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Potential and Challenges of Gamification in Organizational Innovation: an Integrative View from a Self-determination Perspective

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Abstract

The objective of this review is to systematically analyze the literature connecting gamification, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and innovation, providing valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners, exploring the potential and challenges of gamification in organizational innovation. Our methodology employed a systematic review, establishing three primary thematic categories: gamification, motivation, and innovation. We conducted electronic searches in Scopus and Web of Science for studies published between 2010 and 2025, yielding 58 documents, specifically focusing on workplace settings where innovation was linked to employee contributions. The research questions guiding this study include: How do gamification grounded in Self-Determination Theory (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) interact to shape employees' intrinsic motivation during the early stages of organizational innovation processes? Under what conditions do gamified workplace systems yield adverse motivational outcomes (e.g., demotivation or engagement fatigue), and how are these effects mediated by the type of motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) they elicit? And what is the distinctive role of gamification in influencing innovation capabilities? In conclusion, our findings confirm that gamification can enhance engagement, creativity, and knowledge contribution by fostering intrinsic motivations. When strategically designed to satisfy employees' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, gamification emerges as a potent tool for igniting intrinsic motivation in the early, unstructured stages of organizational innovation. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on contextual factors, user characteristics, and specific design elements, with challenges including the risk of undermining intrinsic motivation if perceived as an extrinsic reward, ethical concerns, and the need for careful risk assessment.



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