Issue of The Social Dilemmas After Wars: A Cooperative learning Intervention Through physical education and It's Effect on Social Skills Development Among Middle School Students' In Baghdad, Iraq.

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Abstract: The current essay aims to use a format of Cooperative Learning Strategy (CLS), which involves group work where the groups are set structured tasks with identifiable outcomes using a Student Team Achievement Division (STAD) approach (Dyson and Grineski, 2001; Slavin, 1978; 1990) as a basis for the intervention for promoting amicable social skills amongst Iraqi middle school students. In this study, an intervention programme was devised as part of a new learning style to encourage the emergence of physical and social skills in which students (mean age = 12.8 years, N =60) were invited to participate as part of physical education classes. The measures were completed as pre-tests at the beginning of the intervention for both the treated and control groups and as post-tests at the end of week six (post-test one) and week twelve (post-test two). Mixed-repeated MANOVA measures were used to ascertain whether there were significant differences among the pre-test, the post-test one and post-test two scores and within the two groups. The results showed considerable success in the cooperative learning classes to improve the social skills among the middle school students. This study has determined that CLS holds much promise for physical education and sports activities. Nonetheless, it would be a great challenge if CLS were to be adopted throughout Iraqi schools, especially in the areas of physical education and sport activities.

Key words: Cooperative learning Strategy; Small groups; Social Skills; Iraqi displaced students; Physical Education

INTRODUCTION

The process of change is very necessary, especially when the state begins a new era of life. The state is responsible for evaluating and re-building the educational system and attempting to reform it commensurate with the requirements of the new expected achievement levels in all subjects (Ismail 2007: Mohammad, 2006). However, pursuant to the conflicts and disputes caused by the wars in Iraq, especially after the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003, discrimination grew up between members of society, and even within the same religion, which had a negative impact on the social and humanitarian relationships between people. This was reflected in turn in the children and encouraged violence and aggression among them (Alhamdaney, 2006, Al- Qureshi, 2008).

UNICEF (2006) reported that the hotspots in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad throughout recent years, have seen the highest tally of displaced people. Violence is creating widows and orphans daily, and insecurity has closed schools and parents are afraid to let their children play outside. Unfortunately, the right of children to protection has evoked particular challenges, especially amongst those children who have been separated from their caregivers. The children have been exposed to violence and abuse (UNICEF, 2006).

However, in 2009 the situation was different as the government forces had managed to control the security situation, and the displaced families had begun to return to their regions, and thus return the children to their original schools.

According to numerous surveys conducted by researchers and scholars it has been shown that these children have difficulties in re-integrating into their original schools, they have a fear of directly dealing with their colleagues and engaging in dialogue, they have low academic achievement in various subjects, a low level of interest, and also difficulties in learning, especially in middle schools (Ismail, 2007; Mohammad, 2007; Shoba and Mohammad 2008: UNICEF 2006). Moreover, in a major study, Saieed and Hussain, (2010) mentioned that the Iraqi community needs more understanding and development concerning the behaviours of children in the schools and the laws are not sufficient to solve the social problems of the Iraqi students. Two studies focused on the problem of social skills were conducted in Iraq in recent years, Mohammad, (2007) and Shoba and Mohammad, (2008). The results showed the urgent need to increase monitoring of the protective environment of

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children and their psycho-social situation through schools and local health services, especially for those students who were displaced from their own homes. This aspect is important to achieve effective learning goals, to measure the ability of the students, to encourage them to work in partnership with others, to exchange their views, and improve social relationships in a society which has various races and religions. The schools have an increased responsibility to help students learn the skills needed to cope with these challenges of life (Vanden Auweele, 1999).

Recent developments in the field of physical education have led to a renewed interest in new teaching strategies as alternative approaches to the traditional method of the instructions in the form of pedagogical text. These new approaches focus on the behaviour of the students and the development of social skills as well as positive achievements (Carlson, 1995: Cothran and Ennis 1998: Siedentop *et al.*, 1994).

Nevertheless, social skills refer to specific capabilities that enable individuals to execute a social task (e.g. decision making and response). Viewing social competence as a multilevel construct can be effective for those attempting to adjust, predict or explain the social behaviours of children (Cavell, 1990). The application of instruction in social skills in the context of physical education and sports activities focuses on behaviours that need amelioration. Within any given context, individuals need to recognize when an appropriate social skill is needed or will probably be performed by others.

Individuals as well must be able to use those skills in specific situations. Gillies and Boyle, (2010): Vidoni and Ward, (2006) point out that, the development of social skills is a basic goal of a physical education curriculum because contemporary life places a premium on the ability of citizens to relate well to each other, to work effectively in groups, and to deal with interpersonal conflicts and tensions. This view was supported by Johnson and Johnson, (1998): McHugh, (1995) and Rink, (2009) who concluded that social skills are necessary components of the mental health of people, were positively correlated with success at school and negatively with unhealthy behaviours, help develop socially adjusted people in childhood and adolescence, and facilitate communication in all areas of human activity.

In addition, the learning of social skills necessitates first determining the actual skills required according to the nature of the educational environment and specific objectives for all stages, and trying to integrate these skills with the regular lesson activities. Learning social skills is facilitated using strategies that provide experiential learning experiences in a supportive social environment (Goudas and Magotsiou, 2009). Among them, a CLS maximizes the acquisition of social skills by the students because of the nature of social interdependence among the members of the group. (Cohen, 1994).

Cooperative learning is a dynamic form of learning that requires a shared effort to achieve a common goal (Dyson, 2002). In CLS, students work in heterogeneous groups, which encourage and support each other, using social skills related to collaboration, have a responsible attitude to their own learning and the learning of other group members, and may assess the progress of the group (Rink, 2009: Veenman, *et al.*, 2002).

Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1998) categorized the results of the studies comparing cooperative, individualistic, and competitive efforts in three wide categories relating to the nature of the experience of students: academic success, quality of relationships, and psychological adjustment to school life. These are each discussed below:

Academic Success has an abundant interesting influence on the school experience and is an aspect of whether students achieve academically. This concept has manifold impacts on school friction (the higher achievement of students, the more committed they tend to be to completing their studies (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1998: Watts and Becker, 2008).

According to Chen *et al.*, (2008) and Watts and Becker, (2008) over 50 studies were conducted comparing the relative effectiveness of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learn-ing on the individual achievements of children. Many of these studies found that CLS promotes a higher individual achievement than do competitive approaches or individualistic ones (Dyson, 2001). Dyson (2002) in his study found that CLS increased motor performance abilities and promoted best physical activity outcomes.

Elsewhere, Goudas and Magotsiou (2009) were in agreement with the conclusions of Putnam (2008), in which he mentioned that CLS can develop an awareness of one's physical self and relationship with others, enhance the level of agility and physical coordination, and create an environment that supports mutual learning.

Quality of Relationships, many researchers have evaluated this meaning among students at different academic stages. They found that CLS promotes a greater predilection among students to work cooperatively than those competing with their companions or working on their own (Antil *et al.*, 1998; Putnam, 2008). Sapon-Shevin (2006) and Zeng *et al.*, (2009) reflected that students become more comfortable with cooperative activities and 'grow their abilities' to use the parlance language. They will gradually transfer into a good atmosphere where everyday conversations in the target language are common, in addition to improving the quality of social adaptation to school life and raising social membership in classes.

Psychological Adjustment, Johnson and Johnson (1989) found in their study a variety of usefulness of CLS on psychological health. Caring and committed friendships come from a sense of reciprocal accomplishment, mutual self-pride in combined work, and the bonding that results from common effort. Pachota (2009) realized that some individuals seek to gain the opportunity to work with those they care about. This can lead to common

success which is experienced as a result of working together to get the job done and enhances social competencies, self-esteem, individualistic attitudes, and general psychological health (Pachota, 2009).

Because of the numerous benefits for individuals and groups in the development of motor skills, social habits, and trying new behaviour skills, several physical educators have been emboldened by the use of CLS as a resource for change in physical education and sports activities (Dyson, 2001: Gillies and Boyle, 2010: Grineski, 1996: Wuest and Bucher, 2009). Grineski (1996) concluded that CLS could ameliorate the physical fitness and social interactions of students at all levels.

However, far too little attention has been paid to CLS and its impact on social skills development and its exploitation to resolve the problems of Iraqi students in order to build a new generation with positive behaviours and to overcome the consequences of numerous wars which have affected the Iraqi educational system. Unfortunately, the present researchers could not find any studies investigating empirically the utilization of the CLS approach in the Iraqi middle classes as a practical solution or as a tool to develop the social skills of students in terms of cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control skills, especially in terms of physical education and sports activities. Therefore, this study is part of a major project to acquaint and promote the learning of sports skills and social relations development. Specifically, this experimental study is an attempt to determine and suggest another suitable method for teaching and learning in the Iraqi environment by a new technique in order to develop and increase the quality of social relationships for middle school students through physical education lessons.

The purpose of the study:

The purpose of this experimental study is to investigate the effects of two different teaching strategies on the social skills of children in Baghdad, Iraq. Specifically, the study tries to compare the effects of the CLS programme with those of a teacher centric method through physical education lessons.

Research Question:

Are there any differences between the experimental (CLS) group and the control group scores across the three-time tests (pre-test, post-test one, and post-test two) for Total Social Skills in terms of cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control skills?

Methodology:
Research Design:

Two groups participated in the study which comprised of one control (Teacher-centered techniques) group and an experimental (CLS) group. A pre-test/ post-test research design was followed in order to investigate the effects of an intervention programme using CLS on the social skills of Iraqi middle school students.

Sampling Procedure:

In fact, school classes, as Rusk (1960) stated, are one of the most convenient places for educational experiments since the results of these experimentations can be applied in-situ.

All the seventh grade male students in Al-Mansour middle school, Baghdad, for the academic year (2010-2011) were selected to be the population for the present experimental work. Al-Mansour middle school is located on the east bank on the Al-Rusafa side of the river Tigris in Baghdad, which is the largest city and the capital of Iraq.

This school was selected based on the region, where it is considered to be a hotspot with sectarian conflicts and ethnic disputations. Unfortunately, most of these children and their families in this school have been displaced from their own homes

since 2006 until 2009 because of the violence and insecurity among various components of Iraqi society. Furthermore, the religions, sects, and belief differences were the main reasons that created the conflicts and some groups resorting to imposing their views by the force of arms.

A total of 60 participants were selected randomly from the population using the sample random sampling technique. This technique was employed in order to achieve an unbiased selection of subjects (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1990). The mean age of the children was 12 years and eight months. 30 students represented the experimental group (class1), while 30 students formed the control group (class2). As far as the selection of subjects was concerned, efforts were made to make the groups as homogeneous as possible in order to ensure a better equation.

Moreover, the students came from a middle to lower-middle socioeconomic background. Of the students, 98% of them were from intact families. Approximately one out of every three parents had a scholastic occupation such as a teacher, doctor, engineer, or official; their educational levels ranged mainly from college to university graduate. The other parents were non professional workers, with an educational level of high school or less than high school.

For the ethical process, the students and their parents/guardians were notified of the study by letter. Parents/guardians were required to give a response in writing via a consent form for their child to participate.

Instrument:

An Iraqi Social Skills Rating Questionnaire (ISSRQ) was used to measure the social skills for Iraqi middle school students. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the Malaysian Social Skill Rating Questionnaire (MSSRQ) of Rashid, (2004). This rating system is a group of norm- referenced behaviour rating scales designed to identify social competence and adaptive behaviour. The questionnaire includes both a frequency scale and an importance scale for each item. The determination of Rashid (2004) was to detect problem behaviours that interfere with socially skilled behaviour. Among the domains rated by the MSSRQ were social skills classified in five sub-scales of cooperation, assertion, empathy, responsibility, and self-control. All of the sub-skill factors that were loaded in the selected scales of social skills reflected positive social behaviour, as it was intended to measure the mean higher social skills scored by students. However, the MSSRQ was based on a sample of 128 secondary school students with four randomly selected sample classes in Selangor, Malaysia, involving a variety of groups with normal social behaviour and those who were behaviourally disordered. High levels of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, content, construct and concurrent validity were reported by the author (Rashid, 2004).

Questionnaire Directions:

The questionnaire in this study used for the pre-test and post-test consisted of two parts. The first part elicited biographical data (e.g. occupation of father and mother, level of education). In the second part, students were asked to rate on a five-point scale the five social sub-skills items listed on the questionnaire. The students were requested to read each sentence and decide how often they behave as described and circle their rating.

Data collection:

This study was confined to two learning environments: two seventh-grade classes. The students were in two classrooms in which the teachers volunteered to participate in the study. The differences between the two groups were in the teaching approach. The treatment group was exposed to an intervention program with utilizing CLS according to Student Team's Achievement Division (STAD) (Dyson and Grineski, 2001: Slavin, 1978: 1980). while the other teacher used a Teacher-centred techniques (a "command style") of the Iraqi syllabus (Goudas, 2009: Mosston and Ashworth, 2002) with a control group.

The students were not singled out in any way, and their classroom teachers did not change drastically throughout the duration of the study. Thus, during the study, the students had the same basic environment as at any other time of the school session. Therefore, the participants were protected.

Intervention Programme:

The intervention programme took place over 12 school weeks covering instruction in four volleyball fundamental skills scheduled in three weekly units (Lafont, Proeres and Vallet, 2007). The unit periods were forty-five minutes long as normally followed in the Iraqi syllabus (Ministry of Education, 1983). The physical education intervention programme during the study designed to assist Iraqi middle school students' to attain desirable social skills as well as cooperation relationships', re-integration with the classmates, positive group interaction, and encouragement of participation in physical activities inside the school(See Appendix 1).

The subjects were taught four volleyball fundamental skills (Serving, Passing, Set-up, and Service defence). The researchers utilized a STAD style format because this style could provide students with the opportunity to share leadership and responsibility roles such as being a recorder, encourager, coach, and equipment manager that were used to facilitate group/team activity and use collaborative skills to achieve group goals (Erdem, 2009; Gillies and Boyle, 2010). Moreover, the students were given task sheets which illustrated the learning skills, and then the sheets were checked off by another group member and/or the teacher. The goal in the selection of a task was to design an experience that developed the interdependency of all the members of the team. However, the intervention programme was sent to a supervisory committee and also experts in the field in Iraq for checking the content of the plans. Most of the plans were amended to fit with the purpose of the study.

Teachers Uses:

The two teachers aged 33 and 35 had the same degree in physical education and sports science (Bachelor), and had six years of teaching seventh grade students. One of them was selected at random to teach the experimental group.
Nevertheless, the teachers had not previously been exposed to CLS in their classes, because it was considered to be a new strategy in the Iraqi educational syllabus. Therefore, the teacher of the experimental group was exposed to a training course on the implementation of the CLS technique (Goudas & Magotsiou, 2009). The person who

undertook the training of the teacher held a PhD. degree in CLS. The training was conducted over two weeks before the study started (Alhaidari, 2006).

The cooperative learning training course involved four main stages such as the theoretical cooperative learning approach, practical implementation, procedure, and coaching. The teacher of the experimental group followed this training course to implement the CLS method.

Pre and Post tests:

The pre-test measure was conducted before the intervention programme began in the first week of the study and was given to both the experimental and the control group. The subjects in both groups were exposed to a five social sub-skill test, including (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control). The pre-test scores helped to determine the prevailing level of the social skills of the students. Furthermore, it provided an understanding of the diagnostic ability levels of the subjects, especially for formalizing the cooperative learning sub-groups.

During week eight (session 24) of the study, both groups were subjected to the first post-test. The final post-test took place in the last week (session 33) and was administrated to the groups using the same procedure.

Data Analysis:

To process the data of the present study, the computer statistical program SPSS 18.0 package (PASW) was used. Means were calculated for the experimental and the control group based on the responses of the subjects to the ISSRQ. Eventual differences in the overall social skill Means among the pre-test, post-test one, and post-test two tests for the same group of students on three different occasions were investigated via a "Mixed-repeated multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Five dependent sub-skills were analyzed: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control which were measured at three points in time. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted. This type of statistical approach was used because it incorporates information about several outcome measures and, therefore, informs us of whether groups of participants can be distinguished by a combination of scores based on several dependent measures (Field, 2009). However, the level of statistical significance was set at 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mixed-repeated MANOVA statistics were applied to answer the research question. In addition, the descriptive statistics on the social skills sub-variables was measured at three different points of time on two groups. The means and standard divisions are presented in Table 1.

All the multivariate tests (here Wilk's lambdas) were significant. There was a statistically significant difference on a between-group effect (treatment and control groups) on the combined dependent variables: $F_{(5.54)} = 94.18$, $p < .05$, eta square = .90. This result suggested a large effect size.

When the results for the dependent sub variables were considered separately, all the sub variables of social skills reach statistically significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of 0.01, cooperation sub skill, $F_{(5.54)} = 20.1$, $p < .01$, eta square = .77, assertion $F_{(5.54)} = 30.17$, $p < .01$, eta square = .84, responsibility sub skill, $F_{(5.54)} = 13.1$, $p < .01$, eta square = .69, empathy sub skill, $F_{(5.54)} = 16.13$, $p < .01$, eta square = .73,and self-control sub skill $F_{(5.54)} = 78.86$, $p < .01$, eta square = .58. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that treatment group reported an improvement for cooperation sub skill (M = 3.97, SD =.045), assertion sub skill (M = 3.97, SD = .045), responsibility sub skill (M = 3.97, SD = .052), empathy sub skill (M = 3.98, SD = .043), and for self-control sub skill (M = 3.99, SD = .011) as compared to the control group which reported cooperation sub skill (M = 2.86, SD = .185), assertion sub skill (M = 2.90, SD = .183), responsibility sub skill (M = 2.87, SD = .179), empathy sub skill (M = 2.95, SD = .271), and for self-control sub skill (M = 2.89, SD = 235). The results showed positive gains (significant differences) in the Total social skills of the students for the experimental group after 12 weeks of the experiment.

However, the results obtained from the descriptive analysis of social sub skills are shown in the Table 1, while, Table 2 provides the results of the repeated multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). In addition, Figure 1 showed the estimated mean of Total social skills scores obtained across the three time periods at week one, week eight, and week 12 improved steadily.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we can see, however, how much more successful the cooperative learning approach might be if it were to be adopted throughout Iraqi syllabus, especially in the areas of physical education and sports activity. If we could establish a common cooperative learning approach, the transfer from class to class and year to year would be substantial. This decision could affect whether displaced students can perform to the best of

their ability and reintegrate back into society again. Iraqi students could thus become fully aware of this strategy and able to resolve their own social problems. These findings will have implications for UNICEF and the Iraqi government tactics in rebuilding the curriculum and finding some temporary solutions for the problems of the Iraqi children. It may be a useful method to increase the positive relationships among individuals with a high self confidence so that they are likely to support and contribute to the national endeavours in order to coexist peacefully in their multi-ethnic and multi-religious homeland away from sectarianism and racism.

As with any study, however, limitations and further research opportunities need to be mentioned. One limitation relates to the nature of the subjects and the outcomes. It remains unclear if a generalization of these behaviours would occur in other settings such as during after school programmes or recess activities with multiple levels of students and gender. Nevertheless, we still recommend future research to include female students with different levels of study, if possible. To this end, another sports activity or game situation could be used to promote amicable social skills.

Table 1: Results of Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test, Post-test one, and Post-test two for Social sub-skills in The Treatment and Control Group.

Social sub-skills	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Cooperation Pre-test	Treatment Group	1.3352	.15335	30
	Control Group	1.2556	.18944	30
	Total	1.2954	.17553	60
Cooperation Post-test 1	Treatment Group	2.0037	.15911	30
	Control Group	2.0259	.16998	30
	Total	2.0148	.16362	60
Cooperation Post-test 2	Treatment Group	3.9685	.04540	30
	Control Group	2.8556	.18547	30
	Total	3.4120	.57692	60
Assertion Pre-test	Treatment Group	1.0400	.32358	30
	Control Group	1.0556	.27464	30
	Total	1.0478	.29766	60
Assertion Post-test 1	Treatment Group	2.8333	.27613	30
	Control Group	2.1778	.20666	30
	Total	2.5056	.40955	60
Assertion Post-test 2	Treatment Group	3.9711	.04526	30
	Control Group	2.9000	.18257	30
	Total	3.4356	.55594	60
Responsibility Pre-test	Treatment Group	1.4483	.28902	30
	Control Group	1.5683	.30919	30
	Total	1.5083	.30284	60
Responsibility Post-test 1	Treatment Group	2.9105	.17923	30
	Control Group	2.8000	.18667	30
	Total	2.8553	.18980	60
Responsibility Post-test 2	Treatment Group	3.9717	.05200	30
	Control Group	2.8717	.17893	30
	Total	3.4217	.56982	60
Empathy Pre-test	Treatment Group	1.3417	.36838	30
	Control Group	1.3542	.39676	30
	Total	1.3479	.37963	60
Empathy Post-test 1	Treatment Group	2.9583	.30501	30
	Control Group	2.1875	.24729	30
	Total	2.5729	.47629	60
Empathy Post-test 2	Treatment Group	3.9833	.04322	30
	Control Group	2.9542	.27166	30
	Total	3.4688	.55360	60
Self-control Pre-test	Treatment Group	1.4708	.29026	30
	Control Group	1.4708	.34025	30
	Total	1.4708	.31355	60
Self-control Post-test 1	Treatment Group	2.9521	.25464	30
	Control Group	2.8875	.23523	30
	Total	2.9198	.24521	60
Self-control Post-test 2	Treatment Group	3.9979	.01141	30
	Control Group	2.8875	.23523	30
	Total	3.4427	.58373	60

Discussion:

Since the number of students, environmental conditions, and the school structure were equivalent and remained unchanged during the experiment, we may assume that the differences are due to the teaching strategies and the atmosphere within the groups. We believe that our findings might not imply a great threat to

external validity because the subjects were qualified in several variables which might otherwise affect the results.

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effects of an intervention programme through a CLS group compared to a Teacher -centric technique group in terms of the social skills of children. The findings showed that the intervention was effective in improving the social skills of the students during volleyball activity in physical education lessons. The intervention was successful in raising the total level of the students' social skills through a post-test one (at week 8) and a post-test two (at week 12) evaluation. The students in the CLS group reflected a high rate of improvement in overall Social Skills compared to the control group.

Table 2: Results of Mixed Repeated (MANOVA) for Total Social Skills between Treatment and Control Groups.

Effect	TRAIL	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Eta squared
Multivariate Test Wilks' Lambda (Between Subjects effect)		94.18	5.000	54.00	.000*	.90
Within Subjects Time*Subject		14.33	10.000	49.00	.000*	.97
Between Subjects Effect Test	Cooperation	20.10			.000*	.77
	Assertion	30.17			.000*	.84
	Responsibility	13.06			.000*	.69
	Empathy	16.13			.000*	.73
	Self-control	78.85			.000*	.58

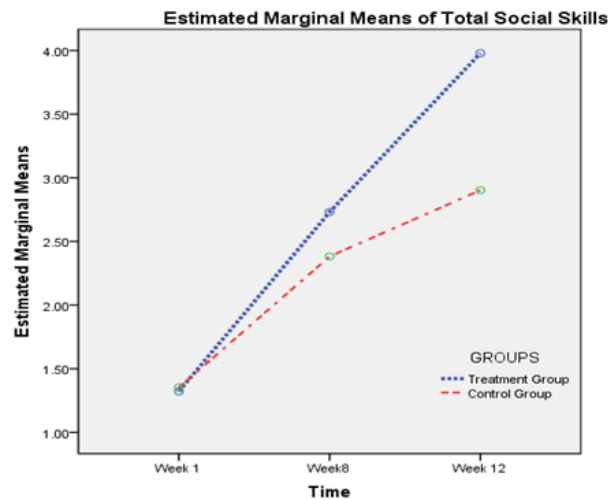*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Figure 1: Estimated Marginal Means of Total Social Skills Score between Treatment and Control Groups in Three Time Tests.

A possible explanation for this might be due to the fundamental interaction and work with numerous individuals and groups. In fact, this was the hypothesized outcome for improving social skills behaviour. The students in the experimental CLS group found themselves under socially and physically new conditions much more often than those in the teacher centric group, which gave opportunities for the practice of social skills. Not only did the students learn something together but also, as Sapon-Shevin, (2006) found, "cooperative learning involves allowing - encouraging - students to take responsibility for their own learning and that of their classmates and better physical skills will be learned" (p. 187). However, the setting in the experimental CLS group established a basis for substantial interaction with a new individual and thereby as well as a possibility for social interaction and for learning and developing a helping behaviour.

Another advantage of the intervention programme was the utilization of the fundamental skills of volleyball. According to Rink, (2009) net games such as volleyball have traditionally been considered as events that promote social skills. The control group had 33 lessons on playing volleyball just as the experimental group, but the results of the control group for social skills were weaker than those of the experimental group. It appears that a goal-oriented teaching method plays a more important role than the content of the lessons. Even so, the essential conditions of successful cooperation and interaction, caring for others and feeling responsible, manifested in advising and helping as well as an autonomously enhanced shared ambition to achieve the goals of the task (Rink, 2002).

Nevertheless, these results reinforce the recommendations of UNICEF concerning Iraqi children, such as support services for children living with unusual conflicts, piloting an initiative to reintegrate street children with

their families, and promoting concepts of child rights rather than welfare approaches (UNICEF, 2006). Furthermore, UNICEF with the cooperation of the Iraqi Ministry of Education sought to implement recreational activities to support key areas to improve the morale of the children and provide psycho-social care.

However, the results related to the measurements of social skills through physical education and sports activities indicated that teaching methods based on student interaction can lead to analogous good results in terms of psycho-motor objectives such as using individual-based activity and traditional teaching methods (Cothran & Ennis 1998; Vidoni & Ward, 2006). Moreover, this study produced results, which corroborated the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field (David, Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Dyson, 2001; Magotsiou & Coudas, 2007; Pachota, 2009; Wuestand & Bucher, 2009) who found that CLS had a positive impact on the social skills and behaviour improvement of middle school students. Empirical research seems to prove the idea that students ameliorated significantly and gained substantial social and academic benefits when involved in CLS (Gillies & Boyle, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Grineski, 1996; Lafont, Proeres & Vallet, 2007; Wuest & Bucher, 2009). These results seem to coincide with the forecasts of advocates for sport psychology and multicultural education, who suggested that students with numerous social problems benefit from CLS more than from the traditional approach, which tends to be more competitive and individualistic (Magotsiou & Coudas, 2007; Slavin, 1996; Lafont, Proeres & Vallet, 2007; Zeng, et al., 2009).

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