

Effects of Hyper-Personalized “Nudge Emails” on Student Participation, Activity, and Completion

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Introduction

This research investigates whether personalized emails, based on activity and grade data, can influence completion and participation in high enrollment open, online courses (MOOCs).

Our experiment explores the potential of tailored communication to enhance student engagement and completion rates, offering insights into the effectiveness of this approach for improving the MOOC learning experience.

The Case Study

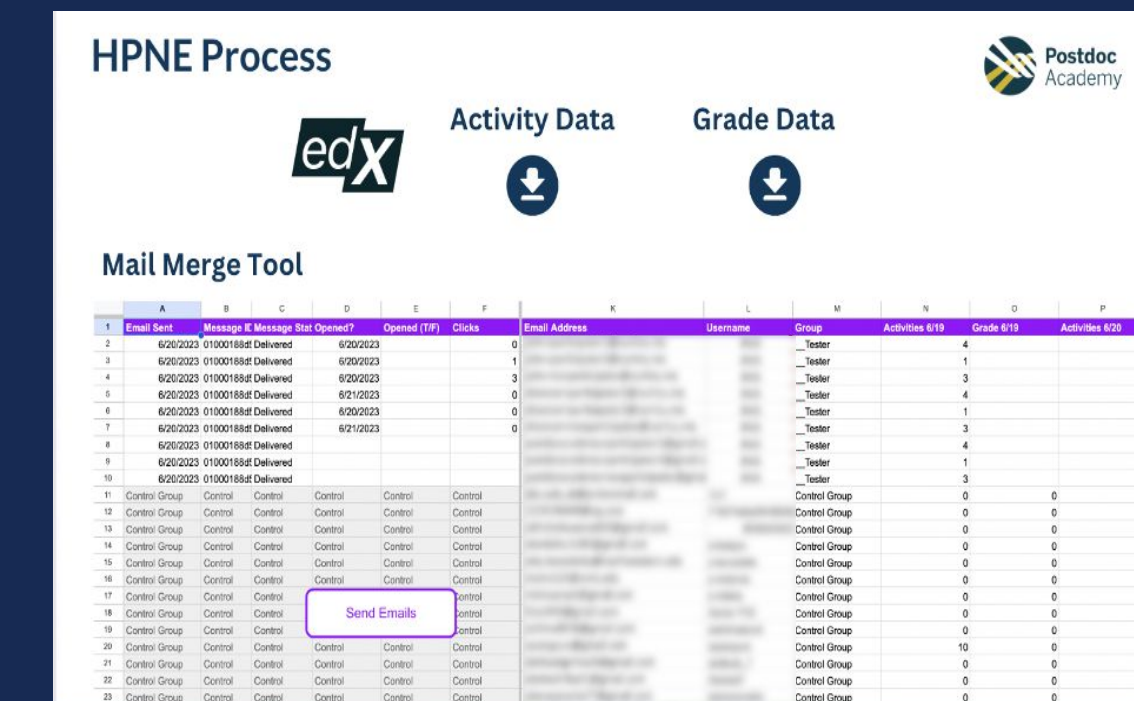
- A NIH-funded, multi-institutional project to support skill development throughout postdoctoral training
- Audience/Participants: Postdoctoral scholars at any stage of their experience, at various types of institutions
- Structure: Two online courses offered through EdX with videos, discussions, and reflection activities + in-person synchronous learning communities

Research Methods

Week 1: June 5 - June 11	Week 2: June 12 - June 18	Week 3: June 19 - June 25	Week 4: June 26 - July 2	Week 5: July 3 - July 9	Week 6: July 10 - July 16	Week 7: July 17 - July 23	Week 8: July 24 - July 30	Week 9: July 31 - Aug 4
All Participants								
Control Group								
Experimental Group (Participators)								
Experimental Group (Non-Participators)								

- We split our enrollees into two groups: a Control and Experimental group.
- Within the experimental group, we divided enrollees into participators and non-participators
- We ran our experiment during Weeks 3–6 with a final reminder email in Week 8

The Intervention



Sample Subject Lines:

- X, You are a top performer!
- Hope you enjoyed the Project Management module, X
- You are 67% done. Only 2 more activities to go!
- Module 5 is now open! You've got 4 activities open to you.

We gathered weekly data from EdX on participants' engagement, activity, and grades



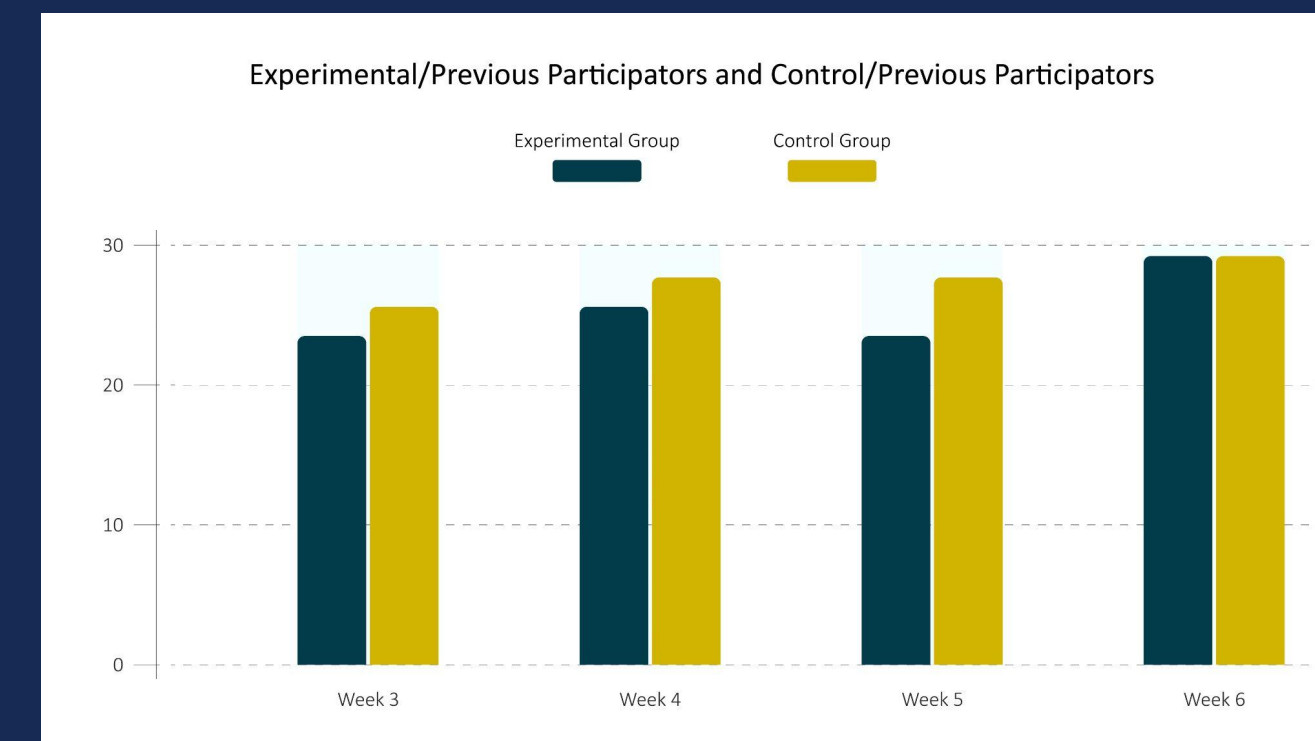
We built a MailMerge tool using Google sheets (Google apps script) & used EdX data to send out personalized emails

Results

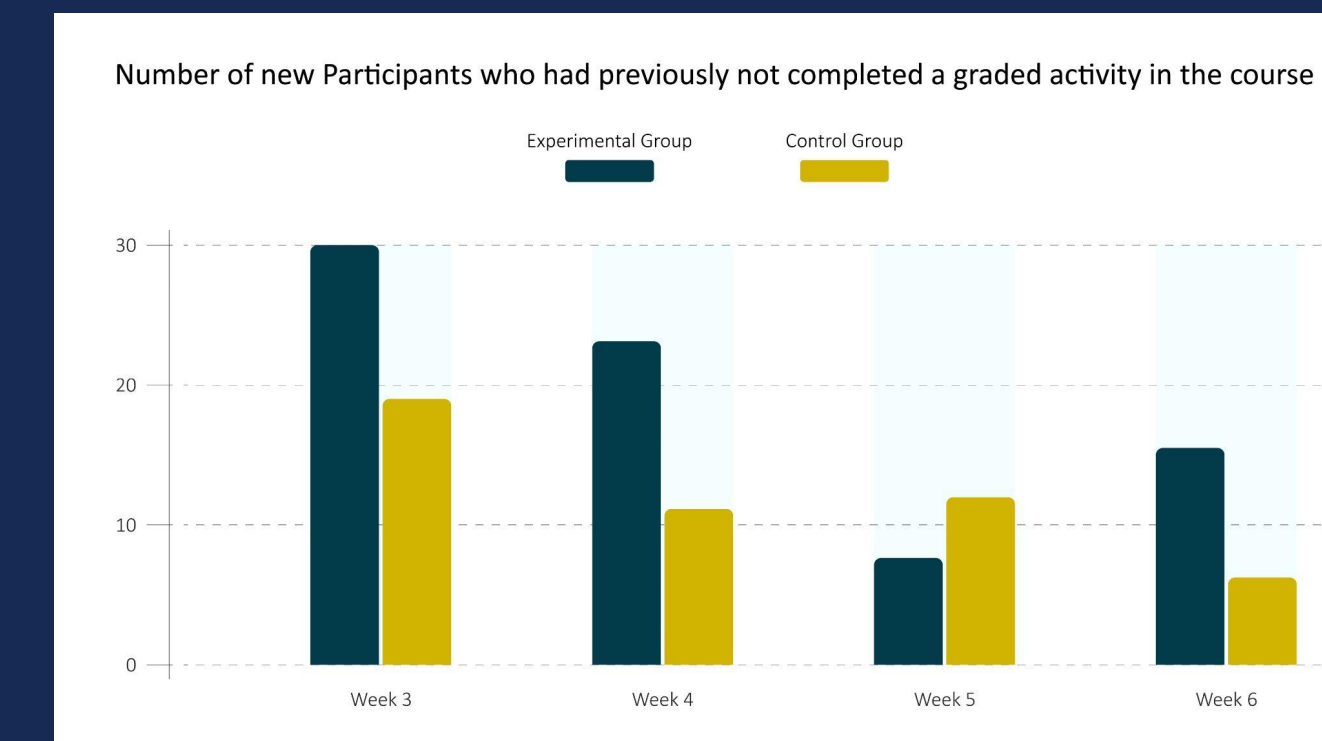


Completion rates out of *total* enrollment did not change, **but** completion rates out of learners who did one activity **jumped significantly**.

Out of those who did one activity, 61.42% completed the course



The HPNE's did not seem to have an impact on the learners who had already participated in the course.



The HPNE's seem to have had an **impact on learners who had not previously participated**.

In general, after receiving an HPNE, non-participators then engaged in the course.

Conclusion

No impact on completion rate, but did encourage non-participators to enter the course

Implications

How do we define success? Through engagement or completion? Does that change for grant-funded projects?

Future Directions

We plan to repeat this experiment with a different implementation, rewording the emails and determining the best time to send personalized emails to increase engagement

Acknowledgements

