THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON STUDENT COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. In the context of the rapid development of information technologies, the internet and online communication exert a multifaceted influence on students. Starting with the hypothesis that students are more closely connected to technological progress than others. The study was conducted on the impact of the internet on the development of their communication skills and educational processes. The research aims to determine the positive and negative impacts of online resources on the quality of students' communication in both personal and educational spheres. Additionally, it seeks to assess the role of higher educational institutions in teaching students effective online resource usage skills. According to the research, only 6 % of the literature suggests positive impact of the internet on human health, while most indicates negative effects on mental and physical health, as well as on communication skills development. These results lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to educate students on rational use of technologies to avoid negative consequences for education and social interaction in the future. Educational institutions play an important role in this process by providing students with the necessary knowledge in this area, aiding their social adaptation and development in the modern digital world.

Keywords: development, education, impact, information technologies.

Abstract. În contextul dezvoltării rapide a tehnologiilor informaționale, internetul și comunicarea online exercită o influență multifacetică asupra studenților. Pornind de la ipoteza că studenții sunt mai strâns legați de progresul tehnologic decât alții, studiul a fost realizat asupra impactului internetului asupra dezvoltării abilităților lor de comunicare și a proceselor educaționale. Cercetarea își propune să determine impactul pozitiv și negativ al resurselor online asupra calității comunicării studenților, atât în sfera personală, cât și în cea educațională. În plus, se dorește evaluarea rolului instituțiilor de învățământ superior în predarea studenților a abilităților eficiente de utilizare a resurselor online. Conform cercetării, doar 6 % din literatură sugerează un impact pozitiv al internetului asupra sănătății umane, în timp ce majoritatea indică efecte negative asupra sănătății mentale și fizice, precum și asupra dezvoltării abilităților de comunicare. Aceste rezultate conduc la concluzia că este necesar să se educe studenții cu privire la utilizarea rațională a tehnologiilor pentru a evita consecințele negative pentru educație și interacțiunea socială în viitor.
1. Introduction

Under the influence of technological progress, students prefer virtual communication over face-to-face interaction, leading to issues in developing live communication skills among college and university students. The primary goal of this study is to delve into the multifaceted nature of technological advancement within the context of shaping communicative skills among students. The research aims to identify both the beneficial and potentially detrimental effects of technological development, as well as to explore effective strategies for minimizing negative impacts and maximizing the potential of new technologies to foster harmonious growth in communication abilities. To achieve this goal, the research sets a number of tasks to examine the types of interpersonal communication, the negative and positive impacts of technological development, the psychological challenges faced by students in the age of digitalization, the influence of higher education institutions on students' communication skills, and the effectiveness of online communication in the learning process.

In the age of digitalization, many countries, including the Republic of Moldova, allocate significant resources to the development of technologies. For instance, as early as in 2000, Moldova established the Regulation of the Supreme Council for Science and Technological Development [1]. In 2018, the foundations for various national and international research and development programs were laid by reorganizing the Agency for Innovation and Technological Transfer and merging it with the National Agency for Scientific Research and Development [2]. By 2024, 60 million lei will be allocated for the digitalization of SMEs to facilitate the transition to e-commerce, and another 60 million lei will be earmarked for supporting digital innovations and startups [3]. Thus, through these investments, Moldova aims to develop technologies for broader applications in various sectors, including education.

Technological development, as a combination of systems engineering and technological engineering activities, encompasses the application and transfer of research results to enterprises, the implementation and deployment of new technologies in the social sphere, and the improvement of existing ones [4], has become an integral part of our lives and infrastructure and includes both pre-competitive and competitive research.

Given the rapid and diverse development of technologies and their integration into everyday life [5,6], the hypothesis of the strong influence of the internet on the lives and communication skills of students is indisputable. However, there are many conflicting facts about the positive or negative impact of the internet on the development of interpersonal communications. These contradictions highlight the necessity of studying the impact of technological advancements on student communication and learning to use these technologies correctly to avoid serious consequences for the communication skills of future generations. Even now, students are facing issues such as information overload, difficulties with personal interaction, and deteriorating concentration and attention.

Higher education institutions help address these communication challenges by integrating technologies and new teaching methods into the educational process and training students to interact both in-person and in online spaces [7]. From this, it can be concluded that higher education institutions are creating a new educational environment that promotes flexibility in learning to meet the diverse needs of students. They are also emphasizing the
development of effective learning skills within the evolving world and the emergence of new demands for knowledge and communication skills.

2. Materials and Methods
During the study of the influence of the Internet on the development of communication among students, methods such as data analysis and scientific literature review from online sources and research articles were used. Additionally, data development, observation, and synthesis were conducted, along with formulating conclusions based on the provided information.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 The types of interpersonal communication among students
Today, within the walls of higher education institutions, students from different countries and societies are trained in professional and communication skills, which plays an important role in interpersonal communication among students.

Interaction between people through communication arises from the need to establish connections and interact with each other. The process of communication can contribute to the creation of harmonious relationships and cooperation, but it can also lead to conflicts and disagreements when it is distorted or incomplete. Communication plays a key role in ensuring positive interpersonal relationships, which in turn contributes to the development of the psychosocial sphere for both individuals and society as a whole [8]. Various types of communication exist: frontal, dialogic, and mediated. In frontal communication, information is transmitted from one speaker to listeners without feedback. In dialogic communication, information exchange occurs in both directions between two participants. Mediated communication involves transmitting information through some means, such as text, video recording, or drawing [9]. Collectively, these types of communication make communication complete and harmonious, which promotes effective interaction.

An important aspect of developing communication among students is the establishment and development of the corporate culture of the educational institution. This process includes creating a sense of belonging to the university, developing horizontal connections, fostering cohesion within the collective, promoting social partnerships, exchanging knowledge and ideas, as well as fostering collective responsibility. Collaborative activities, such as working on joint projects and participating in excursions, contribute to strengthening friendly bonds among students.

The relationships between students and teachers, although shaped by the educational process, are also important for the development of students’ professional communication skills and their preparation for future interactions with employers [9]. Thus, the educational environment created by higher education institutions provides the necessary conditions for the proper development of students’ communication skills.

The modern progress of information technologies leads to significant changes in all areas of human activity, including communication and interactions, having both positive and negative impacts.

3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of technological development
The rapid and comprehensive development of information technologies has a significant impact on each of us, as it occupies a large part of our lives. Therefore, both the
advantages and disadvantages have significant consequences in the life and development of individuals and humanity as a whole.

The main advantages of technological development:

Convenience in communication. The development of technology improves communication, making it more accessible, diverse, and closer to natural interaction in the real world, enriching it with expressive means. Emojis, stickers, audio and video messages allow for a more vivid and precise expression of emotions and mood during communication on social networks. This contributes to a deeper understanding and closeness in virtual communication. Technological advancement also contributes to the creation of new forms of communication, such as virtual and augmented reality, which enable users to interact in virtual spaces and situations, complementing and enriching their communication experience in the online environment [10].

Access to information. Thanks to search engines on the internet, you can find any original text written anywhere on Earth, expanding access to knowledge and information, making it available to users worldwide. Previously, the primary tool for retrieving data was a computer, but with the introduction of smartphones, access to articles available online became possible anytime and anywhere. Now, through mobile devices, users can instantly find and download information, significantly enhancing the convenience and speed of data access. The boundless diversity of information openly available opens vast opportunities for self-learning and personal development in virtually any field. People can learn new languages, take online courses, obtain diplomas and certificates, and participate in webinars and virtual conferences. This contributes to continuous education and professional growth, which is particularly important in a rapidly changing world of technological advancements. Furthermore, the internet and search engines foster global communication and knowledge sharing between diverse cultures and societies. People from all corners of the world can share their ideas, experiences, and scientific breakthroughs, fostering mutual understanding and international cooperation [11].

Improving communication and interpersonal relationships. Virtual communication tools, social media, the internet, and other technological innovations allow people to communicate and share information over distance without limitations, maintaining real-time connections. This is especially important in the context of globalization, where people work, learn, and interact with partners across the globe. The concept of “internet friends” is increasingly common, highlighting how people connect and build relationships with individuals worldwide. This contributes to the development of a global community where everyone can find like-minded individuals, regardless of cultural and national differences. Social media plays a vital role in creating and maintaining these connections, providing platforms for communication, exchange of ideas, and collaborative creativity. Technological advancements make it possible to communicate with people even in unfamiliar foreign languages using various translation applications, enhancing interpersonal communication. Furthermore, virtual communication tools become indispensable in situations where face-to-face meetings are impossible. During global crises, such as pandemics or natural disasters, virtual communication enables people to stay connected, work, and access education, despite limitations [10]. Technologies also promote inclusivity, allowing people with disabilities to participate in social and professional life.

Improving the quality of life. In the field of medicine, technological advancement has revolutionized the treatment of diseases that were considered incurable just a few decades
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ago. The creation of new vaccines, the development of personalized therapy methods, and the use of artificial intelligence for disease diagnosis and prediction – all of this has become possible thanks to technological achievements. In industry and trade, technological tools such as production automation, robotics, and the implementation of data analysis systems enable increased efficiency, reduced costs, and the production of higher quality goods. Online commerce, e-commerce, and supply chain management – all of these modern technological solutions reshape business models and make the market more dynamic and competitive. It also contributes to economic growth, reduces costs, and expands business relationships [10].

Improving the quality of education. The widespread availability of information has transformed models of learning and teaching. Educators and researchers have developed new pedagogical approaches, leveraging the advantages offered by new devices found on various interactive educational platforms. The ability to utilize digital resources such as online courses, webinars, and distance learning enables students to acquire knowledge anytime and anywhere. Moreover, the opportunity for online communication and collaboration on educational platforms and in virtual classrooms facilitates more effective interaction between instructors and students, as well as among the learners themselves [10].

In the past few decades, technology has significantly improved the quality of our lives and interpersonal communications, making life and education more comfortable and diverse. However, rapid technological advancement also has its negative aspects.

The main disadvantages of technological development:

Environmental pollution. While many companies strive for sustainable development, industrial emissions, particularly in developing countries, continue to pollute the air and water, threatening human health and ecosystems. Electronic waste, which is growing in volume each year, contains toxic substances that can seep into the soil and water, causing pollution and threatening biodiversity. Exhaust fumes from vehicles, containing nitrogen and carbon oxides, lead to acid rain, air pollution, and deteriorating air quality, negatively impacting human and animal health. The lack of conscious consumption among individuals is another serious problem, as it leads to overproduction, excessive consumption, and the generation of large amounts of waste. The unsustainable use of natural resources, including water, forests, and oil, also amplifies the anthropogenic impact on the environment [10].

Dependency and disorders. Currently, sociologists and social psychologists are noting significant shifts in values and behavior across cultures, driven by dependence on computers, smartphones, and tablets. Individuals are spending an increasing amount of time in front of screens, leading to the formation of various dependencies and shifts in habits. This situation has given rise to disorders such as cyber-addiction, characterized by excessive internet and digital device use, and social media addiction, where individuals crave constant online interaction and validation through likes. Video game addiction, where players dedicate an excessive amount of time to gaming, neglecting other aspects of their lives, is also widespread. Beyond psychological dependencies, individuals have become more reliant on the opinions of others and seek social validation through online platforms. This amplifies their vulnerability to external influence and fosters unstable self-esteem. Physical conditions have also emerged as a result of this dependence: for instance, the term “Carpal tunnel syndrome” [12] describes pain and inflammation in the thumb due to frequent use of touch screens, while neck injuries arise from the constant head tilt associated with gadget use.

Violation of personal and social security. Experts point out that connecting to unknown open Wi-Fi networks means that anyone can access the data you entered while browsing.
This includes passwords, credit card numbers, and other confidential information. Similarly, posting photos on social media reveals information about where you are and who you are with. Even a simple photo can contain metadata, such as geolocation, that can be used by attackers to track your location. Research suggests that criminals study potential victims’ social media posts to learn about their daily lives and make it easier to target them. Furthermore, excessive openness on social media jeopardizes not only physical safety but also personal data. Posts and photos can contain information that can be used for phishing attacks or identity theft. For example, information about your work, studies, hobbies, and social connections can help attackers gain access to your financial accounts or other important resources. It is also important to note that information once posted online can be difficult to remove. Therefore, excessive openness on social media endangers an individual’s safety and personal data [13].

Reduced levels of intellectual and social development. The easy access to a boundless amount of information saves time and leads to more optimal results, however, it also encourages “mental laziness” as the constant use of technological advancements removes the need for the development of creativity and intellect. This can lead to a decline in the quality of education, the level of education, and a decrease in mental abilities. Students may begin to rely on ready-made answers and solutions, without bothering themselves with analysis and critical thinking. Such superficial understanding of knowledge makes it less resilient and strong, which further negatively affects their professional training. The lack of live communication, decline in activity in public life, and expansion of the digital divide [14] lead to a decrease in interpersonal skills and social development of students, which has negative consequences in the students’ ability to interact and communicate with the world and people around them.

Information overload. Information overload has a number of negative consequences on students’ mental well-being, such as fatigue, increased levels of stress and anxiety, difficulty in decision-making, decreased productivity, attention, and concentration, sleep disturbances, and social problems. In conditions of information overload, students may miss important information or lose the ability to filter and distinguish significant information from secondary, leading to weakened critical thinking and analytical skills.

Information overload, often referred to as “information fatigue,” occurs when students are confronted with a massive amount of data they need to process and absorb in a short period. This creates a state of constant pressure and can lead to burnout. Students, constantly exposed to a large volume of information, begin to experience difficulties concentrating on a single task, which reduces their overall performance and efficiency in the learning process.

“Due to the influx of information, it has become increasingly difficult to assess the value of the information provided online, and we are faced with the transition from real life to a more abstract and virtual one” [15].

Challenges in learning technological skills. Technology changes rapidly, and what was relevant recently can quickly become outdated. This necessitates the constant updating of curricula and materials. The high pace of change and varying levels of preparedness can also hinder effective teaching of technological skills. It is important to consider that the speed of technological progress necessitates the implementation of innovative approaches to education and the adaptation of students to new conditions. The absence of a unified standard complicates the assessment of training quality and the creation of standardized programs, which collectively makes the process of teaching relevant skills more challenging [16].
It's essential to properly assess both the negative and undoubtedly positive aspects of technological progress to effectively address its adverse effects on students' lives and their abilities for development, learning, and communication. For these purposes, higher education institutions, including the Technical University of Moldova, incorporate disciplines such as communication and academic writing, ethics, and philosophy into the curriculum to develop students' communication skills, critical thinking, and create conditions for social interaction experience.

3.3 Psychological problems of the “digital generation” and ways to address them

Today, students use the Internet as an external source of information, while their own abilities to memorize, think critically, and overall intellect significantly decrease. The so-called "digital" generation possesses advanced multitasking skills but suffers from issues with time management, task quality, and productivity, leading to profound negative consequences. Information overload, dependence on social media, and constant stress contribute to the development of attention and concentration crises, increased anxiety, and other problems characteristic of our generation [17]. This can have devastating consequences on the development of future life and communication skills. Minimizing such negative effects can be achieved by reducing students' screen time, controlling the content consumed on social media platforms and online platforms, and reducing stress factors.

The emergence of social networks has changed the nature of human interactions. According to some studies, social networks designed to promote friendliness and easy interaction among people, such as Facebook, can lead to the development of depression due to low self-esteem and social comparison [5,18]. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential negative consequences and use social networks in moderation, paying attention to one's mental health and self-esteem. Already, posting various photos and posts is accompanied by anxiety about whether this information will be accepted and approved by the online community, which places one's self-esteem entirely dependent on the opinions of others. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports the existence of depression caused by Facebook, “depression that develops when students and young people spend a lot of time on social media sites like Facebook, and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression” [18]. A new systematic review of the literature linking social networks to depression was conducted by Lancaster University. The results were published in the journal Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking. Figure 1 illustrates the results of this analysis of 799 articles on the relationship between social networks and mental health.

This literature review shows that only 6% indicate that social media has a positive impact on mental health; however, they more often have a negative or neutral impact on physical and psychological health, including development of communication skills. These results underscore the need for a deeper study and understanding of the impact of social media and online platforms on students' mental health and the development of strategies for the safe use of online resources and platforms. As virtual communication develops, real-life communication degrades, leading to its own set of negative consequences. Certain behaviors, such as comparing oneself negatively to others, feeling envy when observing others' lives, frequent posting and excessive interaction through social networks, forced interaction with people unpleasant to the individual, and the creation of a "virtual person" [20], increase the likelihood of developing depression, as the student's brain is in a vulnerable state during this developmental period.
Moreover, in the modern world, the internet means everything for students: education, work, socializing with friends, searching for information, storing important data, memories, entertainment, and much more. In such circumstances, without access to the internet, a person loses access to all major spheres of life, leading to complete dependency. Additionally, the lack of access to the internet and online platforms results in complete social isolation for the student without the possibility of communication, which has a profoundly negative impact on mental health and the development of communicative skills for the student.

Personality type is also considered an important factor in terms of the risk of developing depression when using social networks [21]. Women and individuals with a neurotic personality have a higher risk. Moreover, while some people have negative experiences on Facebook, others have positive ones. For people with depression, researchers emphasize that online communication platforms can help if they are used to increase social support.

The lack of face-to-face communication is also a common problem. According to GWI research, “in 2022, users aged 16 to 64 spent 2.5 hours a day on social networks,” with a significant portion of media consumption time attributed to students and young people. About 50% of girls and 9% fewer boys aged 16 to 24 spend more than 4 hours a day browsing the internet [22]. In such conditions, the level of development of communication skills significantly decreases, which in turn can lead to a deterioration in the quality of interpersonal relationships and social adaptation.

The combination of these factors can significantly reduce the quality of life and communication skills of both students and humanity as a whole. That’s why it's essential to use technology wisely for learning and communication.

Taking into account the developmental characteristics of students and their preference for using online resources, there are currently a number of scientifically validated online therapies available that can support people with various emotional issues. Within these programs, students receive psychological treatment online under the adequate guidance of a mental health specialist [21], which, in turn, can reduce the negative consequences of internet influence on the psychological and mental health of students.

The possibility of personal information being hacked and insufficient protection of digital data pose challenges for the full and open communication of students on online platforms. This can lead to increased levels of anxiety among students as they become aware
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In the modern online world, serious questions arise about trust and confidentiality of personal information. Today, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine whom to trust entirely in the digital environment to avoid potential blackmail or unauthorized use of provided data. Even communication on online platforms is subject to risk, as it cannot be guaranteed whether the conversation is with a real person, an artificial intelligence, or a malicious actor manipulating personal data such as voice or photos of close individuals. These nuances create an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety, prompting users to be more cautious and attentive when disclosing their personal information in the online space.

3.4 The development of student’s communication skills in higher education institutions in the context of modern technological progress

In the modern world, the higher education process is saturated with online platforms for more efficient learning in the context of technological progress, which provides students with opportunities to develop both professional and communication skills in the online space. At the State University of Moldova, one of the frequently used online platforms is the Cisco Networking Academy, designed for training and developing skills in the field of information technology, as well as for the exchange of ideas and experiences. The results of a global study conducted through a survey of former Cisco Academy students who have completed at least one full course [23] provide an answer to the question of what professional achievements respondents have attained due to their professional training and development of communication skills. As part of this research, a similar question was given to the students at Technical University of Moldova after the Communication and Academic Writing course, resulting in the creation of Figure 2:

![Figure 2](image)

Figure 2. Developing communication skills through information technology.
These results indicate an improvement in the level of students’ professional preparation and their enhanced communicative interaction with employers thanks to the Communication and Academic Writing course, which is integrated into the educational program of the Technical University of Moldova to enhance the knowledge and communication skills of TUM students. Thus, the university’s curriculum becomes more adaptive to market requirements and enhances the qualification of students.

For the development of communicative competence, it is necessary for students to be engaged in specific communicative situations. These skills will positively impact the recipient’s knowledge in linguistic, sociocultural spheres, as well as in reflection and self-assessment [24]. To develop the necessary skills, the curricula of Moldovan universities include subjects such as ethics, philosophy, communication, and academic writing, which allow students to learn how to interact correctly with the surrounding world within the educational program. In addition to this, universities such as the Technical University of Moldova involve students in extracurricular activities, such as participating in various contests and conferences, and sometimes organize excursions to major companies in Moldova [25, 26], providing students with opportunities to socialize and develop their communication skills, as well as opportunities for professional development and finding future employers.

Online platforms create unique opportunities for students to collaborate on academic assignments and projects, even if they are located in different places. This allows students to exchange ideas, solve tasks as a team, and develop collaboration skills in a virtual environment. Through collaborative work on online platforms, students learn to interact effectively, share responsibilities, and coordinate their efforts to achieve common goals. Such experience not only contributes to improving academic performance but also prepares students for the modern work environment, where interaction and teamwork play an important role. With the development of technology, the study of foreign languages has become more accessible and effective. For example, in addition to the traditional language teaching process, it has become possible to watch various videos on specialized topics in a foreign language and even communicate with native speakers through online platforms. Some studies have confirmed that audio and video blogs can be more effective tools for language teaching and learning than traditional methods, especially regarding grammar correctness, language complexity, and fluency of students’ speech. Moreover, with this method of learning, students typically have more freedom to express their ideas and arguments than students taught by traditional methods with teachers. Blogs help students to meet people from different social groups and life circumstances, undoubtedly broadening their horizons and developing their communication skills. Archiving blog posts encourages students to reflect on the content of the blog and develop metacognitive strategies to control the learning process in the blog, leading to a more multifaceted and profound development of students [27]. Thus, communication development is realized and expanded, providing new experiences and opportunities for personal interaction development for students within higher education.

3.5 The effectiveness of online communication for educational purposes and the development of communication skills

Technologies have become an integral part of our lives, helping us deal with various communication difficulties and making interaction a more flexible and adaptive process. A
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A vivid example of solving the communication problem was the COVID-19 pandemic when face-to-face interaction became impossible, and the whole world shifted to online platforms. In the midst of universal panic and fear of personal interaction [28], technological progress and online communication made interpersonal communication possible.

The transition of educational institutions, including higher education establishments, to online learning format has been particularly significant, ensuring the safety of students and teachers during the pandemic. Thanks to this mode of learning, students not only interacted with instructors, receiving knowledge and feedback, but also collaborated with each other, working on joint projects in the online space, which contributed to the development of communication skills, cooperation, and teamwork in rapidly changing life conditions. By using online communication for educational purposes, students master various digital tools, acquire information and experience from different sources, leading to the development of skills in analyzing, interacting with, and evaluating information for its credibility. Participation in discussions, groups, and forums, as well as the debate on various topics, allows students to develop critical thinking and the ability to consider different perspectives on a given situation.

Thus, online platforms have become a key means of personal interaction and digital literacy development [29], both in educational settings and in everyday life and business, playing a crucial role in overcoming the limitations associated with physical and social isolation. Technological progress remains an essential part of our lives even after the lifting of all COVID-19-related restrictions, making daily life, education, and interpersonal interaction more convenient and efficient.

4. Conclusions

Concluding the study, the goal of thoroughly examining the multifaceted impact of the internet on the development of students’ communication skills has been achieved. Positive and negative aspects of internet influence on both the world at large and social groups, individual individuals, and education have been identified. Technologies influence brain structure and behavioral patterns, determined by screen time, the number of tasks performed using technology, and individual characteristics of each person, which can lead to various psychological disorders. That's why it's so important to learn to use technologies wisely and effectively for the development and improvement of all aspects of life, including communication and education.

For example, avoiding certain behavioral patterns promoted on various social platforms, consciously increasing face-to-face interactions, taking measures to protect digital data security, and analyzing one’s psychological state can help prevent the development of depression, increased anxiety and stress, social isolation, data breaches, and other negative behavioral manifestations associated with these factors.

It should be noted that actions such as setting priorities, imposing limits on technology use, engaging in physical activity, and increasing sleep time will help more effectively deal with the consequences of excessive technology use and establish a comfortable way of interacting with technology.

Technological progress has left its mark on the field of education, making it necessary to introduce changes into university curricula. Technical University of Moldova educates and produces engineers who shape the future; however, it also teaches students to interact with people, effectively market themselves and their services by incorporating subjects such as
communication and academic writing, ethics, and philosophy. This is aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of future professionals in the fast-paced world and job market, as ultimately, people buy from people.

**Conflict of interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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