Linking Motivation and Employee Engagement through Gamification in Remote Working

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous organizations have shifted to remote work, telework, or work from home (WFH) for the employees' safety. However, remote work reduces motivation, especially if employees have no choice on where to work. Apart from the motivation of employees, the levels of engagement are also decreasing. With the emergence of telework, numerous challenges are also identified. This research identifies, enumerates, and establishes the need for gamification, a trending concept that uses game elements (or motivational affordances which include points, leaderboards, badges, etc.) to non-game context (marketing/commerce, education, work, etc.) in remote work, to increase the levels of engagement and motivation, as well as to overcome the challenges employees encounter in the new set-up. With the lack of in-depth literature on gamification together with the emergence of work-from-home in the new normal, the researcher used a qualitative design to explore the concept and interviewed 10 employees from the Philippines who were forced to work remotely. The participants for the interview were chosen using the Purposive Sampling method and were asked about their perceptions on motivation, employee engagement, and games, as well as their perception towards implementing gamification in their new workplace. The interviews were done through online interviews (conference call). This research shows a positive response and potential effect on leveraging both motivation and employee engagement through gamification. With the perceptions of the participants toward gamification, this paper could help develop concepts or theories for potential quantitative research, as well as encourage organizations to implement gamification in the workplace to avoid potential problems.

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1. Introduction

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous organizations have shifted to remote work, telework, or work-from-home for the employees' safety. Huge adjustments are being made by organizations to maintain a smooth business despite the hassles. Because of the pandemic, it could cause a permanent shift towards remote working since there is an increased awareness of cost-saving opportunities. However, challenges arise in this 'new normal' of working. According to McGregor and Doshi (2020), work-from-home reduces motivation, especially if an employee had no choice on where to work.

Apart from the motivation of employees, another question that should be addressed by organizations is "Are the employees engaged?" A study released before COVID-19 by Effectory, an Amsterdam-based organization conducting the Employee Engagement Index, states that over the past four years, there is only an increase of 4% in engagement and commitment levels worldwide. In addition, the global levels of engagement remain low at 30% (Hickman, 2020). It is also confirmed by Forbes (2017) that with the emergence of telework, it will be challenging to maintain employee engagement. With this low level of engagement before the pandemic, there is a high chance that it will be way lower during the work-from-home set-up.

This research proposes a solution to address the two challenges (decrease in motivation and decrease in engagement) presented in remote work: to implement the concept of gamification - the use of game elements (or motivational affordances which include points, leaderboards, badges, etc.) to non-game contexts, such as marketing, commerce, education, and work. This paper is designed to establish the need for gamification in remote work to increase levels of employee engagement and motivation of employees. Specifically, it collects the perceptions of employees towards gamification and their problems in a remote work setup, assesses the sources of engagement and motivation of employees who were forced to work remotely and identifies the different game elements which will make the concept of gamification both engaging and motivating in a remote work set up.

2. Literature review

Employee Engagement and Motivation

According to Forbes (2017), engaged employees are intrinsically motivated, and when they are intrinsically motivated, employees enjoy their work. It is suggested that intrinsic

motivation should be ignited for engagement to be sparked. That is, by clearly defining roles and goals, establishing the purpose of employees, and recognition, which does not necessarily mean rewards. Several articles have also associated employee engagement and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation and employee engagement can be influenced by how employees find their job meaningful (Kordbacheh et al., 2014). The role efficacy of an employee also influences and determines the level of employee engagement, motivation, and attrition (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). The relationship between employee engagement and intrinsic motivation was also found to be mediated by employee creativity, and the relationship between creativity and intrinsic motivation is moderated by psychological detachment (Ghosh et al., 2020).

Positive effects are associated with employee engagement being linked to intrinsic motivation. Leaning towards building intrinsic motivation in employees would avoid the unsustainable extrinsic rewards system, in which employees are only motivated to work because of cash incentives or motivated because of the fear of losing their jobs. These are potential causes of burnout and disengagement of employees (Richardson, 2017). Regardless of whether employee engagement is linked with intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, the literature on the connection between the two constructs is still weak.

Gamification, Employee Engagement and Motivation

According to Olenski (2014), one of the best mediums to make people feel involved in the company is through games. The engagement in using gamification has been used as a marketing strategy of marketing executives (Lucassen & Jansen, 2014). Some examples of gamification used by giant companies are the following: Samsung Nation - Samsung also used the concept of gamification as part of its marketing campaign; The Windows Language Quality Game – a strategy used by Microsoft to ensure its translations were accurate; Cisco also used gamification to keep its employees engaged by investing in a global social media training program to improve their employees' social media skillset; Deloitte using gamification for training senior executives by using badges and leaderboards; and Google gamified the submission of travel expense of employees, in which it resulted in a 100 percent compliance of employees in submitting the travel expense information.

Huotari and Hamari (2014) also linked gamification with motivational affordances and psychological outcomes since gamification invokes psychological experiences. Motivational affordances were categorized into ten (10) categories, which are points, leaderboards,

achievements/badges, levels, story/themes, clear goals, feedback, rewards, progress, and challenge. Motivational affordances are also used in the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) designs to attract users. According to Zhang (2008), "*the ultimate goal of designing an ICT for human use is to achieve high motivational affordance so that users would be attracted to it, really want to use it, and cannot live without it*" (p. 145). Zhang (2008) defined ten principles: (P1 and P2) autonomy and self-identity (psychological), (P3 and P4) competence and achievement (cognitive), (P5 & P6) human interaction and social bond (social and psychological), (P7 & P8) leadership and followership (social and psychological), (P9 & P10) affect and emotion (emotional). The outcomes of gamification can be analyzed thoroughly on how the motivational affordances were implemented (Hamari et al., 2014). Thus, for a gamified system to be effective, motivational affordances should be considered in the designing of game elements.

The effectiveness of gamification is based on the game design elements which have specific psychological effects. Certain game design elements affect fulfilling psychological needs (Sailer et al., 2017). Using the framework of self-determination theory, game design elements were analyzed and classified. Seven game design elements were analyzed, and these are points, badges, leaderboard, performance graph, meaningful stories, avatars, and teammates, and were identified with the factors of SDT. For example, avatar, stories, and teammates affect social relatedness. A good implementation of game elements contributes to the satisfaction of psychological needs and is a strong driving force in overcoming problems in motivation at work.

Another role of motivation in gamification is that the motivation of employees is amplified if they are moved to perform a task (Ryan & Deci, 2000). There are numerous sources of motivation, and that includes games. According to Yim and Graham (2007), The Wii from Nintendo and Dance Dance Revolution of Konami were widely used to motivate people to be physically active. This leads to the concept where a game can be used as a tool to motivate people. As the concept of gamification arose, it is not impossible to link it as a driver of employee motivation. Gamification is also proven that it has a direct influence on motivation, particularly, extrinsic motivation, using extrinsic rewards (Zuckerman & Gal-Oz, 2014). On the other hand, if intrinsic motivation is absent, reward-based gamification is expected to be sufficient (Hassan, 2016).

Gamification and Remote Working

According to Schawbel (2018), remote workers can be disengaged and are less likely to stay in the company in their long-term. However, companies had no choice but to place employees in a remote work environment during the pandemic. Similarly, McGregor and Doshi assert that "*working from home is likely to reduce motivation*". In a survey conducted between 2010 and 2015 showed that employees working from home have a lesser motivation than people who are working in the office. Motivation is way lower if employees have no choice where to work (McGregor & Doshi, 2020). Now that most employees have no choice to work because of the pandemic, it is most likely that the decreasing levels of motivation of employees are one of the challenges being faced by most businesses.

According to McGregor and Doshi (2020), business leaders can do something about this, by adjusting strict rules and work procedures, since it can create a spiral of demotivation, which results in less creative thinking. Increasing engagement of team members is also one of the solutions to this pressing problem. Engagement increase is possible by giving autonomy to employees for them to think creatively and maintain their motivation. With remote work, numerous challenges are now being encountered by companies. Although it can bring convenience and it can save employers and employees time and money, WFH also means a decrease in employee engagement and motivation for some.

According to TechWire Asia, companies have been pushing with gamifying remote work operations to instill engagement among employees, even when they are not in a common office space (Devanesan, 2020). The use of digital tools such as Microsoft Teams or Slack can help companies gamify the employees' experience. For instance, gamification can be used for teaching new employees regarding the companies' products and services, as well as their culture and processes. Even conducted remotely, gamification can also be applied to enhance performance and sales, as well as promote social collaboration. Gamification can build and motivate a remote team (Laker, 2020).

According to Beresford (2020), gamification has two types: finite and infinite. Finite gamification is designed to have an end, to have the first prize, or to have a complete set of badges. On the other hand, infinite gamification is designed to just have an upward progression (Beresford, 2020). Examples of infinite gamification include The Oscars (annual voting), TIME Magazine's Person of the Year, UNDP Human Development Index, and the employee of the month and quarterly sales, leaderboards, of which all are classified under infinite gamification.

Another example is the loyalty program of airline companies (air miles), in which infinite gamification is used. This type of gamification also emphasizes metrics or scores and can have a big impact on businesses. According to Lake (2020), infinite gamification can be very powerful. With this, it can be used as a tool for motivating and inspiring the team even when they are working remotely. Beresford (2020) states that a good infinite gamification program should start small and be kept simple. An example of Beresford's program on infinite gamification is the extensive use of social media of UN staff to promote their activities inside and outside the organization. Social media accounts now gained millions of followers after the program was launched.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach, in which it will allow the researcher to provide a depth of inquiry (Creswell, 2013). This paradigm is also flexible in which it will allow the researchers to analyze the participants' experience and views on the concept. This research design is the most appropriate since there is only a handful of in-depth literature relating to gamification, particularly in the perceptions of its usage and effect on work-from-home employees involving employee engagement and motivation. Given the limitations, qualitative research is the most appropriate design. With the lack of in-depth literature on gamification together with the emergence of work-from-home in the new normal, the researcher used a qualitative design and collected perceptions of employees who were forced to work remotely about the concept of gamification.

Participants

Ten work-from-home (WFH) employees from different organizations were asked about their perceptions of the concept. The respondents were interviewed via Zoom and were notified that all information is confidential.

In selecting the participants, Purposive Sampling was used. Purposive sampling is used when the cases are very low and special. It is also called judgment sampling or choosing the participant due to the qualities they possess (Etikan, 2016). Through this sampling method, the researcher can obtain information-rich cases and can focus on people who can provide relevant

information. Since in-depth studies on gamification and work-from-home combined were very low, a purposive sampling would be appropriate. The samples should fit into the particular profile: work-from-home employees because of the pandemic and should be familiar with games or a casual gamer. Employees who are familiar with games particularly game design and game elements will contribute more knowledge in terms of the factors that make a game engaging and motivating. This simulates the concept of gamification of which some of the participants may not be familiar with. After conducting the interview, participants were asked if there are further questions or concerns.

All participants surveyed are single and are living and working in the Philippines. All participants in this study mostly work in the tech industry, but they are classified specifically to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Information and Communication (including e-commerce, etc.), Finance, and Education. Also, most respondents have more than 1 year of work experience. Lastly, all respondents who were interviewed are working remotely because of COVID-19.

Data Gathering Instrument and Process

An in-depth interview method was used to collect the data. Open-ended questions were asked so participants can answer and share their thoughts freely, in particular with their perceptions in gamification in a remote work set-up. Because of the pandemic, a face-to-face interview was not possible. Instead, online conferencing was used to do the interview.

The participants were notified that the meeting is recorded for validation purposes and was asked questions about the criteria. The participants must fit into the criteria for them to proceed with the main interview. The respondents that fit into the criteria were asked the following questions:

> *1. What factors make you feel engaged at work?*
> *2. What factors make you feel motivated at work?*

For the first two questions, the researcher explained thoroughly to the respondents providing the definitions of employee engagement and motivation. Following Kahn's Theory of Employee Engagement, in which employee engagement is the ability of employees to be in their "full self" while working (Kahn, 1990). It is also where employees find that their work is meaningful (Robinson, 2004), and where they can be proactive (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The respondents were given various examples of what employee engagement is. On the other hand,

the term motivation was also explained and discussed to the respondents. Respondents were aware that motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic, in which they feel motivated because of the work they do (intrinsic), or they are rewarded (extrinsic) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). They can also be motivated because of the autonomy, connection, or competence, according to the Theory of Self-Determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Fowler (2014), people often confuse motivation with engagement. Hence, the respondents were briefed on the difference between the two terms.

3. Apart from network connection and accessibility, what are the challenges you have encountered, or you can think of when your company shifted to remote work or Work-from-Home?

This question determined other problems employees are experiencing, which can cause why employees are demotivated or disengaged. The study anticipated that network connection and accessibility will be the most common answer since participants are situated in the Philippines, a country that has one of the slowest internet services in the world (Leyco, 2020). To gather more insights from the respondents, the exemption of connectivity was added to the question.

4. What do you think makes the game exciting or fun?

In the criteria used in the survey, one of the qualifications of the respondents is that he or she must be a gamer or self-identified as a gamer. This criterion suffices the lack of the researcher's connection with game theorists or game developers, which would be more appropriate as the respondents for this research. With this qualification, respondents are believed that they can easily identify the game elements. The awareness of game elements is critical to the study since gamification is one of the primary concepts for this study, and one of the research objectives is to identify the game elements which can create an impact for a gamified system to increase employee engagement and motivation. To instigate a clarification for a future misconception, gamification will work for most employees, regardless if they are familiar with games or not. The ability to thrive in gamified systems will not depend on the employee's knowledge of games. It works well for everyone, although some people may have difficulties with this concept if they focus too much on the competition aspect (Farrell, 2018).

5. What do you think of Gamification?

6. How can this concept make you feel engaged or motivated?

The last two questions pertain to the perspectives of employees in gamification. The fifth question (i.e., *What do you think of Gamification?*) allows the respondents to give their perspectives about gamification freely. Also, not all respondents are familiar with the concept of gamification, so the respondents were given an in-depth explanation of how gamification works by letting them watch a YouTube video. The video explains briefly and concisely how gamification can be applied in the workplace. The concept was further explained through its generally accepted definition (i.e., the use of game elements such as badges, leaderboards, points, to non-game contexts such as education, commerce, and workplace). Afterward, they were asked about their perceptions about the concept of gamification and how it can affect their engagement and motivation (questions 5 & 6).

Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis, a six-step process in analyzing qualitative approach by classifying them into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a useful tool in qualitative psychology that is flexible and has freedom. It is also designed to identify and analyze the patterns within the data. The data are coded and then classified into themes. Themes are the "patterned response or meaning within the data set" and are based on the researcher's judgment (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The recorded interviews were transcribed, which is the first step. During transcription, the data are being familiarized. While reading the transcriptions, some repetitive words and ideas are mentioned by the respondents. For example, when respondents were asked *"What do you think about gamification?"* several respondents mentioned common words. For instance, respondent #4's answer mentioned the following:

"I think this kind of this kind of concept is beneficial to a team because it brings out the **competitiveness** *of each member as they can see their progress."*

On the other hand, respondent #5 answer:

"For me personally, what I've said before, I really like the **competitive** *scene of gaming, so I am really* **competitive** *as well in work and where I work."*

The extracted data (sentences) were coded into **Competitiveness** or the **competition.**

After the data were coded, it was then classified into themes. For the next three steps (searching for themes, reviewing themes, and naming themes), since the concepts are already laid, themes are easier to generate. For example, the code **competition** can be classified under the theme of **Perceptions on Gamification.** Four more themes were identified: **Perceptions on**

Engagement, **Perceptions on Motivation**, **Perceptions on Game Elements**, and **Remote Work Problems**. There are five themes in total that were generated after the analysis. The codes that are under the themes were reviewed and analyzed. The codes were reviewed based on the researcher's judgment whether to include it or not in any of the themes. Several codes were noticeable that correlate with one another. The discoveries are produced into a report, the sixth and final step of thematic analysis.

Research Ethics

All ethical guidelines presented by National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYSU) were adhered to by the study. In the process of data collection, each participant was invited via Zoom, an online conferencing application. Before beginning the interview, participants were reminded that their involvement in the study is voluntary, and they may choose not to participate or to stop at any time. The participants were also reminded that the results of the research study may be published, but their names will not be used. Participants were also informed that their identity will not be associated with their responses in any published format.

4. Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: In this pandemic, the workmate relationship is a strong driving force of motivation and employee engagement.

Regardless of the work environment, whether employees are working in their offices or remotely, this study was able to determine that the employees' relationship with their workmates is a strong driving force of motivation and employee engagement. A close friend at work can help an employee boost his or her engagement, especially if the employee has a positive relationship with other co-workers as well. This also creates a stronger relationship with the company, which also drives employee engagement. One of the respondents answered the question *"What makes them feel engaged?",* and the response is *"The people I work with, they're pretty welcoming and we're just like friends, even though there are higher levels, we call ourselves by first name basis so it's like you're a friend plus a trainer or a boss."* Another response is *"I think I'm engaged with my environment and my co-workers as well, and especially with how my manager interacts with its employees."*

Apart from employee engagement, levels of motivation are also increased if an employee has a good relationship with his or her workmates. Being connected with people can make

employees intrinsically motivated. This claim is also supported in the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Theme 2: The absence of good communication is a common remote work problem

Miscommunication is one of the problems being encountered oftentimes by employees in a remote work setup. Communication with their workmates has been a struggle since they cannot convey or relay everything virtually. By analyzing several responses, communicating with workmates personally is very different compared to communicating virtually. One of the respondents said, *"Since, before the pandemic, we used to go to the office and do our job there. So, communication is easy, and it is personal. So, you can easily relay what you want to say and what you want to convey to the person that you are talking to compared to doing it and chatting with each other online. I mean, it kind of lacks something."* Another response said that *"I think the communication because right now is really hard to communicate with your teammates through chat so I think that's what I think that's very challenging."* Also, one of the respondents mentioned about the problems in interaction, *"Another is the interaction and being able to teach the other team members or if there is anything that needs to be done faster, I feel like we can do it on and off is much easier"*

The communication barrier that is being created by remote working causes different problems. In remote working, how employees communicate in a way that is understandable by others is a problem that should be focused on by organizations. An actual task that was mentioned by one of the respondents emphasized the communication problems: *"(Another) challenge is communication. For example, when I when I messaged my QA (quality analyst) lead to ask a question about a specific error or specific bug. So, I do not know if to compare it physically. Of course, physically is very easy for you to communicate. But when it comes to virtually, it is very hard because you cannot see them. Maybe you can overthink like are they ignoring you or like that, it's my challenge to work from home."*

Theme 3: Social (or connectedness) is an important game design element in amplifying motivation and employee engagement

The perceived effect of the connectedness of gamification links employee engagement and motivation. The communication and relationship of the team can increase engagement and motivation if they are immersed in an activity that would allow them to collaborate and build

interaction with other team members. As defined in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), connectedness or relatedness boosts motivation, as well as it can bring or boost engagement. People also enjoy the game because of the collaboration and interaction they can do within the game. One of the respondents mentioned: *"The interaction with other people is one of the main factors (what makes a game exciting or fun). And as a gamer, it gives me some points in terms of gaming because I wanted to do some gaming with other people."* The sense of engagement in connecting with other players can also be identified in one of the responses: *"And another reason is that when you play with your friends, the memories and bond that you create together, those are memorable, and I think that's also a reason why we keep playing games."*

If the sense of connectedness can make the employees engaged and motivated. This suggests that for a gamified system to be more effective, a collaborative element must be involved. Instead of designing systems that only recognizes individual efforts, a *team or a pair recognition* could be more engaging and more motivating. For instance, gamification can be implemented in pair programming, a technique wherein two developers work at one station, where the one observes and the other one writes the code. In a remote set-up, wherein large teams are involved in one project, this technique can be possibly gamified.

Apart from the findings that provide answers to the objectives and research statements, several findings were also determined in this research.

a. *Gamification makes employee motivated and engaged if implemented properly*

When the respondents were asked about their perceptions on gamification, many have perceived a positive response, which includes improving productivity, makes the team collaborative, improves engagement, makes the employees motivated, and brings out the competitiveness of employees. However, based on several responses, the effectiveness of gamification depends on the leaders and how it is implemented. According to one of the respondents, *"It depends on how the managers and leaders use this kind of method"*, which means leaders should thoroughly examine what will be the set-up of implementation of gamification, as well as which game design elements should be focused on. Another response was noted in this section in terms of implementation and using the right game elements: *"I think the main challenge for this one (implementing gamification) is what are the elements that we might apply for our work activities. Not all game elements are not applicable to these kind of activities and basically, we want to precisely match those game elements in our work elements,*

and I think that's the main question or maybe challenges in terms of implementing gamification in terms of how it will be implemented." On using what kind of gamified system also matters as well as its cost-efficiency, as one of the respondents mentioned: *"I think some companies are not able to do this yet due to lack of funds right now, but I think there are also companies like maybe big companies that are already doing this, but maybe not on the level of high gamification. The system that you put so that you can monitor the points is a bit pricey to add to that, you also have to prepare rewards. So those two the system and the rewards are what makes it costly, in my opinion."*

b. *Remote work also challenges the productivity of employees*

Apart from communication problems, productivity was also identified as one of the major problems of telework. For employees, being at home makes them feel less productive because they can sleep or be unproductive anytime. Remote work employees find a hard time separating their duties at home and work, and the environment also affects their productivity. The following statements were mentioned by one of the respondents *"My first challenge was the environment. Of course, because since this is a home, this is not a working area for you, because of many kinds of stuff at home. For example, I cook, and I clean the house. Yes, 8 hours should be working, it should be working on the company. But you have so many responsibilities when you are at home in terms of when you're at the office."* One of the respondents also confirmed that productivity can be challenging: *"Other challenges that there could still be in here is the productivity. There could be a lot of distractions and distractions at home."*

c. *Gamification is not for everyone*

It is also important to note that the implementation of gamification, will not work for every employee. The competitive factor of gamification is one of the factors why some respondents think that not everyone can enjoy gamification. One of the respondents think that some employees are not just as competitive as others: *"I think gamification would work well for me personally. I think for some of my team members as well, they might not feel that good, because some people are competitive, some are naturally not, so I think it might work on some, but not all. For me personally. I think it might work."* Other employees may also be left behind because of their current progress as an employee. One respondent mentioned that employees who are already struggling cannot keep up with the implementation of gamification in the workplace:

"As for others, they're not prepared for it if their productivity is low or already struggling and they keep getting left behind, I think that will affect their productivity over the others."

The implementation of gamification in the workplace is one of the things organizations must focus on if they want to gamify tasks. It is important to note that gamification is not for everyone. However, the collaborative element of gamification could help some employees see the value of gamification as a factor that could help them in their job.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this research is to determine if gamification is necessary based on the answers of the ten respondents to the research questions. The findings of this study confirm that there is a need for gamification in remote work set up to help increase engagement and motivation levels of employees. Using thematic analysis, a common response can be noticed in the coded answers across themes. The link of employee engagement and motivation through gamification is evident in the answers of the respondents, which is communication/people/connectedness/collaboration. Gamification can increase levels of engagement and motivation of employees in remote work if it is collaborative. Focusing on the game element of collaboration in designing a gamified system is needed in gamification. Through gamification, it can also address the communication problems of employees caused by remote work. Therefore, if organizations are looking for solutions on how employees can be motivated and engaged while working remotely, then gamification could be considered as one of the solutions. The perceptions of the respondents on gamification also confirm that it can help organizations motivate and engage employees.

The collaboration/social element can make gamification effective in addressing problems in remote work, decreasing levels of motivation, and decreasing levels of engagement. It should also be noted that gamification is not for everyone since the element of competitiveness is also present in gamified systems. Some employees may find it difficult adapting to gamified tasks because not everyone can be as competitive as others. However, this perception can be from a preconceived notion of individual competitiveness, as to what gamification is always designed to be. Adding the element of collaboration can change the game and culture of gamification. From individual badges, first placer, or employee of the month, it could turn into group badges, the team of the month, or best pair of the week. In this way, one employee can encourage his or her

co-workers to participate and be competitive in achieving goals and beating deadlines. This could help increase employee engagement and motivation, as they can help one another in pushing each other to finish tasks while getting points and badges.

Since the levels of employee engagement and motivation are decreasing due to remote work, it was found that people, workmates, or relationships give employees an engaged feeling and motivation. Thus, it can be inferred that poor connection or relationship with people could greatly affect the motivation and engagement of an employee. This can be a factor that companies should consider in the new normal which they must act something about it. It was also found that apart from levels, stories, or badges, the social factor of gamification is essential in developing a gamified design in this era of remote working. An employee can maintain his/her motivation and engagement in the company if the gamified system will involve pairs, groups, or teams to achieve something. This can also address the problem of communication as employees will be more connected using a gamified design that involves connecting or collaborating with other workmates. Gamifying communication could help lessen miscommunication among teams in remote work. But before gamifying, leaders must pinpoint how frequent is the miscommunication or what are the common miscommunication issues to identify how can gamification help. Since connectedness is a factor that can influence both employees' engagement and motivation levels, collaborative gamified systems can be used.

This study suggests on the following: leaders can challenge their employees by grouping or pairing them to identify the most bugs; pair assignments or quizzes can also be created by managers to remind their employees of the important knowledge they should keep; and deadline by pairs or by groups can also be implemented.

Companies who have purchased gamified applications to monitor the performance of the employees may also consider having pair achievements or group recognitions in this new normal. In this way, employees who do not perform well or those who are always at the bottom of the leaderboard will be motivated if they are paired with another workmate, or if they are in a group. Moreover, keeping the real connection among employees in a set up wherein it is divided by screens is a challenge in today's setting. Remote work will remain in the next years regardless of the existence of the pandemic, and maintaining a connected team is vital to the overall engagement and motivation levels of employees. Redefining gamification from focusing on individual achievements to team achievements could bring greater results in teams.

This study has several limitations including absence of relevant theory, limited sample size, focused on single industry, limited access and cultural diversity of the participants. As such, quantitative study on how gamification can be effective to improve communication in a remote work setup, cross-cultural study of employees using gamification in the remote workplace and the use of other constructs such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, and/or creativity are encouraged.

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