

Early Childhood Measurement and Evaluation Tool Review

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Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)

Measurement Areas:

The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) is a **norm-referenced** assessment tool that focuses on social behaviour in **pre-school, elementary, and secondary students**. The SSRS focuses on the following measurement areas:

1. Social Skills
2. Problem Behaviours
3. Academic Competence (in the Teacher report form)

Purpose:

The SRSS is a behaviour and personality assessment tool that can be used to:

- identify students at-risk for poor academic performance;
- differentiate learning impaired, behaviour disordered, or intellectually impaired children from non-handicapped children;
- identify social behaviour strengths;
- inform school- or home-based behavioural interventions;
- compliment a comprehensive assessment with other measurement tools; and
- develop Individualized Educational Plans for students requiring social skills assistance.

Length and Structure:

The SRSS administration phase has separate questionnaire booklets for teachers, parents and the student, all based on the student's current educational level (i.e. pre-school, elementary, or secondary). Administration time for the SRSS depends upon the number of rating scales used, and the number of respondents selected for reporting. According to the manual a SRSS rating form typically can be completed in 15-25 minutes; respondents are required to have at minimum grade three reading level. Scoring generally takes approximately 5 minutes per questionnaire booklet. Each questionnaire contains 34 to 57 items that assess the individual's social behaviour. Each items uses a 3-point scale (i.e. 0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Very Often) to describe the individual's typical behaviour.

Raw scores from each form are transferred to subscale scores, and can be converted into scale scores, percentile scores, behaviour levels, standard scores, and percentiles.

Materials:

The SSRS is published under a “Level B” qualification, which requires the purchaser to: (a) possess a Master’s (or Doctorate) degree in psychology, education, or relevant field with training in assessment, or (b) demonstrate equivalent training through licensure from a recognized clinical or educational institution.

The SSRS is available from the publisher in kits according to age group at prices between CDN \$180 and \$210. The kits generally include 10 copies of the parent, teacher and student questionnaire booklets, 10 assessment-intervention records, and the manual. Larger kits that include more than one educational level (i.e. preschool + elementary) are available at an additional cost. Scoring software for both Mac and Windows is available from the publisher for CDN \$385.

Accessibility:

The SSRS checklists are available in the English language.

Administration, Scoring, and Interpretation:

The SSRS checklists can be completed by teachers, parents, and the examinee; according to the publisher no special qualifications are necessary other than a grade three reading proficiency. Paraprofessionals with appropriate supervision can score the checklists using the scoring instructions in the manual.

As with other “Level B” instruments, score interpretation must only be completed by professionals with formal graduate-level training or clinicians with training in psychological assessment. The test is easy to administer, moderately easy to score, and moderately difficult to interpret based on the clinician’s experience and interpretation guides in the manual.

Subscales:

The SSRS consists of three measurement areas: Social Skills, Problem Behaviours, and Academic Competence. The **Social Skills** scale has five subscales: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-Control. The sum of the subscales yield “Behaviour Levels” that indicate the descriptive frequency (based on cutoff scores) of a particular behaviour. The **Problem Behaviours** scale includes three subscales: Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems, and Hyperactivity. Similar to the previous measurement area, these can be translated into “Behaviour Levels” by summing the item scores. The **Academic Competence** measurement area is a single scale without subscales. All subscale scores can be summed to provide standard scores and percentile ranks based on the normative sample.

Documentation:

The manual included in the SSRS kit contains specific procedures for administration, scoring, and extensive sections on interpretation. The manual also has sections discussing the normative sample, standardization, validity, reliability, and a lengthy section discussing the development of intervention plans.

Normative Sample:

The SRSS tool was normed using an American sample of 4,170 children (self-rated), as well as a sample of 1,027 parents who rated their children, and a sample of 259 teachers who rated their students, all completed in 1988. According to the manual, the aforementioned samples consisted of students from a wide variety of educational classifications, including “learning-disabled”, “behaviourally-disordered”, and “mentally handicapped” children. Non-classified students accounted for approximately 82% of the samples. The majority of classified students were in the “learning-disabled” category (59%). In terms of race or ethnic representation, 27% of the samples consisted of “minority” students, compared to the U.S. population, which consists of 31% “minorities” according to 1988 statistics. Black, Hispanic, “Other,” and White are the indicated races in the manual. There is no entry for First Nations or Aboriginal groups. The manual contains more specific demographic information for these samples.

Reliability:

The SSRS manual discusses two kinds of reliability measures that were developed based on data from the aforementioned samples.

Internal Consistency: An analysis of internal consistency yielded average coefficient alpha reliabilities (across all forms and educational levels) of .90 for the Social Skills scale, .84 for the Problem Behaviours scale, and .95 for the Academic Competence scale. According to a study conducted by Diperna and Volpe (2005), the SSRS self-rating form demonstrated “adequate internal consistency” when it was validated using a sample of 185 students.

Test-retest Reliability: Respondents on the SSRS for the elementary-aged sample were given the test a second time 4 weeks after the initial administration. According to the manual, teacher scores correlated between .84 and .93 across all three scales, parent scores correlated at .65 on the Problem Behaviours scale and .80 on the Social Skills scale, and student self-rating scores correlated at .68 on the Social Skills scale. Test-retest reliability scores were not obtained for the preschool population.

Validity:

The SSRS manual includes an extensive section on test validity. According to the authors, the SSRS was developed using content that came from literature searches and item selection by clinicians, parents, and other education professionals.

Construct and Convergent Validity: Several score comparison studies were conducted using the SSRS and a variety of other tools. For the Teacher forms, the authors performed 3 validation studies. One study compared the SRSS Teacher form with the *Social Behavior Assessment (SBA)* tool using a sample of teachers who rated 79 elementary students. According to the authors, the correlations between the SSRS and SBA were “consistent with theoretical expectations,” generally in the .50s and .60s, suggesting that the two tools are “measuring similar constructs.”

The second study compared SSRS scores to the *Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form (CBCL-TRF)* using a sample of 99 elementary students. The results suggest that the SSRS Elementary Teacher Form and CBCL-TRF both measure similar aspects of “behavioural problems”.

The SSRS Teacher form was also compared to the *Harter Teacher Rating Scale* (TRS), yielding correlations in the .50s and .60s, suggesting a relatively moderate relation between the tools.

In addition, the authors compared the SSRS Elementary Parent form with the CBCL-Parent Report Form. While correlations between the SSRS Social Skills subscales and the CBCL subscales were weak (in the .20s and .30s), substantially stronger correlations were found between the SSRS Problem Behaviours subscales and the CBCL subscales (between the .40s and .70s).

The authors also compared the Student Self-Rating forms with two other tools: the CBCL-Youth Self-Report Form (YSR) and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers-Harris 2). Using a sample of 47 students, the comparison between the SSRS Student forms and the CBCL-YSR forms yielded low to moderate correlations (.20s and .40s) for several subscales between the tools. Using a sample of 79 students in the second study, the correlations between the SSRS Student forms and PHSCS were low to moderate for the Social Skills scale when compared to the Self-Concept scale, respectively.

Finally, according to the manual a study performed by Walker and McConnell (1988) showed “a correlation of .75 between the Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment and the tryout version of the SSRS Teacher form,” suggesting that the tools similarly measure aspects of social skills and educational competence.

Publication Information:

The Social Skills Rating System was developed by Frank M. Gresham and Stephen N. Elliott. This review is based on the edition published in 1990 by American Guidance Service.

Materials Used for Tool Review:

- Social Skills Rating System manual
- Academic studies

References:

Diperna, J.C., & Volpe, R.J. (2005). Self-report on the Social Skills Rating System: Analysis of reliability and validity for an elementary sample. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(4), 345-354.
Gresham, F.M., & Elliott, S.N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System manual*. Circle Pines, MN: AGS.

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