

Gamipulation: Exploring Covert Manipulation Through Gamification in the Context of Education

Authors : Aguiar-Castillo Lidia, Perez-Jimenez Rafael

Abstract : The integration of gamification in educational settings aims to enhance student engagement and motivation through game design elements in learning activities. This paper introduces "Gamipulation," the subtle manipulation of students via gamification techniques serving hidden agendas without explicit consent. It highlights the need to distinguish between beneficial and exploitative uses of gamification in education, focusing on its potential to psychologically manipulate students for purposes misaligned with their best interests. Through a literature review and expert interviews, this study presents a conceptual framework outlining gamipulation's features. It examines ethical concerns like gradually introducing desired behaviors, using distraction to divert attention from significant learning objectives, immediacy of rewards fostering short-term engagement over long-term learning, infantilization of students, and exploitation of emotional responses over reflective thinking. Additionally, it discusses ethical issues in collecting and utilizing student data within gamified environments. Key findings suggest that while gamification can enhance motivation and engagement, there's a fine line between ethical motivation and unethical manipulation. The study emphasizes the importance of transparency, respect for student autonomy, and alignment with educational values in gamified systems. It calls for educators and designers to be aware of gamification's manipulative potential and strive for ethical implementation that benefits students. In conclusion, this paper provides a framework for educators and researchers to understand and address gamipulation's ethical challenges. It encourages developing ethical guidelines and practices to ensure gamification in education remains a tool for positive engagement and learning rather than covert manipulation.

Keywords : gradualness, distraction, immediacy, infantilization, emotion

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