ICT Truly Human Life

Using Technology to Help Low-Income Expat Workers in Qatar Achieve a truly Human Life

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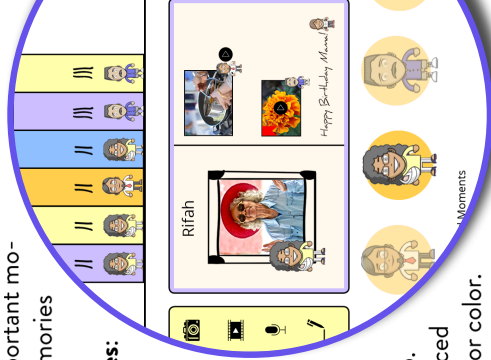
Motivation

This research project is a synthesis of Information Systems (IS) & Ethics. IS integrates technology with processes to make them easier for people. Ethics operationalizes the concept of a Truly Human Life (Nussbaum, 1997), a life that actualizes capabilities such as respect.

A Gap

In the research on ICT use, work to date does not identify the needs of the worker who is both low-income and an expat. Earlier research examines:

Expat workers (Andrade & Doolin, 2016; Lindström & Hashemi, 2019)

Low-income communities (Lang, Oreglia & Thomas, 2010; Mansour, 2015; Wang & Chen, 2012)

Unrepresentative low-income expat workers (Sibal & Foo, 2016)

Methods

All methods adhered to CITI Program's Social & Behavioral Research course and were approved by the IRB.

Observations: Multiple observations were conducted in the workers' break-room in CMUQ aimed at understanding workers' activities during their free time.

Interviews: Sixteen interviews were conducted with workers from CMUQ. These aimed to understand what participants care about and how technology plays a role. Questions focused on interests and goals, followed by technology use.
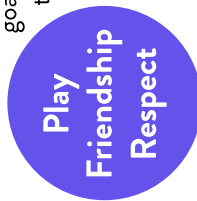
Participatory Design:
The method, "What's On Your Radar?", allows users to express their interests on a radar screen spatially, indicating what they care about through the use of icons and how much they care about it, through its distance from the center. This is especially useful as it transcends language and its barriers which this diverse population may face.

Analysis

Common Habits: Observations revealed time-specific habits where mornings involved quiet socializing and preparing for work, and afternoons involved more recreational socializing. Participants preferred socializing as opposed to isolating themselves in the break room. Finally, mobile phones were a supplement for socializing between participants in their free time.

Valued Capabilities: Nussbaum's capabilities approach (1997) identifies universally valued goals that people should have the opportunity to achieve. Thematic content analysis identified Play, Friendship & Respect as the most valued of Nussbaum's capabilities for low-income expat workers in Qatar.

Play Friendship Respect

Desired But Unrealized Capabilities: The radar screens revealed that the Friendship capability is desired and considered important, but difficult to achieve in the current environment. At times, replacements for Friendship exist in the current environment, like using social media, but social media seems not to be the optimal replacement.

Intervention

A mobile application targets the participants' most valued capabilities: Play, Friendship and Respect, bringing low-income expat workers closer to a truly human life. The main feature **connects users with others through sharing moments to and for others** through group albums. Each user in that group can share important moments, creating memories for everyone.

Data-driven features:
1. Previous albums and pinned moments allow users to view moments.
2. The system rewards users who engage with others the most, fostering respect in the group.
3. Language is replaced with symbols, icons or color.

Future Work

Usability tests will ensure the intervention fits users' needs leading to a working model, enhancing a truly human life for low-income expat workers.

References

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