

A Comparative Study of the Cooperative Style and the Command Style in Teaching Selected Volleyball Skills to Intermediate-Stage Students

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ORIGINAL STUDY

A Comparative Study of the Cooperative Style and the Command Style in Teaching Selected Volleyball Skills to Intermediate-Stage Students

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Abstract

The significance of this study stems from the absence of recent comparative research examining the cooperative style and the command style in volleyball instruction. The research problem was encapsulated in the following question: Are students taught through the cooperative style superior to those taught through the command style, or vice versa, in enhancing the level of volleyball instruction? The study aimed to identify statistically significant differences between the cooperative style and the command style in teaching volleyball to students and to determine the effectiveness of employing the cooperative style in teaching selected volleyball skills. The research population was deliberately selected, comprising 164 students distributed across four classes. The primary experimental sample was chosen randomly by lot and subsequently divided into two equal groups. The experimental group was represented by Class A, consisting of 41 students, who were instructed using the cooperative style. The control group was represented by Class C, consisting of 42 students, who were taught using the command style. The researchers analyzed the data using International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 29) to obtain the results. As for the conclusions, the cooperative style demonstrated an effective impact on learning the performance of the overhand front serve and the main court defense skill, as evidenced by the post-test results of both the experimental and control groups.

Keywords: Curricula, Teaching methods, Cooperative style, Volleyball

1. Introduction

The advancement of science and technology is the benchmark by which national progress and development are measured. A nation that possesses science and technology is, without doubt, a strong nation. For this reason, there is considerable interest in scientific research and its applications. Countries have begun to compete in achieving superiority in the fields of science and technology, adopting education as the primary instrument to attain this goal.

Recent studies have highlighted a variety of methods and approaches across all scientific fields, including physical education in its diverse games, disciplines, and formats, in alignment with modern scientific advancements. Among these is the coopera-

tive style, which is regarded as one of the principal pedagogical approaches in the educational process. This method requires students to become active contributors by encouraging them to engage fully in learning, interact with one another, listen attentively to their peers, and provide mutual support within cooperative groups, rather than remaining passive recipients of information. The aim is to maximize learning benefits, as learners in this context work collaboratively, assist one another, and operate under a clear motivational framework. Such an environment makes the subject matter more engaging and stimulating, while simultaneously enhancing both educational and social dimensions of learning.

Volleyball is one of the team sports taught in secondary schools, and the development of this game

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largely depends on the teaching style and method employed. Therefore, it is essential to conduct research and experiments to determine which instructional approaches are most effective for teaching the game. The significance of the present study arises from the absence of any recent comparative research between the cooperative style and the command style in volleyball instruction, particularly in light of advancements in teaching methodologies and the ongoing scientific and informational revolution. This type of research falls within the domain and specialization of curricula and teaching methods.

1.1. Research problem

Despite the diversity of teaching methods and approaches in physical education—whether direct or indirect—for instructing games, activities, and motor skills, the research problem centers on identifying an approach that is more effective than the command style in teaching volleyball. To address this, a comparative study was conducted between the cooperative style and the command style. The problem is encapsulated in the following question: Are students taught through the cooperative style superior to those taught through the command style, or vice versa, in improving the level of volleyball instruction?

1.2. Research objectives

1. To identify statistically significant differences between the two instructional styles among students in teaching volleyball.
2. To determine the effectiveness of employing the cooperative style in teaching selected volleyball skills.

1.3. Research hypotheses

1. The cooperative style has a positive effect on teaching selected volleyball skills to second-grade intermediate students.
2. There are significant differences in the post-test results between the experimental and control groups, in Favor of the experimental group.

1.4. Research scope

- **Human Scope:** Second-grade intermediate students at Al-Shaheed Hashem Yasser Al-Asadi School, located in the Abi Al-Khasib District.
- **Spatial Scope:** The playground of Al-Shaheed Hashem Yasser Al-Asadi School.
- **Temporal Scope:** From February 25, 2024, to September 20, 2024.

2. Research methodology and field procedures

2.1. Research methodology

The researchers employed the experimental method, as it was deemed appropriate for the nature of the research problem.

2.2. Research population

The research population was deliberately selected and consisted of second-grade intermediate students at Al-Shaheed Hashem Yasser Al-Asadi Intermediate School in Basra for the 2023–2024 academic year, totalling 164 students distributed across four sections. The primary experimental sample was chosen by lot using a random selection method and was divided into two equal groups. The experimental group was represented by Section A, which comprised 41 students who were taught using the cooperative style. The control group was represented by Section C, consisting of 42 students who were instructed using the conventional curriculum. Students who were absent, as well as those included in the pilot study sample, were excluded from the study, as shown in [Table 1](#).

2.3. Equivalence of the research sample

To ensure the equivalence of the two groups, the researchers conducted an equivalence test using the student's t-test (t-test) for independent samples. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the groups, as the p-value (sig) for the overhand front serve skill was 0.85, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This finding confirms that the sample was equivalent in terms of the overhand front serve skill. Similarly, the p-value (sig) for the court defense skill was 0.70, also greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the sample was equivalent in terms of the court defense skill, as shown in [Table 2](#).

2.4. Instruments and tools for data collection

1. Arabic-language sources.
2. Questionnaires for surveying the opinions of experts and specialists, as well as personal interviews.
3. Internet-based information resources.
4. The school playground, volleyballs, and a regulation volleyball net.
5. Measuring tape.
6. Adhesive tape.
7. Two whistles.
8. Chalk for marking and outlining the test areas.

Table 1. Presents the details of the sample size.

Groups	Section	Total Number of students in the section	Pilot study	Excluded	sample size	Percentage
Experimental Group	A	41	6	5	30	73.17%
Control Group	C	42	–	12	30	71.42%
Total		83	6	17	60	72.28%

Table 2. Presents the equivalence between the two groups used in the study for the pre-tests of both the control and experimental samples.

Tests	Unit of Measurement	Control group		Experimental group		Calculated T value	Sig	Statistical significance
		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD			
Overhand Front Serve	Score	19.33	2.08	19.23	2.17	0.18	0.85	Not significant
Court Defense	Score	14.03	1.44	14.16	1.28	0.37	0.70	Not significant

9. One personal computer (HP), with a 13-inch screen.

2.5. Instructional curriculum

Prior to implementing the instructional curriculum based on the cooperative style, the researchers conducted a series of personal interviews with supervisors, teachers, and specialists in the field of physical education. In addition, they reviewed the teacher's guide for intermediate schools and examined a number of sources, references, and methodologies relevant to this approach, in accordance with the content of the physical education lesson. The cooperative style was applied by the researchers in the instructional units for the experimental group, as it facilitates the acquisition of selected volleyball skills. The curriculum was structured as follows:

2.5.1. Fundamental principles of cooperative learning

- 1. Positive Interdependence Among Group Members** (Zayed, 2007, p. 21): As defined by Zayed, this principle refers to the individual's awareness that their success is linked to the success of others, such that no member can succeed without the others also succeeding. In this context, all members of the group derive mutual benefits that positively affect everyone, sharing both successes and failures based on the group's overall performance. A collective team identity emerges, fostering an emotional bond among members. To strengthen goal-based interdependence, the teacher may assign shared motivational rewards to the students.
- 2. Promotive Face-to-Face Interaction** (Al-Heela, 1999, p. 331) As noted by Al-Heela cooperative learning requires direct, face-to-face interaction among students, through which they actively and successfully promote each other's learning. This interaction enables students to contribute

to one another's success by offering support, encouragement, and recognition of each member's efforts to teach their peers. The work of each individual within the group carries significance and value, as it directly contributes to advancing the group's collective task. For interaction to be genuinely productive, the group size should be kept small—ideally between two and six members—and each member should be assigned a specific role, such as group leader, reader, evaluator, recorder, or timekeeper. Participation and effort tend to increase as the group size decreases.

- 3. Individual Accountability and Personal Responsibility** (Al-Bash, 2002, p. 3) As explained by Al-Bish a cooperative group holds collective responsibility for achieving its goals, while each member is individually accountable for contributing their fair share of the work. This accountability becomes evident when each learner's performance is evaluated and the results are communicated to both the group and the individual. Such feedback helps identify members who require additional assistance, support, and encouragement from their peers.
- 4. Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills** :emphasized that for cooperative group work to be productive, for participants to overcome the stress and tension that may accompany it, and for them to collaborate positively, students must possess at least a basic level of social skills. These include leadership, decision-making, trust-building, conflict management, interpersonal interaction, and effective work within small groups. Such skills do not develop spontaneously; rather, they must be explicitly taught and reinforced. Learners should also be encouraged and motivated to apply these skills for cooperative groups to achieve optimal productivity (Al-Heela, 2009, p. 180).

5. **Group processing:** According to Al-Kilani members of the group should discuss and analyze the extent to which they have achieved their objectives and maintained effective relationships while performing their tasks. By reflecting on and evaluating the behaviors exhibited during task performance, the group collectively decides whether to retain and reinforce beneficial behaviors or to adjust those requiring modification. This reflective process enhances the overall effectiveness of cooperative learning and ensures its sustained productivity (Al-Kilani, 2009, p. 36).

2.5.2. Steps implemented in the instructional unit using the cooperative style

The researchers implemented the instructional program for the physical education lesson, consisting of eight instructional units, at a rate of two units per week, in accordance with the school's official schedule for second-year intermediate students. The experimental sample was divided into three cooperative groups, each comprising ten students. Specific roles were assigned to each member of the group—namely, group leader, evaluator, recorder, and timekeeper.

The researchers prepared and designed a worksheet outlining the skill to be practiced, which was then applied cooperatively among the students. In the first week, the teacher explained and demonstrated the skill, after which the participants performed it during the instructional and practical components of the lesson plan, in accordance with their abilities, using the cooperative style in its initial form. Errors were corrected following the sequence outlined in the worksheet.

In the subsequent weeks, the researchers monitored the level of students' participation and the extent to which they fulfilled their assigned roles, considering their physical and technical abilities. The instructional process continued as previously described until the allotted time for the practical component had elapsed. This approach enabled the teacher to engage all students in performing motor tasks cooperatively. The control group, by contrast, was taught the skills using the command style as traditionally employed in physical education instruction.

2.6. Tests administered to the research sample

2.6.1. Overhand front serve accuracy test to the four zones (Hassanein & Moneim, 1988, p. 159)

Purpose of the Test

To evaluate the skill proficiency in performing the overhand front serve in volleyball.

Equipment

A regulation volleyball court and official volleyballs.

Performance Specifications

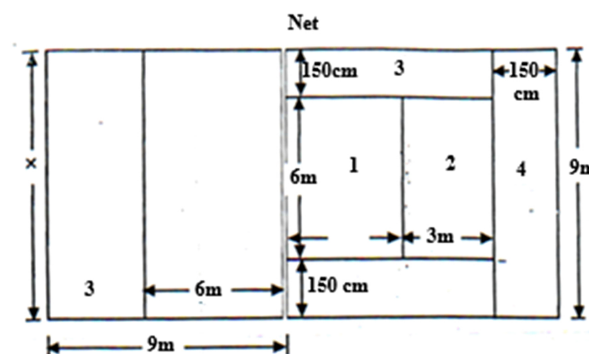
The player stands at the midpoint of the end line on the half facing the designated marked half of the court, positioned 9 meters from the net. From this position, while holding the ball, the player performs an overhand front serve, sending the ball over the net toward the marked target area.

Conditions

1. Each player is allowed ten attempts.
2. If the ball contacts the net and then either lands within the designated half of the court or goes out of bounds, the attempt is counted as one of the ten but no points are awarded.

Scoring

- For each successful serve, the zone number in which the ball lands within the designated half of the court is recorded.
- Points are awarded to the zones on a scale from 1 to 4 points.
- The maximum possible score is 40 points.
- If the ball lands on a line dividing two zones, the score for the lower-numbered zone is awarded.



2.6.2. Court defense test (Hadi & Khazal, 2015, p. 134)

- **Purpose of the Test:** To assess the student's skill in defending the court.
- **Equipment:** A vertical stand fitted with a bamboo or metal hoop measuring 1 m in diameter. The hoop is positioned horizontally and elevated 130 cm above the ground. The stand is placed so that the post is positioned toward the net, at a distance of 1 m from it, and 4.5 m from the sideline.
- Two circles (A and B) are marked in the corners of the court, such that the distance from the center of each circle to the sideline is 1.5 m, and the distance from its center to the baseline is 3 m.
- A mark (X) is placed on the opposite half of the court, at a distance of 3 m from the baseline and 4.5 m from the sideline.

- **Performance Specifications:**

The participant stands inside circle (A), facing the net. The coach positions a chair behind the net (in the half of the court opposite to where the participant is located) and stands on it to deliver a spike toward the participant, aiming to direct the ball through the ring fixed on the post in front of the net.

- **Conditions:**

Each participant is allowed five attempts from inside circle (A) and five attempts from inside circle (B). Any attempt is nullified if the ball is delivered by the coach in an improper manner or to a location outside the circle in which the participant is standing.

- **Scoring:**

The participant's final score is calculated from the total points earned across the ten allotted attempts—five performed from circle (A) and five from circle (B). A ball passing through the ring without touching it awards 3 points, while a ball passing through the ring and making contact with it awards 2 points. If the ball touches the ring without passing through, the participant is awarded 1 point. Any other outcome results in 0 points, making the maximum possible score for the test 30 points.

2.7. Pilot study

The researchers conducted the pilot study using the cooperative learning approach on Monday, March 4, 2024. The participants were selected from outside the main sample and represented Section (A), totaling six students. The primary objectives of this pilot study were to verify the suitability and functionality of the equipment and tools employed in the research; to assess the extent of the students' engagement with the cooperative learning approach; to identify potential difficulties that the researchers might encounter during the implementation of the main experiment using this approach; and to determine the time required to administer the tests.

2.8. Pre-tests

Following the completion of the pilot study, the researchers administered the pre-tests to both the experimental and control groups on Monday, March 11, 2024. Prior to conducting the pre-tests, the researchers implemented two introductory instructional units to enable the students to acquire an initial understanding of the skill. These preparatory units were designed to ensure that the participants were adequately prepared to perform the skill, as the test could

not be administered to the sample if they were unable to execute the skill, even at the most basic motor level.

2.9. Post-tests

After the experimental group had completed the instructional program in volleyball—focusing on the skills of underhand serving and court defense—using the cooperative learning approach, and upon the conclusion of the instructional curriculum, the researchers conducted the post-tests following the same procedures applied in the pre-tests in terms of location and timing. The experimental and control groups were tested on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 9–10, 2024.

2.10. Statistical methods

The researchers analyzed the data using the International Business Machines (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29, to obtain the results.

3. Presentation and discussion of the results

3.1. Presentation and analysis of the results

The results obtained by the researcher were presented and discussed based on the statistical analyses, along with their interpretation for the pre-tests and post-tests of both groups, as outlined below:

Presentation and Analysis of the Pre-Test and Post-Test Results for the Control Group

An examination of [Table 3](#) shows the results of the pre-tests and post-tests for the control group. Using the t-test for paired samples to evaluate the overhand serve skill, the calculated t-value was 12.22 at a significance level of 0.000, indicating statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in favor of the post-test results for the overhand serve skill.

For the court defense skill, the calculated t-value was 7.94 at a significance level of 0.000, likewise indicating statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in favor of the post-test results for the court defense skill.

3.2. Presentation and analysis of the pre-test and post-test results for the experimental group

It is evident from [Table 4](#) that the results of the pre-tests and post-tests for the experimental group, analyzed using the t-test for paired samples, showed that the calculated t-value for the overhand serve skill was 16.93 at a significance level of 0.000. This indicates

Table 3. Presents the means, standard deviations, calculated t-value, and significance level between the pre-tests and post-tests for the control group.

Tests	Unit of Measurement	Pre-test		Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD			
Overhand Front Serve	Score	19.33	2.08	26.06	1.79	12.22	0.000	significant
Court Defense	Score	14.03	1.44	17.16	1.26	7.94	0.000	significant

Table 4. Presents the mean, standard deviation, calculated t-value, and significance level between the pre-tests and post-tests for the experimental group.

Tests	Unit of Measurement	Pre-test		Post-test		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD			
Overhand Front Serve	Score	19.23	2.17	31.16	3.08	16.93	0.000	significant
Court Defense	Score	14.16	1.28	22.4	1.97	18.03	0.000	significant

that the differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, in favor of the post-test results for the overhand serve skill. Similarly, for the court defense skill, the calculated t-value was 18.03 at a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, also in favor of the post-test results for the court defense skill.

3.3. Presentation and analysis of the pre-test and post-test results for the experimental group

It is evident from Table 5, which presents the post-test results for both groups, that the application of the independent-samples t-test for the overhand serve skill yielded a calculated t-value of 7.82 at a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that the differences were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, in favor of the experimental group.

Regarding the court defense skill, the calculated t-value was 12.22 at a significance level of 0.000, likewise indicating statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level, also in favor of the experimental group.

3.4. Discussion

It is evident from Table 2, which presents the pre-test results for both the control and experimental groups in the skills of overhand front serve and court defense, that there was equivalence between the two groups in the pre-tests, as reflected by their closely aligned calculated values. Following the implementation of the traditional command-style instructional method for the control group and the cooperative learning approach for the experimental group, the results presented in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that both groups benefited from the application of their respective instructional methods in developing the two skills. A clear difference is observed between the mean scores of the two groups in the pre-tests and post-tests, with the post-test results surpassing those of the pre-tests. This finding is consistent with the

assertion of (Al-Kazemi, 2002, p. 102) that one of the natural phenomena of the learning process is that progress must occur as long as the teacher adheres to the proper foundations and systematic steps of teaching and learning. For the teaching process to be effective, the explanation and demonstration of the skill must be clear, accompanied by practice in correct performance, with focused reinforcement until the execution becomes well-established and stable.

Based on the post-test results for both the control and experimental groups presented in Table 5, and in order to determine which group achieved greater improvement and which instructional program proved more effective, the researchers calculated the t-value between the post-tests of the two groups. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group, indicating the superiority of the cooperative learning approach over the traditional method in fostering improvement. This outcome can be attributed to the fact that volleyball is a team sport that fundamentally relies on cooperation among players. The cooperation among members of the same group contributed to achieving fruitful outcomes, as each individual worked to support the others in developing and accurately acquiring the skills. Cooperative learning is not limited to simply dividing students into fixed-sized, heterogeneous groups; rather, it also requires mutual understanding and collaboration among the members of those groups. This cooperation enhances the success of the collective effort, as individuals feel a sense of responsibility toward fully performing their roles and operate as a unified entity within an interconnected framework to achieve the desired objectives. According to (Al-Bash, 2002, p. 111), a cooperative group must be responsible for achieving its objectives, and each member of the group must be accountable for contributing their share to the work. The use of cooperative learning has a direct impact on enhancing the acquisition of the overhand front serve and court defense skills in volleyball among the study

Table 5. Presents the post-test results, mean, standard deviation, calculated t-value, and significance level between the control and experimental groups of the study.

Tests	Unit of Measurement	Control group		Experimental group		Calculated T value	sig	Statistical significance
		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD			
Overhand Front Serve	Score	26.06	1.79	31.16	3.08	7.82	0.000	significant
Court Defense	Score	17.16	1.26	22.40	1.97	12.22	0.000	significant

participants. This is because, in heterogeneous cooperative learning, individual accountability is absent, which in turn motivates each member of the group to work with their peers to accomplish the learning process. Moreover, communication among learners enhances the development of acquired knowledge and skills by enabling them to influence and assist one another. In the cooperative learning approach, learners receive continuous feedback, guidance, and direction from the group leader, other group members, and the instructor. Furthermore, the active interaction within the group encourages learners to become engaged, dynamic participants in the learning process. This is consistent with the view of (Al-Sheikh, 1993, p. 75), who stated that one of the advantages of cooperative learning is that a student's achievement and learning are positively associated with the performance of the other members of the group to which they belong, in contrast to the traditional method, which is based on individual or competitive performance among students in the same class. From the above, it becomes evident that the teacher or instructor is responsible for establishing a clearly defined teaching method or curriculum to achieve the intended educational objectives, ensure the inclusion of all students, and simultaneously foster the development of their competencies. Each teacher, however, has their own pedagogical philosophy and applies instructional strategies they believe to be effective in achieving the desired learning outcomes.

4. Conclusion

1. The cooperative learning approach demonstrated an effective impact on mastering the performance of the overhand front serve and court defense skills, as evidenced by the post-test results of both the experimental and control groups.
2. The traditional (command-style) method applied shows a weak impact, as reflected in the post-test results of the experimental and control groups.

5. Recommendation

1. Employ the cooperative learning approach due to its positive and effective impact on acquiring

the skills of the overhand front serve and court defense in volleyball.

2. Conduct similar studies that enhance student cooperation, particularly at the intermediate and secondary school levels, across different sports and for both genders, with comparative analyses between them.

This study presents the cooperative learning approach as a superior alternative to the traditional (command-style) method for teaching selected volleyball skills, aiming to improve and develop athletic performance among intermediate school students.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

We affirm that all tables presented in this study are original and prepared by the authors.

Ethical statement

This manuscript approved by Coach Dr. Riyadh Ali Mohsen on (2024/12/10).

Author contributions

All contributions to this study were made by the two authors, who jointly selected the study title, determined the sample, conducted the main experiment, and performed the statistical analysis. Assistance was provided by several experts: Dr. Riyadh Ali Mohsen in test administration, and Inam Al-Azzawi in translation.

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Data availability

All data used in this study are available.

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Appendix 1

Sample Group Leader's Worksheet for the Overhand Serve Using the Cooperative Learning Approach

Objective:

To teach the overhand front serve in volleyball.

Body Position and Performance Steps for the Overhand Serve

1. Stand facing the net, placing the left foot forward for right-handed servers or the right foot forward for left-handed servers.
2. Distribute body weight evenly across both feet.
3. Support the ball on one hand or hold it with both hands, raised in front of the body at a height above the shoulder of the striking arm.
4. Toss the ball with one hand or both hands upward in front of the body so that it reaches a height above the shoulder of the striking arm.
5. Raise the striking arm upward and backward, arching the trunk while shifting body weight onto the rear foot, extending the body in preparation for the strike.
6. Swing the striking arm away from the right shoulder (for right-handed servers), keeping the elbow close to the head.
7. Strike the ball from behind with an open hand, or with the hand slightly cupped, ensuring accurate contact to direct the serve effectively.

Skill Practice

Practice the skill against a wall, followed by paired practice with a partner through cooperative interaction.

Feedback

- Emphasize the accuracy of the toss.
- Ensure correct stance and execution of the skill, beginning from short distances and gradually increasing the distance.
- From positions 4 and 2, the skill may be executed directly by striking the ball, with a focus on error correction by the instructor. Due to the complexity of this execution, particular precision is required in teaching this skill.

أثر استخدام الأسلوب التعاوني في أداء بعض المهارات بالكرة الطائرة لطلاب المرحلة المتوسطة

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المستخلص

تتبع أهمية البحث من معرفة مدى تأثير الأسلوب التعاوني في تعلم بعض مهارات الكرة الطائرة. وتتمثل مشكلة البحث في إيجاد طريقة أفضل من الطريقة التقليدية في تعلم بعض مهارات الكرة الطائرة بهدف الارتقاء بمستوى تدريس هذه اللعبة. ويهدف البحث إلى إيجاد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الأسلوب التعاوني والطريقة التقليدية في تعليم الكرة الطائرة، والتعرف على أثر الأسلوب التعاوني في تعليم بعض مهاراتها. تم اختيار مجتمع البحث عمدياً وبلغ (164) طالباً موزعين على أربع شعب. أما العينة التجريبية الأساسية فقد اختيرت عشوائياً عن طريق القرعة، وقُسمت إلى مجموعتين متساويتين: مثلت المجموعة التجريبية الشعبة (أ) وعدد أفرادها (41) طالباً طبقوا الأسلوب التعاوني، بينما مثلت المجموعة الضابطة الشعبة (ج) وعدد أفرادها (42) طالباً طبقوا الطريقة التقليدية. عالج الباحثان البيانات باستخدام البرنامج الإحصائي (Statistics 29 SPSS IBM) للحصول على النتائج. أما الاستنتاجات فقد أظهرت أن الأسلوب التعاوني حقق تأثيراً فعالاً في تعلم أداء مهارة الإرسال من الأعلى ومهارة الدفاع عن الملعب، من خلال ملاحظة نتائج الاختبارات البعيدة للمجموعتين التجريبية والضابطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناهج، طرائق التدريس، الأسلوب التعاوني، الكرة الطائرة