Original Research

Validation of a Social Emotional School Readiness Scale in Iranian Children

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Ahmad Sadeghi*

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to provide evidence of the construct and concurrent validity of the Social-Emotional School Readiness Scale (SESRS) among Iranian preschool children. Using a sample of 193 parents of Iranian kindergarten children, evidence for the SESRS's construct validity was provided using confirmatory factor analysis, with four factors confirmed. Evidence for the SESRS's concurrent validity was also presented by analyzing the relationship between subscales of the social-emotional school readiness scale and home to school transition scale. Factor analysis indicated that self-awareness, self-regulation, social relationships, coping skills subscales items loaded on their respective factors, and internal reliability coefficients at all levels were satisfactory to good. Support for validity was shown by associations in the expected direction of home to school transition. This inventory shows promise as a measure of social-emotional school readiness in students from Iran.
Keywords:School readiness, Social-emotional competence, Children.

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Introduction

Transition is a movement from one condition to another. A person (child or adult) experiences several transitions every day by moving from one domain of life to another, such as the transitions from home to school and from home to work, movement between institutions such as the transition from pre-school to school. Main transitions (e.g., from home to school, from school to work) are often defining moments that can cause changes to the person's role and behaviors (Morris, Millenky, Raver, & Jones, 2013; Stormont, Thompson, Herman, & Reinke, 2017).

Also, the process of adaptation to change is called transition. Going to school for the first time as a transition is one of the most important life events for children, teachers and families. This transition is "one of the major challenges children have to face in their early childhood years". (Denham, Bassett, Zinsser, & Wyatt, 2014; Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, & Gill, 2013).

Beginning school in a positive way, and has a lot of positive outcomes for children (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Transition to school at a time of major threats can cause problems for children's mental health (Nix et al., 2013). Within this transition, children have to improve their new social and behavioural abilities with experiencing academic challenges (Bustin, 2007; Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999).

Accordingly, the first grade of school is different from preschool days since it is longer, has classroom rules, fewer game breaks, longer times of inactivity and listening (Blair & Raver, 2015; Ling & Barnett, 2013). There is a new emphasis on punctuality, obligatory attendance, shorter play and rest times, homework, and seating for long periods (Levine & Ducharme, 2013; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). These new demands on social-emotional capabilities cause another tension on the child (Bustin, 2007; Denham, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman

*University of Isfahan, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Department of Counseling, ORCID: 0000-0001-5302-9774,
Email: a.sadeghi@edu.ui.ac.ir , Phone number: 00989131254379, 00983137932512

& Pianta, 2000). Such challenges show that the transition to elementary school is a significant developmental milestone (D. E. Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015; Muñiz, Silver, & Stein, 2014; Perry & Weinstein, 1998). However, this transition can be a kind of opportunity as this can also present as periods of vulnerability. Alternatively, if the risk elements are identified, the sooner the intervention will be possible (McLeod et al., 2017). While most researchers concur that the capabilities a child possesses at the time of school entry are important for school success, this definition is predicated upon different paradigms (Dockett & Perry, 2009; Snow, 2006). To become ready for school entrance, children should gain some characteristics and skills to be able to learn effectively in school (McLeod et al., 2017). Janus and Offord (2000) categorized the most important developmental domains and sub-domains thus:

1. Physical health and well-being, which includes physical readiness for the school day and independence.
2. Social capability, which consists of general social competence, responsibility and respect and readiness to realize new things.
3. Emotional maturity, which includes pro-social and helping behavior, anxious and fearful behavior, aggressive behavior, and hyperactivity and inattention.
4. Language and cognitive development, which includes basic literacy, interest in literacy/numeracy and memory, advanced literacy, and basic numeracy.
5. Communication skills and general knowledge.

Social-emotional competence and maturity is the awareness and perception of emotions, the ability to access and generate emotions that assist in the understanding of relationships and emotional meanings, and the reflective regulation of emotions to promote better emotion, social relationships and thought (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). These abilities can be summarised as emotional knowledge (including awareness and perception of own and other emotions, understanding emotional expression and vocabulary), the use of pro-social behaviors in adaptation relationships (as in self-efficacy, self-regulation, social problem solving, conflict resolution)and empathy as in social awareness and relationships (Bustin, 2007; Denham, 2006; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, & Davidson, 2015; Stormont et al., 2017). The concept of school readiness has been discussed for more than a century (Lidz, 2002) and have received considerable attention in many countries, such as: Australia (Dockett & Perry, 2007, 2009; Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews, & Kienhuis, 2010; Petriwskyj, Thorpe, & Tayler, 2005) and Canada (Janus, 2007; Janus & Offord, 2000). Several assessment instruments have been developed to measure the construct of school readiness, including the early development instrument (Janus, 2007), early development instrument (Curtin, Browne, Staines, &Perry, 2016), the social-emotional classroom behavior and school readiness (Fantuzzo, Bulotsky-Shearer, McDermott, & McWayne, 2007).
One of the complete scales for measuring school readiness is social-emotional school readiness scale (Bustin, 2007). This scale, which was developed in South Africa, incorporates four subscales (self-regulation, self-awareness, social relationships and coping). This concept is a relative term that is socially and culturally constructed, and perceptions of it differ from community to community (Grace & Brandt, 2005; Margetts, 2002,2007). The only assessment instruments created in Iran, have been developed to measure the construct of school readiness, including home to school transition inventory (Sadeghi, Motamedi, & Vkilizadeh, 2016) which contains subscales(anxiety and incompatibility).
Purpose of the Current Study: To date, no appropriate measure of social-emotional school readiness has been devised for Iranian children. Iranian preschool and primary students need to assess their early development because they have to determine the social and emotional readiness before entering into school as the first and serious life transition. However, in Iranian primary school, no school counsellor addresses the issues of physical health and well-being, social capability, emotional maturity or communication skills. The only skill that will work with students in preschool is language and cognitive development which includes basic literacy, memory and basic numeracy. There is no considerable measure of "school readiness" that has been developed for Iranian pre-school students. Due to these limitations, it seems to be necessary to provide a valid measure for Iranian pre and primary school students. Thus, the current study aimed to extend the application of the 26-item BUSSER with an Iranian sample. Therefore, the current study attempts to conceptualize and assess this concept in Iranian society.

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Material and Methods

Measures: Social-emotional school readiness (SESR): The SESR (Bustin, 2007)was used to measure social-emotional school readiness. The 28-item scale consists of four subscales: self-awareness (7 items; e.g., "ability to wait his/her turn to speak in a group"), self-regulation (7 items; e.g., "Is able to tell others what he/she wants to do"), social relationships (7 items; e.g., "Is happy when he/she says goodbye and comes to school"), coping skills (7 items; e.g., "Is able to play on his/her own without adults").

The parents responded to the items using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from; "Has mastered very few of the skills", "Has mastered some of the skills", "Satisfactory mastery of skills" and "Excellent mastery of skills". Bustin (2007) assessed construct validity using factor analysis; Testing the scale's association with grade one performance and adjustment measures and; Reported satisfactory internal reliability coefficients for all subscales (self-regulation, .872; self-awareness, .878; social relationships, .778; coping, .671 and total .889).

Home to school transition Inventory: Home to school transition inventory (Sadeghi et al., 2016) was used to measure the transition from home to school. This inventory was built according to Denham (2006) who believes that the transition from home to school is successful when the child loves and engages in school attendance, having interest in learning academic skills and preparing for separation from their parents as well as participate in a learning environment with other children. The 12-item scale consists of two subscales: anxiety (5 items; e.g., 'the first few days I went to school with worries'') and incompatibility (7 items; e.g., ''earlier this year, I did not participate in class activities''). The parents responded to the items using a 4-point Likert-like format (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree).

Sadeghi et al. (2016) assessed construct validity using factor analysis and testing the scale's association (negative) with emotional intelligence questionnaire (Schutte et al., 1998) reported satisfactory internal reliability coefficients for two subscales (anxiety, .89; incompatibility, .83 and total.84).

Procedures: Participants were recruited using cluster sampling, where the researchers randomly chose four preschools from one randomly chosen district of five in Isfahan. Data were collected in individual formats. This means that mothers in the selected kindergarten and primary school were invited to participate. They filled out the questionnaires individually in their home. To follow the guidelines of the ethical committee, The principal bioethical aspects were settled by ensuring voluntary and informed participation and the confidentiality of the data and information of the study participants. Anyway, all the participants received a Store gift card valued at 400000 rials (US$ 10.00 dollars) as a reward. Participants were assured by delivering analysis only for the complete samples, never for individual cases and all their information would remain confidential and informed that they could learn more about their child from their school's health teachers one month after administration time. Researchers included contact information to give a response to any possible discomfort or doubts associated with the study.

Translation Process: The standard translation and back-translation methodology (P. S. Jones, Lee, Phillips, Zhang, & Jaceldo, 2001) were used to convert the "Social Emotional School Readiness Scale" into Persian. It was translated from English into Persian and confirmed by a bilingual expert in career development. Thereafter, the Persian form was back-translated into English by a bilingual and sent to a native English language speaker and confirmed the back-translation.

Hair, Blak, Babin, & Anderson (2009), by analyzing the discussion of the sample size in structural equation models, have proposed the following for the minimum sample size in different situations: Minimum sample size of 100 units for models that consist of 5 or fewer structures, and each construct is measured with more than 3 reagents and the rate of subscription for each reagent is also 0.6 and higher. A minimum sample size of 150 for models with 7 structures or less and moderate share (about 0.5) without structures Subcategory (Structures with 1 or 2 Reagents). The minimum sample size 300 for models with 7 structures or less; low participation rates in operating models (less than 0.54 and low profile structures). According to that, Participants included 193 parents of children aged 5 to 6 years old with a mean age of 5.56 years (SD=1.25) in kindergarten and pre-schools in Isfahan, the third-largest city in Iran after Tehran and Mashhad, with a population of 1.5 million people. Participants volunteered to complete the BUSESR. The sample was composed of 83.3% and 16.7% Iranian mothers and fathers, respectively. For the educational background, 55.2% of them received a bachelor degree, 26.6% master degree, 6% the doctoral degree, 17.6% with high school diploma,

and the left below high school training.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and internal reliability coefficients were generated for the four subscales and total scale for the Iranian sample. These are presented in table 1, along with comparable data reported by Bustin (2007), the internal reliability coefficients for the Iranian sample ranged from 0.68 to 0.76 for the subscales, and 0.88 for total scale thus suggesting satisfactory internal reliability comparable with that reported by Bustin (2007).

Table 1. Internal Reliability Coefficients for the SESR

Subscales	Present study	Bustin(2007)
	Parents of kids (Years 5–6) N = 193	Parents of kids (Grade R) N = 2173
	A	α
Self-Awareness	.70	.87
Self-Regulation	.74	.87
Social Relationships	.76	.77
Coping Skills	.68	.67
Total	.88	.88

Table 2 presents the final items for each scale and their internal consistency reliabilities. These results suggest that all of the items conformed to normality assumptions associated with correlation-based statistics. The internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's α) for the scales except for the coping skills scale, the range of the reliability estimates suggest that all of the measures fall within the acceptable to excellent range.

Validity: Construct validity of the Farsi form of SESR was investigated in two ways. First, the factor structure of the SESR form was tested using factor analysis; and second, the relationship between the SESR and other homes to school transition scale was assessed. To test if the factor structure of the Farsi form of SESR was consistent with the original SESR structure, we examined individual items loaded on their respective subscales.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 3 shows the results of the CFA for M1 to M2 models. These results largely confirm the configurable invariance of the measurement model. Model M1 needs some correction. Modification indices were examined for the residual invariance model, and error terms with problematic modification indices were freed in an attempt to achieve partial residual invariance. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that data for the Farsi form of SESR fit the theoretical model. The fit indices were RMSEA=.047 and SRMR=.028, which conform to established joint fit criteria (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). The standardized loadings for the final model are in Table 2. All of the loadings are statistically significant at α=.001. The standardized loadings (Table 2) suggest that all the items are strong indicators of the second-order constructs.

Table 4 shows the results from the associations tested between the four subscales of SESR (self-awareness, self-regulation, social relationships, coping skills), and the total showed significant correlation (r = .75 to .86, p< .001), as were the HSTQ subscales (anxiety incompatibility; r = -.632 & -.634, p< .001). There was no correlation between self-regulation and incompatibility (r =-.130, p< .001); with anxiety (r=-.243, p< .001), positive, albeit weak correlated. These findings supported the construct validity of the Farsi form of SESR.

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Table 2. The Farsi form of SE-SR: Items, Standardized Loadings for the Final Model and Internal Consistency Reliabilities

Construct	Item (First-order indicators	Loading[a]	α	Min α	Max α
Self Awareness	4. Is able to tell others what he/she wants to do	.39	.70	.60	.70
	22. Helps others when he/she sees they need it	.60			
	23. Express affection physically with hugs, kisses, strokes or words	.59			
	38. Enjoys it when others show him/her affection	.27			
	40. Is proud of what he/she does [Lego, drawing]	.39			
	42. Comforts others when they are hurt or upset	.56			
	45. Shows us what he/she can do [drawings and physical activities]	.58			
self Regulation	15. Is able to wait his/her turn to speak in a group	.37	.74	.67	.72
	17. Is able to listen to others without interrupting	.53			
	21. Is able to control his/her excitement so that he/she does not disrupt others	.51			
	25. Asks permission to play with a toy when it is being used by another	.59			
	31. Is able to stop him/herself from becoming involved when other children do something they are not allowed to do	.46			
	33. Complies with the rules of the school	.54			
	36. Listens when I talk	.65			
Social Relationships	1. Is happy when he/she says goodbye and comes to school	.53	.76	.70	.75
	12. Is well accepted by his/her peers	.46			
	26. Is able to maintain friendship over time	.71			
	27. Is able to adjust to changes in our daily routine	.49			
	30. Is able to get over being hurt quite quickly if he/she is not seriously hurt	.45			
	35. Comes to school willingly	.55			
	47. Can approach his/her friends when he/she wants to play with them	.67			
Coping Skills	5. Is able to play on his/her own without adults	.23	.68	.60	.65
	9. Is able to feed him/herself at mealtimes	.50			
	14. Is able to go to the toilet alone	.53			
	19. Is able to dress him/herself	.48			
	28. Takes care of his/her own belongings, like toys or clothes	.48			
	29. Is able to decide if I give him/her two things to choose from	.50			
	34. Can unpack his/her school bag without help	57			
Construct SESR	Self-Awareness	.86	.88	.87	.88
	Self-Regulation	1.00			
	Social Relationships	.77			
	Coping Skills	.82			

a:All of the loadings are statistically significant at α=.01

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Table 3. Goodnessof Fit Indexes

Model	χ2	sig	df	CFI	IFI	RMSEA	SRMR
M1	1.569	.000	290	.763	.775	.076	.039
M2	1.440	.000	286	.894	.889	.047	.028

Discussion

The present study provided support for using the Farsi form of SESR to assess social-emotional school readiness of students. Based on the results of the statistical analyses reported herein, we concluded that the Farsi form of SESR performed quite similarly to the SESR in terms of psychometric characteristics and factor structure. The psychometric analysis indicates that, with modifications, the Farsi form of SESR can be a reliable and valid tool for use in making assessments about social-emotional school readiness. Satisfactory to good internal reliability coefficients were obtained for all subscales (self-awareness, self-regulation, social relationships, and coping skills). These coefficients were comparable to those found by Bustin (2007) using a similar sample of South African students.

Construct validity for the test was supported using factor analysis, with individual items loading was largely expected (self-awareness, self-regulation, social relationships, coping skills loaded onto their respective factors except item 5 in coping skills and item 38 in self-awareness subscales). Despite adopting the two items (item 5: "ability to play on his/her own without adults" and item 38: "Enjoys it when others show him/her affection") to reflect Iranian cultural, educational customs and parent training style; therefore, this item did not load on its respective factor. inter-scale correlations were larger among social relationships, self-awareness and self-regulation. The three subscales; coping skills, self-awareness and social relationships were weakly correlated.

Validity was supported by testing correlations between the SESR and the home to school transition questionnaire. Social-emotional school readiness was negatively associated with anxiety and incompatibility. The total scale and four subscales each demonstrated excellent internal consistency estimates and a coherent multidimensional, hierarchical structure that fits the theoretical model and linguistic explication of the Social-emotional school readiness resources. These results should bolster confidence in the conclusion that the Farsi form of SESR and SESR function similarly. To further explore the nature of Social-emotional school readiness with individual clients, we believe that the four subscales are good vehicles for further discussion. In the process of discussion and exploration, we agree with Blair and Raver (2015), Dockett and Perry (2005) and Margetts (2007) assumptions that successful transitions to school are based substantially on social skills and are facilitated by responsive relationships.

Since the transition to school could be viewed as an individual's readiness to be involved in the process in children's lives (Denham, 2006), the impact of children's emotions and social relationships on later schooling and attainment, this is an important area to study and needs further examination. It can also be a criterion variable for testing the SESR's validity.

As far as the process of home to school transition, Denham (2006) believed that social-emotional school readiness could be divided into engaging for school attendance, interest in children for learning and prepare for the separation from parents and participate in a learning environment with other children. Social relationships, self-awareness, self-regulation and coping skills are active in nature. The lack of these four characteristics might be toward negative evasion. For children, the results of social-emotional school readiness, according to Denham (2006) include powerful influences on academic achievement. Influencers and consequences for social-emotional school readiness need to be further examined. Based on the results reported in the present study, the Farsi form of SESR appears ready for use by researchers and practitioners who wish to measure social-emotional school readiness resources among children. Finally, the psychometric analysis indicates that, with modifications, the SESR can be a reliable and valid tool for use in making assessments about social-emotional school readiness.

According to Docket and Perry (2009), other factors that may contribute to school adjustment are school climate, classroom and teacher characteristics and management. Further research will examine the nature, extent and dynamics of these relationships in multiple contexts to improve early school outcomes. Qualitative analysis can be helpful to further know the nature of social-emotional school readiness. Given the increased

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attention on primary school early development intervention and the dearth of appropriate and psychometrically sound measures of school readiness in early development literature in general, and the lack of complete scales in the Farsi language, it is important to continue to explore the usefulness of this measure.

These findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. First, this study is the mono-method (i.e., all data were self-reported by the participants) approach to data collection. Second, caution should be exercised in generalizing these findings to other areas because the data were collected in one geographic area of Iran. Third, the size of our sample was relatively small, therefore, it is suggested that other studies with a larger samples check the psychometric properties of the questionnaire again.

Despite these limitations, this investigation contributes to an extensive effort to develop an instrument to assess social and emotional school readiness. Reliability and validity data are now emerging across studies, indicating that the measure holds up well to psychometric standards. The SESR is continuing to emerge as a promising theoretically-derived assessment tool with the potential to facilitate research on an important yet largely overlooked topic, namely early development.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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