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Play the Game: Evaluation of Psychological Capital, Emotional Intelligence, and Virtual Team Performance among Online Gaming Teams

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Abstract

Virtual teams are becoming ubiquitous with the contemporary work environment. Shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated many to reconceive the workplace whereby work was accomplished by people no longer located in immediate proximity, leading many teams to engage online in virtual spaces. Even in a post-lockdown world, virtual teams have remained widely used within the workplace.

Online gaming has exploded in popularity, it allows people to interact with others from across the world. Numerous parallels exist between online gaming teams and problem-solving teams often used in the contemporary workplace: 1) pursuing a shared goal; 2) identifying member roles; and 3) collaborating together to accomplish a task.

The purpose of our research is to examine the role that psychological capital and emotional intelligence play in team success within an online gaming team challenge. Participants will compete in an online video game event, where their goal, as a 6-player team, is to solve a set of challenges within 24 hours. The researchers will conduct a content analysis of participant recordings from the event. Findings and implications will be discussed. Understanding member interaction among online gaming teams has potential implications for how workplace teams can interact more effectively together.

Session Description

Introduction and Purpose

Online video gaming has emerged as a popular form of entertainment. Many online games require multiple, geographically-dispersed individuals to coordinate together to accomplish game tasks; hence, they offer insight into the effectiveness of virtual teams. There is substantial overlap between online gaming teams and functional workplace teams. Hackman (2002) proposed a model of team effectiveness and both online gaming teams and workplace teams share characteristics: both meet the criteria of real teams requiring a high level of interdependence, and stable membership; both often have a clear and compelling direction in that everyone on the team works toward team goals that motivate members to strive together; and both have enabling structures (e.g., team norms; member roles) that facilitate team interaction and task achievement.

Recently, businesses have begun to adopt video gaming as a team building exercise. For instance, project teams who participate in 45 minutes of recreational teamwork within video games experience a significant increase in productivity compared to traditional goal training activities (Keith, et. al., 2018). However, there is limited scholarship bridging the gap between team members' capacities and effectiveness of online gaming teams.

The present study seeks to address this gap. The purpose of our research is to further examine the role that psychological capital and emotional intelligence plays in team success within a virtual team gaming challenge.

Literature Review

Psychological capital focuses on an individual's strengths often comprised of four dimensions: confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans, et. al., 2004). These components can be measured and optimized to increase work performance (Luthans, 2002). Emotional intelligence involves an individual's capacities to identify and understand the emotional states of themselves and those with whom they work (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). There are four central dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management (Goleman, 2001).

Methods

The researchers will investigate a livestreamed, team race challenge of Destiny 2, a popular first-person shooter MMO (massive multi-player online) game. The race was held starting March 10, 2023, and six-member teams attempted to complete a series of unknown tasks called "encounters" within 48 hours of its release. The researchers captured video streams for the purpose of transcribing team member interaction for content analysis. Because the researchers examined specified domains of interest to the study, an *a priori* coding strategy was applied in the content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017).

Findings and Conclusion

At the time of the poster session submission, the data has been collected and the researchers are currently analyzing the data. The researchers are excited to see where the data leads in this endeavor and look forward to developing the findings of the study as well as implications for teaching and practice of leadership in teams.

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Researcher Bio

Ryan Will
Will is pursuing degrees in Organizational Leadership and Psychology. He is a member of the VALUE program. In the future, Will would like to pursue a career in Industrial Psychology. Will is a peer academic tutor for FHSU. In addition to his studies in Organizational Leadership and Psychology, he is also a member of the FHSU Concert Choir and the Fort Hays Singers.

Brent J. Goertzen
Goertzen serves as a faculty member and is the director of the Leadership Program's graduate program. His expertise is in the areas of program development and evaluation, pedagogy such as service-learning, and leadership in team dynamics. Brent teaches classes such as Fieldwork in Leadership Studies, Qualitative Research Methods and Leadership in Team Dynamics. He has facilitated numerous leadership development workshops including the Small Business Development Center, and the civilian workforce at Fort Riley.

Magdalene Moy
Magdalene Moy is an Instructional Technologist in Teaching Innovations and Learning Technologies as well as an instructor for Advanced Education Programs. She is passionate about designing learning environments to leverage technologies for learner engagement and accessibility. Her research interests include increasing minority participation in STEM careers, identity development in affinity spaces, increasing the sense of belonging in online students, and designing esports as learning ecosystems. In her position at FHSU, Magdalene specializes in learning analytics and is part of the working group for the Digital Master Plan.