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Gamification in The Workplace: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

Training and development are essential for an organization to achieve its goals. Thus, the organization's leader must ensure practical tools are applied in their training and development program. Nowadays, many organizations prefer gamification methods for employee training and development. This study examines the factors influencing employees' acceptance of gamification in their training and development, specifically focusing on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and social influence. The researchers plan to distribute questionnaires randomly to white-collar workers in Malaysia. All collected data will be analyzed using Smart PLS, utilizing techniques such as frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Keywords: Gamification, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Social Influence

Introduction

The rise of technology has revolutionized daily routines and brought about significant changes in various aspects of life (Latip et al., 2020). One notable area where technology has significantly impacted is the integration of games into different spheres, including work, education, and problem-solving scenarios. This trend, often called gamification, utilizes game-like elements and features to enhance motivation and engagement in various activities. Gamification can be defined as "The development of game characteristics in non-game contexts" (Deterding, 2012).

Gamification methods are increasingly being adopted and used by business organizations in various sectors because of the ability of this method to provide various benefits. This method's benefits are increasing employee motivation, creating a more enjoyable work environment, and fostering increased employee engagement.

From the perspective of the HR department, gamification methods play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of training and development programs, monitoring employee performance, providing valuable feedback, implementing rewards systems, and even streamlining the hiring process (Wünderlich et al., 2020). By leveraging gamification techniques, companies can effectively align their workforce with organizational objectives. These methods make training and development more engaging and enable continuous monitoring of employee progress and performance. Constructive feedback can be provided to individuals, fostering their growth and improvement. Moreover, using rewards within gamification motivates employees, driving their engagement and productivity. Additionally, gamification can be applied to the hiring process, introducing innovative assessment methods that evaluate candidates' skills and aptitudes in dynamic and immersive ways.

In addition, in today's competitive and technology-driven world, employers across all industries recognize the pivotal role employees play as the most valuable asset within their organizations. With a diverse workforce spanning different generations, ranging from baby boomers to millennials, it becomes imperative to understand and cater to each group's unique attitudes and preferences. In Malaysia, for instance, Gen Zs and millennials make up a significant portion of the working population, accounting for more than half (Yun-Han, 2022). To effectively enhance the performance of these employees, the adoption of gamification methods is highly recommended. This approach aligns with their digital-native mindset and offers engaging and tailored experiences that can optimize their productivity and contribute to overall organizational success.

Previous studies on gamification in the workplace have primarily focused on evaluating the effectiveness of incorporating game design elements in training methods. In addition, most previous study exploring the impact of gamification on employee engagement and performance (Hosseini et al., 2022). However, there remains a noticeable gap in the research regarding understanding the factors influencing workers' acceptance and utilization of gamification for their training and development. It is crucial to investigate these potential factors to gain insights into the drivers and barriers that may affect employees' willingness to embrace gamification as a viable approach to their professional growth.

Literature Review

Gamification

Gamification strategically utilises game-based mechanics and cognitive frameworks to actively engage individuals, inspire and motivate action, facilitate learning, and drive problem-solving. In addition, gamification can also be defined as "the strategic incorporation of game design elements within non-gaming contexts" (Schobel et al., 2020).

Amidst the advent of the technology-driven era, gamification has emerged as the preferred methodology for numerous employers seeking to optimize daily work activities, particularly as a dynamic training and development tool for their workforce. Gamification methods positively affect companies and employees, such as creating a fun workplace atmosphere and increasing employee engagement.

Pavlou (2020) provides valuable insights into leveraging gamification in the workplace, offering six practical strategies for its implementation. These include: i) communicating the goals and processes of the game, ii) Including gamification in training, iii) offering rewards, iv) recognizing everyone's contribution, v) tracking the success of gamification in the workplace, and vi) reflecting performance.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) is a widely used research model for understanding how individuals accept and use information systems and technology (Kim, 2008). TAM has been extensively studied in various contexts, examining technology acceptance in different systems.

TAM was later updated by Venkatesh & Davis (2000) as TAM2, which introduced new variables to enhance the model. Additionally, Venkatesh & Bala, (2008) and Venkatesh et al., (2003) developed TAM3, known as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) Model, published in MIS Quarterly.

Perceived Usefulness

The concept of "perceived usefulness" (PU) in relation to technology refers to an individual's belief regarding the extent to which it will enhance their job performance (Davis, 2019). It reflects the person's perception of how effectively the technology will enable them to accomplish their job tasks and responsibilities. Perceived usefulness (PU) has consistently served as a construct that reveals the direct factors influencing users' decision to continue using a particular system or technology. It has been widely employed to understand the critical drivers behind users' ongoing adoption and sustained system usage.

A previous study by Sanchez-Mena et al (2016) found that perceived usefulness is a crucial factor influencing student teachers' intention to use gamification in their tasks. Workers who believe that gamification is useful will like to use this method frequently. In addition, based on a previous study by Vanduhe et al (2020) perceived usefulness had a substantial and beneficial influence on intention to use gamified models for training. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed to be tested in future studies:

H1: Perceived usefulness positively influences gamification acceptance among employees in training and development.

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which a user believes that utilizing an information system would require minimal effort or cognitive burden (Davis, 1989). It reflects the user's perception of the system's usability and the ease with which they can interact without encountering significant obstacles or complexities. Generally, when technology is perceived as easier to use, it is also commonly regarded as more useful (Davis, 1989). This perception stems from the belief that a user-friendly and intuitive system is more likely to enhance productivity and facilitate successful task completion. When users find technology easy to navigate and interact with, it increases their perception of its usefulness in supporting their goals and improving their job performance.

A study by Sanchez-Mena et al (2016) showed that perceived ease of use is the factor that influences teachers' intention to use gamification in their learning sessions. In addition, the Panagiotarou et al (2020) study found that perceived ease of use affects the pre-service teacher's intention to use web 2.0 gamification tools in their task. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed to be tested in future studies:

H2: Perceived ease of use positively influences gamification acceptance among employees in training and development.

Social Influence

Social influence encompasses various actions, reactions, and external factors that shape an individual's behaviour. Others influence it, and can manifest through peer pressure, family expectations, and other societal influences. In technology adoption, social influence can be defined as how an individual perceives the significance of others' opinions, including family members, peers, and friends, in their decision to adopt and utilize a new system (Alraja, 2015). AlMarshedi et al (2017) propose that social factors rather than technological factors primarily influence the adoption and utilization of gamification.

In a previous study by Asiri (2019), social influence was an essential factor for predicting a female teacher's intention to use gamification in their task in an English Foreign Language classroom when the social influence to use this method is increasing. Besides that, a study by (Vanduhe et al., 2020) also found that social influence had a significant relationship intention workers to use gamified for their training. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed to be tested in future studies:

H3: Social influence positively influences gamification acceptance among employees in training and development.

Conclusion

Training and development play a crucial role in organizations by aligning employee skills with critical organizational objectives, and it remains a top priority for Human Resources to maximize the effectiveness of these activities. In line with the widespread adoption of gamification methods across sectors, it has emerged as a preferred choice for Human Resource initiatives, including training and development. Hence, it becomes imperative to understand the factors that influence employees in accepting gamification methods for their training and development, given the numerous benefits these methods offer.

This study aims to bridge that gap by providing valuable insights to employers and HR departments, empowering them to plan and achieve positive outcomes in their training activities accurately. It is essential to acknowledge the diverse age groups within organizations and emphasize the need to prioritize training programs that cater to employees' unique needs. By conducting this study, organizations can gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing employees' acceptance and utilization of gamification. This knowledge will enable the design and implementation of targeted training initiatives that resonate with the diverse workforce, fostering maximum effectiveness and engagement. Ultimately, this approach will facilitate positive results and align training efforts with organizational objectives, leading to improved performance and overall success.

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