Alleviating the Negative Effect of Up and Downvoting on Help Seeking in MOOC Discussion Forums

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Abstract—Through the lens of Expectancy Value Theory, we examine the effect of help giver badges, information about helper expertise, and up- and downvoting on help seeking in a MOOC discussion forum. Results show that badges alleviated the negative impact on help seeking introduced by up- and downvoting.

Keywords— help seeking, MOOCs, reputation systems, discussion forums

> **"Alleviating the Negative Effect of Up and Downvoting on Help Seeking in MOOC Discussion Forums" is an out-dated poster/work-in-progress version of the following IEEE Transactions on Learning journal article:**
>
> *http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8118179/*

Reputation Systems' Impact on Help Seeking in MOOC Discussion Forums

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Abstract—Many interactional archetypes from outside of learning contexts are being adapted and widely used for online learning environments without consideration for some of the side effects relevant to learner outcomes. Of particular concern is the effectiveness of help exchange in these learning environments. To address this need, this article explores how the reputation system features of up/downvoting, badges, and displayed expertise impact student helper selection in a peer help exchange system within a MOOC discussion forum. We draw from Expectancy Value Theory for Help Sources as a theoretical framework for positioning the work. Results from our field experiment show that up/downvoting has a negative impact on help seeking which is mitigated by the positive effect of Help Giver badges. The mechanism behind these results are then explored in a survey experiment investigating reputation systems' impact on students' expectancies, values, and costs for a help source.

Index Terms—Discussion forums, education, social computing, computer-aided instruction

Howley, I., Tomar, G., Yang, D., Ferschke, O., & Rosé, C. P. (2015, June). Alleviating the negative effect of up and downvoting on help seeking in MOOC discussion forums. In *International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Education*(pp. 629-632). Springer International Publishing.