

Brief Report**Prejudices towards people with intellectual disabilities: reliability and validity of the Italian Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale**R. Marcone,  A. Caputo, S. Esposito & V. P. Senese *Department of Psychology, University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli', Caserta, Italy***Abstract**

Background Prejudices and negative attitudes towards intellectual disabilities (IDs) may hinder social inclusion of ID individuals, limiting their well-being. This study investigated the psychometric characteristics of the Italian Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale (MCPS-IT) towards people with ID and the effects of gender, age and socio-economic status (SES) on prejudices.

Method The MCPS-IT was administered to 474 adults (69% women, age range 18–70 years, $M = 33.13$) in conjunction with a questionnaire evaluating socio-demographic information (SES), the contact and the education about ID people and the social dominance orientation.

Results Results confirmed that Italian MCPS has a two-factor structure that measures in a reliable and valid way prejudice towards people with ID. Multivariate analyses of variance confirmed a weak gender difference in both scales and age differences in modern scale. No SES differences were found.

Conclusion The Italian MCPS represents a valid scale that can be used to monitor the social context of people with ID.

Keywords inclusion, intellectual disabilities, prejudices, questionnaire, reliability, validation

Background

Intellectual disabilities (IDs) have a strong individual variability (Schalock *et al.* 2002), but society tends to generalise ID to a whole syndrome (McCaughey & Strohmer 2005). Prejudices (Allport 1954) and negative attitudes (Antonak & Livneh 2000) may hinder social inclusion of ID individuals (Antonak & Livneh 2000; Diamond & Kensinger 2002; Ouellette-Kuntz *et al.* 2010; Marcone *et al.* 2016). Accordingly, the evaluation of prejudices and attitudes of people towards ID can be an important index for the evaluation of the social context and the efficacy of intervention programmes aimed at improving the quality of well-being of people with ID (McManus *et al.* 2010).

Some researchers (Swim *et al.* 1995; Glick & Fiske 1996; Akrami *et al.* 2000, 2006) have distinguished between two types of prejudice, *Classical* (overt/direct) and *Modern* (covert/subtle), showing specific gender, age and socio-economic differences (Swim *et al.* 1995; Akrami *et al.* 2000; Ekehammar *et al.* 2000; Katrina 2011): men express more prejudice than women (Akrami *et al.* 2006; Burge *et al.* 2007), and older and

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less educated people have more prejudices towards people with ID (Burge *et al.* 2007; Cuskelly & Gilmore 2007). Moreover, studies showed that previous contacts, experiences and education about ID are associated with positive attitudes (Choi & Lam 2001; Akrami *et al.* 2006; McManus *et al.* 2010; Marcone *et al.* 2016) and that the preference for social inequality [social dominance orientation (SDO); Ekehammar *et al.* 2004] is positively associated with prejudices and negative attitudes towards ID (Claesson *et al.* 2000).

The aim of the present study was to investigate the psychometric properties of the Italian Modern and Classical Prejudices Scale (MCPS-IT) towards people with ID (Akrami *et al.* 2006). In particular, the validity of the scale was tested by investigating its relation with education level, education about people with ID and the SDO. We expected that participants with higher education about people with ID scored lower on the modern dimension but not on the classical dimension (Akrami *et al.* 2006) and that both dimensions were positively correlated with SDO. We hypothesised that men, the older participants and people with lower socio-economic status (SES) expressed more prejudicial beliefs than women, younger participants and those with high SES, respectively, and that these differences were larger for the modern dimension as compared with the classical one.

Method

Participants and procedures

Four hundred seventy-four adults (326 women), age range 18–70 years ($M = 33.1$; $SD = 13.2$), with a

medium–high socio-economic level (Hollingshead 1975; Venuti & Senese 2007; Table 1), participated in our study. In some of southern Italy's universities, 67% were sampled, whereas 33% online. Recruitment and testing were in conformity with the local ethics committee requirements and with the Declaration of Helsinki 2008.

The Italian version of the MCPS (Akrami *et al.* 2006) was developed using standard forward and back translation procedures (Maxwell 1996) and administered with a sociodemographic questionnaire, either online or in a paper-and-pencil form. A randomly selected subsample of participants ($N = 173$) completed also a questionnaire about education and contacts with people with ID, whereas another randomly selected subsample ($N = 134$) completed the SDO Scale.

Measures

The MCPS (Akrami *et al.* 2006) is a 19-item scale on prejudice about people with ID, investigating two forms of prejudice: Classical (items 1–8; e.g. 'People with intellectual disabilities often commit crimes') and Modern (items 9–19; e.g. 'People with intellectual disabilities are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights'). Participants responded to a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 = 'Strongly disagree' to 5 = 'Strongly agree'.

All participants completed a socio-demographic questionnaire collecting information about gender, age, educational and work levels.

Experience with ID, education (e.g. 'Training about intellectual disabilities') and contact (e.g. 'Care about people with intellectual disabilities') with people with ID were evaluated through six statements

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Gender	N	Age				SES				
		M	DS	Min	Max	N	M	DS	Min	Max
Male	143	36.90	14.23	18	70	69	51.25	13.28	17	69
Female	323	31.45	12.51	18	66	105	52.86	12.51	20	69
Missing	2	35.50	13.44	26	45	1	58	–	–	–
Total	468	33.13	13.16	18	70	174	52.26	12.77	17	69

SES, socio-economic status (Hollingshead 1975).

translated from Akrami *et al.* (2006). Participants responded on a dichotomous scale (Yes/No).

Social dominance orientation was evaluated through the SDO Scale (Pratto *et al.* 1994; It. tr.

Aiello *et al.* 2005). For each item (e.g. 'Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others'), participants responded to a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 = 'Strongly disagree' to 7 = 'Strongly agree'.

Table 2 Skewness, kurtosis and standardised saturations of the MCPS-IT items as a function of the factor

Item	Stem	Skewness	Kurtosis	Factor	
				1	2
				Classic	Modern
1	The basic reasons for many of the social and economic problems that people with intellectual disabilities suffer from are due to their own mental weaknesses.	0.35	-0.75	0.39	-
2	Even though there are some exceptions, it seems that most people with intellectual disabilities simply lack those qualities that community members should have.	0.54	-0.53	0.55	-
3	People with intellectual disabilities should live in protected places because of the dangers in society.	1.13	0.60	0.44	-
4	It would be unwise for a person without any intellectual disability to marry a person with intellectual disabilities.	1.22	0.38	0.50	-
5	People with intellectual disabilities do not have the character strength that people without intellectual disability have.	1.00	0.18	0.46	-
6	It seems that people with intellectual disabilities do not take the opportunities offered by the society.	0.60	-0.29	0.68	-
7 [‡]	Like all other people, people with intellectual disabilities have goals and meaning in their lives.	1.43	1.55	-0.53	-
8	People with intellectual disabilities often commit crimes.	1.18	0.64	0.48	-
9	Society takes more care of people with intellectual disabilities than is fair to other groups.	1.13	0.92	-	0.44
10	People with intellectual disabilities are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.	1.83	3.22	-	0.54
11 [‡]	People with intellectual disabilities have more to offer society than they have been given the opportunity to.	0.76	0.25	-	-0.39
12	Most people with intellectual disabilities are no longer victims of discrimination in Italy.	0.64	-0.24	-	0.53
13 [‡]	It is right that people with intellectual disabilities sometimes get special support from society to find appropriate jobs.	1.47	2.28	-	-0.44
14	The situation for people with intellectual disabilities is good as it is.	0.90	-0.19	-	0.72
15 [‡]	People with intellectual disabilities get too little attention in the media.	0.46	-0.39	-	-0.31
16	People with intellectual disabilities are in general treated in the same way as people without intellectual disability in society.	1.18	1.34	-	0.53
17 [‡]	Negative attitudes in society make the lives of people with intellectual disabilities difficult.	0.95	0.68	-	-0.53
18 [‡]	It is easy to understand that people with intellectual disabilities and their relatives still struggle against the injustice they suffer in society.	0.80	0.07	-	-0.35
19	There have been enough societal efforts in favour of people with intellectual disabilities.	0.74	0.35	-	0.73

[†]Item number.

[‡]Reverse item.

Data analyses

The data analyses were carried out to confirm the dimensionality of the MCPS-IT and to investigate the validity of the scores. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were carried out with Lisrel 8.71 (Jöreskog & Sörbom 2004) to compare a one-factor model and a two-factor model. In the latter model, items 1–8 were specified to load on the first factor (Classical) and items 9–19 on the second factor (Modern). Given the distribution problems of some items (Table 2), asymptotic covariance matrices and robust maximum likelihood estimation methods were used to test CFA models. To evaluate and compare the models, we used the maximum likelihood ($ML\chi^2$) goodness-of-fit test statistics in combination with the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) index and the comparative fit index (CFI; Kline 2011). The difference in CFI values (CFI_{diff}) were used to compare the relative fits of the nested models (Kline 2011).

Reliability of the MCPS-IT subscales and of the total scale was examined computing the omega (ω) and the split-half by using the psych package (Revelle 2017) with the software R (R core team 2018). The convergent and concurrent validity of the scale was examined by investigating the correlation between the MCPS subscales and the SDO and by investigating

the association between the exposition to disability and the MCPS scores, respectively. To this aim seven separate two-way between subject multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were carried out by considering the two MCPS subscales as dependent variables and the gender or responses to each of the six questions related to education or contact with people with ID as two-level independent variables. Finally, the correlation between the MCPS subscales and age and SES were also computed.

Results

The fit indices of the CFA did not support the adequacy of the single factor model, $ML\chi^2(152) = 1106.2$, $P < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.08, CFI = 0.89, but indicated that the two-correlated factor model showed an adequate fit to the data, $ML\chi^2(151) = 745.1$, $P < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.94, and that improved the fit, $CFI_{diff} = 0.05$ (Table 2). Factors were rather correlated ($r = 0.59$, $P < 0.05$) thus suggesting the presence of a higher order factor (Kline 2011).

Data showed acceptable level of internal consistency by both omega, 0.76, 0.76 and 0.78, and split-half, 0.62, 0.66 and 0.60, for Classical, Modern and the total MCPS, respectively.

Table 3 Mean comparison of MCPS subscale as a function of the gender and questions related to education about ID and contact with people with ID

Variable	Wilks' λ	F	df	η_p^2	Classical ^A		Modern	
					Yes/M	No/F	Yes/M	No/F
Gender	0.981*	4.57	2, 469	0.019	2.02 ^a	1.91 ^b	1.95 ^a	1.82 ^b
Education about ID								
A. Education or training about intellectual disabilities	0.976	2.11	2, 170	0.024	2.06	2.04	1.72	1.87
B. Experience with people with intellectual disabilities (relatives, friends ...)	0.998	0.15	2, 170	0.002	2.04	2.06	1.82	1.86
C. Met people with intellectual disabilities	0.916***	7.81***	2, 170	0.084	2.01 ^a	2.60 ^b	1.80 ^a	2.27 ^b
D. Care about people with intellectual disabilities	0.960*	3.56*	2, 170	0.040	2.07	2.04	1.68 ^a	1.88 ^b
E. Work with people with intellectual disabilities (i.e. technician of rehabilitation)	0.982	1.52	2, 170	0.018	2.09	2.04	1.74	1.86
F. Have a colleague with intellectual disabilities	0.996	0.37	2, 170	0.004	2.13	2.05	1.66	1.84

M, men; F, women. Different letters indicate different means.

* $p < 0.05$.

*** $p < 0.001$.

Results showed that the MCPS Scale and subscales had adequate concurrent and convergent validity (Table 3). Moreover, the MCPS subscales and the SDO Scale revealed positive and significant associations, $r_s > 0.31$, $P_s < 0.001$.

The MANOVA showed a significant but weak gender difference on MCPS dimensions (Table 3). The follow-up one-way ANOVA showed that the effect was observed on both classical and modern prejudices, $\eta_p^2 < 0.017$, $P < 0.049$. Men showed higher classical and modern prejudices than women.

Multivariate analyses of variance showed a significant association between responses to the question 'C' and prejudices (Table 3). The follow-up one-way ANOVA showed that the effect was observed on both classical and modern prejudices, $\eta_p^2 < 0.061$, $P_s < 0.001$. People that in their life met persons with ID have a smaller classical and modern prejudice than people that had never met persons with ID.

The MANOVA showed also a significant effect of the question 'D' (Table 3). The follow-up one-way ANOVA showed that the effect was observed only on modern prejudices, $\eta_p^2 = 0.029$, $P = 0.024$. The effect on classical prejudice was not significant. People that in their life cared for a person with ID have a smaller modern prejudice than people that have never cared for a person with ID.

Finally, age was weakly but significantly and positively associated with classical prejudice, $r = 0.173$, $P < 0.001$, the older were participants the higher were the classical prejudices. No significant association were observed for SES.

Discussion

Italian MCPS evaluates the two dimension of prejudice (classical and modern) in a reliable way, showing an adequate concurrent and convergent validity.

According to literature (Akrami *et al.* 2006; Burge *et al.* 2007; Cuskelly & Gilmore 2007), men have higher level of modern and classical prejudices towards ID rather than women, but this difference is small. While the weak but positive association between age and classical prejudice seems to indicate that the elders have a higher tendency of showing the overt form of prejudice, thus representing a risk factor. Unlike what is exposed in literature (Akrami *et al.* 2000; Ekehammar *et al.* 2000; Katrina 2011), we

did not find differences in prejudices due to SES, probably due to low variability of SES in our subsample.

In line with literature (Choi & Lam 2001; McManus *et al.* 2010), people that in their life met persons with ID have both overt and covert lower prejudices, while those who cared for people with ID show only lower covert prejudices, underlying no differences about overt ones (Akrami *et al.* 2006). These findings could be also interpreted in the light of overt prejudice's meaning clarity: it could be more likely influenced by 'social desirability' bias.

In conclusion, MCPS-IT is a reliable, valid and useful instrument that could be used in screening prejudices towards ID and to evaluate the efficacy of intervention programmes according to the social inclusion perspective (Soresi *et al.* 2011; Medeghini 2012, 2013).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Accepted 17 December 2018

Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.

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Data S1. Supporting information