

1 **Should aspiring esports psychologists train in esports? Reflections of trainee sport and**
2 **exercise psychologists**

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9

10 **Abstract**

11 There is growing demand for psychology support at esports's highest level of competition. Not
12 only does research suggest that professional esports players are at risk of poor physical and
13 psychological health, but tournament organisers have begun to require teams to provide their
14 player's psychological support. Currently however, psychology practitioners working in esports'
15 top teams have trained in traditional sports before bringing their skills to esports: this is the
16 training route advised by organisational staff of the elite teams they work for. In this article, we
17 reflect on our own experiences as trainee sport and exercise psychologists developing in
18 esports to evaluate whether psychology practitioners aspiring to work at esports' highest level
19 should follow this advice and train in traditional sports, or develop in esports regardless. In our
20 reflexive thematic analysis of our autoethnographic narratives we identified themes of
21 opportunity, alienation, and financial and scheduling barriers to working in esports. While we are
22 more pessimistic than established practitioners, we believe our experiences are at least
23 somewhat typical of sport psychologist trainees, inside or outside of esports. While training
24 within esports is not without its limitations, we encourage trainees with passion and purpose for
25 working in esports to gain applied experience in esports. We finish by providing grounded
26 recommendations on what has helped us develop as practitioners so far.

27 **Should aspiring esports psychologists train in esports? Reflections of trainee sport and**
28 **exercise psychologists**

29 Esports (electronic sports) are video games that have a competitive infrastructure that
30 allows professional play (Bányai et al., 2019). Esports have exploded in popularity since the turn
31 of the millenia, especially in the last decade (Pedraza-Ramirez et al., 2020). Now, after
32 experiencing unprecedented numbers in the pandemic, the industry has stabilised, and despite
33 others questioning the business model of some esports organisations (Carreras et al., 2024),
34 esports are predicted to continue growing over the next decade (Dixon, 2023; Sirotin, 2024).

35 There is growing demand for sports psychology support at esports' highest level. Within
36 Europe's highest professional League of Legends league, performance coaches are now a
37 regulated position with team's coaching structure with a minimum pay level (Riot Games,
38 2024b), and the league requires their teams to offer qualified mental health services that can be
39 accessed anonymously by players (Riot Games, 2024a, 2024b). These announcements come
40 as growing research shows esports players facing high-performance demands and stressors
41 (Leis et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2019; Poulus et al., 2022), how these stressors can worsen
42 performances (Sharpe et al., 2024), how players are more at risk of mental health issues (e.g.,
43 Birch et al., 2024; Leis et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2022; Trotter et al., 2020; Trotter et al., 2023),
44 and increasingly call for wellbeing support (Gaasedal et al., 2024).

45 We believe education and development of qualified, theoretically informed practitioners
46 is needed to fill this gap. As it stands, there is minimal ethical and professional regulation
47 around performance psychology practitioners working within esports, and no standard level of
48 practice or knowledge as ethical competency thresholds. It is not uncommon for performance
49 coaches who use psychology to have no applied psychology training qualifications, or even in
50 some cases no postgraduate clinical, sport, or performance psychology qualifications (see
51 Esports Performance Hub, n.d.). Even at elite levels, practitioners that do have applied sport
52 psychology training do not have the depth of theoretical understanding that is often seen in

53 practitioners of elite-level traditional sports (Horne & Swettenham, 2024). As trainee sport and
54 exercise psychologists within esports, this world we are entering can be chaotic, terrifying and
55 hostile where we have met players and coaches who are sceptical of sport and performance
56 psychologists; and understandably so, if they have had bad experiences with ill-informed,
57 malpracticing performance coaches without proper ethical, theoretical, or practical training.
58 More, better trained practitioners are undoubtedly needed for appropriate player care and
59 industry confidence in the role.

60 However, aspiring sport psychologists face conflicting industry messages on how best to
61 approach their development within the field. Existing esports performance practitioners at the
62 elite level in the area are hesitantly optimistic in their recommendations for trainees in the field.
63 However, they themselves trained in traditional sports first before transferring into esports
64 (Ramaker & Pedraza-Ramirez, 2023). Conversely, Romain Bigeard (2024), the manager of
65 G2's League of Legends team, arguably the most dominant western team, explicitly tells people
66 wishing to work within esports to first master skills outside of esports before transferring them
67 across. This does not inspire confidence in people wanting to train within the industry, but
68 ultimately this advice is coming from their own experiences, in an industry new enough that they
69 themselves could have not developed in it beforehand. As neophyte practitioners just starting
70 our careers, we are in a different position to Bigeard (2024) and Ramaker & Pedraza-Ramirez
71 (2023) - it is unclear how much their advice is still valid.

72 Outside of esports, there are plenty of journal articles which contain trainee practitioners'
73 reflections of their work within traditional sport (e.g., Collins et al., 2013; Holt & Streat, 2001).
74 These reflections give authenticity and transparency to psychologists' development in different
75 performance domains as they gain new experiences and develop their skills (Anderson et al.,
76 2004; Holt & Streat, 2001). Anecdotes and past experiences, such as trainee reflections and
77 case studies, can be used to help other trainees make more informed decisions in their own
78 work and development (Smith et al., 2019), and other reflective accounts may discuss and

79 evaluate ethical practice, improve competencies and encourage their own and other
80 practitioners' development (Wadsworth et al., 2024).

81 More broadly, practitioner reflections are crucial to encourage continual practitioner
82 learning, self-awareness, congruent practice, and a development of a professional identity
83 (Keegan, 2016; Lindsay et al., 2007; Quartiroli et al., 2024). Reflections such as in this article
84 can help generate and provide context-specific knowledge about a particular industry (Cropley
85 et al., 2007, 2010; Fletcher & Maher, 2013). Prior knowledge of industry contexts, such as
86 esports, may help practitioners prepare and/or relieve challenges and self-doubt associated with
87 working in new environments and contexts (Quartiroli et al., 2024).

88 In trainee sport and exercise psychologists' reflections in esports thus far have been
89 localised to specific cases or teams (Swettenham et al., 2024). Trainees have reflected on their
90 team-building interventions (Swettenham & Whitehead, 2022) in a multicultural team (Agrawal
91 et al., 2024), or reported on their experiences from several interventions within a team (Brain et
92 al., 2024). While these case studies' reflections can include some reflections of the wider
93 industry context, these reflections, if present, are never the primary focus. While general
94 reflections of psychology practitioner work exist within esports (Ramaker and Pedraza-Ramirez,
95 2023), these are from established sport psychologists working for top european esports
96 organisations.

97 We look to fill this gap in the literature by providing our experiences training and
98 developing within the esports industry. We aim to answer: "How do trainee sport and exercise
99 psychologists experience their development within esports?". In doing so, we look to provide
100 authenticity and transparency to our training experiences (Anderson et al., 2004; Holt & Streat,
101 2001), and help other trainee sport and exercise psychologists aspiring to work in esports make
102 informed decisions on their future career paths (Smith et al., 2019).

103

104

Method

We used retrospective autoethnography to collect data of our experiences working as a trainee sport and exercise psychologists within esports (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

Autoethnography provides personal accounts and narratives of people's experiences (Sparkes, 2000). These accounts complement empirical research to reflect and elaborate on practical interventions within a context or industry, and encourage individual and social reflection (Holt & Streat, 2001). While these experiences will not necessarily be generalisable to the industry as a whole, our aim is to provide a window into our experiences and roles within it.

Autoethnography is a widely used method, but raises ethical questions regarding consent for others (Edwards, 2021). The method is self-reflective of one's own experiences, however, as human experiences are inherently relational, these experiences and reflections of them are not necessarily one's own (Bochner, 2017; Edwards, 2021). Therefore, researchers are split between issues in authentically and accurately describing their own experiences, and issues of relational ethics in integrity and respect to others through the anonymity that may sacrifice (Edwards, 2021). As this retrospective autoethnography uses the past reflections we record as part of our training (see below), this presents another layer of ethical challenges: it is often not possible to achieve or apply for ethical approval for data that has already been collected (Edwards, 2021; e.g., Loughborough University, 2024). Current guidance is limited and vague, but suggests that where individuals in the text may be identifiable, informed consent should be sought before publication.

We have chosen to prioritise relational ethics within this autoethnography to overcome these issues of anonymity across several steps. First, each author assembled past reflections into a narrative, exploring their general experiences rather than specific client interactions or interventions. Second, these assembled narratives were combined with narratives from the other three authors, preventing any particular reflection being explicitly linked with any author. Third, no esports team or organisation affiliations of any author have been added to this paper.

131 Fourth, by using reflexive thematic analysis (as explained below), we do not present individual
132 narratives, which could be linked to authors, but instead present fragments of each of our
133 experiences presented as quotes. Finally, even where we received prior informed consent from
134 our clients, the final manuscript was shared with any potentially identifiable clients to ensure
135 they consented to its submission. If individuals were not uncomfortable with what we presented
136 or felt like they were identifiable, we either fictionalised the quote or removed the data from the
137 analysis until informed consent was freely given. Fictionalisation was chosen as a potential
138 alternative as it can maintain or even emphasise particular meaning in our experiences as
139 practitioners, while helping protect client anonymity (Eliastam et al., 2018). As a result, readers
140 of our experiences should not be able to identify whether the context is true or fictional, nor
141 which practitioner experienced it. What we have maintained throughout, however, is the
142 meaning of our experiences within esports across games and genres in line with our research
143 question.

144 **Author Information and Narrative Generation**

145 Each author has completed a postgraduate qualification in Sport Psychology and is
146 currently working towards being, or is already, a fully qualified, HCPC registered, Sport and
147 Exercise Psychologist. This is a post-graduate qualification in the UK which can be achieved by
148 different routes: either from the British Psychological Society (2023)'s Qualification in Sport and
149 Exercise Psychology (BPS QSEP), an HCPC-accredited professional doctorate in Sport and
150 Exercise Psychology, or the British Association of Sport and Exercise Science's (2024) Sport
151 and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route (BASES SEPAR). The qualifications require a
152 minimum of 3200-3680 hours (400-460 days full-time) of practice, reflection, planning, and
153 professional development - and require supervised practice. This training can take between 2-6
154 years depending on full- or part-time enrolments, and requires candidates to record and present
155 their reflections as they train. These British qualifications contrast the Specialist in Applied Sport
156 Psychology certification by the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC, n.d.) which

157 only requires 250 practice hours. As authors, we have experience in different esports and
158 traditional sports. Our experience in esports titles includes League of Legends, DOTA 2, Super
159 Smash Bros., Sim Racing, Counter-Strike 2, Overwatch, and Rocket League. Our experience in
160 traditional sports spans Football, Tennis, Volleyball, Wheelchair Basketball, Hockey, Rugby
161 League, Rowing, Mountain Biking, and Motorsports.

162 As part of our training pathways, each author has collected self-reflective data on their
163 practical work, experiences, and knowledge development. These can include memos, voice
164 notes/ recordings, or more formal writings. We have each used these reflections, as well as our
165 own memories, to assemble narrative accounts that discuss and evaluate our experiences
166 whilst training within esports (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Outside of the broad recommendations
167 from Cooper and Lilyea (2022), we did not over-impose structure or formatting to standardise
168 each of our accounts; instead choosing to provide each of us the freedom to present our stories
169 and the meaning of experiences as trainees as authentically as possible.

170 **Analysis and Reflexivity**

171 Then, I (the first author) conducted a reflexive thematic analysis of these narratives in
172 line with guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019, 2021). I familiarised myself with others
173 narratives, and refamiliarised myself with my own, then generated initial codes. I collected those
174 codes into themes and subthemes which were then reflexively and iteratively reviewed by
175 myself and the fourth author, who has expertise in qualitative analysis. Quotes from each theme
176 can often be attributed to authors or interviewees and presented with their prevalence across all
177 sources. However, we have chosen not to do this to protect and maintain client anonymity:
178 where all or some authors experienced a particular theme, it would be easier to deduce and
179 identify clients.

180 Reflexive thematic analysis is an ontologically and epistemologically flexible method
181 (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) which, like autoethnography, fully embraces the subjectivity of the
182 researcher. Reflexive thematic analysis is thus in line with our philosophy of functional

183 contextualism and relational frame theory in our research and practice (see [BLINDED for
184 review]), especially in regards to its focus on individual experiences within a particular context
185 (Jando & Dionne, 2024). Outside of our philosophy and epistemology, the analysis was
186 inductive, using no preceding theory or similar previous reflections to guide it. Pragmatically,
187 reflexive thematic analysis was chosen over presenting each narrative individually (e.g., Collins
188 et al., 2013) to condense how we have made meaning of our experiences as trainees in esports
189 (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and to protect the anonymity of each authors' clients.

190 At the time of writing this paper and conducting the reflexive thematic analysis, I (the
191 first author) am still living with my parents and am currently working remotely at a loss to train as
192 a sport and exercise psychologist: my supervision and training fees are considerably more than
193 the payment I have received for my services as a trainee. While I am in arguably the best
194 physical and mental health of my life and have recently had some of my esports psychology
195 research accepted, I am currently unable to move out and maintain normal relationships with
196 other young people while training at this rate and level of income. This is an active decision I
197 have made to sacrifice my social life, to an extent, to pursue a career that is meaningful to me.

198 I (fourth author) am an HCPC sport and exercise psychologist accredited through the
199 BPS. I am also a lecturer at a UK university and an active researcher. I have worked in esports
200 for the last four years as an applied sport psychologist and researcher. Within this study, I acted
201 as a critical friend during the reflexive thematic analysis (Smith & McGannon, 2018). As I was
202 not immersed in the autoethnographic accounts like author one, I was able to encourage
203 reflection on certain themes in order to provide alternative viewpoints to the data.

204 Naturally, our experiences and perceptions as both a relatively new trainee and an
205 established practitioner and researcher will affect the codes and themes we identify. However,
206 using autoethnography as we do, we look to present and capture our human perceptions as a
207 time capsule for ourselves and the industry. In doing so, we allow ourselves to document and
208 revisit these experiences later in our and the industry's development.

209

Results

210 Our reflexive thematic analysis identified four main themes in our experiences
 211 developing within esports: opportunities, alienation, esports time, and financial barriers (see
 212 Table 1).

213 **Table 1**

214 Identified Themes and Subthemes in the Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Theme	Subtheme	Description
Opportunities	Accessibility	The online environment of esports makes teams, players, and staff more accessible than traditional sport.
	A novel context for Sport and exercise psychology development	New performance domain, outside of what is traditionally taught, which allows for us to use both the sport and exercise sides of our sport and exercise psychology training.
	Pioneers in the industry	Lack of established regulation and other psychologists within esports brings both freedom and responsibility
Alienation	Online communication barriers	Navigating online communication rules can be difficult. Limited face-to-face contact can slow development of practitioner-client relationships.
	Hegemonic masculinity within esports	Female-presenting practitioners' gendered experiences with male players, coaches, and organisational staff have impaired practitioner-client relationship development.
	Limited buy-in from coaches, players, and organisation staff	Poor buy-in and underdeveloped practitioner-client relationships can lead to psychology not being prioritised in player schedules, and individual players being cold or not engaging with us as practitioners.
Esports Time	Esports Pace	Dynamic roster changes and faster seasons in esports have led to us compromise on needs analyses and limited long-term work with players
	Esports Working Hours	Esports work is often at unsociable hours and, without notice, can be hard to schedule with other commitments.
Financial Barriers	Culture of unpaid sport and exercise psychologists in training	Trainee sport and exercise psychologists often work unpaid to fulfil their training requirements.
	Poor payment culture in esports	Esports organisations are also notoriously unreliable in their payments to staff
	The cost of unpaid work	Paid work elsewhere is needed to compensate for unpaid training time. Traditional sports may be better and more

215

216 **Theme 1: Opportunities**

217 This theme describes how esports' novel performance contexts and infrastructures
218 provide room for flexibility, novelty, and experimentation. Here, we have subthemes of:
219 accessibility, a novel context for sport and exercise psychology development, and having a
220 pioneer role in the industry.

221 ***Accessibility***

222 As esports are online, they are far more accessible than traditional sports. Practising
223 sport psychology online can remove geographical and time-based barriers between
224 practitioners and clients (Cotterill & Symes, 2014). As the majority of esports work outside of
225 elite levels is online, we have felt it easier to have more contact with players and staff members:

226

227 What allows me to engage with the industry now as a practitioner is the ability to do so
228 online. ... I have chosen to live with my parents so that I can afford to spend my time
229 working and developing as a practitioner, rather than move out and spend the majority of
230 my working hours in irrelevant part-time work in order to pay for more expensive living
231 costs.

232

233 Ability to access esports teams and organisations online facilitates working from home,
234 which entirely removes transport costs and time. Thus, at the beginning of training, where paid
235 work is more scarce, online remote work may be much more financially feasible. We have been
236 able to work in esports without paying additional costs of time and money associated with
237 transport, professional clothing, or even office space. Even if we decide to expand into other
238 performance or exercise contexts areas later in our development as sport and exercise
239 psychologists, our earlier work in esports has allowed us to accessibly develop our skills,

240 understanding, and confidence while working less time in unrelated paid work to pay training
241 expenses.

242 Our increased accessibility to esports teams, players, and staff has also facilitated
243 engagement and furthered buy-in with teams already accepting and open to us as sport and
244 exercise psychologists (in training):

245
246 I found this easy with my first team despite working online. During workshops and one-
247 to-one 1:1 sessions everyone felt that they could speak freely and casually and all
248 members of the team, including the coach and manager were open with me with regards
249 to what they expected of me but also with how they were feeling and what they were
250 experiencing

251
252 After the first week, I was receiving positive feedback from the players and coach which
253 was fantastic, and I experienced a sense of relief and belonging within the team. I feel
254 like I have never had much of this from the other environments I have worked in, so it
255 made me valued within the team even after just a short time.

256
257 Perhaps it is because I was at the matches, at training, provided consistent one-to-one
258 support, regular workshops, fit in better with the environment and quirks it held, or simply
259 the fact that the team was smaller (five players and two coaches) meaning I could build
260 a better connection with individuals.

261
262 This increased engagement could be for a few reasons. Firstly, it could be due to the
263 online inhibition effect (Suler, 2004) with players and staff feeling more comfortable and open to
264 talk about things online even in our group workshops (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2015). Or, it could
265 also be due to the smaller team and roster sizes in esports compared to traditional sports

266 creating more intimate and supportive environments. It could also be due to one-on-one casual
267 conversations on social media sites such as Discord being more anonymous and confidential
268 than they would be in in-person sporting contexts, or a combination of the above. Regardless of
269 the reason, we have found players and staff accepting of our support to be more accessible to
270 us as practitioners, and we feel the context around online esports may have facilitated
271 practitioner-client relationships in our work.

272 ***A novel context for sport and exercise psychology development***

273 Training in esports also provides new, novel opportunities and contexts to develop and
274 apply our skills and knowledge. We are training to be sport AND exercise psychologists; while,
275 in traditional sport, exercise is often intrinsic to the game, exercise is not intrinsic to esports. As
276 a result, we can not only work to improve exercise participation in esports, but also use exercise
277 to benefit our clients' performance too. While other practitioners may choose to specialise in
278 either sport or exercise, both are applicable within esports, and we have had opportunity to
279 combine both areas of our training in the industry:

280

281 In esports, exercise prior to games can be used to provide a competitive edge. As a
282 trainee sport and exercise psychologist, esports has given me the opportunity to use
283 both parts of my training at once, in a way that traditional sport would not

284

285 Additionally, the remote environment of esports and esports psychology also provide
286 new contexts for growth and development. For example, group interventions, such as exercise,
287 can become more individualised, suiting an individual's preferences, physiology, and fatigue
288 where an in-person exercise intervention may not. As other research has pointed out (Sotirova
289 et al., 2021), online exercise interventions can be more time efficient and convenient. We have
290 found this accessibility and efficiency really helpful when exercising as part of a pre-
291 performance routine prior to an official game:

292

293 I instructed players to exercise at a moderate level in whatever way they liked, with the
294 aim that while some types of exercise may be more optimal for performance increases,
295 doing something they enjoyed would make them more likely to continue exercising
296 independently before games, or at least be onboard with future interventions

297 ***Pioneers in the industry***

298 While esports as an industry is arguably no longer in its infancy, we believe psychology
299 within esports definitely is [Blinded for review]. There is little regulation on psychology within the
300 industry, and while that brings a lot of chaos, it also allows us the opportunity for flexibility and
301 innovation:

302

303 As psychology within esports is still young, there are so many opportunities for research,
304 applied work, and even moulding the field to become more informed about what
305 performance psychology looks like in esports

306

307 Esports is seen as an unknown entity by many sport psychology practitioners. Previous
308 reflections from practitioners have noted a lack of within industry-based tutorage (Ramaker &
309 Pedraza-Ramirez 2023) due to the infancy of psychology within esports. We echo this
310 sentiment:

311

312 I felt very uncertain about what it should or could look like within this new performance
313 context. One reason I had this concern was that I did not know anyone working within
314 the field. When I reached out to people in my network (e.g., mentors, lecturers, peers)
315 about this I tended to get funny looks!

316

317 Additionally, a lack of qualified psychologists in esports and esports organisations often
318 not recognising or requiring practical training qualifications with ethical supervision encourages
319 people confident to practice psychology without them. As some of the trained psychologists
320 working and developing within the industry we have the responsibility to set a good precedent
321 and raise the industry up to a similar standard to traditional sports in terms of ethics,
322 professionalism, and evidence-based practice to help the professionals in the industry perform
323 better, more consistently, and more sustainably. We feel there is still much work needed to be
324 done:

325

326 I felt a huge gap in the psychological demands of esports and the supply of qualified
327 psychologists. As a sport and exercise psychologist, I felt there is much attention needed
328 to the context and helping players deal with it's impact on their performance and
329 wellbeing

330 **Theme 2: Alienation**

331 This theme, conversely, highlights the social downsides of developing in esports, often
332 remotely, and behind a screen. Here, we identify themes of online communication barriers,
333 hegemonic masculinity within esports, and limited buy-in from players, coaches, and
334 organisational staff. While we do not believe that all of these issues are unique to esports
335 psychology practice (especially regarding hegemonic masculinity in high performance
336 environments) the persistent remote and often voice- and text-only communication in esports
337 has made it harder to build strong practitioner-client relationships.

338 ***Online communication barriers***

339 Online play requires online communication. Compared to in-person socialising, where a
340 practitioner can judge their social context and a situation from afar, online communication in
341 voice channels presents practitioners with a black box where they are unable to see what is
342 inside without opening it. Cottrell et al. (2019)'s esport recommendations and guidelines discuss

343 the ethics of knowing *how* to use online communication software, however, we feel like the
344 bigger issue is knowing *when* to use online communication software:

345

346 I was unsure what the etiquette was like when joining voice channels during their training
347 and was concerned about speaking when they were busy or stepping on anyone's toes.

348 It is in those group situations when I would wonder what to say, how to say it, and when
349 was the right time to say it.

350

351 Additionally, compared to our other applied work, we have struggled with esports players
352 and coaches normally only using voice chat or text-based communication, rather than video
353 calls, which are more typical for our online services in other performance domains. Other
354 practitioners elsewhere have noted that voice-only communication online can impair the
355 development of practitioner-client relationships compared to in-person as explicit and implicit
356 communication is lost (Cotterill & Symes, 2014). In our experiences with esports, we too feel
357 that voice-only or even text-only communication slows the development of our relationships with
358 staff, coaches and players especially when starting with a new team; in individual and group live
359 sessions too, voice-only communication has also impaired how we have assessed engagement
360 and understanding, and gathered feedback:

361

362 In the beginning, it was challenging to understand the players from behind their closed
363 cameras and therefore, challenging to build rapport and understand interpersonal
364 boundaries and norms of approaching players. This limited the non-verbal feedback
365 when speaking to players - where [the intervention] was helpful, it was hard to exactly
366 gauge how much by

367

368 It is worth noting that where psychology work was done in-person for esports teams,
369 these online communication barriers were no longer an issue:

370
371 A highlight of my work thus far has been working as a practitioner at [an in-person
372 competition]. ... This event gave me the opportunity to meet and interact with players so
373 much more naturally and seamlessly than online. Casual conversations, checking in with
374 the players was so much easier. I no longer felt like I was intruding on potentially an
375 important group meeting or interrupting communication and flow of a scrim on a voice
376 channel

377 ***Hegemonic masculinity within esports***

378 Where trainees were women, and players and staff were men, we felt alienated from the
379 rest of their team because of our gender. Players treated us differently, and made gender-
380 specific comments which upheld gendered-behavioural norms. These gender-based comments,
381 even if intended to be light-hearted, led to a sense of alienation from the rest of the team. We
382 feel this is a symptom of the hegemonic masculinity present within the esports industry (Scholz
383 & Nothelfer, 2022):

384
385 There also seemed to be some 'banter' about me being the only woman in the
386 environment, for example people would say "thanks mum" after sessions and when I
387 joined the voice channels sometimes say "we have to behave now, there's a girl in the
388 room". I assume this was intended in a benevolent and humorous manner, but it does
389 make me feel separated from the team in some ways and reinforces gender stereotypes
390 within the team.

391
392 Gender research within esports argues that esports are male-dominated environments
393 where gender roles are used to minimise female power and agency (Rogstad, 2022). Within

394 esports environments women experience harassment and have to navigate the gender
395 environment, either by performing in line with gendered expectations or hide their femininity
396 altogether to prevent differential treatment (Madden et al., 2021; Rogstad, 2022). The above
397 quote is in line with this, players changed their behaviour, even benevolently, due to their
398 gendered expectations of a women sport psychologist.

399

400 The hegemonic masculinity within the esports community has been linked to the lower
401 participation from women players, especially at the professional level (Hilbert, 2019; Interpret,
402 2019) as women walk away from esports due to social barriers and harassment (Scholz &
403 Nothelfer, 2022). We reflected above that severe effects of hegemonic masculinity such as
404 sexism may be less felt by sport psychologists working in esports compared to players:

405

406 These experiences... typical of those directed at women within esports, focusing on
407 appearance and forms of sexism... led me to question whether I should pursue work in
408 esports but I came to the ultimate conclusion that because I wasn't the player these
409 experiences wouldn't happen, therefore I would be comfortable working in the industry.

410 ***Limited buy-in from coaches, players, and organisation staff***

411 Poor or underdeveloped practitioner-staff/client/player relationships caused by the above
412 can lead to poor buy-in for our interventions. At an organisational staff and coach level, this has
413 manifested in psychology sessions not being prioritised in schedules, and us needing to strongly
414 advocate ourselves for team contact time; at a player level this has led to resistance, coldness,
415 or no responses to our messages altogether:

416

417 During my work with other clients I found this rapport building process incredibly difficult.
418 In the case of the individual, despite multiple different strategies, they were incredibly
419 shut off and therefore it was difficult to establish the goals for our work together. With the

420 other team I worked with, one of the players was very engaged and we built a good
421 relationship over the course of my time there but the other players and the coach made
422 no attempt to build a good relationship, despite multiple efforts on my end.

423
424 Initially, I tried to use a more systems based approach, or at least introduce it in that
425 way, however this did not come to fruition as management and coaching staff did not
426 seem keen on this and kept reiterating the support was only needed for the players.

427
428 There is loads more I would like to do, such as group sessions that build team culture
429 and identity through team values and goals, pressure training ..., and working on pre-
430 performance routines. Ultimately, however, I am limited by scheduling

431
432 This leads to a frustrating gap between what us trainees would like to do, and what
433 actually is implemented and prioritised in player and coach schedules. We practise what we
434 preach to players, so it can be frustrating to know first-hand what benefits to their performance,
435 wellbeing, and resilience we have experienced that they could be missing out on. Practitioner-
436 client relationships are relational at their core and require a willingness to work from all parties
437 to be successful and mutually beneficial (Sharp et al., 2015). In cases where we have not
438 already found client team curiosity and willingness to learn about psychology, developing and
439 maintaining client relationships has been predominantly one-sided.

440 **Theme 3 - Esports Time**

441 Esports scheduling, both in training and competitions provide another barrier to practice
442 and development for us trainees. This theme has two subthemes: esports pace and esports
443 working hours.

444 ***Esports Pace***

445 Esport seasons of play happen quicker than traditional sports (Hollist, 2015;
446 Swettenham & Whitehead, 2022). This also means players come and go from organisations
447 faster and rosters are less stable and more dynamic. We, as trainee esports psychologists,
448 have needed to adapt to these systems of working alongside players and staff to effectively
449 integrate within our esports teams.

450 As psychologists developing in this environment, we have had to compromise in our
451 practice: shortening our needs analyses, rushing into action, and missing chances to reflect on
452 our interventions with the team to evaluate what does and does not work. Practitioner-client and
453 player-player relationships can often suffer too, as can feelings of team cohesion, identity and
454 support, because in some cases the team will be disbanded 2-3 months after its creation. Our
455 sentiment is echoed by Brain et al. (2024)'s tale of "crunch time". For practitioners looking to
456 promote long-term, sustainable changes in players and staff, we have found this culture to be
457 saddening and to limit our effectiveness as practitioners:

458
459 Unfortunately, since the Summer Split had already started and was only for the duration
460 of seven weeks, I was required to begin delivering a psychology programme within the
461 environment sooner than I would have with other performance environments, such as in
462 traditional sports

463
464 I felt that if esports organisations keep switching players, how can I help the players in
465 their personal and professional development as a process. New teams will be formed in
466 every split requiring formation of team identity, bonding and cohesiveness and then two
467 months later, they are disbanded. It is infuriating to see this 'in and out' format as a
468 person who values nurturing the individual in the process than to use them as a means
469 to an end

470 ***Esports Working Hours***

471 Working within the esports industry, for anyone involved, is far from a typical 9-5 job.
472 While we need not engage in the long training hours of professional players (Hollist, 2015), we
473 have nonetheless had to adapt to esports' schedule to work and develop as trainees. Only
474 working part-time with teams, however, the fast-pace of esports has been harder to integrate
475 with other life and training commitments without sacrificing session quality. This is especially the
476 case if sessions are scheduled at short-notice, but where notice is given, we have found
477 integrating our different commitments is far more manageable:

478

479 Many competitive matches and training took place in late evenings or at odd timings
480 during the day including weekends. This persisted for the two-three months of the
481 competitive season. Staying up with the team till 11 PM for match observations,
482 meetings with coach and manager and conducting 1-1 individual work on weekends to
483 suit client's availability after their commitments in education and esports was
484 manageable and efficient as I could adjust my other commitments during the day or
485 schedule beforehand with the player

486

487 However, I often don't get a response until Friday and am asked to do this for Sunday,
488 giving me 2 days to complete the work and, as previously stated, my part time job makes
489 that difficult so I either have to delay the session which makes me look less competent
490 or I have to rush and deliver a sub-par session to the client, making it a lose-lose
491 situation

492 **Theme 4 - Financial Barriers**

493 This final theme discusses financial barriers to training as a sport and exercise
494 psychologist in esports. The subthemes we identified are a culture of unpaid sport and exercise
495 psychologists in training, a poor payment culture within esports, and the cost of unpaid work.

496 ***Culture of unpaid sport and exercise psychologists in training***

497 Currently, the majority of work we have been doing in the industry has been unpaid.
498 Despite research-backed benefits of psychology in traditional sport and esports, there is not a
499 strong culture of paying for psychological services. As our qualification and professional
500 development requires training time and client contact over a maximum of four years, we have
501 often resorted to unpaid work to fulfil this requirement, despite, in the current case of the first
502 author, 7 prior years of formal psychology education and training:
503

504 One difficulty that neophyte practitioners face is ensuring that we are paid for the
505 services that we provide, based on my own experiences I believe that this is due to two
506 factors. Initially, we, as neophyte practitioners are required to practise under a title that
507 states that we are in training regardless of how much experience we have, the use of
508 this title when communicating with potential clientele has been a hindrance as I have
509 been questioned as to whether I'm actually allowed to provide the service and have had
510 my services outright refused because I "don't have the right qualifications".
511

512 However, this is not sustainable as a long-term career; at some point I need to get paid
513 for my work to justify my degrees and years of training. It is rare in any other job to do so
514 much training and receive nothing in return.

515 ***Poor payment culture in esports***

516 In addition to the poor payment culture of sport and exercise psychologists in training
517 generally, the esports industry itself presents another financial barrier. Esports are a new industry
518 with less regulations, players and staff members (us included) are more vulnerable to predatory
519 labour practices (Hollist, 2015; Johnson & Woodcock, 2021). In some cases, esports
520 organisations take advantage and exploit players. For example, this year, UK team Lioncreed
521 were removed from their regional League of Legends league, the NLC, for not paying former
522 players (Daniels, 2024). As less essential members of the team than players, we feel our

523 services are less financially prioritised in an already competitive industry, and wonder if would
524 be more financially savvy to train elsewhere:

525

526 Because of these denials of work I, and many other [sport and exercise psychologists (in
527 training)], have had to volunteer our time [in esports] in order to gain enough experience
528 for our qualifications. In addition to this, esports is notorious for not providing payment
529 for services provided, especially to outside staff such as psychologists, making it
530 challenging to solely train in this field.

531

532 I remain slightly doubtful about how financially viable a developing career in esports is
533 long-term ... Top practitioners in the area have only joined esports after training
534 elsewhere in in-person, traditional sport with likely more widespread appeal and funding.

535 Should I do the same?

536 ***The cost of unpaid work***

537 While unpaid work often is great for our development as trainees, its cost is time that we
538 cannot spend working elsewhere, recovering, or developing other skills. This lack of financial
539 support has led us to either diversify our training to supplement our income, despite our passion
540 and interest for the industry, or sacrifice our social lives and interpersonal development living
541 with our parents:

542

543 I also appreciate that I am in a very privileged position to live with my parents and thus
544 afford to work an unpaid role - without reduced living costs it would not be financially
545 viable to work as much as I do.

546

547 Due to my circumstances I have extended my clientele to more 'mainstream sports' in
548 order to fund my qualifications and bills and have noticed that my experiences within

549 these sports have been more positive overall across all aspects mentioned above

550

551 **Discussion**

552 We set out to describe our experiences of training to be sport and exercise psychologists
553 within esports. In our reflexive thematic analysis of our narratives, we identified several themes
554 which can be divided into the opportunities that esports can provide, and the barriers it presents.
555 Esports undoubtedly provides new, interesting, and exciting opportunities for sport and exercise
556 psychology to provide a competitive, performance advantage for teams, and improve the
557 sustainability of these performances over time. However, financial, scheduling, and social
558 barriers exist within the esports industry and the performance context of esports games - all of
559 which can limit the effectiveness and implementation of psychology for players and
560 organisational staff, and as well as limit the sustainability of developing as a practitioner within
561 esports.

562 This is a bleaker set of reflections than those from full-time esports psychology
563 practitioners at the elite level. Our reflections share some similarities with Ramaker and
564 Pedraza-Ramirez (2023): for example, both describe the opportunities that psychology within
565 esports has as well as navigating esports psychology work online. However, compared to
566 Ramaker and Pedraza-Ramirez (2023), we as trainees experienced far more barriers to
567 practice. The most noticeable difference is arguably in buy-in from organisations and players,
568 both socially and financially, and thus the extent of psychological assessments and
569 interventions they are able to provide. We seemingly face more barriers to implementation at
570 each of the organisational, coach and player levels, which have left us wanting to do more than
571 we are able. While this could be partly a skill and experience difference, where the more
572 experienced practitioners are able to generate more buy-in, this could also be due to these
573 performance psychologists working for organisations and players which already value and
574 prioritise psychology enough to invest money and players' schedule time into it. Greater

575 organisational and coach investment allows both players and practitioners to spend more time
576 working with psychology, and as a result, its beneficial effects are more likely to be realised and
577 the work more rewarding. Lower tier esports organisations may not prioritise investment in their
578 players' wellbeing if their contracts only last 2-3 months.

579 This bleaker outlook may however be partly in-line with current trainee sport and
580 exercise psychologist's feelings and reflections in traditional sports. While a review of new sport
581 psychology practitioners' reflections focused more on emotional and professional barriers and
582 did not mention financial barriers at all (Wadsworth et al., 2021), other research has shown that
583 trainees struggle emotionally compared to established practitioners, and have similar issues in
584 attracting clients to do either paid or unpaid work to complete their qualification (Hings et al.,
585 2020). The extent of these struggles have even led to published calls to action to help support
586 and increase trainee and new practitioners' quality of life (Martin et al., 2021). While this is sad
587 to normalise this experience, it seems that not all our experiences training within esports are
588 unique, and that being able to train as a sport psychologist at all is a financially privileged
589 choice, regardless of the performance environment. Our bleaker outlook compared to Ramaker
590 & Pedraza-Ramirez (2023) may be partly representative of overall differences in outlooks
591 between trainee and established sport and performance psychology practitioners (e.g., Martin et
592 al., 2021), and may even suggest that the sunnier reflections from Ramaker & Pedraza-Ramirez
593 (2023) could be out of selection bias. For those two authors that have found successful jobs in
594 the industry, how many have not? Only time will tell for us which group we will fall into.

595 Perhaps this bleaker outlook may also be due to hegemonic masculinity within esports
596 affecting how psychological support is perceived and prioritised by players and organisations.
597 Above we discussed how the female-presenting authors of this article have had explicit
598 gendered experiences. However, esports' hegemonic masculinity culture may also lead to an
599 implicit stigma towards psychology, or at least a reluctance to invest in it. If esports
600 organisations, teams, or players adopt and buy into the hegemonic masculinity ideals of being

601 dominant, hierarchical, and unemotional (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Scholz & Nothelfer,
602 2022), they may be less likely to be vulnerable and discuss their feelings (Smoliak et al., 2022),
603 especially in such a fast-paced, competitive industry where being seen as flawed and imperfect
604 may feel contradictory to securing jobs. This may lead players to initially reject any psychology,
605 but especially approaches that encourage the mindfulness and acceptance of thoughts and
606 feelings, rather than suppression, avoidance, or rationalisation through rational emotive therapy,
607 relaxation, or self-talk (see Horne & Swettenham, 2024 for a discussion). Encouraging the
608 acceptance of emotionality in men has been suggested for better wellbeing and gender equality
609 in therapy (Smoliak et al., 2022). In esports too, encouraging and accepting emotionality from all
610 gender identities may promote wellbeing and the acceptance of psychological help.

611 Perhaps the bleaker outlook we present is also bleaker because of my (the first author's)
612 current life situation. After all, we use a reflexive thematic analysis in this paper, and thus it is
613 important to reflect on how our own positionality and context may affect our conclusions (Braun
614 & Clarke, 2019, 2021). As said above, my financial, living, and social situation is not what I
615 would want it to be; I am choosing to sacrifice my social and economic development in order to
616 pursue work that is meaningful for me. I do so willingly and this is not a choice I would change,
617 but would this outlook be so bleak if I and other authors had financial freedom and/or fulfilling
618 social lives? Perhaps not. On the other hand I would not even be writing this paper if I was not
619 able to move back in with my parents and have fewer living costs? Voices of people that neither
620 have parental support nor time to write and submit articles for peer-reviewed journals may not
621 even be heard. Perhaps we are better off than many that could never even afford to start.

622 Regardless, we have not found our current approach to training in esports to be
623 financially sustainable long-term. Especially as trainees, we are also paying for supervision and
624 qualification costs to stay ethical and professional, all on top of our living costs. While esports
625 professionals at the top level are paid, it remains to be seen whether the esports industry is able
626 to financially fund the development of its own practitioners, or will have to continue borrowing

627 practitioners who trained in traditional sport. This is especially a concern as the esports
628 industry's business model is not as affluent as in traditional sports (Carreras et al., 2024). In
629 light of these accounts, Romain Bigeard (2024)'s advice of training elsewhere first and then
630 moving to esports could be more paternal. As much as current practitioners encourage the
631 development of practitioners within the industry (Ramaker & Pedraza-Ramirez, 2023), it might
632 be a more financially savvy option to supplement our incomes with practitioner work outside of
633 esports until we have the knowledge and experience to apply for top-tier teams, as current elite
634 level practitioners have done. An argument that could be made here is that training is not
635 supposed to be sustainable; however, it is rare in any other job role and even other disciplines
636 of psychology to have such little financial infrastructure to support development,
637 apprenticeships, assistants, and junior staff members.

638 However, are we just marketing ourselves badly? It is easy to blame the industry while
639 taking little responsibility ourselves. In both our general education in sport and exercise
640 psychology and groups in esports, we have been told specifically to not give our work away for
641 free where possible, as doing so devalues our work and the work of other qualified sport (and
642 exercise) psychologists in the industry. Thus, we have arguably been unethical in how we have
643 been training so far, without payment, even without an experience-base. Now we all have
644 experience, ethical supervision and guidelines, and industry-leading psychology knowledge as a
645 foundation for future practice ([Blinded for review]), there are even fewer reasons why we
646 should not be charging for our services. After all, either inside or outside of esports, we can
647 absolutely provide a competitive edge to performance, and do so in a sustainable, meaningful
648 way (Horne & Swettenham, 2024).

649 **Limitations**

650 A limitation of this paper is its generalisability to other trainee sport and exercise
651 psychologists aspiring to work in esports. While some of our experiences may not be unique,
652 such as unpaid work (Hings et al., 2020) the contexts they are derived from are. While it might

653 be possible for our readers to work with the same people as we have done, there are minimal
654 chances of you working with the same teams, and no chance whatsoever of you working with
655 the same teams at the same point in time. Autoethnography is not a method that especially
656 encourages generalisation (Holt & Streat, 2001; Sparkes, 2000), and thus we can offer no
657 guarantee your experiences will be anything like ours, especially if your context (e.g., social
658 relationships, financial situation, gender) is different to our own. What we do hope, however, is
659 through reading this article and our recommendations below, you are better prepared for the
660 barriers to esports training we have highlighted, if you experience them.

661 Another limitation is this article's bounded authenticity and depth through how our
662 experiences are presented. Due to the ethical barriers around retrospective autoethnography
663 (Bochner, 2017; Edwards, 2021), we chose to prioritise relational ethics as much as possible.
664 This meant potentially fictionalising details (Eliastam et al., 2018) and/or removing identifying
665 content to protect our clients' anonymity as much as possible. We note above that our quotes
666 and experiences are neither linked to a practitioner through name or frequency, nor can be
667 trusted to be true at all. While we have worked to maintain meaning throughout the process, the
668 individual details that remain cannot be completely trusted. While this limits authenticity,
669 especially at a quote-basis, we feel that this approach is compatible with the paper: instead of
670 focusing on particular client cases and interventions (e.g., Swettenham & Whitehead, 2022), we
671 instead step back to evaluate our own developmental experiences within the industry. From this
672 perspective, any individual case, intervention, or client relationship is less influential on our
673 overall experiences.

674 **Our Recommendations**

675 It would be fantastic here to be able to provide concrete guidelines and
676 recommendations to help other practitioners in the same position as us trainees. However,
677 considering the above it feels hypocritical to say we have things all figured out or provide any
678 guaranteed tricks of the trade.

679 So far advice of practitioners has encouraged trainees to expect challenges, to reach out
680 and intern at terms to get experience, and to present their ideas clearly (Ramaker & Pedraza-
681 Ramirez (2023). Other trainees have similarly argued for self-care, flexibility in practice, and
682 engagement in online practice (Brain et al., 2024). However, we feel this advice is brief, so
683 below we attempt to build on their points with some grounded suggestions. We can of course
684 make no promises that they will make you hugely successful in the industry as most of us are
685 not either, so please take this advice with heavy scepticism. What we do hope to provide,
686 however, is some guidelines that, regardless of your success, should make you a better sport
687 and exercise psychologist.

688 ***Be your own first client***

689 Before you even start to find other clients, you should try everything you plan on
690 teaching others for yourself. Self-practice is essential not only to your understanding of the
691 techniques and their benefits, but also your understanding of yourself (Pack et al., 2014). Self-
692 practice can also help build the resilience (or psychological flexibility; see Horne & Swettenham,
693 2024) that you will need to navigate the barriers we have highlighted above (Quartiroli et al.,
694 2022). Self-practice is essential for a practitioner's quality of life and arguably an ethical
695 requirement in order to maintain effective long-term care for your clients (Quartiroli et al., 2022).
696 I (the first author) cannot recommend Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and its
697 performance and wellbeing applications enough (ACT; Gardner & Moore, 2004; Hayes et al.,
698 1999; Horne & Swettenham, 2024), but there are other approaches you could use too (see Tod
699 & Eubank, 2020).

700 This is easy to say but this is the most important of the advice we give here. Learning to
701 progressively become more psychologically flexible or resilient - overcoming barriers which may
702 have drawn you to psychology in the first place - will allow you to navigate an uncertain industry
703 and rebound from rejections, and to speak from your heart when you ask others to do as you
704 do. In my case I am passionate about what I do because ACT and ACT-based interventions

705 have transformed both my mental health, productivity and work quality; 2 years ago I was
706 diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and was experiencing panic
707 attacks from forgetting university assignments, now many of my ADHD symptoms are probably
708 below average. Mental roadblocks that used to derail my whole day I can now glide over, and I
709 feel joy and purpose for the first time in my life. Be your own first client - “live your principles out
710 loud” (Busanich & Baird, 2024, p.29) - everything else will follow.

711 ***Know your philosophy***

712 Following on from the above, it is not just important to know what interventions work to
713 improve performance and wellbeing, but also why they work, and how they can fit together
714 within a coherent model of practice (Horne & Swettenham, 2024). Ramaker & Pedraza-Ramirez
715 (2023) recommend succinctness and clarity in presentations; we believe that this comes with
716 practice and a clear understanding of your work and role. People will ask you to elaborate on
717 what you present either out of malice or curiosity and you should prepare, as best you can, to
718 respond to both as they were the latter. Having a rich, deep understanding of your interventions
719 and how they improve performance and/or wellbeing makes this remarkably easier. We strongly
720 recommend that trainee sport and exercise psychologists develop their own professional
721 philosophy and identity (e.g., Horne & Swettenham, 2024; Quartiroli et al., 2024) if you are
722 looking to be a flexible, dynamic, purposeful practitioner that can react to answer client
723 questions well, and be proactive in designing interventions and intervention programs based on
724 client needs.

725 ***Outreach to teams***

726 We agree with Ramaker and Pedraza-Ramirez (2023) that reaching out to teams that
727 are not currently advertising can be a good way to find work and internships with esports teams,
728 and this method has worked for us. However, if teams respond they may say they do not have
729 the budget to pay you. If you still want to work at this organisation this gives you a couple
730 options.

731 You could get creative and suggest an alternative financial agreement. Even if the team
732 has no budget, are they able to offer you with a % of the total winnings? Naturally this would not
733 provide you with a consistent or guaranteed income, but having a contract with a % of winnings
734 provides no financial risk to the organisation in taking you on as a new practitioner while still
735 providing some buy-in to your services. Additionally, as this % of winnings is likely also split with
736 players, this may increase their motivation to work with you and develop from your skill set. We
737 appreciate this may not sit comfortably with some practitioners and they may argue that it
738 prioritises performance outcomes over personal growth. However, we disagree. Given
739 organisations do already give players a % of prize money as winnings, working on a no-win, no-
740 free basis provides psychological support for players with no additional financial risk should they
741 lose. While we have not heard of this type of contract being made by psychology practitioners in
742 esports psychology, it is not unheard of in traditional sport.

743 Alternatively, you could work as an unpaid intern. However, if you are still going to work
744 for free, please ensure you are doing so on your own terms, and for an organisation that will still
745 value and invest in you socially if not financially. Even if they cannot pay you, can they still
746 promote you as a professional in the industry, can they help you network with others? The more
747 you can learn about clinical theory and healthy behaviour (e.g., Hayes et al., 1999; Horne &
748 Swettenham, 2024), the more you should be able to discern psychologically healthy, value-
749 driven members of the industry from the rest. If an organisation's management is not able to
750 invest in you and your services, either socially or financially, this could be a red flag for how
751 much buy-in you will be able to get from the coaches and players they do hire. In the worst
752 case, this could mean that you become tied to an organisation that provides you with no
753 experience, no financial support, and could restrict you getting either from elsewhere. In all
754 cases of unpaid please discuss a finite time period to reaffirm the expectation that you cannot
755 work for free forever.

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Conclusion

Not only is there opportunity for sport and exercise psychology trainees to give esports teams a competitive edge but also a well-researched need for sport psychology's wellbeing services. Esports are novel performance environments that provide accessibility to geographically isolated trainees, while also presenting new, novel challenges to learn and adapt to. However, as trainees in the industry, we are struggling and facing more barriers to practice than elite level practitioners. It is tempting to follow industry professionals' advice to train in traditional sports first (Bigear, 2024), and doing so may be more sustainable financially and make our training experiences more comprehensive. However, only training in traditional sports may mean we are less prepared when we do later try to return to esports, so perhaps a combination of both is best. Training within esports is not for the half-hearted, however if you are committed to the industry, inspired by the opportunities it presents, and not put off by these barriers, we strongly encourage you to join us in helping level up the ethics, professionalism, and research-based practice of sport and exercise psychology within esports. Perhaps we can even help erode the gendered norms and hegemonic masculinity within the industry. We will certainly try - only time will tell whether we will succeed.

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