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GAMIFICATION AS AN INNOVATIVE INSTRUMENT FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Abstract. Society 5.0, industry 4.0, globalization, digitalization, and even pandemic have changed the whole labor market. Thus, the market expands, and the need for employees is very high. Nowadays, employers face with huge lack of qualified and even unqualified workforce. On the contrary, employees are unwilling to change their workplace, return to normal contract work, or even start work. They become less engaged in all organizational processes and performance. Organizations are forced to think about employee attraction, retention, and engagement by applying various modern instruments and methods. Employee engagement is a trending topic among human resource managers because it directly correlates with organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and even its financial results. It helps to retain employees, explode their competencies, and improve organizational results. In this paper, employee engagement could be defined as individual, job, and organization engagement. Gamification is a powerful tool that increases employee engagement because it allows transforming boring and routine tasks into interesting and meaningful activities and engaging employees. Gamification motivates employees, providing the mean or satisfying internal or external needs. Regular engagement methods already could not achieve key purpose indicators, so gamification could be one of the new ways of work. Although organizations are highly interested in gamification application possibilities, there is a relative lack of research concerning gamification in employee engagement growth. This paper aims to identify how gamification affects employee engagement – individual, job, and organizational. The quantitative empirical research evaluated the theoretically grounded framework of gamification and employee engagement. The results showed that gamification has the strongest impact on individual and job engagement. In the process of assessing the engagement factors and gamification relationship, gamification makes the most substantial impact on reward and recognition, procedural justice, feedback, distributive justice, perceived supervisor support, career, knowledge, learning, and development opportunities.

Keywords: gamification, gamification elements, employee engagement, job engagement, organizational engagement.

Introduction. In 2025, representatives of the generation Y would account for 75% of the labor market. That is why this generation would have a huge impact on corporate results and achievements in the future. Generation Y appreciates personal development and progress; interesting work is important, but generation Y does not feel attached to the workplace. So, gamification could be an instrument for Y generation engagement because it allows organizations to involve motivated employees in business processes, enabling them to learn, improve their skills, and encourage collaboration. High employee engagement has a positive impact on job satisfaction (Saks, 2006, 2019), an increase in commitment to

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an organization (Saks, 2006, 2019), and better job performance (Rich et al., 2010). It also encourages creative employee behavior (Rich et al., 2010; Saks 2006, 2019; Bakker and Xanthopoulou 2013). Therefore, high employee engagement indirectly positively affects customer loyalty and better customer service, thus resulting in higher corporate profits, rising earnings, and corporate growth (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). But despite scientists' interest in gamification and employee engagement topics, there is still a gap of knowledge of what gamification elements should be applied to achieve employee engagement.

Literature review. Employee engagement has become the challenge for human resource management to fill the existing gap (Attridge, 2009; Bates 2004; Richman, 2006; Saks, 2011, 2019). Organizations face difficulties in motivating generations Y and Z employees to carry out the monotonous and uninteresting tasks that the organization needs to accomplish. Organizations also raise the issue of increasing employee involvement in the organizational performance when it is likely that the current employees would no longer be in the organization in five years. Maslach et al. (2001); Saks (2011); Shuck et al. (2011) argued that high employee engagement results in lower employee turnover.

Researchers identified different engagement models such as Kahn's model of personal engagement and disengagement at work, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Model of Engagement, a model of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, the Aon Hewitt Engagement Model, the Job Demands-Resources Model, JDR (Sakyte-Statnicke, 2020), etc. The key engagement concepts are personal engagement, job engagement, and organizational engagement. Saks (2006) found that there are prerequisites that affect the involvement (both job engagement and organizational): job specificity, employee-perceived assistance from the organization, employee-perceived assistance from the manager, awards and recognition, procedural justice in the organization, and equity of the remuneration for work. Referred to Kahn (1990), Saks (2006, 2019) stated that meaningfulness at work could be achieved through the specific elements of work: complexity and variety of work, ability to use different skills at work, autonomy, feedback, and personal approach to work.

Awards and recognition at work are also among the essential preconditions for Saks's (2006, 2019) engagement model. Studies by Kahn (1990) found that employees' engagement varies according to the perceived benefits of their work. Saks (2006) argued that higher employee engagement could be expected if their input is integrated into an organization and rewarded. Maslach (2001) also agreed with this statement and emphasized that the organization's lack of awards and recognition promotes burnout at work. As some engagement prerequisites, Saks (2006) also identified employee-perceived help from the organization and manager. Positive interpersonal relationships in the organization positively impact the psychological safety of workers at work. Then, people are not afraid to make mistakes, experiment, and test new things. Regarding Bakker's (2013) idea, social support is a work resource that promotes employee engagement. The employee-perceived assistance from the organization is defined as the employee's belief that the organization values the employee input and cares for their well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Similar findings considering the influence of well-being factors, particularly social protection and need satisfaction via the communication tools development within organizations, are obtained in the research by Bilan et al. (2020) and Mishchuk et al. (2020). Gruzauskas and Gmanova (2018) obtained empirical evidence considering the remuneration policy's impact on employee engagement. Organizations that are transparent and consistent in remuneration and procedural work issues are in a better position to encourage employee engagement, seeing that employees feel psychologically safe. According to Saks (2011), the popularity of employee engagement is due to the positive impact of engagement on organizations: increasing employees' job satisfaction, increasing organizational commitment, and emerging civic behavior in the organization. The conclusions about the direct influence of job satisfaction on subjective well-being are also made by Cannas et al. (2019).

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2013), the decent work resources provided have a positive impact on both internal (personal development, learning, growth) and external motivation of the employee (helping

to achieve the goals of the work). The authors emphasized the importance of feedback in the process of employee training and competence development and information on the worker's activities in achieving the goals of the work. Shuck and Wollard (2010) formulated the concept of employee engagement as an individual employee's emotional state and behavior, which is aimed at achieving the organization's desired goals. Shuck and Wollard (2010) highlighted individual and organizational assumptions for employee engagement. The antecedents that increase the engagement of employees are grouped into 3 levels: individual characteristics, job characteristics, and organizational characteristics:

- individual characteristics: accumulation; immersion; self-evaluation; self-esteem, internal energy, optimism; curiosity; personal approach to work; perseverance; devotion; emotional resistance (Rothbard, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003; Shuck and Wollard, 2010);

- job characteristics: the meaning of the job (task); the opportunity to see signs of the contribution to the work done; challenges; task complexity level; suitability for work; work control; independence; autonomy; clarity of job roles, clear expectations; skills needed to complete a task; the ability to use different skills; the variety of tasks; the importance of the assignment (Kahn, 1990, Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003, Saks, 2018, Bakker and Demerouti, 2013, Shuck and Wollard, 2010);

- organizational characteristics: feedback; assurance of the resources required for work; hygiene factors; freedom of opinion; psychological safety at work; safety of working conditions; recognition, learning and development opportunities; interpersonal and social relations; social support; positive microclimate; awards; recognition; justice for work; procedural justice in the organization; career opportunities; suspected/perceived organization support; mastery/perceived help; encouragement, leadership; work/life balance (Kahn, 1990; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Saks, 2018; Shuck and Wollard, 2010).

The Concept of Gamification in Human Resource Management. The term gaming in scientific literature is understood ambiguously. Helgason (2010), Schell (2010), Chatfield (2011) perceived gamification as the application of games in everyday life. Meanwhile et al. (2011); Zicherman and Cunningham (2011), Deterding et al. (2011), observing that video games are capable of motivating players, sought to find ways to motivate users in real life by using game elements. The most widely used definition of gamification is Deterding et al. (2011), which states that gamification uses game elements and game design techniques in the non-gaming context. Schell (2010) described the game's aesthetics as a player's feelings about the game: the appearance of the game, the game environment, and the feelings of the game. Meanwhile and Dignan (2011) identified 19 different game elements that shape and create the games: goal, competition, randomness, time pressure, lack of resources, puzzles, new levels, levels of social pressure, teamwork, currency, game upgrade by mistakes, forced solutions, data, progress, points, sensation, recognition, and status. The most commonly used game elements are points, levels, challenges, virtual goods, leader boards, and gifts. Bunchball (2010) evaluated people's motives for playing games and detected the status quest, rewarding, self-expression, competition, achievement, and altruism. It was found that the challenges satisfy all of the player's desires and represent the most effective playing tool. The points fulfill status-seeking aspirations, reward, competition, achievement, and altruism. In turn, leader boards and donations meet the aspirations of status, achievement, competition, and altruism. Virtual goods satisfy the aspirations of status, reward, self-expression, competition, and achievement. Levels are the least effective element of play because it satisfies only the desires of the status quest, competition, and achievement.

Based on self-determination theory (STD), Ryan et al. (2006) argued that gamification is motivating and engaging because it is designed to meet the needs of human autonomy, feedback, and the desire to adapt to the needs of the social community and to use competencies and skills. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) described the factors that increase employee involvement: autonomy, feedback, ability to use different skills, interpersonal and social relationships. Burke (2012) identified four aspects of gamification that encourage the employees or users to engage in the organization: feedback, clear goals for the game,

rules, and roles, and involving narratives and challenges. Kostecka and Davidaviciene (2015) pointed out in the gamification model that various elements of game mechanics and dynamics can meet the needs of the employee: the need to work with other people, the need to communicate with other people, the need for competition, and the assessment of the individual for the merits and achievements of the individual; the feedback, self-actualization, the need to grow as a personality, the need to feel that work is interesting and useful to society, and the need to meet complex goals and achieve them. Pink (2009) argues that autonomy, excellence, and meaningfulness are the needs that gamification can satisfy. The author points out that autonomy is achieved through work productivity and ownership in gamification. Mastery is achieved through points and progress tables while connecting meaningfulness with the discovery in the games, the challenge of the challenge. Wang et al. (2009) identified the game's independence, skill, and meaning as mechanics and dynamism.

The Model of Gamification Application for Employee Engagement. Mohammad et al. (2011) observed that gaming could be used to enhance employee engagement, resulting in employees exceeding the job requirements and becoming citizens of organizations and increased employee job satisfaction. Gamification can be a convenient tool for a business to increase employee engagement and employee performance. Rivers (2016), after empirically researching advertising agencies, found out that organizations using games in their activities enjoyed significantly higher employee engagement and positive consequences: lower staff turnover and increased organizational citizenship. Figure 1 displays a conceptual model for developing employee engagement while applying gamification in an organization. It is based on the analysis of the gamification literature and employee engagement models. Based on the literature analysis provided in this chapter, it could be assumed that gamification affects employee engagement, which could be individual, job, and organizational. The conceptual model illustrates the interaction between the concepts of gamification and engagement.

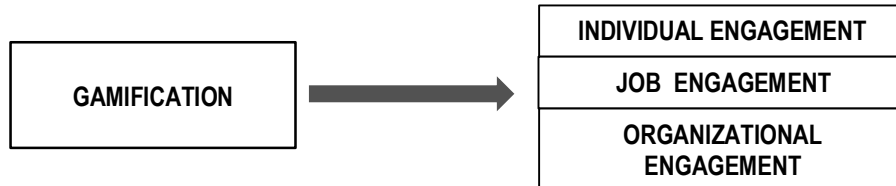


Figure 1. The model of application of gamification for employee engagement

Sources: developed by authors.

Methodology and research methods. Empirical research on the application of gamification was conducted to evaluate the impact of gamification on increasing employee engagement. A quantitative research method was selected, which allows assessing the effect of gamification on different participants' engagement and determining the strength of this effect. Depending on the set criteria, an organization was selected for testing, which uses several game components in the internal staff IT system: leader board, score collection for different tasks, badges, levels.

Table 1. Criteria for selection of an organization

	Criteria	Evaluation
1.	Gamification application	Should be applied
2.	Organization size	Medium and big companies
3.	Duration of gamification application	Longer than one year

Sources: developed by authors.

The organization has been using these gamification elements for 3 years. It has 251 employees, so the company is classified as a medium-sized enterprise by its number. The organization is engaged in real estate activities and provides for clients brokerage services. Not all staff participated in the gamification, so administration staff and unactive brokers were excluded from the research. The final sample was equal to 174. The survey was conducted by electronic means. A total of 94 completed questionnaires were received. The hypothesis H0 was formulated: Gamification makes an positive impact on employee engagement. The research used a nominal scale to evaluate the demographics of the respondents (gender, age, education) and the ranking scale (Likert scale), which determined the type of players and the effect of the element of the gamification element on the factors of engagement. The second part of the questionnaire contains 29 questions that assess the impact of gamification elements on the individual, job, and organizational engagement factors. Answers to these questions were marked on a six-point Likert scale. Meanwhile, the effect of gamification on the engagement factors in a questionnaire consisting of 29 questions, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is equal to 0.824. Hence, the questionnaire on the effect of gamification on the factors of engagement has a good internal consistency. The obtained research data are homogeneous and reliable.

Results. To evaluate the impact of gamification on individual, job, and organizational engagement, during the empirical research, respondents assessed how to apply the elements of the gamification to the company being analyzed and each participant involved. The respondents believed that gamification had the most impact on increasing employee perseverance (average score: 4.39 points). 33% of the respondents agreed to a certain extent with the statement that the points used in gamification helped persist in work even when they failed. 34% of respondents agreed with this statement, and 13.8% fully agreed. Meanwhile, 17% of respondents disagreed with this statement to a certain extent.

In the empirical study, the respondents felt that gamification positively impacted the increase in employee commitment (average score: 4.11 points). 33% of respondents to a certain extent agreed with the statement «CRM points increase enthusiasm for work», 27.7% of respondents agreed, and 12.8% fully agreed with it. Meanwhile, some of the respondents (26.6%) did not think that gamification affected increasing employee commitment. The respondents also believed that the game's components (CRM) implemented in the organization positively influenced the increase in employee curiosity (average score: 4.09 points). Of the respondents, 9.6% fully agreed with the statement «Game (CRM points) encourages their interest in their own and colleagues' outcomes», 26.6% agreed with this statement, and 36.2% of respondents agreed to a certain extent. Meanwhile, 27.7% of respondents rated this claim negatively. The empirical study found that in the analyzed company, gamification had the lowest impact on the increase of the emotional strength of employees (average score: 3.24 points).

When assessing the antecedents of job attraction, respondents considered that gamification mostly influenced the increase of the meaning of a job or a task and the opportunity to see the signs of contribution to work (average score: 4.27 points). More than a third of respondents (38.3%) agreed to some extent with the statement that points used in CRM helped to grasp the meaning and purpose of tasks. This statement was accepted by 34% of respondents, and 9.6% of respondents fully agreed with it. Meanwhile, this statement was negatively rated by 18.1% of respondents.

In the empirical study, the respondents felt that playing also positively affected the challenges at work and the complexity of tasks, and the level of interest (average score: 4 points). The research findings showed that gamification had the lowest impact on autonomy (average score: 2.24 points), work control (average score: 2.88 points), clarity of work roles, and clear expectations (average score: 2.98 points).

Analyzing the factors of organizational engagement, the results of the empirical research reveal that gamification the most influences the awards and the recognition of subjective (average score: 4.19 points). The results obtained during the study reveal that gamification had a positive effect on procedural justice in the organization (average score: 4.15 points).

Hypothesis H0 – gamification makes a positive impact on employee engagements was approved.

Empirical research has found that the lowest influence of gamification in assessing the antecedents of organizational engagement was on the freedom of opinion, psychological security at work (average score: 2.71 points), life and work balance (average score: 3.4 points), interpersonal and social relations (average score: 3.4 points). The purpose of the game could result in such research findings – the game had to increase the efficiency of employees by increasing competition among them. Thus, psychological security at work and interpersonal and social relations gained the lowest evaluation, and strict game rules led to the low evaluation of opinion freedom.

To summarize, it can be stated that gamification employee perseverance, the meaning of the job, interest, challenges at work. But on the contrary, gamification should be applied carefully to retain a good microclimate and increase engagement at the organizational level.

Conclusion. Employee engagement is a trending topic among human resource managers because it directly correlates with organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and even financial results. Human resource managers apply different instruments to enhance employee engagement, but it is still a challenge. Gamification could be a powerful tool helping increase employee engagement because it allows transforming boring and monotonous tasks into interesting and meaningful activities. Gamification provides more motivation and purpose in performing routine tasks. It can improve efficiency, motivation, cooperation, trust, teamwork, employee engagement, job satisfaction.

There is a wide range of engagement models, but in this paper, three levels of engagement of employees were used: individual, job, and organizational level. The antecedents of engagement were defined. A gamification model for employee engagement has been constructed, consisting of three levels of employee engagement and gamification elements. It was established that gamification has a positive impact on employee engagement. The quantitative research assessment of the relationship between organizational engagement factors and gamification showed that gamification makes the strongest impact on individual and job engagement. The specific characteristics which were influenced mostly are reward and recognition, procedural justice, feedback, distributive justice, perceived supervisor support, career, knowledge, learning, and development opportunities.

As a limitation of the research, the small sample and only one selected organization could be identified. For further research in this area, a bigger sample should be analyzed as well the purpose of the game should be identified. Also analyzed game had the aim to improve effectiveness, and it was based on competition, not collaboration. So other gamification cases with different aims should be analyzed as well.

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Гейміфікація як інноваційний інструмент заохочення співробітників

Суспільство 5.0, четверта промислова революція, глобалізація, цифровізація та пандемія обумовлюють трансформаційні процеси в усіх секторах та ринках, у тому числі на ринку праці. Авторами наголошено, що роботодавці відчують критичну нестачу як високо-, так і низькокваліфікованої робочої сили. Оскільки працівники не бажають повертатись на робоче місце після послаблення карантинних обмежень внаслідок пандемії. Співробітники втрачають зацікавленість у процесах та результатах функціонування компанії, тоді як рівень зацікавленості співробітників має прямий вплив на ефективність її роботи та фінансові результати. Таким чином, перед менеджментом компаній постає необхідність впровадження низки інноваційних інструментів та методів для залучення, утримання та заохочення співробітників. Проблематика залучення співробітників є актуальною для менеджерів з персоналу при визначенні напрямів утримання співробітників та розвитку їх компетенцій, а також покращення результатів діяльності компанії. Встановлено, що традиційні методи заохочення співробітників не дозволяють досягнути ключових показників ефективності. У рамках даної статті авторами досліджено гейміфікацію як інноваційний інструмент підвищення зацікавленості співробітників, що дозволяє уникнути нецікавих та рутинних завдань. Гейміфікація сприяє підвищенню рівня мотивації співробітників, задовольняючи їх внутрішні та зовнішні потреби. Головною метою статті є визначення впливу гейміфікації на особисту, робочу та організаційну зацікавленість співробітників. У ході емпіричного дослідження оцінено теоретичну схему гейміфікації та заохочення співробітників. Отримані результати засвідчили, що гейміфікація має найбільш значущий вплив на особисту та робочу зацікавленість. Найбільший вплив гейміфікації на зацікавленість працівників спостерігається при нагороді та визнанні їх заслуг, забезпеченні зворотного зв'язку, підтримці з боку керівництва, кар'єрному зростанні, підвищенні знань та наданні можливостей для професійного розвитку.

Ключові слова: гейміфікація, елементи гейміфікації, зацікавленість співробітників, зацікавленість в роботі, організаційна зацікавленість.