



THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS ON STUDENTS' INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the impact of the virtual learning environment on students' interpersonal communication skills. It examines how students' interaction, exchange of ideas, and social skills are formed in the educational process organized on the basis of digital technologies. The article examines the positive and negative effects of virtual learning on communication, the problems that arise, and ways to overcome them. At the same time, practical recommendations are provided for the development of students' communication skills using pedagogical approaches. The results of the study show the urgent importance of effectively organizing interpersonal communication in a virtual learning environment.

Keywords: virtual learning environment, interpersonal communication, students, digital education, communication skills, online education, pedagogical approaches, social interaction, educational technologies.

Modern technologies are deeply penetrating almost all aspects of our lives. In particular, the education sector is not left out of these changes, and traditional forms of teaching are gradually being replaced by virtual learning formats. In recent years, especially after the pandemic, the use of virtual learning environments has increased dramatically, and this has a significant impact on the quality, efficiency of education, and the personal development of students. A virtual learning environment is an educational process organized between a student and a teacher using information and communication technologies, which is carried out without the boundaries of time and space. In this environment, students independently acquire knowledge, communicate on various platforms, and complete assignments. However, what impact such conditions have on students' interpersonal communication skills remains a pressing question.

Unlike traditional education, there are no time and space boundaries in a virtual environment.[1] Students have the opportunity to learn anywhere and at a time convenient for them. At the same time, the learning process is organized interactively through various electronic platforms - video lessons, online tests, virtual classrooms, educational forums. Independent learning, responsibility and self-management skills play an important role in virtual education. Each student independently plans and evaluates his or her own educational activities. However, this situation can sometimes lead to a weakening of social ties among students. Because many tasks are completed individually, and group communication opportunities are likely to be limited. In addition, in the virtual education system, students also acquire the skills to effectively use technical tools. They master skills such as working on online platforms, working with electronic

documents, and observing digital ethics in practice.[2] Interpersonal communication is a process that represents direct and indirect contacts between people, based on the exchange of ideas, expression of emotions and mutual understanding. This type of communication is an important tool for successful socialization and cooperation of people in society. Interpersonal communication formed among students is not only a necessary factor for the exchange of knowledge, but also for socio-emotional development. Interpersonal communication manifests itself in several main forms: verbal communication (expressed through words), nonverbal communication (through gestures, facial expressions, body posture) and virtual communication (written or oral communication carried out through digital devices). Especially today, digital forms of communication - for example, messaging, video calls, online forums - are becoming important means of interpersonal communication.

Students' interpersonal communication skills are formed in the school environment, in the family circle and in the process of everyday social relations in society. These skills include the culture of listening, free and clear expression of one's own opinion, cooperation, respect for the views of others. It is these aspects that play an important role in the future development of students as socially active and communicative individuals, adapted to society. [3] The development of interpersonal communication in the educational process is supported not only by asking questions or working in groups during the lesson, but also by pedagogical methods that allow students to try out different roles. Therefore, in modern education, communication is considered not only as an exchange of knowledge, but also as an integral part of personal and social development. The widespread introduction of virtual learning environments has a significant impact on students' interpersonal communication. This impact is manifested in two directions - positive and negative. Through virtual educational tools, students have the opportunity to enter the global information space, communicate with representatives of different cultures. This expands their horizons, develops skills in communicating in foreign languages, and effectively uses technologies. In addition, through forums, video lessons, and group projects organized on online educational platforms, students develop a culture of virtual communication. [4] They learn to manage digital communication in written and oral forms, which can be important in their future professional activities.

However, there are also negative effects of the virtual environment on communication skills. First, as a result of the limited opportunities for face-to-face communication, students may have difficulty understanding nonverbal signals and emotional tones. Second, participating in online education for a long time is likely to cause psychological states such as loneliness and social isolation in students. This leads to their distrust of real-life communication. Some studies show that the emotional intelligence and activity in collective activities of students participating in virtual education may be lower than in traditional education. Therefore, when organizing the virtual learning process, it is necessary to use methods that encourage lively communication between students. In general, the impact of the virtual learning environment on communication skills largely depends on how the educational process is organized.[5] If this process is thoughtful, interactive, and emotionally rich, then the potential for communication is not only preserved, but also developed in new forms. Several challenges are emerging in the virtual learning process. The first challenge is the lack of communication. In online classes, students only interact with the teacher, which limits the opportunities for group work and exchange of ideas. To solve this problem, interactive methods, such as group discussions and role-playing games, should be used.

The second challenge is socio-emotional disconnection. Students can become isolated and emotionally depressed. To prevent this, teachers need to create a supportive environment and provide psychological support.

The third challenge is technological inequality. Some students do not have access to the Internet or the necessary devices.[6] As a solution, schools should provide technical support and provide students with the necessary devices.

Conclusion. The specific characteristics of the virtual learning environment have a significant impact on students' interpersonal communication skills. Although students have the opportunity to learn independently in online education, the limitation of group activities and face-to-face communication can negatively affect social and emotional development. Therefore, interactive and collaborative teaching methods are necessary to develop communication skills in a virtual learning environment, as well as support for students' psychological health. Teachers can increase students' social activity and communicative potential by organizing the educational process in a qualitative and effective way.

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