journey towards developing into professional esports players. Objective. to explore causal model of factors influencing decisions to become an E-Sport player. Methods. The study research was mixing method study the qualitative research was used to employs explore causal model of factors influencing decisions to become an E-Sport player. The focus group was used in the qualitative phase with E-sport professional athletes who have an experience more than three years in competing E-sport both domestic and international tournament all total 10 people to explore the motivations of becoming professional esports players with the Value and Lifestyles (VALS) Framework concept. Next, the quantitative was used for obtaining direct and indirect effects of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand. The sample size number of participants was 400 individuals answering the questionnaire and the answers were analyzed preliminary data using descriptive statistics includes percentages, averages, standard deviations, maximum and minimum values, skewness, and kurtosis. Additionally, the researchers utilized the LISREL model to analyze causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete. The study also examined the direct and indirect effects of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Result. The intention to become an esports athlete, along with the attitude towards the profession of esports athlete, as well as the lifestyle patterns of the actualizer and striver, influences the decision to become an esports athlete. Furthermore, the management strategies of esports associations and the managerial style of executives also play a role in the decision-making process to become an esports athlete. The management strategies of esports associations, the managerial style of executives and staffs can significantly impact the decision-making process for individuals considering becoming esports athletes. Conclusion. The e-sports association should prioritize the identification of professional athletes' career growth needs and establish management strategies to meet those needs. This is essential to support athletes who are determined and committed to growing in their professional paths, ultimately leading to successful outcomes.

Keywords: *E-Sport Player, Value and Lifestyles, E-Sport Pathway Career.*

Introduction

The E-Sports industry is a relatively recent development, but it is experiencing rapid expansion. In 2019, the global revenues from E-Sports reached $957.5 million and are projected to surpass $1.6 billion by 2024. Sponsorship and advertising constitute the primary sources of income, complemented by contributions from betting, prize pools, and tournaments. China leads the E-Sports market, with the United States following as the second-largest regional market (Gedik, 2023). The significant surge in the E-Sports sector highlights its dynamic and compelling nature. The fact that, revenues reached $957.5 million in 2019 and are expected to exceed $1.6 billion by 2024 underscores the considerable economic potential of E-Sports. This growth is fueled by various revenue streams, including sponsorships, advertising, betting, prize pools, and tournaments, demonstrating the industry's robust and sustainable upward trajectory (Özsoy, 2023). The E-Sports sector is experiencing swift expansion, drawing a substantial player base and carrying significant economic worth. Games like FIFA 18, for instance, were purchased approximately 24 million times within the initial 11 months after their market release. During this timeframe, FIFA 18 recorded an impressive 7 billion played matches, with over 20 million participants hailing from 60 different countries engaging in official online FIFA competitions (https://news.ea.com/press-release/company-news/ea-sports-fifa-worlds-game). A study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers GmbH, involving 1,001 participants aged

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14–35, revealed that 80.6% of respondents engage in video gaming on a regular basis, with 55% of male participants playing several times a week. Noteworthy, no significant variations were observed based on the age of the interviewees. Among those surveyed, 73.9% were familiar with the term "eSport," and within this group, 3% identified as professional players, while 29.2% considered themselves non-professional eSport participants. According to that, encouraging certain motivations in players can contribute to fostering positive attitudes towards pursuing a career in E-sports (Ballhaus et al., 2017). A growing number of young individuals perceive esports as a viable avenue through which they can build a professional livelihood. Because esports have gained popularity and is now recognized as a sport, certain universities, such as the University of California-Irvine and the University of California-Berkeley, offer sports scholarships for professional players. Additionally, the Olympic Council of Asia has officially incorporated esports into the program of the 2022 Asian Games in China, which serves as a subsequent event to the Olympic Games (Hallmann and Giel, 2018). Furthermore, there are a total of 80 academic programs related to esports, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, technical degrees (diplomas), certificates, or undergraduate minors. These programs are offered by 62 distinct higher education institutions worldwide, with a predominant presence in North America and Europe. The majority of these academic offerings (77.5%) specifically concentrate on the business aspects of esports, such as management and marketing (Jenny. Et al.,2021). It can be said that, there have supporting by the international E-sport Federation to coordinate a sequence of tournaments and events, including the prestigious annual World Esports Championship. This serves as a gathering ground for top-tier esports athletes worldwide, fostering an atmosphere that promotes both fair and elite competition (https://iesf.org/), with the support of educational institutions, international esports associations, and the esports industry, one can anticipate a promising future for esports. In this context, key players in esports, the athletes, need to receive support and encouragement to grow professionally. Additionally, the athletes themselves must possess the desire to become professional esports players, driven by internal motivation. The motivations that lead gamers to engage in competitive video gaming play a crucial role in influencing their decision to pursue a career in esports. Specifically, these motivations are closely linked to gamers' ambitions of becoming professional esports players. Earlier research has emphasized that intrinsic motivations and the development of an esports player identity are significant factors in the journey toward professionalism (Bányai, 2020). Furthermore, Kim & Thomas (2015) state that the motivational style of an aspiring professional esports player undergoes transformation throughout the journey to becoming a professional. Therefore, motivation, self-esteem, aspiration, accomplishment and recognition (Soe,2016) will be instilling determination to become a professional esports athlete involves the efforts of the team, coach, and psychological consultant, who play crucial roles in assisting players in transitioning from gamers to esports athletes at each stage (Bányai et al.,2020). However, previous studies clearly indicate that athletes must possess internal drive and external pressures, such as environmental factors, as mentioned earlier, to help them navigate through or overcome various obstacles on their journey towards developing into professional esports players. This research aims to explore "Causal Model of Factors Influencing Decisions to Become an E-Sport Player" using the three concerts, which were personal factors, external factors, relate to the management of the esports association, using the 7S McKinsey model, and internal factors using the Value and Lifestyles (VALS) Framework concept, which consisting of (1) Actualizer (2) Achievers (3) Strivers (4) Strugglers (5) Fulfillers (6) Believers (7) Experiencers (8) Makers to explore the consistency of direct and indirect influence of the causal model over decisions to become an e-sport player in Thailand. Furthermore, this study will obtain the structural equation of the causal model of factors influencing decisions to become an e-sport player in Thailand to present the study findings to those involved in driving the esports industry in Thailand for effective management, aiming to comprehend the motivations both internally and externally that propel individuals on their journey toward reaching the pinnacle of a professional esports career.

Research method (11 pt, Sentence case)

Phase 1 Qualitative

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Qualitative research employs the focus group with E-sport professional athletes who have an experience more than three years in competing E-sport both domestic and international tournament all total 10 people.

Phase 2 Quantitative

Analysis of questionnaire respondents' preliminary data using descriptive statistics includes percentages, averages, standard deviations, maximum and minimum values, skewness, and kurtosis. Additionally, the researchers utilized the LISREL model to analyze causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete. The study also examined the direct and indirect effects of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results are presented through narration and tables. Furthermore, the quantitative was divided into three sections

The questionnaire respondents, presented in frequency and percentage to analyzed the personal factor.

Analysis of basic statistics for the observed variables used in the causal factor model influencing the decision to become an esports athlete, in order to understand the distribution characteristics of the variables. Basic statistics include mean ("X"), standard deviation (SD), coefficient of variation (CV), maximum value (Min), minimum value (Max), skewness (Sk), and kurtosis (Ku).

Analysis of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete and verification of the consistency of both direct and indirect influences of the causal factor model affecting the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand.

The analysis consists of two parts: Part 1 involves analyzing the relationship between causal variables that influence the decision to become an e-sports athlete. Part 2 involves examining the alignment of both direct and indirect influences of causal factor models affecting the decision to become an e-sports athlete in Thailand. The analysis employs the LISREL model for examination.

Material

Phase 1 Qualitative

The focus group questions were used in this step asking the internal factors using the VALS framework concept to explore the motivations of becoming professional esports players. The result was analyzed and summarized and conducted to confirm and support the aforementioned ideas in the subsequent quantitative analysis phase.

The key informants

E-sport professional athletics with the criteria as follow; 1) be a professional E-sport athletes 2) have an experience more than three years in competing E-sport both domestic and international tournament all total 10 people.

Phase 2 Quantitative

Quantitative research findings from the questionnaire study on three sections 1) the personal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete cover personal factors, 2) the 7S McKinsey strategy to examined the direct and indirect effects of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand, 3) the 8 aspects of the VALS Framework.

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Population

The population is gamers who are esports athletes participating in E-Sports tournament competitions.

Sample Size

The calculation of the sample size, following the recommendations of the necessary use of the LISREL model (Hair & others, 1998), suggests a large sample size of 10-20 individuals per estimated parameter. The researchers have opted for a sample size of 10-15 individuals per estimated parameter, resulting in a potentially suitable sample size of at least 200-400 individuals. This will be achieved through purposive sampling based on the convenience and appropriateness criteria determined by the researchers and respondents. The sample size number of participants was 400 individuals.

Results and discussion

3.1 The result of the qualitative phase

The key informant was discussing and express their opinion in the focus group phase by using the Value and Lifestyles (VALS) Framework as an issue in discussing about the motivations of becoming professional esports players. The result was analyzed as show at the table 1.

Table 1: The key informants' opinion in the focus group phase

Value and Lifestyles (VALS) Framework	**The Key Informants**
Actualizer	The Key informant C said "I have encountered young athletes who, despite their age, are determined to achieve success in life. They look up to role models who earn income through esports, and individuals in this group often have supportive parents, relatively affluent backgrounds, and access to computer equipment to pursue their interests"
Achievers	The Key informant H said "There are athletes who, despite having stable jobs, continue to compete because they have aspirations for recognition. Importantly, athletes of this type demonstrate a high sense of responsibility; they can effectively balance work and esports without compromising their primary responsibilities. This ability reflects the characteristics of athletes with a strong sense of responsibility and discipline"
Strivers	The Key informant A said "I know an athlete who lacks resources compared to other kids but possesses determination and a cheerful disposition. Despite facing challenges, he aspires to become a professional esports athlete. He is confident that he can generate income through pursuing a career in esports"
Strugglers	The Key informant G said "Some athletes come from unfavorable financial backgrounds, and some argue that being an esports athlete comes with high expenses, mostly catering to kids from more affluent families. This is mostly true, some athletes of this type are talented, and sports associations need to provide support"
Fulfillers	The Key informant J said "Dedicated athletes, they are likely to be critical thinkers, enjoy exploring new innovations, and have a relatively high interest in technology. With a disciplined and organized approach, they seem to be athletes well-suited for a successful professional career in esports"

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Believers	The Key informant F said "I have encountered some athletes who tend to be overly stressed and have personalities that are not very open or receptive to others' opinions. This could potentially be a hindrance to becoming a professional athlete. However, I provided advice to adjust their attitudes and behaviors by encouraging them to try playing different sports, especially team sports. The aim is to help them develop a new mindset, reducing attachment to their existing thought patterns"
Experiencers	The Key informant A said "Some athletes seek experiences, enjoy trying new things, and thrive on challenges. From what is observed, they tend to be young athletes, enthusiastic, and sociable individuals"
Makers	The Key informant E said "Athletes of the type who can produce good results but never stop progressing. They enjoy accumulating experiences and consistently develop their skills"

The key informant confirmed those 8 items of the VALS, which were (1) Actualizer (2) Achievers (3) Strivers (4) Strugglers (5) Fulfillers (6) Believers (7) Experiencers (8) Makers had an influence on the E-sport athletic in motivate the intention to become a professional e-sport player

3.2 The result of the quantitative phase

1) the result of the personal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete cover personal factors

Table 2: The result of the personal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete cover personal factors

Demographic Characteristics of Data Contributors		**Number**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	374	93.5
	Female	26	6.5
Age (Year) (Mean=26.7 SD=6.93)	20 – 24	225	56.3
	25 – 29	28	7.0
	30 – 34	66	16.5
	35 – 39	81	20.3
Educational Level	No formal education	-	-
	Primary school or equivalent	-	-
	Lower secondary school or equivalent	27	6.8
	Upper secondary school or equivalent	-	-
	Vocational Certificate or equivalent	-	-
	Diploma or equivalent	27	6.8
	Bachelor's degree or higher	346	86.5
Marital Status	Single	347	86.8
	Married / Living together	53	13.3
	Widowed / Divorced / Separated	-	-
Occupation	Student	212	53.0
	Civil servant / Public sector	-	-
	Private company employee	80	20.0

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Demographic Characteristics of Data Contributors		Number	Percentage
	Employee	-	-
	Freelance / Merchant	-	-
	Self-employed / Business owner	27	6.8
	Esports athlete	81	20.3
	Other	-	-
Average Monthly Income (Baht) (Mean=20,110.0 SD=18,319.44)	Less than 10,000	212	53.0
	10,001 – 50,000	161	40.3
	More than 50,001	27	6.8
Number of times participating in esports tournaments (Frequency) (Mean=12.2 SD=15.73)	1 – 9	267	66.8
	10 – 19	27	6.8
	More than 20 times	106	26.5
Number of hours per day before participating in the first esports tournament (Mean=6.6 SD=2.86)	1 – 4	80	20.0
	5 – 9	239	59.8
	More than 10 hours	81	20.3
Number of days per week before participating in the first esports tournament (Mean=6.40 SD=2.86)	5	81	20.3
	6	80	20.0
	7	239	59.8
Gaming Location (Mainly)	Own home	266	66.5
	Friend's house	27	6.8
	Gaming cafe	53	13.3
	Other	54	13.5
Gaming Expenses (Baht/Month) (Mean=1,265.75 SD=1,107.55)	No gaming expenses incurred	28	7.0
	1 – 999	172	43.0
	1000 – 1,999	79	19.8
	More than 2,000	121	30.3
Typical gaming time periods	00.00-02.59 am	81	20.3
	03.00 – 05.59 am	-	-
	06.00 – 08.59 am	-	-
	09.00 – 11.59 am	27	6.8
	12.00 - 14.59 pm	81	20.3
	15.00 – 17.59 pm	53	13.3
	18.00 – 20.59 pm	53	13.3
	21.00 – 23.59 pm	105	26.3

The demographic characteristics of the data contributors in this study, gathered through a survey, reveal a total sample size of 400 individuals. The distribution by gender is 93.5% male and 6.5% female, with an average age of 27 years. The majority have completed a bachelor's degree or higher (86.5%), and most are unmarried (86.8%). About half are students (53.0%), 20.3% are esports athletes, and 20.0% work in private companies. The average income is 20,110 Baht, with over half earning less than 10,000 Baht (53.0%) and 40.3% earning between 10,001 and 50,000 Baht. On average, participants have joined esports tournaments 12 times, with 66.8% having participated 1-9 times. Before participating in their first esports tournament, they played an average of 7 hours per day, with 59.8% playing 5-9 hours per day. Before the first tournament, they played an average of 6 days per week, with 59.8% spending 7 days per week playing.

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The primary location for playing games is at home (66.5%), with an average monthly expenditure of 1,266 Baht. Nearly half (43.0%) spend between 1-999 Baht per month, while 30.3% spend 2,000 Baht and above. The most common time for gaming is between 21:00 and 23:59 (26.3%), followed by 00:00 to 02:59 and 12:00 to 14:59 (20.3%).

2) The preliminary statistical analysis of the observed variables was used for analyzing the causal factor model that influences the decision to become an esports athlete.

The preliminary statistical analysis of the observed variables used in the causal factor model analysis that influences the decision to become an esports athlete. In this study, the variables are categorized into 1 internal embedded variable, which was the VALS, and 2 external embedded variables, which were personal factors and the 7s McKinsey strategy. The embedded variables are measured from all 25 observed variables, aiming to study the distribution and explanation characteristics of each observed variable. The results of the basic statistical analysis of the observed variables are shown in the table 3 below:

Table 3: Preliminary statistics of the observed variables used in the causal factor model analysis that influences the decision to become an esports athlete.

Variable(s)	($\bar{X}$)	Level(s)	SD	Min	Max	Sk	Ku
VALS factors	**4.29**	High	**0.38**	**3.44**	**4.94**	**-0.220**	**-0.521**
Achievers	4.31	High	0.42	3.75	5.00	.380	-1.056
Actualizer	4.24	High	0.40	3.25	5.00	-.103	-.754
Believers	3.74	High	0.47	3.00	4.75	.094	-.949
Experiencers	4.70	Highest	0.28	4.00	5.00	-.521	-.731
Strivers	4.30	High	0.50	3.25	5.00	-.386	-1.113
Makers	4.47	High	0.26	3.75	5.00	-.250	.516
Fulfilled	4.13	High	0.48	2.75	5.00	-.414	-.219
Struggles	4.41	High	0.25	3.75	4.75	-.558	.137
Personal factors	**4.01**	**High**	**.65**	**2.87**	**5.00**	**-.216**	**-.964**
Intention to be an esports athlete	3.72	High	0.76	2.50	5.00	.144	-1.110
Attitude towards the esports athlete profession	4.04	High	0.61	3.00	5.00	.087	-1.019
Motivation to be an esports athlete	4.00	High	0.68	2.67	5.00	-.528	-.748
Self-identity	3.89	High	0.61	2.83	5.00	-.169	-.795
Social aspect	4.38	High	0.61	3.33	5.00	-.614	-1.147
Ages	26.65		6.93	20.00	39.00	.628	-1.199
Income	20110		18319.44	2000	70000	1.32	1.133
Number of times participating in esports tournaments	12.24		15.73	1.00	65.00	2.478	5.757

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Variable(s)	($\bar{X}$)	Level(s)	SD	Min	Max	Sk	Ku
Number of hours per day before participating in the first esports tournament	6.55		2.86	1.00	12.00	.033	-.619
Number of hours per day before participating in the first esports tournament	6.40		0.80	5.00	7.00	-.835	-.943
7s McKinsey strategy factors	**4.68**	**Highest**	**0.28**	**4.04**	**5.00**	**-.538**	**-.441**
Strategy	4.79	Highest	.20	4.50	5.00	-.348	-1.1426
Structure	4.67	Highest	.27	4.25	5.00	-.117	-1.316
System	4.49	High	.32	3.75	5.00	-.307	-.367
Style	4.52	High	.49	3.50	5.00	-.744	.-698
Personnel management	4.68	Highest	.27	4.00	5.00	-.770	-.202
Skills	4.82	Highest	.18	4.25	5.00	-.680	-.104
Shared values	4.80	Highest	.21	4.00	5.00	-.804	.042

Regarding VALS factors, it was found that the average value of the variable is 4.29. The highest average values are for Experiencers, Makers, and Struggles, with averages of 4.70, 4.47, and 4.41, respectively. The standard deviation ranges from 0.25 to 0.50, with an overall distribution showing a left skewness (negative skewness), indicating that the majority have scores higher than the average, except for conservatives and successful individuals who exhibit right skewness (positive skewness), suggesting that these two groups have scores lower than the average. When considering kurtosis values, it was found that most data distributions have a flatter shape than a normal distribution (kurtosis less than 0), indicating a greater spread of data, except for practitioners, who have a data distribution with higher kurtosis than a normal distribution (kurtosis greater than 0).

Concerning personal factors, it was found that the average value of the variable is 4.01. The highest average values are for the social aspect, attitude toward the profession of e-sports athlete, and motivation to be an e-sports athlete, with averages of 4.38, 4.04, and 4.00, respectively. The standard deviation ranges from 0.61 to 0.76, with an overall distribution showing a left skewness (negative skewness), indicating that the majority have scores higher than the average, except for the intention to be an e-sports athlete and the attitude toward being an e-sports athlete, which exhibit right skewness (positive skewness), suggesting that these two aspects have scores lower than the average. When considering kurtosis values, it was found that the data distributions have a flatter shape than a normal distribution (kurtosis less than 0), indicating a greater spread of data.

Regarding the strategy 7s McKinsey factors, it was found that the average value of the variable is 4.68. The highest average values are for skills, shared values, and strategy, with averages of 4.820, 4.80, and 4.79, respectively. The standard deviation ranges from 0.18 to 0.49, with an overall distribution showing left skewness (negative skewness), indicating that all have scores higher than the average. When considering kurtosis values, it was found that the data distributions have a flatter shape than a normal distribution (kurtosis less than 0), indicating a greater spread of data, except for shared values, which has a distribution with higher kurtosis than normal (kurtosis greater than 0).

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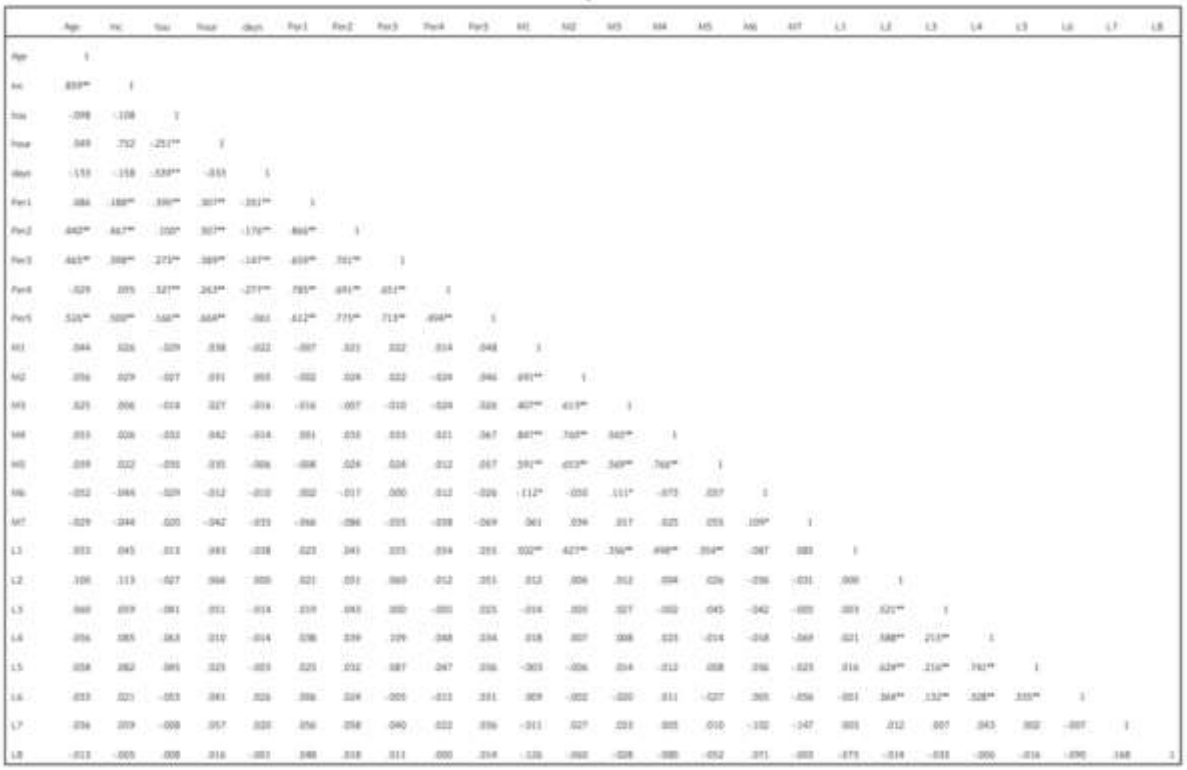
3) Analysis of causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete and verification of the consistency of both direct and indirect influences of the causal factor model affecting the decision to become an esports athlete in Thailand.

Part 1 involves analyzing the relationship between causal variables that influence the decision to become an e-sports athlete.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficient - Statistical test for assessing the correlation between causal variables influencing the decision to become an e-sports athlete.



p< 0.01, * p< 0.05 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 6720.521 df = 300 p = .000 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = .604

Analysis of the relationship between causal variables influencing the decision to become an e-sports athlete was conducted with 25 observed variables, using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficients were calculated for a total of 300 pairs, and statistically significant differences from zero were observed in 61 pairs at the .01 significance level and in 5 pairs at the .05 significance level.

The relationships between the observed variables were categorized based on the magnitude of the correlation coefficient. There were 247 pairs with a very low level of correlation (r = .00 to .30), 19 pairs with a low level of correlation (r = .30 to .50), 18 pairs with a moderate level of correlation (r = .50 to .70), and 10 pairs with a high level of correlation (r = .70 to .90). The correlation coefficients demonstrated both positive and negative relationships.

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The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded an Approx Chi-Square value of 6720.521 with 300 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, indicating a statistically significant difference from zero at the .01 significance level. This aligns with the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index, which approached 1 (KMO = .604), suggesting that the correlation matrix of the variables used in the study was suitable for structural equation modeling analysis.

The analysis further investigated the relationships within groups of variables. For personal factor variables, the correlation coefficients ranged from .029 to .866, indicating both positive and negative relationships. Notably, the strongest positive relationship was found between the intention to become an e-sports athlete (Per1) and the attitude towards the profession of e-sports athlete (Per2) with a correlation coefficient of .866.

In the strategy 7s McKinsey variables, correlation coefficients ranged from .017 to .847, with both positive and negative relationships. The most prominent positive relationship was observed between the level of perception regarding strategy (M1) and the level of perception regarding style (M4) with a coefficient of .847.

For VALS variables, correlation coefficients ranged from .000 to .624, indicating both positive and negative relationships. The most substantial positive relationship was found between the level of perception regarding those hopefuls in life (L2) and the level of perception regarding those determined and persistent (L5) with a coefficient of .624.

The analysis provided insights into the relationships among observed variables, shedding light on the interplay of factors influencing the decision to become an e-sports athlete. The results could be further explored using structural equation modeling for a comprehensive understanding of the causal relationships.

Part 2 involves examining the alignment of both direct and indirect influences of causal factor models affecting the decision to become an e-sports athlete in Thailand. The analysis employs the LISREL model for examination.

Table 5: The statistical values from the analysis of the correlation coefficients between latent variables and the analysis of the model's causal influence affect the decision-making to become an esports athlete.

Outcome variable	VALS				
Predictor variable	TE		IE		DE
Personal	0.038 (0.049)		-		0.038 (0.049)
McKinsey 7s	0.001 (0.055)		-		0.001 (0.055)
Sstatistics	Chi-square = 70.23, df = 81, p = 0.79785, GFI = 0.978, AGFI = 0.967, RMR = 0.00418, RMSEA = 0.000				
Variable	Per1	Per2	Per3	Per4	Per5
weighting of components	0.755**	0.536**	0.547**	0.487**	0.540**
consistency	0.983	0.761	0.653	0.631	0.788
variable	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
weighting of components	0.142**	0.224**	0.212**	0.447**	0.220**
consistency	0.480	0.694	0.454	0.825	0.675
variable	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
weighting of components	0.287**	0.118**	0.231**	0.439**	0.105**
consistency	0.508	0.064	0.699	0.774	0.164
Equation structure of VALS variables					

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R SQUARE			0.001
the correlation matrix between latent variables			
Latent variables	Life	Per	McKinsey
Life	1		
Per	0.038	1	
McKinsey	0.002	0.022	1

Note: total effect (TE), indirect effect (IE), and direct effect (DE) *p < .05, **p < .01.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the structural validity of the causal factor model influencing decision-making in becoming an esports athlete. The observational data for this study included three latent variables: personal factors, the 7s McKinsey strategy, and VALS pattern. A total of 20 observed variables were utilized for data analysis, as detailed in Table 5.

Upon evaluating the SEM results, it was found that the model was consistent with the observational data. The chi-square statistic ($\chi 2$) was 70.23, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 81 and a probability (p) of 0.79785, indicating that the chi-square value was not significantly different from zero. This result supports the acceptance of the main hypothesis that the causal factor model influencing decision-making to become an esports athlete is well-aligned with the observational data. This aligns with the analysis of the goodness-of-fit indices, with a Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of 0.978, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) of 0.967, and a Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) of 0.00418, all indicating a close fit of the research model to the observational data.

Examining the standardized coefficients of the structural equation model, it was found that VALS pattern variable had a coefficient of 0.001, indicating that personal factors and the 7s McKinsey strategy could explain 0.1% of the variance in the VALS pattern variable.

Regarding the interrelationship matrix between latent variables, the coefficients ranged from 0.002 to 0.038, all showing positive relationships. The highest interrelationship was observed between the personal factor and lifestyle pattern variables, with a coefficient of 0.038, suggesting that higher personal factors are associated with a more developed lifestyle pattern. The lowest interrelationship was found between the 7s McKinsey strategy and the VALS pattern variables, with a coefficient of 0.002.

Considering the indicators with the highest weights for each latent variable, it was found that the personal factor variable had the highest-weight indicator, namely the intention to become an esports athlete, with a weight of 0.755. For the 7s McKinsey strategy variable, the pattern dimension had the highest-weight indicator with a weight of 0.447, and for VALS pattern variable, the indicator with the highest weight was the determined effort dimension, with a weight of 0.439.

Assessing the direct effect size in the standardized scores of variables as causal factors influencing the decision to become an esports athlete, it was found that the model derived from observational data was consistent with the theoretically expected model. However, in the context of this research, it was observed that personal factors and the 7s McKinsey strategy did not have a statistically significant influence on VALS pattern factors."

The results of the analysis of the consistency of the causal factor model influencing the decision to become an esports athlete.

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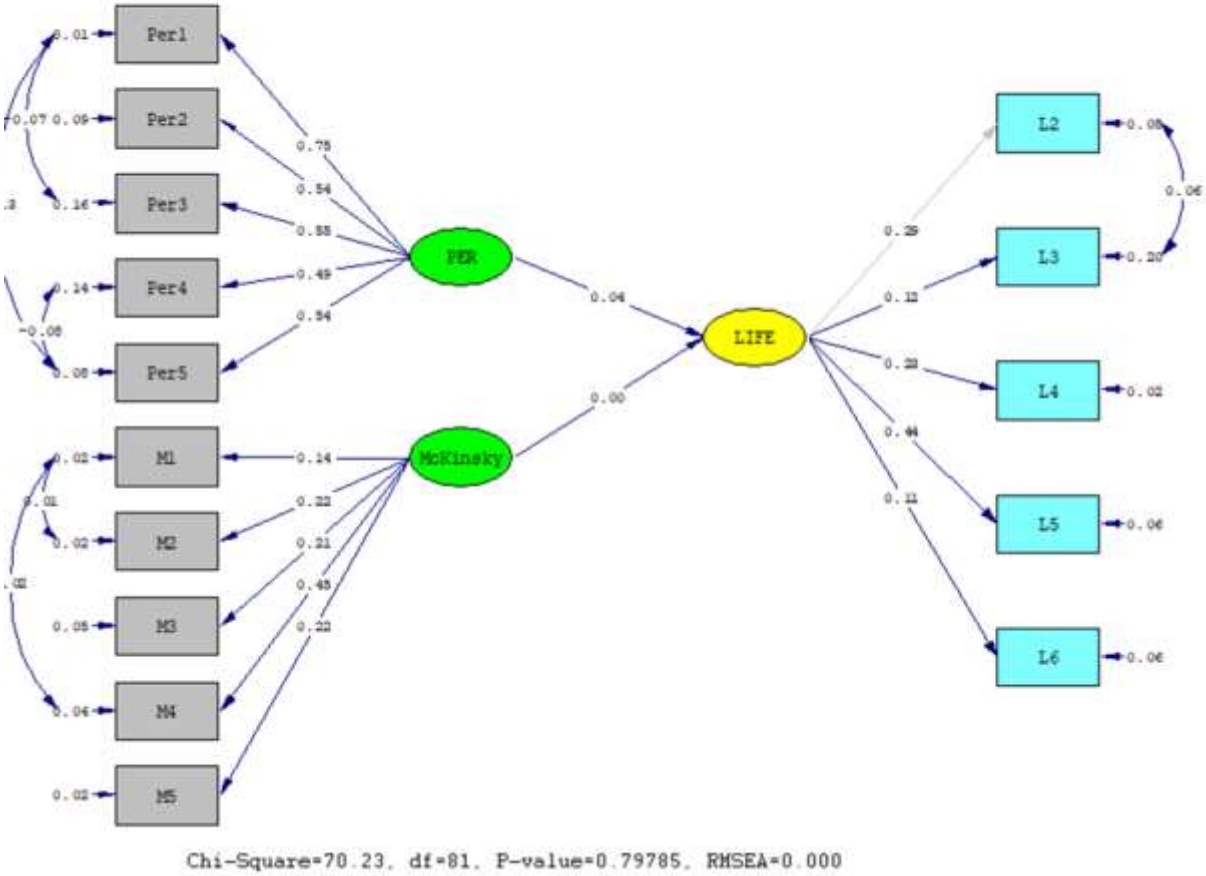

Discussion

The intention to become an esports athlete reflects an individual's deliberate commitment to pursuing a career in competitive gaming, involving dedicated efforts to develop gaming skills and participate in professional esports competitions (Meng-Lewis, 2022). On the other hand, attitude towards the profession encompasses one's mindset, beliefs, and perceptions about being a professional esports athlete (Poulus., et al, 2022). Moreover, in the field of athletics, the importance of certain qualities or characteristics is evident, particularly with respect to actualizers and strivers. Actualizers, defined as individuals who can transform their potential into tangible achievements, play a crucial role (Meyer, 1990). Athletes possessing the ability to effectively translate their skills, talent, and training into actual performance significantly contribute to the success of sports teams and events (Larsen.et al. 2013). Similarly, strivers, characterized by motivation, hard work, and determination to succeed, are also highly valuable. The drive to continually improve, set and achieve goals, and push one's limits is essential for success in sports (Brown., et al, 2018). Strivers not only contribute to a team's work ethic but also prove instrumental in overcoming challenges within the athletic domain (Russell, 2020). Esports associations, through well-structured management strategies, often implement talent development programs. These initiatives include scouting promising players, providing top-notch training facilities, and offering coaching and mentorship. Aspiring players are drawn to organizations with robust talent development, influencing their decision to pursue a career in esports (Yue Meng-Lewis., et al, 2022).

Moreover, the management of esports associations significantly shapes the overall professionalism and reputation of the organization (Florian., et al, 2023). Furthermore, a positive organizational reputation may

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influence the decision of aspiring players who want to align themselves with esteemed organizations (Duman, 2020). Additionally, the effective management involves understanding the competitive landscape, formulating strategies for tournaments, and making informed decisions about team compositions and participation (Chen, 2021). Aspiring players may be drawn to organizations with a clear competitive strategy, increasing their chances of success in the esports scene.

Conclusions (11 pt, Sentence case)

The intention to become an esports athlete, along with the attitude towards the profession of esports athlete. It can be said that, the intention and the attitude associated with gamers' aspiration through career journey to become a professional e-sport player. Additionally, individuals who can actualize their potential and those who strive for continuous improvement play pivotal roles in the realm of e-sport athletics. These qualities, combined with skills and training contribute to the overall success and competitiveness in e-sports. Furthermore, the management strategies and managerial style of esports associations and executives shape the organizational environment and culture. This, in turn, affects the decision-making process of individuals who are considering a career as esports athletes, influencing their perception of the opportunities, support, and overall experience offered by the esports organization. Likewise, the management strategies of esports associations, especially in terms of staff management and strategic planning, can significantly influence the decision of individuals to pursue a career as esports players. The overall environment, support structures, professionalism, and strategic direction set by the organization play crucial roles in attracting and retaining talented players.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

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Ethical approval statement (11 pt, Sentence case) (mandatory for studies with human or animal subjects)

Research ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Social Science, Humanities Science, and Behavioral Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University * Assoc.Prof. Yothin Sawangdee (65-196-2-1 / COE. 2-194/2022 *

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