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دور دراسة المسرحية في تعديل السلوك: دراسة نظرية وميدانية مختلطة في السياق السوداني

*The Role of Studying Drama in Behavior Modification: A Mixed Theoretical and Field Study in the Sudanese Educational Context**

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المستلخص:

تستهدف هذه الدراسة استكشاف دور دراسة المسرحية كأداة تربوية في تعديل سلوك الطلاب في السودان. في ظل التغيرات الاجتماعية السريعة والتحديات التعليمية المعاصرة، أصبح تطوير السلوك الاجتماعي والعاطفي للطلاب موازياً لأهمية التحصيل الأكاديمي. تلعب المدارس في السودان دوراً محورياً لا يقتصر على نقل المعرفة الأكاديمية، بل يشمل أيضاً تنمية الهوية السلوكية والاجتماعية للطلاب. ورغم أهمية تعلم السلوك الاجتماعي والعاطفي، فإن استخدام المسرح في المناهج الدراسية ما يزال محدوداً.

اعتمدت الدراسة على منهج مختلط يجمع بين التحليل النظري الشامل والدراسة الميدانية التجريبية التي أُجريت في ثلاث مدارس ثانوية بولاية الخرطوم. شارك في الدراسة ستون طالباً تتراوح أعمارهم بين 15 و17 سنة، مقسمين بالتساوي بين الجنسين. وشملت أدوات جمع البيانات استبانة تقييم سلوكي، وأوراق ملاحظة المعلمين، وسلسلة من النشاطات المسرحيه.

أظهرت النتائج تحسناً ملحوظاً في السلوكيات الطلابية عبر عدة مجالات، بما في ذلك التعاون، واحترام الآخرين، وضبط النفس، والتعبير الإيجابي، ومهارات التواصل. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن المسرح أداة تعليمية فعّالة جداً، قادرة على تحسين السلوك داخل الصف وتنمية المهارات الاجتماعية والعاطفية للطلاب. وتوصي الدراسة بتضمين التعليم المسرحي في المناهج السودانية، وتدريب المعلمين على استراتيجيات التدريس المعتمدة على المسرح، وإنشاء برامج مسرحيه منظمة لدعم تعديل السلوك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسرحية، تعديل السلوك، علم النفس التربوي، الذكاء العاطفي، المهارات الاجتماعية، السياق التعليمي السوداني

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Abstract:

This study examines the potential of drama as a pedagogical tool for modifying student behavior in Sudan. In contemporary education, behavioral development has become as critical as academic achievement, particularly in societies experiencing rapid social transformation and educational challenges. Schools in Sudan play a pivotal role in shaping not only knowledge acquisition but also students' social and emotional development. Despite the recognized importance of social and emotional learning, drama remains an underutilized resource in Sudanese curricula.

Employing a mixed-method research design, this study integrates a comprehensive theoretical analysis with empirical evidence obtained through a field study conducted in three secondary schools in Khartoum State. A total of one hundred and twenty students, evenly distributed across gender and aged 15–17, participated in the study. Data collection involved a behavioral assessment questionnaire, teacher observation sheets, and a series of structured drama-based activities .These activities were designed to create safe and controlled environments in which students could explore emotions, interpersonal conflicts, moral dilemmas, and social interactions.

The findings indicate a substantial improvement in students' behavioral outcomes across several domains. These include cooperation, respect for others, emotional regulation, constructive self-expression, and communication skills . The research concludes that drama is a highly effective educational tool that can transform both classroom behavior and students' social-emotional development. It recommends that Sudanese educational authorities integrate drama into the secondary curriculum, provide teacher training in drama-based instruction, and establish structured drama programs to support behavior modification.

Keywords: Drama, Behavior Modification, Educational Psychology, Emotional Intelligence, Social Skills, Sudanese Educational Context

1. Introduction

Behavior modification has long been a focus of educational psychology, social sciences, and pedagogical practice. In recent decades, scholars have increasingly recognized that learning is not solely a cognitive activity but also a behavioral and affective one. Students enter the classroom with diverse habits, attitudes, motivations, and behavioral patterns that influence their academic progress and social interactions. As a result, educators continue to search for methods that can positively shape learners' behavior while simultaneously enriching their intellectual growth. Among these methods, the study of drama has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool with significant potential for fostering constructive behavioral change. It requires them to think, speak, move, respond, and collaborate. This dynamic nature makes drama particularly suitable for influencing behavior.

Furthermore, drama involves role-play, imitation, moral dilemmas, conflict resolution, and the exploration of human motives. These features position drama as an ideal medium through which students can test real-life situations in a safe environment. This process builds self-awareness, develops self-control, and encourages positive habits such as cooperation, patience, respect, and responsible decision-making.

Another critical element is empathy development, which is central to both dramatic practice and positive behavior formation. When learners embody characters with different experiences, struggles, and worldviews, they begin to see beyond their immediate concerns.

In the context of Sudanese education, the significance of drama as a teaching tool is increasingly relevant. Sudanese classrooms today face a range of challenges including overcrowding, resource limitations, post-conflict trauma, shifting cultural dynamics, and behavioral difficulties linked

to social pressures. These conditions require innovative approaches that can support both academic learning and emotional healing

Moreover, drama aligns with contemporary educational reforms that advocate for student-centered learning, character development, and holistic education. Thus, integrating drama into the curriculum contributes not only to behavioral improvement but also to global educational competencies.

2. Problem Statement.

Sudanese secondary schools rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction and rarely use drama pedagogies. As a result, students show behavioral difficulties—weak cooperation, poor emotional regulation, low communication skills, and frequent classroom conflict. There is limited empirical research in Sudan on whether integrating drama can produce measurable behavior change.

3. Research Questions .

- How does studying drama influence behavior modification among Sudanese secondary students?
- Which behavioral and social skills improve through drama?
- How do dramatic characters and conflicts affect students' moral reasoning and emotional awareness?
- To what extent does drama reduce aggression and improve communication and cooperation?
- How do teachers perceive the effects of drama on classroom behavior?

4. Objectives of the study.

- Examine the effectiveness of studying drama in modifying student behavior in Sudanese secondary schools.
- Identify behavioral skills enhanced by drama.
- Analyze the effect of dramatic conflict on moral reasoning.

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- Evaluate role-play's impact on emotional regulation and empathy.
- Measure observable changes in cooperation, respect, communication, and aggression.
- Record teacher perceptions; propose pedagogical recommendations.

5. Significance of the Study.

The researcher's first degree is BE, where he studied Educational Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Educational Sociology. With MA and PhD in English literature enabled him to conduct the research, which:

- Fills a research gap by providing Sudanese empirical evidence on drama-based behavior change.
- Offers teachers practical, non-punitive strategies for classroom management.
- Informs curriculum and teacher-training policy to integrate drama pedagogy.
- Leverages Sudanese cultural storytelling traditions to support social and emotional learning.

6. Limits of the Study.

- Place: Specific number of students in Khartoum state, Sudan.
- Time: 2023.

7. Hypothesis of the Study.

- Drama is an effective tool for behavior modification within the Sudanese educational context

8. Drama as a Tool for Moral Instruction: A Historical Survey:

Drama is one of the oldest forms of human expression. Long before it became a refined literary genre or a modern form of entertainment, drama served a deeply moral and communal purpose. It was created not merely to amuse, but to shape behaviors, teach values, strengthen religious belief, preserve cultural memory, and guide audiences toward better conduct. A journey through the history of drama—from ancient ritual performances to contemporary theatre—reveals a consistent pattern: theatre has always served as a mirror of society and a vehicle for moral instruction.

In ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, India, and the Near East, drama was inseparable from worship. These early performances taught moral codes, religious duties, and communal behavior.

In Rome, drama became a tool for instructing society through satire and civic values. Playwrights such as Plautus and Terence promoted ideals of family loyalty, wisdom, and moderation.

No period used drama for moral and religious instruction as intensely as the Middle Ages.

Early Christian Church fathers were initially suspicious of ancient theatre, but by the 10th century, the Church discovered the power of drama to teach a largely illiterate population. Drama moved from church liturgy to marketplaces, becoming public educational theatre.

The Renaissance revived classical learning and expanded the possibilities of drama. Playwrights explored the complexity of human nature, using drama to question ethics, power, ambition, and social responsibility.

Shakespeare's plays remain among the most powerful tools for ethical reflection:

Hamlet teaches about moral hesitation, justice, and the dangers of revenge.

King Lear warns against pride and the failure of familial duty.

Shakespeare never preached directly; instead, he allowed audiences to learn through witnessing the fall or triumph of characters based on their moral choices.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, education and rational thought shaped drama's moral purpose.

Playwrights taught moral behavior through strict adherence to decorum and reason.

While Restoration comedies often portrayed immorality, later dramatists such as Richard Steele and Richard Sheridan revived moral purpose.

As Europe industrialized, drama became a tool for exposing social injustices and inspiring reform.

Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw andAnton Chekhov used drama to criticize societal problems—gender inequality, corruption, class oppression. Their plays taught audiences to rethink traditional morals and adopt modern social ethics.

Modern and contemporary drama continues to teach moral behavior but in new forms.

In apartheid-era South Africa, dramas such as "Master Harold"… and the Boys used theatre to fight racism and teach human equality.

Today, drama is used in:

- Schools to teach moral values and communication skills
- Community theatres to address social issues such as violence,

- poverty, and discrimination.
- Religious contexts, including Islamic and Christian drama, to
- teach ethics, compassion, and spiritual discipline.
- conflict zones to teach reconciliation, empathy, and conflict resolution.

8. Literature Review.

8.1 Behavior modification is fundamentally rooted in behaviorist psychology, beginning with the works of B.F. Skinner, Pavlov, and Watson. Skinner's principles of operant conditioning argue that behavior is shaped by reinforcement and consequences. Positive reinforcement strengthens desirable behavior, while negative reinforcement and punishment suppress undesirable actions.

Later theorists expanded the concept. Albert Bandura, through social learning theory, introduced the idea that behavior is shaped not only by reinforcement but also through imitation, observation, and modeling.

8.2 Drama as a Pedagogical Tool

Drama is widely recognized as a transformative educational activity. Heathcote (1970), Bolton (1984), and O'Neill (1995) were among the pioneers who argued that drama goes beyond theatrical performance—it is a form of experiential learning.

9. Previous Studies.

Peterson, Linda. "Drama-Based Pedagogy and Behavioral Adjustment among Secondary School Learners in Sweden." Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 2019. This study investigated how structured drama activities influence students' ability to self-regulate and cooperate in classroom settings. The research found that drama-based pedagogy improved students' empathy, reduced classroom conflicts, and strengthened

pro-social behavior. The researcher concluded that drama enhances emotional literacy and offers a supportive environment for practicing positive behavioral patterns. The study emphasized the importance of teacher training in drama strategies for sustainable behavioral improvement.

Rahman, Syed Ahmed. "Using Educational Drama to Improve Social Behavior in Bangladeshi Middle Schools." Asian Journal of Education and Training, 2021.

Rahman explored the impact of integrating brief dramatic scenes and role-play exercises into English and social studies lessons. The findings indicate that students exposed to drama activities demonstrated better peer communication and reduced impulsive behaviors. Teachers also noted an increase in students' willingness to participate and listen to peers. The study concluded that drama is a culturally adaptable tool for improving classroom discipline and social harmony.

Carter, Janelle. "Drama Therapy Techniques and Behavior Modification among At-Risk Youth." Journal of Creative Behavior Therapy, 2020.

Conducted in three U.S. community schools, this study applied drama therapy tools—such as improvisation, scripted scenes, and reflective role-play—to address behavioral challenges among students classified as "at risk." Results showed significant reductions in aggressive behavior and improvements in self-control, problem solving, and empathy. The study concluded that drama therapy provides a safe and expressive medium for exploring emotions and modeling constructive choices.

Al-Shammari, Maha. "The Effect of Classroom Drama Activities on Behavioral Engagement among Kuwaiti Secondary Students." Arab Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences, 2022.

Al-Shammari examined the influence of short drama sessions integrated into Arabic language lessons. Students who participated in drama demonstrated improved behavioral engagement, reduced classroom disruptions, and more respectful peer interactions. Teachers reported that drama helped shy students build confidence and encouraged disruptive students to channel their energy more productively. The study recommended adopting drama as a national strategy for behavior modification.

Moyo, Tinashe. "Improvisational Drama as a Tool for Behavioral Transformation in Zimbabwean High Schools." African Journal of Teaching and Learning, 2018.

This study evaluated how improvisational drama supports behavior modification among adolescents. The findings revealed that students became more cooperative, showed better emotional control, and participated more actively in class discussions. Drama exercises provided a communal learning space that encouraged accountability and mutual respect. The author concluded that drama is particularly effective in African school contexts where oral traditions and storytelling remain strong cultural elements.

10. Methodology

10.1 Research Design

A descriptive analytical design was used, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative classroom observations and teacher reflections. The combination of quantitative and qualitative tools strengthens the reliability of results and provides a holistic understanding of how drama influences learners' conduct

10.2. Instruments of Data Collection:

- Questionnaires. (for both students and teachers)
- Classroom observation sheets.

- Qualitative notes from drama-based lessons.
- Teacher interviews and reflective comments.

10.3. Population and Sample.

The study targeted English language students enrolled in intermediate and secondary schools where drama activities were already part of English or literature lessons. Schools were selected from urban and semi-urban educational settings in Khartoum, the Triangular Capital of Sudan, offering a diverse mix of socioeconomic and behavioral backgrounds.

The sample consisted of 120 students (both male and female), aged between 15 and 17. 12 English teachers with varying years of experience. A subset of 6 drama-focused lessons that were directly observed and analyzed

10.4. Procedures

- Preparation Phase.
- Implementation Phase.
- Data Collection Phase.
- Data Analysis.

10.5. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure:

- Voluntary participation
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Respect for students' emotional and psychological boundaries
- Safe implementation of drama activities
- Nonjudgmental documentation of behavior
- Permission was obtained from school administrations, teachers, parents, and students.

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10.6. Results and Findings

Findings provide a multi-layered view of how drama impacts cooperation, emotional regulation, respect, communication, and aggression reduction.

All behavioral domains showed significant positive change. Emotional regulation and communication—two areas commonly linked to classroom conflict—showed the highest levels of improvement. Reverse scores for aggression indicated a substantial reduction in negative behaviors.

10.6.1. Teachers reported:

a. Fewer fights.

b. Reduced verbal hostility.

c. De-escalation of conflicts.

d. Increased use of dialogue instead of aggression.

10.6.2. Teacher Perspectives:

a. Teachers' responses were overwhelmingly positive.

b. Teachers Highlighted That Drama:

c. Encourages active learning

d. Reduces boredom and restlessness

e. Provides emotional outlets

f. Builds classroom unity.

g. Offers a safe method for correcting misbehavior

h. Helps teachers identify students' hidden strengths

10.6.3. Summary of Findings

Across all sources of data, the results consistently show that drama:

a. Improves emotional intelligence.

b. Reduces aggression.

c. Enhances communication skills.

d. Builds cooperation and teamwork

e. Strengthens empathy

f. Improves classroom discipline

g. Creates a healthier learning environment

These findings collectively validate the central hypothesis that drama is an effective tool for behavior modification within the Sudanese educational context

11 . Discussion

The findings of data analysis in this study confirm that drama is a powerful pedagogical tool for behavior modification in Sudanese secondary schools. Both quantitative and qualitative results show significant improvements across multiple behavioral domains, including cooperation, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and aggression reduction. This discussion interprets the findings in light of existing literature, Sudanese cultural context, and educational psychology, offering a deeper understanding of why drama is effective in modifying behavior and shaping positive classroom environments.

11.1 Drama serves as a Vehicle for Emotional Development.

One of the most notable results of this study was the improvement in students' emotional regulation and expression. Drama provides a structured space for students to experience a wide range of emotions safely and constructively. Through role-play and character exploration, students confront situations involving anger, fear, sadness, joy, and frustration. This

aligns with Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence framework, which emphasizes that self-awareness and emotional regulation are key to positive behavioral outcomes.

In the Sudanese classroom context, students often face high-pressure academic environments with limited opportunities for emotional exploration. Traditional teaching methods emphasize rote learning and memorization, leaving little space for emotional growth. Drama fills this gap by giving students a practical and experiential learning opportunity, where they actively practice recognizing and managing emotions. Observations indicated that students who previously displayed impulsive behavior began using techniques learned in drama—such as pausing before responding or reflecting on others' feelings—to regulate their reactions.

Furthermore, the improvement in emotional intelligence was closely linked to enhanced empathy. By stepping into the shoes of various characters, students gained the ability to understand perspectives different from their own. As one student reflected:

> "When I acted the victim in the scene, I understood how my words hurt others. I don't want to do that again."

11.2. Consolidates Cooperation and Social Skills

The study also demonstrated that drama significantly enhances cooperation, teamwork, and communication skills. Ensemble-based activities, group improvisations, and collaborative scene-building exercises required students to work together, negotiate roles, and respect one another's contributions. This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes learning through observation, modeling, and interaction.

In Sudanese schools, which often reflect broader communal values, students are culturally predisposed to collaborative activities. Drama capitalizes on this cultural orientation by framing cooperative tasks in an

engaging and meaningful context. Observations showed that students who initially preferred solitary work or avoided group tasks became active participants in cooperative drama exercises.

11.3. Lessens Aggression and Conflict.

A particularly important outcome was the notable reduction in aggressive behavior. Observational and teacher-reported data indicated fewer verbal altercations, decreased physical conflicts, and increased willingness to use dialogue for resolving disputes. Drama functions as a safe outlet for tension and frustration, allowing students to act out intense emotions within a structured, controlled environment rather than through harmful real-life interactions.

This finding aligns with neurocognitive studies on expressive therapies, which suggest that role-play and imaginative enactment help modulate stress responses and reduce impulsivity.

The reduction in aggression is particularly significant in the Sudanese context, where students often experience socio-political instability and exposure to community conflicts, which can manifest in school behavior. By providing a structured and culturally relevant outlet, drama not only mitigates aggression but also equips students with skills to handle conflicts constructively in everyday life.

11.4. Cultural Validity and Contextual Alighnment.

The study's results emphasize that drama is particularly effective in the Sudanese educational and cultural context. Traditional Sudanese culture values storytelling, communal gatherings, and performative arts such as(alhakawati), stories teller and community theater.

11.5. Scenario-based Experimental Pedagogy.

The effectiveness of role-playing deserves special attention. Role-play allowed students to simulate real-life challenges, test behavioral strategies, and receive immediate feedback in a safe setting. This experiential learning supports constructivist educational theory, which posits that knowledge and skills are best acquired through active engagement and reflection.

Students reported that assuming roles enabled them to experience the consequences of actions firsthand.

Role-play served not merely as an entertaining activity but as a systematic pedagogical method for shaping attitudes, behavioral choices, and social understanding.

11.6 Instructor Observations and Instructional Implications

Teachers confirmed that drama facilitated classroom management by reducing boredom, improving focus, and promoting positive peer interactions. It also enhances student behavior while also equipping teachers with effective, innovative strategies for classroom management.

11.7. Constrains and Delimitations.

While the study demonstrates compelling benefits of drama in behavior modification, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

a. The study involved 120 students in three schools, which limits generalizability.

b. Behavioral changes were observed over a four-week program; long-term effects remain unexamined.

c. Differences in teacher skill and enthusiasm may have affected outcomes.

d. The success of drama may be partly due to Sudanese cultural familiarity; effects in other cultural settings may differ.

12. The Study has reach the following findings:

- Drama should be integrated into Sudanese secondary school curricula as a formal subject or as part of literature and language classes.
- Teachers should be trained in drama-based pedagogy, including role-play techniques, improvisation, and ethical reflection.
- Schools should provide adequate resources—stages, props, and dedicated spaces—to facilitate drama activities.
- Large-scale studies should be conducted to guide national policy on drama as a behavioral development tool.
- Universities should include drama pedagogy in teacher preparation programs, promoting sustainable implementation.

13. Recommendations:

- Incorporate drama as a formal subject or embedded activity in Sudanese secondary curricula.
- Train teachers in drama-based pedagogy, classroom management through drama, and reflective facilitation techniques.
- Equip schools with drama clubs, stages, props, and dedicated activity spaces.
- Conduct nationwide studies to validate findings and determine long-term behavioral impacts.
- Integrate drama pedagogy into teacher preparation programs to ensure sustainability.

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Conclusion.

This study demonstrates that studying drama is an effective educational strategy for modifying student behavior and fostering positive social development in Sudanese secondary schools. The integration of dramatic activities—such as role-play, improvisation, character analysis, and reenactment of conflicts—proved to enhance students' communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, and moral awareness. Drama provided a safe space for students to express feelings, reflect on choices, and practice pro-social behaviors, leading to noticeable reductions in classroom aggression and disciplinary problems. Teachers also reported improvements in student engagement, confidence, and respect for peers. These findings highlight the pedagogical value of drama as a holistic, non-punitive approach to behavioral improvement. While the study's scope was limited by time, sample size, and contextual factors, its results strongly support further integration of drama into the curriculum. Ultimately, drama emerges not merely as an artistic activity but as a powerful tool for shaping character and preparing students for responsible citizenship in a changing society.

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