

Chapter 1

eSports and eSocial Work

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ABSTRACT

Bringing together international players, eSports benefits beyond digitalization according to its intended use. It is possible to socialize individuals who cannot come together due to pandemics, extraordinary events, and economic difficulties and increase their commitment to life with these video games. Social work should take advantage of this developing field. eSports can provide benefits in geriatrics, home care services, physical therapy, elderly people in nursing homes, women, children, people with an autistic spectrum disorder, and social adaptation. Social work's functions in many areas such as environmental and social adaptation, well-being, welfare, public health, social policy, and the rehabilitation of children prone to crime can be made more functional through eSports. This chapter deals with the functions of social work to be developed and improved with eSports.

INTRODUCTION

Today, digital technology contributes to all areas of life (Chayko, 2014). Digital transformation has gained momentum for leisure activities via design, simulation, and artificial intelligence algorithms (Matt et al., 2015; Iivari, Sharma, & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020). The technological infrastructure enriched with color, size, audio, and visual designs has enabled the development of video games (Zyda, 2005).

Video games are a tool for individuals to develop their cognitive abilities and gain logical inference skills (Newman, 2008). Video games developed through content, bot, and technology design enable individuals to improve their skills such as logic, cognition, problem-solving, and struggle with difficulties (Druin, 1999). These games provide team competitions and group participation behaviors through esports (Dixon et al., 2010).

Esports is a type of video game that delivers the psychological satisfaction of the players of digital transformation and artificial intelligence technology, appeals to the five senses, and gives a sense of reality (Scholz et al., 2019). These games provide a sense of social satisfaction by enabling individuals to spend their free time in a quality way by performing teamwork (Bányai et al., 2019). The negative

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socialization effects of the recent pandemic reducing physical proximity can be overcome by esports (Hallmann, & Giel, 2018). Esports, which provides active participation in the life, social well-being, psychological and mental strengthening, is a more efficient digital tool than today's developing social media (Lee & Schoenstedt, 2011; Reitman et al., 2020).

Electronic sports continue to show their positive effects on many areas of life through digital innovation and transformation (Seo, 2016). The harmful and positive effects of video games on society, social factors, individuals, and the law are an up-to-date issue that needs to be researched (Prot et al., 2014; Prot et al., 2012). The fact that the players cover a wide audience, including children and adults, requires esports to be evaluated in the context of social work (Payne, 2014). Because social work plays an important role in many issues such as the elderly, children, children dragged into crime, disabled people, violence against women, discrimination, and ageism (Flexner, 2001; Kadushin & Kadushin, 1997). Players, content, and design of the game, avatar, digital elements, the effects of games on humans are subjects that need to be investigated in the context of social work.

eSocial work is a new science and discipline in which the functions of social work are realized digitally and investigates the new functions required by the digital age. Social work functions under the influence of virtual applications, social media, IoT, gerontechnology, information technology, and digital elements are shaped according to the needs of the digital age. Human and society psychology has changed significantly under the influence of digital needs and factors. eSocial work aims to find solutions by addressing the problems caused by this change, eliminating conflicts, and activating the necessary functions to reintegrate individuals into society. This new science enables the elimination of problems caused by virtual, digital, and communication tools of society, human-related problems, meeting the needs, developing social policy, improving existing social work practices and principles, and creating strategies on all these issues. eSocial work is a new field related to social work in which the functions of social service are provided via digital, technology, and the internet. Another issue that these three elements have important contributions and effects on the players and society is eSports.

eSports and eSocial work are two important interrelated issues. The cognitive, physical, and social functions of individuals try to adapt to the requirements of the digital age. The declines that occur with aging, the social isolation caused by the pandemic, the discriminatory behaviors, and crimes that become widespread with virtual applications cause the emergence of social problems. The elimination of these problems is related to the counseling, rehabilitation, education, and resource distribution functions of the social work. eSocial work, which aims to ensure social welfare, can benefit from the positive functions of eSports in cases where physical proximity cannot be achieved due to health, pandemic, physical, social and psychological situations. Especially the development of cognitive and behavioral abilities is a common point that relates to both issues. On the other hand, the socialization function of eSports is among the basic functions of eSocial work. It can significantly contribute to the functions of eSports eSocial Work in ensuring active participation in the life, protecting public health, reducing memory problems and dementia. In the context of evaluating and investigating these two issues, which are interrelated in terms of their functions, the following questions arise: What is "esocial work", what are its functions? What are the functions of "esports" associated with social work?

The purpose of this chapter is to examine esports in the context of e social work, to introduce esocial work to literature, and to determine the functions related to the relationship between esocial work and esports. The chapter includes esports' socialization, psychological therapy, cognitive and personal abilities, quality of life, and successful aging functions, gerontechnology, autism spectrum disorder, children dragged into crime rehabilitation, women's empowerment, social policy, and public health functions.

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