

Proceedings of the Positive Gaming: Workshop on Gamification and Games for Wellbeing – Preface

Gustavo F. Tondello

University of Waterloo
Waterloo, ON, Canada
gustavo@tondello.com

Rita Orji

Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS, Canada
rita.orji@dal.ca

Kellie Vella

Queensland University of
Technology, Brisbane, Australia
kellie.vella@qut.edu.au

Daniel Johnson

Queensland University of
Technology, Brisbane, Australia
dm.johnson@qut.edu.au

Marierose M. M. van Dooren

Delft University of Technology
Delft, The Netherlands
m.m.m.vandooren@tudelft.nl

Lennart E. Nacke

University of Waterloo
Waterloo, ON, Canada
lennart.nacke@acm.org

INTRODUCTION

Gamification [5] and games have been used and studied in a variety of applications related to health and wellbeing [6,7,13]. Nevertheless, their application in the domains of wellbeing and flourishing [8,14] (the pursuit of a happy and meaningful life rather than the simple inexistence of illness) remain considerably less studied than other more common application areas, such as physical health or fitness.

Therefore, this Workshop [15] aimed to provoke research and discussion by bringing together a community of interested researchers to discuss theoretical and practical considerations and promote the development of research projects focused on “Positive Gaming” as a technique for realizing the Positive Computing [2] objective of using technology to foster flourishing. A total of eight papers were accepted and presented at the Workshop. They addressed a rich variety of topics covering various areas of positive gaming including methods to understand users and design gameful applications for wellbeing. Examples application areas include motivating engagement in wellness activities, kindness interventions, nutritional interventions, and emotion regulation training; considerations for using technology to boost employee wellbeing; and opportunities for exploring game audio as a facilitator of wellbeing.

PAPERS IN THESE PROCEEDINGS

The design of gameful applications that support the user’s wellbeing requires additional attention, because it is a new concern in addition to the instrumental goals addressed by such applications. Hence, two papers explored potential methodologies and frameworks to improve gameful design for wellbeing. De Croon et al. [4] proposed a focus group protocol that can be used with patients and caregivers to select appropriated gamification mechanics for designing health or wellbeing applications, in the paper

Anthropomorphism-Based Focus Group Protocol to Select Gamification Mechanics. With a different approach, Altmeyer and Lessel [1] investigated the gaming preferences of seniors aged 75 and older and provided initial data that can be used to better design applications for this target group, in the paper *The Importance of Social Relations for Well-Being Change in Old Age – Do Game Preferences Change as Well?*

Two papers presented examples of gameful applications for wellbeing. Vella et al. [16] presented the paper *Motivating Engagement with a Wellbeing App Using Video Games and Gamification*, in which they report upon the design and initial evaluation of MindMax, a mobile application produced with the aim of improving the wellbeing of young people. Additionally, Ciocarlan and Masthoff [3] presented the paper *Kindness is Contagious: Exploring Engagement in a Gamified Persuasive Intervention for Wellbeing*, which reports the results of a pilot study of a gamified persuasive intervention that promoted random acts of kindness within the University environment.

Closing the gamification topic, Pogrebtsova et al. [10] presented on *Using Technology to Boost Employee Wellbeing? How Gamification Can Help or Hinder Results*, where they review current online positive psychology intervention research as well as the gamified positive psychology literature, exploring how gamification shows promise to improve employee wellbeing and areas where it can actually pose a threat.

Regarding the use of games to promote wellbeing, Schäfer et al. [12] presented the paper *NUDGE – NUTritional, Digital Games in Enable*, where they describe the design of a gaming platform aimed at changing the nutritional behaviour of adolescents. Furthermore, Pnueli and Cook [9] presented the paper *On the Development Process of ReApp, an Emotion Regulation Training Mobile Game, in the Context of Gamification and the Creation of Games for Wellbeing*, in which they describe a mobile, multiplayer game aimed at training people in emotion regulation techniques, specifically in cognitive reappraisal.

Finally, Rogers and Nacke [11] discussed the potential of games to act as a tool for relaxation and stress reduction through their music and sound, and explored opportunities for future research, in the paper *Exploring the Potential of Game Audio for Wellbeing*.

CONCLUSION

The works presented at this Workshop demonstrated a rich interest in exploring the potential of gameful applications and games for supporting and fostering wellbeing. However, many of them are still in their infancy or have conducted only preliminary evaluations. At the same time, a few ideas were proposed that are still underexplored, such as the use of gamification for employee wellbeing and the use of game audio as a facilitator of wellbeing. Therefore, we can say that the use of gamification and games for wellbeing is presently an exciting research area, with many opportunities for future work and a lot of untapped potential still to be explored.

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