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The Impact of Recreational Games, on Mitigating Psychosocial Conflict, Among Shelter Residents State Shelters for the Homeless

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ORIGINAL STUDY

The Impact of Recreational Games, on Mitigating Psychosocial Conflict, Among Shelter Residents State Shelters for the Homeless

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Abstract

This study is aiming to identify the impact of recreational games on reducing the psychosocial conflict of residents in state-run shelters for the homeless, in the shadow of the psychological and social pressures faced by this group due to the loss of family stability and emotional deprivation. The research used the experimental method on a sample containing (17) residents who lives in Dar Al-Zuhour in Baghdad Governorate, and the study relied on the psychosocial conflict scale to rate the level of conflict before and after the application of the recreational program. The results showed a significant decrease in the levels of the psychological conflict in the individual, conflict among female peers, and conflict between residents and the management of the home, reflecting the effectiveness of the recreational games in improving the psychological and social balance of the residents. The results also showed a significant decrease of overall level of psychosocial conflict after the program, confirming the comprehensive impact of the recreational activities in enhancing the psychological and social balance among the residents. These results shows that the recreational games contribute to the release of negative emotions.

Keywords: Recreational games, Psychosocial conflict, Homeless care

1. Introduction

The development of communication and cooperation skills, and the enhancement of the sense of belonging to the group. One of the most important conclusions of the study is that recreational games are an effective tool for alleviating the intensity of the psychosocial conflict among the residents. The study also recommends the necessity of integrating recreational activities into the periodic rehabilitation programs in care homes to enhance the psychological and social well-being of the residents and increase the level of positive interaction among them. Present-day societies are witnessing increasing in the psychological and social challenges due to economic and cultural transformations and the rapid pace of life, which has reflected clearly on the stability and psychological and social adjustment of individuals, especially the

most fragile groups in society. The residents of state-run shelters for the homeless are considered among the groups that are exposed to complex psychological and social pressures due to the harsh life they have experienced, such as the loss of family stability, emotional deprivation, and weak social bonds, which caused the appearance of many psychological problems, foremost among them being psychosocial social conflict. And the psychosocial social conflict is a state of internal tension that rises from the conflict between needs, motivations, and emotions with the demands of social reality. This manifests as behavioral disturbances, social maladjustment, and a sense of alienation. The intensity of this conflict increases among residents in care homes due to the limited opportunities for positive social interaction and the lack of activities that contribute to releasing negative emotions and building healthy social relationships.

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Hamza and Ali explained this by saying that positive social interaction is a vital element in achieving goals and enhancing stability and trust (Khudair & Mahdi, 2021, p. 48). This necessitates the search for effective methods to reduce this conflict and enhance their psychological and social balance. Recreational games are considered important educational and psychological tools that contribute to improving mental health and enhancing positive social interaction. They provide a safe environment for emotional expression, develop cooperation, build self-confidence and trust in others, and play a significant role in alleviating psychological and emotional stress. Recreational games are characterized as exciting and organized activities that enhance cooperation and competition and motivate individuals to participate actively (Katouf, 2024, p. 5). Moreover, participation in recreational games helps break social isolation, strengthens the sense of group belonging, and provides opportunities for constructive social communication, which positively contributes to reducing the level of psychosocial conflict. The importance of studying the effect of recreational games on psychosocial conflict among residents of state shelters for homeless women stems from the fact that psychosocial conflict is one of the main factors influencing personality balance and psychological and social development. Psychosocial conflict does not occur incidentally; rather, it becomes rooted as a result of accumulated negative experiences and emotional and social deprivation. It directly affects behavior, decision-making, and patterns of relationships with others and, if persistent, may lead to social withdrawal, aggressive behavior, or loss of self-confidence and trust in others. Residents of state shelters for homeless women constitute a social group suffering from complex psychological and social conditions due to harsh life experiences, such as family disintegration, emotional deprivation, and weak social support, which negatively affect their psychological, and social adjustment. Psychosocial conflict represents one of the most pressing challenges experienced by this population. It is often reflected in persistent inner strain, emotional instability, difficulties in adjusting to the social environment, and a limited ability, to establish healthy and supportive relationships. Based, on direct observation of the residents' living conditions, along with an analytical review, of relevant literature and previous research, it became evident that residents exhibit varying degrees of psychosocial conflict. The importance of studying the impact of recreational games on the psychosocial conflict among residents in state-run shelters for the homeless stems from the fact that it represents one of the main factors affecting personality balance and psychological and social development. The psy-

chosocial conflict does not appear transiently, but rather takes root as a result of the accumulation of negative experiences and emotional and social deprivation. It directly affects behavior, decision-making, and the pattern of relationships with others, and if it persists, it may lead to social withdrawal, aggressive behavior, or loss of self-confidence and trust in others. The study also contributes to providing a scientific framework that can be utilized in designing purposeful recreational programs within care institutions, thereby improving the psychological and social quality of life of residents. In addition, it supports the efforts of counselors and psychological and social specialists by providing scientific findings that assist in selecting appropriate recreational activities and employing them effectively to reduce psychosocial conflict.

The study aimed to:

- 1- Identify the level of psychosocial conflict among residents of state shelters for homeless women.
- 2- Identify differences in the level of psychosocial conflict among residents as a result of using recreational activities.
- 3- The study hypothesized that there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychosocial conflict among residents of state shelters for homeless women as a result of using recreational activities.

2. Previous studies

Several researchers have addressed topics related to the present study. Among them is the study by Shaimaa Hassan Taha Al-Laithi and Fatima Fawzi Abdelrahman (2001) entitled "The Effectiveness of a Recreational Educational Program for Teaching Basic Swimming Skills to Treat Children's Reluctance to Learn (Ages 6-9)". The study aimed to design a recreational educational program focusing on basic swimming skills based on diagnosing children's reluctance to participate in activity and examining its effectiveness in treating this reluctance among children aged 6-9 years. The researchers used a descriptive-analytical approach and questionnaires specifically designed for this purpose. The study was conducted at the Summer Club of the Faculty of Physical Education for Girls, Alexandria University, with a sample of (55) children. The program presented content in an enjoyable recreational framework, including water games and simplified swimming skills. Results showed a significant reduction in reluctance and increased motivation among children to participate in swimming activities (Al-Laithi & Abdulrahman, 2001, pp. 8-10)

The study by Shokhan Omar Abdelrahman (2010) entitled “The Effect of a Recreational Swimming Pool Program on Certain Perceptual-Motor Abilities and Social Interaction among Female Pupils Aged (6–7) Years” aimed to prepare an age-appropriate aquatic recreational program and identify its effect on improving social interaction. Using an experimental method, the sample was divided into control and experimental groups. Results revealed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group, including improvements in balance, motor coordination, sensory-motor integration, and social interaction skills such as integration, participation, and cooperation, as well as increased motivation toward activities (Abdelrahman, 2010)

The study by Jawad and Razaq (2022) entitled “The Effect of a Recreational Program Using Small Games on Adaptive Behavior among Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Baghdad” focused on the lack of attention to the psychological aspect in the Iraqi Special Olympics. The researchers developed a recreational program using small games to improve adaptive behavior and social interaction. The results showed a positive effect of the recreational program on adaptive behavior and social interaction (Jawad & Razaq, 2022, pp. 109-117)

The study by Karrar Yaarib (2024) entitled “The Effect of Certain Recreational Games on Aggressive Behavior among School Students” aimed to identify the effect of recreational games on aggressive behavior among students aged (15–17) years. Using a descriptive survey method with a sample of (35) students, results indicated a positive change in aggressive behavior attributed to the recreational games program (Katouf, 2024)

The study by Abbas and Matar (2025) aimed to identify sports affiliation among male and female players using a sports team affiliation scale. Statistical results showed that players demonstrated a sense of belonging to their sport, with badminton players exhibiting higher affiliation levels compared to tennis and table tennis players (Abbas & Matar, 2025, p. 133)

2.1. Study population and sample

The study population included residents of state shelters for homeless women in Baghdad Governorate, specifically those registered at Al-Zuhour Shelter for the academic year 2024–2025. The study was conducted from 14/2/2025 to 9/5/2025 within the shelter facilities. The sample consisted of (17) residents selected all and they represent the entire population from Baghdad Governorate. The experimental method was adopted due to its suitability for

the study. Data were collected through Arabic and foreign sources and personal interviews.

The psychosocial conflict scale developed by Mouhdab Raziqa (2011) was adopted from the study “Feelings of Psychological Loneliness and Their Relationship to Psychosocial Conflict among School-Adolescent Girls” (Rzeqa & Suleimani, 2011, p. 417)

3. Methods and instruments

3.1. Selection of the psychosocial conflict scale

The researchers adopted the psychosocial conflict scale prepared by Mouhdab Raziqa (2011) due to its suitability for the sample’s characteristics. The scale consists of (36) items distributed across three domains: psychological conflict (11 items), parental conflict (11 items), and parent–child conflict (14 items). It is based on psychoanalytic theory and uses a five-point Likert scale. The scale was reviewed by (13) experts in educational and sports psychology to verify its validity. A pilot study was conducted on 28/2/2025 with (7) participants to ensure clarity, determine completion time, and calculate reliability. Validity was verified through content validity, and reliability was confirmed using the test–retest method, showing a high level of stability. The main experiment involved applying the scale to all 17 residents on March 18, 2025. The data were checked for normality using skewness values (± 1). As shown in Table 1, confirming that the dataset was appropriate for further statistical analysis.

3.2. Implementation of the recreational program

Upon applying the recreational program prepared by the two researchers, the program consisted of recreational activities aimed at reducing psychosocial conflict among residents of state care shelters. The researchers implemented the motor recreational activities after completing the preparation phase, which included the design of (20) recreational motor activities aligned with and consistent with the objectives of the study. Care was taken to ensure that each implemented activity specifically targeted the reduction of psychosocial conflict.

All recreational activities were implemented over a period of (12) weeks, at a rate of two units per week, as allocated by the shelter during designated recreational periods (Mondays and Fridays) at 4:00 p.m., starting on Friday (21/3/2025) and ending on Monday (5/6/2025). The program was carried out in the designated playground of Al-Sulaykh Orphan Care Shelter. A suitable time was selected for implementing the activities so as not to interfere with educational

Table 1. Shows the sampling distribution of the sample mean.

Variables	Measurement unit of	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	skewness
Individual Psychological Conflict	Score	47.294	48	3.235	-0.325
Conflict Among Peers in the Institution	Score	47.764	49	4.085	-0.394
Conflict Between Orphans and the Institution Administration	Score	60.352	60	4.061	0.059
Psychosocial Conflict	Score	155.411	155	5.690	0.697

Table 2. Presents the means, standard deviations, differences, and t-values for the pre-test and post-test measurements of the study.

Level of Error	v.T	Std.d	differences	Post-test		Pre-test		Variables
				std	Mean	std	Mean	
0.000	6.997	1.76777	3.00000	3.0976	44.2941	3.23583	47.2941	Individual Psychological Conflict
0.008	3.035	1.67815	1.23529	3.5021	46.5294	4.08548	47.7647	Conflict Among Peers in the Institution
0.000	11.567	1.84510	5.17647	3.3021	55.1765	4.06111	60.3529	Conflict Between Orphans and the Institution Administration
0.000	15.513	2.50147	9.41176	4.8605	146.0000	5.69055	155.411	Psychosocial Conflict

or rest periods. The program included four types of activities in each session, addressing mental, motor, individual, and group-based tasks. The number of participants was set according to the available space and resources. The researchers made sure that all activities were appropriate for the participants' health, age, and physical and emotional development, with difficulty levels adjusted to match each individual's abilities. Activities included both ball games (e.g., football, basketball, volleyball, handball) and non-ball exercises such as rhythmic games, races, jumping, obstacle courses, and balance challenges. These activities aimed to enhance physical fitness, coordination, motor skills, balance, and flexibility. They also fostered self-discipline, concentration, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving through structured group interaction, while promoting positive competition and stress reduction.

Following the completion of the recreational program for the experimental group, post-tests were administered to both experimental and on May 9, 2025, using the same procedures as the pre-tests. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to calculate the relevant statistical measures.

- 1- Arithmetic mean
- 2- Hypothetical mean
- 3- Standard error of the mean
- 4- Skewness coefficient
- 5- Standard deviation
- 6- Chi-square (χ^2) test

At 16 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.05 in the Table 2, the pre-test and post-test comparison revealed positive changes in all dimensions, of psychosocial conflict among the experimental group after the recreational program. For the individual psychological conflict dimension, the mean decreased

from, 47.29 in the pre-test to 44.29 in the post-test, showing a difference of 3.00. Similar improvements were observed across other dimensions, indicating the effectiveness of the program in reducing psychosocial tension and enhancing overall psychological adjustment. The calculated t-value, was (6.997) at a significance level of (0.000), which is statistically significant, indicating the presence of meaningful differences between the two measurements in favor of the post-test. With respect to the conflict among peers within the shelter, the arithmetic mean in the pre-test was (47.7647), whereas it declined to (46.5294) in the post-test, with a difference of (1.23529). The calculated t-value reached (3.035) at a significance level of (0.008), which is lower than the adopted significance level (0.05). This indicates statistically significant differences between the two measurements and reflects a reduction in the intensity of peer conflict after applying the program. As for the conflict between residents and shelter administration, the results revealed a clear decrease in the arithmetic mean from (60.3529) in the pre-test to (55.1765) in the post-test, with a difference of (5.17647). The calculated t-value was (11.567) at a significance level of (0.000), which is statistically significant, indicating a noticeable improvement in the nature of the relationship between residents and the shelter administration. At the level of the overall psychosocial conflict scale, the arithmetic mean recorded (155.411) in the pre-test, while it decreased to (146.0000) in the post-test, with a difference of (9.41176). The results of the t-test showed a calculated value of (15.513) at a significance level of (0.000), which represents a highly statistically significant result. This confirms the existence of significant differences between the pre- and post-tests in favor of the post-test and reflects the clear positive effect of the recreational program in reducing the level of psychosocial conflict among residents.

4. Discussion of results

In the [Table 2](#), the results demonstrated a statistically significant decrease, in the arithmetic mean of individual psychological conflict following the implementation, of the recreational program. This indicates an improvement, in psychological balance and a reduction in internal tension, and conflict among residents. Which confirmed (that recreational activities help reduce internal conflict and achieve a degree of emotional balance by satisfying basic psychological needs) ([Abdel Latif Abu, 2010](#), p. 215). The results of the axis of conflict among the housemates also showed a statistically significant decrease after the program was implemented, which is attributed to the nature of recreational games that rely on group interaction, cooperation, and participation, contributing to the development of social communication skills and the enhancement of positive relationships among individuals. These games work to reduce negative behaviors resulting from unhealthy competition or social isolation, and help instill values of tolerance and acceptance of others. As for the aspect of conflict between the residents and the management, the results showed a significant decrease in the level of conflict after implementing the recreational program, which reflects an improvement in the nature of the relationship between the two parties. This can be explained by the fact that the participation of residents in recreational programs within the institution contributes to creating a positive psychological and social environment, which reduces tension and enhances the feeling of safety and belonging to the place, thereby positively reflecting on the acceptance of instructions and administrative regulations. This aligns with what [Erikson \(1968\)](#) pointed out, as he believes that providing a supportive environment based on positive interaction contributes to reducing psychological and social conflicts and achieving harmony with the social environment ([Erikson, 1968](#), p. 92). At the level of the overall psychosocial conflict scale, the results showed a clear decrease in conflict levels after the implementation of the recreational program, indicating the comprehensive impact of recreational games in improving the psychological and social health of the residents. This effect is attributed to the fact that recreational games influence several dimensions of an individual's personality simultaneously. They contribute to improving psychological well-being, enhancing social relationships, and fostering a sense of belonging and social acceptance, making them an effective tool in psychological and social rehabilitation programs within care homes. Based on the above, the results of the current study

confirm that recreational games represent an effective means of reducing psychosocial conflict among residents in state-run shelters for the homeless, due to their role in emotional discharge, fostering positive social interaction, and improving psychological and social adjustment. This necessitates the inclusion of these games in the approved programs of social care institutions.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

1. Recreational activities played a clear role in lowering levels. of psychosocial conflict among woman residing, in government-run shelters.
2. The implemented program contributed to easing' personal psychological stress, leading to improved emotional stability, a greater- sense of comfort, and enhanced overall mental well-being.
3. Conflicts among peers declined' as recreational games encouraged collaboration, group participation, and positive social engagement, while reducing tendencies toward social withdrawal or negative competitive behavior.
4. Interaction between. residents, and shelter management showed noticeable improvement, demonstrated, by increased compliance with regulations, more effective, communication, and a stronger feeling of belonging to the institution.
5. The impact of recreational games, was broad and multifaceted, positively affecting all aspects of psychosocial conflict and reinforcing their importance within psychological and social rehabilitation interventions.
6. Variations in individual outcomes were observed, emphasizing the necessity of adapting recreational activities to suit participants' psychological preparedness, and their preferred patterns of social interaction.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- 1- Adopting recreational games as an essential component of rehabilitation programs in state shelters for homeless women due to their positive effect in reducing psychosocial conflict.
- 2- Designing diverse and well-organized recreational programs that are appropriate to the psychological and social characteristics of residents and consider individual differences.

- 3- Training counselors and psychological and social specialists working in care institutions on the scientific application of recreational games to improve psychological and social adjustment.
- 4- Providing appropriate environments and the necessary material and human resources to implement recreational programs regularly and sustainably within care institutions.
- 5- Encouraging residents' active participation in group recreational activities due to their role in enhancing positive social relationships and building self-confidence and trust in others.
- 6- Conducting future studies examining the effect of recreational games on other psychological and social variables, such as self-esteem, psychological adjustment, sense of belonging, and quality of life.
- 7- Conducting a prospective study on samples from different age groups of residents in orphanages and homeless shelters.

Conflict of interest

None.

We confirm that all tables and figures in this article are ours and written by the researchers themselves.

Ethical clearance

This manuscript approved by **ANAAM MOHAMMED JAWD** on (19/1/2025).

Author contributions

All contributions of this study were done by the researchers **ANAAM MOHAMMED JAWD** and **Sahira Razaq Kadhum** who get the main idea and work on writing and concluding also with number of experts **Prof. Dr. Hussein Abdul-Zahra** in Statistics **Prof. Asst. Haider Nawar Hussein** in translating. in revision, **Asst. Lect. Inam Al-Azzawi**.

Facilitate the task

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Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Appendix

Appendix (1): The Final Version of the Psychosocial Conflict Scale

Psychosocial Conflict Scale (Final Version).

Item	Psychological Conflict of the Individual	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I find it difficult to make the right decision in difficult situations					
2	The administration cares about my opinions					
3	I feel upset by the administration treating me like a child					
4	I am responsible for myself					
5	Some conflicts occur in the home for reasons I do not know					
6	I do not feel anger or annoyance from continuous criticism by the administration					
7	I find myself confused and hesitant					
8	I notice differences between my opinions and those of the administration					
9	The administration likes the way I interact with others					
10	The administration does not allow me to visit my friends at their homes					
11	The administration often threatens me with punishment or expulsion					
12	I sometimes feel that my peers do not appreciate my desire to stay up late, causing disagreements					
13	Tension arises between me and some peers when they object to my choice of TV programs					
14	Some peers avoid criticizing me in front of others, while others do so deliberately, creating conflict					
15	I am annoyed by some peers' curiosity and monitoring of my actions as if they interfere in my private matters					
16	Sometimes I doubt the intentions of some peers when they ask questions about my personal matters					
17	Conflicts arise between me and some peers due to differences in opinions about daily life matters					
18	Some peers may use harsh words when I express my opinion, increasing tension between us					
19	I sometimes feel confused about my relationship with peers and how it will affect my future in the home					
20	Conflict arises when peers feel that my going out at night causes them annoyance or suspicion					
21	I sometimes feel that some peers do not care to know where I am or what I go through after returning from school					
22	Negative comments from some peers make me feel incapable or worthless					
23	Conflicts sometimes occur between the administration and other orphans while I am in the home					
24	I feel upset when the administration chooses programs or activities that do not match the orphans' desires					
25	Orphans feel upset when the administration asks too many questions inside the sections					
26	The administration sometimes prevents orphans from going to recreational places during holidays, causing tension					
27	Conflict arises when the administration does not show sufficient cooperation with orphans in taking responsibility					
28	Feelings of resentment arise when the administration does not clearly express concern for orphans in front of others					
29	Some orphans feel upset by the administration interfering in choosing their clothes					
30	The administration prevents some orphans from accompanying friends outside the home, causing disputes					
31	Orphans feel embarrassed and tense when talking to the administration about age-related matters					
32	Some orphans feel confused at school due to pressure from the administration to complete their duties					
33	Orphans face conflict when the administration shows excessive concern about academic excellence, making them feel pressured					
34	Some orphans feel sad due to the administration's way of dealing with them, increasing tension					
35	Orphans feel tense when the administration ignores their participation or opinions in important matters					
36	Conflict arises when the administration does not give orphans enough opportunity to discuss matters concerning them					

تأثير الألعاب الترويحية في خفض الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي للمقيّمات في دور الدولة لرعاية المشردات

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الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على تأثير الألعاب الترويحية في خفض الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي للمقيّمات في دور الدولة لرعاية المشردات، وذلك في ظل الضغوط النفسية والاجتماعية التي تتعرض لها هذه الفئة نتيجة فقدان الاستقرار الأسري والحرمان العاطفي. استخدم البحث المنهج التجريبي على عينة مكونة من (17) مقيمة في دار الزهور بمحافظة بغداد، واعتمدت الدراسة مقياس الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي لتقييم مستوى الصراع قبل وبعد تطبيق البرنامج الترويحي. أظهرت النتائج انخفاضاً معنوياً في درجات الصراع النفسي للفرد، وفي الصراع بين الزميلات، وبين المقيّمات وإدارة الدار، مما يعكس فاعلية الألعاب الترويحية في تحسين التوافق النفسي والاجتماعي. كما أظهرت النتائج انخفاضاً ملحوظاً في مستوى الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي الكلي بعد البرنامج، مما يؤكد الأثر الشامل للأنشطة الترويحية في تعزيز التوازن النفسي والاجتماعي لدى المقيّمات. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن الألعاب الترويحية تسهم في تفريغ الانفعالات السلبية، وتنمية مهارات التواصل والتعاون، وتعزيز الشعور بالانتماء للمجموعة. ومن أهم استنتاجات الدراسة أن الألعاب الترويحية تُعد أداة فعالة للتخفيف من حدة الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي لدى المقيّمات. وتوصي الدراسة بضرورة دمج الأنشطة الترويحية ضمن البرامج التأهيلية الدورية في دور الرعاية لتعزيز الصحة النفسية والاجتماعية للمقيّمات ورفع مستوى التفاعل الإيجابي بينهن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الألعاب الترويحية، الصراع النفسي الاجتماعي، رعاية المشردات.