# SHORT COMMUNICATION

## Netiquette and its Necessity in Virtual Education of Medical Students

نتیکت وضرورتها في التعلیم الافتراضي لطلاب الطب

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**Background**: The lack of familiarity with netiquette or social etiquette in virtual space overshadows teaching and learning processes. Learning netiquette (virtual ethics) is one of the ways to deal with the negative effects of education in the virtual space in universities to improve the effectiveness of education. The purpose of this research was to familiarize with Netiquette and examine its necessity in the virtual education of medical students.

**Method**: Articles using Persian keywords and their Latin equivalents, which include "virtual education" "Netiquette" "virtual space" and "electronic learning" separately and combined in internal and external sites: Scopus, Magiran, Irandoc, SID, Noormags, PubMed as well as Google Scholar search engine were searched regardless of the time limit.

**Results**: Commitments in cyberspace are in the form of virtual commitments that are often anonymous and unrealistic, they weaken the context of moral and educational commitments in users and make the requirements of adhering to these commitments lighter.

**Conclusion**: The lack of familiarity with netiquette and virtual professionalism causes defects in the two critical elements of the educational system (teacher and student) the emergence of misunderstandings and sometimes behaviors far from the dignity of each of them, as one of the critical issues in this research.

**Keywords**: Netiquette, Virtual education, e-learning, Medical Student

**الخلفية:** إن عدم الإلمام بآداب الإنترنت أو الآداب الاجتماعية في الفضاء الافتراضي يلقي بظلاله على عملیات التدریس والتعلم. تعلم قواعد السلوك (الأخلاق الافتراضية) هي إحدى طرق التعامل مع الآثار السلبية للتعليم في الفضاء الافتراضي في الجامعات لتحسين فعالية التعليم. كان الغرض من هذا البحث هو التعرف على نتیکت وفحص ضرورته في التعليم الافتراضي لطلاب الطب.

**الطريقة:** تم البحث في المقالات التي تستخدم الكلمات الرئيسية الفارسية ومكافئاتها اللاتينية ، والتي تشمل "التعلیم الافتراضي" " نتیکت " "الفضاء الافتراضي" و "التعلم الإلكتروني" بشكل منفصل ومجمع في المواقع الداخلية والخارجية: Scopus و Magiran و Irandoc و SID و Noormags و PubMed بالإضافة إلى محرك بحث Google Scholar بغض النظر عن الوقت المحدد.

**النتائج:** تكون الالتزامات في الفضاء الإلكتروني في شكل التزامات افتراضية غالباً ما تكون مجهولة المصدر وغير واقعية ، فهي تضعف سياق الالتزامات الأخلاقية والتعليمية لدى المستخدمين وتجعل متطلبات الالتزام بهذه الالتزامات أخف.

**الخلاصة:** إن عدم الإلمام بشبكة الإنترنت والمهنية الافتراضية يتسبب في عيوب في عنصرين حا سمين في النظام التعليمي (المعلم والطالب) ظهور سوء تفاهم وأحياناً سلوكيات بعيدة عن كرامة كل منهما ، كأحد القضايا الحاسمة في هذا البحث.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الإنترنت ، التعلیم الافتراضي ، التعلم الإلكتروني ، طالب الطب

نتیکت و ضرورت آن درآموزش مجازی دانشجویان پزشکی

طبی طلباء کی ورچوئل ایجوکیشن میں نیٹیکیٹ اور اس کی ضرورت

**زمينه و هدف:** عدم آشنایی با نتیکت یا همان آداب معاشرت در فضای مجازی، فرایندهای یاددهی– یادگیری را تحت الشعاع قرار می‌دهد. یکی از راه های مقابله با تأثیرات منفی آموزش مجازی در دانشگاه‌ها، آشنایی با نتیکت است تا بتوان اثربخشی آموزش را بهبود بخشید. هدف از این پژوهش آشنایی با نتیکت و بررسی ضرورت آن در آموزش مجازی دانشجویان پزشکی بود.

**روش:** با استفاده از کلید واژه های فارسی و معادل لاتین آنها که شامل " آموزش مجازی"، " نتیکت"، " فضای مجازی" و " یادگیری الکترونیک" بصورت جداگانه و ترکیبی در پایگاه های داخلی و خارجی SID, Irandoc , Magiran ,Scopus Noormags, PubMed و نیز موتور جستجوی Google Scholar بدون درنظر گرفتن محدودیت زمانی انجام شده است.

**یافته ها:** بررسی متون نشان می دهد که در فضای مجازی، تعهدها در بهترین حالت به شکل تعهدهای مجازی است که غالبا" گمنام و غیرواقعی هستند و زمینه تعهدات اخلاقی و تربیتی را در کاربران تضعیف می‌کنند و الزامات پایبندی به این تعهدات را کم رنگ تر می‌نمایند.

**نتیجه گیری:** عدم آشنایی با نتیکت یا به عبارتی پروفشنالیسم مجازی، علاوه بر اینکه ایراد و نقصی برای هر کدام از دو عنصر کلیدی سیستم آموزشی (استاد و دانشجو) محسوب خواهد شد، باعث به وجود آمدن سوءبرداشت و بعضاً رفتارهایی به دور از شأن و منزلت هر کدام از ایشان نیز می‌شود که این موضوع یکی از مسائل مهم در ارائه این پژوهش بود.

**واژه های کلیدی:** نتیکت، آموزش مجازی، یادگیری الکترونیک، دانشجوی پزشکی

**پس منظر:** ورچوئل اسپیس میں اخلاقیات یا سماجی آداب سے واقفیت کی کمی تدریس اور سیکھنے کے عمل کو زیر کرتی ہے۔ تعلیم کی تاثیر کو بہتر بنانے کے لیے یونیورسٹیوں میں ورچوئل اسپیس میں تعلیم کے منفی اثرات سے نمٹنے کے طریقوں میں سے ایک طریقہ سیکھنا (مجازی اخلاقیات) ہے۔ اس تحقیق کا مقصد نیٹیکیٹ سے واقفیت اور طبی طلباء کی ورچوئل تعلیم میں اس کی ضرورت کا جائزہ لینا تھا۔

**طریقہ:** فارسی کلیدی الفاظ اور ان کے لاطینی مماثلتوں کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے مضامین، جن میں "ورچوئل ایجوکیشن" "نیئیکیٹ" "ورچوئل اسپیس" اور "الیکٹرانک لرننگ" کو الگ الگ اور اندرونی اور بیرونی سائٹس میں ملایا گیا ہے: Scopus، Magiran، Irandoc، SID، Noormags، PubMed کے ساتھ ساتھ گوگل کی تلاش کے انجن کو بے لیے وقت کی حد محدود تھی۔

**نتائج:** سائبر اسپیس میں وعدے مجازی وعدوں کی شکل میں ہوتے ہیں جو اکثر گمنام اور غیر حقیقی ہوتے ہیں، یہ صارفین میں اخلاقی اور تعلیمی وابستگیوں کے تناظر کو کمزور کرتے ہیں اور ان وعدوں پر عمل کرنے کے تقاضوں کو ہلکا بناتے ہیں۔

**نتیجہ:** اخلاقیات اور ورچوئل پروفیشنلزم سے واقفیت کا فقدان تعلیمی نظام کے دو اہم عناصر (استاد اور طالب علم) میں خرابیوں کا سبب بنتا ہے اور بعض اوقات ان میں سے ہر ایک کے وقار سے دور رویے، اس تحقیق کے اہم مسائل میں سے ایک ہیں۔

**مطلوبہ الفاظ:** نیئیکیٹ ، ورچوئل ایجوکیشن، ای لرننگ، میڈیکل اسٹوڈنٹ

## INTRODUCTION

In addition to extensive changes in global health centers, the COVID pandemic has challenged the traditional way of learning. Computers have been increasingly used in medical education since their invention. Social networks have represented a digital revolution transforming communication and collaboration (1). Easy access to new opportunities is one of the technological consequences of the second decade of the 21st century. Until 15 years ago, Internet users were a relatively homogeneous group, mainly of Western-educated people, which is not the case today (2). Technology has improved, its forms have diversified and information and communication technology has gradually become an integral and regular part of people's lives. The globalization of computer networks is about to pass the point where certain people no longer constitute the simple majority of the Internet user base and the World Wide Web (3).

The word "netiquette" is composed of two words "net" meaning network and internet and "etiquette" which refers to a set of rules of behavior and social habits and the right way to socialize with others. Netiquette refers to the laws and customs of user behavior in a network (4). There is still a long way from a system that efficiently defines Netiquette in public or private virtual spaces, especially for universities and higher education institutions. The concept of netiquette has remained unclear to us. Some golden rules of Netiquette:

*Respect people's privacy*

*Pay attention to verbal communication that takes place through language*

*Don't be sarcastic*

*Respect the opinions of others (5)*

Internet use contracts have wide dimensions and spectrum due to differences in socio-cultural level. There is no training and counseling regarding netiquette or virtual ethics in medical sciences universities in the country for professors and students to familiarize themselves with these essential categories and prevent possible communication skill disorders. The lack of familiarity with netiquette causes defects in the two critical elements of the educational system (teacher and student) the emergence of misunderstandings, and sometimes behaviors far from the dignity of each of them, as one of the critical issues in this research.
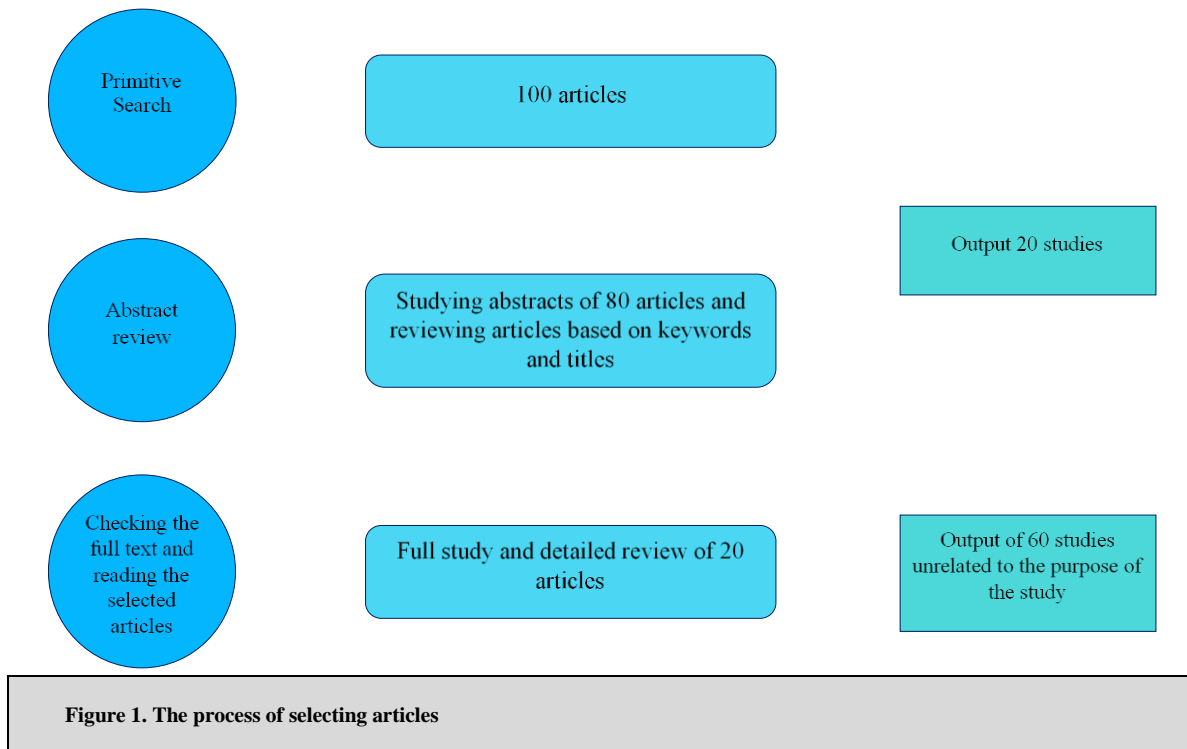
The lack of knowledge about netiquette can create many challenges. The issue becomes more serious when the lack of understanding of faculty members and students about the netiquette process leads to many disturbances in the educational system and subsequently, the teaching-learning process. The essential possible disruption is directed at the lowest level of the educational system, i.e. the classroom of professors and students. Cultural diversity should be taught to medical students because they are supposed to be future health advocates of people of all cultures and ethnicities. Physicians are responsible for providing the highest quality care and services to people from different cultural backgrounds (6). Familiarization with the netiquette process in virtual education at medical sciences universities is one of the ways to prevent the occurrence of many disorders in

establishing communication between professors and students. Lack of familiarity with netiquette in cyberspace overshadows activities such as educational design and content editing. The best way to deal with the negative effects of online education in universities is to teach the principles of netiquette to improve the effectiveness of education. Failure to pay attention to the netiquette process in virtual educations faces serious and new challenges to higher education about its mission which is the flourishing of science, knowledge, growth, and human excellence. One of the main rules of netiquette is "humanity"(7).

The COVID pandemic brought about massive changes to universities and educational centers worldwide, challenging the traditional way of learning. Computers have been increasingly used in medical education since their invention. Computer technology has transformed physical resources into electronic format, added valuable and reusable tools to the teacher's and learner's toolbox, broken down geographic boundaries, and transcended time zones. The progress of electronic communication has given a new position to education. The Internet has created new challenges in the field of education, and the use of the appropriate platform and infrastructure of the Internet for education has been welcomed in recent years (8) and Electronic learning has been used in medical education along with non-electronic methods and not as a substitute for it (9).Therefore for the efficiency of the electronic learning system, it is necessary to identify and eliminate the damages that exist on its way (10). The character of the professor and student appears on the screen only through words in the virtual communication that takes place In virtual education, students need various supports, including educational advice, counseling, and unique services, This type of support is of equal value and should be considered (11). The weakness of the all-round development of the student's personality is one of the disadvantages of virtual education, Due to the weak teacher-student relationship and the purely lecture-oriented teaching method, virtual space does not lead to the overall development of the learners' personalities (12) before attending the meeting on time, the students should open the necessary documents, download the necessary software, microphones and video cameras. Connect and test (13).

## METHODS

This paper study was conducted in2023 to express the importance of netiquette in virtual education. The results of this study are based on articles published in domestic and foreign journals. In this research the importance of netiquette was investigated. Therefore articles using Persian keywords and their Latin equivalents, which include "virtual education" "Netiquette" "virtual space" and "electronic learning" separately and in combination in Scopus, Magiran, Irandoc, SID, Noormags and PubMed were searched online without considering the time limit. The inclusion criteria were the presence of keywords in the title and abstract of the articles, and the study exclusion criteria included research contents unrelated to the purpose of this study. Therefore 100 articles were found in the initial search and after reviewing the abstract titles 80 articles were analyzed.

**Figure 1. The process of selecting articles**

Finally20 articles that were completely related to the subject of the study were carefully reviewed.

## RESULTS

The results of studies show that ethics, education and behavior on the Internet, both in theory and in practice need to be updated. Understanding and analyzing the net is necessary in a society where information and communication technology has changed the way of socializing and communicating. Efforts have been made to properly implement electronic and virtual education in Iran, but no organization has comprehensively implemented it effectively (14).The success of the implementation is significantly dependent on the accurate knowledge of its key obstacles and requires the attention and care of the managers and system designers. Organizations not being ready to launch and apply training in virtual space and lack familiarity with the obstacles cause the lack of use of its capacities and the efforts remain fruitless. Learning management systems, different designs of electronic courses, reduction of physical communication between the instructor and the learner, investment and human resources for electronic education have required a detailed study of the obstacles to the use and design of appropriate cultural infrastructures as well as the development of education policies in cyberspace (15). According to the head of the Iranian Sociological Association, people in a traditional society with social and cultural values that have a somewhat restrictive approach in establishing free relations, all at once in the virtual space, free from all strictures and obstacles and restrictions are standing next to each other without any preparation and They do not learn the necessary training on how to behave and act in the virtual space and proceed by trial and error, which can be vulnerable

from this point of view (16). The findings show several obstacles in establishing communication in a virtual space based on virtual ethics in education. Individual obstacles are one of the obstacles related to netiquette, which includes factors such as insufficient attention to the respect and dignity of university professors and lack of information about how to communicate with superiors and subordinates students (17). Educational weakness is one of the most significant weaknesses in the virtual space of student education. Due to the vastness of virtual space and internet networks, local obligations have no meaning. It is possible to enter and exit the virtual space without prior affiliations or responsibilities and leave the affiliation and responsibility there and go. In the Internet space, commitments are at best virtual commitments (18).Students have expressed disturbing factors such as loud noises in educational environments, inappropriate support to respond to legal problems and weakness in time management such as netiquette. The findings showed that Netiquette is a part of educational programs in universities and is a subject of serious study. The authors find it helpful to develop a training course on digital etiquette in universities to improve communication with students and develop the necessary communication competence (9).

Some reports indicate the poor performance of new technology in educational matters. The argument is that educational software has distanced itself from the primary mission of education The problems of virtual education, the lack of creativity and new ideas, the lack of technology knowledge, the lack of motivational factors and the weakness of organizational culture, the focus of education on memorization and the lack of attention to learning at higher levels, creativity development and education due to the lack

of face to face and more democratic relationships between professors-students and students-students can be mentioned (19).Evidence shows that most students object to decreased depth and quality of learning, The lack of deep conversations online, the emergence of impromptu and creative ideas, understanding and being understood by others, have been mentioned (20). Behavior in the virtual world is not just an individual behavior. Therefore, knowing these manners improves relations with virtual friends.

## DISCUSSION

Cyberspace is both an opportunity and a threat; the right way to use it before introducing these technologies will have fewer negative consequences. The application of modern teaching methods is so important that some experts in educational sciences have considered the proficiency in these methods more important than a teacher's scientific knowledge and information. Using these methods requires familiarity with the principles of communication in the virtual education space for professors and students, and all the mentioned research has clearly expressed its shortcomings. The need for higher education in virtual education to provide a Netiquette process, the free flow and a wide range of electronic communication are shown. This issue is vital because all training has moved towards virtualization with the COVID pandemic. Therefore the lack of inadequacy of training,

counseling, and awareness of the Netiquette process in virtual education can create many challenges for professors and students.

It is necessary to start moving in this direction as soon as possible. Procrastination is only the loss of many opportunities available to the Ministry of Health, Medical Education and Higher Education.

Netiquette should be considered as part of educational programs in educational systems. In communicating, ideas should be expressed effectively and clearly in written and oral forms and avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation of reports by the recipient. All studies stated that familiarity with the principles of socializing in the virtual education space for professors and students in academic environments was a deficiency.

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