Ardian Kurtolli

The Importance of a Well-Developed Organisational Structure for Esports Organisations. A Perspective from Kosovo Esports teams and Organisations

Thesis (M.A.)

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The importance of a well-developed organisational structure for esports organisations:

A perspective from Kosovo esports teams and organisations

KURTOLLI, Ardian

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Executive Summary

Esports has grown and is growing with rapid speed worldwide, generating hype and interest for organisations and entrepreneurs to be a part of the industry. Easier access to technology, hardware, and high internet penetration has made that Kosovo is also a part of this interest. Many informal and a few formal esports organisations are present in Kosovo. Thus, this dissertation will get an understanding of organisational structures in esports organisations, see its change and focus on generating recommendations towards the Kosovar organisations.

One of the challenges this dissertation faced was the lack of literature review regarding esports organisations, especially from an internal perspective, since most of the current literature available gave a glimpse of issues from an external perspective.

Using a one-to-one interview research method and conducting those interviews with hand-picked top-notch experts from the industry, this dissertation aims to get results and recommendations that are very practical and applicable on all stages of the organisation, even in the founding stage.

Experts were interviewed with a series of questions that focus around the organisational structure, the growth of the organisation, roles that are present and the different challenges they faced.

After a precise data analysis process and a generation of fascinating themes, results and findings of this dissertation show us the type of organisational structure that is present in esports organisations in its early stages; when it starts to change; what roles support the change; and who drives the productivity of the organisation.

Concluding this dissertation with implications and recommendations that the researcher generates, gives this dissertation the practical shape of research that not only contributes to the esports industry but also serves as a guide for the leadership of an esports organisation to open discussions within the organisation regarding several factors when it comes to organisational structure and change.

Acknowledgement

My final submission at Staffordshire University for the award of a Master in Business Administration (MBA) is this thesis. Words cannot express my deepest gratitude towards everyone who aided me to complete this dissertation.

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A special thank you goes to the visionaries, leaders, experts of esports interviewed in this dissertation since, without them, this research would not have the same value.

Most importantly, this whole journey is dedicated, inspired and fuelled by the love from and towards my Mother and Father. They are no longer with us, but always with me, to eternity! My family, wife, sisters, nieces, nephews, friends and colleagues are the positive vibes of my life and food for the positive energy that guides me every second.

Without them, I am lost, with them, my universe is whole, I am a Jedi, and the force is with me!

Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The environment that organisations operate in can affect them, but also the organisations can affect the environment that they operate. Therefore, organisational theory studies these factors and how an organisation functions (Jones, 2013). Jones (2013) recounts and explains very well the relationship between Organization Theory and Organizational Structure, Culture, and Design, and Change. By definition, an organisational structure is simple; it is the formal system of the relationship between authority and tasks that controls how people coordinate their actions and how they use resources to achieve the goals of the company. It shapes the behaviour of people and the organisation; it evolves as the organisation grows and differentiates. Moreover, very important, it can be managed and changed through the process of organisational design. Organizational Design that keeps the balance between the actual structure and the actual culture of the organisation.

The organisational structure is also considered as perspective or viewing glass by which individuals could view their organisation along with the environment of the organisation. An organisation is a variant for clustered entities. The organisation could be structured in several separate ways which depend on the objectives of the organisation (Jones 2013). The organisation's structure would determine modes by which it would operate and perform. Organisational structure authorises responsibilities' expressed allocation for several processes and functions to separate entities like department, individual, branch and workgroup. Organisations should be innovative, flexible, caring and efficient in order for achieving competitive advantages.

The researcher finds it fascinating how, according to Daft (2012), structures are sometimes not entirely related to work activities, but the expectations of the environment. Therefore, many organisations may add different positions to increase its reputation, survivability and legitimacy to the public. Positions and activities like e-commerce division, chief compliance officer, social media director, are added since they are perceived necessary by the larger society (Daft,2012).

While there exist several different structures, which could be adopted by organisations, depending on the organisation type which includes if it is a manufacturing organisation or service organisation, many benefits are there for well-structured organisation.

Esports organisations are service organisations that use their services to get revenue through media rights, merchandise and ticket sales, advertising, sponsorship, and game publisher fees (How Do esports Teams Make Money?, 2020).

Objectives of the organisation could be achieved by a well-structured organisation through ideal coordination of every activity. In a well organisational structure, disagreement among individuals for jurisdiction is kept at a minimum (Noe et al. 2017). As each person has a particular job, the total responsibility for performing the situation is with him. Traceability in outcomes is seen as results and interdependency of work for the particular task reduces to a minimum. Duplication and overlapping of work are eliminated in a well-structured organisation. There is duplication when the distribution of work is not identified,

and the performance of work is haphazard and in a disorganised way. As a well-structured organisation needs that duties are assigned and defined, such duplication in work is removed. Everything needs to be precise.

In esports teams, players, depending on the video game in which they perform their roles are pre-assigned based on their preference, skills, performance and other factors. In the videogame League of Legends, team members have roles such as:

Top, Mid, Jungle, Support and AD Carry. (League of Legends: Each Role Explained | SKY TV, 2016, 00:01:08).

Communication becomes easier at every level within the organisational hierarchy.

As authority flow and communication lines are identified clearly on the chart of organisation, intercommunication is more comfortable and more unobstructed, and ambiguity is eliminated—well-structured organisation results in an increase of cooperation and a sense of satisfaction within members of the organisation. Sufficient freedom is given to an employee within the domain of responsibility and authority. As authority and extent for such authority could be known, the sense of satisfaction developed among employees could be highly boosting of morale.

In videogames like "World of Warcraft" players are structured in guilds, that in some way are "virtual organisations" within the game. Guilds consist of an unlimited number of players who come together and share common interests and goals within the game to compete with other guilds. Design-wise, they have different hierarchies, but all are required to have a Guild Master (GM) that reflects the CEO of an organisation. Then, depending on the strategy of the guild development, the guild might have roles such as, officers, class leaders, raid leaders and even players who manage the guilds virtual resources (Thomas, 2009). The researcher in 2005 was one of the founders of a top European guild named "SECURITY" and

reflected how these virtual roles could be mirrored to regular roles within organisations based on their skills and responsibilities—officers to managers, class leaders to team leaders, raid leaders to project managers.

Based on the above information, the skeleton of a specific sports business is reflected by the organisational structure. Adopting and implementing a suitable organisational structure is essential to carry out the strategic intent of the sports business (Miller, L.K., 1997). The adopted structure depends on several factors like product complexity, staff expertise and philosophy of management. Narrow and tall structures are required when tasks are varied and complex. Tall structure means a structure which has a different number of layers and smaller management spans. (Passos, Araújo and Davids 2013). This specific sports business might select a narrow and tall organisational structure.

Usual organisations have a functional structure which is based on the organisation being divided into small groups having specific roles or tasks. Advantage of such structure is there are groups of employees divided as per their function and skill set, which allows them in focusing on executing roles of theirs as a department (Bresman and Zellmer-Bruhn 2013). While the narrow and tall organisational structure is chosen by the sports team, organisations having significant resources would be able to have a taller structure. Sports business requires a structure which has several layers and more managerial layers.

There are teams such as Paris Saint-Germain esports that are a part of a taller structure. They are the esports department of the French Paris Saint-Germain club. Besides esports, the club also has other active divisions: Football (Men's, Youth Men's, Women's), Handball (Men's') and Judo (Mixed) (Annual report 2018, Paris Saint-Germain, 2020). Most of European already established sports teams are now either creating or acquiring esports teams to add to their structure. Recently FC Bayern Munich entered the esports scene to compete with other European teams with already established esports teams such as FC Barcelona, Manchester United and Juventus Turin (FC Bayern Munich Enters the esports Scene, 2019).

In sports organisations, if managers and owners can exert control over the employee/athlete without affecting their motivation and attitude towards work, it can be said that they have the "right" structure (Nicholson et al., 2012). Good reporting, proper accountability and communication channels while reducing the costs of management are the results of a well-implemented organisational structure. The organisational structure provides a clear roadmap to these teams on how different positions are related to each other and to

other teams within the organisation. Robbins (2010) states that to have a good structure, in the process of designing it, managers need to take into consideration the elements of work specialisation, departmentalisation, chain of command, a span of control, centralisation and formalisation. And this structure can also have many influences from other vital factors such as strategy, size, technology and environmental uncertainty. It is critical for managers to be aware of the design process and also the factors that influence the structure. Doing so, they deliver an improved organisational structure outcome and performance (Nicholson et al., 2012).

In esports organisations with a clear structure, vision and strategy, such as Astralis, small recruitments of specific players can lead to massive improvements for the player but also the organisation in general.

"A requirement for succeeding with a move like this is an organisation with a strong culture and structure around the team and it requires versatile players who are able to adapt and adjust - and who are motivated by the continued work to always improve." (Kasper Hvidt, Director of Sports in Astralis, 2020)

Video Game competitions organised by amateurs started becoming popular in the 2000s, nowadays these tournaments are becoming more and more popular and professional (Tassi 2012). By definition, "esports" can be applied to any type of video game / digital game that is competitive, regardless of its type (Techopedia, 2019). The industry itself is growing, and getting a lot of attention and innovations, teams and organisations are being created with high dynamics. There are over 90 esports organisations that are popular and have had revenue of over $1 million (esportsearnings.com, 2019).

The revenue growth tells it all; esports will generate $345 million in North America in 2019 and overseas an estimated $500 million more (Ingraham, 2018). In Kosovo, Scuta Gaming founded by the researcher was the 1st team that approached the esports scene more professionally and managed to qualify for the "Electronic Games World Cup 2012" in Paris (Gosugamers.net, 2019).

While the revenue growth of esports worldwide is in high numbers, Kosovo still has an informal economy of these organisations. To date, there are not many statistics of revenue of these companies, but some individuals have recorded revenues of over $12,686.70 (esportsearnings.com, 2019).

1.2 Aim and Objectives

This dissertation aims to identify how organizational structures change while companies grow and see if the process is the same in esports organizations while comparing them to other organizations, in order to contribute to the informal and formal esports organizations in Kosovo, so that they can grow domestically, perform better abroad and start exporting talents in the international scene.

The research will have three objectives that will help us achieve our main aim:

1.Understand the importance of the organisational structure in esports organisations.

2.See the organisational structure change in the stages of organisational growth while having a focus on esports organisations.

3.Formulate recommendations for Kosovo esports organisations that will lead them to an improved organisational structure and performance.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives this dissertation will answer the following questions:

- Are organisational structures present from early stages in the esports organisations and are roles and responsibilities clearly defined within them?
- How vital are communications, and how is that being done across the structure of the organisation? What type of communication and reporting is done?
- Is the organisational structure reviewed and modified in different stages of growth? What does trigger its modification?
- What are the critical roles that keep the organisations functional and lead it towards progress and achieving its development plans?

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

Following the recommendations of the British Standard Institute regarding dissertation structure, this dissertation is structured with six chapters.

As seen above, the first chapter provides a general research background, including the aim of the dissertation, objectives and research questions. Following that, the second chapter is the literature review, and it has three subsections: Organisational Structure, Changes in Organisational Structure, and Esports Organisations. The methodology is covered in the third chapter; it explains the philosophy, approach, strategy and methods used in this research. Chapter four covers the data analysis, and it begins by introducing the panel of experts continuing with demographical information, data analysis, themes and discussions.

This dissertation concludes in chapter five, where the researcher connects the analysis findings with the research objectives, questions and finally gives the recommendations.

Chapter six reflects the learning of the researcher and the experience gained during this dissertation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organisational Structure

Organisational structure is defined in a sophisticated way by many authors, in its central core, it represents the way how people communicate within the company. Not so long ago in 2016, Ahmady, Mehrpour, and Nikravesh stated that organisational structure refers to the framework of individuals, internal systems, operational processes and groups working together to achieve set goals. The structure exists as a means of determining the duties and the people who coordinate and execute them. Moreover, it affects every aspect of the company, and it governs the internal relations of the company regarding power, formal communication, reporting, decision making, delegation, and responsibilities. The organisational structure ensures that everyone understands and plays their role as is expected, because an organisation is a system of interrelated departments which must function together to achieve the set goals (Ahmady, Mehrpour, and Nikravesh, 2016). A different thought is that in its central core, the organisational structure is a foundation for system thinking, Bustinza et al. (2015) recount, the organisational structure lays the foundation for system thinking in which every department operates for the good of the entire company. Within the system, there are soft elements and hard elements. The hard dimension is composed of hierarchical units within the organisations which interact and display the soft elements by making judgments concerning organisational processes (Ahmady, Mehrpour, and Nikooravesh, 2016). More importantly, the organisational structure determines the relationship between different units and the number as well as levels within the organisational hierarchy. Summarising with all of the above authors, we can conclude that having a clear organisational structure is giving the organisation the ability to think and communicate clearly in all aspects of operations.

A company's survival is hinged on the ability of the people within it to anticipate, plan and execute different activities. The organisational structure ensures that the internal processes of the company are adept at meeting the set goals. Several components of organisational structure determine the extent to which it is useful, and they include formalisation, control, and centralisation (Tran and Tian, 2013). Formalisation refers to the extent to which the workforce is provided with rules and procedures concerning their roles.

These rules can either deprive or encourage the level of creativity, learning and autonomous work within the company. Companies that have high formalisation are those that have rules that are restrictive within the workplace, and these rules discourage innovation. The most successful companies in the modern business scene are those that give employees a chance to explore their creativity. More companies now realise the importance of a less formalised workplace on improving the quality of output (Lee, Kozlenkova, and Palmatier, 2015). Centralisation is a hierarchical level of authority that is granted to an individual or a group of people tasked with making decisions. Highly centralised companies, like formalised ones, minimise communication between different groups and limit the participation of employees in company processes (Tran and Tian, 2013). In situations where control is only granted to a few people, the company becomes less dynamic, and this negatively affects its ability to survive in the competitive marketplace.

Companies must align their organisational structure with the company's strategy to ensure that the firm maintains top performance in its management and other aspects of the operation. This will lead to advances in different aspects of the company and will culminate in better marketing outcomes (Zaridis and Mousiolis, 2014). There are different types of organisational structure, and they can be used to categorise the employees within the company. A functional structure classifies workers and activities into separate units based on their functions in the company or their areas of expertise. In a multidivisional structure, the company is subdivided into smaller divisions that perform several functions separately. The advantage of this structure is that the company is more responsive to changes in the external market. However, the threat of using this structure is that some of the functions may be duplicated because of the lack of interdepartmental consultation (Zaridis and Mousiolis, 2014). With more research being done into organisational management, there has been a rise of new forms of organisational structure. The newer structures like matrix and network are based on the modern business which is founded on dynamism and competitiveness. The type of organisational structure used within a company determines the relationship between its different departments.

During the industrial age, organisations assumed a more mechanistic structure, and this was attributed to mass production at the time. Employees were expected to perform specialised tasks for long periods of time because companies were focused on producing the same items for many customers. Communication within the organisation remained vertical, with employees gaining technical skills to improve their output in the role that they play. As O'Neill, Beauvais, and Scholl (2016) recount, employees gain longevity by remaining loyal to

the objective of the company and maintaining high output within the company. Organisations had simple operations because the employees would perform the same tasks repetitively, which required minimal skills (O'Neill, Beauvais, and Scholl, 2016). Therefore, such organisations had simple information processing technique as opposed to the more contemporary companies. Also, organisations were located in distinctive locations, and many of the communication technicalities that exist in the present did not exist at the time. The organisational structure during the era of the industrial revolution was fairly simplistic because the companies dealt with mass production, which called for vertical organisational structure and specialisation within the company.

A new concept of organisational structure became popular at the beginning of the digital era because of the drastic changes in the business scene. Since goods and services became more personalised, customers began having higher purchasing power. Consequently, companies shifted their focus from mass production to customer satisfaction. The concept of employee multifunctionality was introduced into the organisational structure. It refers to the ability of the employees to perform different tasks owing to continuous learning within the organisation (Huang, Rode, and Schroeder, 2011). Multifunctionality improves the flexibility of the workforce by giving employees opportunities for creating new knowledge and attaining job enrichment. The argument for the inclusion of multifunctionality in organisational structure is that the management in a centralised organisation is very detached from the crucial information that can be used to help improve the outcome of the company. Therefore, a flat organisational structure allows for more effective communication between different departments. The development of organisational structure was necessitated by the changes in the market situation which were brought on by the ongoing wave of technological innovation.

New creative concepts regarding organisational structures are also present in esports organisations. According to Sevilla, the main structural issues are lack of money, immature industry and technical limitations of the actual videogames. Therefore, a new structure that would focus on talent proposed; this structure would hire, develop and retain the best talent (Sevilla, 2017).
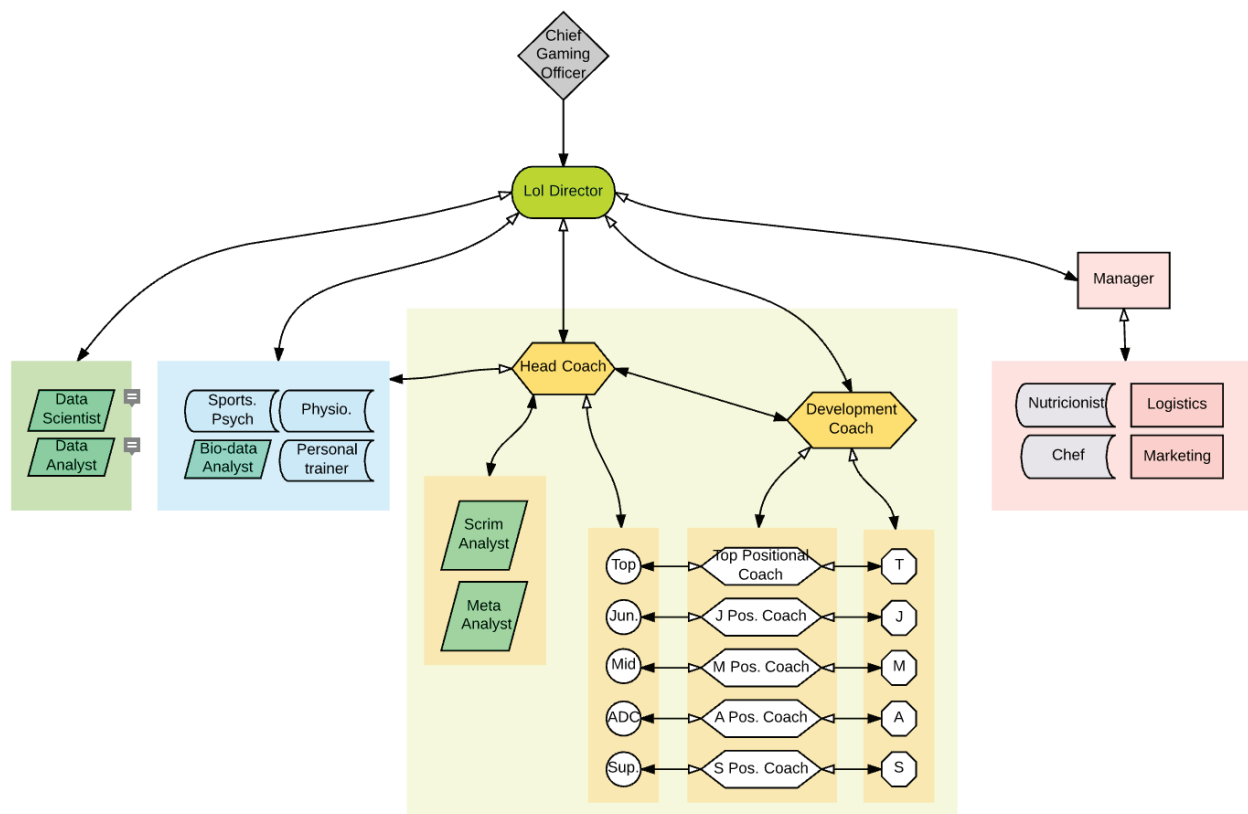
Figure 1: Organisational Structure proposal by Sevilla. Source (Sevilla, 2017).

Connecting to Zaridis and Mousiolis, and their view on the structure based on the function of workers and activities, in esports organisations, a division is focused on a specific video game. While an organisation can have one or several divisions that all have the same structure, all can operate independently, and all are responsive to the changes in the market. It can be seen in the proposed structure by Sevilla in 2017, where immediately under the Chief Gaming Officer, there is the "Lol Director", defined by the game in which they operate: LoL/League of Legends. The researcher agrees that the whole division can be multiplicated and be operational for a similar video game under a new director and structure.

2.2 Changes in Organisational Structure and Growth

Organisations must change their operations regularly to keep up with the changing external environment. Many researchers have postulated that the change process is one that takes place over an extended period and must be conducted carefully. This is because any mistakes made during the process can prove to be very costly for the company. Change is expected to be a process that is very inclusive in that every aspect of the business must be involved from the beginning to the end. Every employee has a role to play in the change

process; therefore, it is crucial that they are convinced of the need for change from the beginning. However, Král and Králová (2016) claim that when it comes to organisational structure, the change process is very discrete as it occurs without the knowledge of much of the workforce. This is mainly because unlike the change in organisational operations, changes in organisational structure are made by the management. The process of changing the organisational structure simply involves changing a single component of the hierarchy. Moreover, the management does not even consider the implications that the changes have on the rest of the components within the structure (Král and Králová, 2016). Another difference between changing the organisational processes and changing its structure is that with the overall organisational operations, the changes must be tracked to determine whether they were effective. With the organisational structure, the management does not pay much attention to the changes once they have been made. Changing the organisational structure is a straightforward process; hence may occur many times during the lifetime of the company.

In the modern economy, learning organisations have become the most lucrative of all business types because an essential commodity is now information. Innovation is the primary determinant of company success, and contemporary businesses are aware of this. Therefore, firms have prioritised employee learning to ensure that the workforce has the right competencies to come up with creative ideas. One of the main ways that businesses inject knowledge into their internal processes is by changing the organisational structure constantly. Leaders rely on the organisational structure to control the workforce and inspire individual employees to think in a certain way or adopt a confident attitude that will help the organisation meet its goals (Agbim, 2013). Employees can attain knowledge by working in innovative companies that create an atmosphere that is supportive of creativity by changing the organisational structure.

There are several stages that the company undergoes during the change process, and one of them is the internal entrepreneurship drive. This is when employees are empowered to think more like entrepreneurs and use their creativity for the good of the company. It is imperative to change the organisational structure to motivate the commitment of the employees. The management must put in place systems of motivations that are both tangible and intangible to ascertain the commitment of each employee (Paunovic and Dima, 2014). Leaders also rely on the organisational structure to create an enabling environment; hence it is crucial to revise the company structure at this point. There are different employees within a typical company, and it is the role of the management to determine the tangible and intangible incentives that can motivate the employees to remain committed. Change in

organisational structure is an integral part of the change process, and it is also necessary for organisations that want to improve their levels of innovations. In a sense, it is the organisational structure that guides how the change process should be conducted (Paunovic and Dima, 2014). However, the structure itself must change before the employees are motivated to get on board concerning the need for change.

The main issue with changing the organisational structure is resistance from the employees. There are several factors that may contribute to resistance. One of them is trust violation by the management. Employees may also be unsure about their job security within the firm once the changes have been implemented. The problem with changing the organisational structure is that it is not necessary for the management to communicate with the subordinates. This means there is much mistrust between the two groups as employees are not sure when the changes will take place or how they will be affected. Bateh, Castaneda, and Farah (2013) recount that it is crucial for the management to communicate openly with the employees to ease their frustrations. Changing the organisational structure occurs covertly; hence employees have a valid reason to be concerned about their job security. Just like with organisational change, when changing the company structure, the management must consider communicating openly with employees and revealing their intentions (Bateh, Castaneda and Farah, 2013). The main issue with the process of changing organisational structure is the resistance from subordinates, whose involvement in the process has been kept to a minimum.

Involving employees in the process of changing the organisational culture is vital in improving group dynamics and ethical standards within the organisation. Ellman and Pezanis-Christou (2010) reveal that when employees are involved in making decisions and held responsible for the outcome of those decisions, they are less likely to engage in unethical conduct within the organisation. There is a direct correlation between ethical behaviour and a sense of responsibility for the operations in the company. Moreover, when employees feel responsible, they are likely to feel committed to the success of the organisation, and this guarantees the outcome of the change process. It is also crucial to minimise the activity of management during the process of changing the organisational structure. This is because people are psychologically prone to performing better when those in authority do not assume an active role in the process (Ellman and Pezanis-Christou, 2010). Therefore, the lower the involvement of the management, the better the outcome. Ultimately, the employees are the focus of many modern companies because they have the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the prevailing market situation. Therefore, like every other aspect of the company, the organisational structure must be changed to accommodate the needs of the workforce.

2.3 Esports Organisations

Esports, also known as electronic sports, is a form of sports competition that involves video games. The competitions involve professional gamers that are usually organised into teams (Funk, Pizzo, & Baker, 2018). The teams are then pitted against each other to compete in various competitions. Organised competitions became more popular as professional gamers and spectators increased and live streaming of the events grew. Sponsorship and support from the gaming community increased, which led to the surge in the industry in the 2010s (Hamar & Sjöblom, 2017). According to Funk, Pizzo, and Baker (2018), the growing demand from consumers is the sole reason why esports continues to grow, and it has since received attention from three sectors: sports, event, and entertainment. Despite the growth of the industry and its organisations, there is still a debate about the industry in which the companies should be placed. Do they belong in the gaming or sports sectors? However, Funk, Pizzo, and Baker (2018) believe that the organisations lean more towards sports management as opposed to the placement in a gaming organisation. Hence, any management of the teams should be accorded the attention of a sports organisation because of the apparent similarities of the competitions.

The organisations have become more focused on beating the competition in the industry by purchasing the best teams and players in different segments. According to Hamari and Sjöblom (2017), the more competitive an organisation is, the more coverage and audiences it attracts, which then generates several benefits, including but not limited to increased sponsorship. It is possible that the increased coverage comes from an organisation's ability to compete in the best leagues around the world. Therefore, the companies are focused on building more robust and highly competitive teams in order to survive in the industry. Funk, Pizzo, and Baker (2018) reports the highly fragmented nature of the esports sector with intense competition.

The esports industry as a whole continues to grow and thus attract more organisations and stakeholders. The rapid growth of the industry has been echoed by several scholars (Korpimies, 2017: Karhulahti, 2017: Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017: Funk, Pizzo, & Baker, 2018: Scholz, 2019), with statistical support from various economic organisations. Ozanian (2019) reported a 15% year-on-year growth in the audience of esports, which represented 165 million people in 2018. In 2019, the revenues of the esports industry grew by 38% with sponsorships, the leading sourcing followed by advertisements and media rights (Ozanian, 2019). The industry's exponential growth has been catapulted by the ensuing success of the

video game industry as well as advancements in technology. The video games industry is central to esports as it provides the platform for the competitions and the rolling out of games that shape the industry. Technology is also central to the popularity of esports because the majority of the audience access the content via the live streaming services that depend on video technology (Scholz, 2019).

The organisations are managed as traditional sports clubs, and professional gamers even recognised as athletes in the US (Jenny et al., 2017). Therefore, the structure of the organisations resembles that of traditional sports. The management of esports firms involves several activities including organising the tournaments and leagues that the different teams under the club participate in, financial management of the company (including travel expenses and salaries), and normal operations of a sports organisation. However, in esports, salaries to professional gamers take up more than half of the operational costs of the companies (Parshakov, Coates, & Zavertiaeva, 2018). Investment in the players and roasters is a fundamental aspect of the cash flow as it allows the organisation to remain competitive. In turn, the organisations benefit from the increased earnings in tournament prizes among the sources of income, as mentioned earlier. Hence, teams opt to join several competitions and leagues to increase their earnings. For example, Cloud9 is the most valuable esports organisation with an estimated worth of $360 million (Ozanian, 2019). The company is known to participate in several competitions including the League of Legends, Overwatch, and a sixth consecutive year in the World Championship. The teams build on their reputation by acquiring better roasters according to the changes in the games as well as more teams to build on their franchises.

The structure of esports organisations is much more complicated than that of ordinary sports companies. In most cases, the firms are a part of the larger game development organisations. For example, Riot Games owns the League of Legends, arguably the most common esports tournament in the world. The company employs approximately 2,500 staff to work on its different game development and the process of organising the tournament (Riot Games, n.d). Riot Games is, therefore, an organisation at the centre of the esports industry. Consequently, it has faced criticisms over time because of the absolute power it enjoys due to the popularity of its League of Legends. For example, Karhulahti (2017) reports the case of Riot Games vs Team Renegades owned by Mykles Gaming LLC. The team's previous and concurrent owners were accused of breaching the rules of the competition. Riot Games was accused of enjoying absolute power because of the investigator, prosecutor, and judge during the case that led to the suspension of the team (Karhulahti, 2017).

Overall, the organisation of esports teams is more complicated; hence the seriousness accorded to competitive gaming as a sport in its own right. While the pro-gamers receive all the attention from media coverage, there is entire management behind the teams that handle the logistics part (Kane & Spradley, 2017). Topmost is the organisation's owner who founded or purchased the team and is responsible for several decisions such as hiring and firing of team managers and provision of financial support to the team. Next in the structure is the management of the team which includes several individuals including coaches, scouts, accountant (for the large organisations), and even facility managers depending on the size of the teams (Parshakov, Coates, & Zavertiaeva, 2018). For example, Cloud9 was planning to develop a training facility for its players to ease the process of coaching as a measure to improve performance (Ozanian, 2019). Players then follow as the most valuable staff of the teams and are accorded the level of attention to ensure that the teams remain competitive and profitable as aforementioned. Finally, other supporting staff completes the organisational structure of a typical esports club in the professional gaming industry. Kan and Spradley (2017) argue that esports organisations should be recognised as sports clubs because of the undeniable similarities.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile mentioning that esports teams are just a part of the whole esports ecosystem. According to esportsobserver.com (2019), the esports ecosystem consists of: publishers, players and teams, tournament and league organisers, brand and advertisers. Some esports organisations offer services in different parts of the ecosystem, i.e. an organisation that is a tournament and league organiser but also has its teams and players (An Introduction to the Esports Ecosystem, 2019). The researcher made sure that this research has a mixture of several types of organisations interviewed, elaborated furthermore in the appropriate sections below.

2.3 Research Gaps

Esports as an industry is still in its infancy stage and is only beginning to receive some level of attention from the greater economic and business world. The majority of the scholars have conducted studies to classify and categorise the sector among the existing industries that are; it is argued to fit; sports and gaming. In all earnest, it is paramount to obtain a conclusive classification of the industry as pro-gaming continues to grow in popularity around the globe. Nonetheless, there is a huge gap in almost every aspect of the industry and its organisations from an economic and management standpoint.

The lack of not only conclusive but non-existent research on the dynamics of esports organisations is a huge research gap that needs scholarly contribution. Despite receiving scholarly attention, the studies only focus on the esports industry as a whole and how it is constructed (Jenny et al., 2017; Kane & Spradley, 2017). Others such as Korpimies (2017) only focus on the various revenue generation streams of the industry with interest in sponsorship as the major source of income. While it is important to understand the sector in its entirety before focusing on the specifics, there is still a need to fill the gap. Funk, Pizzo, and Baker (2018) conducted a study on the management aspect of esports but analysed the issues from an external perspective. Therefore, they still leave a gap in the internal management structure of esports.

Another notable gap in the literature is the fact that the research focuses on the assumption of synonymy between esports and traditional sports organisations. While it is evident that esports has numerous similarities with sports clubs, some major differences specifically define an Esports firm. Therefore, there needs to be literature that addresses the industry as isolation from the major sports research fraternity. The studies will then help to provide a more specific understanding of esports organisations. The application of the assumptions of a traditional sports industry might not apply to an esports organisation. Therefore, there is a need to fill the gap. As a result, this study has focused on developing a theoretical framework of the organisational structure of esports companies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Zikmund et al (2010), defined "Business Research" as in applying scientific methods in searching for the truth regarding a business phenomenon. Moreover, this is what this research categorises itself as, since it is a final product of the Master of Business Administrations studies.

The research methodology employed is best described through the lens of the "research onion" proposed by Saunders et al (2009), that has several sequences of stages.

The researcher, having personal experience in the esports industry and also being a founder of an esports organisation, during this research will make appropriate choices to focus on the objectives of this research. Zikmund et al. (2010) point out that these choices, alternatives are essential to keep in mind while researching in order to achieve the objectives of the study.
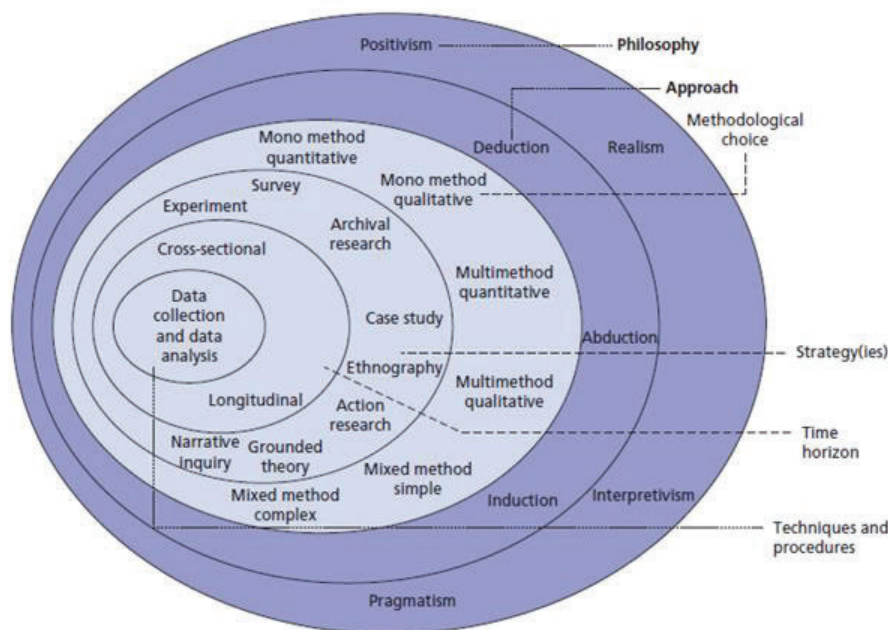
Figure 1: Stages of the Research Process –Source: Saunders et al. (2009).

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At the final stage, again keeping in mind the research objectives, recommendations will be made towards Kosovo esports informal and formal organisations, on the best way for the organisational structure can be improved through the redesigning of the guideline. This kind of research methodology follows the "research onion" stages in its structural processes, as discussed below.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Several philosophies would be engaged in this research, and which collectively would contribute towards its success. These include positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). From the positivist perspective, the research might make use of existing theory in the development of hypotheses. The hypotheses will then undergo scrutiny and confirmation, wholly, or refuted, a case in which further development of the same theory will be necessary through increased research. Also, the positivist approach will rely on neutrality and detachment from the research as well as data. It is essential for the avoidance of influence on the findings. The implication is that the research is undertaken within a value-free way to the level possible. This plausibility of this position is on its measurability and quantifiability of the data collected.

The second philosophy is critical realism. This philosophy involves consideration of reality as the most crucial aspect of the research. Critical realism also stretches the importance of a layered or structured ontology (Fleetwood, 2005). Accordingly, the reality will be observed as being independent and external, albeit not explicitly accessible via knowledge and observation. Instead, what would be experienced is empirical or sensations. These are but a few manifestations of what the real world holds and not the actual objects. The implication for research is that there will be a striving towards being aware of how the socio-cultural experiences and background could influence the research, thereby minimising these kinds of biases while maintaining objectivity.

The interpretivism philosophy will aid in the creation of the more vibrant and novel interpretation and understanding of social contexts and worlds. For the case of this research, the implication is that organisations will be observed from the perspective of various groups of individuals. This will then lead to the argument, for instance, that how the CEO, the directors, the managers, and the rest of the employees and customers observe and experience large organisations is so different to the level that it is possible to arguably observe them as experiencing various realities of the workplace (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The other research philosophy is the postmodernist research philosophy in which the objective is the exposure and questioning of power relations which sustain dominant realities. Ideally, this will involve the deconstruction of realities, in search of instabilities around the truths that have gained full acceptance, as well as that which is yet to be discussed. The main focus in

this regard will be on the ongoing processes of the organisation, management, and ordering constituting the various entities.

Finally, the pragmatic research will commence with a problem, followed by a contribution towards practical solutions informing future practice. As a researcher, the inbuilt values will drive the reflexive process of inquiry, basically triggered by doubt as well as a sense that there is something out of place or wrong. Ultimately, it will be believed that there has been a solution to the problem. The main concern is, therefore, will be the practical outcomes.

3.2 Research Approach

The approach that will be used in the research is the inductive approach. This approach to research will commence with the proposal of theories and observations towards the end of the process of the research due to the perceived observations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Specifically, the research will entail the conducting of interviews with the esports leaders in order to make substantive observations. As indicated by Thomas (2006), the inductive research will involve searching various patterns through observations followed by the development of explanatory viewpoints – theories – for the said patterns via various hypotheses. Considerably, this kind of research will not consider any hypotheses or theories at the start of the research. This implies that as a researcher. The researcher will be free to concerning the alteration of the direction of study following the commencement of the research process.

There is need for emphasising that by making use of the inductive approach to research, the implication is not that theories are disregarded during the formulation of the research objectives and questions. Instead, the use of this approach in the research will work towards the generation of meanings from the collected set of data to point out the relationships and patterns for the development of theory. Nonetheless, this does not mean that as a researcher, it will be not possible to use the existing theory for the formulation of the research questions, which can then be expansively discussed or explored (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The basis of the inductive reasoning is on gaining knowledge (learning) through experience. Regularities, resemblances, and patterns within experience or premises will be observed following the outcome of the interviews to reach to some substantive conclusions or even generating theory.

The commencement of the inductive reasoning shall be on making a detailed observation of the whole esports as an organisation, thus moving towards generalisations and ideologies that are much more abstract (Neuman, 2003). Through the use of the inductive approach to research, it will be possible to construct empirical generalisations and the identification of preliminary relationships towards the progression via the research. At the very primary stages, it is not possible to develop any hypotheses considering that there is no certainty with regards to the type of research findings up to the end of the whole study. As Figure 2 below illustrates, there is a shared referral of inductive reasoning as a "bottom-up approach", considering that the researcher uses observations in the development of abstraction, or the description of a given picture of a scenario studied (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010).
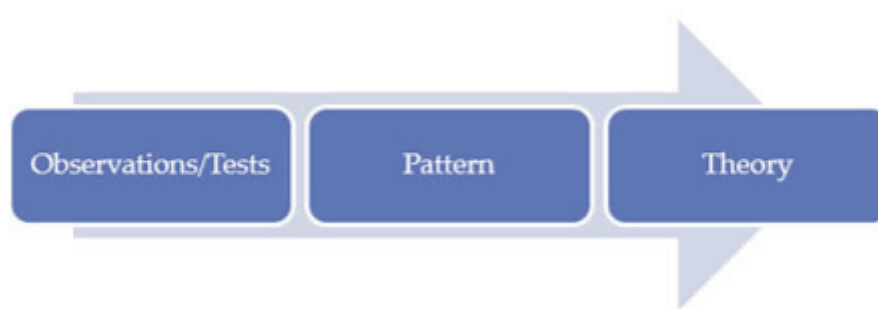

Figure 2: The use of inductive approach to research. Source (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010).

In this case, therefore, the observation will involve the leaders of esports, taking into consideration the various aspects of experiences that they have had. These will then be used in the creation of patterns which can subsequently help in the development of theory or hypothesis.

3.3 Research Strategy

The primary strategy of this research will involve interviewing between 7 to 8 individuals, selected based on their roles as leaders in the esports organisation. Procedurally, it will be necessary that the selected individuals for the interview (sample) have a level of consistency in terms of the format of the interview, the timing, as well as the collection of data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). For instance, should there be some items that a given section of the respondents are read to, but administered in written format to a different section of the respondents, the validity, reliability, and measurement of the interview may be hugely compromised as a result of the inconsistency in administering the interview (Ortega & Richey, 1998). The vital element is the timing of the interviews with the selected members of the organisation. For purposes of comparison, the collection of data will happen simultaneously for the six respondents, or at least within some reasonable time.

The other important step in the interviewing process is the establishment of procedural equivalence. The research will make efforts towards the maintenance of the same rapport levels with all the respondents. Rapport is the confidence of the respondent in the researcher; their general comfort levels with the researcher; as well as the degree of willingness for cooperation with the laid down procedures concerning the interview. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) inform that it is not wise for the researcher to establish some unequal or higher degree of rapport with the respondents, but instead, rapport remains a fundamental factor in the research environment for the realisation of the overall equivalence. The issues arising from rapport may emanate from a feeling in the respondents that the researcher is somewhat obstructive, particularly with the involvement of respondents from different cultural backgrounds (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Should the respondents feel a little uncomfortable with the interview as a result of these kinds of differences, the patterns of response that they will give in, the interview might be compromised. Moreover, care will be taken on possible apprehension on the side of the respondents, towards conformity to what they imagine would be the most popular answer to a given question. This will ensure that the idiosyncratic biases associated with research methods such as interviews are avoided.

3.4 Research Method

The research will implement the qualitative method of research. According to Zikmund, Carr & Griffin (2013), the interest of qualitative research is the gaining of an understanding of the meaning constructed by individuals. In other words, how people make sense of the world they live in, as well as their various experiences within that world.

Examples of qualitative research methods include one-on-one interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research, case study research, process observations, among others (Silverman, 2016). The focus of this research will, however, be on one-on-one interviews. The reason for the selection of this method of research is because it will offer an excellent opportunity for gaining precise data from the leaders over the subject matter. Considerably, esports organisation leaders selected for the research will be subjected to an in-depth interview, which is optimal for the collection of data on their various experiences, perspectives, and histories, which can be used for gaining an understanding of organisational structure. Guest, Namey & Mitchell (2013) inform that qualitative research has the strength of being able to offer elaborate textual descriptions of how individuals experience some issue in particular – in this case, organisational structure. The vital information regarding the human perspective of the issue of organisational structure will be available. Silverman (2016) also notes that qualitative methods are quite vital in the identification of the intangible factors, including ethnicity, gender roles, socioeconomic status, social norms, as well as religion. These are some of the factors that are quite inherent to an organisation and may never be quite apparent until research is conducted.

Figure 3: Types of Qualitative Research Methods (Bhat, n.d.)

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative study aimed to identify how organisational structures change while companies grow and to explore whether this process is the same for the Esports organisations. Purposively selected 8 participants from the Esports organisations provided their views and opinions in this regard through the semi-structured interviews. Their participants provided valuable views in the light of their knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and ground realities through their personal experiences in the Esports. The responses of the participants were examined and coded to identify the common themes and patterns relating to the research questions of the study. This chapter includes demographical information of the participants and analytical findings through the technique of thematic data analysis with the support of NVivo 12 software.

4.1 Interview Participants - Panel of experts

The researcher has a broad personal network within the local and international esports industry, therefore, made a selection of experts from different parts of the globe and with different types of esports companies. The researcher decided to take interviews of experts from organisations in Europe, USA, India, Australia, Croatia and Kosovo. In total, there were eight experts interviewed with a total of 15 questions each.

The first expert is a veteran member of the esports community worldwide, and he started his career in Counter-Strike, a first-person shooter video game, in the year 2000 just as a 19-year-old. Seeing the potential of his fellow friends, they decided to create their team in May of 2000. The team was unbeaten in Local Area Network competitions and later on, also won the world championship in 2001. Most of the team members, including our expert, in 2002 joined another team and our expert was one of the 1st professional gamers in Counter-Strike. The new team from July 2003 to January 2004 had 42 consecutive wins. During this time, our expert one of the best players in the world and the popularity of Counter-Strike and their team reached unprecedented heights. Later he returned to the first team and stayed for over a year as a player and manager. In 2006 he decided to take a break from e-sports, until 2016. In 2016 he made a massive comeback with a new organisation that builds educational structures for esports. The new organisation builds educational content for

schools, municipalities, and private actors. They also train coaches and teachers and also organise camps and training for schools.

The second expert is a serial entrepreneur with experience in management consulting. Currently, our expert is heavily invested in esports and gaming. The organisation that he founded in 2016 has grown to be one of the largest esports organisations in South Asia and among the top 5 organisations in the world. The organisation works in a very productive way to create large scale esports projects. Our expert managed to expand the organisation to the Middle East and South Africa from the South Asian base. Management, business development and training are areas of high skill where our expert excels, but his primary expertise is gaming, telecommunications and venture capital.

The third expert is an entrepreneur that is result driven and has above 12 years of experience. His growth was exponential in different roles from leading and managing projects and products for start-ups, entrepreneurs and accelerators up to scaling companies, creating new ventures and launching new products.

At this time, he is a co-owner and chief executive officer at a software development company that specialises in building custom web and mobile apps and solutions for various businesses and organisations; they also developed several educational games. Their clients are from Health Care, Accounting & HR, Education and Entertainment industries. Our expert leads 35 people, and under his leadership, the company has become one of the fastest-growing companies in the region. They provide cutting edge solutions and services for clients worldwide. Our expert is also a co-founder of several business ventures and also contributes as a board member in an ICT Association. His background in the Engineering and Technology Industry specialised him in new business development in the ICT field, med-tech innovations as well as applying modern technologies to expand new ideas beyond local markets.

The fourth expert is an entrepreneur with a focus in the esports industry. He is a co-founder and CEO of a local esports organisation that leads the local market in esports, gaming and tournament events. Although young, he has been a part of the esports community for over 15 years. He was an active player in the esports team that was founded and managed by the researcher, then a team manager in two other teams, a content writer for an esports organisation and now leading his own. Currently, he is also finishing studies in

entrepreneurship and innovation and also leads the translation department at a company that focuses on transcribing subtitles for the film industry.

The fifth expert attained much of his experience working his way through challenges and obstacles present to him and "real-world" problem-solving. He was fortunate to slot into different consultation and marketing positions over his years in the Tech industry.
Our expert started his career in esports first as a player in the "Battlefield 2" video game then later became a commentator for local radio. From 2011 to 2014 he was a community and esports manager for various esports tournaments, and also managed players directly, including their public relations. He continued developing his career in PR and Marketing, and later in 2017, he registered his own company. The company specialises in esports, gaming and influencer business.

The sixth expert is all about growth and data. He led e-commerce start-ups in his region and was in charge of Social Media sales, Advertising and Community Management. Working for prestigious consulting companies and the tech giant Google he has gathered the first-hand experience when it comes to company growth and marketing. From 2015 he is a Founder and CEO of an esports organisation that defines itself as a B2B esports movement which introduces a new approach to employer branding, team building and networking through gaming and esports. The events organised by our expert's organisation are present internationally.

The seventh expert is a transformational gaming executive that is known for turning start-ups into successful business ventures. He has a proven track record for raising capital and managing costs with deep industry connections. He is laser-focused on business objectives, strategic and operational skills. He started his esports career as a Sales & Community Manager for one of the most prominent esports organisations in Europe, later on, he continued to join a company where he managed a gaming portfolio valued at EUR 100M and was responsible for its evaluation and due diligence. In 2015 he founded an esports organisation that was crowned two times as the world champion in the "Defence of The Ancients 2" video game. One of the researchers' ex-players was also a part of that championship-winning team two times. Since 2018, he is the CEO and Co-Founder of a new company that is a monetisation aggregator for competitive amateur games.

The eighth expert has over 20 years of experience in esports community management. Since 2004 he has been administering community portals and from 2005 started to work on organising tournaments and leagues. Now, he leads the regional league of "Counter-Strike" that has teams participating from seven regional countries. The idea of the company was created in 2017 as a solution to the problem of not having a single hub for information and event management for the whole region. Their primary service is to bring news regarding all relevant tournaments, fairs, events, results and other essential esports actions from the region. It is community-driven with the intention of bringing together individuals who will want to improve the domestic and regional esports scene.

4.2 Demographical Information

The demographical information of sample participants is useful in providing a better understanding of the participants and organisations in which they are working. Pseudo names and code names were assigned to refer the participants during and after the research study to keep their confidentiality. Demographical information includes current country of operations, current position, year in which the organisation was founded, and a number of the staff at the time of foundation. A table providing the demographical profile of each participant is available below:

Pseudo Name	Country	Current Position	Year Founded	Number of Staff
P01	Kosovo	Partner & CEO	2007	3
P02	Croatia	CEO/Founder	2009	1
P03	USA	CEO	2018	1
P04	Croatia	CEO	2018	1
P05	Kosovo	CEO	2016	5
P06	Sweden	CEO	2016	4
P07	Australia	Director	2018	1
P08	India	Managing Director	2014	2

Table 1: Demographical information of interview participants

Participants described an Esports organisation in their professional words which can be understood by anyone who has no experience regarding Esports. One of the participants P03 stated,

"Gamers competing on highest level in their game and are able to earn and stable income being in the top of millions of players. It is indeed very similar to traditional sports but doesn't require you to have local players to practice with and more people are participating than watching".

More detailed description as provided by the participant P05,

"Traditional Esports Organization - where teams participating in Esports were self-organised. Teams would find the necessary players to participate and join leagues and tournaments by paying an entry fee. By winning or placing near the top of these tournaments, teams would be compensated from the prize pool. As Esports became more popular, more revenue opportunities presented themselves for teams. These opportunities included: sponsorships, merchandise, branded skins, and advertising opportunities on streaming platforms."

4.3 Data Analysis, Themes and Discussions

The analysis process of the qualitative study included transcribing and cross-referencing the recorded interviews, coding of the data, identification of the themes, and interpretation of the data analysis. The researcher organised and coded the data manually to ensure the accuracy and transparency of the data analysis. Thematic analysis technique was used for the identification of most significant themes within the data to get the answers of research questions. NVivo 12 software was also used to get the assistance in sorting, organising, coding, interpretation and presentation of the data analysis. Interview transcripts were read and re-read by the researcher to identify the similarities and relativity. The coding process was systematic, and the researcher made sure that the utmost care and attention are given to this process. Four themes emerged from the data during the coding and analysis of the data which are following the research questions of the study and are presented below with the support of NVivo 12 software.

4.3.1 Theme 01: Early Organisational Structure and Delegations of Goals

Figure 4: Word Cloud of Theme 01: Early Organisational Structure and Delegations of Goals

The first theme of the analysis was aligned with the first research questions of the study, i.e. are organisational structures present from early stages in the Esports organisations and are roles and responsibilities clearly defined within them"? The responses of the participants indicated that in the early stages, the Esports organisations did not have a well-defined organisational structure where roles and responsibilities were assigned to the personals as per their position in the organisational hierarchy. It has been observed that companies were comprised of a fewer number of people usually 1 to 2; hence, there was no specialisation for different tasks at the beginning. As per the words of P05, the organisational structure was,

"The organisation had a semi-clear structure as it was more founder-centric. Initially everyone had the same position in hierarchy, and everyone reported to the CEO. It was a niche structure based on the fact that everyone on the team were the closest with the CEO than each other."

It has also been observed that, at the early stages of the sample Esports organisations, the roles and responsibilities were assigned based on performance in a particular or specific area of interest. Roles and responsibilities were not identified and delegated to any specific persons. As the number of staff members at the beginning was minimal; hence, it was

impossible to have a clear delegation of duties for different people. Same participant P05 stated the situation of clear roles and responsibilities at the early stage of organisation in these words,

"In the beginning there were no clear roles and responsibilities. Even though tasks were appointed to people with more skills on the matter, everyone still did everything. Everyone got involved as much as possible and whoever had the most knowledge and skill on the matter would lead the task."

4.3.2 Theme 02: Communication: Importance and Adopted Type

Figure 5: Word Cloud of Theme 02: Communication: Importance and Adopted Type

The second theme of the analysis identified through the coding process was addressing the second research question of the study, i.e. "how vital are communications and how is that being one across the structure of the organisation? What type of communication and reporting is done?". All of the participants unanimously agreed that communication plays a significant part in the success of a company by having an effective method of operations. Communication is vital for transparency, and team members are kept updated about all aspects of the project, including success and failure. It has been observed that participants favoured flat or horizontal communication over the vertical one within the departments for project tasks. The importance of communication in Esports was mentioned by participant P04 in these words:

"Streaming production cannot start if they can't get information from main organisers when games start, if they don't have the required equipment from the construction crew etc. We would have one main point of contact for most inquiries who would then piece together people and dept 's/needs."

Process of communication is considered most crucial, and at this stage, team leads are given the task to communicate with each member of the team horizontally, and then this team leads reports to project managers. Hence, it can be said that horizontal communication within the project team and vertical communication by the managers is adopted in the majority of the sample organisations. P01 stated:

"We encourage team members to discuss all parts of a project and to keep group discussions instead of private communication, because it's important that everyone is aware of what is going on. When a physical meeting is not possible, we make use of tools such as Slack, Zoom, Hangouts to encourage further communication. We don't make the process to formal, so the idea is to make communications between departments easy and not too much burdened with formalisation."

P05 described the mode of communication in the organisation in these words,

"Especially in the beginning horizontal communication is everything. You don't get to report that much but instead you need to communicate constantly with everyone because everyone is involved in everything, therefore reporting only works later on. In our case communication was centralised.".

4.3.3 Theme 03: Modifications in Organisational Structure: Triggers and Challenges at Different Stages of Growth.

Figure 6: Word Cloud of Theme 03: Modifications in Organisational Structure: Triggers and Challenges at Different Stages of Growth

This theme of the analysis is linked with the third research question of the study, i.e. "is the organisational structure reviewed and modified in different stages of growth? What does trigger its modification?" The responses of the participants indicated that organisational transition stated smoothly by upgrading the processes, and when new members were added to the core structure of the organisation. The transition or modification within the organisational structure was always voluntarily, and the members of the organisation accepted it because it was the need for growth and for moving forward. There were some cases when employees did not accept the change and left the organisation. The participant P01 explained this situation in these words,

"We started to do a smooth organisational transition and upgrade in fall of 2019, which impacted some of the company's departments. This reflected on the employee's part, with some rejecting the change and leaving the company, as they were in a comfort zone which wasn't available to them anymore after the change. Any organisational shift is often rejected by people who are used to a comfort zone and expect drastic changes to their

environment. However, this has to be accepted normally, and the company should proceed with those that accept the changes for a better future."

P05 also expressed the situation in the organisation in these words:

"There were minor organisational structure changes made after the first phase of launching and extensive work. It was voluntary and it was accepted very well from everyone because of the hardcore tempo that we had in the beginning, a slow train voluntarily leaving and making room for changes was welcomed.

The second massive changes that we had on organisational structure were made just recently after some thorough reviews of the organisational structure and more."

Furthermore, participants were also questioned that, "was there any role that would be good to be present from the start, which would have needed the modification and transition easier". The responses highlighted the importance of middle management, business development role, financial advisors, technology, sales and marketing. Importance of middle management was mentioned by P01 in these words,

"Middle management is very important to have, especially when the company is scaling. If every process of the company starts to be focused around the CEO, at some point the company might be on the brink of breaking. So shared responsibility comes into action thanks to the middle management. It's easier to put pressure on the middle management, who then put pressure on their respective departments, instead of having to deal with pressure on each and every one. So please take care of these processes as early as possible."

It has also been mentioned by the participants that organisations have faced different challenges at different stages of the role, specifically during the process of modification and transition. One of the biggest challenges was growth itself where organisation jumps from one size to another. During the growth process, new people are bought in the company, and everyone has to adjust to the change. Different cultures are brought in the company, and versatile clients are introduced, structural and procedural changes are brought to adjust every member. Additionally, if the company goes beyond fifty members, then the need and importance of middle management are more highlighted to manage the employees efficiently and productively. One of the participants mentioned the challenge of sponsors in these words (P02),

"Biggest challenge was to find sponsors that would support us and our leagues. Prize pool money was the hardest to get.

Nowadays, it's easier since we are more known in the industry, everybody has heard of us, and they know what kind of stuff we do. Also, most of the marketing managers have heard of "esports" these days, and they know that this is something big that they need to know more about, and they trust us more and more on developing these parts of their company."

Maintenance of sustainable business in the Esports industry is also a challenge where the industry is plagued with hype and unrealistic numbers and expectations, which increases the chances of fraud and false information sharing. Hence, an organisation has to build a reputable brand to be acknowledged and trusted in the industry. Participant P05 elaborated the challenges and ranked them in these words,

"The biggest challenge in all stages of growth is consistency. Especially when u is in a country were the esports industry is new, and as an organisation, you have to "teach and do" in parallel. Maintaining motivation and financial stability as an esports org is also a big challenge throughout the years. I would rate the difficulty the same number from stage one to stage 3. The challenges seem constant, and they come with the same amount of growth that the organisation has, so it does feel like it is as difficult as the ones on the first phase, but in retrospect, those weren't as difficult, in that case, a challenge that was 9/10 on stage 1 is probably a 3/10 on stage 3.

Specific experience is all about it. Competitive experience, community managing, specific staff additions etc."

4.3.4 Theme 04: Critical Roles for Excellence versus Luxury Roles in East Coast Organizations.

Figure 7: Word Cloud of Theme 04: Critical Roles for Excellence versus Luxury Roles in East Coast Organizations.

The last theme of the analysis addresses the fourth research questions of the study, i.e. "what are the critical roles that keep the organisation functional and lead it towards progress and achieving its development plan". The participants were of the view that Esports organisations should have only those roles that are necessary to make the company efficient and productive. Fancy and luxury positions should be discouraged because they are not an essential part of the progress. It has been stressed that middle management should come into play as early as possible, together with the project managers and product owners. The roles and positions should always be synchronised with the budget of the company and should not be a burden on the finances. There can be some roles which are luxury positions, especially at the start of the company, such as HR with only fewer employees. The roles and positions should always be balanced in a company depending upon the size and need of the company. One of the participants listed the compulsory and luxury positions in the response. The compulsory ones were broadcast, league operations, content creation, casters, player

management, and event management. Whereas project managers, commercial managers, website creators, video editors boost productivity. On the other hand, luxury positions can be marketing, CFOs, client relation managers, legal advisors, and project management. As per the words of P02,

"I guess marketing/sales and business development - so that the organisation has a clear goal of where it wants to go and what to do.
The luxury position would be a project manager/project owner since this can be "filled" with one of the other people from other roles."

The compulsory position of the organisation depends upon the nature of the product offered by the organisation as the Esports organisations are technology-related so the technology-related roles would be more helpful rather than traditional hierarchical structure including HR, content managers, partnership managers, and community managers. One of the participants stressed the importance of the CEO in these words (P04),

"Must have - CEO/Leader/Visionary who has a clear vision of how he sees the brand in coming months and years. This person needs marketing, sales, branding experience and a passion for esports. Real-life business experience is absolutely crucial. Apart from that, an eager assistant is pretty important."

Few of the participants were of the view that a marketing or PR executive is a must-have position in early stages of the Esports organisations, whereas; dedicated content creators and journalists can boost the performance of the Esports organisation efficiently and productively. One of the participants was of the view that the performance and importance of any position depend upon the motivation and performance of the person performing the duties and roles. An inexperienced, non-motivated and incompetent person at any position can make the things difficult for other individuals also and can affect the productivity of the organisation adversely. As stated by P06,

"All positions are depending on a person to perform. Sometimes people get unmotivated in their work, and the whole company suffers from it, the larger you are, the less impact is a single person. but if it's a managing role it could short term be chaos."

5.0 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this dissertation, the aim was to understand the organisational structure in esports organisations, always through the lens and the perspective of esports organisations in Kosovo. Ultimately, to formulate and give recommendations to the existing and upcoming entrepreneurs in the formal and informal Kosovo esports industry.

The theoretical part of this dissertation was conducted after carefully selecting the best primary and secondary sources of literature available to the researcher for review, to ensure the best understanding of the topic. Although as mentioned in the research gaps, there was a gap between internal and the external studies conducted. Studies of the internal structure were absent, while the researcher found studies from an external perspective such as the one by Funk, Pizzo, and Baker (2018)

The theory part of this dissertation went pretty smooth, but as gaps were identified, it was clear that the research part was the challenging part of this dissertation. Again, focusing on the gaps, it was clear to the researcher that qualitative sources would be needed. Therefore, explained through the methodology section, the researcher decided that the research part needs to be done through one-on-one qualitative interviews with carefully chosen experts in order to present findings that will help us achieve the aimed objectives.

The researcher is also an entrepreneur in the esports industry himself; therefore, carefully selected the experts based on his experience and network in order to get the best overall results for different types of organisations within the esports industry. Data of the interview was collected in a questionnaire form, from where it was analysed with the help of Nvivo software, that helped the researcher sort, organise, code, interpret and present the data analysis.

The first objective of this dissertation "Understand the importance of the organisational structure in esports organisations." implies several things. First, based on the unanimous agreement of our participants that communications is a critical element in the success of an organisation and correlating this with authors Ahmady, Mehrpour, and Nikravesh (2016) and

Bustinza et al. (2015), the research implies that a structure is present and is of high importance.

The results show that transparency between all members is of crucial importance; therefore, it implies the importance that esports organisations are decentralised so that trust and control are distributed throughout the competent people inside the organisation.

Hamari and Sjöblom (2017) showed that the esports industry is a highly competitive and dynamic one, and Tran and Tian (2013) confirm that the less control granted to people, the company becomes less dynamic, and it affects its position in a competitive environment.

Then, based on several results of the analysis; the number of people initially in the early stages of the company; how the roles and responsibilities were assigned; the preference of horizontal communications, it is implied that a flat organisational structure is a correct way to go in the early to mid-stages of the organisation. It is seen that multifunctionality, as described by Huang, Rode, and Schroeder (2011), is present from day one in esports organisations. Being a form of a sport, with live-streaming events and spectators as described by Funk, Pizzo, & Baker (2018); having customers with high purchasing power, requiring personalised services and goods; confirms the statement of multifunctionality being present and necessary in esports organisations from the start.

Moving on the second objective of this dissertation "See the organisational structure change in the stages of organisational growth while having a focus on esports organisations.", several findings are present.

The processes by default, with growth, require updates—those updates of processes correlate to adding members to the core structure. Contradicting Král and Králová (2016) and their claim towards the change process, our respondents indicated that the change was very transparent and voluntary inside the organisation since it occurred from the natural need for growth and moving forward. Paunovic and Dima (2014) describe in a sense that the organisational structure guides the change process, but, based on the above statements, it is seen that the change process guides the new structure.

At stages when the company grows from small to mid-size, the importance of the need for middle management is visible, confirmed by our respondents. However, referring to the findings of Theme 04 of our data analysis, the organisation has to be laser-focused when it comes to recruiting middle management since several compulsory positions were defined. Focus on productivity and finances is the key to survival and growth since the industry has a lot of hype, unrealistic numbers and expectations. Again, keeping in mind

multifunctionality, a mix of several compulsory positions into one, might be a budget-friendly and realistic solution. The respondents stated the importance of roles in middle management such as a business development role, financial advisor, sales and marketing; but also tagging them as luxury positions. Therefore, a mix of these luxury positions is also an option; thus, giving the option to recruit positions that boost productivity as described by our respondents. It implies that both these middle management and productivity-booster positions will be competent, therefore motivated to perform; according to Nicholson et al. (2012) that is the "right structure" to have.

In the end, following the last objective "Formulate recommendations for Kosovo esports organisations that will lead them to an improved organisational structure and performance." this research gives the following recommendations:

- Initially, the esport organisation starts small everywhere; therefore, it is crucial having transparent communications within all members from the early stages. Keeping the organisation decentralised. Having a flat structure with horizontal communications backed-up with trust.

- Leadership, passionate in esports, needs to have skills in several executive positions, including marketing, finance, operations in order to execute a multifunctional position of the highest level and precision to ensure survival and growth. Therefore, having in consideration the above and relating to our analysis; specifically, on Theme 04; education such as an MBA in Tech Management would be a perfect fit when it comes to educating such leadership.

- Try to recruit compulsory positions as soon as possible. If there is such talent, try to recruit multifunctional talent that is a mix of those positions, such as a: Caster/Content Creator; a Manager for players, leagues and events. Alternatively, even a talent that is a mix of compulsory and productivity-boosting positions such as Broadcast/Video Editor/Content Creator.

- Focus on realistic business results and outcomes, detect fraud and false information, avoid unrealistic hypes, numbers and expectations. Concentrate on several things;

building and maintaining the organization's brand; keeping a close eye on processes, identifying ones that require updates and executing those updates with full transparency, consent and voluntary generating smooth, natural growth; then and accommodating it.

6.0 REFLECTION

In this chapter, the researcher reveals the challenges that he faced, the learning and experience gained during work in this dissertation.

In 2012, the researcher created his esports organisation. Even though having experience and creating several informal ones previously, this was the first formal one. Lacking expertise on maintaining it, although achieving initial successes, led that the researcher had to stop its operations and focus on boosting his educational spectrum. Therefore, taking this journey with this research is not only a practical one but also a very inspiring one, contributing the researcher directly and the whole esports industry in Kosovo. Diving into the literature review, the researcher was sceptical several times, since the biggest challenge was the lack of academic material on the specific topic that interested the researcher. The challenge was seen through positive lenses as an opportunity to contribute in this direction, gathering more knowledge in the topic for himself also.

The methodology and data analysis were a roller coaster ride for the researcher. Moving into the methodology, metaphorically speaking, being a road up and moving forward at a high pace, a pause became present all of a sudden. Data analysis felt and looked as an unfinishable task, but with dedication, research and persistence, the researcher managed to utilise specialised tools and software in order to help him achieve this goal and overcome this obstacle.

Findings of this research have enormous value to the researcher, considering them one of the most important learnings of his lifetime, although having over 19 years of working experience. This whole dissertation will serve as an inspiration and a guide to implementing the findings into real-life scenarios.

The researcher has decided to start looking at the possibilities of offering also consultancy regarding the topic to local and international esports organisations.

This dissertation not only has improved the researcher academically, but it has opened a whole new chapter in his life. A new vision, road, journey that he is eager to take as soon as possible.

Editor's note: This image was removed due to copyright reasons.

Figure 8: The Researcher and his team during their attendance at the Electronic Sports World Cup 2012 in Paris, France (Kurtolli,2012)

TOTAL WORDS: 13,635

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APPENDIX 1: Dissertation Interview Questions

1. Username

2. Name and Surname

3. What is your current organisation?

4. What is your current position?

5. When was the organisation founded, and how many staff it had initially?

6. Did the organisation have a clear organisational structure in the beginning? Describe who was in the organisational structure and who reported to who? Were all aware of the organisational structure?

7. Did/do all the members have clear roles and responsibilities? Are these responsibilities focused on one department or several? (i.e. A player also is a designer, editor. A CEO is also a financial analyst) Where systems, processes, rules present?

8. How active and how important is the communication between sectors/departments? That is, how vital is horizontal communication in comparison to vertical (reporting) communications? Is it centralised, Decentralised? Hierarchy?

9. Was the organisational structure reviewed and where any changes made? On what period of the operations? Was it voluntary or some action led to a review of the organisational structure? How was it accepted/rejected by employees?

10. Going back to the early stages of the organisation, is there any role that would be good to be present from the start, that initially was not? A different structure that would make it easier to jump-start to a different stage? (challenges)

11. What are the MUST HAVE positions in an esports organisation in the early stages? Furthermore, what are the performance boosters positions that boost the performance but are expensive?

12. Did the organisation experience a situation when a new position/role/responsibility led to a drastic change in the organisation's performance? If yes, describe. What is a "luxury" position that helps but is not necessary?

13. Introduce yourself and tell us shortly how many years of experience you have in the esports industry?

14. Did you have / what kind of experience you had in the early stages of the organisation, before founding/joining?

15. Describe an "Esport Organization" with your words as a professional, but also in words directed to someone who has no experience regarding esports.

16. What were the biggest challenges in different stages of growth? How do those challenges look from a different stage of growth? If challenge number 1 on stage 1 was 9/10 difficulty, how does that challenge 1 look on stage 3 of the organisation's growth? Does any role / specific experience impact this?

APPENDIX 2: Dissertation Interview Questions - Disclaimer

Study participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without any penalty or loss to which you are entitled.

This study is anonymous, and your data will be treated with full confidentiality. That, if published, every effort will be made to ensure it will not be identifiable as theirs.

This study will offer participants the opportunity to be debriefed.