

Meeting the Needs of e-Therapy Users: Gamification in Web Based Therapy Systems

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Abstract

Despite a significant body of research on the impact of gamification in such disciplines as: e-Learning, e-Medicine, marketing and politics, significantly less Knowledge exists on the role of game design theory in relation to e-Therapy. The overall perspective from the literature suggests e-Therapy can be a potential substitute for face-to-face therapy, and that gamification can impart positive aspects to web based therapy such as high adherence rates, increased self-motivation, a positive therapeutic environment, and successful treatment outcomes. Through qualitative, inter-generational, and semi-structured interviews, this study provides perspectives from the field of psychology, by analysing the insights and opinions of both psychotherapists and psychology students, in relation to gamification and e-Therapy. An analysis of these interviews yielded views from the field of psychology that both upheld and challenged many of the research findings from the literature: 1) Gamification failed to create a game like environment. 2) Gamification was successful in creating an interactive environment. 3) e-Therapy was not considered a substitute for face-to-face therapy, and at best was suitable in the area of skills top-up, or as treatment for mild mental health issues. 4) Gamification created an online environment that encouraged motivation in e-Therapy users. 5) Gamification would appeal more to younger people. 6). e-Therapy users were seeking a quick fix solution to complex mental health issues. 7) Gamification had the potential to increase adherence rates for online treatment programmes. This research adds nuance to the role of gamification in delivering the type of online treatment programme that users want. The study is part of a growing body of research into gamification and e-Therapy. In tapping into the experience of individuals involved in psychology, this research will contribute to future research on similar topics.