

## The Effectiveness of Using the Cooperative Learning Method to Develop Social Skills among Kindergarten Children

Dr. Salama Aqeel Al- mehsin

Associate Professor of Educational psychology

Prince Sattam Bin Abdul-Aziz University

[Salamasa1980@yahoo.com](mailto:Salamasa1980@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

The study aimed to identify the effectiveness of using the cooperative learning method to develop social skills among kindergarten children, as the study relied on. The study sample consisted of (34) kindergarten children at Al Sabeel School in Amman, where a training program based on the cooperative learning method for kindergarten children was applied to them, prepared by the researcher in addition to a notecard aimed at measuring the development of social skills among kindergarten children. The card included (30) skills; it was formulated in phrases that express simple behavioral actions that can be observed from the researcher's preparation and after making sure of their psychometric properties' suitability. The study results found a difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills observation card has a statistically significant manner and in favor of the post-application. Using the cooperative learning method has contributed to the development of social skills among the research group members. In light of this, the study recommended that kindergarten teachers should pay attention to developing children's social skills. And the need to train kindergarten teachers to use the cooperative learning method to achieve kindergarten education goals.

**Keywords:** cooperative learning - social skills anxiety - kindergarten children

### Introduction

Early childhood is the most formative period in a person's life because it is the period in which the initial seeds of the personality are laid, which crystallize and show its features in the child's future life, and it is the most influential stage of growth in the following stages, and this matter requires attention to the child's upbringing at this stage. As the interest in raising children in early childhood is considered one of the essential features that predict the extent of society's progress and development, where today's children are tomorrow's men and the future leaders. Hence, a better future for society can be achieved by providing proper care and education for children. (Darwish, Esquivel, Houtz, & Alfonso., 2001).

Kindergarten is considered one of the social institutions that assume the responsibility of caring for and raising children in early childhood; it is located in the middle of the nursery school and primary school (Beheshteh 2010). And it includes children between the ages of 3-5 years, and its primary goal is to achieve the integral development of children and prepare them for the primary stage (Carpendale & Lewis, 2006). Many educators have advocated for including it on the educational ladder (González & Muñoz-Repiso, 2017). As the academic ladder in any country cannot be complete and strong unless it is led by kindergarten (Jin & Moran, 2017). It is a self-sustaining, purposeful educational stage; it has its educational philosophy, programs, appropriate structures, specialized teachers, Rohmah, Rustono, & Rifa. 2016). And it has indicated that most developed countries in the world consider kindergarten as an essential stage of the educational process and an integral part of the general educational system (Dollman, Morgan, Pergler, Russell, & Watt, 2007).

In recent years, childhood interest has increased at the global level in general, and in Jordan in particular, at the Jordanian level, the child receives a great deal of care and attention at all educational, cultural, and health levels (Al-Khafaf, 2013). kindergarten has become a semi-primary stage, where private and government schools have proliferated, which accommodate many children aged 4-6 years. (Vodopivec, 2011). Contemporary trends have emphasized the need to pay attention to kindergarten children's education and take into account the accuracy of what is presented to them (Artut, 2009). Prepare programs that contribute to providing them with information, skills, trends, tendencies, values, and behavioral habits that enable them to live in contemporary society, and help them understand the environment in which they live and adapt to its modern requirements and capabilities (Akçay, 2016).

Social skills are considered important and necessary factors for an individual's interaction with others and his ability to continue this interaction (Al-Sahi, 2014). Among the social skills that should be acquired and developed by kindergarten children are cooperation, teamwork, play with peers and sympathy with them, their participation in dialogue and speaking, and social relations and others (Kultti, & Pramling, 2015).

Frederick (2009) emphasized that one of the social skills necessary for a child for successful social interaction in kindergarten is respecting others' rights and property, interacting cooperatively, taking responsibility for public and private property, and being able to exercise self-control (Fredre, 2009). Because of the utmost importance of social skills, educators called for the multiplicity of activities offered to children in the kindergarten, which are based on cooperation and teamwork. (Alanis, 2018) The child learns about his rights and duties during the exercise of his interactive relationships with others, and he is trained on how to express his feelings and emotions in an acceptable social manner. (Dovigo, 2016). And acquire the criteria for judging the patterns of behavior; He distinguishes between right and wrong, and acquires teamwork skills, as it requires cooperation, tolerance, and mutual respect, As he is gradually freed from selfishness and self-centeredness. Also, social skills are formed as one of the most important life skills for a kindergarten child, and many skills can be developed in a kindergarten child through play and various daily activities such as the skill of acceptance, rejection, resistance, and conflict resolution. (Pavitra, 2014). The cooperative learning method is one of the recent trends in the field of learning, and it has received significant attention due to the possibility of using it in the classroom as a modern method of education based on cooperation and teamwork to achieve common goals through cooperative activities carried out by the learners (Dereli-Iman, 2014). Also, cooperative learning is one of the types of classroom learning in which class students are divided into small cooperative groups, and it is used as a basis for developing academic achievement and social skills (Vitiello, Williford, 2016). And one of its advantages is that it is suitable for teaching various school subjects and can be applied in various educational stages, starting from kindergarten.

In light of the above, the researcher found out the importance of developing social skills among kindergarten children, using appropriate educational methods and activities, the most important of which are: Cooperative learning method.

### **Previous studies**

To uncover the effect of a training program on social intelligence for kindergarten children, Qatami and Al-Youssef (2010) conducted a study consisting of (100) children, half of whom were males and the other half were females, whose ages ranged between (4-5) years. The researchers built a measure of interpersonal intelligence for a kindergarten child to measure the skills that constitute intelligence between people, where four skills were adopted (empathy with others, effective communication with others, maintaining relationships with others, Cooperating with others, and designing a program to develop social intelligence for kindergarten children) as the program aimed to develop sub-dimensions of interpersonal intelligence. The study results showed that the training program used led to an increase in overall performance level on the scale with its four component skills. The study of Hamdallah (2011) aimed to identify the effect of cooperative learning (GEXO) on the motivation of female students in the kindergarten department to learn human biological material, The study sample consisted of (75) female students from the first stage of kindergarten department in the College of Education for Girls at the University of Baghdad. The results revealed the experimental group's superiority (JEXO) over the control group in motivation to teach the biological subject.

To reveal the effectiveness of using the cooperative learning strategy in imparting some critical thinking skills to the kindergarten child, Muharram (2006) conducted a study consisting of (30) students in kindergarten. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences at the level (0.01) between the mean scores of the children of the experimental group that were exposed to the cooperative activities program and the mean scores of the children of the experimental group that were exposed to the activities of the program in the traditional way of testing critical thinking skills for the benefit of the children of the experimental group. There are also statistically significant differences at the level (0.01) between the mean scores of the children of the experimental group exposed to the cooperative activities program on testing critical thinking skills in favor of the post-application.

To determine the effectiveness of a training program in developing social skills among a sample of kindergarten children, Al-Sawafia and Abdel Rahman (2017) conducted a study whose sample consisted of (20) pre-school children. The results indicated statistically significant differences in performance on the scale of social skills used in the study due to the effect of the training program used.

To know the correlation between kindergarten children's social competence and some family variables such as mother's education and child's gender, Irshaid (2013) conducted a study in which her sample consisted of (363) children in Amman. The study results indicated that there was no discrepancy between the overall score of children's performance on the scale of social competence and family variables. And to know the effect of teaching social skills to young children to enhance their social behavior and increase their emotional capabilities. (Khatchadourian, 2010) conducted a study where its results indicated improvement in children's participation who received the training program in positive behaviors and social interaction in the classroom to reveal the program's effectiveness to develop some social skills among kindergarten children. Al-Maghribi and Suleiman (2016) conducted a study in which a sample consisted of (20) children from the Libyan city of Benghazi. The

results indicated an improvement in the level of social skills among the experimental group children after being exposed to the training program and increased social skills compared with the children who did not undergo the training program.

By reviewing previous studies, the researcher noted the importance of making educational programs for kindergarten children to develop different concepts as studies (Qatami and Al-Youssef, 2010; Khachaturian, 2010; Al-Sawafia and Abdel Rahman, 2017; Muharram, 2006). There is also a scientific significance for cooperative learning for this group of children in educational science, which will be reflected in the future on their learning of different skills. The study of (Muharram 2006) indicated that this category's social skills are easy to modify and develop through the teaching process followed by the teacher, and this is what the results of the study of both (Al-Maghribi and Suleiman, 2016, Muharram 2016) indicated. At the same time, it is noticed through the review of previous studies that some studies have conducted their experiments on the target sample directly, which are kindergarten children as the studies of (Al-Maghribi and Suleiman, 2016, Muharram, 2016; Qatami and Al-Youssef, 2010; Khatchadourian, 2010; Al-Sawafia and Abdel Rahman, 2017; Irsheed, 2013). In contrast, others were looking for educational programs and developing various skills on a sample of teachers of that category as a study (Hamad God, 2011).

Based on the above and the difference of some previous studies on the target sample and the different skills to be developed, the current study came to know the effectiveness of using the cooperative learning method for developing social skills among kindergarten children.

### **Research problem**

Kindergarten is concerned with the linguistic and cognitive aspects needed to prepare children for primary school, and it is not concerned with experiences and activities that satisfy the needs of children and develop their personalities. During her visit to some kindergarten schools, the researcher also noticed that they are interested in teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic to prepare children for primary school. As well as the lack of attention to teaching children appropriate social skills. The method of teaching followed is the traditional collective method based on memorization and not using appropriate educational methods and activities for kindergarten children, such as the cooperative learning method. Thus, the current research problem was identified in the low educational level of kindergarten children and the low level of their performance of appropriate social skills. Therefore, the current research attempts to address the deficiencies in these aspects by preparing a training program based on the cooperative learning method suitable for kindergarten children and measure its effectiveness in developing their social skills. In light of this, the current research problem was identified in the following central question:

**What is the effectiveness of the cooperative learning method in developing social skills among kindergarten children?**

### **Research objectives**

The current research aims to determine the effectiveness of using a cooperative learning method to develop social skills among kindergarten children.

### **The importance of the study**

The current research's importance is evident in the need to pay attention to kindergarten children's social skills. It may also contribute to providing kindergarten teachers with a training program for kindergarten children using the cooperative learning method and the current research contribution in raising kindergarten children's educational level and their level of social skills performance. And this research could benefit those responsible for training kindergarten teachers before and during service where the training program is a model that can be used in training kindergarten students in colleges of education and kindergarten teachers during service. This research can benefit researchers in the child education field in preparing other programs in other educational fields for kindergarten children.

### **The limits of the study**

The current research is determined by the training program based on the cooperative learning method. These topics were determined in light of a survey of arbitrators' opinions who are specialists in curricula and teaching methods and those interested in education in kindergarten. And it is determined by measuring the appropriate social skills for kindergarten children and included in the training program.

### **The Methodology**

The current research used the experimental approach based on the design of one experimental group due to its relevance to the current research's nature, as the training program based on cooperative learning strategies

represents the independent variable. At the same time, the social skills of kindergarten children are the dependent variable.

### **The study sample**

The research experiment was applied to a sample consisting of (34) kindergarten children at Al Sabeel School in Amman during the second semester of the year 2017/2018.

### **The study materials and tools**

The materials and tools for the current research included the following:

1. A training program based on the cooperative learning method for kindergarten children (prepared by the researcher).
2. Notecard for social skills (researcher preparation).

### **The study hypotheses**

The current research attempted to validate the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the two pre-post applications of the social skills notes card for the post-application benefit.

### **The study terms**

#### **Social Skills: Social Skills**

Al-Laqani and Al-Jamal (2003) define social skills as "skills that are dominated by social performance, such as skills for working with a group, and the skills of speaking and interacting with others, participation in discussion, and cooperation with colleagues to accomplish the work assigned to them. These are skills acquired through the learners' practice of classroom and extra-curricular activities that are presented inside and outside the classroom, such as seminars, trips, exhibitions, and scientific symposia. In light of the above, the researcher defines social skills procedurally as a set of verbal and non-verbal social behavior patterns that help kindergarten children interact with others inside and outside the school, which are the social skills included in the proposed program and the observation card prepared by the researcher in this research.

#### **Kindergarten**

The researcher procedurally defines kindergarten as: An educational stage attended by children who have completed the fourth year of their life, and it includes children whose ages range from (4-6) years, and the duration of the study in which two years, the study is carried out by a curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education, and aims to achieve the comprehensive, integrated development of children and prepare them for basic education.

#### **Kindergarten Children**

They are the children who enroll in kindergarten, and their age ranges between 3-5 years. In this research, they are the children who enroll in kindergarten, and their ages range from 3-5 years.

### **Preparing the training program based on the cooperative learning method:**

#### **First: Preparing the training program**

The training program based on the cooperative learning method for kindergarten children was prepared as follows:

1. Determining the program's general objectives: The general objectives of the program were defined in light of the characteristics of the development of kindergarten children and their needs and the goals and philosophy of kindergarten education. And the training program aims to develop some appropriate social skills among children. The content of the program has also been determined by identifying the main and subtopics appropriate for kindergarten children, where the learning method to be followed in the program was determined as the cooperative learning method, and the proposed program included the steps that the teacher should follow in this method and social skills that children must be trained in while practicing program activities. The teaching plan included each of the main topics proposed for the program as the title of the topic and the behavioral objectives for teaching the topic: It has been defined precisely and clearly, and includes cognitive mental goals, psychomotor goals, and affective goals that are hoped to be achieved after completing teaching the topic. And the subject matter where the appropriate scientific content for kindergarten children has been determined in each of the program topics; in presenting the content, the researcher took into account the scientific accuracy, clarity, sequence, and logical progression. The researcher also identified the means, tools, and materials needed for each of these activities. And even the place for the activity and the activity steps. And the appropriate evaluation methods for each topic, and at the end of the teaching plan for each topic, the researcher made some proper means to evaluate children's learning of the scientific material related to

the topic and to ensure that the objectives of its teaching are achieved, these methods included a variety of questions that children would answer orally. Observe children's behavior inside and outside the classroom.

### **Polling the arbitrator's opinions on the proposed program**

After preparing the program in its initial form, it was presented to ten arbitrators specialized in curricula and teaching methods and interested in teaching in kindergarten, in expressing their views on this program, the arbitrators agreed on the suitability of the training program for the level of development of kindergarten children, and its validity scientifically and linguistically for application to the basic research group. The researcher conducted an exploratory experiment of the training program to identify the suitability of the proposed program for kindergarten children and its suitability for application to the basic research group, make the necessary adjustments to the program, and determine the time required for its implementation. An exploratory sample was chosen from the Al Sabla School due to its proximity to the researcher's residence; the number of sample members reached (10) male and female preschoolers. The researcher divided the children of the exploratory sample into two heterogeneous groups, with the help of a school teacher, and then provided the necessary resources to implement the exploratory experiment. The pilot experiment of the program was carried out from 10/10/2017 to 7/11/2017 for 45 minutes a day. The program took the final image of it and became applicable to the core research group.

### **Preparing a social skills note card**

The researcher reviewed some theoretical writings and previous studies that dealt with social skills to identify social skills and the measures that the researchers used in their studies to measure these skills, and in light of this, a notecard was prepared to measure the development of some social skills among kindergarten children, as the goal of the notecard was determined which is a measure of the development of some social skills among kindergarten children. The card included in its initial form (30) skills that were formulated in phrases expressing simple observable behavioral actions, and in front of each phrase, there are three boxes: (Always lead, sometimes lead, rarely lead). The researcher specified three grades for each skill "always performed," two grades for each skill "performed occasionally," and one score for each skill "rarely performed" then the scores are added at the end to give the total score to the card. The notecard was displayed in its initial form, accompanied by a survey of the arbitrators' opinion, to identify the accuracy of the linguistic and scientific wording of the card phrases. The phrases of the card are appropriate for the kindergarten level and the proper phrases of the card for the purpose for which it was set. Any phrase can be added, modified, or deleted. The arbitrators agreed on the validity of the card for application, its statements are appropriate for kindergarten children and for the purpose for which it was set, and this indicates that the notecard is characterized by a high degree of validity.

### **The exploratory experiment of the notecard**

The researcher applied the observation card to the exploratory sample on which the proposed program was previously applied and the achievement test, from 12/11/2017 to 11/17/2017 for 45 minutes a day. The observation card's exploratory experiment aimed to ensure that the social skills included in the card could be observed. The observation card's reliability was confirmed by calculating the percentage of the observers' agreement, as the researcher and one of the kindergarten teachers observed the survey sample members. Each child had two cards, one of them applied by the class teacher and the second applied by the researcher, then the percentage of observers' agreement was calculated for each member of the survey sample, where the average percentage of agreement among the observers was equal to 89.84%, which indicates an increase in the stability of the notecard. Calculation of the stability factor of the card by the half-segmentation method, as follows: After monitoring the scores of the survey sample members in individual and marital statements and the card as a whole, the correlation coefficient between the two halves of the card was calculated using Getman's half-segmentation equation, and the results are shown in the following table:

**Table 1: The reliability factor of the notecard by the half-segmentation method**

The square of the standard deviation of the first half of the card (=12)	The square of the standard deviation of the second half of the card (=22)	Square of the standard deviation of the card as a whole (=2)	The correlation coefficient between the two halves of the card (=11)	Card reliability factor
4.72	5.22	17.5	0.864	0.927

It is evident from the previous table that the social skills notecard has a high degree of reliability.

#### Verifying card validity

The researcher calculated the self-validity coefficient, which is equal to the square root of the reliability coefficient, and found that it is equal to 0.96, and this indicates that the card is characterized by a high degree of validity. In light of the above, the card took its final form that applies to the basic research group members. After completing the preparation of the proposed program and applying it to the exploratory sample and making the necessary adjustments, as well as after the completion of the preparation of the two research tools and ensuring their validity and reliability, both the program and the note pad are now applicable to the Basic Search Group. Immediately after the program's application, the researcher applied the search tool to the primary research group members, and the social skills notecard was applied to the members of the research group.

#### Analyzing and interpreting research results

**Validity test of the research first hypothesis, which states: "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the observation card, social skills and in favor of the post-application."**

To test the validity of this hypothesis, the researcher took the following procedures:

1. Monitoring the research group members' scores in the pre and post applications of the social skills note card.
2. Calculate the scores differences between the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills observation card and the average of these differences.
3. Calculation of T of two corresponding averages using the following equation: to determine the significance of the difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills note card.

Table (8) shows the values of "T" to denote the difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills observation card.

**Table 2: "T" values for the difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills observation card.**

N	Mean	Standard deviation	Freedom degree	Calculated T	Tabular T	
					0.05 Level	0.01 Level
34	31.125	228.634	33	48.362	2.07	2.81

It is clear from the previous table:

The calculated value of "t" (48.362) is greater than the tabular value of "t" (2.07) for the significance of the two sides at the level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom (23) and also more significant than the tabular value of "t" (2.81) for the significance of the two parties at a level of 0.01 and a degree of freedom (33). This shows that the difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the social skills observation card is statistically significant and in favor of the post-application. And in light of this, the first hypothesis of the research hypothesis was accepted.

From the previous results, it is clear that the training program using the cooperative learning method has contributed to the development of social skills among the members of the research group.

### Analysis and interpretation of hypothesis results

The hypothesis validity test results showed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the research group members in the pre and post applications of the observation card of some social skills in favor of the post-application. The researcher attributes the current result to dividing the children into small groups with different characteristics during the exercise of the activities included in the training program; it provided an opportunity for children to cooperate and positively interact with each other, which helped develop some social skills. The program also included a variety of guided scouting activities that provided the opportunity for children to practice work and team play, which helped develop their work skills and team play. The researcher also took care of training children on social skills included in the program while practicing scientific activities, which helped develop them. Add to that the researcher's observation of the children and directing them to follow the patterns of proper social behavior, which also helped create some of their social skills.

The present result is consistent with the results of the studies of Maghribi and Suleiman, 2016; Muharram, 2016; Khachaturian, 2010; Irshaid, 2013; Praise be to God, 2011) whose results indicated the effectiveness of cooperative learning in developing skills for kindergarten children.

Through testing the validity of the first hypothesis, it was possible to answer the research question, which states: What is the training program's effectiveness using the cooperative learning method in developing social skills among kindergarten children? And that is through the following procedures:

**Table 3: Adjusted earnings ratio to measure the effectiveness of the proposed program**

Scale	N	S	W	D	Adjusted earnings ratio
Social skills note card	34	50	81.125	84	1.29

Where (W) is the average scores of the research group members in the scale post-application, (S) is the average scores of the research group members in the scale pre-application, (D) is the total scale score (Helmy Ahmad Al-Wakeel and Muhammad Amin Al-Mufti, 1992, 386).

It is clear from the previous table:

- The rate of adjusted earning of social skills is equal to 1.29, and this percentage is higher than 1.2, which confirms the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing social skills among the research group members, the researcher attributes the current results to the suitability of the proposed program for the characteristics of children's growth, their needs, and preferences. The experiences included in the program were learned through the collaborative learning method, and this helped the children to acquire the concepts included in the content of the proposed program topics and their social skills.
- The current result can also be explained by the fact that the training program provided opportunities for cooperation, teamwork, and effective participation in dialogue and discussion while learning its topics. It also helped develop the social skills of children, and the use of a variety of materials, tools, and appropriate color images during the practice of cooperative activities, which led to the provision of a cooperative environment rich in elements of excitement and suspense, which helped increase children's motivation to learn, increase their memory of scientific concepts, and develop some social skills for them. The current study results also agreed with the skills developed through the cooperative learning strategy in general as a study (; Khatchadourian, 2010; Al-Sawafiyya and Abdel-Rahman, 2017; Muharram, 2006) and in the skills development in particular as a study (Qatami and Al-Youssef, 2010).

### Recommendations

In light of the research findings, the researcher recommends the following: Kindergarten teachers should pay attention to developing the social skills of children so that a person can be prepared for social interaction and forming healthy social relationships with others. And the need to train kindergarten teachers to use the cooperative learning method to achieve kindergarten education goals. To hold seminars and lectures for kindergarten teachers to introduce them to appropriate social skills for kindergarten children, their importance, development, and measurement methods.

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