From Hobby to Career: Exploring Professional eSports in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The eSports phenomenon, a convergence of gaming and sports, has evolved beyond casual recreation, establishing itself as a burgeoning professional pursuit globally. This transformation is particularly pronounced in Bangladesh, fueled by a youthful demographic and widespread internet access. This research investigates the motivations driving individuals to embrace eSports as a career, scrutinizing associated challenges such as societal perceptions, financial considerations, and broader cultural implications. Through a combination of surveys, expert interviews, and a comprehensive examination of 64 survey responses and in-person interviews with 22 participants, this study reveals that personal enthusiasm serves as a primary driver for players, despite the challenges of balancing academic and personal responsibilities. While skepticism persists, eSports is gaining momentum, fostering communities and innovative employment opportunities. To sustain this positive trajectory, government support and recognition of study limitations are imperative. This study offers a thorough analysis of eSports' profound impact on the socio-cultural landscape and anticipates its future ramifications for Bangladesh. The findings contribute to the HCI and ICT4D communities, offering insights into the intersection of technology, culture, and eSports in a rapidly evolving digital nation.

Introduction

eSports, or electronic sports, has evolved from a recreational activity into a professional industry. This evolution is attributed to the increasing accessibility of technology and the growth of competitive gaming. Studies have highlighted the rapid growth of eSports globally and its appeal among younger demographics [1]. The industry has become a viable career path for many players, offering opportunities in both regional and international arenas.

In Bangladesh, eSports is gaining traction, reflecting global trends. Despite its potential, players often face challenges such as financial instability, lack of infrastructural support, and societal skepticism [4]. The competitive nature of eSports requires rigorous training and performance structures, as discussed by Nagorsky and Wiemeyer [3], emphasizing the need for systematic support and infrastructure.

The business aspects of eSports are also noteworthy, with eSports venues and events becoming lucrative opportunities for stakeholders, as highlighted by Jenny et al. [2]. This creates avenues not only for players but also for industry professionals, including event organizers, sponsors, and content creators.

Understanding the dynamics of eSports in Bangladesh requires addressing its unique sociocultural and economic contexts. As Hamari and Sjöblom [1] noted, eSports engagement stems from both intrinsic motivations, like passion for gaming, and extrinsic factors, such as financial prospects and social recognition. These insights are crucial for framing the study and understanding the aspirations and challenges faced by Bangladeshi eSports players.

Research Objectives

1. Assess the financial viability of eSports in Bangladesh.
2. Identify factors of professional players.
3. Study societal perceptions of eSports as a career.

Methodology

The methodology involved a step-by-step process to analyze the evolution of professional eSports in Bangladesh, with a focus on income distribution, challenges, and player aspirations. The workflow is illustrated below:

1. **Defining Research Objectives**: Identified the financial, motivational, and social aspects influencing professional eSports players.
2. **Survey Design and Data Collection**:
   - Developed structured and open-ended survey questions using HCI principles for user-centric design.
   - Conducted surveys using snowball sampling to reach a diverse group of eSports players and enthusiasts.
3. **Qualitative Interviews**:
   - Conducted in-depth interviews with selected professional players to understand their personal challenges and aspirations.
   - Gathered insights into socio-economic factors affecting eSports as a career in Bangladesh.
4. **Data Preprocessing**:
   - Verified survey responses for consistency and accuracy.
   - Normalized data to ensure compatibility for analysis.
5. **Data Analysis**:
   - Segmented data into key categories such as income levels, motivational factors, and societal perceptions.
   - Visualized findings using pie charts, bar graphs, and infographics.
6. **Validation of Results**:
   - Collaborated with eSports professionals and industry experts to validate the insights and findings.
   - Cross-referenced with global trends to establish the relevance of findings specific to Bangladesh.
7. **Integration with Broader Research**:
   - Combined the results with a literature review on eSports in similar socio-economic contexts.
   - Highlighted gaps in infrastructure and policy support for the local eSports ecosystem.
8. **Recommendations and Future Directions**:
   - Proposed strategies to enhance financial stability, societal acceptance, and career development opportunities for eSports players.
   - Identified avenues for policy development and collaboration with educational institutions to support eSports.
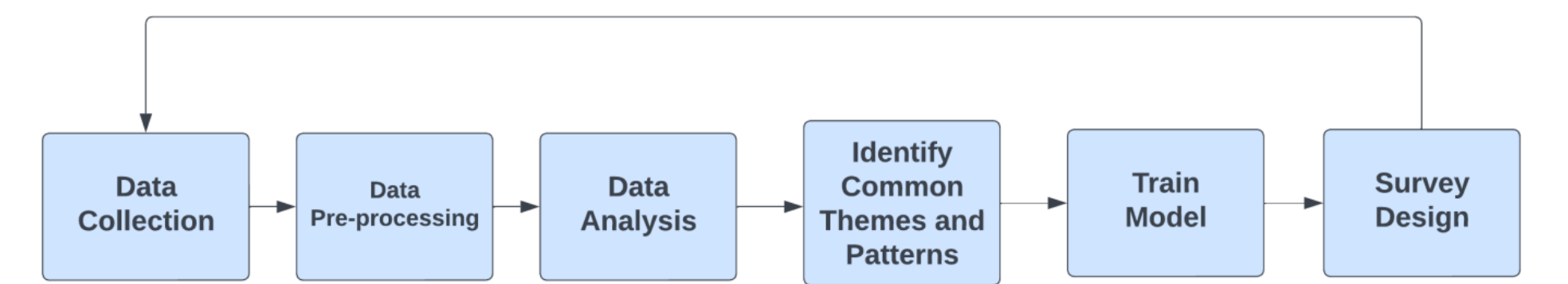

Figure 1: **eSports Research Workflow**

Findings

Income Distribution

The financial viability of professional players varies significantly. Based on survey data, the following income brackets were observed:

- **70.8%** of players earn **less than BDT 20,000** (USD 185) per month, indicating that the majority are struggling to sustain themselves financially.
- **16.7%** earn between **BDT 20,000 and BDT 50,000** (USD 185–460), representing semi-professional players who perform consistently in regional competitions.
- **12.5%** earn between **BDT 50,000 and BDT 1,00,000** (USD 460–920), usually top-tier players or streamers.
- **0%** of players surveyed earn **more than BDT 1,00,000** (USD 920), highlighting the lack of large-scale financial opportunities in the industry.
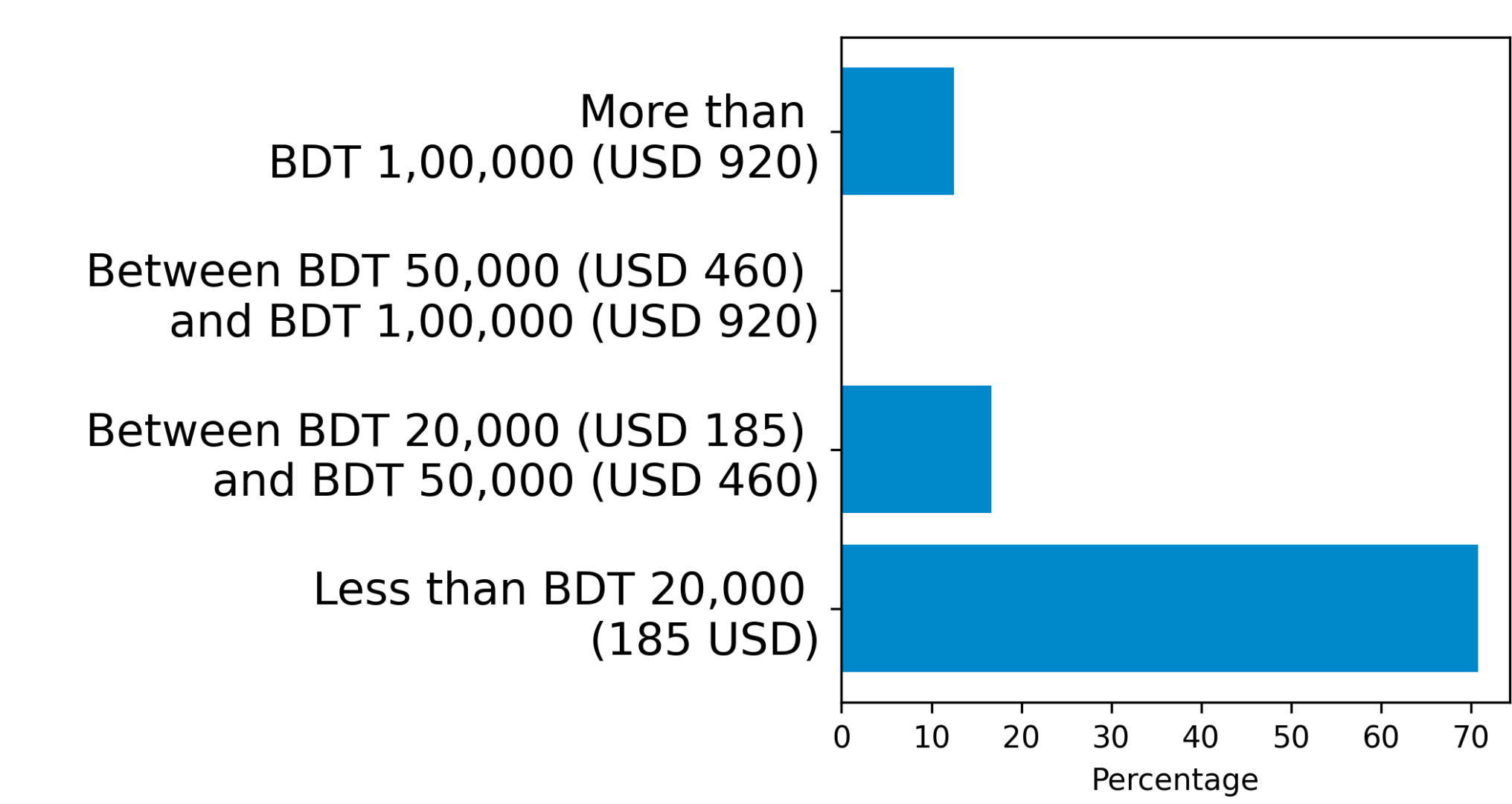

Figure 2: **Income Distribution Among eSports Players**

Motivations

The primary driving forces behind choosing eSports as a career include:

- **91.7%** of players stated "Passion for gaming" as their primary motivation.
- **8.3%** mentioned "Prospects for financial gain" and "Fame and recognition" as secondary motivators.
- Interviews revealed that players often view eSports as a pathway to express creativity, collaborate with teams, and compete at international levels.
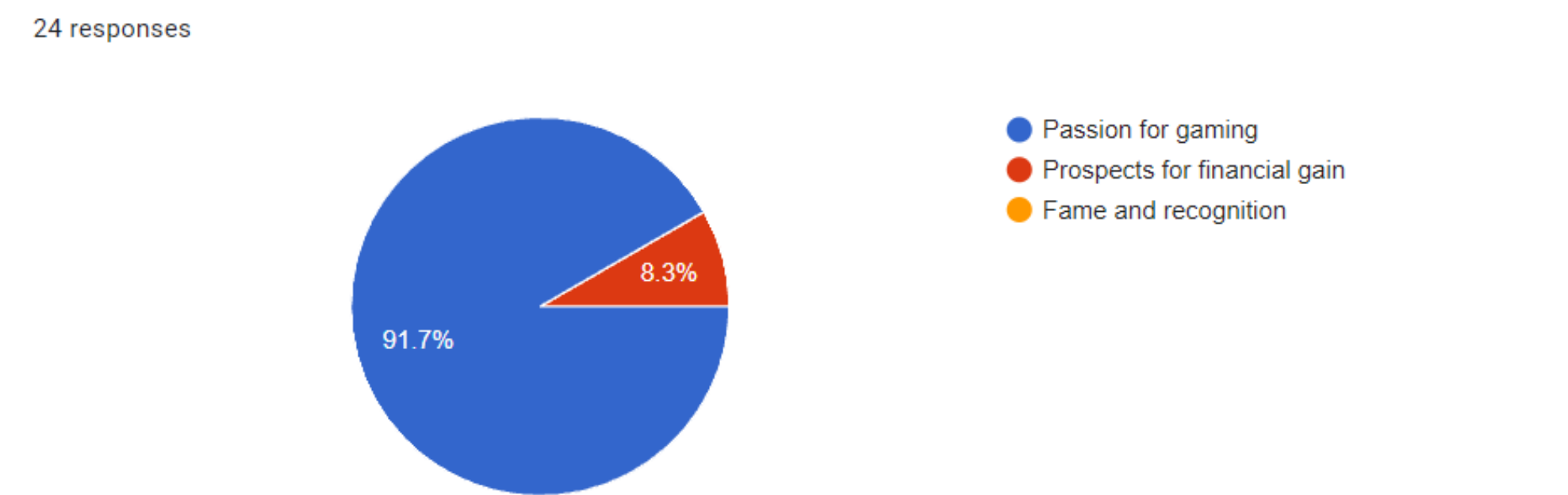

Figure 3: **Motivations Behind Choosing eSports**

Challenges

eSports players face numerous challenges, as highlighted in the survey:

- **54.2%** reported "Shared success stories of other professionals" to convince their families.
- **20.8%** highlighted financial burdens and lack of income stability.
- **37.5%** said they face criticism "quite a lot" or "all the time" from family or friends regarding gaming as a career.

These challenges often stem from cultural skepticism, the lack of infrastructure for competitive gaming, and limited financial returns.
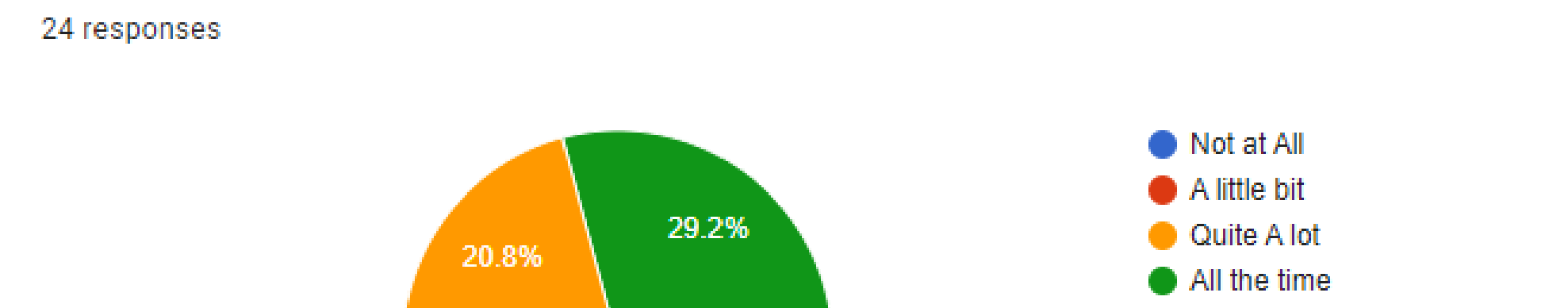

Figure 4: **Challenges Faced by eSports Players**

Family Support and Perception

Family support remains crucial for eSports players:

- **54.2%** of respondents convinced their families by highlighting success stories and income potential.
- **20.8%** stated they showed their dedication and skills to gain trust from their families.
- **29.2%** of respondents reported no resistance from their family, largely because they balance eSports with other career or educational pursuits.

This data emphasizes the need for greater public awareness and acceptance of eSports as a viable profession.
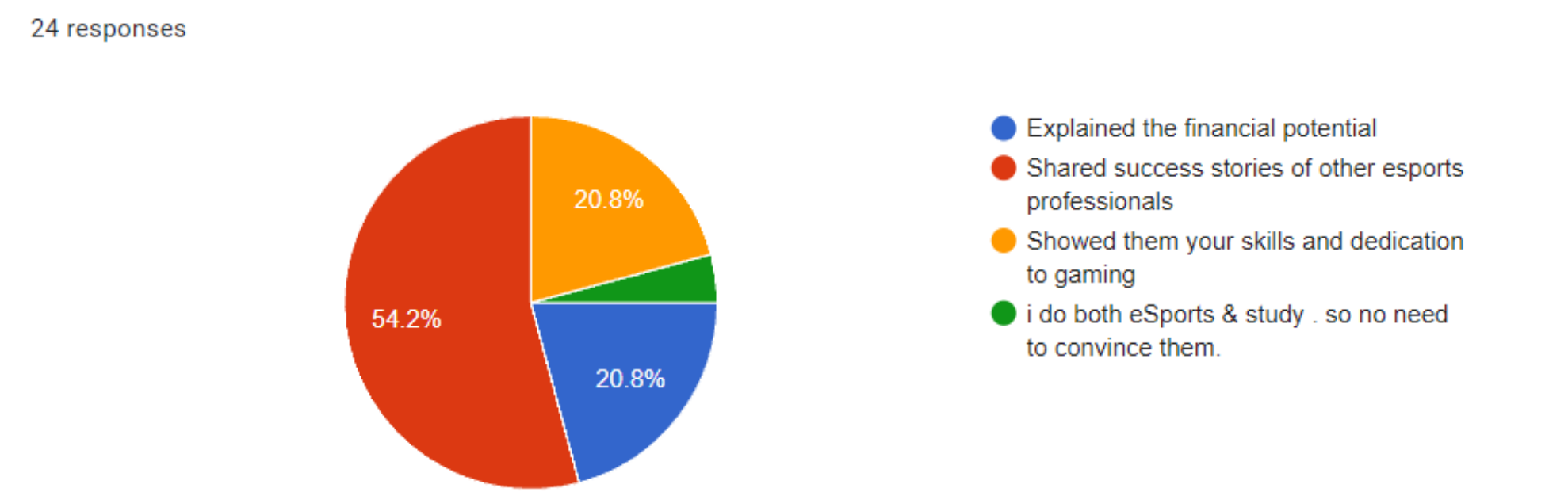

Figure 5: **Family Support and Perceptions**

Conclusion

eSports in Bangladesh shows significant potential despite facing financial and social hurdles. From inspiring passion to generating income, eSports could play a pivotal role in achieving youth aspirations. Understanding the need for institutional support and broader acceptance of eSports as a viable career path is crucial for its future growth.

References

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