

Educational gamification and motivation for creative writing in higher education

Gamificação educacional e motivação para a escrita criativa no ensino superior

Gamificación educativa y motivación para la escritura creativa en educación superior

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ABSTRACT

Student motivation toward creative writing represents a recurrent challenge in higher education, particularly when writing activities are perceived as static or disconnected from students' interests. In this context, gamification has been proposed as a pedagogical strategy aimed at integrating game elements into traditional learning processes. The objective of this study was to analyze university students' perceptions of the influence of gamification on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward creative writing. The study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive, non-experimental design. The sample consisted of 100 second-year university students enrolled in the course Creative Writing II. Data was collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure dimensions of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that a considerable proportion of students reported favorable perceptions regarding the use of gamified elements, particularly in relation to enjoyment of the creative process, visualization of progress, and clarity of objectives. However, variability in responses was also observed, suggesting that not all gamification elements are perceived equally by all participants. The findings provide relevant descriptive evidence to support pedagogical reflection in specific university contexts, while acknowledging the methodological limitations of the study.

Keywords: creative writing, education, gamification, motivation, rewards.

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A motivação dos estudantes universitários em relação à escrita criativa constitui um desafio recorrente no contexto educacional, especialmente quando as atividades de escrita são percebidas como pouco dinâmicas ou distantes de seus interesses. Nesse cenário, a gamificação tem sido proposta como uma estratégia pedagógica voltada à incorporação de elementos lúdicos em processos formativos tradicionais. O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar as percepções de estudantes universitários sobre a influência da gamificação na motivação intrínseca e extrínseca para a escrita criativa. A pesquisa adotou uma abordagem quantitativa, com delineamento descritivo e não experimental. A amostra foi composta por 100 estudantes universitários do segundo ano, matriculados na disciplina Escrita Criativa II. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de um questionário estruturado com escala do tipo Likert, elaborado para medir dimensões associadas à motivação intrínseca e à motivação extrínseca. Os dados foram analisados por meio de estatística descritiva. Os resultados indicam que uma parcela significativa dos estudantes apresentou percepções favoráveis em relação ao uso de elementos gamificados, especialmente no que se refere ao prazer no processo criativo, à visualização do progresso e à clareza dos objetivos. Contudo, observou-se variabilidade nas respostas, indicando que nem todos os elementos da gamificação são percebidos da mesma forma pelos participantes. Os achados fornecem evidências descritivas relevantes para a reflexão pedagógica em contextos universitários específicos, reconhecendo as limitações metodológicas do estudo.

Palavras-chave: educação, escrita criativa, gamificação, motivação, recompensas.

Resumen

La motivación de los estudiantes universitarios hacia la escritura creativa constituye un desafío recurrente en el ámbito educativo, especialmente cuando las actividades se perciben como poco dinámicas o desvinculadas de sus intereses. En este contexto, la gamificación ha sido propuesta como una estrategia pedagógica orientada a integrar elementos lúdicos en procesos formativos tradicionales. El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar las percepciones de estudiantes universitarios sobre la influencia de la gamificación en su motivación intrínseca y extrínseca hacia la escritura creativa. El estudio se desarrolló desde un enfoque cuantitativo, con un diseño descriptivo y no experimental. La muestra estuvo conformada por 100 estudiantes universitarios de segundo año que cursaban la asignatura Escritura Creativa II. La recolección de datos se realizó mediante un cuestionario estructurado con escala tipo Likert, diseñado para medir dimensiones asociadas a la motivación intrínseca y a la motivación extrínseca. El análisis de los datos se efectuó mediante estadística descriptiva. Los resultados muestran que una proporción considerable de los estudiantes manifestó percepciones favorables respecto al uso de elementos gamificados, particularmente en relación con el disfrute del proceso creativo, la visualización del progreso y la claridad de objetivos. No obstante, también se observó variabilidad en las respuestas, lo que indica que no todos los elementos de la gamificación son valorados de la misma manera por los participantes. Los hallazgos aportan evidencias descriptivas relevantes para la reflexión pedagógica en contextos universitarios específicos, reconociendo las limitaciones metodológicas del estudio.

Palabras clave: educación, escritura creativa, gamificación, motivación, recompensas

Introduction

The impact of gamification within the educational sphere has been the subject of growing interest in recent research, particularly due to its potential to transform traditional pedagogical activities into more dynamic and engaging experiences for students. Various studies have approached this methodology from complementary perspectives: while Briceño Núñez (2022, 2025) analyses gamification as a didactic strategy aimed at strengthening motivation and participation across different educational levels, Alonso-García et al. (2021) offer a review of experiences applied in higher education, highlighting its effects on student engagement. Meanwhile, Pegalajar-Palomino (2021) examines university students' perceptions of gamification implementation, underscoring both its motivational benefits and the conditions necessary for its pedagogical effectiveness. Thus, these contributions demonstrate that gamification, far from merely introducing playful elements into the classroom, redefines teaching-learning dynamics from a motivational and participatory perspective.

In the context of creative writing, it has been observed that gamification can foster greater student participation and commitment by integrating ludic elements such as levels, rewards, and creative challenges (Zhihao, Z & Zhonggen, 2022; Samosa et al., 2021). This study seeks to explore, from a quantitative approach with a descriptive scope, how gamification influences the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of university students enrolled in creative writing courses, within the framework of face-to-face education in a Teaching degree programme. This allows for a scientific justification of the need to analyse how these dynamics impact the creative process at the university level.

Creative writing is a fundamental skill in students' academic and personal development, as it enables them to express ideas, emotions, and knowledge in a unique manner (Timbal-Duclaux, 1993). However, many students experience a lack of motivation to engage actively in this process (Karaca & Inan, 2020; Rachel et al., 2020). Gamification offers a promising solution by presenting writing as a more attractive and structured activity, incentivising both personal enjoyment and the achievement of specific goals. This research aims to provide empirical evidence on the benefits of this methodology in the university class.

From an epistemological perspective, this research is framed within constructivist learning theory, which holds that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction and experience (Vera-Velazquez et al., 2020). Gamification, by fostering active and meaningful participation, aligns with this approach, as it transforms the writing process into a series of interactive challenges that contribute to cognitive development. Ontologically, the study addresses the dual nature of motivation in writing, analysing both the internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) factors that drive students to write (Ramos & García, 2022). From an axiological standpoint, it values the importance of offering an education that not only promotes academic achievement but also fosters personal growth and creativity (Parrales-Pincay et al., 2024).

Regarding the existing scientific literature, numerous studies have pointed out the potential of gamification to increase motivation in diverse educational contexts (Castro Benavides et al., 2023; Deterding et al., 2022; Sánchez-Pacheco, 2021; Covas-Alves, 2020). In the specific field of creative writing, authors such as Acedo-García (2023), Burbano-Narvaez, and Cespedes-Sierra (2020) have highlighted that students tend to engage more actively when tasks are presented as gamified challenges. However, few studies have directly addressed the relationship between gamification and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in creative writing, leaving a theoretical gap that this study seeks to fill.

The problem addressed by this research is linked to the decline in motivation towards creative writing among university students, a phenomenon documented in previous studies on academic and creative writing processes. Research such as that by Karaca & Inan (2020) and Rachel et al. (2020) shows that students often experience demotivation towards writing tasks, associated with factors such as low perceived competence, lack of interest, and the routine nature of proposed activities. In the university context, this situation raises the need to explore innovative pedagogical strategies that can reverse this demotivation and promote more active participation in the creative process.

Despite traditional pedagogical efforts, a need persists for more dynamic strategies that capture students' interest. This study proposes that gamification could be an effective solution to this problem, by combining playful elements that foster both the intrinsic pleasure of writing and the desire to achieve external rewards. Some authors (Huamán-Briceño et al., 2023; Prieto-Andreu et al., 2022; Robles-Ortega & Vásquez-Guevara, 2022) have demonstrated that the use of games and similar dynamics can improve student performance and motivation in various learning areas.

The objective of this research is to analyse the impact of gamification on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of university students participating in creative writing activities. It is expected that the findings will offer a new understanding of how the use of gamified elements can increase participation and enjoyment in the creative process, contributing to the improvement of educational methodologies employed in this field. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the implementation of gamification will not only incentivise greater performance but also reduce procrastination and increase students' personal satisfaction with their written productions.

Theoretical Framework

Gamification, defined as the use of game elements and dynamics in non-playful contexts (Deterding et al., 2011), has emerged as a relevant tool in the educational field. Theoretically, its application in creative writing aligns primarily with the constructivist approach to learning, which holds that students actively construct their knowledge from meaningful and participatory experiences. However, gamification has also been analysed from other theoretical perspectives, such as behaviourist approaches, which emphasise the role of external rewards, or motivational theories centred on self-determination, which highlight the importance of autonomy and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). From these viewpoints, it is noted that inappropriate use of gamification could generate excessive dependence on extrinsic incentives or reduce the depth of learning. Despite these limitations, the constructivist approach is particularly pertinent for creative writing, as it prioritises experience, reflection, and active learning, central elements in creative processes mediated by ludic dynamics.

A significant reference point is established by Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, who conducted a systematic review demonstrating how gamification can positively influence students' motivational behaviour (Hamari et al., 2014). These authors found that extrinsic incentives such as points and leaderboards can generate greater competition and participation, while intrinsic aspects, such as narrative and creative challenges, can make students enjoy the learning process more. However, despite advances in the application of gamification in other educational areas, there remains a lack of studies delving into how these dynamics affect motivation in creative writing.

The analysis of the relationship between gamification and motivation in creative writing is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that articulates flow theory, self-determination theory, and the constructivist approach to learning. From flow theory, Csikszentmihalyi (1998) explains that students can experience a state of optimal immersion when activities present challenges balanced with their skills, a condition that gamification favours through progressive challenges and dynamic narratives. Complementarily, Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory allows us to understand how these gamified environments enhance intrinsic motivation by promoting autonomy in

creative decision-making, the perception of competence through visible progress, and relatedness through collaborative or competitive dynamics. These contributions converge with the constructivist approach, insofar as gamified creative writing is conceived as an active and meaningful experience where the student constructs their learning from interaction, reflection, and creative practice. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a coherent explanation of how gamification impacts the motivation and engagement of university students in the creative writing process.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, often criticised for its temporary nature, can be effective if used in moderation combined with strategies that strengthen intrinsic motivation. According to previous studies (Deterding et al., 2011; Garris et al., 2002), when used appropriately, extrinsic incentives, such as rewards in the form of points, badges, or rankings, can complement intrinsic motivation in creative tasks, causing students not only to seek rewards but also to enjoy the creative process.

Although research has been conducted on gamification in various educational contexts, studies concerning creative writing at the university level remain limited and fragmented. In higher education, creative writing has been progressively recognised as a formative competency contributing to the development of critical thinking, personal expression, and knowledge construction, beyond its traditional association with literary training. However, despite its pedagogical relevance, there are few studies that specifically analyse how innovative strategies, such as gamification, affect university students' motivation towards this competency, which justifies the pertinence of the present study. Authors like Reyes-Cabrera (2022) and Muntean (2011) have explored the impact of gamification on skills such as problem-solving or collaborative learning, but have not delved into writing as a creative activity that could benefit from these playful elements. In this sense, our study aims to contribute to the scientific literature with evidence on how gamification can be a catalyst for both the intrinsic enjoyment of writing and the fulfilment of external objectives, such as obtaining better grades or peer recognition.

Thus, this paper aims to examine how game elements incorporated into creative writing activities can influence student motivation, especially the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide practical recommendations for educators interested in applying gamification in their creative writing courses, thereby contributing to improved participation, engagement, and academic performance among university students.

Metodología

This research was developed under a quantitative approach, with a non-experimental, descriptive, and correlational design, aimed at analysing the relationship between gamification and motivation for creative writing in university students. The choice of this approach is based on the need to objectively measure perceptions and levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through observable and comparable indicators, allowing the identification of general trends and relationships between variables. While qualitative or mixed approaches could provide a deeper understanding of students' subjective experiences, the quantitative approach has the limitation of being unable to capture in detail the individual meanings associated with the creative process; nevertheless, it is pertinent for establishing general patterns in broad educational contexts.

For data analysis, descriptive statistical procedures, such as frequencies and percentages, were employed, organised using Likert scales, which allowed characterising the participants' levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Likewise, the relationship between variables was considered based on the comparison of their dimensions, without direct manipulation. Intrinsic motivation was operationalised through the dimensions of pleasure in the creative process and self-realisation, while extrinsic motivation was analysed through the dimensions of competence and recognition, as well as rewards and clear goals, taking as a reference the theoretical contributions of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The research design was cross-sectional, as it was carried out at a single point in time, and non-experimental, as the independent variables were not manipulated but observed in their natural environment. Data were collected through the application of a structured questionnaire that assessed intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, using a 5-point Likert scale. This methodology allowed for obtaining precise information on students' perceptions and attitudes towards gamification in the context of creative writing.

The target population consisted of 100 second-year university students enrolled in a Teaching degree programme at a public Colombian university, who were taking the Creative Writing II course. A census sampling method was used, as the population was accessible and manageable in its entirety. Regarding the sample characterisation, participants were aged between 19 and 26 years, with an equitable gender distribution (50 women and 50 men). The students came from a similar sociocultural context, corresponding to regular face-to-face university education, which allowed for a relatively homogeneous group for the analysis of motivation towards creative writing.

For data collection, a structured 32 items questionnaire was used, constructed from scratch for this research, based on the theoretical foundations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), as well as previous studies on gamification in educational contexts. The validity of the instrument was established through content validity, supported by the theoretical review of the dimensions and indicators of the variables under study, and through a pilot application aimed at evaluating the semantic clarity, coherence, and pertinence of the items. This pilot study was conducted with 15 students with characteristics similar to the target population, allowing for the adjustment of items that presented ambiguity or comprehension difficulties.

Regarding reliability, it was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, considering values equal to or greater than 0.70 as the acceptability criterion, in accordance with methodological standards for quantitative descriptive research. The final administration of the questionnaire took place during the first quarter of 2024, in a single face-to-face session within regular class hours, lasting approximately 25 to 30 minutes per participant, ensuring homogeneous application conditions for all students.

For data collection, a structured 32-item questionnaire was used, designed specifically for this research, based on the theoretical references of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) and previous studies on gamification in educational contexts. The instrument underwent a content and clarity validation process through a pilot study applied to 15 students with characteristics similar to the target population, allowing for adjustments to the wording and pertinence of the items. The questionnaire was administered during the first quarter of 2024, in a single face-to-face session within regular class hours, lasting approximately 25 to 30 minutes per participant.

Inclusion criteria were established as being a second-year university student in the Teaching degree programme and being enrolled in the Creative Writing II course at the time of the research. During the data collection process, some cases of non-response occurred, corresponding to students who were absent on the day of questionnaire administration or who did not complete the instrument in its entirety; these were not considered in the final data analysis.

Resultados

The impact of gamification on students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is analysed based on the distribution of frequencies and percentages obtained from the administered questionnaire. The data show that a significant proportion of students fell into the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories for items related to enjoyment of the creative process and the presence of external rewards, thus allowing us to describe a favourable trend towards the use of game elements in creative writing (see Table 1). Responses were also recorded in the neutral and disagreement categories, evidencing variability in student perceptions of gamification.

Table 1 presents the results organised into percentages according to a five-category Likert scale: "Strongly agree" (SA), expressing full agreement with the statement; "Agree" (A), indicating a generally positive assessment; "Neutral" (N), representing an intermediate stance with no definite inclination; "Disagree" (D), indicating a negative assessment; and "Strongly disagree" (SD), reflecting a clearly unfavourable perception. This categorisation allowed for describing the predominant trends in students' responses regarding the different components of motivation associated with gamification.

The items included in Table 1 are grouped into two main dimensions: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation encompasses the subcategories of pleasure in the creative process and self-realisation and personal progress, while extrinsic motivation is structured around the subcategories of competence and recognition, as well as rewards and clear goals. This organisation allows for a systematic presentation of the results obtained, facilitating the comparative description of students' responses based on each dimension analysed.

Intrinsic Motivation

The two subcategories comprising intrinsic motivation—pleasure in the creative process and self-realisation and personal progress—allow us to describe how students perceive the creative writing experience when gamification elements are incorporated. The results show that a considerable portion of participants expressed positive assessments regarding the enjoyment of writing and the perception of personal growth, although neutral and disagree responses were also recorded, evidencing differences in how students experience these dynamics.

Regarding pleasure in the creative process, students reported higher levels of agreement when writing is presented as an interactive and stimulating activity. The data indicate that creative challenges and the possibility of developing progressively evolving narratives are associated with favourable perceptions towards the writing activity. However, the presence of responses in the neutral and disagree categories suggests that not all students experience the same level of enjoyment from gamified strategies.

Complementarily, the results corresponding to the subcategory of self-realisation and personal progress show that a relevant proportion of students perceive their advancement in writing through systems of levels, missions, and gamified feedback. These responses reflect that progress-tracking mechanisms are valued by part of the participating group. Nevertheless, the percentages recorded in the neutral and disagree options indicate that the perception of personal growth is not homogeneous, highlighting the diversity of experiences within the analysed context.

Subcategory: Pleasure in the creative process

The quantitative results corresponding to the subcategory Pleasure in the creative process show that a majority proportion of students fell into the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories concerning the enjoyment of writing when gamification elements are incorporated. In particular, the data indicate that 40% of students agreed and 30% strongly agreed with the item "I really enjoy writing with game elements," while a small percentage fell into the disagreement categories. Likewise, in the item referring to the exploration of imaginative topics, 50% stated they agreed and 20% strongly agreed, reflecting a favourable trend in the responses associated with this component.

In comparative terms, the item "Solving creative challenges is exciting" registered one of the highest levels of agreement, with 65% of students located in the positive categories, compared to 10% who expressed disagreement. Conversely, the item "I prefer writing when I can unlock levels" presented a more heterogeneous distribution

Tabla 1.
Impacto de la Gamificación en la Motivación para la Escritura Creativa (datos en %)

ÍTEM	SD	D	N	A	SA
INTRINSIC MOTIVATION					
Pleasure in the creative process					
I really enjoy writing with game elements	5	10	15	40	30
I feel more creative exploring imaginative topics	3	7	20	50	20
It is exciting solving creative challenges	4	6	25	40	25
Writing stories that evolve is gratifying	2	8	18	50	22
I prefer writing when I can unlock levels	6	10	25	40	19
Creative writing is more fun with missions	3	12	22	38	25
Completing a story gives me satisfaction	4	11	19	42	24
I find interactive narrative pleasant	5	9	21	43	22
Self-realisation and personal progress					
I improve as a writer by completing missions	4	7	25	45	19
My progress in writing motivates me	3	9	20	50	18
I am proud to see my growth through the levels	5	8	22	40	25
Gamification helps me see my progress	2	12	18	47	21
I learn new skills through challenges	4	9	20	44	23
Feedback improves my writing style	6	10	19	42	23
Completing gamified stories fulfills me as a writer	5	8	18	47	22
My growth is evident thanks to gamification	3	11	23	40	23
EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION					
Competence and recognition					
I am motivated to earn points for challenges	4	9	20	42	25
Leaderboards inspire me	6	11	22	40	21
I try harder with rewards	3	10	18	50	19
Public recognition drives me	5	12	19	43	21
Competing in rankings motivates me	4	14	25	38	19
Virtual rewards make me feel valued	5	9	22	43	21
Being recognised as one of the best motivates me	4	12	18	47	19
Seeing my name on the leaderboards inspires me	6	8	20	45	21
Rewards and clear goals					
I am motivated to receive rewards at the end of a task	3	10	20	48	19
Completing specific challenges motivates me	5	9	18	47	21
Knowing I can earn points keeps me focused	4	11	22	43	20
Rewards help me maintain interest	5	12	18	45	20
Setting goals with rewards helps me be consistent	3	10	21	50	16
I achieve more with a reward system	4	11	19	46	20
Virtual rewards make me feel valued	6	9	18	43	24
Having clear goals helps me avoid procrastination	4	13	21	44	18

of responses, with 19% in total agreement and 25% in the neutral category, indicating that this gamified element is not perceived uniformly by all participants.

Overall, the distribution of responses suggests that elements linked to creative challenges and the progressive evolution of narratives tend to concentrate higher levels of agreement among students. Nevertheless, the presence of relevant percentages in the neutral and disagreement categories evidences that enjoyment of the creative process mediated by gamification varies according to the individual preferences and experiences of the participants, a factor which must be considered when interpreting these results.

Subcategory: Self-realisation and personal progress

In the subcategory Self-realisation and personal progress, the results indicate that a considerable proportion of students expressed favourable perceptions regarding their improvement as writers when participating in gamified activities. In the item "I improve as a writer by completing missions," 45% of participants fell into the "agree" category and 19% into "strongly agree," while a small percentage expressed disagreement. Similarly, 50% of students stated they agreed with the statement "My progress in writing motivates me," allowing us to describe a positive trend concerning the perception of personal advancement.

When analysing the items specifically, it is observed that "I am proud to see my growth through the levels" presented one of the highest levels of agreement, with 65% of responses concentrated in the positive categories. On the other hand, the item "Feedback improves my writing style" showed a more balanced distribution, with 42% agreement and 23% strong agreement, alongside relevant percentages in the neutral and disagreement categories, evidencing differences in the valuation of this component among students.

Overall, the results show that mechanisms associated with visualising progress and recognising personal growth concentrate higher levels of agreement among participants. However, the variability observed in some items suggests that the perception of self-realisation mediated by gamification is not homogeneous, highlighting the diversity of individual experiences within the studied group.

Extrinsic Motivation

Concerning extrinsic motivation, the results were organised into two subcategories: competence and recognition, and rewards and clear goals. The distribution of responses indicates that a significant portion of students expressed positive assessments regarding the external incentives associated with gamification, such as points, virtual rewards, and ranking systems. Nevertheless, neutral and disagree responses were also observed, evidencing differences in the degree of acceptance of these mechanisms among participants.

In the subcategory competence and recognition, the data show that several students fell into the agree and strongly agree categories regarding the influence of external rewards on their participation in creative writing. Elements such as obtaining points, public recognition, and the presence of leaderboards concentrated relevant percentages of positive responses.

However, the presence of neutral responses suggests that competition does not constitute an equally motivating factor for all students. For its part, the results associated with the subcategory rewards and clear goals indicate that the definition of specific objectives and the promise of rewards upon task completion are related to favourable perceptions in a part of the studied group. The responses show that these mechanisms contribute to maintaining focus on writing activities for some students, although the variability recorded across the different response categories reflects that their effectiveness is not perceived uniformly by all participants.

Subcategory: Competence and recognition

In the subcategory Competence and recognition, the results show that a considerable proportion of students expressed positive responses towards the external incentives associated with gamification. In particular, 42% of participants fell into the "agree" category and 25% into "strongly agree" concerning the item "I am motivated to earn points for challenges," while a small percentage expressed disagreement. These data allow us to describe a favourable trend towards the use of rewards as a motivating element in creative writing.

Regarding visibility and comparison mechanisms, the results evidence a more heterogeneous distribution of responses. For example, in the item "Leaderboards inspire me," 40% of students stated they agreed, while 22% fell into the neutral category, suggesting that this resource does not generate the same level of motivation in all participants. Similarly, the item "Competing in rankings motivates me" registered one of the lowest levels of agreement, with 19% of responses in the "strongly agree" category.

Generally speaking, the distribution of responses indicates that incentives associated with external recognition are valued diversely by students. While some mechanisms, such as obtaining rewards for effort, concentrate higher levels of agreement, others linked to direct competition present more balanced responses between agreement, neutrality, and disagreement. This variability highlights that competition does not constitute a homogeneous motivational factor within the studied group.

Subcategory: Rewards and clear goals

In the subcategory Rewards and clear goals, the results indicate that a majority proportion of students expressed positive responses towards the presence of incentives associated with completing specific tasks. In the item "I am motivated to receive rewards at the end of a task," 48% of participants fell into the "agree" category and a smaller percentage expressed disagreement, allowing us to describe a favourable trend towards the use of rewards as a stimulus for creative writing.

Specifically, the item "Knowing I can earn points keeps me focused" concentrated 43% of responses in the "agree" category and 20% in "strongly agree," indicating that this type of incentive is perceived as useful for maintaining attention on the task by a significant part of the studied group. Conversely, the item "Having clear goals helps me avoid procrastination" presented a more balanced distribution, with 44% agreement and 18% strong agreement, alongside relevant percentages in the neutral and disagreement categories.

Overall, the distribution of responses suggests that clarity of goals and the presence of virtual rewards are positively valued by many students as elements that contribute to sustaining interest in creative writing activities. Nevertheless, the variability observed in some items evidences that these mechanisms do not have the same effect on all participants, reinforcing the need to interpret the results within the specific context of the study and without broad generalisations.

Discussion

The results obtained in this research allow us to describe favourable trends in the perception of university students regarding the use of gamification in creative writing, particularly concerning intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. However, these findings must be interpreted with caution, considering the descriptive nature of the study and the specific context in which it was developed. From this perspective, gamification cannot be understood as a determining causal factor, but rather as a set of pedagogical strategies associated with certain motivational experiences reported by the students.

Concerning intrinsic motivation, the data show that a significant part of the students expressed higher levels of enjoyment and satisfaction when creative writing incorporated gamified elements, such as narrative challenges and progression systems. These findings resonate with the postulates of constructivism and self-determination theory, insofar as they highlight the importance of active participation and the perception of autonomy in learning. However, the presence of neutral and disagree responses suggests that these effects do not manifest homogeneously, indicating that gamification is not equally meaningful for all students nor does it guarantee, by itself, a satisfying creative experience.

Likewise, the findings related to self-actualization and personal progress show that the mechanisms for visualizing progress are valued by some students as indicators of growth in writing. However, the fact that certain elements linked to feedback received less consistent evaluations raises questions about how these elements are implemented and perceived. The paradox that can be seen in the contradiction described based on the results obtained suggests that the effectiveness of gamification could depend not only on the presence of playful mechanics but also on their pedagogical coherence and the quality of teacher support.

From the perspective of extrinsic motivation, the results indicate that rewards, points, and external recognition are perceived as relevant stimuli by a part of the student body, in line with self-determination theory, which posits that extrinsic incentives can complement intrinsic motivation when they do not displace it. However, the variability observed in items related to competition and rankings suggests that these mechanisms are not universally motivating and, in some cases, may be indifferent or even insignificant for certain students.

In this sense, the findings partially coincide with previous studies that highlight the motivational potential of gamification (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari et al., 2014), but they also contribute relevant nuances by evidencing individual differences in how students experience these resources. This heterogeneity reinforces the need to avoid standardised approaches and to consider gamification as a flexible strategy, susceptible to adaptation according to the characteristics of the group and the educational context.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the results of this research are conditioned by certain methodological limitations, such as the use of a self-report instrument, the focus on a single subject, and the absence of comparisons with control groups. These factors do not invalidate the findings but do delimit their scope and underscore the need for future research that incorporates more diverse methodological designs, mixed approaches, or longitudinal analyses allowing for a deeper exploration of the relationship between gamification, motivation, and creative writing in different university contexts.

Conclusions

- The investigation into the impact of gamification on motivation for creative writing in university students has revealed relevant findings from a descriptive and pedagogical perspective that reflect the efficacy of this methodology in improving engagement and enjoyment in the written activity. The results obtained confirm that the integration of ludic elements, such as challenges, rewards, and feedback, has a positive influence on both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of students.
- Gamification proved effective in increasing the intrinsic pleasure that students experience during the writing process. Elements such as creative challenges and the level system contributed to greater personal satisfaction and self-realisation. These aspects not only improved the perception of the creative process but also fostered greater emotional and cognitive investment in the task.
- Regarding extrinsic motivation, the external incentives provided by gamification, such as points and virtual rewards, played a crucial role in maintaining students' focus and dedication. The possibility of receiving recognition and clear rewards for their efforts contributed to greater participation and a reduction in procrastination. Although competition was not equally valued by all, gamification mechanisms that offer rewards and clear goals proved effective in motivating the majority.
- The study provides descriptive evidence on students' perceptions regarding the use of gamification strategies in creative writing within the university classroom. While the results suggest a predominantly favourable assessment of these resources in relation to motivation, it is necessary to interpret them considering the methodological limitations of the study, such as its non-experimental design, the use of self-report instruments, and the focus on a sample confined to a specific subject and institutional context. Within this framework, the findings do not allow for the establishment of causal relationships or broad generalisations, but they do offer relevant elements for pedagogical reflection.
- From a theoretical perspective, the findings resonate with the constructivist approach to learning insofar as they show that students positively value those strategies that promote active participation, creative exploration, and the progressive construction of knowledge through meaningful experiences. In particular, the presence of narrative challenges, feedback, and progress visualisation is linked to constructivist principles such as active learning and the student's central role in their formative process, which allows us to interpret gamification as a pedagogical resource consistent with this approach, provided its implementation is contextualised and pedagogically oriented.
- This work opens lines of research aimed at deepening the analysis of gamification in university contexts similar to the one studied. In particular, future research could examine, through comparative or mixed methodological designs, how the combination of different gamified elements is associated with students' motivation levels in creative writing subjects or other related areas. Likewise, the need arises for longitudinal studies allowing for the analysis of the evolution of these effects over time, considering specific contextual and pedagogical variables, beyond the scope of the present study.
- Thus, gamification presents itself as a promising methodology for improving motivation in creative writing, offering a framework that can be adapted and personalised to meet students' needs and enrich their educational experience. The integration of game dynamics into teaching can not only increase interest and enjoyment in the creative process but also foster a more dynamic and motivating learning environment.

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