

Gergő Jókai-Szilágyi

Player Preferences on Optimal In-Game Leader (IGL) Characteristics and Behaviors



Bachelor of Business Admin-
istration

Esports Business

Autumn 2022



KAMK • University
of Applied Sciences

Abstract

Author: Gergő Jókai-Szilágyi

Title of the Publication: Player Preferences on Optimal In-Game Leader (IGL) Characteristics and Behaviors

Degree Title: Bachelor of Business Administration

Keywords: leadership, esports, style, team, leader, in-game, preference, research, video, games, IGL

The purpose of the thesis was to understand user desired preferences over the different leadership styles and characteristics in an online team-based competitive video game scene. The main research questions were what gamers' preferences on leadership traits and behaviors are and which of these are preferred in a teammate in a leader-like role (such as an in-game leader).

A user-friendly, easy-to-follow survey was developed for this research. The questionnaire included twenty (20) questions; on average, the survey completion took less than five minutes for the participants. All the questions were related to user preference, and there was not any limitation on the target groups, such as geographic or demographic aspects.

The responses showed that, in general, people prefer the characteristics and traits of a leader who promotes and actively practices the democratic leadership style. People desire an in-game leader (IGL) who actively engages with their teammates, whether strategizing together or giving and taking feedback bi-directionally, supports and inspires the team to work as one, as well as to reach a common goal, such as winning a match. The leadership qualities and the preferences of users? of these leader attributes also lean towards the traits and characteristics of a democratic leader.

On the other hand, based on the findings and responses gathered, most of the respondents ranked and defined themselves supportive and participative) or often chose the capable but cautious dimension of the situational leadership style. This outcome indicates that team-based competitive esports environments promote or prefer? the supportive leadership style and mindset of players who are playing together for a common purpose.

Some aspects could have been utilized better to increase the quality of the collected data further. In the future, there could be more in-depth analysis based on the player preferences, more customized questions for the respondents, and some open-ended questions, which would inevitably improve the value of the data.

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Esports and leadership.....	1
1.2	In-game leader vs. coach.....	2
2	Theoretical background.....	4
2.1	Kurt Lewin’s leadership styles.....	4
2.1.1	Autocratic (Authoritarian) leadership.....	5
2.1.2	Democratic leadership.....	5
2.1.3	Laissez-faire leadership.....	6
2.2	Theoretical leadership styles.....	6
2.2.1	Entrepreneurial & Path-goal leadership.....	7
2.2.2	Transactional & transformational leadership.....	8
2.2.3	Situational leadership.....	8
3	Research questions and hypotheses.....	11
3.1	Research methodology.....	11
4	Outcome of the research.....	13
5	Conclusion.....	26
5.1	Discussion.....	26
	List of references.....	28

Appendices

1 Introduction

There have been several debates on how someone in a leader-like position or role should behave in a competitive online video game match environment. People have social preferences, and it is no different in an online video game setting either, more so if it is a competition. In competitive team-based video game (esports) environments, teamwork is one of the most crucial elements for success. Constant communication is present throughout the game if you have ever witnessed an esports match. A team-based esports match consists of player roles, these roles have different characteristics and objectives, but every player's ultimate goal is to win the match. Every game has different or similar roles; some of the most common ones are called support, tank, in-game leader (IGL for short).

As defined by Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2014): "Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates to reach organization goals. A leader can be defined as a person who delegates or influencing others to act so as to carry out specified objectives." (p. 57). This definition of leadership is also valid for team-based competitive video games, as IGLs practice the same ideas and processes that an organizational leader would.

For an in-game leader, choosing the appropriate leadership style is vital, as team performance and productivity are also impacted by it. A leadership style can endow a person with many characteristics and traits. This research thesis will help evaluate and clarify which leadership style(s) and characteristics could be the most optimal to be practiced by an in-game leader (IGL for short) that the people prefer to play with.

1.1 Esports and leadership

There are various definitions for esports. Some people connect it with traditional sports; others describe it simply as competitive gaming. According to Scholz (2019), "eSports is more an umbrella term for any video game that can be played competitively" (p. 3). One definition that is rather distinguished from the generic ones would be Wagner's explanation as; "Esports" is an area of sports activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies." (Wagner, 2006)

The above definition strengthens the idea that esports has deep ties to traditional sports because of the similarity in their elements, such as roles, team dynamics, structures, and basic principles of competitive team-based games, to name a few. Anyone who has played team-based esports or competitive video game titles should already have come across a variety of people with different leadership abilities, characteristics, and styles who took the lead role in-game - or it could have been you who took the initiative.

As far as esports go, several leadership roles have been formed because of the complexity of the industry. These positions can be in and out of games, such as team coaches, just like traditional sports coaches. Another example is the in-game leaders (IGL) who instinctively practice their leadership abilities inside an online video game match.

1.2 In-game leader vs. coach

Out of all the varying roles a player can choose in an esports title, some come attached with leader-like responsibilities and qualities, such as a team coach or an in-game leader. The two roles have both similarities and differences from each other. The following section will examine the contrast between in-game leaders and coaches, beginning with the definitions of these roles. "An IGL (short for in-game leader) is the one who calls out the rotations, strategies, how his teammates should position themselves when specific parts of the map should be pushed, and a lot more. He's the brain of the team and thus a very important member to have" (Labiszak, 2015).

Often, in esports teams, the IGLs have the most experience of the game out of all the players in the team, hence why they are the ones that get to play this role. The in-game leaders work closely with the team coaches to bring out the most potential in their teammates. The responsibilities that come with this role include improving the team's morale, promoting an appropriate level of team ethics, and generally keeping the team itself functioning as one. As stated by Hasan, (2021) "An Esports coach works with an esports team to develop meta-based strategies, analyze the competitions' weaknesses, develop strong internal communication, grow player morale, provide personal mentoring and ensure the success of the team in tournaments."

At first glance, team coaches have reasonably more tasks and responsibilities to deal with than in-game leaders. This statement is strengthened with the help of an exhaustive list of esports team coach responsibilities written by Hasan. In terms of differences between a coach and an in-game leader, there are several undeniable distinctions between the two. First and foremost, the

most distinguishable difference between the two is that coaches operate outside of the games. Meanwhile, the in-game leaders handle the on-prem strategizing and the leading inside these competitive games.

- **Analyze the current meta to draft up strong strategies that play to the team's strengths.**
- **Enhance internal communication of the players. This can be done through team-building activities and identifying key communication lapses during games.**
- **Ensure players keep a positive outlook on the game, their performance and have a winner's mentality through various motivational tactics.**
- **Resolve a player's personal issues and provide consulting on personal issues to remove mental baggage from the player to ensure they perform at their max potential.**
- **Ensure the players are prepared when travelling and that nothing important is being forgotten. This typically is referring to player jerseys, sponsorship items and team-branding merchandise.**
- **Coordinate scrimms for the teams to provide more practicing opportunities.**
- **Work with the managers to determine specific competitions to be involved in and, if the coach is an employee of the team, to ensure the players the team desires to resign have received a service from the team to justify resigning.**
- **Work with the team analyst/s (if there is one) to look at the team's play-by-play, specific game stats and determine critical flaws of the team. The team analyst/s would also work with the team manager to observe opposing teams and determine how their team can draft a strategy to win when facing that team.**

Figure 1. Hasan, U. (2021). General responsibilities of an esports coach.

Another significant difference is that a team coach not only deals with game strategizing and dynamics but also looks after the team members' well-being outside of their games, such as organizing scrimms (short for a scrimmage, a method of practice in which two esports teams have an unofficial match with each other), taking care of branding, merchandise, travels. Moreover, there could be situations even where an additional responsibility of a team coach is to take care of the team's wellbeing too. These differences in both roles reinforce that one and the other positions are crucial elements of a well-operating esports team. The following upcoming chapters will be a detailed elucidation of Kurt Lewin's and other theoretical types of leadership styles.

2 Theoretical background

Omolayo's 2007 study (as cited in Nanjundeswaraswamy, Dr & Swamy, D R., 2014) revealed that leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals. A person who delegates tasks or persuades others to take certain actions can be referred to as a leader. Organizations nowadays require capable leaders who are aware of the complexity of the fast-transforming global environment.

Choosing the appropriate style of leadership is essential for raising team member satisfaction and commitment. Everyone needs to discover leadership characteristics that benefit them and their team members. For you and your team, what works for other leaders might not. However, you stand a far higher chance of success as a leader if you spend time analyzing various leadership styles and how they operate for different personality types.

For this research, I have decided to work with several leadership styles that are well-recognized worldwide, and countless studies and academic papers have been written about them. As a note, for this study, I only hand-picked the three most well-known leadership styles (Autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership style), as well as some styles that have similarities connected to the "Big three" styles.

2.1 Kurt Lewin's leadership styles

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, classified three leadership philosophies in 1939 based on how a leader makes choices. These three Lewin's Leadership Styles outline the degree of control and team involvement a leader has in the decision-making process. All three leadership styles work differently, have unique characteristics, and can be recognized clearly without hassle. Below, I have included a picture demonstrating the differences between the three styles. The following few sections will elaborate on the three main leadership styles.



Figure 2. Lindberg, C. (n.d.). Kurt Lewin leadership styles.

2.1.1 Autocratic (Authoritarian) leadership

“Authoritarian leadership style—sometimes referred to as autocratic leadership style—is a leadership style that is described to have exclusive control over decision-making processes based on their own beliefs, rarely receiving suggestions or input from others.” (Nuangjumnong, & Mitomo, 2012). Despite their reputation for being harsh and absolute, autocratic leaders may be a good influence in situations that necessitate quick decisions.

However, this could result in a backlash if it is practiced unethically. The significant characteristics or keywords that this style promotes are limited input from others, one-way communication, and structured but often rigid environments. This leadership style also has several drawbacks, including a lack of responsibility, limited participation, and empowerment within the team. Additionally, it creates a firm reliance on the leader, and little happens when the leader is absent.

2.1.2 Democratic leadership

Democratic leaders are sometimes referred to as participative leaders. It is a leadership style that strongly emphasizes group participation in decision-making. According to research, democratic leaders are among the most effective in improved production, higher quality contributions from

group members, and overall increased morale. Goodnight's 2004 study (as cited in Nuangjumnonga, & Mitomo, 2012) has described that "Research has shown that democratic leaders are one of the most effective in terms of greater productivity, higher quality of contributions from group members as well as general increased morale within the group."

The democratic leader is still there to provide direction and control even though this approach frequently emphasizes group equality and the open exchange of ideas. Creativity, collaboration, and engagement are some of the most notable characteristics of this leadership style (Cherry, 2022). However, this leadership style also has its downsides, such as taking too long to gather feedback from team members, which results in the suffering of production, or when leaders cannot choose which path to take on forward if the feedback is equally variable.

2.1.3 Laissez-faire leadership

According to Nuangjumnonga, & Mitomo's study, the laissez-faire leadership style, often known as delegative or free-reign leadership, is those who delegate duties with little monitoring or decision-making. The logic behind these leaders' actions is that group members have different methods of functioning efficiently and should thus be left alone with their assigned responsibilities. Highly skilled and experienced teams can do great when making all decisions themselves.

The keywords or main characteristics of this style are reliability on teammates, an attitude of trust, creativity, and freedom of choice. Members working under the leadership of laissez-faire leaders have a sense of autonomy in their decision-making and working processes. ("What is laissez-faire leadership?", 2020) Laissez-faire leaders, on the other hand, may offer advice or aid if his/her group members so request. This can work if the team members are capable and motivated, but it may also cause issues if they are not.

2.2 Theoretical leadership styles

There are a variety of theoretical leadership styles developed and researched; apart from the three main leadership styles, which of these alternative leadership styles share some similarities with the three leadership styles defined by Kurt Lewin in some cases. In this thesis, I only cover

those other theoretical leadership styles, which have similar insights and ideas, that a person whose role is an in-game leader - would more or less proactively exercise.

2.2.1 Entrepreneurial & Path-goal leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership means organizing and encouraging a group of people to work toward a common goal through innovation, seizing opportunities, and managing a dynamic team environment. This type of leadership has lots of characteristics associated with it. For example, this kind of leader invests in learning and improving their expertise and encourages team members to expand their knowledge, broaden their experience, and take on numerous challenges by creating a learning atmosphere. (*"10 entrepreneurial leadership characteristics."*, 2021). Another example would be that the entrepreneurial leader fosters an environment where everyone is encouraged to share ideas, learn, and succeed.

Path-goal leadership is based on the path-goal theory, developed by Robert House in 1971 and later revised in 1996. The main principle of this theory states, "How leaders support (clear obstacles) and motivate their employees to reach group and organizational goals" (Komulainen, 2019). According to the path-goal theory, leaders must assist team members in reaching their objectives and must supply them with the essential knowledge.

Path-goal leadership has several characteristics, such as path-goal type of leaders, who clarify the "path" (E.g., where the team is heading), define clear, understandable goals, remove obstacles, and provide support for their subordinates. In practicality, in-game leaders can potentially promote this type of leadership, given that these dimensions and characteristics are followed. Below I have attached a visual model of the Path-goal leadership style developed by J. Dudovskiy in 2013, which visualizes the core idea of this leadership approach.



Figure 3. Dudovskiy, J. (2013). Path-Goal Theory.

2.2.2 Transactional & transformational leadership

In 2014, Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy wrote: "transactional leadership relies more about "trades" between the leader and follower by which followers are compensated for meeting specific goals or performance criteria.". Transactional leadership is characterized as rewarding subordinates for their efforts and performance. Transactional leaders utilize contingent rewards, corrective measures, and rule enforcement to encourage their subordinates.

On the other hand, transformational leadership focuses on both the growth and the needs of followers. With the preamble of their talents, leaders with the transformational leadership style focus on the growth and development of their team members' value systems, emotional levels, and moralities. The goal of transformational leadership is to "transform" people and teams in the literal sense - to change them in mind and heart by expanding vision, insight, and understanding, clarifying reasoning, and bringing about permanent, self-perpetuating changes and momentum-building. (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014)

2.2.3 Situational leadership

The situations influence the most effective leadership style that leaders find themselves in, according to Hersey and Blanchard's theory (the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory). According to Bruin (2020), Hersey and Blanchard focused a great part of their research on the characteristics of followers in determining appropriate leadership behaviors. Situational leadership is yet another kind of leadership style, which mainly focuses on leadership in situations.

This approach states that different situations require different leadership styles. Moreover, this approach demands that leaders match their style to the competence and commitment of their subordinates (Komulainen, 2019). For this kind of leadership style, there has been a leadership model associated with it, called the "Situational leadership model" – Developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969, based on Reddin's (1967) 3-D management style theory.

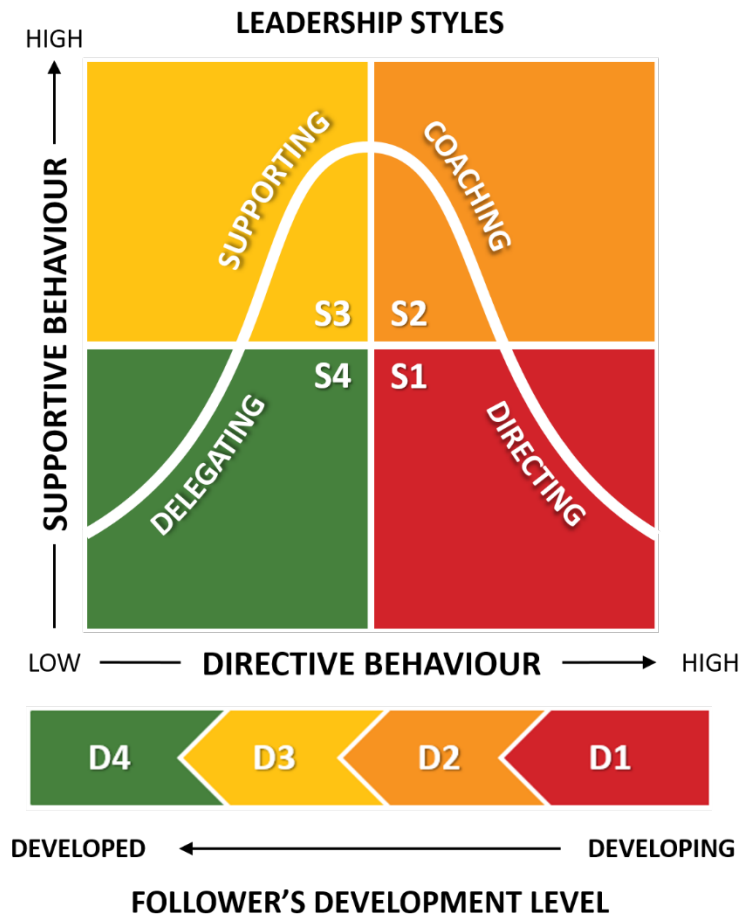


Figure 4. Hersey, Blanchard. (1969). Situational Leadership Styles.

Each of these leadership styles must be used in a specific scenario and consist of both directive and supporting dimensions. “Based on these different follower styles, leaders should adapt their leadership style in such a way that it meets the needs of their subordinates.” (Bruin, 2020). Depending on the followers' degree of preparation or growth, leaders must decide on the right amount of directed behavior. Below are the four directive dimensions listed:

1. Unable and Willing (Low Competence and High Commitment) – D1
2. Unable and Unwilling (Low Competence and Low Commitment) – D2
3. Able and Unwilling (High Competence and Low Commitment) – D3
4. Able and Willing (High Competence and High Commitment) – D4

“A leader’s supportive behavior reflects the ‘concern for people’ dimension of Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid.” (Bruin, 2020). This refers to the degree to which a leader prioritizes

developing and sustaining positive relationships with subordinates by attending to the safety, well-being, and individual requirements of the team members. Below I have listed the four supportive dimensions:

1. Telling (Directing) – S1
2. Selling (Coaching) – S2
3. Participating (Supporting) – S3
4. Delegating – S4

In the next chapter, I will cover the research part of my thesis, including the research questions and objectives, my hypotheses, methodology, and the research outcome.

3 Research questions and hypotheses

The research aims to understand user desired preferences over the different leadership styles and characteristics in an online team-based competitive video game scene. The main research questions are what the preferences of gamers on leadership traits behaviors are and which of these are they looking for in a teammate who is in a leader-like role (such as an in-game leader), and for this study, I have formed two hypotheses.

My first hypothesis is that people prefer to have an in-game leader who represents the democratic leadership style as an optimal leadership style that Kurt Lewin has described. The reasoning for my hypothesis is based on the practical experience I have gathered over the years playing these kinds of competitive online video games. I have personally experienced that, in general, people like to play as a team. However, they also like to independently choose what to do in a particular situation, meaning these gamers are not always keen to following orders or suggestions from others but instead act like a "lone wolf" even in team-based esports titles; however, this behavior could lead to a loss for the team potentially.

My second hypothesis would be that, in general, people who get into a leader in-game position in a team-based esports or competitive online video game title would be more or less instinctively practicing one of the four dimensions of the so-called situational leadership style, with one of the appropriate behaviors and characteristics that the theory promotes.

3.1 Research methodology

Choosing the right approach for the research methodology is vital for successful research. For this research, it was decided to conduct the study with a standard method, a quantitative online survey. The form was built into a user-friendly, easy-to-follow questionnaire with the help of Google Forms. The survey included precisely twenty (20) questions, and on average, the time for the completion of the survey took less than five minutes for the participants.

Initially, the survey included around ten (10) questions, and it was realized that the questionnaire might have been way too short. In the end, it was extended with ten additional questions, which improved the way of collecting answers and data for the research. All the questions were tied to user preference; without complex or open-ended questions, it was chosen to have them left out

because that might have impacted the number of participants in the long run. For this questionnaire, there has been only one requirement for becoming a perfect potential candidate: having prior experience playing team-based online competitive video games.

On the other hand, there has not been formed any limitations on specific target groups, such as geographic or demographic aspects, meaning that the survey was open to all, as it was essential to include as many people as possible for a successful outcome. To make the most out of the research method, it included a self-funded sweepstakes, which took place inside the survey to motivate candidates to fill out the form. The distribution method of the survey was relatively straightforward. Being part of gamer communities prior to the survey being finished, it could be freely shared with like-minded people, and the opportunity was taken to do so. On some platforms, such as private discord servers, approval had to be asked for from the owner(s) of the servers to share the form link. The survey was open for submission for a little bit more than two weeks.

The only downside of choosing this research methodology was the potential risks of sharing the survey with strangers. To name a few risks, people could spam the first answers all the time, which could lead to deterioration of data quality, or the same person could make alt accounts to fill out the survey more than once, which would have been hard to filter out. Fortunately, these consequences were mitigated successfully by only sharing the link in the first run, mostly with people who are known, and proceeding with this approach resulted in the survey having high-quality data to analyze.

After the closure of the survey, the analysis of the survey started. The method of analyzing was to go through all the respondents' answers, but not case-by-case because it was believed that by taking the higher average of the answers, the users' needs can be better understood. Chapter 4 – Outcome of the research, includes the outcome of the answers of the respondents. The survey questions were also incorporated in this thesis, which can be found in the appendices.

4 Outcome of the research

In this chapter we will cover the outcomes and results of the survey that was conducted for the research. A total of 68 (n=68) people have successfully completed the questionnaire. As I have stated before, I wanted to include as many people as possible in my questionnaire, so I did not limit people based on their geographical or demographical properties. Overall, the majority of the responses were of high quality, and had no issues generating a considerable number of interesting insights about the topic that I have chosen to research. It was to my surprise how diversely my respondents answered my questions, and even more spectacular, how for some of the questions the answers came out, as they were more or less one-sided in particular cases.

What is your gender?

68 responses

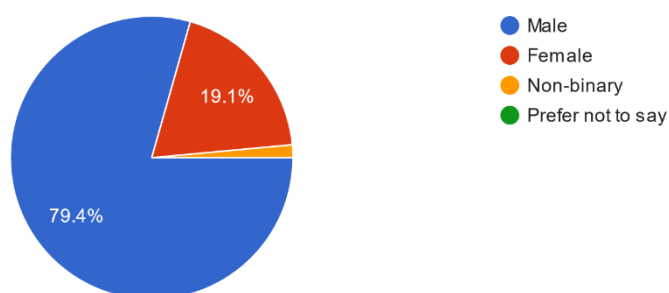


Figure 5. What is your gender? (n=68)

In which age group do you belong to?

68 responses

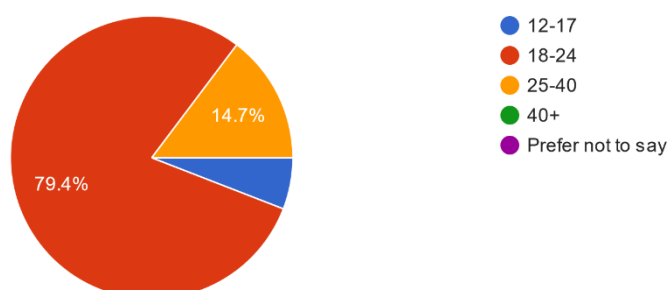


Figure 6. In which age group do you belong to? (n=68)

The first few questions were made to act as warmup questions, so people can feel engaged in this without feeling disconnected from it. There were 54 males, 13 females, and one person who identified as non-binary - among those who completed the survey, or just about a 79-19-1.5% male to female to non-binary split. Out of all the respondents, most of them belonged to the age group 18-24 (nearly 80 percent of all the people); meanwhile, ten (10) of the respondents, which corresponds to almost 15% - reported that they were part of the age group 25-40 years old. The youngest age group (12-17 years old) accumulated a total of 4 answers, which accounted for approximately 5.9% of all the people.

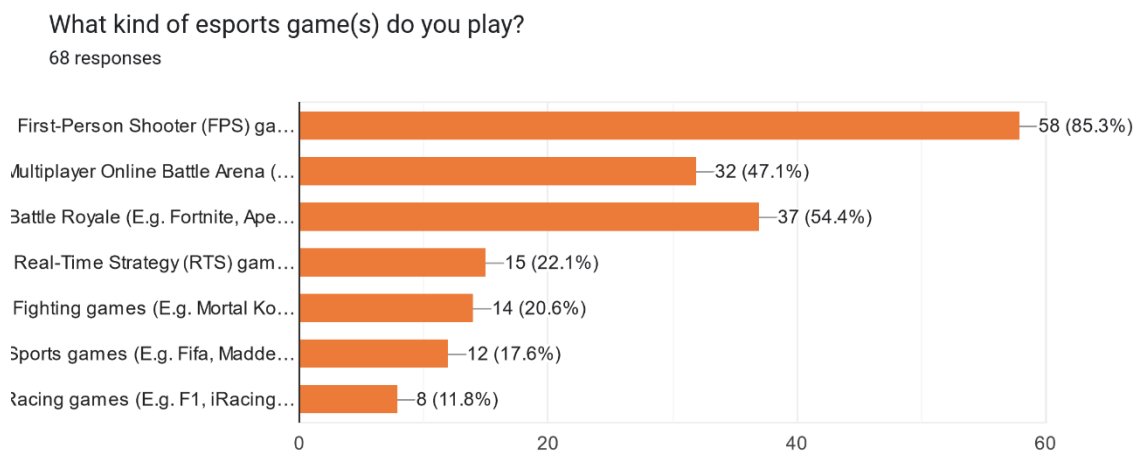


Figure 7. What type of esports game(s) do you play? (n=68)

This question related to what esports games the users played or had played with. I have listed a vast number of esports game genres and some examples that correlate with the genres mentioned above. Most respondents (85.3%) actively play or have played first-person shooter games (FPS for short), which is a popular game genre. Among the top three genres played are Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA for short) (47.1%) and Battle Royale (54.4%) games. The least played titles in this survey were the Racing ones (such as F1 or iRacing), totaling eight responses, which translates to 11.8%.

Have you ever played any esports titles competitively (tournaments, championships, high elo ranked, etc.)?

68 responses

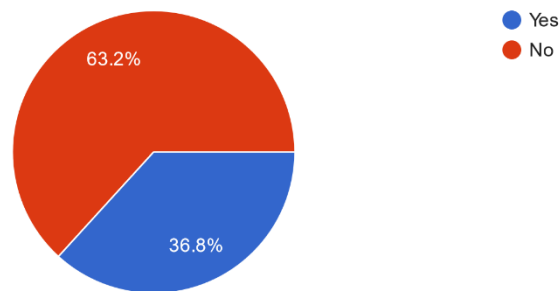


Figure 8. Have you ever played any esports titles competitively (tournaments, championships, high elo ranked, etc.)? (n=68)

As the chart above visualizes, nearly 2/3 (63.2%) of all the users who answered reported that they have participated neither in tournaments, championships, or high elo (In zero-sum games like chess or esports titles, the relative skill levels of players are determined using the Elo rating system. It incorporates the name of the physics professor and Hungarian-American who developed it, Arpad Elo.) ranked esports games.

Have you ever took up a leader role (e.g. in-game leader) in a team-based esports game?

68 responses

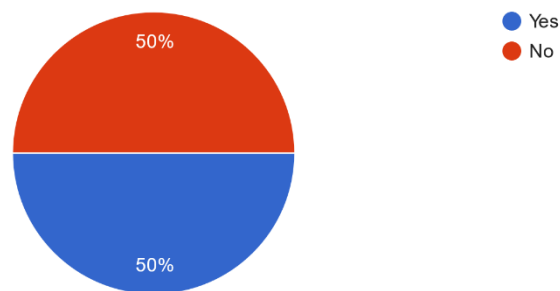


Figure 9. Have you ever taken up a leader role (e.g., in-game leader) in a team-based esports game? (n=68)

The chart above questioned whether the gamers (respondents) have tried playing in a leader-like role, such as an in-game leader. Out of all the 68 answers, exactly half (34) of the users have taken a similar role up.

In general, do you prefer playing as a team or as a "lone wolf" in a team-based esports game?

68 responses

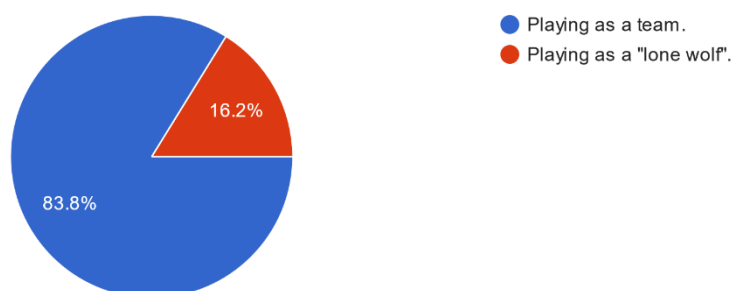


Figure 10. In general, do you prefer playing as a team or as a "lone wolf" in a team-based esports game? (n=68)

It can be agreed that the more extensive group of respondents (83.8%) prefer to play their esports/team-based competitive games as a team rather than playing alone. Those who answered playing as a "lone wolf", hypothetically speaking, could be correlated with bad experiences of playing in the past with teammates who shared the same idea before choosing this gameplay style.

Which of these statements reflect your overall experience in a team-based esports game in general?

68 responses

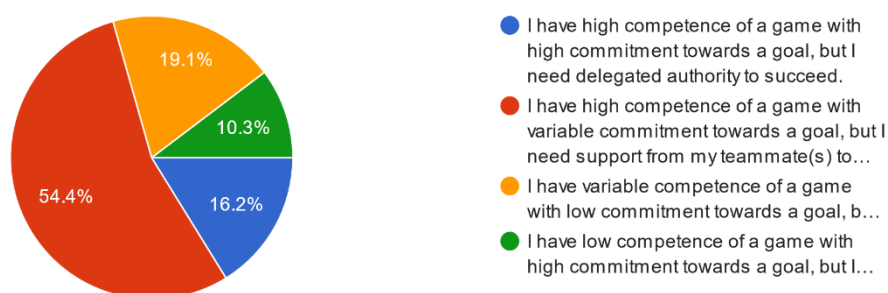


Figure 11. Which of these statements reflect your overall experience in a team-based esports game in general? (n=68)

This survey question was by far the most complex to answer, which asked about the gamer's/respondent's overall experience of their team-based gameplay in general terms. The statements included a variety of prior game competence, goal commitment, and the need for specific support

from the other team members. These four statements essentially answered one of my hypotheses.

More than half of the respondents, 54.4%, answered: "I have high competence in a game with variable commitment towards a goal, but I need support from my teammates to succeed." The other statements were split into 13-11-7 (19.1%-16.2%-10.3%) parts in a descending numbers.

How would you rate from a scale of 1 to 3 the importance of the following qualities in a leader?

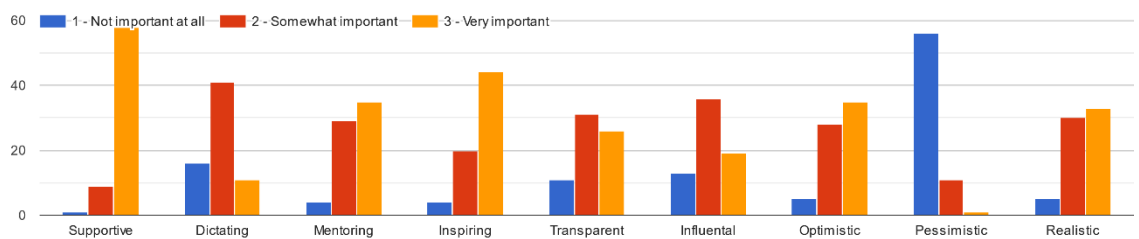


Figure 12. How would you rate from a scale of 1 to 3 the importance of the following qualities in a leader? (n=68)

The graph above measured the importance of leader qualities on a scale of 1 to 3, 3 being "very important" meanwhile one meaning "Not important at all." The two most notable characteristics that stand out are the "Supportive" and the "Pessimistic" dimensions – These were almost unanimous in terms of the overall answers. Backed by this chart, we can assume that people find the supportive dimension essential. On the other hand, they find the pessimistic trait a weak link to have as a leader, but rather the users prefer to have someone who has either a realistic or optimistic mindset.

The respondents find the "Inspiring" trait quite significant among the other qualities. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents (41) believe it is only somewhat important for a leader to be dictating.

Proceeding with the following questions, it was about customized arguments that the respondents had to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much they agreed with the given statements. In total, I have formed 12 statements.

"I feel comfortable taking orders from my teammates in game"

68 responses

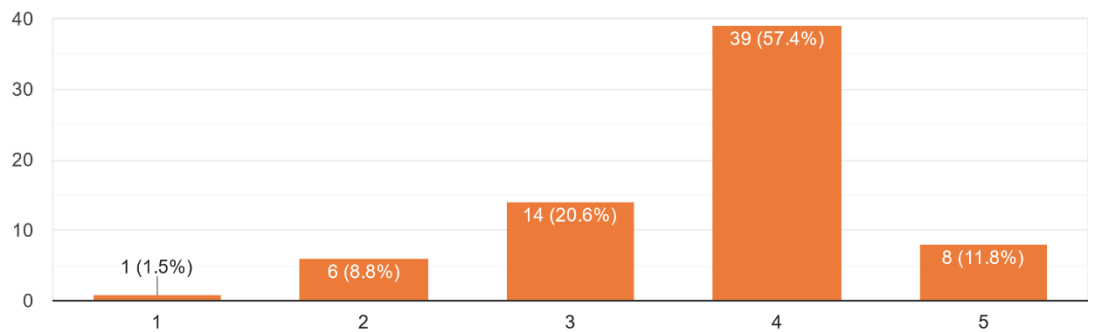


Figure 13. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 1 (n=68)

Analyzing this graph, more than half of the users (57.4%) believe they mostly feel comfortable taking orders from their teammates in-game. These answers more or less correlate with the previous answers on leadership qualities.

"I gladly take constructive feedback/suggestions that I may get from my teammates throughout the game"

68 responses

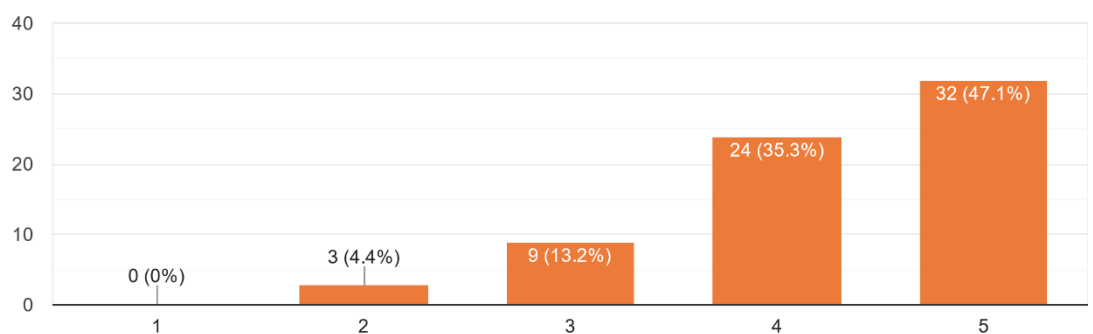


Figure 14. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 2 (n=68)

From this question, we can conclude that the respondents desire to take constructive feedback or suggestions that they might get from their teammates throughout their game. Only a minimal

percentage of users (4.4%) reported that they rather not prefer taking feedback from their team members.

"I don't like when somebody tells/suggests me what to do in a game"

68 responses

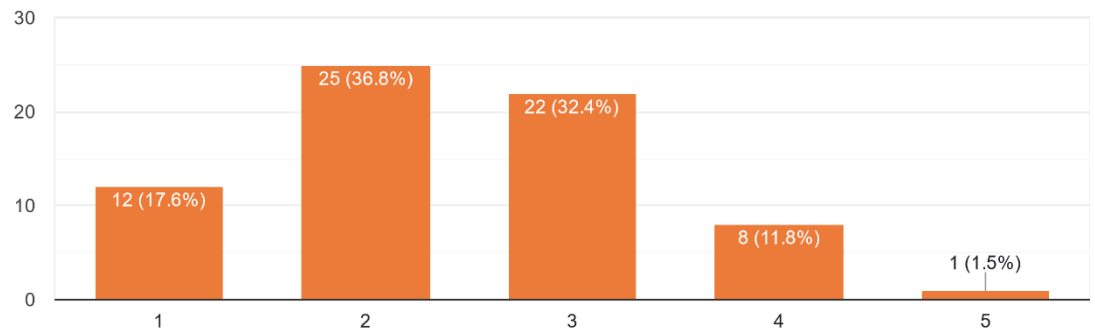


Figure 15. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 3 (n=68)

This statement above was more or less the opposite of the previous question. These answers further strengthen the previous findings that the users prefer or desire to receive feedback from their team members, as most of the gamers responded with disagreement on the statement above, meanwhile only 13.3% (11.8% + 1.5%) of the respondents agreed on the dislike of receiving suggestions.

"Everyone in the team should have equally shared responsibility towards a common goal"

68 responses

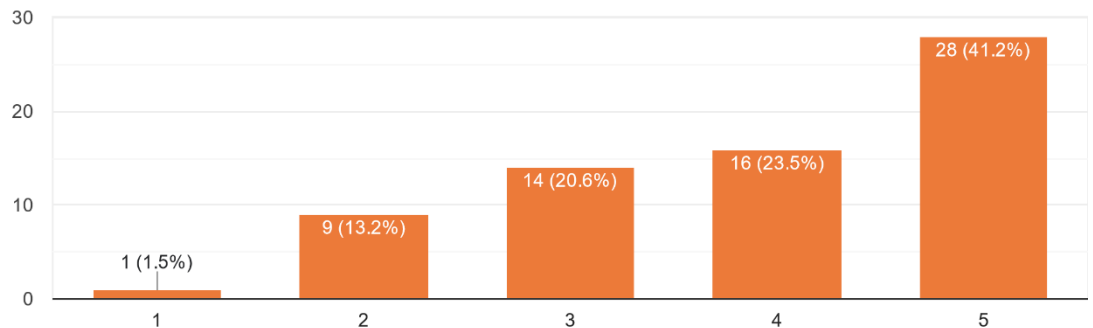


Figure 16. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 4 (n=68)

The graph above reports what the users think/prefer about shared responsibility in a team setting. The tendency arguably pulls towards the fact that every player in a team should have shared responsibility towards a common goal. Only ten respondents disagreed with the statement, which outputs a percentage of slightly less than 15%.

"An in-game leader (IGL) should listen to the feedback/suggestions given from his/her teammates"

68 responses

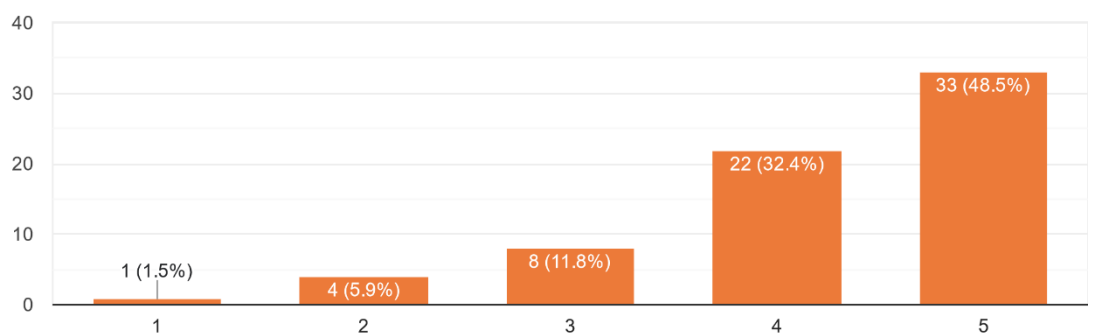


Figure 17. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 5 (n=68)

The subsequent few statements focused on the in-game leaders (IGL). Fifty-five of the users, which equals 80.9% of all respondents – Somewhat or strongly agree that IGLs should listen to the feedback they get from the other team members they are leading; moreover, less than 10% of the respondents disagree with it.

"An in-game leader (IGL) should have high competence of the game that I am playing, to meet my standards of leadership"

68 responses

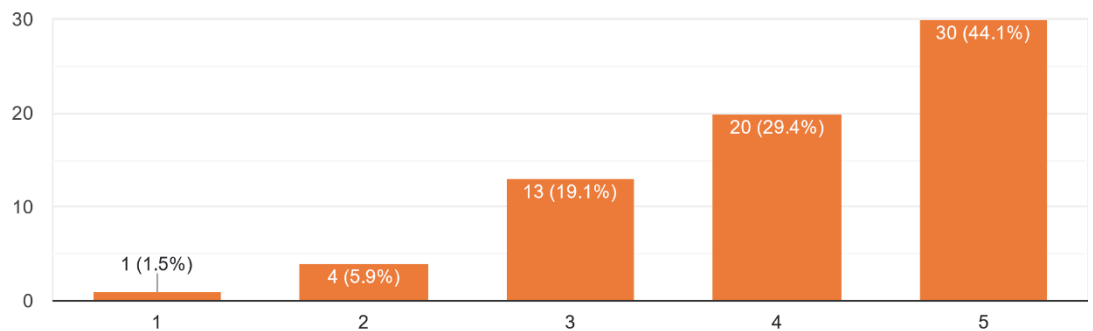


Figure 18. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 6 (n=68)

The above statement relates to IGLs also; in this case, I have asked the users to provide their preference if they agree that an IGL should have high experience of the game they are playing, which would meet their leadership standards. Unsurprisingly, a tiny percentage (7.4%) of the users disagreed with the statement, which reports that the better average of respondents believe that an IGL having a broad experience of a game benefits the team in the long run.

"An in-game leader (IGL) should have high commitment towards the teams' goal(s) in a game"
68 responses

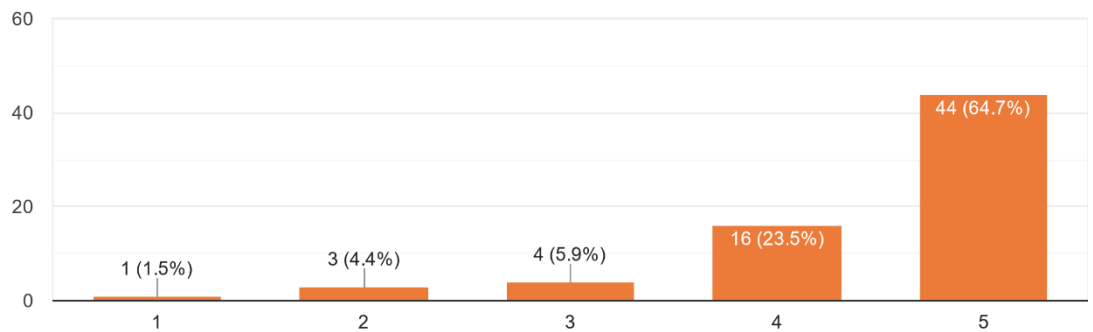


Figure 19. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 7 (n=68)

The following graph studies whether an in-game leader should commit highly to common team goal(s). This question was rather one-sided, as a bit above 10% (11.8%) of the total users reported their disagreement with the statement; meanwhile, 44 of the people (65%) strongly agreed with it.

"An in-game leader (IGL) has to be strict to be a good leader"
68 responses

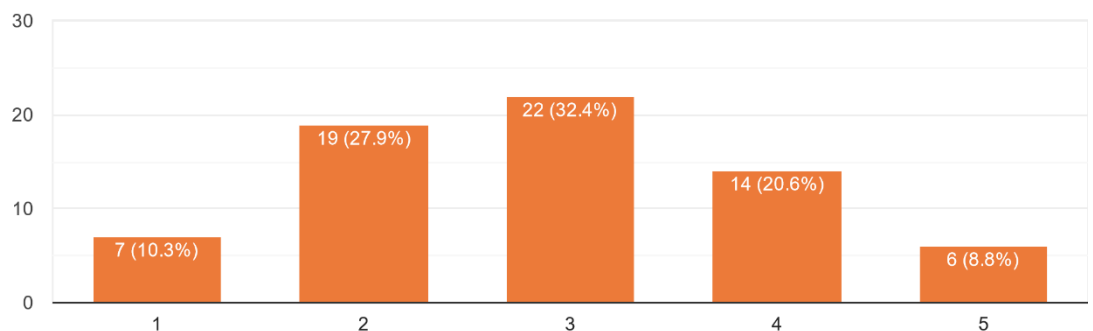


Figure 20. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 8 (n=68)

This question was the most spread out of all the statements. Whether an IGL should be strict depends on individual user preference; such a person could hypothesize that there is no one

correct answer to this question. As seen by the graph, slightly 1/3 of the respondents are neutral (nor agree or disagree) with the statement. This split up in answers could be connected with the preferred leader qualities, such as the "dictating" trait, as its variety in answers represents itself in this question.

"I try my best to play as a team, rather than playing solo in a team-based esports game"

68 responses

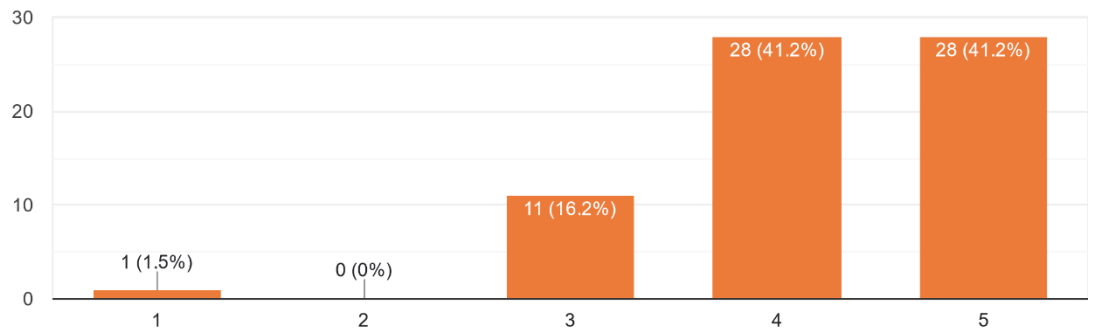


Figure 21. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 9 (n=68)

Whether people like playing as a team rather than as a "lone wolf", it can be said that a more significant percentage of players (82.4%) prefer the earlier one. This statement essentially asks the same question mentioned before (Figure 10.), concluding that most respondents prefer playing as a team in team-based video games.

"I go beyond my comfort zone, if it takes to win for the team"

68 responses

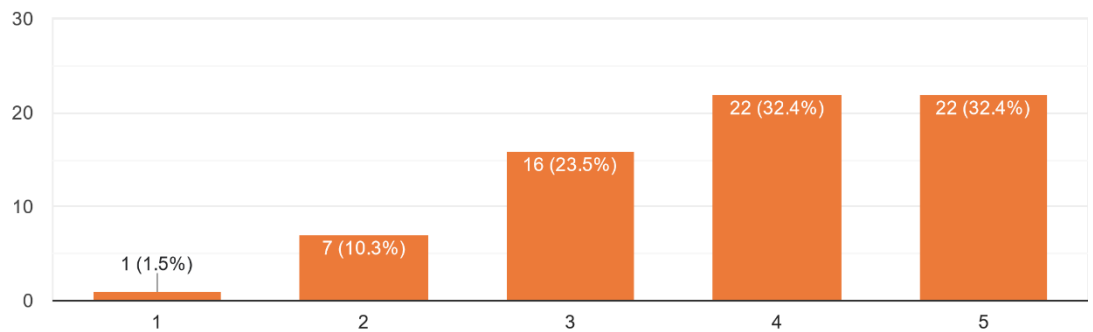


Figure 22. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 10 (n=68)

When talking about comfort zone, there is a trend towards the agreement for the above statement that the players tend to break out of their comfort zone if it takes them to win for their team, as evidenced by the 44 answers, which translates to 64.8% - which agree with the question. Only one person of all the respondents (1.5%) strongly disagree with going beyond their comfort zone.

"I take my game(s) more seriously if there is a prize/promotion attached to it"

68 responses

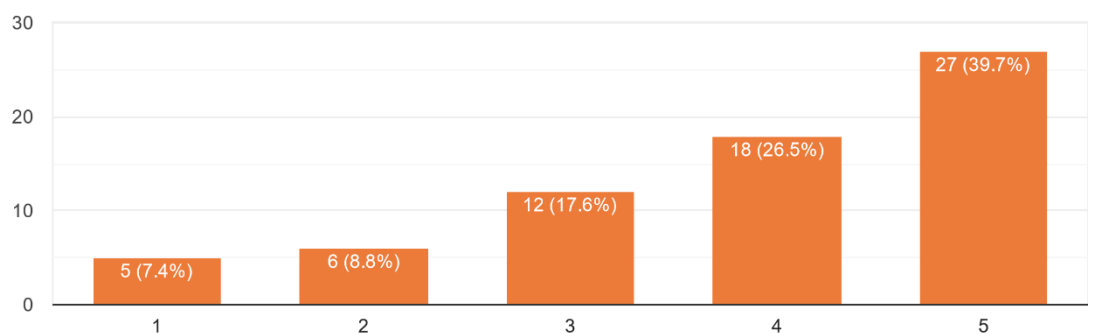


Figure 23. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 11 (n=68)

I also asked about the users' preference if they play in a prize match game. Approximately 2/3 of all the players tend to take their games more seriously if it is tied to any prize, let it be tangible, such as money, trophies, etc., or intangible, for example, titles, ranks, future invitations to prized matches or even the bragging rights of winning.

"I believe that in general, if somebody steps up as a leader in a team-based game, the team has a better chance to succeed"

68 responses

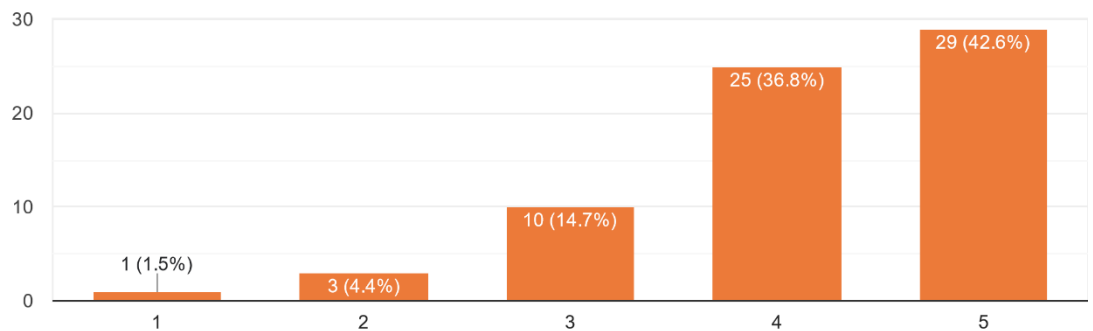


Figure 24. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements? (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) - Statement 12 (n=68)

The last statement researches a common argument if having someone step up as a leader in a game increases the chance of coming out of it as a winner. Slightly 80% of respondents agree with the statement that having, for example, an in-game leader in a game raises the chances of winning the game overall. Only 4 of the people (5.9%) disagree with the question.

5 Conclusion

After analyzing all the research and survey questions, I concluded that both of the prior hypotheses were validated with the conduction of the questionnaire. These answers from the respondents support the hypothesis that people generally prefer the characteristics and traits of a leader who promotes and actively practices the democratic leadership style of Kurt Lewin's leadership styles.

People desire an in-game leader (IGL) who actively engages with their teammates, whether strategizing together or giving and taking feedback bi-directionally, supports and inspires the team to work as one, as well as to reach a common goal, such as winning a match. The leadership qualities and the preferences of users of these leader attributes also lean towards the traits and characteristics of a democratic leader.

The second hypothesis was that, in general, players who undertake leadership roles in team-based esports or competitive online video game titles would inevitably reflect one of the four aspects of the so-called situational leadership style with one of the recommended behaviors and traits.

This hypothesis was also successfully validated, by the evidence of the survey responses because of the diversity of leadership dynamics these competitive video games offer to the players.

Based on the findings and answers gathered, most of the respondents ranked and defined themselves in the S3 (Supportive behavior, participative) or often so-called "Capable but cautious" dimension of the Situational leadership style, which Hersey and Blanchard developed. This outcome shows that team-based esports competitive game environments promote the supportive leadership style and mindset of players who are playing together for a common purpose.

5.1 Discussion

In this final chapter, I wanted to go through all the challenges and obstacles I came across while doing this thesis and how this research could be improved with the help of others researching this topic in the future.

Initially, I had to re-think my thesis topic, as my previous one came across an obstacle that could not have been avoided, limiting my time in the long run. On the other hand, the re-evaluation of my topic and giving it a second attempt gave me much more insights and knowledge about the literature behind this topic and gave me a sense of understanding what type of leaders people prefer to see in their team-based competitive video game environments.

Moving onto the improvement of the data quality, I believe there are some aspects I could have improved to increase the quality of the collected data further. To name some examples, in the future, there could be more in-depth research based on player preferences; forming more customized questions for the respondents might also include some open-ended questions, which would inevitably improve the value of the data.

Another valuable addition to this research could have been made by broadening the scope of the study by including professional esports players in the survey as participants. With that, I would expect a much higher number of total responses overall.

In the end, there could be either a more in-depth validation or even some counterarguments towards the hypotheses in the future.

List of references

- 10 entrepreneurial leadership characteristics.* (2021, April 02). Retrieved from <https://yscouts.com/10-entrepreneurial-leadership-characteristics/>
- Bruin, L. (2020, April 18). *Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model explained: B2U.* Retrieved from <https://www.business-to-you.com/hersey-blanchard-situational-leadership-model/>
- Cherry, K. (2022, November 08). What is Democratic leadership? Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-democratic-leadership-2795315>
- Dudovskiy, J. (2013, March 31). *Path-goal theory - research methodology.* Retrieved from <https://research-methodology.net/path-goal-theory/>
- Hasan, U. (2021, February 17). *Esports coaching - a full explanation of coaches in esports.* Retrieved from <https://esporhow.com/esports-coaching-full-explanation-of-coaches-in-esports/>
- Jordan, C., & Stebbings, C. (2018, August 30). *Three C-suite roles every esports team needs right now.* Retrieved from <https://www.sriexecutive.com/2018/08/30/three-c-suite-roles-every-esports-team-needs-right-now/>
- Komulainen, R. (2019). Leadership Styles 2019 Summary.
- Labiszak. (2015, August 15). *Understanding the In-game leader role.* Dignitas. Retrieved November 20, 2022, from <https://dignitas.gg/articles/blogs/CSGO/7529/understanding-the-in-game-leader-role>
- Lindberg, C. (2021, September 11). Kurt Lewin *Leadership styles.* Retrieved from <https://www.leadershipahoy.com/kurt-lewin-leadership-styles/>
- Nanjundeswaraswamy, Dr & Swamy, D R. (2014). *Leadership styles. Advances In Management.*
- Nuangjumnonga, T., & Mitomo, H. (2012). *Leadership development through online gaming.*
- Scholz, T. (2019). *ESports is business: Management in the world of competitive gaming.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SmallBusinessPro. (n.d.) *Different types of leadership styles.* Retrieved from <https://www.small-businesspro.co.uk/marketing/leadership-styles.html>
- Wagner, M. G. (2006). *On the Scientific Relevance of eSports..* In H. R. Arabnia (ed.), International Conference on Internet Computing (p./pp. 437-442)
- What is laissez-faire leadership?* (2020, July 07). Retrieved from <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-laissez-faire-leadership2006.html>

Appendices

Appendix 1 **Online survey**

User preferences on optimal/desirable in-game leader (IGL) characteristics and behaviors

Hello and welcome!

First let me express my **sincere appreciation** for taking the time to fill this survey out. My name is Gergő Jókai and I am a last year undergraduate student, studying Business Administration, as well as my specialization is esports business.

Anyone who have played team-based esports or competitive video game titles should already have come across with a variety of people with several different kinds of leader abilities, characteristics and styles who took the leader role in-game - or it could have been you who took the initiative.

In this questionnaire, I am conducting a research about user preferences on optimal/desirable in-game leader (IGL) characteristics and behaviors. By filling out the form, you are helping me understand the preferences of gamers on what leadership traits, behaviors they are looking for in a teammate who are in a leader-like role (such as an in-game leader).

The survey takes around 5 minutes to complete. You are the perfect candidate if you have previously played team-based esports or competitive video games which have at least 1 leader role.

At the end of the survey, you may submit your Discord tag for a **chance to win one of the two (2) 25€ (Equivalent to your Steam currency) Steam digital gift cards**. This sweepstake is organized by myself on my budget as a thank you for taking your precious time completing the survey. **The questionnaire will close on the 10th of December 2022 - The winners will be notified by their Discord tag on that day to claim their prize. (The winners will be chosen with the help of random.org)**

Let's start with some quick questions..

What is your gender? *

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

In which age group do you belong to? *

- 12-17
- 18-24
- 25-40
- 40+
- Prefer not to say

What kind of esports game(s) do you play? *

- First-Person Shooter (FPS) games (E.g. CSGO, Valorant, Overwatch, etc.)
- Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games (E.g. League of Legends, Dota 2, Smite, etc.)
- Battle Royale (E.g. Fortnite, Apex Legends, PUBG, etc.)
- Real-Time Strategy (RTS) games (E.g. StarCraft, Age of Empires, Warcraft, etc.)
- Fighting games (E.g. Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter, Super Smash Bros, etc.)
- Sports games (E.g. Fifa, Madden, NHL, etc.)
- Racing games (E.g. F1, iRacing, etc.)

Have you ever played any esports titles competitively (tournaments, championships, high elo ranked, etc.)? *

- Yes
- No

Have you ever took up a leader role (e.g. in-game leader) in a team-based esports game? *

- Yes
- No

In general, do you prefer playing as a team or as a "lone wolf" in a team-based esports game? *

- Playing as a team.
- Playing as a "lone wolf".

Which of these statements reflect your overall experience in a team-based esports game in general? *

- I have high competence of a game with high commitment towards a goal, but I need delegated authority to succeed.
- I have high competence of a game with variable commitment towards a goal, but I need support from my teammate(s) to succeed..
- I have variable competence of a game with low commitment towards a goal, but I need coaching from my teammate(s) to succeed.
- I have low competence of a game with high commitment towards a goal, but I need strong directions from my teammate(s) to succeed.

How would you rate from a scale of 1 to 3 the importance of the following qualities in a leader? *

	1 - Not important at all	2 - Somewhat important	3 - Very important
Supportive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dictating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspiring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transparent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influential	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Optimistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pessimistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Realistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with the below statements?

"I feel comfortable taking orders from my teammates in game" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I gladly take constructive feedback/suggestions that I may get from my teammates throughout the game" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I don't like when somebody tells/suggests me what to do in a game" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"Everyone in the team should have equally shared responsibility towards a common goal" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"An in-game leader (IGL) should listen to the feedback/suggestions given from his/her teammates" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"An in-game leader (IGL) should have high competence of the game that I am playing, to meet my standards of leadership" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"An in-game leader (IGL) should have high commitment towards the teams' goal(s) in a game" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"An in-game leader (IGL) has to be strict to be a good leader" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I try my best to play as a team, rather than playing solo in a team-based esports game" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I go beyond my comfort zone, if it takes to win for the team" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I take my game(s) more seriously if there is a prize/promotion attached to it" *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

"I believe that in general, if somebody steps up as a leader in a team-based game, *
the team has a better chance to succeed"

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Sweepstake (optional)

WANT TO WIN 1 OF THE 2 25€ DIGITAL STEAM GIFT CARD?

Please enter your **Discord tag**, if you want to take part in the sweepstake. If not, just ignore this question. (1 entry per person)

Your answer _____

[Back](#)

[Submit](#)

[Clear form](#)