



## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Examining age-related differences in support needs on the Supports Intensity Scale-Children's Version-Spanish translation



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### KEYWORDS

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**Abstract** *Background:* Interest in the support needs of people with intellectual disability has directed attention to developing assessments to measure of the pattern and intensity of supports which people need to participate in valued life activities. Assessments of the support needs of children must account for the influence of age. *Method:* Four hundred fifty (450) Spanish children with intellectual disability (ages 5-16) were assessed with the *SIS-C Spanish*. To test for measurement invariance and latent differences, the *SIS-C Spanish* standardization sample was linked to the *SIS-C English* normative sample. Models developed during the norming process were used to investigate measurement equivalence across age groups, differences in latent means, and differences in latent variances and standard deviations. *Results:* Findings suggested that all items on the *SIS-C Spanish* could reliably be used to measure support needs of children ages 5-16. When exploring age-related differences at the latent level, however, data showed latent mean differences in support need domain scores across age cohorts. *Conclusions:* The same set of items can be used to measure support needs in children ages 5-16, but age-related influences must be considered in developing norms for the *SIS-C Spanish* as well as in planning supports for children.

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**PALABRAS CLAVE**

Discapacidad intelectual; evaluación de necesidades de apoyo; integración en la comunidad; estudios instrumentales

### Diferencias relacionadas con la edad en las necesidades de apoyo: análisis de la versión española de la Escala de Intensidad de Apoyos para Niños y Adolescentes

**Resumen** *Antecedentes:* El interés en las necesidades de apoyo de las personas con discapacidad intelectual debe centrarse en la evaluación del patrón e intensidad de los apoyos requeridos para realizar las actividades diarias. Cuando se evalúan estas necesidades en niños, se debe considerar además la influencia de la edad. *Método:* Se evaluaron 450 personas con discapacidad intelectual (5-16 años) mediante la versión española de la SIS-C. La invarianza de medida y las diferencias latentes fueron analizadas relacionando la muestra española con la muestra normativa de la versión en inglés. Los modelos desarrollados para la creación de baremos se utilizaron para estudiar las equivalencias de medida en los distintos grupos de edad y las diferencias latentes de sus medias, varianzas y desviaciones típicas. *Resultados:* Los ítems de la versión española de la SIS-C son fiables para medir las necesidades de apoyo en personas de entre 5 y 16 años. A nivel latente, los datos mostraron diferencias en las medias de las puntuaciones de diferentes grupos de edad. *Conclusiones:* Pueden utilizarse los mismos ítems para medir las necesidades de apoyo de niños y adolescentes, pero debe considerarse la influencia de la edad tanto en la creación de baremos como en la planificación de apoyos.

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In the most recent edition of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) terminology and classification manual [Schalock et al. \(2010\)](#) emphasized the importance of a social-ecological understanding of people with intellectual disability. According to a social-ecological model, people with intellectual disability can be distinguished from the general population by the extent of mismatch they experience between their personal competencies and the demands of community environments. This mismatch poses significant barriers to full participation in settings and activities that are valued by others in the culture. Providing personalized supports can reduce the mismatch and result in enhanced human functioning.

The growing emphasis on the support needs of people with intellectual disability has directed attention to developing measures that promote a greater understanding of the pattern and intensity of supports which people with intellectual disability need to fully participate in age appropriate, culturally valued life activities (e.g., education in schools for children, employment in community workplaces for adults). One measure that has been validated and extensively researched is the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS; [Thompson et al., 2015](#)), which was normed for people with intellectual disability, ages 16-64 years. It has been translated into 13 languages and is used in more than 20 countries (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, [AAIDD, 2013](#)).

The SIS was recently updated and published as the SIS-Adult Version (SIS-A; [Thompson et al., 2015](#)), and consists of three sections: Section 1, Exceptional Medical and Behavioral Support Needs; Section 2, Supports Needs Index Scale; and Section 3, Supplemental Protection and Advocacy Scale. Section 2 is the standardized portion of the scale where items are organized into six support need domains. A Children's Version, the SIS-C, was also recently developed for

children ages 5-16 ([Thompson et al., 2016](#)). The manuals that accompany these instruments provide extensive details regarding evidence for their reliability, content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity, and factor validity.

Completing SIS-A and SIS-C assessments yield norm-referenced scores, allowing for meaningful comparisons across individuals as well as opportunities to empirically investigate issues related to the nature of people's support needs, including changes in support needs across age groups and over time. For example, the SIS-A provides one set of norms for adults aged 16-64, and data from the standardization sample suggested limited influence of age on support needs in the standardization sample ([Thompson et al., 2015](#)). When developing the SIS-C, however, it was assumed that age would significantly influence support needs throughout childhood. Independent of disability, it is logical to assume that younger children have more intense needs for support. Thus, the SIS-C standardization sample was developed to address this issue, including six age cohorts that were further stratified by level of intellectual functioning (mild, moderate, severe/profound). Research with the U.S. standardization sample (see [Shogren et al., 2015](#)) confirmed the impact of age on SIS-C scores.

In the U.S. standardization sample of over 4,000 children with intellectual disability, researchers found that measurement invariance could be established in the seven support need domains measured on the SIS-C (Home Life, Community and Neighborhood, School Participation, School Learning, Health and Safety, Social, and Advocacy Activities), meaning the same set of items could be used to measure support needs across ages. There were, however, differences in the latent means based on age group. This finding confirmed that younger children, generally, had more intensive support needs than older children. Furthermore, it highlighted the

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