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(Original Research)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CIRCLE DISCUSSION STRATEGY IN DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG SEVENTH GRADE BASIC STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the circle discussion strategy in developing social skills among seventh-grade basic students. An experimental design was employed with 57 female students divided into experimental (n=32) and control (n=25) groups. The experimental group was taught using the circle discussion strategy while the control group received traditional instruction. Data was collected using a social skills assessment measuring six key dimensions: cooperation and group work, communication, empathy and acceptance of others, school-home social skills, decision-making, and problem-solving. The experiment was conducted during the first semester of the 2024-2025 academic year in Zakho, Kurdistan Region, Iraq. Findings revealed statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in favor of the circle discussion strategy group. Analysis showed a large effect size (η^2=0.496), confirming the strategy's substantial impact on developing students' social skills. The results suggest that structured circle discussion activities provide valuable opportunities for students to practice social skills in authentic contexts, reinforcing the importance of implementing interactive pedagogical approaches in middle school classrooms.

Keywords

Circle discussion strategy, social skills, seventh grade, cooperative learning, classroom interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Social skills are essential life competencies that enable individuals to navigate complex social environments, build meaningful relationships, and function effectively within various community settings (Sørlie et al., 2020). These foundational capabilities serve as crucial prerequisites for academic success and overall well-being throughout childhood and adolescence (Berry & Connor, 2010). The development of social skills during middle childhood represents a critical period when students transition from primarily family-centered interactions to more complex peer relationships that require advanced communication abilities, emotional regulation, and cooperative behaviors (Spilt et al., 2012). Educational institutions increasingly recognize their responsibility to cultivate these competencies alongside traditional academic content (Korpershoek et al., 2016).

Contemporary educational paradigms increasingly emphasize the integration of social-emotional learning within academic curricula rather than treating these domains as separate educational objectives (Borowski, 2019). This integrated approach recognizes that effective classroom communities serve dual purposes: facilitating content mastery while simultaneously developing the interpersonal capabilities necessary for success in diverse social contexts (Fox-Cardamone & Rue, 2019).

Research on classroom instructional approaches consistently highlights the significance of interactive methodologies that engage students in authentic social exchanges (Dallimore et al., 2004). Circle discussion strategies, characterized by structured dialogic interactions within an inclusive spatial arrangement, have demonstrated particular promise for enhancing students' social development (Canney & Byrne, 2016). These approaches create democratized learning environments where hierarchical barriers are minimized, allowing each participant equal opportunity to contribute perspectives and practice essential communicative skills (Zhou et al., 2025). Within circle discussions, students learn to articulate ideas clearly, listen attentively to diverse viewpoints, and respond constructively to peers' contributions (Hollander, 2022).

The circle discussion format aligns with this integrated vision by creating structured opportunities for practicing social skills within substantive academic conversations (Cefai et al., 2014). For the successful implementation of such strategies, teacher competence development is essential. Wahyuningsih et al. (2024) emphasize that pedagogical competence training encompasses teachers' skills in lesson planning, classroom management, and evaluating student learning outcomes, with the goal of enabling teachers to gain a deep understanding of effective teaching

strategies, including circle discussion approaches. When teachers are properly trained, they can create positive learning environments where students feel motivated to participate actively in social interactions.

The process of evaluating and monitoring teacher performance helps educational institutions achieve various goals, including measuring progress according to objective standards and assessing the compatibility between teaching profession requirements and teachers' qualifications, psychological, cognitive, and social characteristics. It also reveals strengths and weaknesses in their performance, enabling educational institutions to take measures that ensure the development and enhancement of performance levels, encouraging practices that promote teacher-student interaction. In the knowledge era, teachers seek self-development by keeping up with new developments to acquire professional competencies and qualifications that enable them to design instruction and produce resources using information and communication technology effectively. They develop problem-solving and decision-making abilities, organize discussions and activities, and work as supervisors and guides to bridge the gap between society and school (Ibrahim, 2017).

Middle school environments present unique challenges and opportunities for adolescent social development (Griggs et al., 2016). During this period, students experience significant neurological and psychological transformations that influence their social cognition and behavioral tendencies (Johnson & Finch, 2025). Simultaneously, academic expectations increase in complexity, requiring more sophisticated collaborative abilities and communication skills (OECD, 2021). This confluence of developmental factors and educational demands creates an optimal context for implementing targeted instructional approaches designed to enhance social capabilities alongside content knowledge (Neal-Jackson, 2025). Circle discussion strategies respond effectively to these intersecting needs by structuring interactions that scaffold both academic understanding and interpersonal skill development (Tvarozek & Brza, 2023).

In the context of contemporary educational challenges, Qolamani (2022) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic cast a shadow on all aspects of human life and had the greatest impact on health and educational systems worldwide, as education shifted from physical to electronic formats. This experience highlights the importance of researching effective teaching strategies like circle discussion that can be adapted to work in diverse educational environments, whether traditional or virtual, helping to enhance students' social and communication skills even under conditions of social distancing.

Despite compelling theoretical justifications for discussion-based pedagogies, research consistently reveals a significant gap between educational ideals and classroom realities (Inada, 2023). Traditional instructional approaches frequently prioritize teacher-directed discourse patterns that limit authentic peer-to-peer interaction (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This discrepancy underscores the importance of empirically investigating the efficacy of specific discussion formats, particularly within developmental contexts where social competencies are actively forming (Carlo et al., 2017). The present study addresses this research need by examining the impact of circle discussion strategies on seventh-grade students' social skill development within authentic classroom settings.
The present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the circle discussion strategy in developing social skills among seventh-grade basic students. There is no statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores of social skills in the post-test for students in the experimental group who studied according to the circle discussion strategy and students in the control group who studied according to the traditional method. There is no statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean development of social skills for the scores of the pre and post-tests among students in the experimental group who studied according to the circle discussion strategy. The current study is limited to the following parameters: Human limits: Seventh-grade basic students continuing their studies in public schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education in the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Spatial limits: Public girls' schools in the city of Zakho. Temporal limits: The first semester of the academic year (2024-2025).

Literature Review

The circle discussion strategy represents a pedagogical approach rooted in socio-constructivist learning theories that emphasize the collaborative construction of knowledge through meaningful social interactions (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). This instructional methodology creates structured opportunities for students to engage in democratic dialogue while simultaneously developing crucial interpersonal competencies (Mercer et al., 2019). The theoretical foundations of circle discussions can be traced to Vygotsky & Cole's conceptualization of learning as an inherently social process mediated through language and shaped by cultural contexts (Daniels, 2002). According to this perspective, higher-order cognitive functions initially emerge through interpersonal exchanges before becoming internalized as individual psychological capabilities (Alexander, 2020).

Circle discussions operationalize this theoretical principle by creating regulated social environments where students practice communication skills and cognitive processes that gradually become integrated into their independent repertoires (Howe, 2017). Research indicates that discussion-based methodologies facilitate deeper conceptual understanding by allowing participants to articulate, justify, and refine their thinking through sustained dialogic engagement (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015). These structured conversational formats additionally promote perspective-taking abilities as students encounter diverse viewpoints and learn to navigate conceptual disagreements productively (Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

Developmental psychologists consistently emphasize the middle school period as particularly significant for social-emotional skill acquisition, as adolescents during this stage experience substantial neurological development in brain regions associated with social cognition and emotional regulation (Crone & Dahl, 2012). The structural characteristics of circle discussions align with these developmental considerations by providing scaffolded contexts for practicing advanced communicative skills within a supportive community framework (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015).

Educational researchers have documented multiple variations of circle discussion formats, each with distinct procedural elements but shared philosophical foundations (Riestenberg, 2012). The circle discussion strategy implemented in this study incorporates key components identified in previous research as essential for effective dialogic learning: equitable participation structures, substantive engagement with academic content, and intentional cultivation of interpersonal skills (Berry et al., 2015). This comprehensive approach acknowledges that social competencies develop concurrently with cognitive abilities rather than representing separate educational domains (Wentzel & Ramani, 2016).

Contemporary perspectives on social skill development recognize the multidimensional nature of these competencies, encompassing cooperation, communication, empathy, self-regulation, and problem-solving capabilities (Durlak et al., 2011). Empirical investigations consistently demonstrate that targeted instructional approaches can significantly enhance these abilities when implemented systematically within educational environments (Jones et al., 2017). Circle discussions provide particularly effective contexts for this development by creating authentic communicative situations that require coordinated implementation of diverse social competencies (Elliott et al., 2025).

Research on classroom implementation of circle methodologies indicates several essential procedural elements that contribute to their effectiveness: establishment of clear participation norms, thoughtful facilitation that balances structure with student autonomy, and intentional reflection on both content learning and social processes (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). When effectively facilitated, these structured discussions create psychological safety that encourages authentic engagement while simultaneously promoting accountability for respectful participation (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). These combined characteristics establish optimal conditions for practicing and refining complex social interactions within supportive educational communities (Morrison, 2015).

Cross-cultural research demonstrates the adaptability of circle discussion approaches across diverse educational contexts, suggesting their potential applicability within various cultural and linguistic settings (Pranis, 2014). This universal relevance stems from the alignment between circle methodologies and fundamental social-psychological principles regarding human connection, belonging, and communicative development (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). As educational systems worldwide increasingly recognize the importance of social-emotional competencies alongside academic achievement, pedagogical approaches that intentionally integrate these domains gain heightened significance within contemporary educational discourse (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Research Procedures

This section outlines the procedures implemented by the researchers, beginning with selecting the appropriate experimental design, defining the research population and sample, establishing equivalence between the experimental and control groups across various variables, preparing teaching plans for both groups, adopting research tools, and selecting appropriate statistical methods.

First - Research Method:

The researchers employed the experimental method to implement the experiment, as it was most compatible with the research objectives and hypotheses. The researchers sought to identify the effectiveness of the independent variable (circle discussion strategy) on the dependent variable (social skills development) among the research sample.

Second - Experimental Design:

The experimental design represents the initial steps on which researchers rely to control study variables and ensure the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables. According to Khasbak (2015, p. 441), selecting the appropriate experimental design depends on the nature of the problem adopted by the researchers and the circumstances of the selected sample. The researchers found that the experimental design with equivalent groups, expressed and its procedures in the following diagram, suited their research requirements:

Table 1. Experimental Design Distribution

Group	Pre-test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable (Post-test)
Experimental	Social Skills	Circle Discussion Strategy	Social Skills
Control		Traditional Method	

Third - Determining the Research Population and Sample:

The current research population consisted of all seventh-grade female students (8,789) continuing their studies in basic education schools (morning sessions) in Zakho district center for the academic year (2024-2025), comprising 85 schools. The research sample was represented by selecting Soz Basic School, and through simple random sampling, two sections (C-D) were selected, with a total of 61 students, from among the four sections available in the school for the seventh grade to implement the experiment. Section (D), comprising 34 students, represented the experimental group taught social studies according to the circle discussion strategy, while section (C), comprising 27 students, represented the control group taught the same subject according to the traditional method. After excluding some repeating students (due to their previous experience from the previous year), the final distribution was as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Distribution of Research Sample Groups Before and After Exclusion

Group	Teaching Method	Group	Number of Students		After Exclusion
			Before Exclusion	Excluded	
Experimental	Circle Discussion Strategy	D	34	2	32
Control	Traditional Method	C	27	2	25
Total Number of Students			61	4	57

Fourth: Equivalence of Research Groups:

The researchers ensured that the research groups were equivalent regarding variables related to the research. The mean scores and standard deviations for the experimental and control groups were calculated, and to compare the two means, the t-test for two independent samples was applied for each variable as follows:

1. Age in months**:** Students' ages in both research groups were calculated up to (29/9/2024). The mean for the experimental group was (149.31) and for the control group (148.20). The t-value for the difference between the groups was (1.244), which is less than the tabulated value of (2.009).
2. Intelligence quotient**:** The researchers adopted the Raven's Progressive Matrices Test standardized for the Iraqi environment by Ahmed Zaki Saleh, consisting of (60) items distributed across five groups (A, B, C, D, E), each containing a progressively difficult matrix. The mean for the experimental group was (32.75) and for the control group (34.24). The t-value for the difference between the groups was (1.055), which is less than the tabulated value of (2.009).
3. Overall average for sixth grade (2023-2024): The researchers relied on the results of the general examinations for students in the sixth grade for the academic year (2023-2024). The mean for the experimental group was (68.59) and for the control group (67.50). The t-value for the difference between the groups was (0.466), which is less than the tabulated value of (2.009).
4. Social studies grade for sixth grade (2023-2024): The researchers relied on the first-term grades for history in the previous year. The mean for the experimental group was (69.41) and for the control group (67.84). The t-value for the difference between the groups was (0.790), which is less than the tabulated value of (2.009).
5. Pre-test for social skills**:** The researchers applied the social skills test adopted in the current study to both research sample groups before starting the experiment on (29/9/2024). After correcting the answers, the mean for the experimental group was (56.56) and for the control group (53.88). The t-value for the difference between the groups was (1.387), which is less than the tabulated value of (2.009).

The above results indicate that all calculated values were less than the tabulated value at the significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (57), which means there was no statistically significant difference between the means of the research sample in these variables, thus the two groups were considered equivalent for these variables.

6. Equivalence of parents' educational level**:** The equivalence of educational achievement for both (fathers and mothers) of the research groups was verified according to their educational achievement after merging cells with frequencies less than five. The educational achievement level was classified into (primary or less - preparatory or less - institute or higher). To verify the equivalence of this variable, the Chi-Square test was used, and its value for fathers was (0.611) and for mothers (0.792), which is less than the tabulated value of (5.99) at the significance level of

(0.05) and degree of freedom (2). This means there was no statistically significant difference between the equivalence of the research groups in the variable of parents' educational achievement, and thus the two groups were considered equivalent.

Fifth: Research Requirements (Data Collection Tools):

To achieve the research objective and hypothesis, several requirements needed to be prepared, including:

1. Determining the scientific material**:** The researchers defined the scientific material covered by the research that would be taught to students in both research groups during the experiment according to the curriculum of the social studies textbook (history section) for the seventh grade for the academic year (2024-2025). It included the following sections: (First: Introduction to Ancient History - Second: Ancient Iraqi Peoples - Third: Ancient Kurdish Peoples - Fourth: Ancient Kurdish Monuments).
2. Formulation of behavioral objectives**:** The researchers formulated behavioral objectives based on studying the content of the educational material covered by the experiment, totaling (120) behavioral objectives for the cognitive domain from Bloom's taxonomy (remembering, understanding, application). The list of behavioral objectives in its initial form was presented to a group of arbitrators and specialists in education and methods of teaching history and social sciences to express their opinions and observations regarding them and their suitability to the level of the objective and coverage of the material content. An agreement rate of (80%) or more was adopted as a criterion for accepting the objective or not. In light of their opinions, the linguistic formulation of some behavioral objectives was revised.
3. Preparation of teaching plans**:** The researchers prepared two models of teaching plans: the first according to the steps of the circle discussion strategy for students in the experimental group, represented by the steps (introduction - oral discussion - written discussion - summary and review - evaluation - closure), and the second according to the traditional (usual) method for students in the control group, represented by the steps (introduction - presentation - conclusion - evaluation - homework). In light of the plan analysis, the researchers presented a model of the experimental and control plan to a group of arbitrators and specialists in education and methods of teaching history and social sciences to verify their validity for use in the experiment. All the observations they indicated were taken into account, and the necessary adjustments were made. The rest of the teaching plans were prepared according to the modified models, reaching (21)

teaching plans for each group with (3) lessons per week, thus the plans were ready for implementation.

Sixth: Research Tool: Social Skills Test:

To detect social skills among members of the research sample, the researchers reviewed many literature and previous studies in the educational field related to social skills. They selected the tool prepared by (Al-Jamshidi, 2023), consisting of (30) objective items distributed across (6) main social skills with (5) items for each of the following social skills: (cooperation, participation, and teamwork; communication; empathy and acceptance of others; home-school social skills; decision-making; problem-solving). The test items consist of two parts: (the introduction) which presents the problem (social situation) in the question, and (a list of alternatives) placed below the problem representing several solutions or answers, one or more of which is the correct answer or the best answer. The student is asked to choose this answer from among the displayed answers. The researchers applied the psychometric properties procedures to the social skills test as follows:

1. Test validity**:** To verify the face validity of the social skills test, the test was presented to a group of arbitrators and specialists in education and methods of teaching history and social sciences. After review, some items were modified only in terms of linguistic formulation, as all items obtained an agreement rate of (80%) or higher, thus the researchers verified the face validity of the test.
2. Statistical analysis of test items**:** To verify the psychometric properties of the test items, the researchers applied the test to the same pilot sample of (100) students to identify the clarity of the test instructions and items, detect weaknesses and strengths in the content, determine the appropriateness of answer alternatives, and the time required to answer the test. The results indicated the clarity of the items and instructions, except for some observations related to how to answer, which were clarified by the researchers. The time taken to answer the test items was calculated at (40) minutes. The researchers also analyzed the responses of the pilot sample to extract the discrimination coefficient for its items by arranging the students' scores in descending order and selecting (27%) for the upper and lower groups. The number of students in both groups was (54) students. The item discrimination coefficient equation was applied, and it was found that all items were distinctive and acceptable in terms of discriminatory power, with values ranging between (0.67-0.34), which is within the acceptable range. According to Ebel, if the discriminatory power of test items is greater than or equal to (0.30), they are considered

distinctive items (Al-Nabhan, 2004, 179). Thus, the test items are considered within the specified range and are distinctive items, and none of them were eliminated. The researchers also verified the effectiveness of the distractors, as incorrect alternatives are ineffective and worthless if the percentage of their selection from the upper group is equal to or smaller than the percentage of their selection from the lower group. All were negative and less than (0.05) except for the correct alternative, and thus the researchers verified the construct validity of the test items.

3. Test reliability**:** The researchers verified the reliability of the test after applying it to a pilot sample of (32) students from section (A) of Soz Basic School. Reliability was extracted using the split-half method, where the test was divided into two parts - odd and even-numbered questions. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the two parts of the test, and the correlation coefficient was (0.78). Since the estimated value of the internal consistency coefficient calculated by the split-half method represents the reliability coefficient of half the tool and not the entire tool, this problem was corrected using the Spearman-Brown formula, which reached (0.87), considered good and appropriate reliability. Thus, the test became ready for application.
4. Scoring the social skills test items**:** The researchers assigned three degrees for each item, where the correct alternative receives (3) points, the less correct alternative (2) points, and the least correct alternative (1) point. Thus, the score that a student can obtain ranges between (30-90) points.

Seventh: Implementation of the Experiment:

The procedures for implementing the experiment were carried out as follows:

1. The experiment was applied to students in both research groups in the first semester of the year (2024-2025), with the social skills test and intelligence test applied as pre-tests.
2. Actual teaching for the experiment began on Monday (14/10/2024) and continued until Sunday (15/12/2024). Students in both research groups were taught according to the teaching plans prepared for each group, the (experimental) group according to the circle discussion strategy, and the (control) group according to the traditional method.
3. The social skills (post-test) was applied on (20/12/2025).
4. Both groups (experimental and control) were taught by one of the researchers with a total of (21) actual lessons.

Eighth: Statistical Methods:

The researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to process the data statistically, as this program is one of the important software that helps in processing data using computers, as well as programming some special laws for tests using Microsoft Excel. The researchers adopted the following statistical methods in their research procedures and results analysis:

1. T-test for two independent samples: Used to find statistical differences between the means of equivalence variables and analyze the final results according to the research hypotheses for the experimental and control groups. It was calculated according to the following formula.
2. T-test for two correlated samples: Used to analyze the final results according to the research hypotheses for the experimental group.
3. Chi-square test: Used to find statistical differences between the means of equivalence variables between the educational level of parents for the experimental and control groups according to the following formula.
4. Objective item discrimination formula: Used to find the discrimination coefficient for the objective items of the tests (social skills).
5. Effectiveness of incorrect alternatives: To find the effectiveness of incorrect alternatives for the social skills test.
6. Cooper's formula: Used to find the agreement rate of arbitrators regarding content analysis.
7. Pearson correlation coefficient: To extract the reliability of the social skills test using the split-half method.
8. Spearman-Brown formula: To correct the reliability coefficient extracted using Pearson's equation.
9. Effect size: To find the effect size specific to the t-test for two independent and correlated samples.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The researchers addressed in this section the results reached through the application of the circle discussion strategy in developing social skills among seventh-grade basic students in history, in addition to interpreting the results according to the hypotheses, which can be detailed and discussed as follows:

First - Presentation of Results:

Results related to the first null hypothesis, which states**:** "There is no statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean scores of social skills in the post-test for students in the experimental group who studied according to the circle discussion strategy and students in the control group who studied according to the traditional method."

To verify this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation for the social skills test scores were calculated for individuals in both research groups (experimental and control). To identify the statistical significance, the t-test for two independent samples was used, and the results were included in the following table:

Table 2: Results of the t-test between the Mean Social Skills Post-Test Scores for Individuals in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Number	Mean Social Skills	Standard Deviation	t-value		Degree of Freedom	Significance Level
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Experimental	32	73.22	5.314	7.357	2.009	55	Significant
Control	25	61.60	6.614				

The table above shows that the mean score of the overall social skills test for students in the experimental group was (73.22) with a standard deviation of (5.314) compared to the control group with a mean of (61.60) and a standard deviation of (6.614). The calculated t-value was (7.357), which is greater than the tabulated value of (2.009) at a significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (55). Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative is accepted, meaning there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the social skills post-test, in favor of the experimental group that studied according to the circle discussion strategy.

To calculate the effect size of the independent variable (circle discussion strategy) on the dependent variable (social skills) between students in both groups, the researchers calculated eta squared (η^2) and found its value to be (0.496), which is classified as a very large effect size according to standard values. This means that the circle discussion strategy contributed significantly to raising the level of social skills among students, as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Eta Squared (η^2) Value to Determine the Effect of the Circle Discussion Strategy on Social Skills Among Individuals in Both Groups (Experimental and Control)

t-value	Factor	Calculated Value	Standards				Effect Size
			Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	
7.357	(η^2)	0.496	0.01	0.06	0.14	0.2	Very Large

Results related to the second null hypothesis, which states: "There is no statistically significant difference at the level of (0.05) between the mean development of social skills for the scores of the pre and post-tests among students in the experimental group who studied according to the circle discussion strategy."

To verify this hypothesis, the data from the pre and post-tests for the experimental group's scores in the social skills test were processed. To find the amount of development for each social skill separately, the researchers calculated the means for both tests and the difference between them, as well as calculating the standard deviation of the development (difference). Then they processed the data using the t-test for two correlated samples, and the results were included in the following table:

Table 4. Results of the t-test to Measure the Differences Between the Mean Scores of the Pre and Post-Tests in the Development of Social Skills Among Students in the Experimental Group

Social Skills	Arithmetic Mean		Difference	Standard Deviation of Difference	t-value		Significance Level
	Pre-test	Post-test			Calculated	Tabular	
Cooperation, participation, and teamwork skills	10.41	13.13	2.72	3.304	4.654	(1.697) (0.05) (31)	Significant
Communication skills	8.97	11.84	2.88	3.220	5.050		Significant
Empathy and acceptance of others skills	9.69	12.78	3.09	2.911	6.012		Significant
Home-school social skills	8.41	11.97	3.56	3.902	5.165		Significant
Decision-making	7.94	10.84	2.91	3.477	4.729		Significant
Problem-solving skills	8.47	12.66	4.19	3.788	6.253		Significant
Overall	53.875	73.219	19.344	9.983	10.962		Significant

The table above shows that the calculated t-values for all social skills were greater than the tabulated value (1.697) at the significance level of (0.05) and degree of freedom (31). Thus, the third null hypothesis is rejected and its alternative is accepted. This result indicates the existence of statistically significant differences between the pre and post-tests in favor of the post-test for all

social skills, which indicates that there is an effect of the circle discussion strategy in developing social skills among students in the experimental group.

To identify the effect size that the independent variable (circle discussion strategy) had on the dependent variable (social skills development) among students in the experimental group, the researchers resorted to using Cohen's coefficient (d). The calculated values for the effect size (d) showed a very large effect for the skills of (empathy and acceptance of others, home-school social skills, problem-solving) and a large effect for the skills of (cooperation, participation, and teamwork, communication, decision-making) compared to the standard values (small, medium, large, very large) (0.2, 0.5, 0.8, 1.0), which indicates the effectiveness of using the circle discussion strategy in developing social skills, as shown in the following table:

Table 5. Shows the Value of Coefficient (d) to Determine the Effect of the Independent Variable on the Dependent Variable in the Pre and Post-Tests Among the Experimental Group

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable Skills	Calculated t-value	(d) value	Effect Size
Circle Discussion Strategy	Cooperation, participation, and teamwork	4.654	0.823	Large
	Communication	5.050	0.893	Large
	Empathy and acceptance of others	6.012	1.063	Very large
	Home-school social skills	5.165	0.913	Very large
	Decision-making	4.729	0.836	Large
	Problem-solving	6.253	1.105	Very large
	Overall	10.962	1.938	Very large

Table 5 demonstrates the significant impact of the Circle Discussion Strategy on social skills development in the experimental group. Statistical analysis reveals large effect sizes for cooperation/teamwork (d=0.823), communication (d=0.893), and decision-making (d=0.836), with very large effects for empathy (d=1.063), home-school skills (d=0.913), and problem-solving (d=1.105). The overall effect size was notably substantial (d=1.938), with all t-values showing statistical significance, confirming the Circle Discussion Strategy as highly effective for enhancing critical interpersonal competencies.

Discussion

The nature of the circle discussion strategy, which relies on group work and continuous interaction between students, provided multiple opportunities for them to practice social skills such as communication, listening, empathy, and respecting others' opinions, in addition to competition and cooperation between them. Students in each group cooperate with each other to produce the

best ideas and correct answers, which contributed to increasing students' motivation through participation multiple times without fear or hesitation. Organizing work within small groups allowed for the distribution of roles and responsibilities among students, which develops their leadership skills, teamwork, and commitment to the rules of collective work for decision-making and problem-solving. This contributed to seventh-grade basic students possessing a good level of social skills practice, which increases with the reality of a good social network and the presence of a positive perception of oneself and the role of others who can provide support and assistance when needed. The continuous feedback provided by the teacher during the implementation of the strategy helped to modify students' behaviors and improve their social skills gradually, in addition to providing a classroom climate characterized by mutual respect and democracy, which encouraged them to express their opinions with confidence and accept constructive criticism between them. The repetition of interactive situations between students contributed to increasing the reality of a good social network and the presence of a positive perception of oneself and the role of others who can provide support and assistance when needed, providing an opportunity for students to refine these skills and develop them over time.

The circle discussion strategy contributed to providing a rich educational environment with stimuli and social situations that required students in the experimental group to show appropriate behavior in different situations, which helped them to initiate interaction with others, form friendships, and then participate with them in cooperation, empathy, and concern for others to solve problems they face. The circle discussion strategy helped to link historical concepts using the mental and intellectual activity of students in the experimental group because teaching history content focuses on the unity of the human species, human origin, coexistence with others, and solving problems facing societies to preserve individual life and continuity in secure living, seeking to achieve the necessary requirements for society to face emergency conditions and benefit from previous historical events. All this contributed to expanding their awareness and creating positive attitudes towards social skills. The researchers found that following the steps of the circle discussion strategy contributed to activating awareness of multiple perspectives among students during discussion, cooperation, and continuous communication between them, accepting others' opinions to solve problems and make decisions, which provided them with real opportunities to practice the targeted social skills and apply them in different contexts. The atmosphere provided by the circle discussion strategy helped to promote a spirit of cooperation and positive participation among

students through shared tasks and activities, leading to addressing individual differences and enhancing positive relationships among students, which has a role in developing social skills.

CONCLUSION

In light of the results revealed by the research, the circle discussion strategy positively contributed to students' thinking and social interaction, as the study results showed notable progress in social skills through effective communication between students while exchanging ideas and perspectives in various educational situations. The nature of the circle discussion strategy enhanced self-confidence and developed a spirit of responsibility and leadership among students through the exchange of roles and diversity of tasks, which contributed to developing their personalities and improving their social skills. Based on these findings, it is necessary to include social studies curricula at various educational stages with general and procedural objectives that focus on developing social skills, and to incorporate cooperative and dialogic activities that contribute to developing those skills. Designing a guidance manual for teachers and instructors of social subjects that explains the steps for implementing modern strategies, including circle discussion, and includes practical models and examples of activities and tasks that can be employed in teaching various historical topics would be valuable. Working on developing social skills through teaching social subjects in both branches (history and geography) using active learning strategies, including the circle discussion strategy, is also recommended. To complement the research results, future studies could examine the effectiveness of an educational-learning program according to the strategies of circle discussion and hidden arrangement in developing social skills among eleventh-grade literary students in history, as well as investigating the circle discussion strategy and its relationship to cognitive achievement among eighth-grade basic students in social studies.

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