

The Effect of an Educational Program of Greek Dances on The Social Skills of Children Aged 10-13 Years

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Abstract

Background: The acquisition of social skills plays a crucial role both in the development of children and adolescents and in the management of their social relations in childhood and adult life. The aim of the research is to study the impact of an educational program of Greek dances on the development of social skills in children aged 10-13.

Material and Method: The sample of the study consisted of 94 students aged between 10 to 13 years, divided into two groups. The experimental team consisted of 46 students and followed a 60-minute program of Greek traditional dances, twice a week for 3 months. The control team consisted of 48 students and did not participate in any systematic physical or dance activity. Under this research, Merrell's questionnaire "School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS)" was used, which includes 23 topics, divided into 4 factor categories: "cooperative skills", "empathy", "quick temperedness", "disruptiveness". Two measurements were made: at the beginning and at the end. In order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the two groups, as well as between the measurements for each factor mentioned above, an analysis of variance was performed on two factors, one of which is repeated.

Results: From the results regarding the factors from the first to the second measurement, it appeared that the educational program of Greek dances contributed greatly to the development of cooperative skills and empathy of the students in the experimental group and helped them to reduce quick temperedness and disruptiveness. Regarding the two groups during the second measurement, statistically significant differences occurred, with the experimental group showing better values for the factors of the questionnaire. From the results of this research, it is concluded that the educational program of Greek dances contributed to the improvement of social skills.

Conclusions: The educational program of Greek dances contributes positively to the development of the social skills of children aged 10-13 years old.

Key words: dance, children, social development, educational course.

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I. Introduction

In recent decades, Greek dance belongs not only within a traditional community, who shares them through experiences and knowledge from the elders, but also in schools and cultural associations. Greek dance, through teaching, becomes a way of promoting social values and developing children's social skills. The World Health Organization defines social skills as the ability individuals acquire in order to adapt and negotiate effectively, according to the demands and challenges of their daily lives (W.H.O., 1999). According to the international bibliography, the acquisition of social skills plays a crucial role both in the development of children and adolescents and in the management of their social relations in childhood and adult life. According to Combs & Slaby (1977), complex social skills are essential for self-confidence, responsiveness and beneficial interaction with other people and are certainly among the most important skills a child needs to learn. These skills are acquired when a person has a socially acceptable behavior, i.e. interacts effectively with other people and refrains from antisocial activities (Eliot & Gresham, 1993), while lack of social skills plays an important role in the development and maintenance of emotional and behavioral dysfunctions in children and adolescents. Group dances inherently demand skills like interpersonal interaction, coordination, turn-taking, sharing, and self-confidence, all of which are essential for a cohesive and harmonious dance performance. Borowski (2021) conducted an extensive review on the relationship between dance and the development of social-emotional competence. His findings suggest that dance fosters social-emotional growth by offering opportunities for self-awareness, nonverbal expression, and synchrony. Thus, the development of social skills is very important for the adolescent's ability to perform basic social behaviors, which are important for his success in social situations (Spence, 2003). Social skills are acquired, so their development is of great importance in childhood and

adolescence as it includes thoughts, emotions, skills and behaviors, which change according to the situations children have to face (Topping, Bremner & Holmes, 2000). As far as the school and the teachers involved in the learning processes are concerned, they are responsible for providing students with the necessary skills, so that they can live effectively and successfully in their environment (Magotsiou, 2007). In a study by Massadis, Philippou, Derris, Papaioannou (2016), it was found that 10-year-old students have less developed social skills than 12-year-old students. This is attributed to the fact that social skills are not innate, but instead, they need time and education to be developed. School can help significantly in the development of social skills, provided that the courses are designed with the appropriate measuring instruments, clear educational goals and intervention strategies (Kennedy, 1988). Therefore, the years the children spent in primary and secondary education are of great importance for the development of their social skills. The systematic activity of dances contributes to the smooth and multifaceted development of the children's personality, enhancing their lifelong practice, expression and involvement in the creative arts. At the same time, their self-confidence is boosted through the experience of new motor skills, which are not aimed at competition and victory, resulting in creating a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and the willingness to cooperate with each other (Lykesas, 2004). Within the dance environment, adolescents are in a continuous pedagogical process of social integration and socialization, thus improving the social skills and the life quality of the participating adolescents of the 1st grade of junior high school (Darginidou, 2018). Folk dances play a vital role in the social and emotional development of individuals, and they are a key element of cultural heritage. They provide participants with an opportunity for self-expression and contribute to boosting their self-confidence. For instance, a notable increase in self-confidence was observed among university students who engaged in folk dancing (Soykan & Mirzeoğlu, 2020). Through folk dances, individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves and express their emotions through body language. Additionally, folk dances are important for fostering an understanding of group dynamics and encouraging teamwork. Research indicates that students who participate in folk dances experience a significant improvement in their social skills, acquiring abilities such as leadership, empathy, and problem-solving (Gündoğdu, 2019).

Dance, as a mean of expression and creation, contributes to the development of social skills, as creativity is associated with social influences, motivation and imagination and is used to characterize individuals, groups and even entire societies (Tsirogianni, 2017). Dance educational programs in dance clubs and school activities related to dance improve the social behavior of the participating adolescents at school, as they improve the cooperative skills and empathy and they contain the disruptiveness and quick temperedness of the participating adolescents (Darginidou, 2018). Achieving the improvement of the social skills of children/adolescents through dance can clearly provide them with a better quality of life, as social skills are known to contribute greatly to the improvement of the quality of life of adolescents (Darginidou et al., 2017). The aim of this paper was to study the impact of a Greek dance educational program on the social skills of children, aged 10-13 years old.

II. Material and Method

Participants

The sample of the survey consisted of 94 students, (N= 39) male and (N=55) female students aged between 10 to 13 years, divided into two groups. They were selected by random sampling. The first group was the experimental one (N=46), which followed a 60-minute program of Greek traditional dances twice a week for 3 months. The second group was the control group (N=48), which did not participate in any systematic physical or dance activity (Table no 1).

Table no 1. The age of the participants

Groups	Experimental		Control		Total	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
10	13	28.3	12	25	25	26.6
11	12	26.1	13	27.1	25	26.6
12	11	23.9	11	22.9	22	23.4
13	10	21.7	12	25	22	23.3
TOTAL	46	100.0	48	100.0	94	100.0

2.2 Measuring instruments

The data collection was made with Merrell's School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS) (1993). The validity and reliability of the scale for the Greek population was examined and adapted by Magotsiou, Goudas, and Hasandra, (2006). The questionnaire was also used for the Greek population in other surveys examining

children's social skills (Katsanos, Kouvelas, Samaras, & Hasandra, 2008; Goudas & Magotsiou, 2009). The questionnaire consists of 23 questions, divided into 4 factor:

1) Cooperative skills (5 questions, e.g. "I work in a team with my co-dancers, I like teamwork and I am completely dedicated to it").

2) Empathy (6 questions, e.g. "I am interested in the feelings of others, I care about my fellow dancers and I sympathize with them").

3) Quick temperedness (6 questions, e.g. "I am often annoyed and irritated, I have nervous outbursts").

4) Disruptiveness (6 questions, e.g. "I often fight with my fellow dancers, I cause disrupts in the class").

The answers to the questionnaire were given on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

2.3 Process

To carry out the study, two measurements were carried out. The 1st measurement was made at the beginning of the program. The second measurement was made 3 months later, at the end of this program. The children of both groups completed 94 questionnaires in total, following the instructions of the person responsible for the program and their personal opinion was requested. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, by children aged 10-13 years and lasted about 15 minutes. In the program, a total of 24 traditional dance lessons were held in 3 months, lasting 60 minutes each. The children were taught Greek traditional dances from various regions of Greece, and the selection of dances was based on specific characteristics such as:

- I. Representativeness: the most representative dances from each region
- II. Popularity: whether dances are recognizable by dancers in every part of Greece and whether they are danced in social events
- III. Kinetic structure: the children were taught dances starting from simple to complex and from easy to difficult

Statistical Analysis

- a) Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were carried out to analyze the data.
- b) Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
- c) One-Way ANOVA
- d) Repeated measures Two-Way ANOVA

III. Results

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 2-3 and 4-5 present the results of the factors for each group separately and in total, in the 1st and 2nd measurement.

Table no 2. Means and standard deviations of the factors in the 1st measurement.

Groups	1st Measurement					
	Cooperative Skills		Empathy		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	4.33	.33	4.10	.36	4.215	.34
Control	4.30	.35	4.25	.34	4.275	.34
TOTAL	4.32	.34	4.18	.36	12.805	.68

Table no 3. Means and standard deviations of the factors in the 2nd measurement.

Groups	2nd Measurement					
	Cooperative Skills		Empathy		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	4.83	.21	4.74	.22	4.785	.215
Control	4.50	.38	4.42	.38	4.46	.38
TOTAL	4.66	.35	4.42	.38	4.54	.36

Table no 4. Means and standard deviations of the factors in the 1st measurement.

Groups	1st Measurement					
	Quick temperedness		Disruptiveness		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	1.54	.31	1.27	.43	1.405	.37
Control	1.47	.26	1.19	.32	1.33	.29
TOTAL	1.50	.28	1.23	.38	1.365	.33

Table no 5. Means and standard deviations of the factors in the 2nd measurement

Groups	2nd Measurement					
	Quick temperedness		Disruptiveness		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	1.17	.31	1.07	.17	1.12	.24
Control	1.33	.33	1.12	.23	1.225	.28
TOTAL	1.25	.33	1.10	.20	1.175	.26

Reliability analysis

In order to examine the consistency of the questions that form the evaluation of social skills factors and consequently, the reliability of these factors, a reliability analysis was carried out by calculating Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's Alpha ranges from .74 to .94. All the factors had a satisfactory internal cohesion $\alpha > .70$ (Table no 6.).

Table no 6. Reliability analysis of social skills.

	Factors	1 st measurement	2 nd measurement
		Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Skills	Cooperative Skills	.74	.77
	Empathy	.85	.77
	Quick Temperedness	.72	.81
	Disruptiveness	.94	.77

One-Way ANOVA

One-Way ANOVA was used in the 1st measurement to search any statistically significant differences in the social skills factors, due to the group of participants. In addition, the results of the analysis of variance did not show any statistically significant differences among the two groups of the research (Table 7).

Table no 7. Differences of the social skills factors in the 1st measurement.

1 st Measurement		
Factors	F	p
Collaborative Skills	$F_{(1,77)}=.184$.669
Empathy	$F_{(1,77)}=3.493$.065
Quick Temperedness	$F_{(1,93)}=.791$.377
Disruptiveness	$F_{(1,93)}=.869$.354.

* $p < .05$

Repeated Measures Two-Way ANOVA

To detect any statistically significant differences between the sample separated by an independent factor (group) and a repetitive dependent factor (measurement), repeated measures a two-way analysis of variance was used.

a) *Cooperative skills.* The analysis of variance for dependent samples for two factors (measurement * group), one of which was repeated, showed a statistically significant interaction between the two factors ($F_{(1,73)}=16.943$; $p < .001$). Analyzing the interaction for each degree of the independent factor, a statistically significant influence of the repeated factor "measurement" was found, both in the experimental group

($F_{(1.73)}=66.874$; $p<.001$), and in the control one ($F_{(1.73)}=9.122$; $p=.003$). Observing the means of the groups (Tables 2-3), it is found that the factor "cooperative skills" in the experimental group was higher. Regarding this factor at the 2nd measurement, there were statistically significant differences between the two groups ($F_{(1.93)}=25.610$; $p<.001$). Observing means of the groups (Table 3), it appears that the experimental group showed a statistically significantly higher means for this factor than the control group.

b) *Empathy*. The analysis of variance for dependent samples for two factors (measurement* group), one of which was repeated, showed a statistically significant interaction between the two factors ($F_{(1.76)}=41.202$; $p<.001$). Analyzing the interaction for each degree of the independent factor, a statistically significant effect of the repeated factor "measurement" was found, both in the experimental group ($F_{(1.76)}=110.974$; $p<.001$), and in the control one ($F_{(1.76)}=4.385$; $p=.040$). Observing the means of the groups (Tables 2-3), it is found that the factor "empathy" in the experimental group was higher. Regarding this factor at the 2nd measurement, there were statistically significant differences between the two groups ($F_{(1.93)}=23.999$; $p<.001$). Observing means of the groups (Table 3), it appears that the experimental group showed a statistically significant higher mean in the factor than the control group.

c) *Quick temperedness*. The analysis of variance for dependent samples for two factors (measurement* group), one of which was repeated, showed a statistically significant interaction between the two factors ($F_{(1.62)}=5.983$; $p=.017$). Analyzing the interaction for each degree of the independent factor, a statistically significant effect of the repeated factor "measurement" was found only in the experimental group ($F_{(1.62)}=12.626$; $p=.001$). Observing the means of the groups (Tables 4-5), it is found that the factor "quick temperedness" in the experimental group was lower. Regarding this factor at the 2nd measurement, there were statistically significant differences between the two groups ($F_{(1.93)}=6.094$; $p=.015$). Observing the means of the groups (Table 5), it appears that the experimental group showed a statistically significantly lower mean in the factor than the control group.

d) *Disruptiveness*. The analysis of variance for dependent samples for two factors (measurement* group), one of which was repeated, showed no statistically significant interaction between these two factors ($F_{(1.92)}=2.637$; $p=.108$). On the contrary, a statistically significant effect of the repeated factor "measurement" was found ($F_{(1.92)}=12.626$; $p=.001$) in the experimental group ($F_{(1.92)}=13.123$; $p<.001$). Observing the means of the groups (Tables 4-5), it appears that in the experimental group the factor "disruptiveness" decreased from the 1st to the 2nd measurement. Regarding this factor at the 2nd measurement, there were no statistically significant differences ($F_{(1.93)}=1.289$; $p=.259$). Observing the means of the groups (Table 5), they appear to have remained the same.

IV. Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to study the impact of an educational program of Greek dances on the social skills of children aged 10-13. Specifically, it was examined whether an educational program of Greek dances can contribute to the development of social skills in boys and girls aged 10 to 13. The results of the factors of "cooperative skills" and "empathy" show that the students of the experimental group rated these higher from the 1st to the 2nd measurement. Therefore, the experimental group, after attending Greek dances, showed an improvement in their ability to collaborate with other individuals within a group, as well as in their ability to recognize and understand the feelings of others. The students of the experimental group reported that the lessons of the Greek dances of this program helped them regarding the socialization and the cooperation. Observing the means of the groups (Table 3), it appears that the experimental group exhibited statistically significant higher means in the factors of "cooperative skills" and "empathy" than in the control group.

The results of the factors "quick temperedness" and "disruptiveness" show that the students of the experimental group rated these factors lower from the 1st to the 2nd measurement. Observing the means of the groups (Table 3), it appears that the experimental group showed a statistically significant lower mean in the factors "quick temperedness" and "disruptiveness". Consequently, it was shown that the program of Greek dances contributed to the reduction of these two factors in the participants of the experimental group. The results of this research are consistent with other researches demonstrating that participation in traditional dance programs improves social skills in children and adolescents (Darginidou, 2018; Darginidou, Goulimaris, Mavridis, 2017; Marouli, Venetsanou, Kambas, Koutsouba, 2021; Masadis, Philippou, Derri, Mavridis, Rokka, 2019; Masadis, Philippou, Derri, Papaioannou, 2016). Children's social skills will determine both their success and their adaptation to adult life and the activity of traditional dances is a valuable tool for achieving these goals.

V. Conclusions

The results of the research present that it is concluded that the educational program of Greek dances contributes positively to the development of the social skills of children aged 10-13 years old, since it has been shown that they improved their cooperative skills and empathy, while, at the same time, it helped them to reduce

quick temperedness and disruptiveness. Students acquire skills that will be useful to them in many areas of their lives and this increases the importance of the Greek dance lesson.

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