

Playing Against Creative Burnout in Sprint Retrospectives: A Design Science Research Study

About

This study investigates how playful interaction design can mitigate creative burnout in software development teams' Sprint Retrospectives. Using a Design Science Research approach, the researchers developed and evaluated a design artifact called 'Scrumstinct' in workshops with eight professional teams to understand the impact of playfulness on team well-being and creativity.

Problem

Creative burnout is a significant issue in software development, leading to stagnation, exhaustion, and rigid routines that harm team creativity and well-being. While acknowledged in the industry, this phenomenon is academically underexplored, particularly at the team level, creating a need for research-backed strategies to foster sustainable creativity.

Study Outcome

- Playful retrospectives can successfully reframe problems, foster openness, and reduce emotional fatigue among software development teams.
- The study proposes six design principles for integrating playfulness to address team-level creative burnout by countering stagnation, exhaustion, and rigidity.
- Introducing fun, excitement, and desire through a designed artifact ('Scrumstinct') increased team engagement and made retrospectives more desirable.
- Using humorous and metaphorical artifacts helps teams discuss serious concerns in a constructive, less confrontational manner.
- Playful activities that deviate from routine were found to challenge rigid thinking and open up teams to new perspectives and solutions.

Keywords

Creative Burnout • Playfulness • Scrum • Sprint Retrospectives • Design Science Research • Software Development Teams • Team Well-being