



Validation of the Devereux early childhood assessment for preschoolers in measuring child well-being in Indonesia

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Abstract

Child well-being remains a pressing issue in Indonesia, with many children lacking fulfillment of essential physical and psychological needs. Addressing this requires valid and reliable tools to assess early childhood well-being, yet few instruments have been adapted for the Indonesian context. This study aims to adapt and validate the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers (DECA-P), a comprehensive tool designed for parent and teacher reports on early childhood well-being. Data were collected from 377 parents of children aged 1 to 6 years. Results indicate that the Indonesian adaptation of DECA-P demonstrates strong internal reliability. Additionally, validity testing using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient yielded favorable values. These findings suggest that the Indonesian DECA-P adaptation is a suitable instrument for assessing early childhood well-being in Indonesia.

Keywords: Assessment; childhood well-being; Devereux early childhood; well-being

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1. INTRODUCTION

Well-being is one of the Positive Psychology concepts. There are two approaches to well-being: the objective and subjective approach. Objective well-being theory defines well-being in an objective, external, and universal sense of the quality of life, such as social attributes (health, education, social networks, and connections) and material resources (income, food, and housing) (Watson et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2021). The definition of well-being constructed in early life varies between health, psychology, mental health, and education domains (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Gormley & Hines 2024; Pinto-Cortez et al., 2023).

The theory of objective well-being emerges from Amartya Sen's work in welfare economics, and therefore, focuses on core human capabilities necessary for a quality life: health and bodily integrity; the ability to think and imagine; the ability to express emotions; and the ability to exercise practical reasoning and autonomy in contribution to education, employment, and political and social participation (Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Karila & Kupila 2023). On the other hand, the subjective well-being theory evaluates subjective life as a whole, consisting of two main components: 1) affective aspects, such as feelings, emotions, and moods; and 2) life satisfaction, defined by a particular domain in life such as school, work and family (Diener & Ryan, 2009). A person is considered to have achieved subjective well-being when positive emotions are more dominant than negative emotions (Diener et al., 1999). In 1998, Dr. Martin Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association (APA), shifted focus from mental illness and pathology to studying what is good and positive in life, and ever since so, many studies have examined positive psychological interventions in purpose to help people live better lives (Rusk & Waters, 2015).

There are agreements and commonalities in traits, observable qualities, and demonstrable characteristics which support the development of well-being in the early years (Mayr & Ulich, 2009; Barblett & Maloney, 2010). These traits and characteristics include attachment, affect and regulation, resilience and persistence, adaptability, confidence, peer relations, and prosocial skills (Laevers, 2005; Nair et al., 2024). Various instruments have been developed to measure the level of child well-being. Based on these traits and characteristics, Marbina et al., (2015), summarize instruments for measuring well-being in children and DECA-P is one of them (Marbina et al., 2015). DECA-P is an assessment tool used to measure the level of social and emotional well-being in early childhood, usually for children aged 2 to 5 years.

The theory underlying DECA-P is the theory of social and emotional development in early childhood. According to this theory, children at an early age experience rapid growth and development in social and emotional skills. Therefore, measuring their level of social and emotional well-being is important to provide appropriate interventions if needed. DECA-P measures levels of self-confidence, ability to regulate emotions, relationships with adults and peers, and behaviors inside and outside the classroom (Zins, et al., 2004). This instrument also collects information about risk factors, such as stress or traumatic experiences that may affect children's social and emotional development.

DECA-P enables caregivers and teachers to identify children who require additional assistance in developing social and emotional skills. Appropriate interventions may help children improve their social and emotional well-being and provide a strong foundation for healthy growth and development throughout their lives.

1.1. Purpose of study

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The present study chose DECA-P with the consideration that DECA-P may measure a child's well-being individually, while administratively conducted by professionals or parents. By carefully studying it, the instrument may reflect children's state of happiness.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

2.1. Participants

A total of 377 samples participated in the DECA-P validity test, consisting of parents who have early childhood with an age range of 1 to 6 years, with 355 children aged 3 to 6 years participating in it (94.16%). This number is the majority of the sample size. From the age of the respondents, they were in the age range of 19 to 62 years, with the majority in the two age groups: 114 respondents of age 19 to 29 years (30.24%) and 202 respondents of age 30 to 40 years (53.58%).

Furthermore, the level of family income varies. Almost half of the sample size earned IDR 3-5 million and more than 5 million a month: 75 respondents earned more than and equal to IDR 3 million (19.89%) and 80 respondents more than and equal to IDR 5 million (21.22%). In addition, 58 respondents earned IDR 2.5-3 million (15.36%) and a small portion, equal to 34 respondents, earned IDR 2.0-2.5 million (9.02%). Lastly, 43 respondents earned IDR 500 thousand to 1 million (11.4%). Thus, judging from the economic background, most of the respondents belong to the lower middle class. From the area of origin, most respondents were from West Java (92.04%), and the remainder were from West Sumatra, Central Java, and East Java. Thus, the majority of respondents were on Java Island.

2.2. Data collection instrument

DECA-P covers 38 statements that describe children's behavior in terms of cognitive, social, language, and emotional disclosure with a scale of 'never', 'rarely', 'occasionally', 'frequently', and 'very frequently'. The results of DECA-P translation to Indonesian are described in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1

English and Indonesian versions of Devereux early childhood assessment for preschoolers (DECA-P)

English Original Version	Indonesian Translation	English Back Translation
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<p>The form describes several behaviors seen in some young children. Read the statements that follow the phrase: <i>During the past 4 weeks how often did the child...</i> and place a check mark in the box underneath the word that tells how often you saw the behavior. Please answer each question carefully. There are right or wrong answers. If you wish to change your answer, put an X through it and fill in your new choice as shown to the right. Please do not skip any items.</p>	<p>Form menggambarkan sejumlah perilaku yang terlihat pada beberapa anak kecil. Bacalah pernyataan yang mengikuti frasa: Selama 4 minggu terakhir, seberapa sering anak tersebut... dan beri tanda centang pada kotak di bawah kata yang menunjukkan seberapa sering Anda melihat perilaku tersebut. Jawablah setiap pertanyaan dengan hati-hati. Ada jawaban benar atau salah. Jika Anda ingin mengubah jawaban Anda, beri tanda X dan isi pilihan baru Anda seperti yang ditunjukkan di sebelah kanan. Harap jangan melewatkan item apa pun.</p>	<p>The form describes several behaviors seen in some young children. Read the statement that follows the phrase: During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child... and place a checkmark in the box below the word that indicates how often you have seen the behavior. Answer each question carefully. There are right or wrong answers. If you want to change your answer, put an X and fill in your new choice as shown on the right. Please don't miss any item.</p>
<p>...</p> <p>Item</p> <p>During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child</p> <p>1. Act in a way that makes adults smile or show interest in him/her.</p> <p>2. Listen to or respect others?</p> <p>3. Control his/her anger?</p> <p>4. Seem sad or unemotional on a happy occasion?</p> <p>5. Show confidence in his/her abilities (for instance, say "I can do it!")</p> <p>6. Have a temper tantrum?</p> <p>7. Keep trying when unsuccessful (Show persistence)</p> <p>8. Seem uninterested in order children or adults?</p> <p>9. Use obscene gestures or offensive language?</p>	<p><i>Selama 4 minggu, seberapa sering anak melakukan hal-hal berikut:</i></p> <p>Menunjukkan perilaku yang membuat orang dewasa tersenyum atau tertarik padanya.</p> <p>Mendengarkan atau menghormati orang lain</p> <p>Mengendalikan amarahnya</p> <p>Tampak sedih atau tanpa ekspresi emosi pada saat-saat bahagia</p> <p>Menunjukkan kepercayaan diri pada kemampuannya (misalnya, mengatakan "saya bisa melakukannya!")</p> <p>Mengamuk</p> <p>Terus mencoba ketika tidak berhasil (menunjukkan ketekunan)</p> <p>Tampak tidak tertarik pada anak-anak atau orang dewasa lain</p> <p>Menggunakan bahasa tubuh yang tidak senonoh atau memalukan</p>	<p>During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child</p> <p>Act in a way that makes adults smile or show interest in him/her.</p> <p>Listen to or respect others?</p> <p>Control his/her anger?</p> <p>Seem sad or unemotional at a happy occasion?</p> <p>Show confidence in his/her abilities (for instance, say "I can do it!")</p> <p>Have a temper tantrum?</p> <p>Keep trying when unsuccessful (Show persistence)</p> <p>Seem uninterested in order children or adults?</p> <p>Use obscene gestures or offensive language?</p>

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10	Try different ways to solve a problem.	Mencoba berbagai cara untuk memecahkan masalah	Try different ways to solve a problem.
11	Seem happy or excited.	Tampak senang atau bersemangat melihat orang tua dekat dengannya atau ketika orang tua baru pulang	Seem happy or excited.
12	Destroy or damage property?	Menghancurkan atau merusak properti atau peralatan rumah tangga	Destroy or damage property?
13	Try or ask to try new things or activities.	Mencoba atau meminta untuk mencoba sesuatu atau aktivitas baru	Try or ask to try new things or activities?
14	Show affection for familiar adults?	Menunjukkan kasih sayang pada orang dewasa yang familiar (dikenal)	Show affection for familiar adults?
15	Start or organize play with other children?	Memulai atau mengatur permainan dengan anak-anak lain	Start or organize play with other children?
16	Show patience?	Menunjukkan kesabaran	Show patience?
17	Ask adults to play with or read to him/her.	Meminta orang dewasa untuk bermain atau membacakan cerita untuknya	Ask adults to play with or read to him/her?
18	Have a short attention span (difficulty concentrating)?	Memiliki rentang perhatian yang pendek (sulit berkonsentrasi)	Have a short attention span (difficulty concentrating)?
19	Share with other children?	Berbagi dengan anak-anak lain	Share with other children?
20	Handle frustration well?	Menangani frustrasi/kecewa dengan baik	Handle frustration well?
21	Fight with other children?	Berkelahi dengan anak lain	Fight with other children?
22	Become upset or cry easily?	Mudah kesal dan menangis	Become upset or cry easily?
23	Show an interest in learning new things?	Menunjukkan minat untuk mempelajari hal-hal baru	Show an interest in learning new things?
24	Trust familiar adults and believe what they say?	Mempercayai orang dewasa yang sudah dikenal dan mempercayai apa yang mereka katakan	Trust familiar adults and believe what they say?
25	Accept another choice when his/her first choice was not available?	Menerima pilihan lain ketika pilihan pertamanya tidak tersedia	Accept another choice when his/her first choice was not available?
26	Seek help from children/adults when necessary.	Mencari bantuan dari anak-anak atau orang dewasa bila perlu	Seek help from children/adults when necessary.
27	Hurt others with actions or words?	Menyakiti orang lain dengan tindakan atau kata-kata ejekan maupun kasar	Hurt others with actions or words?
28	Cooperate with others?	Bekerja sama dengan orang lain	Cooperate with others?
29	Calm himself/herself down?	Menenangkan diri ketika ada hal yang tidak disukai	Calm himself/herself down?
30	Get easily distracted?	Mudah teralihkan perhatiannya	Get easily distracted?
31	Make decisions for himself/herself?	Membuat keputusan untuk dirinya sendiri	Make decisions for himself/herself?
32	Appear happy when playing with others?	Terlihat senang ketika bermain dengan orang lain	Appear happy when playing with others?

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33	Choose to do a task that was hard for him/her.	Memilih untuk melakukan tugas yang sulit baginya	Choose to do a task that was hard for him/her.
34	Look forward to activities at home or school (for instance, birthdays or trips).	Menantikan kegiatan di rumah atau sekolah yang menyenangkan (misalnya, ulang tahun atau jalan-jalan)	Look forward to activities at home or school (for instance, birthdays or trips).
35	Touch children or adults in a way that you thought was inappropriate.	Menyentuh anak-anak atau orang dewasa dengan cara yang menurut Ibu/Bapak tidak pantas	Touch children or adults in a way that you thought was inappropriate.
36	Show a preference for a certain adult, teacher, or parent.	Menunjukkan kecenderungan senang pada orang dewasa, guru, atau orang tua tertentu	Show a preference for a certain adult, teacher, or parent.
37	Play well with others	Bermain dengan baik bersama orang lain	Play well with others
38	Remember important information?	Mengingat informasi penting	Remember important information?

2.3. Procedure

The DECA-P Questionnaire sheet was translated into Indonesian and then translated back into English to prove no change in meaning. Instruments were given to parents of early childhood (ages 1 to 6 years). Parents filled out the questionnaire according to the results of their observations of their children daily. Questionnaires were created in a Google form and randomly distributed online to parents of early childhood whose children attended daycare, playgroups, preschool, or other early childhood education services through the caregivers and educators who helped spread this Google form.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Validity test of child well-being instrument

Validity is the relation between the data what the test measures and how well the test can measure (Anastasia and Urbina, 1997). Validity also relates to the accuracy of the significant components in a study. If associated with the item as a measuring tool, validity is the accuracy of the measuring instrument with what is being measured. In this study, the validity test for each item was obtained by using SPSS software resulting in r table = 0.101 with $n = 377$ and $\alpha = 0.05$ (table 2).

Table 2
Child well-being instrument

	Questions	r value	Sign	r table product moment	Validity
1	<i>Menunjukkan perilaku yang membuat orang dewasa tersenyum atau tertarik padanya (Act in a way that makes adults smile or show interest in him/her?)</i>	0.476	>	0.101	Valid

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2	<i>Mendengarkan atau menghormati orang lain</i> (Listen to or respect others?)	0.556	>	0.101	Valid
3	<i>Mengendalikan amarahnya</i> (Control his/her anger?)	0.408	>	0.101	Valid
4	<i>Tampak sedih atau tanpa emosi pada saat-saat bahagia</i> (Seem sad or unemotional at a happy occasion?)	0.161	>	0.101	Valid
5	<i>Menunjukkan kepercayaan diri pada kemampuannya (misalnya, mengatakan "saya bisa melakukannya!")</i> (Show confidence in his/her abilities (for instance, say "I can do it !"))	0.480	<	0.101	Valid
6	<i>Mengamuk</i> (Have a temper tantrum?)	0.344	>	0.101	Valid
7	<i>Terus mencoba ketika tidak berhasil (menunjukkan ketekunan)</i> (Keep trying when unsuccessful (Show persistence))	0.428	>	0.101	Valid
8	<i>Tampak tidak tertarik pada anak-anak atau orang dewasa lain</i> (Seem uninterested in other children or adults?)	0.299	>	0.101	Valid
9	<i>Menggunakan bahasa tubuh yang tidak senonoh atau memalukan</i> (Use obscene gestures or offensive language?)	0.057	<	0.101	Invalid
10	<i>Mencoba berbagai cara untuk memecahkan masalah</i> (Try different ways to solve a problem?)	0.488	>	0.101	Valid
11	<i>Tampak senang atau bersemangat melihat orang tua dekat dengannya atau ketika orang tua baru pulang</i> (Seem happy or excited)	0.378	>	0.101	Valid
12	<i>Menghancurkan atau merusak properti atau peralatan rumah tangga</i> (Destroy or damage property?)	0.187	>	0.101	Valid
13	<i>Mencoba atau meminta untuk mencoba sesuatu atau aktivitas baru</i> (Try or ask to try new things or activities?)	0.422	>	0.101	Valid
14	<i>Menunjukkan kasih sayang pada orang dewasa yang familiar (dikenal)</i> (Show affection for familiar adults?)	0.494	>	0.101	Valid
15	<i>Memulai atau mengatur permainan dengan anak-anak lain</i> (Start or organize play with other children?)	0.428	>	0.101	Valid
16	<i>Menunjukkan kesabaran</i> (Show patience?)	0.489	>	0.101	Valid

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17	<i>Meminta orang dewasa untuk bermain atau membacakan cerita untuknya</i> (Ask adults to play with or read to him/her?)	0.521	>	0.101	Valid
18	<i>Memiliki rentang perhatian yang pendek (sulit berkonsentrasi)</i> (Have a short attention span (difficulty concentrating)?)	0.331	>	0.101	Valid
19	<i>Berbagi dengan anak-anak lain</i> (Share with other children?)	0.453	>	0.101	Valid
20	<i>Menangani frustrasi/kecewa dengan baik</i> (Handle frustration well?)	0.431	>	0.101	Valid
21	<i>Berkelahi dengan anak lain</i> (Fight with other children?)	0.189	>	0.101	Valid
22	<i>Mudah kesal dan menangis</i> (Become upset or cry easily?)	0.284	>	0.101	Valid
23	<i>Menunjukkan minat untuk mempelajari hal-hal baru</i> (Show an interest in learning new things?)	0.457	>	0.101	Valid
24	<i>Mempercayai orang dewasa yang sudah dikenal dan mempercayai apa yang mereka katakan</i> (Trust familiar adults and believe what they say?)	0.416	>	0.101	Valid
25	<i>Menerima pilihan lain ketika pilihan pertamanya tidak tersedia</i> (Accept another choice when his/her first choice was not available?)	0.369	>	0.101	Valid
26	<i>Mencari bantuan dari anak-anak atau orang dewasa bila perlu</i> (Seek help from children/adults when necessary?)	0.391	>	0.101	Valid
27	<i>Menyakiti orang lain dengan tindakan atau kata-kata ejekan maupun kasar</i> (Hurt others with actions or words?)	0.282	>	0.101	Valid
28	<i>Bekerja sama dengan orang lain</i> (Cooperate with others?)	0.552	>	0.101	Valid
29	<i>Menenangkan diri ketika ada hal yang tidak disukai</i> (Calm himself/herself down?)	0.394	>	0.101	Valid
30	<i>Mudah teralihkan perhatiannya</i> (Get easily distracted?)	0.198	>	0.101	Valid
31	<i>Membuat keputusan untuk dirinya sendiri</i> (Make decisions for himself/herself?)	0.373	>	0.101	Valid
32	<i>Terlihat senang ketika bermain dengan orang lain</i> (Appear happy when playing with others?)	0.397	>	0.101	Valid
33	<i>Memilih untuk melakukan tugas yang sulit baginya</i> (Choose to do a task that was hard for him/her?)	0.396	>	0.101	Valid

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34	<i>Menantikan kegiatan di rumah atau sekolah yang menyenangkan (misalnya, ulang tahun atau jalan-jalan)</i> (Look forward to activities at home or school (for instance, birthdays or trips)?)	0.457	>	0.101	Valid
35	<i>Menyentuh anak-anak atau orang dewasa dengan cara yang menurut Bapak/Ibu tidak pantas</i> (Touch children or adults in a way that you thought was inappropriate?)	0.182	>	0.101	Valid
36	<i>Menunjukkan kecenderungan senang pada orang dewasa, guru, atau orang tua tertentu</i> (Show a preference for a certain adult, teacher, or parent?)	0.296	>	0.101	Valid
37	<i>Bermain dengan baik bersama orang lain</i> (Play well with others)	0.537	>	0.101	Valid
38	<i>Mengingat informasi penting</i> (Remember important information?)	0.544	>	0.101	Valid

Based on the validity test, the result shows that 37 items are valid to use in measuring child well-being aged 1 to 6 years.

3.2. Reliability test

The reliability coefficient is considered satisfactory if it exceeds 0.30 (Azwar, 2008). Conversely, if the correlation between an item and the total is low (below 0.30) or negative, the statement is considered bad and must be discarded. The development and drafting of psychological scales usually use a correlation coefficient value of at least 0.30. In this scale analysis, the minimum standard score is 0.30, and the result is as follows (table 3).

Table 3
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.837	37

The total of VALID question items is 37 and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.837 > 0.6. Therefore, all questionnaire items for measuring child well-being variables are declared reliable or consistent.

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the DECA-P validity test, item 9 has an *r* value of 0.057, less than 0.1, and therefore, item number 9 is declared invalid. This item may be invalid due to cultural differences as it is about obscene gestures and offensive language. Van Widenfelt, et al., (2005) state that when culture is seen as something that has the potential to have a significant impact on a concept or how the concept is expressed, then an instrument used in a country needs to go through several cultural adaptations before being used.

As item 9, the expression of sexuality outside of marriage is considered inappropriate in Indonesian culture (Jaafar et al., 2006). This is different from Western culture, which is more open to expressions

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of sexuality as reflected in Disney cartoons such as Snow White, Aurora, and Belle which have explicit kissing scenes. Meanwhile in Indonesia, a movie has to go through censorship and the pornographic scene has to be cut out to air on television (Fitria, 2016). Everything that children watch at an early age will be absorbed into their subconscious (Siddique, et al., 2021). Thus, parents of early childhood in Indonesia do not agree with indecent scenes in early childhood because they view sexual expressions such as kissing on the lips, love for the opposite sex, and other sexual expressions, as obscene body language and only for teenagers and adults. It is reasonable that item number 9 becomes invalid.

Apart from item 9, other items are declared valid and reliable, and thus, the adapted DECA-P is ready for use. However, a larger scale of research is required for wider use. Considering that the number of samples in this study is 377 people, it is advisable for further research to take a larger sample size. DECA-P adaptation that has been translated into Indonesian, which was originally only intended to measure child well-being in children aged 3 to 5 years, turns out to be still valid and reliable for measuring child well-being aged 1 to 6 years. The results are in line with DECA adaptations in other countries.

DECA-P has been used to analyze the relationship between preschoolers' temperament, social abilities locus of control, and resilience. The analysis is based on the Polish adaptation of the DECA observation scale as an instrument that enables the diagnosis of protective factors and child behavior problems (Sikorska et.al, 2020) and as an instrument to measure child protection and risk factors (Sikorska et al., 2021).

In addition, The Deveraux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers, Second Edition (DECA-P2) has been used to measure the natural potential that may support the development of initiation, self-regulation, and attachment in preschoolers, which are major protective factors that may diminish or moderate the effects of stress and difficulties and allow children to develop or even be changed by adversity (Ernst et al., 2019; Song et al., 2024).

The classical test theory analysis and the item response theory analysis approach show that the C-DECA-T (Toddler) is a reliable and valid instrument for measuring social-emotional strength and needs in Taiwan. The high internal consistency of the three subscales and the DECA-Toddler total score show that symptom manifestation of competence and social-emotional needs in Taiwanese toddlers is not culturally different from that of American toddlers. The C-DECA-T possesses good psychometric properties (Liang et al., 2019).

5. CONCLUSION

The Indonesian adaptation of the DECA-P instrument for measuring child well-being has demonstrated strong validity and reliability, supporting its use as a meaningful assessment tool. Consistent with findings from similar adaptations in other regions, this study establishes that the DECA-P Adaptation (DECA-P Adaptasi), comprising 37 items, is effective in evaluating well-being among Indonesian preschoolers aged 1 to 6. This tool provides a robust framework for researchers focused on early childhood well-being, offering reliable insights into children's social-emotional health.

To enhance its effectiveness further, future research should consider testing the instrument on a larger and more culturally diverse sample. Such trials would refine its sensitivity to Indonesia's rich cultural variations, potentially increasing its relevance and accuracy across different regions. This expanded validation effort could ensure that the DECA-P Adaptation remains a practical and insightful resource for understanding early childhood well-being within Indonesia's varied cultural landscape.

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