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Validation of the Persian Version of State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) in Employees

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A B S T R A C T

Self-esteem is a key component of personality, associated with self-assessments and the judgment of oneself in relation to others. Self-esteem can be viewed as global self-esteem, relating to the entire personality, or as partial self-esteem, which refers to various aspects of personality and performance. Nonetheless, limited tools are available for assessing state self-esteem. A key tool for evaluating state self-esteem is the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) in employees. The purpose of this study was to verify the Persian version of the scale in the context of Iranian culture. A total of 580 employees finished an online questionnaire. The State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's α= .84). Confirmatory factor analysis was utilized to assess the validity of the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20), where several loaded items surpassed .40 and the coefficients were significant. The relationships among the three factors of the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) were all significantly varied, ranging from r= .509 to r= .679 (p< .01). The Persian State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) is a trustworthy and valid tool for measuring state self-esteem in an Iranian population.

Introduction

Self-esteem is a key aspect of personality, tied to how one perceives and assesses oneself in relation to others. Self-esteem may be global self-esteem, relating to the entire personality, or partial self-esteem, focusing on the various facets of personality and performance (Stoyanova & Ivantchev, 2025). Doré (2017) defines the self-esteem as "an inner attitude at the base of the personality's construction that is responsible about that individual's psychic balance and the adaptive processes over the course of life". Self-esteem is an important psychological factor that affects health and quality of life. It has long been considered as a fundamental component of mental health and has attracted the attention of many researchers in recent years (Charmaraman et al., 2024). Self-esteem protects people from anxiety, improves coping skills, increases physical health, and makes people aware of their vulnerability (Vaghar Hasanpur et al., 2020). Self-esteem is an aspect of self-concept and the most decisive factor in the psychological development of individuals (Martín-Talavera et al., 2023). Self-esteem is also a judgment that an individual has about his or her own worth. In fact, it can be said that it is the degree and value that an individual attributes to himself or herself (Burger & Mortimer, 2024). With increased self-esteem, a person feels empowered and positive changes such as academic success, increased effort to achieve success, high self-confidence, ambition, and a desire to enjoy better health emerge (Chacón-López, & Maeso-Broncano, 2023). Low self-esteem serves as a contributing factor for depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Liu et al., 2019; Moksnes & Reidunsdatter, 2019; Soto-Sanz, 2019).

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Many scales have been developed to assess the level of self-esteem of individuals, and they are examined in this article. One of the most famous scales for assessing self-esteem was developed by Rosenberg (1979). The purpose of the 10-item RSE scale is to assess self-esteem. Initially, the measure was created to assess the self-esteem of high school students. Since its creation, the scale has been utilized with various populations, including adults, and norms have been established for many of these groups. The RSE shows a Guttman scale reproducibility coefficient of .92, reflecting excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability measured over a 2-week duration shows correlations of .85 and .88, suggesting exceptional stability. Hare (1975) developed a self-esteem scale to evaluate the self-esteem of school-aged children in three areas (peer, school, home), enabling a comprehensive assessment of self-esteem when the scores are totaled. These three domains represent the primary areas of engagement for a child where self-esteem is cultivated. The focus group consists of young individuals aged 10 to 18 years. It includes 30 items (10 items for each sub-scale). The response scale varies from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The overall self-esteem score is obtained by averaging all three sub-scales. Greater scores signify increased self-esteem. Test-retest reliability showed strong consistency (r = .56 to .65) for the three scales and (r = .74) for the overall scale. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (CSEI or SEI; Coopersmith 1981, 1987, 2002) is a widely utilized self-report questionnaire aimed at assessing self-attitudes across various domains (family, peers, school, and social activities) for both adolescents and adults. The CSEI contains 50 items and provides a total score along with four distinct scores that reflect particular dimensions of self-esteem: general self, social self with peers, home with parents, and school academic (or professional in the adult version). An additional collection of items forms a lie scale (protective answers; eight items). The CSEI is available in three formats: School Form (for ages 8–15, Form A), Adult Form (for ages 16 and older, Form C), and Short Form (Form B). Every version can serve as a screening and/or diagnostic instrument in both clinical and research environments. The CSEI items ask participants to directly express feelings about themselves and are generally scored on a binary scale ("like me" versus "unlike me"). Consequently, CSEI scores can vary from 0 to 50, where elevated scores indicate greater self-esteem. The different versions of the CSEI show an internal consistency coefficient ranging from .80 to .92 among various cultural groups (Coopersmith 2002; Lane et al. 2002; Turan and Tufan 1987). The CSEI demonstrated a test-retest reliability of roughly .70 for adolescents (Form A) over durations of 5–156 weeks and .80 for adults (Form C) over spans of 6–58 weeks.

The Current Study

The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES) created by Heatherton & Polivy (1991) is an important instrument for evaluating overall state self-esteem as well as temporary variations in self-esteem in relation to performance, appearance, and social contexts. The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) is a 20-question tool that evaluates self-esteem at a specific moment. The scale consists of 3 self-esteem components: the performance sub-scale, which assesses how individuals view the worthiness of their performance (e.g., I feel anxious or shaken regarding my performance); the social sub-scale, which evaluates how people perceive their relationships with others based on various roles (e.g., I am concerned about others' opinions of me); and the appearance sub-scale, which gauges an individual's worries about looks, appeal, and body image (e.g., I feel pleased with my current body image). Responses to the items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely"). The initial questionnaire demonstrated a high Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale (α = .92) (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). This scale was evaluated in both groups of participants. Recently, Escrivá-Martínez et al. (2025) studied this scale in the Spanish population. They aimed to assess the factor structure and internal consistency of the State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES-20 and SSES-6) in a Spanish-speaking sample. Escrivá-Martínez et al. (2025) found that the SSES-20 general dimension demonstrated outstanding internal consistency (α = .91, ω = .91). Likewise, the associated sub-scales (Performance: α = .78, ω = .80; Social: α = .86, ω = .87; Appearance: α = .83, ω = .84) demonstrated strong reliability as well. The State Self-Esteem Scale has not been studied in the Iranian population yet. The objective of this study is to assess the factor structure and internal consistency of the State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES-20 and SSES-6) in a Persian-speaking sample of employees.

Method

Participants, procedure, and ethics

The sample comprised 580 employees from different organizations and offices who were recruited via snowball sampling from Zahedan City, Iran, and who completed an online survey hosted on

the Porsline platform. The participants were requested to complete the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20), along with the socio-demographic questionnaire that included age and gender. On the built platform, it was stated to answer the questions thoughtfully, and the participants were guaranteed that their answers would remain private and be used solely for research purposes. The average age of the participants was 31.15 years (SD=9.48), comprising 174 males (30%) and 406 females (70%). The requirements for inclusion were possessing at being employee, being knowledgeable about using internet and social network, being an Iranian national, and having proficiency in the Persian language. The exclusion criteria included not being employee, not being literate in using social networks and the internet, having a nationality other than Iranian, and speaking languages other than Persian. All participants hailed from Zahedan organizations and offices, a city situated in the southeastern region of Iran.

Measures

Demographic and State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20)

Participants were asked questions about their age in years and gender.

State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20)

The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; Escrivá-Martínez et al., 2025) is a 20-question tool that evaluates self-esteem at a specific moment. The scale consists of three elements of self-esteem: the performance component, which assesses how individuals regard their performance as valuable (e.g., I feel anxious or disturbed about my performance); the social component, which evaluates the perceptions people have regarding their relationships based on various roles (e.g., I am concerned about how others perceive me); and the appearance component, which gauges an individual's worries about looks, attractiveness, and body image (e.g., I feel content with my current body appearance). Responses to items are provided on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“extremely”). The initial questionnaire indicated an outstanding Cronbach’s alpha for the entire scale (α = 0.92) (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Escrivá-Martínez et al. (2025) demonstrated that the general dimension of SSES-20 exhibited outstanding internal consistency (α = 0.91, ω = 0.91). In the same way, the individual sub-scales (Performance: α = 0.78, ω = 0.80; Social: α = 0.86, ω = 0.87; Appearance: α = 0.83, ω = 0.84) exhibited strong reliability as well. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was 0.84, and the Omega coefficient was (ω = 0.87). The Cronbach's alpha values were 0.40 for performance, 0.64 for social, and 0.76 for appearance, respectively. The SSES-20 in English was translated into Persian (the Iranian language) by no fewer than two distinct translators whose first language is Persian. The translators were skilled in both English and Persian, as stipulated by the instrument. Additionally, the two translators originated from distinct backgrounds (one is from Zahedan and the other from Tehran). The original translator possessed knowledge of psychological terminology and understood the content of the instrument in Persian. The second translator had a strong command of everyday phrases, psychological slang and terminology, idiomatic expressions, and emotionally impactful words commonly used in the Persian language. The second translator was not well-versed in psychological terminology and/or the structure of the SSES-20. This approach yielded two translated versions that included terminology and phrases addressing both psychological dimensions and colloquial language, along with its cultural nuances. Ultimately, the two translators were asked to convert the SSES-20 back into its original index in English.

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed for the SSES-20 factor structures, criterion-related validity, and inter-relationship between three sub-scales using SPSS version 26 and Smart PLS version 4.1.0.1. To evaluate the factor structures of SSES-20, measurement models utilizing CFA with maximum likelihood estimation were applied.

Results

Table 1- Initial structural equation modeling using CFA for SSES-20.

Item	Statements	Factor loading
1.	I feel confident about my abilities.	.302
2.	I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.*	.568
3.	I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.	.057
4.	I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance.*	.584
5.	I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read.*	.547
6.	I feel that others respect and admire me.	.004
7.	I am dissatisfied with my weight.*	.483

8. I feel self-conscious.*	.110
9. I feel as smart as others.	.104
10. I feel displeased with myself.*	.665
11. I feel good about myself.	.127
12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.	.118
13. I am worried about what other people think of me.*	.528
14. I feel confident that I understand things.	.045
15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.*	.656
16. I feel unattractive.*	.557
17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.*	.502
18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others.*	.492
19. I feel like I'm not doing well.*	.572
20. I am worried about looking foolish. *	.639

Note: Items are reverse coded*

As shown in Table 1, factors 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 demonstrated a satisfactory value above .40, and factors 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 14 showed a value below .40 and should be removed from CFA model.

Table – 2 Fit indices of measurement models for SSES-20.

AGFI	AIC	BIC	CFI	χ^2	χ^2/df	Df	GFI	NFI	Sig.	RMSEA	SRMR	TLI
.95	170.13	287.93	.96	116.13	2.28	51	.97	.93	.001	.047	.034	.95

Note. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = root mean square residual; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion; GFI= Goodness of fit index; AGFI= Adjusted goodness of fit index; NFI= Normed Fit Index;

The three-factor model was examined. The fit indices utilized in this research included: comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), Akaike information criterion (AIC), and Bayesian information criterion (BIC). The chi-square test was additionally applied to evaluate the models' goodness of fit. The chi-squared model evaluates the overall fit and the difference between the sample and the estimated covariance matrices. Its p-value must be > .05 (meaning the assumption of an ideal fit cannot be dismissed). However, it is responsive to sample size. Typically, a strong model fit is considered to be between .95 and 1.00, while an acceptable fit is from .90 to .95 for both the CFI and TLI (Hu & Bentler, 1998, 1999; Lance & Vandenberg, 2001; Shinaprayoon et al., 2018). For the RMSEA and SRMR, an excellent fit ranges from .00 to .08, whereas a satisfactory fit falls between .08 and .10 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016; MacCallum et al., 1996; Shinaprayoon et al., 2018). A reduced AIC and BIC suggest a superior fit and a more straightforward model (Kline, 2016; Raftery, 1995; Shinaprayoon et al., 2018). The (adjusted) goodness of fit ([A]GFI) represents the proportion of variance explained by the estimated covariance of the population. Similar to R^2, the GFI and AGFI values ought to exceed .95 and .90, respectively (Byrne, 1994). Table 2 presents the fit indices for the measurement models. In the present study, a satisfactory fit was .96 for CFI and .95 for TLI. The RMSEA was found to be .047, which is acceptable, while the SRMR was .034, which is not satisfactory. The AIC value was 170.13, while the BIC was 287.93. The values for GFI and AGFI were .97 and .95, respectively.

Table 3- Final structural equation modeling using CFA for SSES-20.

Item	Statements	Sub-scale	Factor loading
2.	I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	Social	.569
4.	I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance.	Performance	.588
5.	I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read.	Performance	.548
7.	I am dissatisfied with my weight.	Appearance	.471
10.	I feel displeased with myself.	Social	.662

13. I am worried about what other people think of me.	Social	.531
15. I feel inferior to others at this moment.	Social	.650
16. I feel unattractive.	Appearance	.538
17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making.	Social	.508
18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others.	Performance	.502
19. I feel like I'm not doing well.	Performance	.579
20. I am worried about looking foolish.	Social	.634

As shown in Table 3, each factor demonstrated a satisfactory value above .40, and all three factors (performance, social, and appearance) within the SSES-20 were suitable.

Table 4 – Factor interrelation of the three-factor model of SSES-20.

Sub-scale	1	2	3
1. Performance	1		
2. Social	.679**	1	
3. Appearance	.509**	.564**	1

**p<.01

The results of Table 4 showing that the interrelation among the three factors varied from *r*=.509 to *r*=.679.

Discriminant validity

Table 5- Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

Sub-scale	CA	CR	AVE	1	Omega	2	3
1. Appearance	.40	.41	.26	-(.51)	-	-	-
2. Performance	.64	.64	.31	.99 (1.00)	-	- (.56)	-
3. Social	.76	.77	.35	1.01 (1.00)	-	.97 (0.97)	- (.60)
Overall SSES-20	.84	-	-	-	.87	-	-

To assess the goodness-of-fit of the data to the model, standard criteria were employed. Typically, values ranging from .70 to .95 for Cronbach alpha and composite reliability are commonly accepted (Aburumman et al., 2023). Table 5 shows the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and composite reliability (CR). In the present study, the three constructs obtained values that ranged from .40 to .76 for the Cronbach alpha and the internal consistency for the whole scale of SSES-20 was equal to .84. Additionally, all three constructs attained values between .41 and .77 for CR. The McDonald's omega (ω) for overall SSES-20 was .87. Consequently, the scale exhibits good internal consistency reliability. Conversely, AVE values exceeding .50 are generally recognized as acceptable (Chin & Yao, 2014). In the present study, each indicator possessed a loading below .50 indicating inadequate convergent validity. Typically, values below .85 for the HTMT criterion are broadly accepted values (Henseler et al., 2015). In the present study, the HTMT value for SSES-20 was higher than .85 which unacceptable value for discriminative validity according to the HTMT standard.

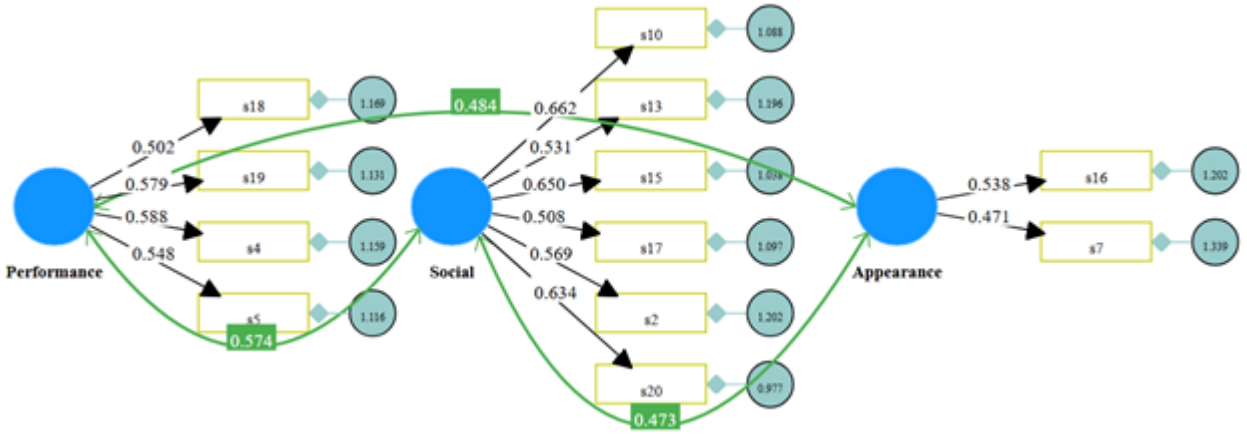

Figure 1. CFA for SSES-20 facto

Discussion

The aim of the current research was to translate the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) into Persian and validate it with an Iranian population (different employees of organizations and offices). The results of the current study indicated that in the initial confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) the factors 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 demonstrated a satisfactory value above .40 and remained in the CFA model. But, factors 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 14 showed a value below .40 and were removed from CFA model. To evaluate the corrected model in the second stage CFA was used and the indices for the measurement models was fit. In the second stage, a satisfactory fit was .96 for CFI and .95 for TLI. The RMSEA was found to be .047, which is acceptable, while the SRMR was .034, which is not satisfactory. The AIC value was 170.13, while the BIC was 287.93. The values for GFI and AGFI were .97 and .95, respectively. The results indicated that the interrelation among the three factors varied from *r*=.509 to *r*=.679 which are acceptable. The results of the CFA model showed that the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) and composite reliability (CR) for the three constructs values ranged from .40 to .76, and the Cronbach alpha and the internal consistency for the whole scale of SSES-20 was equal to .84 which was acceptable. Additionally, all three constructs attained values between .41 and .77 for CR. The McDonald's omega (ω) for overall SSES-20 was .87. Consequently, the scale exhibited good internal consistency reliability. Conversely, in the present study, each indicator possessed a loading below .50 for AVE indicating inadequate convergent validity, and the HTMT value for SSES-20 was higher than .85 which unacceptable value for discriminative validity according to the HTMT standard. The findings of this research align with the results of Escrivá-Martínez et al. (2025), who examined this scale in the Spanish population and discovered that the SSES-20 overall dimension showed excellent internal consistency (α = .91, ω = .91). Our results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha (.84) and omega (.87) were acceptable, but these figures were lower than those from the Spanish-speaking sample. In our research, all three elements of composite reliability reached values of .40 for appearance, .64 for performance, and .76 for the social factor. With the exception of the social factor (α = .76), the values for appearance and performance are significantly lower than those found in the Spanish study (Escrivá-Martínez et al., 2025). Similarly, in the Spanish research (Escrivá-Martínez et al., 2025), the related sub-scales (Performance: α = .78, ω = .80; Social: α = .86, ω = .87; Appearance: α = .83, ω = .84) also exhibited high reliability and were notably greater than those found in this study.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) demonstrates acceptable internal consistency. These results indicate that the SSES-20 can be effectively used with Iranian samples (employees). The scale's reliability makes it a promising tool for researchers aiming to understand fluctuations in self-worth among different groups within the country. Additionally, the scale is appropriate for use with Persian-speaking populations. In practical terms, having a reliable tool like the SSES-20 for both Iranian and Persian-speaking populations opens the door for a broad range of research studies.

Psychologists and social scientists can now confidently use this scale to explore how self-esteem varies in different situations, such as during stressful events or in different social settings. This validation process also adds to the growing body of evidence that the scale is versatile enough to be adapted across diverse cultural and linguistic groups. It supports the idea that the core aspects of self-esteem are universal, even though expressions and perceptions might differ slightly from culture to culture. In conclusion, the confirmation of the SSES-20's internal consistency in this context affirms its role as a robust and dependable measurement tool. Any future studies looking to assess state self-esteem among Iranian or Persian-speaking individuals can confidently utilize the scale, knowing it has been tested for reliability in these populations.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was associated with indicators that had a loading lower than .50 for AVE, indicating insufficient convergent validity, and the HTMT value for SSES-20 exceeded .85, which is an unacceptable level for discriminant validity based on HTMT criteria. Another limitation pertained to the participants who were chosen from the southeastern part of Iran (Zahedan City), which possesses a distinct culture compared to other regions of Iran; therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to the entire Iranian population.

Suggestions

It is recommended to validate the State Self-Esteem Scale-20 (SSES-20) in various cultures and languages to determine the similarities and differences of this study's findings with others. Furthermore, conducting cross-cultural validation enhances the overall robustness of research using the SSES-20. It allows researchers to compare data more accurately between groups, knowing that the scale functions similarly across different populations. This can lead to more meaningful conclusions about the role of self-esteem in various social, educational, or work settings. Overall, rigorous validation in multiple cultures and languages ensures that the SSES-20 remains a reliable, valid, and relevant tool for assessing self-esteem in diverse populations worldwide.

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Conflict of interest

The author of this research has no conflicts of interest.

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