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Differentiating anxious, aggressive, and socially competent preschool children: Validation of the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 (parent version)

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Abstract

The present study examined the factor structure, internal consistency, and construct validity of the parent version of the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 for preschoolers (SCBE-30; LaFreniere, P. J. (1990). Social competence and behavior evaluation-30. Unpublished measure.), an adaptation of the validated teacher version of the same measure (LaFreniere & Dumas, *Psychol. Asses.* 8 (1996) 369). The parent version of the SCBE-30 is a 30-item Likert rating scale questionnaire designed to assess patterns of anxiety/withdrawal, anger/aggression, and social competence. Principal components analysis was used to identify the factor structure of the parent version of the SCBE-30 ($N=218$ preschool children). To assess construct validity, a compliance task was utilized to determine whether children identified as high on anxiety/withdrawal, anger/aggression, or social competence with the parent version of the SCBE-30 ($n=20$ for each group) could be distinguished behaviorally on several observational variables. Principal components analysis identified three factors accounting for 44% of the variance. Ten items positively loaded onto each factor and matched conceptual expectations. A between-subjects MANOVA demonstrated significant group differences in observed child behaviors including compliance, noncompliance, subtypes of non-compliance, and aversive behavior. Results of the current study suggested that the parent version of the SCBE-30 demonstrated both internal consistency and construct validity, and findings paralleled many of the results from LaFreniere and Dumas' validation of the teacher version of the SCBE-30. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Psychometrics; Test validity; Behavioral assessment; Aggressive behavior; Anxiety

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1. Introduction

Accurately identifying children according to behavioral and emotional characteristics is essential from both a research and a clinical perspective. To investigate the predictors and the course of childhood disorder, it is often necessary to distinguish children based on behaviors or affective characteristics that may serve as risk or protective factors as well as to monitor changes in these characteristics over time. From a clinical perspective, correctly assessing patterns of behavior and emotional functioning is imperative in successful case conceptualization, treatment planning, and evaluation. While identifying behavioral and emotional problems in early childhood is often an essential component of both research and treatment, it is rare for mental health professionals to be able to observe a child's home behavior under a variety of conditions. Thus, an instrument providing a valid, reliable, and efficient parent report of child behavioral and emotional functioning is highly desirable.

The parent version of the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 for preschoolers (SCBE-30; LaFreniere, 1990) is an adaptation of the teacher version of the same measure (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996). Both measures are designed to have a three-factor structure used to assess patterns of anxiety and withdrawal, anger and aggression, and social competence in preschool children. In a validation study of the teacher version, LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) obtained a definitive three-factor structure in four samples of preschool children. Each factor was composed of 10 items that matched the conceptual factors of anxiety/withdrawal, anger/aggression, and social competence and had high inter-rater and test-retest reliability as well as high internal consistency. In the same study, the teacher version of the SCBE-30 was also shown to be highly correlated with a longer (80-item) teacher version of the SCBE for preschoolers that had convergent validity with the teacher version of the Child Behavior Checklist (Edelbrock & Achenbach, 1984) and was highly correlated with sociometric and observational measures (Dumas & LaFreniere, 1993; LaFreniere & Dumas, 1992, 1996; LaFreniere, Dumas, Capuano, & Dubeau, 1992).

The present study examined the factor structure, internal consistency, and construct validity of the parent version of the SCBE-30 for preschoolers. It is the first examination of the parent version of the SCBE (either the short form, the SCBE-30, or the 80-item SCBE). It has been well documented that parent and teacher versions of the same measure often have notably different factor structures (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1978).

Similar to the validation study of LaFreniere and Dumas (1996) on the teacher version, the current study used principal components analysis to identify the factor structure of the parent version of the SCBE-30. Additionally, in order to provide a robust assessment of the measure's construct validity, the current study utilized a compliance task to determine whether children identified using the parent version of the SBCE-30 as being high on anxiety/withdrawal, anger/aggression, or social competence could be distinguished based on a number of observed behaviors. The compliance task is a structured observational procedure (Davies, McMahon, Flesati, & Tiedemann, 1984) used to measure child compliance, noncompliance and aversive behavior.

Compliance and related behaviors were used as behavioral criteria because (a) refusal to comply is the most commonly reported child behavior problem; (b) it is an early marker for later conduct problems; and (c) increasing compliance can improve other problem behaviors (McMahon &

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