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Psychometric Properties of Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory in Albanian Context

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Abstract

From early childhood onward, aggressive behavior and other forms of behavior difficulties have been shown to be stable phenomena. As a part of their normal development, preschool-age children are highly active, often moody, and hardhead. Moreover, typical preschoolers disobey to their parents 'commands. Though, problem behavior occurs frequently and is expected as part of typical development for young children, it is an area of concern.

Developmental researchers and psychologists have been continuously interested in assessing and screening children's problem behaviors, since such behaviors have been associated with negative long-term outcomes. Behavior rating scales are the most commonly used method of assessing and the number of child behavior rating scales has increased dramatically in recent years (Kamphaus et al., 2000).

The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) is the scale analyzed in the current study. ECBI is a parent rating scale widely used to assess disruptive behaviors in children and adolescents. The purpose of this study is to assess psychometric properties of the Albanian version of the ECBI. The Albanian version of the ECBI was administered to parents of 251 children between the ages 3 and 6 in three different kindergarten in Tirana. Results indicated that the Albanian version of ECBI is psychometrically sound.

Keywords: Problem Behavior, Intensity Scale, Problem Scale, Preschooler.

Introduction

Preschool age is usually characterized by aggression, defiance, activeness, non-compliance and other difficult behaviors. Moreover, preschool children tend to disobey toward their parents' commands. It is developmentally typical for the young children to display a large number of negative behaviors such as noncompliance and temper tantrums in response to not having things their way, since they are in search for independence and autonomy especially in their home setting (Campbell, 1995). Though problem behavior is an area of concern, even it occurs frequently and is expected as part of typical development for preschool children.

Developmental researchers and psychologists have been continuously interested in assessing and screening children's problem behaviors, since these behaviors have been associated with negative long-term outcomes.

More than 25 years ago, Robinson, Eyberg and Ross (1980) criticized the field of assessment in child and adolescent psychiatry for being far too eager to use assessment tools without first obtaining standardized norms for each instrument. Unfortunately, this critique has been valid throughout the 1990s as well (Bilenberg, 1999). Advances in child behavioral assessment has been seriously hampered by a failure to develop well standardized and widely used measures of child and family characteristics (Mash & Terdal, 1997).

In Albania there still exists such barriers, as very few instruments have been translated as an attempt of individual researchers or professionals leaving the diagnosing and research field practically empty in terms of standardized instruments, especially for children and adolescents.

But still, behavior rating scales are the most commonly used method of assessing and the number of child behavior rating scales has increased dramatically in the recent years (Kamphaus et al., 2000). The one analyzed in the current study is the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI). It is a widely used parent-report instrument used in screening preschooler problem behaviors as reported by parents. Parents are certainly an important source of information in the assessment of misbehaviors in children. They see the child in various situations. Parent reports of a child's behavior are most conveniently quantified by using rating scale measures. Though due to social acceptance could be somehow consciously or unconsciously manipulated.

The ECBI was originally standardized using a primarily European American sample, in Northwest U.S (Robinson et al., 1980). In 1999 a re-standardization of the ECBI was done where were included 19% African Americans, in Southeast U.S (Colvin et al., 1999). Investigators found high internal consistency among the 151 African American 2- to 16-year-olds in the study.

The original version of ECBI contains two scales: (a) a 7-point Intensity Scale measures the frequency of child disruptive behaviors, and (b) the dichotomous (yes-no) Problem Scale measures the number of child behaviors the parent finds problematic. In the current study, was used 5-Point Likert for the Intensity Scale. It was on researcher's judge and earlier experience to use the 5 point Likert scale, due to the difficulty of understanding the detailed level of assessment for the 36 items. Albanian parents are not used to report their parenting perception regarding their children through questionnaires, which is also reflected even in the difficulty of getting back the filled questionnaires.

Several studies have demonstrated a significant positive correlation between the ECBI Intensity and Problem Scores (Colvin et al., 1999). However, there are cases in which the intensity score and the problem score are discrepant. Discrepant scale score elevations on the ECBI have been assumed to reflect problematic parenting styles (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999). Discrepancy assumption holds that when, on the Intensity Scale, a parent reports that disruptive behaviors occur very often, but on the Problem Scale reports finding few of these behaviors problematic, the parent may be tolerant of misbehavior. Conversely, if the parent reports on the ECBI that disruptive behaviors occur infrequently but that a high number of the behaviors are a problem, parents seem to be intolerant. Parental tolerance has been characterized as the extent to which a parent is annoyed by child misbehavior (McMahon & Estes, 1997). Parental tolerance is a new construct

that has not been studied in-depth, but is believed to be an important variable that influences child misbehavior and how parents react to the misbehavior.

Traditionally, the ECBI has been considered to be one-dimensional measure of disruptive behaviors (Eyberg, 1992); however, more recently it has been viewed as a multidimensional measure of disruptive behaviors (Burns & Patterson, 1991, 2000).

Multiple studies have shown through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis that the ECBI has three meaningful factors and that this three-factor model provides significantly better fit than the original one-factor model (Burns & Patterson, 2000).

In the current study ECBI is considered as one dimensional measure. To the author's knowledge, in Albania, there are no properly standardized assessment instruments specifically aimed at identifying children with problem behaviors.

Methodology

The current study aims to examine the psychometric properties of ECBI for use with young Albanian children between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

A sample of 251 parents completed the ECBI Intensity and Problem Scales. 270 self-reported questionnaires were distributed to parents of preschool children in three kindergartens in Tirana city. Kindergarten educational staff handed questionnaires to the parents, at the time they came to pick up their children. Most parents returned the questionnaires after responding to all questions. 7 parents did not return the questionnaires and 12 questionnaires were excluded after data cleaning procedure.

The questionnaires were filled from parents where 76.5% were mothers of the children, 20.7% fathers and 2.8% of the sample reported to have filled both of them.

The gender of the children in the sample resulted to be quite balanced with 52% girls (N=131) and 48 % boys (N=120). While children's mean age is 4.7 years old (varying from 3 to 6 years old).

In the present study, children's behaviors are measured using Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999). ECBI was designed to be behaviorally specific instrument to assess the parental report of behavior problem of their children (Eyberg & Ross, 1978).

The instrument was translated in Albanian language and back translated in English by a team of experts in order to provide accuracy in items translation. The 36-item ECBI was given to 270 parents living in Tirana.

Data processing and other statistical analysis were done using SPSS 21. The original version, also used in this study, has no reversed items. But after the data cleaning procedure, only 251 questionnaires were considered to be analyzed in the current study. The questionnaires that had 10% of the items unanswered were excluded (N = 8). Also the data that had extreme values were deleted (N=4). All items in the inventory resulted to be suitable for the Albanian context. The total item correlation analysis showed no problems with the items of the both scales.

In this study, internal consistency of ECBI was excellent, indicating a deep understanding of the study participants for the items in this inventory. Therefor the original version of the items included in this instrument is used.

Results

Item Analysis

On average, the behaviors rated by the ECBI occur "sometimes" or "half of the time". Each item was endorsed as a problem by 11% to 61% of parents. The behavior most frequently endorsed as a problem was "*gets angry when doesn't get own way*", (61%) and the item least frequently endorsed as a problem was "*steals*" (11%). These two items respectively are endorsed as most and less frequent problematic behavior even in the Colvin, Eyberg, & Adams, (1999) study.

	Item	Mean	Std. deviation	% of the problem
1	Dawdles in getting dressed	0.42	0.494	41.8
2	Dawdles or lingers at mealtime	0.5	0.501	50.2
3	Has poor table manners	0.4	0.491	39.8
4	Refuses to eat food presented	0.54	0.499	54.2
5	Refuses to do chores when asked	0.34	0.474	33.9
6	Slow in getting ready for bed	0.22	0.417	22.3
7	Refuses to go to bed on time	0.41	0.493	41
8	Does not obey house rules on own	0.35	0.478	35
9	Refuses to obey until threatened with punishment	0.59	0.492	59.4
10	Acts defiant when told to do something	0.45	0.499	45.4
11	Argues with parents about rules	0.28	0.451	28.3
12	Gets angry when doesn't get own way	0.61	0.489	61
13	Has temper tantrums	0.45	0.498	44.6
14	Sasses adults	0.36	0.482	36.3
15	Whines	0.42	0.495	42.2
16	Cries easily	0.41	0.492	40.6
17	Yells or screams	0.51	0.501	50.6
18	Hits parents	0.24	0.427	23.9
19	Destroys toys and other projects	0.31	0.465	31.5
20	Is careless with toys and other objects	0.34	0.476	34.3
21	Steals	0.11	0.315	11.2
22	Lies	0.27	0.445	27.1
23	Teases or provokes other children	0.27	0.447	27.5
24	Verbally fights with friends own age	0.35	0.477	34.7
25	Verbally fights with sisters and brothers	0.48	0.501	47.8
26	Physically fights with friends own age	0.28	0.451	28.3
27	Physically fights with sisters and brothers	0.39	0.536	37.8
28	Constantly seeks attention	0.29	0.457	29.5
29	Interrupts	0.37	0.531	35
30	Is easily distracted	0.44	0.497	43.8

31	Has short attention span	0.41	0.492	40.6
32	Fails to finish tasks or projects	0.39	0.489	39
33	Has difficulty entertaining self alone	0.3	0.46	30.3
34	Has difficulty concentrating on one thing	0.31	0.464	31.1
35	Is overactive or restless	0.32	0.468	32.3
36	Wets the bed	0.23	0.422	23.1

The study results reveal that the majority of the parents report that their preschool children behavior is moderately problematic and they are moderately concerned about their child problem behavior.

Scale Analysis

The normative data, based on 251 Albanian boys and girls ages 3, 4, and 5 are reported in the table below. The mean score for the Intensity Scale was 89.4 (SD = 20.11), and scores ranged from 36 to 180. Analysis of skewness and kurtosis indicated normal Intensity Scale distribution (skewness = 0.545; kurtosis = 0.834). The mean score for the Problem Scale was 13.39 (SD = 7.63), ranging from 0 to 36. The Problem scale was slightly negatively skewed (skewness = 0.252; kurtosis = -0.424).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Score range	
			Min	Max
ECBI Intensity Scale	89.94	20.11	36	180
ECBI Problem Scale	13.39	7.625	0	36

Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory contains two scales: Intensity scale – measuring the frequency and intensity of problem behaviors such as stealing, crying, not completing their duties, etc., and Problem scale – measuring parents perception of the problem behavior as concerning or not. The Intensity Scale asks parents to rate the frequency each behavior (item) on a Likert-type scale of 1 "Never" to 5 "Always" on "How often does this occur with your child?" The Problem Scale asks parents to respond "Yes" or "No" to the question: "Is this a problem for you?" for each behavior.

Internal Consistency

The reliability for these scales was analyzed and results to have an excellent reliability in the Albanian context. The ECBI is used in different cultures and there are some slight differences, not statistically significant, compared to ECBI used in Albanian family context.

Corrected item-to-total correlations between the item intensity ratings and the Intensity Scale score ranged from 0.26 for "*Is overactive or restless*" and "*Slow in getting ready for bed*" to 0.522 for "*Refuses to obey until threatened with punishment*". Only two items had a correlation coefficient below 0.30.

	Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	Dawdles in getting dressed	57.02	54.931	0.34	0.882
2	Dawdles or lingers at mealtime	57.11	54.651	0.373	0.882
3	Has poor table manners	57.01	54.397	0.418	0.881
4	Refuses to eat food presented	57.15	55.053	0.319	0.883
5	Refuses to do chores when asked	56.94	55.203	0.318	0.883
6	Slow in getting ready for bed	56.83	55.866	0.261	0.884
7	Refuses to go to bed on time	57.02	54.352	0.422	0.881
8	Does not obey house rules on own	56.96	54.853	0.363	0.882
9	Refuses to obey until threatened with punishment	57.21	53.662	0.522	0.879
10	Acts defiant when told to do something	57.07	53.724	0.504	0.879
11	Argues with parents about rules	56.89	54.632	0.424	0.881
12	Gets angry when doesn't get own way	57.22	54.87	0.354	0.882
13	Has temper tantrums	57.06	54.527	0.392	0.881
14	Sasses adults	56.97	54.554	0.404	0.881
15	Whines	57.04	53.938	0.478	0.88
16	Cries easily	57.01	54.976	0.336	0.882
17	Yells or screams	57.12	53.82	0.489	0.879
18	Hits parents	56.85	54.419	0.483	0.88
19	Destroys toys and other projects	56.92	54.022	0.501	0.879
20	Is careless with toys and other objects	56.95	54.168	0.467	0.88
21	Steals	56.72	55.943	0.342	0.882
22	Lies	56.88	54.431	0.462	0.88
23	Teases or provokes other children	56.88	54.573	0.438	0.881

24	Verbally fights with friends own age	56.96	53.962	0.496	0.879
25	Verbally fights with sisters and brothers	57.09	54.497	0.394	0.881
26	Physically fights with friends own age	56.89	54.591	0.431	0.881
27	Physically fights with sisters and brothers	56.98	54.299	0.414	0.881
28	Constantly seeks attention	56.91	55.396	0.302	0.883
29	Interrupts	56.95	55.115	0.309	0.883
30	Is easily distracted	57.05	54.888	0.343	0.882
31	Has short attention span	57.01	54.538	0.397	0.881
32	Fails to finish tasks or projects	57	54.708	0.375	0.882
33	Has difficulty entertaining self alone	56.91	55.32	0.311	0.883
34	Has difficulty concentrating on one thing	56.92	54.767	0.389	0.881
35	Is overactive or restless	56.94	55.64	0.257	0.884
36	Wets the bed	56.84	55.388	0.332	0.882

Item-to-total correlations for the problem ratings ranged from 0.22 for "*Is overactive or restless*"
to 0.64 for "*Gets angry when doesn't get own way*". Three out of 36 items had a correlation
coefficient below 0.30.

	Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	Dawdles in getting dressed	86.95	385.513	0.371	0.916
2	Dawdles or lingers at mealtime	86.93	381.659	0.421	0.915
3	Has poor table manners	87.5	383.619	0.482	0.915
4	Refuses to eat food presented	87.06	388.524	0.326	0.917
5	Refuses to do chores when asked	87.27	386.12	0.391	0.916
6	Slow in getting ready for bed	87.64	382.223	0.41	0.916
7	Refuses to go to bed on time	87.04	376.818	0.519	0.914
8	Does not obey house rules on own	87.51	384.011	0.439	0.915
9	Refuses to obey until threatened with punishment	87.24	376.105	0.615	0.913
10	Acts defiant when told to do something	87.37	376.001	0.599	0.913
11	Argues with parents about rules	87.53	377.138	0.562	0.913
12	Gets angry when doesn't get own way	86.53	375.418	0.638	0.913
13	Has temper tantrums	87.49	380.499	0.486	0.915
14	Sasses adults	87.86	377.763	0.602	0.913
15	Whines	87.32	379.322	0.607	0.913
16	Cries easily	86.94	390.64	0.277	0.917
17	Yells or screams	87.41	375.828	0.606	0.913
18	Hits parents	88.47	384.066	0.579	0.914
19	Destroys toys and other projects	87.56	371.511	0.637	0.912
20	Is careless with toys and other objects	87.3	373.794	0.578	0.913
21	Steals	88.9	401.962	0.268	0.917
22	Lies	88.38	391.189	0.395	0.916
23	Teases or provokes other children	87.99	383.728	0.472	0.915
24	Verbally fights with friends own age	87.68	382.131	0.506	0.914
25	Verbally fights with sisters and brothers	87.22	384.494	0.39	0.916
26	Physically fights with friends own age	88.28	382.218	0.56	0.914
27	Physically fights with sisters and brothers	87.77	380.674	0.442	0.915
28	Constantly seeks attention	85.99	389.712	0.325	0.916
29	Interrupts	87.48	381.827	0.572	0.914
30	Is easily distracted	87.21	386.767	0.434	0.915

31	Has short attention span	87.21	386.021	0.39	0.916
32	Fails to finish tasks or projects	87.52	384.667	0.429	0.915
33	Has difficulty entertaining self alone	87.61	385.486	0.35	0.916
34	Has difficulty concentrating on one thing	87.73	380.272	0.517	0.914
35	Is overactive or restless	85.65	394.686	0.219	0.918
36	Wets the bed	88.5	391.515	0.375	0.916

For the entire sample, Cronbach's alpha was .91 for the Intensity Scale and.88 for the Problem Scale, indicating a deep understanding for the items in this inventory.

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Intensity Scale	.917	.918	36
Problem Scale	.884	.884	36

Comparison of Cronbach's Alpha with ECBI original version and other cross-cultural studies is shown in the table below. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha is quite comparable with other studies.

	Participants	N	ECBI Intensity	ECBI Problem
Colvin, Eyberg & Adams, 1999	Different ethnicity	798	0.95	0.93
Eyberg, Rich, & Behar, 2003	Different ethnicity	88	0.94	0.93
Ashley Michelle Butler, 2005	African American	154	0.94	0.94
Reedtz, 2010	Norwegians	7300	0.93	0.89

Internal consistency coefficients for demographic subgroups based on gender are presented in the table below.

Internal Consistency Coefficients for Intensity and Problem Scales by gender		
	Girls	**Boys**
ECBI Intensity Scale	.906	.924
ECBI Problem scale	.869	.893

Considering the reliability analyses, these results indicate that the ECBI is an internally consistent and homogeneous measure.

Correlations between Intensity Scale and Problem Scale were done to indicate the consistency in what parents consider to be problematic behaviors and their concern about these behaviors. Data analyses shows that there is a statistical positive significant correlation $r (249) = 0.65$, $p<0.01$. Parents that perceive their preschooler to have problematic behaviors, also find these behavior to be a matter of concern for them.

Correlations

		Intensity Scale	Problem Scale
Intensity Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.651[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	251	251
Problem Scale	Pearson Correlation	.651[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	251	251

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations between Intensity Scale and Problem Scale was also done, considering child gender. Data analyses show that there is no statistically significant differences, in the correlation between intensity of the problematic behavior and parents' concern about them, considering the gender of the child. In the case of girls, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was r (129) = 0.574, p<0.01. It seems to be a strong positive correlation, which means that when Albanian parents perceive that their girls display problematic behaviors they are concerned. It can be said that in this case, the intensity score and the problem score are not discrepant.

Correlations [a]

		Intensity Scale	Problem Scale
Intensity Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.574[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	131	131
Problem Scale	Pearson Correlation	.574[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	131	131

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
a. child gender = girl

In the case of the boys, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was r (118) = 0.6, p<0.01, which is a strong positive relation between the behaviors perceived as problematic by the parents and their concern about this behavior.

Correlations [a]

		Intensity Scale	Problem Scale
Intensity Scale	Pearson Correlation	1	.600[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
Problem Scale	Pearson Correlation	.600[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
a. child gender = boy

These correlations indicate that child gender do not affect the parents' perception on child's problem behavior and their concern. The more the boys and girls preform problematic behavior the more parents are concerned.

Discussion

The results indicated that the ECBI is a psychometrically sound measure of behavior problems in children between the ages of 3 and 6 years in Albanian family context.

Other statistical analyses also indicated that the ECBI has good internal consistency. Correlations between the ECBI Intensity and Problem scores indicate that the frequency of problem behavior in children and parents' endorsement of behaviors as problems are related dimensions. As McMahon and Estes (1997) have suggested that a low Intensity score in conjunction with a high Problem score may indicate that the parent is intolerant or personally distressed. A high Intensity score and a low Problem score might, on the other hand, occur when a parent has a high tolerance level or is reluctant to admit that the child's behavior is a problem.

The strong positive correlation between the Intensity Scale and Problem Scale indicates that Albanian parents do not display gender differences when it comes to their concerns about children's problematic behaviors.

Across the sample, the Intensity and Problem score were normally distributed. Taken together with the reasonably large standard deviations of each item, this indicates that the ECBI is sensitive to a broad range of behavioral differences.

Conclusions

Internal consistency of ECBI was excellent, indicating a deep understanding of the study participants for the items in this inventory.

The comparison of ECBI reliability in different cultural context indicates that the ECBI used in Albanian context is acceptable.

ECBI is an internally consistent and homogeneous measure (two items for Intensity Scale and three items for Problem Scale had a correlation coefficient below 0.30 for both scales).

The Intensity and Problem Scales were strongly correlated with each other, showing that in the current study intensity score and the problem score were not discrepant.

Recommendations for Future Research

To the author's knowledge, the issue of assessing preschool children behavior and rating it as a problem is not a much studied field in Albania.

There is a need for measurement methods standardization in Albanian context. This instrument tested in the current study, is a well-established measure of problem behavior in children and adolescents, used in different cultures. It is of great interest to standardize this inventory in the Albanian culture.

A replication of the exploration of ECBI could be done and also extending the research throughout the country. This would help extend an exploratory study in Albania to discover differences in cities and villages, socio-economic status and parents' education.

Research should be conducted also to see if there are any differences relating to parents' gender and child's gender in reporting problem behaviors and concerns.

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