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A Systematic Literature Review: Success Factors and Gamification Impact on Donation-Based Crowdfunding Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Gamification is a fast-growing technique that increases user engagement and motivation in donation-based crowdfunding (DCF). The impact of gamification on donor participation has gained attention as a critical digital engagement strategy in social media-integrated DCF platforms. This study uses a systematic literature review to investigate the essential success factors and influence of engagement drivers, especially gamification, on DCF campaigns' success. The PRISMA method has been used to identify various success factors at campaign, fundraiser, and platform levels by analysing 104 relevant papers extracted from the literature. In the initial phase, research patterns were identified from the literature and presented visually. In the second phase, a conceptual framework has been formulated to comprehensively summarize the role of success factors and drivers in enhancing donor engagement and optimizing crowdfunding outcomes. This research contributes by highlighting the importance of engagement strategies and the potential of gamification on DCF platforms. The study also addressed the broader context of these platforms' digitalization, which offers new ways for gamification integration into digital engagement strategies.

Keywords: Donation-Based Crowdfunding, Gamification, Donor Engagement, Systematic Literature Review, Success Factors
JEL Classifications: D64, D03. G23

1. INTRODUCTION

Natural and artificial disasters cause significant damage, affecting humanity and creating multigenerational obstacles to progress (Baltas et al., 2022). Organisations, banks, insurance firms, trade credits, and government bodies stepped in to help during these damages (Rijanto, 2018; Wierzbicka and Prystrom, 2021). Donation-based crowdfunding (DCF) attracts online donors through non-monetary rewards (Shneor and Vik, 2020). However, a significant challenge in DCF campaigns is donor retention due to volunteer participation and lack of financial incentives. DCF campaigns struggle with sustained donor engagement, as 1-time contributions dominate, and long-term engagement remains challenging. In the absence of continuous engagement, these operations are susceptible to inefficiency and failure (Zhao et al., 2020).

DCF is a digital revolution, an online fundraising technique that collects small amounts from volunteers for disaster relief efforts, charitable causes, or social welfare projects preferentially (Brüntje and Gajda, 2016). Platforms like GoFundMe, LaunchGood, and Indiegogo connect donors and beneficiaries (Bone and Baeck). The campaigns on these platforms include the project creator, the charity project, and its donors (Ho et al., 2021; Salido-Andres et al., 2021). Typically, DCF campaigns are initiated by some friends, family, or relatives on the beneficiaries' behalf to support those humanitarian causes. Likewise, DCF involves the amount of donation and rewards as satisfaction, good feelings, public acknowledgment, satisfaction, and relief from guilt (Sentanoe and Oktavia, 2022; Wierzbicka and Prystrom, 2021).

It is a social fundraising model that includes no complicated prerequisites to raise donations (Sentanoe and Oktavia, 2022).

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DCF transactions can be done via the Internet using an advanced accessible system. Nevertheless, platforms are unlicensed and unregulated, which results in additional administrative costs (Scataglini and Ventresca, 2019). Salido-Andrés et al., (2019), highlight the characteristics of DCF, and mention the areas that need more research regarding online platforms, organizational supporters, and individual donors. Although DCF has an inferior market share Böckel *et al*., (2021), it has high growth potential in academia (Y. Zhang et al., 2020). The main functions of DCF include fundraiser accreditation, campaign start-up, financial administration, campaign promotion, donations, and closure (Scataglini and Ventresca, 2019).

Moreover, preliminary research suggests that digital engagement in CF is significantly enhanced by a multitude of factors, including motivation, reward mechanisms, social recognition, user experience, user interface, gamification strategies, and competition. These drivers made the donation process more interactive and rewarding (Xiao and Yue, 2021). With the advancement in the DCF field, understanding these digital engagement drivers becomes essential for optimizing campaign effectiveness and maximizing donations (Vinerean and Opreana, 2021).

Furthermore, gamification drives long-term participation through challenges, quests, and rewards to increase user engagement and motivation to maintain sustainable relationships over time (Behl and Dutta, 2020b; Golrang and Safari, 2021). Emergent studies suggest that gamification enhances donor motivation and campaign sustainability, but its role has not been analysed systematically.

This study aims to address the challenge of sustaining donor engagement and long-term campaign effectiveness through a comprehensive literature review. It fills the gap by exploring the key success factors and engagement drivers in DCF and examining various elements, including campaign strategies, donor motivations, platform features, and social factors. It also investigates the role of gamification in enhancing donor engagement and campaign sustainability (Zhang and Liu, 2012).

The study collected the factors from numerous articles in the literature and categorized those quantitative and qualitative factors as campaign, donor, platform, fundraiser, social, ethical, and legal factors. Further, these success factors can be analyzed in the future to discover their differences and similarities through critical inquiry and rigorous analysis for the practical implementation of DCF platforms. This study bridges this gap by identifying the broader success factors of DCF campaigns (RQ_1). Then, it examines engagement drivers (RQ_2) and gamification (RQ_3) as potential tools for addressing donor retention and engagement challenges.

1.1. Research Questions

As research on DCF campaigns advances, it becomes clear that a single factor cannot fully explain the success or failure of a campaign. A complex web of factors shapes donor behaviours and campaign success by interacting with various psychological, social, technological, and contextual factors. These findings highlight the need for a deeper analysis of how these factors influence donation intentions, behaviour, motivation, and campaign success. In light of these insights, this study summarizes the contribution of various factors from the literature. It also seeks to explore the impact of these factors on DCF campaign success through these research questions:

- What factors contribute to the sustainability and success of DCF campaigns?
- What roles do digital engagement drivers such as motivation, engagement strategies, and gamification play in enhancing donors' engagement for the success of DCF campaigns over time?
- How do gamification elements contribute to the long-term sustainability of DCF campaigns?

The remaining sections of the study are structured as follows: Section 2 explains the methodology for extracting and analysing the literature, and Section 3 summarizes the literature on DCF campaigns' success factors. Section 4 then presents the research findings along with an outcomes analysis, and Section 5 presents discussions, Section 6 rounds off with concluding observations.

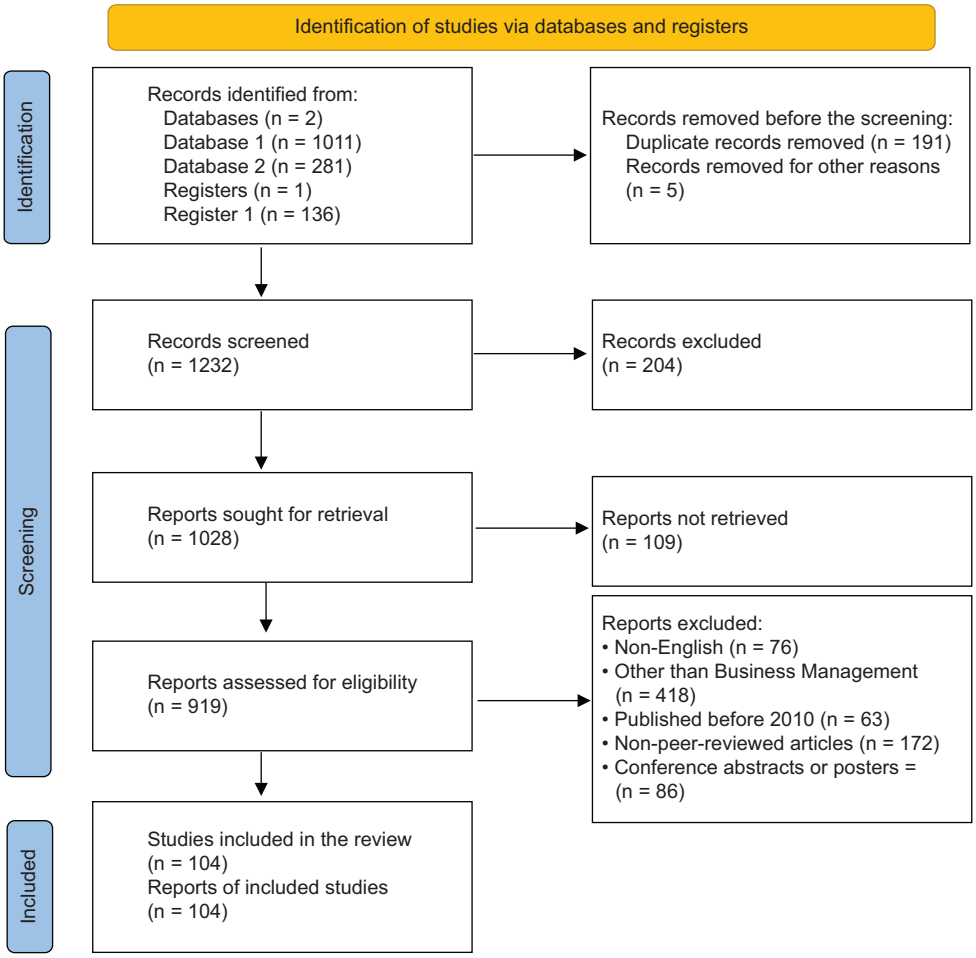
2. METHODOLOGY

A systematic review by Siddaway et al. (2019), was employed for its academic relevance. The authors used Research Rabbit and applied the Pearl Growing Technique. This technique helped identify key studies by cross-checking references from cornerstone articles. The PRISMA method represented in Figure 1 has been chosen to improve transparency and to address potential biases (Moher et al., 2010). Due to their comprehensive coverage of high-impact, peer-reviewed journals, the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases, Chadegani et al. (2013) were selected for data extraction, focusing on articles published in English from 2010 to 2024 across Business, Management, Medicine, and Computer Science journals. To maintain methodological rigour and relevance, non-peer-reviewed sources and studies from other fields were excluded. The 2010-2024 era was chosen due to significant growth in online DCF platforms, including studies addressing disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Later, keywords, abstracts, and titles were used to extract data from the literature. A total of 104 studies were included among the 1232 records. Inclusion criteria comprise the relevance of the study to DCF, peer-reviewed status, and publication within the defined timeframe. The keywords used in the study included "donation-based crowdfunding," "crowdfunding campaign success factors," "gamification and crowdfunding," "crowdfunding outcomes," "impact of gamification," "donor engagement strategies," "crowdfunding motivations," "donor behavior in crowdfunding," "crowdfunding rewards" "crowdfunding campaigns and social media," "gamification elements," "engagement drivers," "user engagement in crowdfunding," "gamification and user engagement," and "intrinsic motivation in crowdfunding."

The authors employed Boolean operators (AND/OR) to refine keyword combinations to ensure the precision of the systematic review by identifying relevant studies and minimizing the

Figure 1: PRISMA representation of data extraction from literature



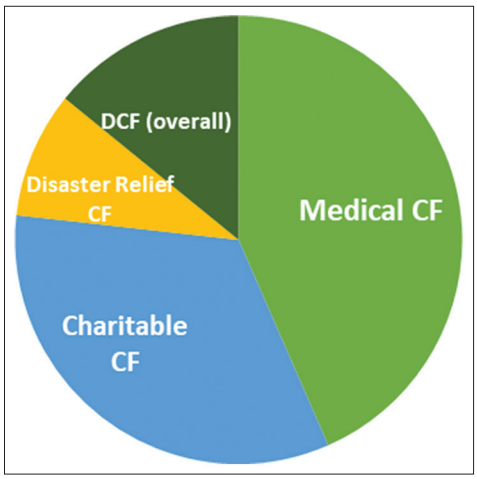
inclusion of unrelated articles. Clustering and co-occurrence networks based on the author's keywords and co-authorship have been generated using VOS viewer.

3. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Behl and Dutta, (2020a), found DCF crucial for disaster relief efforts. DCF campaigns include medical, charitable, social welfare, and disaster relief crowdfunding. Medical crowdfunding raises funds for health-related expenses Snyder and Crooks, (2021); charitable crowdfunding supports non-profit causes, disaster relief crowdfunding provides aid to affected communities Salido-Andres et al., (2021); and social welfare crowdfunding addresses societal issues (Van Teunenbroek and Hasanefendic, 2023). Figure 2 represents the category-wise division of the literature. In the extant literature, various aspects, such as the individual motivations of backers Jovanović (2019), the impact of platform-based features Tomczak and Brem, (2013), and managerial strategies employed by campaign creators Frydrych et al., (2016), have been explored. Moreover, Scataglini and Ventresca, (2019), discussed DCF platforms' innovation strategies and their latent contribution.

Also, researchers have investigated the legal, ethical, and sustainability implications of crowdfunding and examined the regulatory

Figure 2: Category-wise percentage of publications in the literature



environment and long-term viability considerations to shape fundraising success (De Luca et al., 2019; Mastrangelo et al., 2020; Snyder et al., 2017). Explicitly, many factors, such as the project's goal, the creator's communication, marketing strategies, the degree of social network engagement, and the perceived trustworthiness of the campaign, have been highlighted by Xiao et al., (2021). Hence, this review integrates and synthesizes these diverse aspects to comprehend the influencing success factors for a sustainable DCF campaign.

3.1. Key Success Factors in DCF Campaigns

The success of DCF campaigns is influenced by a range of factors, from the campaign itself to the characteristics of the donors and platforms. Understanding these key success factors is crucial to optimizing the design and execution of such campaigns. These campaigns are categorized at different levels: Campaign, donor-related, platform, fundraiser, social, and ethical. This section explores the critical success factors, shedding light on how each aspect influences donor behavior and campaign outcomes.

3.1.1. Campaign-level factors

Numerous campaign-level factors influence the success of DCF campaigns. For instance, project target amount, campaign title, visual information, message content, and message quality significantly determine campaign effectiveness (Kim and Hall, 2021a). Also, social ties, project goals, and duration directly influence the campaign success probability (Dehdashti et al., 2022). Linguistics style in project advertising also depicts a positive impact on campaign success (Wan Nur Fazni and Williams, 2021).

3.1.2. Donor-related factors

Research specified that the intention to donate relates to psychological factors such as empathy, perceived credibility, anticipated regret, and experience (Gilchrist et al., 2019; Kasri and Indriani, 2021). Other donor characteristics, such as demographic, behavioral, attitudinal, and experiential aspects, significantly influence DCF campaigns. Aleksina et al., (2019) and Mollick, (2014) mentioned intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, perceived ease of use, self-efficacy, and social connection as some other influential factors. Additionally, past donation behaviour, cultural variations, and social disparities based on race, gender, and age impact donation intentions (Kenworthy et al., 2020).

3.1.3. Platform characteristics

Platform design and functionality significantly impact user trust and donation behaviour. Some important platform characteristics that affect users' trust include quality of information, system reliability, and perceived platform regulations (Park et al., 2021). Moreover, crowdfunding websites' security, navigability, and visual appeal also play an essential role (Chen et al., 2019; Kasri and Indriani, 2021). Performance expectancy, facilitating conditions, and effort expectancy also enhance the donation intention (Theerthaana and Manohar, 2021).

3.1.4. Fundraiser-level factors

Fundraiser credibility and engagement strategies directly affect campaign success. Transparent communication strategies, such as timely updates on campaign progress, enhance donor confidence and increase engagement. Campaign success also depends upon the creator's credibility and backer (Bukhari et al., 2019). Research shows that digital accountability and transparency reduce information asymmetry between funders and campaign organizers, resulting in campaign reliability (Salido-Andrés et al., 2019).

3.1.5. Social and ethical considerations

Media revelation plays an important role in DCF campaigns by shaping public perceptions (Snyder et al., 2017). Social capital and signalling strategies such as identity, patience, and reciprocity also influence donor (Zribi and Khoufi, 2022). Moreover, legal, regulatory, and ethical considerations, including patient privacy in medical crowdfunding, impact the overall campaign's effectiveness and legitimacy (Grassi and Fantaccini, 2022).

Table 1 presents the key patterns of the factors extracted from the literature. Quantitative studies predominantly analyse measurable aspects, such as fundraising target goals, platform engagement metrics, and the statistical relationship between campaign duration and funding success. Qualitative research focuses on the subjective donor experiences and psychological motivations based on certain success factors, such as donor trust, social influence, and perceived credibility. By understanding these methodological preferences and contextual emphases, future research can bridge gaps in underexplored areas and provide a more holistic understanding of DCF success factors. The table is arranged context-wise, allowing different literature trends to be observed. For instance, the literature is analyzed according to success factors: campaign-level, donor-related, platform-related, fundraiser-level, gamification, and social factors. Moreover, the literature is also categorized according to the qualitative or quantitative nature of success factors.

4. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

This study investigates the sustainability and success of DCF campaigns by analysing key themes from the literature and bibliometric analysis. The analysis is structured according to the research questions, highlighting crucial factors that influence campaign success, the role of digital engagement drivers such as motivation, trust, credibility, engagement strategies, perceived impact, emotional connection, reciprocity, transparency, and loyalty, to effect donor engagement and the long-term sustainability of DCF campaigns. Moreover, the impact of gamification on the overall success of DCF campaigns over time has been analysed.

4.1. Thematic Findings

A thematic synthesis approach Braun and Clarke, (2006) was adopted, which involved coding to extract data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and interrelationships between different success factors using MAXQDA.

4.1.1. Success factors in DCF campaigns

The sustainability of DCF campaigns depends on multiple factors, including campaign strategies, fundraiser credibility, donor relationships, social and ethical considerations, and platform features. The key themes identified in the literature include:

At the campaign level, fundraising success is influenced by well-structured goals, compelling storytelling, strategic communication, and engagement with donors. Campaigns with clear, realistic financial targets and transparent fund allocation plans are more likely to attract donors. Regular updates on project progress, testimonials, and success stories play an important role in encouraging continued donations. Moreover, post-campaign communication and stewardship strategies enhance long-term donor confidence and commitment. The use of gamification techniques, such as progress tracking and milestone-based

Table 1: Summary of the DCF campaigns' success factors

Context	Authors	Type of DCF	Aspect	Factors found	How it contributes to campaign success
Campaign	Yin and Li, (2023)	DCF	Qualitative	Emotional Appeals Entrepreneurial Narratives Effective Narrative Design	Creates a deeper connection between the campaign and potential donors by promoting empathy, building trust, and influencing decision-making.
	Kim and Hall, (2021b)	Sustainability Crowdfunding		Campaign Title Visual Information Message Quality Message Content	Capture attention, set the tone, and increase donation likelihood by fostering emotional connections.
	Parhankangas and Renko, (2017)	Crowdfunding		Linguistic Style	Fosters a stronger connection with potential donors by shaping donor perceptions, enhancing emotional engagement, cultivating trust and motivation among donors.
	Dehdashti et al., (2022)	DCF	Quantitative	Project Target Amount Campaign Time Goal Distance	Motivate potential donors to contribute towards a tangible goal.
	Han et al., (2023)	Crowdfunding		Funding Goal Funding Period Estimated Time of Delivery Social Ties Investment Preparation Presentation Multiple Rewards Interaction With the Crowd	Augment donor trust through perceived credibility and increase the likelihood of meeting sustainable financial targets.
	Kenworthy et al., (2020)	Medical Crowdfunding		Race Gender Age Relationships	Influence donor perceptions, trust, and emotional connection by shaping donation behaviour based on shared identity, social affinity, and cultural factors.
Donor	Liu et al., (2018)	Charitable Crowdfunding	Qualitative	Empathy Perceived Credibility. Emotional And Cognitive Components	Evoke donor compassion, establish trustworthiness, and shape decision-making processes.
	Gilchrist et al., (2019), Shneor and Vik, (2020)	Crowdfunding/ Medical Crowdfunding		Demographic Characteristics Location Experience Behaviour Campaign Awareness Past Contribution Behaviour Attitude	Shape how individuals perceive and connect with a campaign, influencing their willingness to contribute, sense of involvement, and likelihood of sustained support.
	Aleksina et al., (2019), Lee et al., (2022), Liu et al., (2021)	Medical Crowdfunding		Attitude Subjective Norms Perceived Behavioural Control Trust Security Issues	Outlines donor intentions, influences participation, fosters confidence in the platform, ensures transparency, and mitigates concerns related to online transactions.
	Gilchrist et al., (2019), Kasri and Yuniar, (2021)	Medical Crowdfunding/ Charitable Crowdfunding		Perceived Control Enabling Circumstances Anticipated Regret Experience Empathy Perceived Credibility	Determining intentions, enhancing engagement, fostering emotional connections, and building donor confidence and credibility.
	Aleksina et al., (2019), Mollick, (2014)	Medical Crowdfunding/ Crowdfunding		Intrinsic Motivation Extrinsic Motives Perceived Ease of Use Self-Efficacy Social Connection	Driving donor motivation, simplifying participation, strengthening confidence, fostering social ties, and increasing ease of engagement.
	Snyder et al., (2017)	Medical Crowdfunding		Altruism Self-Esteem	Encourage generosity, foster a sense of fulfilment, and reinforce positive donor behaviour and long-term engagement.
	Jiao et al., (2022)	Charitable Crowdfunding		Intrinsic Motivation Shared Values Perceived Trust Financial Restrictions Complex Nature of Incentives Extrinsic Factors Intrinsic Factors	Aligning donor motivation with shared values, fostering trust, overcoming financial constraints, simplifying

(Contd...)

Table 1: ***(Continued)***

Context	Authors	Type of DCF	Aspect	Factors found	How it contributes to campaign success
				Financial Factors Social Factors.	incentives, and integrating social and financial influences to encourage sustained engagement.
	Allah Pitchay et al., (2022)	DCF		Sense of Self-Worth Perceived Donor Effectiveness Moral Obligation	Instilling personal value, increasing confidence in the impact of donations, and reinforcing a sense of moral duty to give.
	Xiao and Yue, (2021)	Charitable Crowdfunding		Donation Experiences	Shaping donor perceptions, reinforcing trust, and increasing the likelihood of repeated contributions based on past experiences.
	Mejia et al., (2019), Shneor and Vik, (2020)	Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Donor Education Financial Literacy	Improving donor decision-making, increasing financial awareness, and enabling more thoughtful and credible contributions.
	Wang et al., (2021)	DCF		Sympathy With Specific Project Topics Longer Visit Duration	Relatable causes evoke stronger donor connections, while prolonged interaction builds trust.
	Mollick, (2014); Jöntgen, (2022)	Crowdfunding		Economic Factors Intermediary Function	Shapes donor affordability, enhances trust, and streamlines transactions.
Social	Snyder et al., (2023)	Medical Crowdfunding	Quantitative	News Media Coverage	Amplifies campaign visibility, shapes donor perceptions, and increases credibility.
	Choy and Schlagwein, (2016)	Charitable Crowdfunding		Online Campaign Sharing on Social Networks Comments	Broaden audience reach while comments foster engagement, trust, and donor enthusiasm.
	Wang and Wang, (2019)	Crowdfunding/ DCF		Social Capital Incentive Component	Fosters trust and engagement motivate participation and sustain donor involvement.
	Chen et al., (2019)	DCF		Security Navigability Visual Appeal Transaction Convenience	It enhances donor trust, simplifies navigation, improves visual engagement, and ensures seamless transactions.
	Kubheka, (2020)	Medical Crowdfunding	Qualitative	Societal Variables Policy Variables	Shape donor behaviour ensures credibility, transparency, and ethical participation.
Platform	Park et al., (2021)	DCF	Qualitative	Information Quality System Quality Institutional Mechanism Characteristics Platform Regulations Trust	Ensure reliability and reinforce transparency and trust.
	Theerthaana and Manohar, (2021)	DCF		Performance Expectancy Effort Expectancy Facilitating Conditions Trust	Setting clear expectations, reducing effort barriers, ensuring supportive conditions, and reinforcing trust.
	Zhang et al., (2022)	Medical Crowdfunding		Social Presence Perceived Differences in Trust	Fosters donor engagement and influences confidence.
	Gilchrist et al., (2019), Mauka et al., (2015)	Medical Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Motivational Rewards Ease Of Access to Donation Sites Altruistic Motivations Favourable Views	Offering incentives and fostering a spirit of generosity.
	Zhang et al., (2021)	Medical Crowdfunding		Design Features of Medical Crowdfunding Websites	User-friendly interfaces and transparent communication.
	Salido-Andrés et al., (2019)	DCF		Digital Transformation of CF Platforms	Enhances efficiency and sayli advanced technologies.
	Suh and Hijal-Moghrabi, (2023)	DCF/ Crowdfunding		Confidentiality And Integrity of Donation Data Transparency Trust Accountability	Builds donor confidence, strengthens trust, and ensures ethical fundraising practices.

(Contd...)

Table 1: ***(Continued)***

Context	Authors	Type of DCF	Aspect	Factors found	How it contributes to campaign success
Donor/Social	Kubheka, (2020), Snyder et al., (2023)	Medical Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Digital Skills Pre-Existing Social Networks Emotional Potency News Media Coverage	Facilitates campaign navigation, expands reach, enhances donor connections, and amplifies visibility.
	Chen et al., (2021)	Crowdfunding	Qualitative	Trust And Emotional Appeal Content Quality Initiator Credibility Platform Reputation	Ensures transparency and enhances credibility through reliable content and reputation.
Donor/Campaign/ Fundraiser/ Platform	Pan and Dong, (2023)	Charitable Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Signals at Platform Level Fundraiser-Level	Clear signals reduce information asymmetry, enhance credibility, and strengthen donor confidence.
	Salido-Andres et al., (2021)	DCF		Profile Of Individuals, Groups, Organizations The Use of Effective Channel Strategies Sympathy Through the Use of Imagery The Influence of Impulsiveness The Role of Information Asymmetry Social Capital The Impact of Social, Demographic, and Psychographic Characteristics	Leveraging audience characteristics, optimizing communication strategies, evoking emotional responses, influencing impulsive giving, mitigating information gaps, strengthening social ties, and considering demographic/ psychological traits.
	Kaminski and Hopp, (2020)	Crowdfunding		Campaign Messaging Communication Strategies	Effectively engaging donors and conveying the campaign's purpose.
Social/Campaign	Li et al., (2022)	DCF	Qualitative	Information Asymmetry Signalling Effect on Social Networks	Mitigate information asymmetry, amplify visibility, and foster donor trust.
Fundraiser	Cai et al., (2021)	Crowdfunding Campaign	Qualitative	Post-Campaign Communication and Care Reporting on the Use of Funds and Their Effects	Strengthens donor relationships and builds trust and accountability.
	Bukhari et al., (2019)	DCF		Creator Credibility Backer Support	Builds confidence, increases campaign visibility, and social proof.
Fundraiser/ Campaign/ Platform	Zribi and Khoufi, (2022)	Crowdfunding Campaign	Qualitative	Signalling Strategies Identity Patience Pointing Reciprocity Interactivity	Directing donor attention, encouraging mutual support, and strengthening long-term donor relationships.
Platform/ Campaign/ Fundraiser	Salido-Andres et al., (2022)	DCF	Quantitative	Sharing/Updating Transparent Information	Reinforcing trust, demonstrating accountability, enhancing perceived reliability, and encouraging continued participation.
Platform/ Gamification	Jiao et al., (2021), Theerthaana and Manohar, (2021)	Charitable Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Information Technology (IT) Affordances	It improves accessibility, streamlines donation processes, enables real-time engagement, fosters trust through secure transactions, and amplifies outreach via digital platforms.
Social/Donor/ Campaign	Saleh et al., (2020)	Medical Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Social Media Presence Campaign Narrative Length Fundraising Target Contributor Numbers Demographic Traits	Broadens outreach, shapes donor perception, enhances credibility, generates social proof, and enables targeted engagement.
Donor/Campaign/ Platform	Jang and Chu, (2022)	Donation-Based Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Donation Amount Per Donor Number Of Donors	Increases total funds raised and expands reach and engagement.
Donor/Fundraiser	Li et al., (2022)	Charitable Crowdfunding	Qualitative	Cultural Variations	Shapes attitudes, donation behavior, and preferences toward giving.

(Contd...)

Table 1: ***(Continued)***

Context	Authors	Type of DCF	Aspect	Factors found	How it contributes to campaign success
Donor/Campaign	Saleh et al., (2020)	Medical Crowdfunding	Quantitative	Healthcare Expenditures Beneficiary Demographics The Impact of Routine Treatment	Drive donation urgency, Influence donor empathy, and shape funding needs.
Gamification	Behl et al., (2023), Behl et al., (2023), Behl and Dutta, (2020a), Golrang and Safari, (2021)	Disaster Relief Crowdfunding/ DCF	Quantitative	Gamification Techniques	Enhance donor engagement, boost motivation through rewards and challenges, and foster long-term participation.
Legal/Ethical	Linzalone et al., (2023); Liu and Chen, (2021)	Medical Crowdfunding	Qualitative	Legal Regulatory and Ethical Factors	Ensure compliance and donor protection, enhance platform accountability, build trust, and enhance transparency.

incentives, is also a driver for sustained engagement (Dehdashti et al., 2022; Ho et al., 2021).

In donor-related factors, the sustainability of DCF campaigns is strongly influenced by transparency. Transparent fund allocation, regular updates, and verified fundraisers enhance credibility and lead to more donations. Real-time reporting, security measures, and encrypted transactions strengthen confidence. Emotional factors such as altruism, empathy, and social recognition influence donor behaviour that creates a sense of connection and urgency through personal storytelling, compelling visuals, and testimonials, driving initial and repeat donations. Moreover, social media engagement and peer networks amplify donors' role in others (Aleksina et al., 2019; Kasri and Indriani, 2021; Snyder et al., 2017).

At the platform level, user-friendly interfaces, secure payment options, and recommendation algorithms influence donor participation. Donor recognition and feedback mechanisms foster a sense of trust and credibility through social media integration. Legal and regulatory frameworks also shape donor behaviour on DCF platforms (Prananingtyas and Irawati, 2021; Salido-Andres et al., 2021; Salido-Andrés et al., 2019). Besides, credibility, transparency, and prior experience contribute to campaign success at the fundraiser level. Accountability through detailed financial breakdowns or regular progress updates enhances the fundraiser's credibility and is more likely to secure donor trust (Bukhari et al., 2019).

Moreover, Social aspects include media coverage that significantly impacts DCF campaign success by shaping public perception and increasing visibility. Viral content, particularly emotionally charged narratives, triggers donation likelihood. Campaigns shared widely on social media gain credibility, attract larger audiences, and enhance donor motivation. Additionally, real-time donor updates and public acknowledgements strengthen the legitimacy and encourage participation (Hapsari and Sulung, 2021; Kubheka, 2020).

Regulatory considerations also outline the efficiency of DCF campaigns. The absence of standardized regulations causes risks such as fraudulent campaigns and mismanagement of funds that can shake the donor's confidence. Lastly, ethical concerns, such as patient privacy in medical crowdfunding and fair allocation of raised funds, influence donation decisions. Platforms with strong verification processes, ethical fundraising guidelines, and transparent accountability measures gain more trust (Linzalone et al., 2023).

4.1.2. Digital engagement drivers

Beyond the initial success of a campaign, long-term sustainability hinges on donor engagement. Sustaining donor engagement is a significant challenge in DCF due to the lack of monetary incentives (Kamarudin et al., 2023). Also, effective donor engagement is rooted in trust-building mechanisms, psychological motivations, and strategic communication efforts. Psychological motivations such as reciprocity, a sense of community, and moral obligation are essential in shaping donor behaviour. A personal connection to the cause is created by emotional triggers that create exclusivity and urgency through narrative, compelling messages, individualized communication, and acknowledging donations (Ein-Gar et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2023).

Moreover, multimedia elements such as videos, infographics, and real-time campaign updates enhance donor engagement. Additionally, crowdfunding platforms that provide interactive spaces like comment sections and live Q&A sessions create a sense of connection to the fundraising process (Sirisawat et al., 2022). Also, continuous updates on fund utilization and project progress create a secure environment. Some donor retention strategies, such as membership models, loyalty programs, or exclusive content for recurring donors, enhance retrieval and donor engagement. It gives them a sense of being active stakeholders in the cause rather than one-time donors (Ramanath, 2016).

Hence, the key themes identified in the literature are:

- Perceived impact nurtures trust, emotional connection, and reciprocity that enhance donor motivation and long-term campaign sustainability (Kamarudin et al., 2023).
- Loyalty promotes sustained donor participation, trust, and long-term commitment through incentives, social recognition, and gamified experiences (Sirisawat et al., 2022).
- Psychological motivation includes altruism, social recognition, and peer pressure that contribute to long-term donor engagement. Donors are more likely to contribute if they see others donating (Saxton and Wang, 2014).

- Personalization and social media coverage increase engagement and reach (Snyder et al., 2023).
- Trust and transparency enhance donor participation by mitigating fraud risk and ensuring accountability via real-time updates, secure transactions, and visible campaign impact (Zhang et al., 2021).
- Engagement strategies such as social recognition and personalized donor interactions foster sustained participation, enhance donor motivation, and strengthen community connections (Sherman and Axelrad, 2022).
- Gamification Elements, such as rewards, badges, and leaderboards, increase donor retention and participation (Behl and Dutta, 2020b).

4.1.3. Role of gamification in DCF

Gamification plays a crucial role in enhancing donor motivation and campaign sustainability**.** By integrating elements such as leaderboards, achievement badges, and progress visualization tools, crowdfunding platforms create a more engaging and interactive donor experience. These mechanisms encourage donors to contribute for philanthropic reasons and self-recognition (Behl et al., 2024; Golrang and Safari, 2021).

Moreover, real-time feedback on fundraising progress due to gamification fosters a sense of commitment. Tangible millstones, such as leaderboard ranking or goal achievement, maintain their involvement. Gamification also promotes a sense of collective achievement, such as team-based fundraising challenges or referral incentives. Also, campaigns with dynamic and interactive experiences engage donors more than passive campaigns (Behl et al., 2022; Behl and Dutta, 2020b; Behl and Pereira, 2021).

Some of the extracted themes from the literature include:

- Impact on Donor Motivation: Game elements increase motivation by making the donation experience more interactive and enjoyable (Allah Pitchay et al., 2023).
- Competition and Social Recognition: Leaderboards and challenges encourage friendly competition, increasing donor retention rates (Kamarudin et al., 2023).
- Donor Retention: A comparison of gamified versus non-gamified DCF campaigns suggests that the former leads to higher donor retention rates due to sustained engagement (Chen, 2018)
- Impact on Donor Experience: Gamification enhances the donor experience by making the donation process more engaging, enjoyable, and rewarding (Xiao and Yue, 2021).
- Impact on Donor Behaviour: Game mechanics influence the frequency and repetition of donations by enhancing platform features (Bhati and McDonnell, 2020).
- Impact on Donor Loyalty: Gamification strengthens donor loyalty through badges and exclusive rewards for frequent donors, creating a sense of belonging and long-term commitment (Sirisawat et al., 2022).
- Emotional engagement: Interactive storytelling and gamification enhance emotional engagement, connecting donors with a cause (Snyder et al., 2023).

4.2. Bibliometric Findings

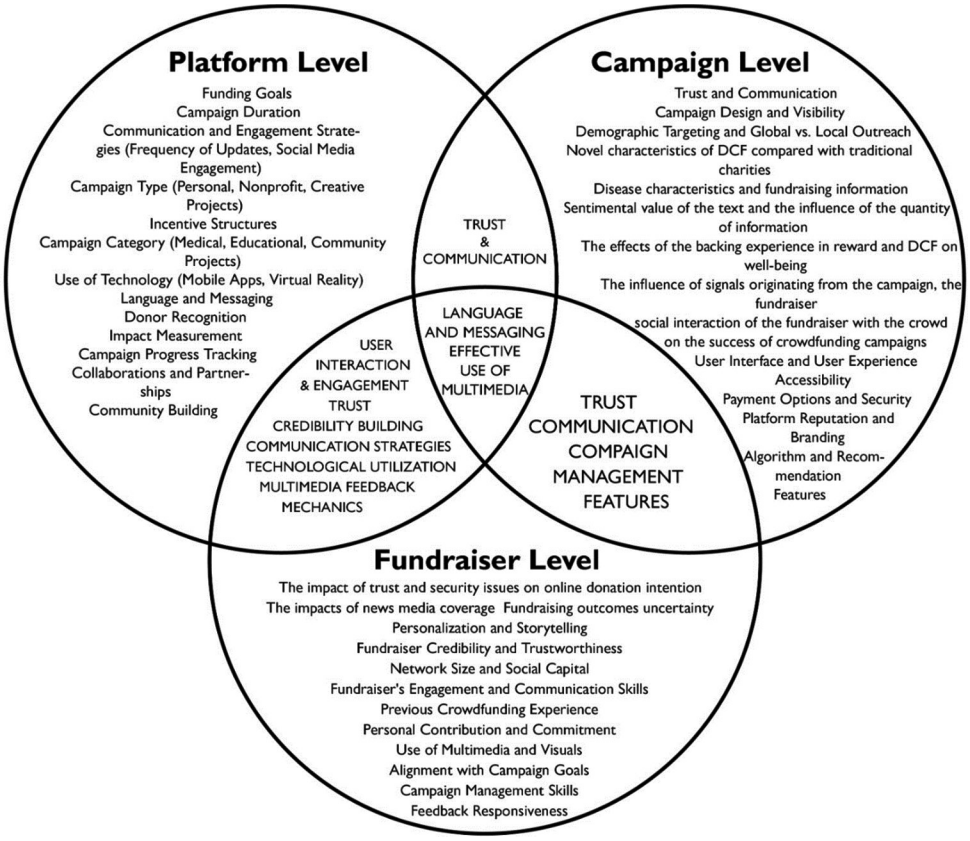
A bibliometric analysis was conducted to examine DCF's academic landscape systematically, identifying key themes, influential authors, and emerging research trends through co-citation mapping, Venn diagram, keyword analysis, and network visualization

Figure 3 is a virtual representation of the factors in the literature contributing to the DCF campaign's success. The size of the word describes its frequency in the literature. The word cloud highlights key themes in DCF. It emphasizes the importance of social dynamics, trust, transparency, and donor engagement. Prominent terms such as "social," "donation," "trust," "information," and "practice" suggest that donor behaviour is influenced by social presence, perceived credibility, and strategic engagement. Additionally, concepts like "profile," "impression," "self," and "asymmetry" indicate donor perception and decision-making in crowdfunding success. The presence of the words "sharing," "networks," and "media" highlights the impact of digital connectivity and communication strategies.

A Venn diagram in Figure 4 categorizes these factors. It illustrates the intersection of success factors at three levels: Platform, campaign, and fundraiser. At the platform level, key factors include user interface, accessibility, security, reputation, and regulatory considerations. The campaign level highlights goal clarity, supporter engagement, post-campaign stewardship, gamification, and audience targeting. The fundraiser level

Figure 3: Word cloud of the success factors found in the literature

Figure 4: Venn diagram presenting intersection of factors



emphasizes credibility, trustworthiness, communication skills, personal commitment, and previous crowdfunding experience. The overlapping sections highlight the crucial role of trust and communication, campaign management features, and technology. User interaction, engagement strategies, effective multimedia use, and feedback mechanisms drive crowdfunding success.

A co-occurrence map has also been presented in Figure 5 to analyze the keywords used in the literature related to DCF and reveal several interconnected themes in crowdfunding research. The map includes terms like crowdfunding success, donation, and donation-based crowdfunding as the central facets of the field. Cluster sizes of social media, trust, and online donations highlight the growing role of digital platforms in crowdfunding. Keywords like blockchain and fintech emphasize the increasing influence of financial technologies in enhancing security, transparency, and trust in DCF campaigns. The map also highlights the impact of COVID-19 on medical crowdfunding and shows how the pandemic stimulated healthcare-related crowdfunding efforts. Ethical considerations, such as altruism and information asymmetry, point to ongoing concerns in the crowdfunding field. Overall, the map illustrates the diverse, multidisciplinary nature of crowdfunding studies, encompassing technological, social, ethical, and financial dimensions. Furthermore, a co-citation map, as shown in Figure 6, was created using VosViewer to analyze the authors' contributions and collaborations.

In total, 6767 authors are present in the literature review, and it is impossible to analyze all of them. Twenty is the minimum number of citations required to meet the qualifying criterion. Hence, 27 authors have qualified according to these criteria. Four clusters represent the different groups of authors according to their co-authorship. The nodes represent individual authors, while the lines indicate co-authorship relationships. Different colors signify clusters of researchers who frequently collaborate, highlighting key research groups. Larger nodes indicate authors with higher centrality or influence within the network. Additionally, Appendix 1 represents the occurrence of the DCF campaign's success factors in the literature year-wise. In the initial years, social and donor-related factors were discussed only. In the later years, the versatility of factors can be seen.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study display a combination of campaign-level strategies, donor-related motivations, platform characteristics, and social and ethical factors that shape the success and sustainability of DCF campaigns. As articulated in RQ_1, what factors contribute to the sustainability and success of DCF campaigns? Several key factors contribute to shaping donor behaviour. For instance, psychological factors such as emotional triggers, empathy, the sense of moral obligation, and the desire for social recognition drive individual donation decisions and promote long-term donor engagement. The satisfaction achieved by contributing to the cause or social validation from peers creates a long-lasting relationship between the donor and the cause. Social dynamics also play a vital role in networking among similar working groups.

Additionally, a sense of collective action reinforces participation and motivates ongoing donations. Ethical and normative factors

Figure 5: Co-occurrence map of the keyword used in literature

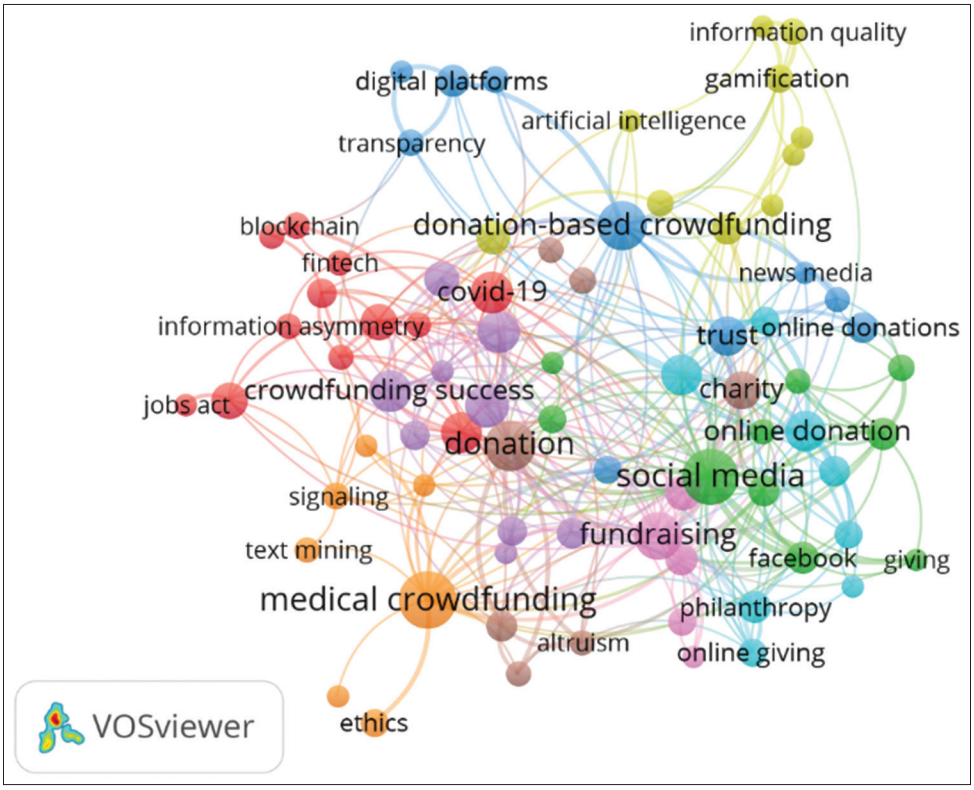
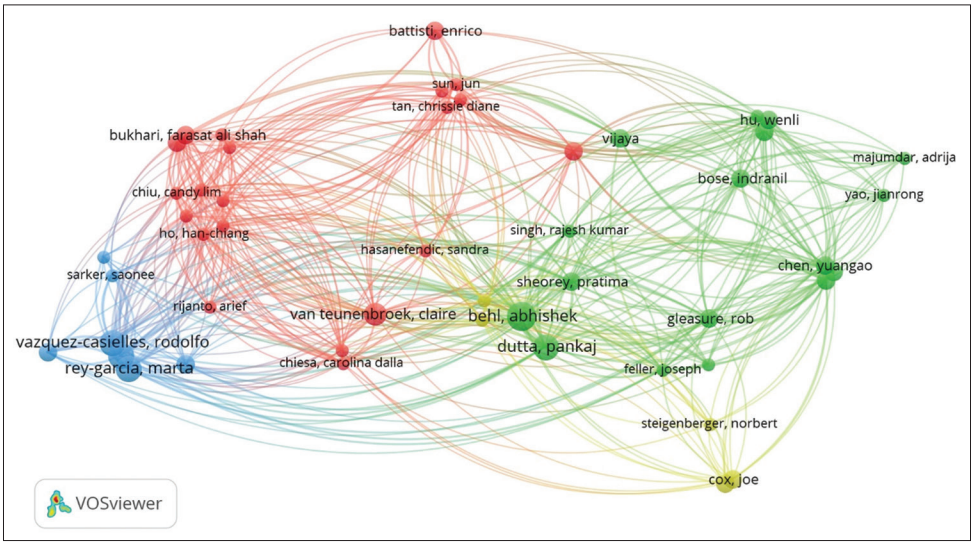


Figure 6: Co-citation network analysis of most influential authors



also influence the campaign's success through transparency and assurance that funds are being used in the right direction. To conclude, technological and societal aspects also intersect with the abovementioned dimensions. The evolution of these platforms encourages potential donors through real-time updates, interactive content, and gamification strategies. These results align with existing research that emphasizes the importance of these multi-dimensional factors in driving DCF campaign success (Kim and Hall, 2021; Dehdashti et al., 2022; Bukhari et al., 2019). Hence, this study illustrates how success factors from different levels drive donor engagement.

While previous research has extensively examined factors such as campaign design, fundraiser credibility, platform trust, etc., in determining DCF success, sustaining donor participation remains a persistent challenge. The findings from RQ_1 suggest that a combination of factors contributes to long-term engagement**.** With the growth of digital platforms, engagement strategies such as digital and gamified mechanisms significantly enhance donor retention and engagement. To further explore this, the present study assesses the effectiveness of digital engagement drivers in strengthening long-term donor involvement**.**

RQ_2: What roles do digital engagement drivers such as motivation, engagement strategies, and gamification play in enhancing donors' engagement for DCF campaigns' success over time?

Digital engagement drivers promote motivation, trust, and sustained dedication to enhance donor retention. Participation and consistent donation are powered by inner and extrinsic donor motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Credibility and trust boost donors' confidence and engage potential donors (Salido-Andres et al., 2021; Salido-Andrés et al., 2019). Effective engagement strategies such as interactive storytelling and tailored messaging increase donors' level of involvement. Perceived impact cultivates empathy and reinforces the campaign's efficacy to enhance the inclination to donate. Reciprocity also encourages repeat donations by offering community recognition, donor acknowledgments, and special updates. Transparency in campaign updates and money distribution reassures donors about how their contributions are being used (Chen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019).

Regular participation, meaningful communication, and long-term relationship-building strategies cultivate loyalty and lead to continued donor support (Xiao and Yue, 2021). The proposed framework in Figure 7 highlights central elements that enhance donor engagement and ultimately lead to campaign success. The following section explores how gamified engagement mechanisms influence donor participation and expansively contribute to the sustainability of DCF campaigns. Findings from the literature indicate that campaigns integrating gamification experience higher engagement rates and donor retention than non-gamified campaigns (Behl et al., 2023; Golrang and Safari, 2021).

RQ3. How do gamification elements contribute to the long-term sustainability of DCF campaigns?

The gamification integration can significantly impact the DCF campaigns (Kumari and Gujral, 2023). Gamification integration affects several factors, including trust, credibility, social collaboration, donor motivations, emotional appeal, and signalling strategies in DCF campaigns. DCF platforms can use gamification strategies to improve user experience, foster trust, and enhance social media sharing for enhanced campaign performance and donation intent. In the context of sustainable CF, the flow of donations and the ensured long-term success of the campaign are crucial and can be achieved by gamification inclusion (Gazzola et al., 2022). Also, Bukhari et al. (2019), highlight that gamification designs can improve user engagement on DCF platforms (Efrat et al., 2022; Sirisawat et al., 2022). Hence, gamification is a powerful tool for promoting engagement and social sharing on digital platforms, enhancing the exposure and spread of DCF campaigns**.** While traditional engagement methods focus on communication and community-building, gamification introduces interactive and reward-based incentives that further drive donor engagement.

Literature has addressed the integration of gamification elements in DCF by identifying several recurrent themes, trends, and variances. For instance, gamification has been investigated as a moderating factor influencing the success of crowdfunding campaigns, especially in reward-based systems. It fosters trust and encourages continued support, resulting in campaign sustainability (Behl et al., 2023). By introducing project milestones and tracking donors' donations, gamification can enhance transparency and accountability and contribute to campaigns' sustainability (Nawaz et al., 2023). A few gamification elements are presented in Figure 8.

Gamification tends to modify donors' behaviour and attitudes through games habitually (Behl et al., 2023; Mauka et al., 2015). Moreover, gamification offers recognition and rewards from external sources to draw in donors (Morales-Alonso et al., 2022). Hence, gamification encourages competence, relatedness, and autonomy to increase the effectiveness of DCF campaigns (Kumari and Gujral, 2023). For instance, incorporating donor leader boards and tier-based recognition systems can enhance repeat donations and increase donor retention rates, ensuring long-term financial accomplishment (Behl et al., 2023). These elements inspire donors to contribute, create a feeling of

Figure 7: Integrative Framework for DCF campaign success factors

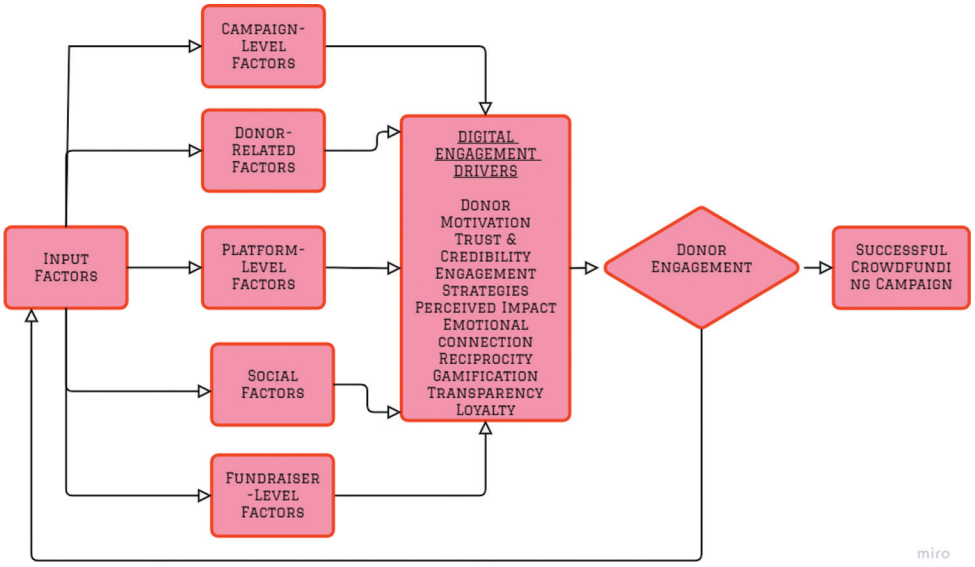


Figure 8: Gamification Elements; Icons Sourced From (Learrntech, 2024)

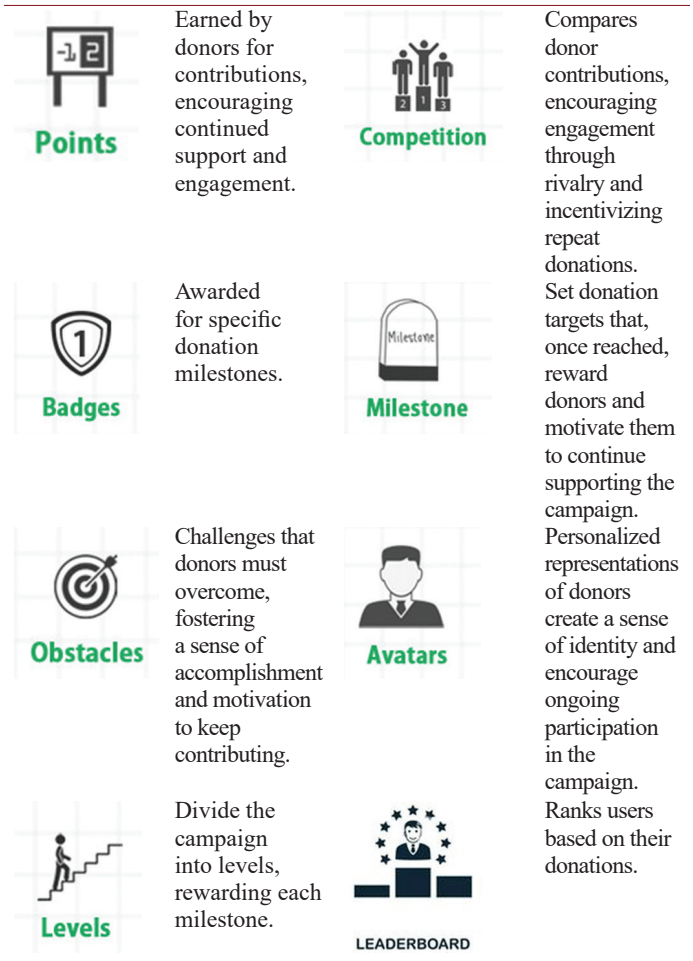
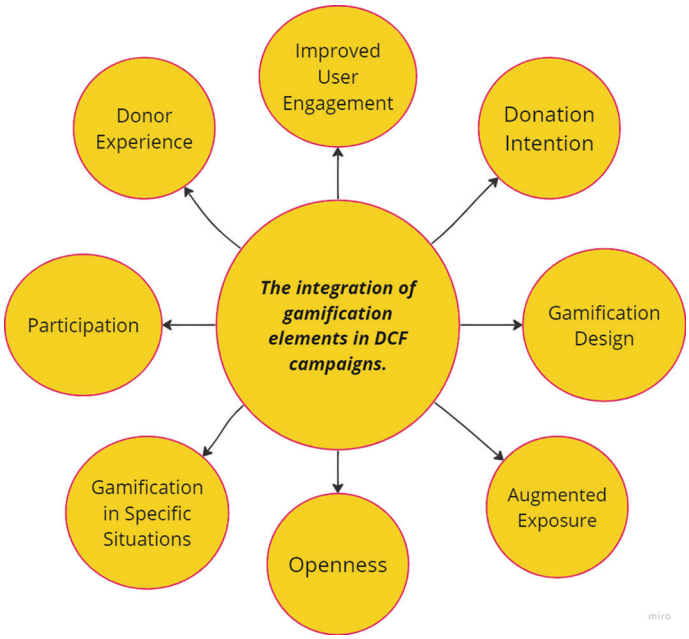


Figure 9: The integration of gamification elements in DCF campaigns



community and engagement, and promote ongoing involvement in fundraising events (Allah Pitchay et al., 2022; Gosal et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019).

Different studies use diverse approaches to determine the impact of gamification on DCF campaigns by elaborating the complex relationship between gamification, donor motivation, donor engagement, donor participation, and crowdfunding outcomes. (Behl and Dutta, 2020a, 2020b; Golrang and Safari, 2021), addressed the application of gamification design in specific situations to boost user engagement. Figure 9 represents the impact of gamification integration in DCF campaigns.

Hence, a significant incline in the DCF campaigns' sustainability can be made by integrating technological innovation and gamification, aligning with sustainable development goals by ensuring ongoing support for causes, and reducing the volatility often associated with one-time donations (Maehle, 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study explored many contributing factors that led to the sustainability of the DCF campaigns. The study also highlights key factors such as campaign promotion, fundraising accreditation, media coverage, and emotional potency that drive the DCF campaign's success. Some factors that increase donor motivation include trust, social presence, policy factors, unmet healthcare needs, and societal variables. Digital engagement drivers play a very important role in donor retention. Also, integrating gamification elements, i.e., points, badges, leader boards, and progress tracking, has enhanced donor engagement, motivation, participation, and campaign success through a long-term donor-platform relationship. Rewards, recognition, and interactive features create a sense of connection and engage the donors, resulting in the overall sustainability of the DCF campaign. User feedback also enhances donor engagement and campaign success by improving transparency.

Overall, this systematic literature review summarizes the multi-dimensional success factors and addresses the impact of engagement drivers and gamification on the success of DCF campaigns, which leads to enhanced donor engagement and DCF campaign success. It considers elements such as emotional appeal, social connection, trust, and design features at different levels, i.e., campaign, platform, and fundraiser. It summarizes the strategies to engage donors and persuade them to participate effectively. Conclusively, gamification creates a more transparent, engaging, and data-driven environment that supports sustainable practices by including this technological innovation to enhance donor engagement. Gamification ultimately contributes to the long-term success and resilience of campaigns and platforms. Hence, this study will help CF platforms understand and implement the critical success factors to achieve overall campaign and platform success through a sustainable approach.

6.1. Future Implications

This study on gamification and its impact on DCF opens several directions for future studies. Ethical implications of DCF practices, the efficacy of regulatory frameworks in ensuring accountability and donor privacy, can be some of the future research to improve donor engagement and campaign outcomes.

Another direction can be exploring different cultural contexts and crowdfunding platforms to perform a comparative analysis of how gamification elements (mechanics, dynamics, and aesthetics) influence campaign success and donor engagement globally. Another domain in future research can be a comparison between DCF campaigns' success factors in the presence and absence of gamification.

Moreover, longitudinal studies can be performed to assess the long-term effects of gamification on donor engagement and campaign success by identifying sustainable gamified engagement strategies. In the future, donor loyalty, donor motivation, donor experience, and donor behavior can also be considered to study the overall impact of gamification on campaigns. Hence, including artificial intelligence or blockchain in gamification could be a potential future research area. These technologies might enhance these platforms' transparency, trust, and user experience.

6.2. Limitations

Despite its comprehensive scope, the study is subject to a few limitations. Primarily, as a systematic literature review, the research is limited by the quantity, availability, and quality of the existing literature. Publication bias or assessment issues might have eliminated some of the relevant studies. Next, this research is comprehensive and informative, but due to its qualitative nature, some limitations regarding replicability and generalizability across a broader context are posed. Addressing these limitations in future studies could provide a more holistic view of crowdfunding success.

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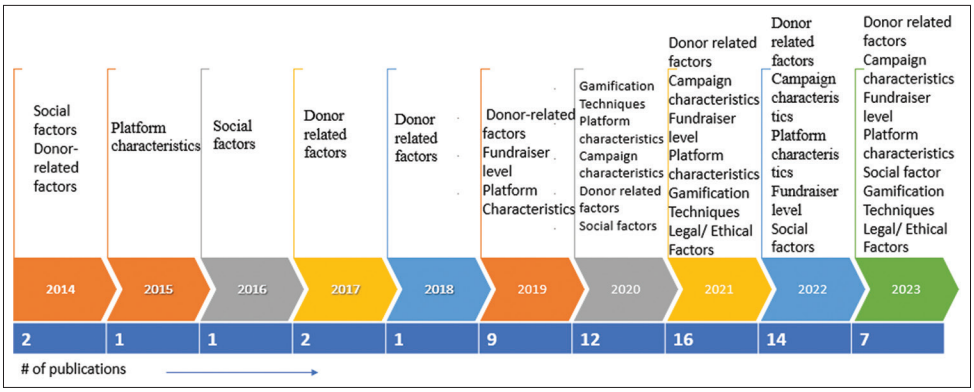
APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Occurrence of the success factors in literature for DCF campaigns