UTILIZING VIDEO GAMES AND GAMIFICATION TO ENHANCE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS ONLINE

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROJECT

The prevalence of social media has given rise to polarized views and inflammatory content due to the nature of the platform. Much research has been done to look at negative online interactions such as cyberbullying, harassment and bigotry. As the negative consequences of antisocial behaviors online is concerning, it is important to look into ways to prevent negative social interaction and antisocial behaviors to occur online.

Empirical studies have shown that digital games can be helpful in making learning personally meaningful to students (Barab et al., 2012) and reducing stigmatizing of remedial education groups (Wiklund et al., 2014). Gameful experiences are structured by rules and are goal-oriented, in order to effectively utilize an infusion of game design techniques, game mechanics, and/or game style (Bouça, 2012) to motivate user behavior in various nongame contexts.

Therefore, this project aims to develop and test a video game or gamified digital environment with carefully designed messages and playful ways for users to engage with the development of self-regulating online social interaction and prosocial behaviors. The purpose of developing the gamified interactive media is three-fold:

1. To theorize effective design principles, in accordance with learning theory, for the purpose of promoting self-regulation and positive social interaction.

2. To implement the proposed design principles in the design of the gamified interactive media.

3. To test the effectiveness of the gamified virtual environment in promoting positive social interaction.

SCOPE OF WORK FOR SELECTED PHD STUDENT

Aside from fulfilling requirements by IGS and the university to obtain a Ph.D. degree, the student will work closely with supervisors and their respective research teams to collaborate and co-publish with researchers across disciplines. The student is expected to be familiar with relevant theories and methodological and/or programming skills from both disciplines in the topical area of the project. Specifically, the student needs to

1) make significant intellectual contributions to the body of knowledge;

2) conduct empirical user studies and think analytically;

3) apply critical thinking to the research field;

4) communicate effectively -both orally and in written form;

5) design a gamified environment or a video game.