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**The Relationship between Social Skills  
and Behavioral Problems of Pupils with and  
without Learning Disabilities in Kuwait**

*By*

**Yousef Alshatti**

**Ph.D.  
Researcher in Special Education  
University of Jordan**

**Dr. Nadia Tazi**

**Associate Professor of Learning  
Disabilities Learning Disabilities  
Arabian Gulf University**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this research is to identify the level of social skills and behavioral problems, the relation connectivity between them, to detect the indication of differences between normal students and those with learning disabilities in social skills and behavioral problems. The current research used the scale of social skills, and the scale of evaluating the behavioral characteristics of those who have emotional, social or behavioral problems. The research sample included 50 normal pupils and another 50 pupils with learning disabilities. The results of the research showed that the levels of behavioral problems are ranked successively: hyperactivity, lack of concentration and alertness, decrease or weakness of self-understanding, lack of social skills, being emotional, violent behavior, withdrawal behavior and being dependent on others. On the other hand, the order of levels of social skills was as follows: cooperation, making friends, communication then being initiative. The results showed also that there is a statistically significant correlation between social skills and behavioral problems for both normal and learning disabled students. Therefore, the research recommends the importance of providing guide programs to help pupils with learning difficulties acquire social skills and decrease their behavioral problems.

**Keywords:** social skills, behavioral problems, learning disabilities, Kuwait.

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(\*) Ph.D. Researcher in Special Education – University of Jordan.

(\*\*) Associate Professor of Learning Disabilities Learning Disabilities – Arabian Gulf University.

## العلاقة بين المهارات الاجتماعية والمشكلات السلوكية للطلاب العاديين وذوي صعوبات التعلم في الكويت

المخلص باللغة العربية

يهدف هذا البحث إلى التعرف على مستوى المهارات الاجتماعية والمشكلات السلوكية، وأيضا إلى الكشف عن العلاقة الارتباطية بينهما، إضافة إلى الكشف عن الفروق بين كل من الطلاب العاديين وذوي صعوبات التعلم في المهارات الاجتماعية والمشكلات السلوكية. استخدم البحث الحالي مقياس المهارات الاجتماعية، كما استخدم مقياس تقييم الخصائص السلوكية لأولئك الذين يعانون من مشاكل عاطفية أو اجتماعية أو سلوكية. تكونت عينة البحث ٥٠ تلميذاً عادياً و ٥٠ تلميذاً آخرين يعانون من صعوبات التعلم. أشارت نتائج البحث إلى أن أعلى مستويات المشكلات السلوكية كانت مرتبة على النحو التالي: فرط النشاط، وقلة التركيز والانتباه، ونقص أو ضعف فهم الذات، ونقص المهارات الاجتماعية، والعاطفة، والسلوك العنيف، والسلوك الانسحابي، والاعتماد على الآخرين. من ناحية أخرى، جاء ترتيب مستويات المهارات الاجتماعية على النحو التالي: التعاون، تكوين الصداقات، التواصل ثم المبادرة. أشارت النتائج إلى وجود علاقة ارتباطية بين المهارات الاجتماعية والمشكلات السلوكية لكل من الطلاب العاديين وذوي صعوبات التعلم. وقد أوصى البحث بأهمية توفير برامج إرشادية لمساعدة التلاميذ الذين يعانون من صعوبات التعلم على اكتساب المهارات الاجتماعية وتقليل مشاكلهم السلوكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات اجتماعية، مشاكل سلوكية، صعوبات التعلم، الكويت.

**Introduction:**

Social skills help the individual have self-awareness and awareness towards others, which helps him merge in social life. This helps him to affect the society and being affected by him. The individual exchanges with community members thoughts, feelings and attitudes in a way that leads to deep mutual understanding, which reflects on his personality and psychological health. This is why social skills involves whatever positivity the individual has towards himself and towards others. When the individual lacks most of these skills, it is difficult for him to live socially and psychologically in a healthy state since it is difficult for him to communicate with members of his community. This leads to a multitude of psychological problems. If this the case with a normal person, the it is going to be much worse for those who have learning disabilities. It is noticed that people who have learning disabilities have an obvious deficiency in expressing themselves (words or signals). They also lack the skills of taking permissions, apology or the initiative. They do not greet others. They feel rejected, so they lack the skills of communication and social interaction. (Mohammed, 2012).

Mohammed (2012) sees that any lack or deficiency in social skills is a dangerous warning of his educational, behavioral, social and psychological growth. When the pupil who has learning disabilities lack one or more social skills, he cannot understand the messages he receives on the reception level, also he cannot express his messages to others.

Arising of this interest in such results and dimensions that combine to revolve around the problems of poor emotional, behavioral and social skills for children who have learning disabilities, many researchers see that it is not enough to deal with academic difficulties apart from the emotional, behavioral and social effects based on these disabilities (Kavale & Forness, 1966).

Al Zayat (1998) sees that pupils with emotional and social disabilities do not interact positively and acceptably with others. They are the last pupils to choose roles and group interactive situations. Some of the behavioral characteristics of pupils who have emotional and social difficulties in learning are: hyperactivity, lack of concentration, lack or deficiency of reflexive or social skills, violent behavior and being dependent on others.

Some researchers see that behavioral aspects that identify children with learning disabilities are numerous. Addass (1998) noticed that children with learning disabilities seem not to show progress at school and willingness to learn and a weakness in dealing with others.

Both Mercer (1997) and Sabornie (1994) handled social growth of children with learning disabilities through some definitions: (Social skills, acceptance, social competence)

Geithardt & Munch (1996) affirmed that in their study, as they figured out the main causes that leads to rejection or poor social acceptance of children with learning disabilities.

This is shown in hyperactivity, low educational attainment, violent behavior, low self-understanding and low motivation for learning. As for social competence, Mercer (1997) points that it offers interaction and internal relationships among four elements which are measured by: the relationship between individuals through social acceptance, social perception through self-understanding, behavioral problems and social skills by teachers' evaluations.

Some researchers as Rock & Fessler (1997) took steps to put a model among the characteristics of children with learning disabilities, in which it showed they suffered from problems directed at the outside world as violence and sabotage.

Handwerk & Marchel (1998) affirm that when the compared two groups of children who are emotionally disturbed and having learning disabilities with another group of normal children using the scales that measure aggression and educational problems, shyness and tense behavior, they came with the conclusion that these problems appear strongly with children with learning disabilities, compared with normal counterparts. However, the appearance of these problems is more obvious with those who have emotional disorder more than these who have learning disabilities (Mc Conaugh, Mattison & Peterso 1994).

According to the above, the idea of this study came in which it tries to identify the relationship between social skills and the appearance of behavioral problems for the pupils with learning disabilities and normal ones in the state of Kuwait

### **The Research Problem:**

Some studies as the Amasha (2002) showed the presence of social problems with learning disabilities pupils. Many of these pupils have poor social skills which might affect their relationship with others, because of not responding in real-life situations as it should be, since these pupils fail to build healthy social relationships, in addition to some behavioral problems.

Studies point out that 34% - 59% of students with learning disabilities are subjected to social problems in a way that they lack the ability to continue to keep positive, healthy relationships. This drives them to show violent behavior or being shy which causes them to be rejected by their normal colleagues and imposes several problems in adapting with school demands. There is a great disappointment that makes them unwilling to show up and socialize with others. Thus, they refuse to take part in answering questions or taking part in indoor summer activities and also outdoor activities.

Therefore, social disabilities derive their importance from their effect on the whole life of the individual, whereas academic or learning disabilities. They affect the individual only on the academic levels. Social difficulties with varied and several aspects affect the different aspects of the individual's personality through his personal emotional, social behavioral and personal acceptance.

According to the above, this study tried to identify the level of social skills of pupils with learning disabilities, compared with normal ones and how far this level of social skills is connected with the appearance of behavioral problems in the middle school stage.

### **Research Questions:**

- 1- statistically significant correlation between social skills and behavioral problems for all pupils, whether normal or having Learning Disabilities?
- 2- Are there differences with statistical indicator among pupils with learning disabilities and normal ones in the average performance and according to the scale of social skills?

### **The Importance of the Research:**

- 1- Highlighting the most important behavioral and social problems that face pupils with learning disabilities.
- 2- The research helps to provide data of statistics that researchers can go back to in case they need to have more studies about the phenomenon of poor social skills of pupils with learning disabilities, its connection with the appearance of behavioral and emotional problems.

**Terminology of the research:****Social Skills:**

The ability to interact with others in a specified social frame , in certain acceptable social methods .(Allam , 2008).

They are known by the mark, given to the pupil with the learning disabilities and the normal, evaluated by the teacher on the scale of social skills in the research.

**Behavioral Problems:**

Abnormal forms of behavior that comes from the individual and this is the result of a disorder in learning which appears in the form of emphasizing the fact of unable of adapting or not enforcing adjusting behavior (Yehya , 2003).

They are known by the mark, given to the pupil with the learning disabilities and the normal, evaluated by the teacher on the scale of social skills in the current study.

**Pupils with learning disabilities:**

They are the pupils who have one disorder or more in the basic psychological processes, which includes understanding or use of both spoken or written language. This can be apparent in the ability to listen, think, read, spell or do calculations (Abadaat, 2013).

The term “learning **disabilities**” is known as all the previously mentioned characteristics that applies to pupils of Al Khandaq School and the diagnostic specialists from the ministry of education in the scholastic year (2016-2017).

**Method:**

The society of the research is composed of all male pupils from grade six and seven in the middle stage and those who are enlisted in schools of learning disabilities, related to the ministry of education for the scholastic year 2016-2017 in Al Mubabarak and Al Asema Educational Zones for learning disabilities and normal education.

As for the research sample, it included 50 pupils of those who have learning disabilities who were randomly chosen from Al Khandaq School in the first semester of the year 2016-2017.

**Research Tools:**

The research tools consisted from The scale of social skills (Ismail, 2014), and Evaluating Behavioral Characteristics Scale (Al Zyat, 2002).

**The scale of social skills (Ismail, 2014)**

This scale is composed of 40 sentences distributed among four dimensions. It aims to recognize social skills of children in Al Bahraini environment. These are the four dimensions of the scale:

- 1- Co- operation, It consists of (9) paragraphs.
- 2- Making Friends, It consists of (8) paragraphs.
- 3- Social Communication, It consists of (14) paragraphs.
- 4- The Initiative, It consists of (9) paragraphs.

The reliability of the scale was checked by using Cronbach's Alpha. It indicated that reliability coefficients varied between (0.762 & 0.941) which proves that the scale has a high level of reliability.

Al Rashidi (2015) checked the psychometric properties of the scale for a sample of pupils who have learning disabilities in Kuwait. The following shows the procedures I went through to check reliability and validity.

Validity was checked by calculating the correlative coefficients of the scale dimensions and the total score. The table below shows the correlation coefficient matrix between marks of the dimensions of the scale and the total score of the scale.

**Table 1 Correlation coefficient between marks of the dimensions of the scale and the total score of the scale**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>Making Friends</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Social Communication</b>	<b>Total Score</b>
Cooperation	1	0.859**	0.836**	0.873**	0.954**
Making Friends	-	1	0.823**	0.817**	0.923**
Initiative	-	-	1	0.838**	0.922**
Social Communication	-	-	-	1	0.949**

The correlation matrix shows that all dimensions of the social skill scale is connected with the total score at level 0.01. Also, all dimensions are statistically correlated with each other at the same level. This indicates that the dimensions of the scale are consistent with each other and with the total score.

The reliability of internal consistency of social skills scale was extracted by using the coefficient of Cronbach’s Alpha of which value reached 0.951. This value is considered excellent for the stability of the scale. The reliability coefficient was calculated for all the dimensions of the scale as exhibited by Table 2.

**Table 2 The stability of reliability coefficient of social skills scale by using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient**

Dimension	Reliability Coefficient
Co-operation	0.902
Making Friends	0.765
Initiative	0.767
Social Communication	0.842
Total Mark	0.951

The results of stability show that reliability coefficients of the social skills scale are high which proves that it has good stability.

#### **The Emotional and Social Behavior Scale (Al Zyate, 2002)**

The scale of estimating behavioral characteristics for those who have emotional and social problem aims at revealing pupils of emotional, social and behavioral problems, who appear to have some or all behavioral characteristics related to emotional and social behavioral problems . The scale includes 80 sentences distributed among these dimensions as shown in table 3.

**Table 3 Dimensions of Emotional and Social Behavior Scale**

Dimension	Items
Hyperactivity	1-10
Lack or No Concentration	11-20
Weak or low self- Understanding	21-30
Lack or poor social skills	31-40
Impulsivity	41-50
Aggressive Behavior	51-60
Withdrawal Behavioral	61-70
Reliability	71- 80

**Results:**

To answer the first question which is as follows: Is there a statistically significant correlation between social skills and behavioral problems for all pupils, whether normal or having Learning Disabilities? The correlation coefficient of Pearson was calculated between social skills and behavioral problems as shown in table 4 and between normal pupils and those with learning disabilities as shown in table 5.

**Table 4 Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Social Skills and Behavioral Problems among students with learning disabilities**

Behavioral Problems	Social Skills				
	Co-operation	Making Friends	Initiative	Social Communication	Total Score
Hyperactivity	-0.180	-0.256	-.307*	-.370**	-.317*
Lack of Concentration	-.410**	-.441*	-.410**	-.564**	-.509**
Weak Self-understanding	-.463**	-.484**	-.438**	-.600**	-.553**
Weak Social Skills	-.399**	-.441**	-.402**	-.557**	-.502**
Impulsivity	-.373**	-.400**	-.294*	-.486**	-.428
Violent Behavior	-.367**	-.437*	-.394**	-.505**	-.476**
Withdrawal Behavior	-.438**	-.490**	-.442**	-.597**	-.549**
Reliability	-.407**	-.336*	-.327*	-.452**	-.423**
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>-.422**</b>	<b>-.457**</b>	<b>-.419**</b>	<b>-.574**</b>	<b>-.522**</b>

\*\* Statistical Indicator at level 0.01

\* Statistical Indicator at level 0.05

Using Pearson correlation coefficient showed the presence of a reverse negative statistically significant correlation between the total score of the social skills and the behavioral problems of pupils with learning disabilities, in which the value of the correlation coefficient reached (-0.522) with a statistical indicator less than (0.01) .

**Table 5 Pearson Correlation Coefficient  
Between Social Skills and Behavioral Problems among Normal Pupils**

Behavioral Problems	Social Skills				
	Co-operation	Making Friends	Initiative	Social Communication	Total Score
Hyperactivity	-0.406**	-.469**	-.545**	-.345**	-.503**
Lack of Concentration	-.299**	-.426*	-.552**	-.324**	-.466**
Weak Self-understanding	-.349**	-.334**	-.551**	-.339**	-.457**
Weak Social Skills	-.430**	-.475**	-.602**	-.417**	-.552**
Impulsivity	-.370**	-.363**	-.500**	-.305*	-.440**
Violent Behavior	-.398**	-.361*	-.457**	-.352*	-.445**
Withdrawal Behavior	-.194	-.151	-.341*	-.152	-.247
Reliability	-.004	-.114	-.297*	-.094	-.164
Total Score	-.350*	-.381**	-.540**	-.330*	-.462**

\*\* Statistical Indicator at level 0.01

\* Statistical Indicator at level 0.05

Using Pearson correlation coefficient showed the presence of a reverse negative statistically significant correlation between the total score of the social skills and the behavioral problems of normal pupils, in which the value of the correlation coefficient reached (-0.462) with a statistical indicator less than (0.01).

To answer the second question of the research which is as follows: Are there differences with statistical indicator among pupils with learning disabilities and normal ones in the average performance and according to the scale of social skills? The (t) Test was used for the independent samples to verify the difference between the means of the marks of the performance according to the scale of social skills between normal pupils and pupils with learning disabilities. Table 6 shows these results.

**Table 6 Independent Samples t- Test Results  
in the average of the marks of social skills between normal  
pupils and pupils with learning disabilities**

Dimension	Pupils with Learning Disabilities		Normal Pupils		T	Significance
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Co-operation	21.66	3.32	24.80	2.06	5.68	0.000
Making Friends	18.36	3.23	21.38	2.51	5.22	0.000
Initiative	32.62	4.75	38.58	3.52	7.13	0.000
Social Communication	19.40	3.55	23.12	2.99	5.67	0.000
Total Score	92.04	13.23	107.88	9.87	6.79	0.000

To answer the third question of the research which is as follows: Are there any differences with statistical indicators among normal pupils and pupils with learning disabilities in the average of performance at the scale of behavioral problems? The independent t- test was used to verify the differences in the average of performance marks at the level of the scale of behavioral problems between normal pupils and pupils with learning disabilities. Table 7 exhibits these results.

**Table 7 Independent Samples t- Test Results in the average  
of the marks of behavioral problems between normal  
pupils and pupils with learning disabilities**

Dimension	Pupils with Learning Disabilities		Normal Pupils		T	Significance
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Hyperactivity	32.60	12.01	21.86	9.65	4.93	0.000
Lack of Concentration	31.90	10.65	22.56	8.65	4.81	0.000
Weak self-understanding	28.96	13.55	21.66	8.95	3.18	0.002
Weak Social Skills	29.50	12.99	21.96	8.22	3.47	0.001
Impulsivity	29.92	12.16	21.44	9.06	3.95	0.000
Violent Behavior	28.68	13.29	20.78	10.77	3.27	0.001
Withdrawal Behavior	27.40	12.01	22.02	8.91	2.55	0.012
Reliability	28.30	11.32	25.56	8.11	1.39	0.167
Total Mark	237.26	88.30	177.84	64.47	3.84	0.000

Through table 7 , it is clear that the Means of the normal pupils in the total score for the scale of behavioral problems is equal to (177.84) with a standard deviation of (64.47) which is less than the average of the scores of pupils with learning disabilities which reached (237.26) with a standard deviation of (88.30) . The independent sample t-test results pointed out that the existing difference between the two averages is a statistical indicator if the level of significance view is equal to (0.000) which is less than ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

The results of the first question showed a reverse correlative relationship (negative) that is statistically significant between the the total mark of the social skills (cooperation, making friends, initiative and social communication) and behavioral problems for pupils who have learning disabilities . It is connected with (hyperactivity, lack of concentration, weak or no self-understanding, impulsivity, weak social skills, violent behavior, withdrawal behavior and reliability) on the other hand.

This relationship means that as the level of behavioral problems of pupils with learning disabilities increases, the level of social skills decreases. The reason is that behavioral problems and its types are only factors that decrease the level and competency of social skills that the pupil acquires, related to (cooperation, making friends, initiative and social communication. For example, the pupil who suffers from hyperactivity moves around more inside the classroom, which decreases his ability to cooperate inside the class. This reflects negatively on his behavior. This naturally reflects negatively on the level of his social skills. It applies to the rest of all behavioral problems. Therefore, the correlative relationship between types of behavioral problems and social skills is a reverse correlative relationship (negative) one which explains this relationship.

The result of this research is in agreement with what has been pointed out by Mohammed and Sherbet (2009) in the shortcomings of social skills for pupils with learning disabilities. This is represented in the weakened capacity of social interaction, shortcomings in building successful relationships with others.

This is beside the weakened ability to take part in tasks or group activities. There is also shortcoming in the consideration of rules and social standards; consequently, there is a shortcoming in the consideration of rules and social standards at school.

Hassan (2009) points out that pupils with learning disabilities are described as ones who have weak interaction and socializing with others in a classroom. They are not cooperative. They have a shortage of social responsibility and making friends, let alone socializing with them. They tend to work alone and they are characterized with social withdrawal. Lack or no initiative for pupils with learning disabilities results from the inability to solve problems and acknowledge solutions like being initiative or making friends. This difference between results of the first question in the current research is because of their level of social skills, which is being asserted by the theoretical literature as being weak.

As for the second question, tests showed that pupils with learning disabilities suffer from more apparent behavioral problems than normal pupils. Also, the analysis between differences in statistical significance at level 0.001 for normal pupils and pupils with learning disabilities in all patterns of behavioral problems (hyperactivity, lack of concentration, weak or no self-understanding, impulsivity, weak social skills, violent behavior, withdrawal behavior and reliability) is in favor of pupils with learning disabilities.

The reason for getting such a result is mentioned by Al Zayyat (1998), including factors and primary factors and causes related to the disorder in the central nervous system. The secondary factors and causes are problems and social emotional difficulties are side effects or the results of the academic problems or disabilities that pupils with learning disabilities suffer from.

In addition, the results that Handwerk (1998) reached figured out that pupils with learning difficulties suffer from more behavioral problems than normal pupils. Their marks in all CBCL are higher significantly than normal pupils.

As for the third question, the results showed that pupils with learning disabilities have higher behavioral problems which has significant indicator in behavioral problems.

This is what has been asserted by the study of Therell & Rydell (2008) who studied behavioral problems and shortcomings of social competency of a sample of those who were hyperactive and having lack of concentration, together with the effect of age and sex. The sample included pre-school children and school children who suffer from high levels of hyperactivity, together with lack of concentration. Results showed that pre-school children are not different from those who are going to school in any of the social problems. There is no connection between age and the used groups. However, behavioral problems with older children have been affected negatively by age within their daily lives. This caused an increase in the burden on the families, compared with the problems of younger children, especially those who suffer from hyperactivity. Males were more negatively affected than females as relating to the symptoms of learning

disabilities, much related to behavioral problems let alone the negative effects and the burden on the family.

**Educational Recommendations:**

According to the results that this study, we can conclude some recommendations that we hope there is benefit as:

- 1- The importance of having methods to identify pupils with learning disabilities and suffering from problems that concern the social aspect and offering the needed care for them.
- 2- Following the role of the family and cooperating with them to develop the level of social skills of those who have learning disabilities at an early age.
- 3- Conducting more researches in this field so that those who are responsible for this case can offer such services in a better way and overcome the resulting obstacles.

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