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Psychometric Properties of a Social Abilities Evaluation Scale: *C-scale*

Propiedades psicométricas de una escala de observación de la expresión motora de las habilidades sociales: *escala-c*

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Abstract

In this paper the psychometric data of a scale of evaluation of the social abilities (social expression and motor skills) are presented. The scale was constructed to investigate *social competence* and *antisocial conduct* in adolescence. The process of the scale's construction is explained; and the data on its internal consistency, its test-retest reliability, and its concurrent validity are presented. The scale was filled out by 325 teachers from different schools in the city of Badajoz (Spain); however, 20 scales were rejected because

they were not properly completed. As well, the scale was analyzed, giving as a result 9 factors that explain 59.4% of the total variance. With the results obtained, the position of *situational specificity* with regard to social abilities is supported.

Key words: Social competencies, psychometrics, behavior rating scales.

Resumen

En este artículo se presentan los datos psicométricos de una escala de evaluación de las habilidades sociales (expresión social y parte motora), construida por las autoras con la finalidad de investigar la *competencia social* y la *conducta antisocial* en la adolescencia. Se explica el proceso de construcción de la escala y se presentan los datos sobre su consistencia interna, su fiabilidad test-retest y su validez concurrente. La escala fue rellenada por 325 tutores de diferentes colegios de la ciudad de Badajoz (España), aunque una vez devuelta se rechazaron 20 por no estar bien cumplimentadas. Asimismo, la escala fue analizada, dando como resultado nueve factores que explican 59.4% de la varianza total. Con los resultados obtenidos se apoya la posición de *especificidad situacional* respecto a las habilidades sociales.

Palabras clave: Competencias interpersonales, psicometría, escalas de calificación conductual.

Introduction

The issue of the evaluation of social skills has always been very controversial; we could say that there are as many assessment tools as approaches to interpersonal behavior. Perhaps the greatest difficulty lies in the complex nature of interpersonal relationships and lack of agreement on:

- What constitutes a socially-skilled behavior;
- The types of conduct included the construct of social skills itself;
- A significant external criterion for validating the assessment procedures (Caballo, 1993).

Despite these drawbacks, the assessment of social skills is a condition necessary for research and intervention, both clinical and psychoeducational, in the field of social inadequacy, since it seems that most researchers defend the multidimensionality and the situational specificity of the construct.

Evaluation by others is a technique for collecting information on the behavior of a particular subject in the real environment, with the observer-evaluators as part of the subject's social context.

I. Construction of the scale

This C-scale of social abilities, behavioral type, was created to develop a study on *social competency and antisocial conduct* in adolescence. Echoing the recommendations of Galassi and Galassi (1979), there was made an inventory of specific social skills, composed of subscales (relevant to the population of interest), validated against specific behavioral criteria.

For producing this scale, the following sources were used:

- Scientific literature on the subject (through the principal psychology databases: PsycINFO, PsycDOC, E-PSYKE, CINDOC, Psycho-Search, TESEO and REDINET).
- Educational proposal for interpersonal relations through the new educational *curriculum* (Organic Law 1 / 1990).
- Analysis of socio-scholastic competency of elementary-school students in the province of Badajoz by means of *Memoirs of Teaching Practices* developed by the students of the Bajadoz School of Education during three years (1999-2003).

One of the sections on the *Memoirs of Teaching Practices* is the "Description of the student's behavioral characteristics". This section, as its name says, explains how each of the school's student teachers, after having observed of a group of students during their practice, describes in detail each one. This student teacher is a natural observer of the teacher/student and student/student interactions developed both in the classroom and on the playgrounds. Some student teachers use the technique of the sociogram to analyze the relational constellation inside the classroom and on the playground. Farther along there will be described the behaviors characteristic of each sociometric group. For example:

- Popular: chosen by "X" percentage of her* peers, cooperates with others, yields her material to others when they need it, and so on.
- Withdrawn: Not chosen by his peers to conduct classroom activities or to play in the yard; goes to the board voluntarily; when asked about some topic in class, lowers his head and stammers, etc.
- Aggressive: she is rejected by a very high percentage of peers, annoys them, is disrespectful to the teacher, does not respect the rules of the games, etc.

Other student teachers do not use the sociogram technique, and only describe the behavior of some children who are not adapted to the school context. They write, for example, "The child 'x' does not bring the material to class. He is often absent

* Translator's note: Before the feminist movement arose, in situations including both genders it was customary to use the masculine pronoun. Today, however, pronouns of both genders are used to avoid what is now seen as sexist language. To avoid the awkwardness of continually using "s/he", "his/her", we shall, in this paper, sometimes use the feminine pronoun, and sometimes the masculine.

without justification, interrupts others when they are speaking, bothers others when they are working...”

Once all the information was collected, all the behaviors from the sociograms and descriptions were written down, both those that facilitated interaction, and those that inhibited it. Later, those behaviors which were very similar were eliminated, as were those whose frequency of occurrence was minimal, and these modes of conduct were encoded in three broad categories.

- Aggression. In this category were included behaviors that were related to disruption, noncompliance with rules and regulations, physical and verbal aggression, challenging negativism, etc.
- Isolation. In this category were included those behaviors related to possible avoidance behavior and anxiety (biting fingernails while at the blackboard, wringing of hands while talking, hanging the head, etc.)
- Assertiveness. This category is made up of those behaviors facilitating social interaction (participation in games and teamwork), conversational skills (asking questions, asking permission to speak, speaking correctly in front of an audience, etc.), friendly relations (making friends, asking forgiveness, asking for favors, paying compliments, etc.)

Thus we arrived at the first version of the scale on the observable dimension of the child’s behavior in class; the scale consisted of 90 items.

In a second stage, bearing in mind a bibliographic review of the issues of social competence, social skills and the educational proposal of competency for interpersonal relationships through the new *educational curriculum*, we grouped our behaviors as they contained implicitly a verbal component, a non-verbal one, or a paralinguistic one.

Finally, guided by the contents that Monjas (1993) includes in his program of social skills aimed at children and young people, we made the C-scale presented in Annex I.

This scale includes, at the end, a section where teachers are asked to make a general assessment of the student she has been evaluating, according to the following criteria:

Based on an assessment of the social skills of the student (name of child), I would say that s/he:

___is adapted to the school context.

___has a tendency toward withdrawal.

___has a tendency to react impulsively and/or aggressively.

As can be observed, this type of scale falls within the category of *rating scales*, in which the tutor must rate certain behaviors of his students observed over time. It is a strategy of indirect evaluation. This type of scale has certain advantages, such as: the rapidity with which it can be answered, and which allows one to obtain data from very diverse situations in which the student manifests himself spontaneously. In spite of the advantage of its *ecological validity*, we are conscious of the limitation of an *informational bias* which supposes the evaluation of an observer, and because of this, each student was evaluated by two different teachers: the tutor and a teacher/specialist (in English, physical education, or music).

This instrument (C-scale) consists of five Likert scales with three response alternatives: 3 = Always, 2 = Sometimes, 1 = Never, each of which we believe to measure a dimension of *social competence*.

II. Psychometric analysis of the C-scale

Given the multidimensionality of the social skills and the independence of these dimensions between themselves, we believed it would be useful to have psychometric data regarding them. While an individual may be relatively skilled in one class of behaviors, he may have major problems in another. In these cases, data concerning each of these different dimensions would be most useful.

2.1. Procedure

Teachers filled out the scales for observation of students in November, when they had a more or less reliable knowledge of the group.¹ In the month of March they completed the scale again.

2.2. Results

The mean and standard deviation of the C-scale with N = 295 subjects were 74.37 and 17.31, respectively. Cronbach's α for internal consistency was 0.9484. The test-retest reliability (with an interval of four months between the first and the second time that the scale was done) for N = 70, was 0.90. Concurrent validity (with the *Peer Questionnaire* taken as a criterion) with N = 50 was 0.86.

We carried out the factor analysis of the scale with N = 295 subjects. We used SPSS for Windows, version 6.0, and used the varimax rotation of principal components with orthogonal dimensions.

In the first stage there were obtained nine factors, with an *eigenvalue* ≥ 1.0 that explained 59.4% of the total variance. Table I shows the analytic-factorial structure of the C-scale. It was considered that an item saturated significantly in a factor if its weight were at least \pm in that factor, which is substantially correct for purposes of interpretation (Stevens, 1986).

Table I. Factorial analysis of the *C-scale*

Factor nº	Variance explained by each factor	Nº ítems	Saturation	Commonality	Variance explained in accumulated percentage	Description of the item
F. 1.	34.1	43	0.5081	0.5768	34.1	When she has to speak to the teacher, the child does it serenely, and asks courteously for what she needs.
		44	0.6352	0.6786		When the teacher corrects him for whatever reason, the child adopts a respectful posture.
		46	0.4336	0.5879		The child, when speaking with the teacher, uses suitable gestures: she looks at the teacher when speaking, maintains an appropriate distance from the teacher, stands erect, has a natural expression on her face, nods her head, etc.
		11	0.4197	0.5674		The child during conversation gives others an opportunity to participate.
		34	0.4801	0.6111		The child, when facing an unjust accusation, knows how to defend himself in an appropriate manner, without verbal or nonverbal expressions that would indicate violence.
		35	0.4286	0.5287		In an argument, he tries to put himself in the place of others (empathizes).
		40	0.6986	0.6469		The child, when she fails at some activity (test, sport, etc.), is able to recognize it.
		41	0.7702	0.7249		When he does something wrong and is scolded for it, the child is able to recognize his responsibility.
		42	0.7259	0.6662		The child shows interest in correcting herself when shown that she is mistaken.
F.2	5.3	29	0.4828	0.5653	39.4	The child supports and encourages his classmates in times of difficulty.
		30	0.4736	0.5716		The child has reasonable arguments: she tries to persuade others that her ideas are better, and that they will be more useful.
		9	0.4728	0.4092		The child, when she wants to participate in a conversation, first listens to the topic being discussed, and then contributes suitable comments.

		10	0.6916	0.6815		During the conversation, her questions and answers are appropriate for the topic. She makes an effort to understand what is being said to her at the moment.
		12	0.4454	0.5355		The child values and takes into account the opinions of others.
		133	0.5651	0.5353		The child expresses questions precisely, coherently and correctly.
		15	0.4636	0.5717		The child makes an effort to understand what others are saying to him.
		16	0.4759	0.5956		If the child does not understand, once the conversation is over, or during some pause, he asks for additional information.
		18	0.4370	0.5186		The child looks at the face of the speaker with a receptive attitude, nodding his head and maintaining a correct physical closeness.
		19	0.5532	0.6151		The child speaks at a volume suited to the circumstances of the context.
		20	0.6792	0.5465		The child changes her intonation depending on what she wants to express at the moment.
		22	0.4760	0.5367		Her body language fits her oral expression.
F. 3	3.7	23	0.5365	0.4533	43.1	The child accepts what the majority agree upon.
		24	0.7043	0.6578		The child knows how to wait his turn without showing impatience.
		25	0.6407	0.6779		When a debate has been established, he respects the rules previously agreed upon.
		12	0.4298	0.5355		The child values and takes into account the opinions of others.
		21	0.5578	0.6585		The child knows how to be silent when the situation requires it.
F. 4	3.2	45	0.4770	0.6605	46.3	When the child feels treated unjustly by the teacher, she goes to the teacher and tries to resolve the conflict in an appropriate way, asking for an explanation and expressing the reasons she feels she has been treated unjustly.
		31	0.8026	0.6824		When someone is bothering him, the child expresses his desire for the other person to treat him differently.
		33	0.4045	0.6567		When his classmates try to involve him in something he does not agree with, he says, "No", and tells them why.

		36	0.6901	0.6477		The child discusses the rules and regulations that seem unjust to her.
F. 5	3.0	8	0.4648	0.6196	49.3	He does his schoolwork diligently.
		28	0.6741	0.5591		The child accepts responsibility for what he is given to do.
		16	0.4759	0.5956		If the child does not understand, once the conversation is over, or during some pause, he asks for additional information.
		17	0.4384	0.6851		When the child wishes to end a conversation, she expresses her desire to end it with expressions that indicate this: "I will end this conversation by saying..." "I'm sorry, but I have to go. We can talk again later."
F. 6	2.8	3	0.4354	0.6493	52.0	He uses good manners: greeting upon entering, saying goodbye, etc.
		33	0.5182	0.6567		When his classmates try to involve him in something he does not agree with, he says, "No", and tells them why.
		38	0.6333	0.6272		The child stays out of situations that can get her into trouble.
		39	0.6273	0.5685		In occasions when he seems to be involved unjustly in conflicts with classmates, he indicates the steps he is going to follow in order to solve the problem (and he follows through), without having to resort to threats.
F. 7	2.6	2	0.6934	0.5569	57.2	She comes to class on time.
		7	0.6489	0.5474		When he is working alone, he remains quiet, silent, without bothering his classmates.
F. 8	2.5	3	0.4354	0.6493	57.2	He uses good manners: greeting upon entering, saying goodbye, etc.
		8	0.4648	0.6196		He does his schoolwork diligently.
		14	0.4493	0.6021		The child pays attention to the person speaking to her.
F. 9	2.2	7	0.6489	0.5474	59.4	When he is working alone, he remains quiet, silent, without bothering his classmates.
		17	0.4384	0.6851		When the child wishes to end a conversation, she expresses her desire to end it with expressions that indicate this: "I will end this conversation by saying..." "I'm sorry, but I have to go. We can talk again later."

The nine factors obtained in the factor analysis of the C-scale approach the five dimensions the C-scale hypothetically evaluated. The factor *Self-control* explains 34.1% of the variance, and is centered on the expression of feelings and opinions in interpersonal conflictive situations. Factor II is *conversational skills*, and explains 5.3% of the variance. Factor III, *Skills of cooperation and assistance* during teamwork explains 3.7%. Factor IV, *Defending one's rights* is an expression of discomfort and displeasure, and explains 3.2%. Factors V, VI, IX have been annulled on the grounds that their items saturated in more than one factor. With regard to factors VII and VIII, we have considered it advisable to regroup them, because they are both related with *basic skills* for socio-scholastic interaction. The items to which we refer below did not participate in any empirical factor, and did participate in the rational factors. We therefore decided to leave them included in the factor called *basic skills for socio-scholastic interaction*:

- 21. He presents himself as a nice guy with an easy smile.
- 34. The child respects the center's facilities.
- 29. When she has to ask for something, she says "please", and then says, "Thank you".

The definitive C-scale consists of five factors, which are:

- Factor I. *Self-control* skills (expression of feelings and opinions in conflictive interpersonal situations).
- Factor II: *Conversational* skills.
- Factor III: *Skills of cooperation and help during work*.
- Factor IV: Skills related to the *defense of personal rights*.
- Factor V: *Basic skills* for socio-scholastic interaction.

Then we obtained the mean and standard deviation for each of the factors (see Table II).

Table II. Means and typical deviations of the C-scale

Name of the factor	Median	Typical deviation
Self-control skills ^[C-scale]	24.96	5.46
Conversations skills ^[C-scale]	31.81	6.34
Skills of cooperation and help ^[C-scale]	17.70	3.84
Skills of defense of personal rights ^[C-scale]	9.56	2.26
Basic skills ^[C-scale]	19.95	3.32

Finally, to determine and analyze the possible differences between *adaptive*, *aggressive* and *withdrawn* groups (according to the teacher's overall assessment) on the implementation of each of the dimensions of the social skills of a behavioral nature, we obtained a series of ANOVAS, where the independent variable was always the teacher's assessment on three levels: adaptive, withdrawn, aggressive;

and the dependent variable was the mean obtained in each dimension of social skills.

The hypothesis from which we began was as follows:

There are statistically-significant differences between the three groups: adaptive, withdrawn, aggressive, in all dimensions of social skills, the adaptive group being that which obtained the highest scores, and the aggressive group, the lowest.

Table III reflects a summary of the various analyses of variance of a single factor, which we have done for that effect.

Table III. Means pertaining to the dimensions of the social skills for the groups *adaptive*, *withdrawn* and *aggressive*

Dimensions of the social skills	F	N.S.F.	Adaptive	Withdrawn	Aggressive
Self-control ^[C-scale]	16.16	0.0000	26.26	26.53	19.95
Conversational ^[C-scale]	32.18	0.0000	34.20	30.53	24.62
Cooper. and help ^[C-scale]	39.27	0.0000 7	19.16	16.84	13.04
Defense of personal rights ^[C-scale]	31.59	0.0000	10.38	9.38	7.12
Basic ^[C-scale]	47.33	0.0000	21.25	18.50	16.24

From observations of the coefficients and their statistical significance in Table IV, we deduced that the hypothesis is fully confirmed, as there are significant statistical differences among the three groups of overall assessment by the teacher: adaptive, withdrawn, and aggressive, in all dimensions of social skills, with a level of significance by $p < 0.0000^{***}$ for all the dimensions. Our hypothesis is therefore fully confirmed.

We next present the analysis of the group-to-group comparison, for which we have used the LSD Bonferroni modified multiple range test with a significance level of 0.05 and a critical range of 3.40.

Table IV. Group-to-group contrasts for all the dimensions of social skills

Contrasts (teacher's evaluation)			
	Adaptive/Withdrawn	Adaptive/Aggressive	Withdrawn/Aggressive
<i>Self-control</i> ^[C-scale]	_____	*	*
<i>Conversational</i> ^[C-scale]	*	*	*
<i>Cooper. and help</i> ^[C-scale]	*	*	*
<i>Defense personal rights</i> ^[C-scale]	*	*	*
<i>Basic</i> ^[C-scale]	*	*	*

(*) Indicates significant difference between the two groups

(__) Indicates that there are no differences between the two groups

A close look at Table IV shows that there are significant differences when contrasting all groups and dimensions, except the comparison between the adaptive group and the withdrawn group in the *self-control* dimension; these have proved non-significant.

III. Conclusions

Psychometric data obtained in this study on the C-scale provide suitable reliability and validity for the use of the scale, both at a research and a psychopedagogical level.

The results of this work also support the concept of the multidimensionality of the construct of social skills. Many of the dimensions we found here have also been obtained in other studies, other social skills inventories and with other populations (e.g., Monjas, 1995; Caballo and Buela, 1988; Caballo, 1993).

We can say that there is a whole set of dimensions that appear as clear components of the construct of social skills and behaviors that are important in our social life, especially in the child/youth population in the school context. The initiation of relationships, expression of feelings, defense of personal rights and confrontation with authority, are some examples.

However, this C-scale fails to explain 30% of the variance. Something similar happens in the factor analysis in other scales such as Caballo's EMES-M (1993).

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Annex 1. C-scale, Social behavioral skills

Directions: On the back of this page is a list of skills that are suggested in the *curriculum*; they are competencies necessary for the socio-scholastic interaction of the adolescent, and can be a matter for observation and assessment through the daily pedagogical experience.

What we are asking, by means of filling out this scale, is that you evaluate the use of the skill, based on the observation of conduct in each situation.

1. Means that it *never* happens.
2. Means that it *sometimes* happens.
3. Means that it *always* happens.

	Never	Some-times	Always
1-43. When the child has to speak to the teacher, he does it serenely, and asks courteously for what he needs {4}	1	2	3
2-44. When the teacher corrects him for whatever reason, the child adopts a respectful posture. {4}	1	2	3
3-45. When the child feels treated unjustly by the teacher, she goes to the teacher and tries to resolve the conflict in an appropriate way, asking for an explanation and expressing the reasons she feels she has been treated unjustly. {4}	1	2	3
4-46. The child, when speaking with a superior, uses suitable gestures: erect posture, a natural expression on her face, nods her head, etc. {4}	1	2	3
5-11. During a conversation the child gives others an opportunity to participate. {2}	1	2	3
6-34. The child, when facing an unjust accusation, knows how to defend himself in an appropriate manner. {1}	1	2	3
7-35. In an argument or problem, he tries to put himself in the place of others (empathizes). {1}	1	2	3
8-40. The child, when she fails at some activity (test, sport, etc.), is able to recognize it. {1}	1	2	3
9-41. When the child does something wrong and is asked for an explanation, he is able to recognize his responsibility. {1}	1	2	3
10-42. The child shows interest in correcting herself when shown that she is mistaken. {1}	1	2	3
11-9. The child, when she wants to participate in a conversation, first listens to the topic being discussed, and then contributes suitable comments. {2}	1	2	3
12-10. During the conversation, her questions and answers are appropriate for the topic. {2}	1	2	3
13-23. The child accepts what the majority agree upon. {3}	1	2	3
14-9. The child supports and encourages his classmates in times of difficulty. {3}	1	2	3
15-31. When someone is bothering him, the child expresses his desire for the other person to treat him differently. {1}	1	2	3

16-17. When the child wishes to end a conversation, she expresses her desire to end it with expressions that indicate this: "I will end this conversation by saying..." "I'm sorry, but I have to go. We can talk again later." {2}	1	2	3
17-22. Her body language fits her oral expression. {2}	1	2	3
18-12. The child values and takes into account the opinions of others. {2}	1	2	3
19-32. The child, in giving a complaint, uses a clear message, whose verbal content refers to the conduct she dislikes, and does not put the person down; (for example, "You pushed me, and next time I want you to ask me to move instead of pushing me," rather than saying, "You're a bully!") {1}	1	2	3
20-19. The child speaks at a voice level suited to the circumstances of the context. {2}	1	2	3
21-1. He presents himself as nice, with an easy smile. {5}	1	2	3
22-2. She comes to class on time. {5}	1	2	3
23-13. The child expresses questions precisely, coherently and correctly. {2}	1	2	3
24-33. When his classmates try to involve him in something he does not agree with, he says, "No", and tells them why. {1}	1	2	3
25-36. The child discusses the rules and regulations that seem unjust to her. {1}	1	2	3
26-37. When the child bothers somebody, he apologizes, and says he won't do it again. {1}	1	2	3
27-38. The child stays out of situations that can get her into trouble. {1}	1	2	3
28-3. He has good manners: greeting upon entering, saying goodbye, etc. {5}	1	2	3
29-4. When he has to ask for something, he says "please", and "thank you". {5}	1	2	3
30-14. The child pays attention to the person speaking to her. {2}	1	2	3
31-15. The child makes an effort to understand what is being said to her {2}	1	2	3
32-28. The child accepts responsibility for what he is given to do. {3}	1	2	3
33-20. The child changes the intonation according to what she wants to express at the moment. {2}	1	2	3
34-5. The child respects the center's facilities, as well as his classmates' belongings. {5}	1	2	3
35-7. When he is working alone, he remains quiet, silent, without bothering his classmates. {5}	1	2	3
36-18. The child looks at the face of the speaker with a receptive attitude, nodding his head and maintaining a correct physical distance. {2}	1	2	3
37-16. If the child does not understand, once the conversation is over, or during some pause, he asks for additional information. {2}	1	2	3
38-8. He does his schoolwork diligently. {5}	1	2	3
39-26. The child collaborates with interest when asked to do so. {3}	1	2	3
40-21. The child knows how to be silent when the situation requires it. {2}	1	2	3
41-24. The child knows how to wait his turn without showing impatience. {3}	1	2	3
42-6. The child gets along well with classmates of the other sex. {5}	1	2	3
43-39. On occasions when he seems to be involved unjustly in conflicts with classmates, he indicates the steps he is going to take in order to solve the problem (and he follows through), without having to resort to threats. {1}	1	2	3
44-30. The child has reasonable arguments: she tries to persuade others that her ideas are better, and that they will be more useful. {2}	1	2	3
45-25. When a debate has been established, he respects the rules previously agreed upon. {3}	1	2	3
46-27. When there is a disagreement in the group, the child tries to bring about a consensus by means of dialogue and negotiation. {3}	1	2	3

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¹ In Spain the school year runs from September to June.