

# Identification with the Aggressor Scale (IAS) - Open-Access Manual

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Users must provide appropriate citation of the original validation study: Lahav, Y., Talmon, A., & Ginzburg, K. (2021). Knowing the Abuser Inside and Out: The Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the Identification With the Aggressor Scale. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(19–20), 9725–9748.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519872306>

For the official version of the IAS and other materials, please also cite the instrument package: Lahav, Y. (2026). *Identification With the Aggressor Scale (IAS) — Official Manual* [version 1.0]. OSF. [DOI

<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/C3JXE>]

**Translation Policy:** Those who translate the IAS are requested to share the translated version with the first author for archiving and quality purposes: [yaellah1@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:yaellah1@tauex.tau.ac.il)

## 1. Overview

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The **Identification with the Aggressor Scale (IAS)** measures **identification with the aggressor (IWA)** — a psychological process in which survivors of abuse fuse with, adopt, or internalize their perpetrator's experiences, perspectives, and behaviors (Ferenczi, 1932, 1933; Frankel, 2002).

Identification with the aggressor is understood as a defense mechanism that emerges in abusive relational contexts. Identification with the aggressor can involve multiple facets, including:

- 1. Adopting the perpetrator's experience concerning the abuse** — internalizing the perpetrator's perspective, emotions, and beliefs.
- 2. Identifying with the perpetrator's aggression** — internalizing the perpetrator's aggressive tendencies.
- 3. Replacing one's agency with that of the perpetrator** — loss of personal desires or acting according to the perpetrator's wishes.
- 4. Becoming hypersensitive to the perpetrator** — heightened awareness of the perpetrator's thoughts, feelings, and potential danger.

### Target Population:

- ▶ **Adults (18 years and older)** who have experienced abuse by another person, in any form or context.
- ▶ Examples (illustrative, not restrictive) include: childhood maltreatment, intimate partner violence, captivity, war-related abuse, or other interpersonal victimization.
- ▶ IAS can be used for any adult survivor, regardless of type, severity, or timing of abuse.

The scale is currently available in English and Hebrew, with a Korean translation.

## 2. Administration Instructions

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### Instructions for Participants:

Many individuals have experienced at least one incident in which they were threatened or harmed by another person. The following sentences describe possible reactions people may experience in interactions with their perpetrator, including when they are around them, think about them, or speak about them.

Please indicate the percentage of time you experience each reaction in regard to your perpetrator.

**Response Scale:** 0% (Never) → 100% (Always), in 10% increments: 0, 10, 20, ..., 100%

**Additional Guidelines:**

► **Reference Frame:** Before administering the IAS, researchers should define the reference frame for participants. Options include:

1. **The most severe abuse or offense** the participant has experienced.
2. **A specific incident or type of abuse** relevant to the study (e.g., childhood maltreatment).

The chosen reference frame should be inserted into the participant instructions accordingly

### 3. IAS Items

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**Important Note:**

All items are presented in their original wording. Researchers are advised not to modify item phrasing in order to preserve the psychometric properties of the scale.

#	Item
1	Some people do not know what they want in the presence of their perpetrator
2	Sometimes the needs and desires of people are similar to those of their perpetrator
3	Some people feel that the point of view of their perpetrator is the right one
4	Some people "read the thoughts" of their perpetrator
5	Some people feel "wiped out" in the presence of their perpetrator
6	Some people sense what their perpetrator needs or feels
7	Some people "get" their perpetrator accurately
8	Some people can identify when their perpetrator poses a danger
9	Some people feel that they have no desires or needs
10	Some people act just like their perpetrator would want them to act
11	Some people feel that the way their perpetrator would want them to feel
12	Some people care about their perpetrator
13	Some people understand their perpetrator
14	Some people feel that their perpetrator was right
15	Some people feel a certain pleasure from the offense
16	Some people feel emotions that are similar to those of their perpetrator
17	Some people understand their perpetrator's desire to hurt them
18	Some people believe that they are as aggressive as their perpetrator
19	Some people believe that they resemble their perpetrator
20	Some people believe that they too can be as aggressive as their perpetrator
21	Some people feel that they and their perpetrator are in fact not so different from one another
22	Some people identify with their perpetrator
23	Some people feel that they behave like their perpetrator

**Response Format:** Select the percentage of time each reaction occurs: 0%, 10%, 20%, ..., 100%.

## 4. Scoring

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### 4.1 Total Score

- ▶ **IAS Total Score:** Mean of all 23 items.
- ▶ Higher scores indicate stronger identification with the aggressor.

### 4.2 Subscale Scores

Subscale	Items	Description
<b>Adopting the perpetrator's experience concerning the abuse</b>	2, 3, 12–17, 22	Alignment of emotions, perspectives, and experiences with perpetrator
<b>Identifying with the Perpetrator's Aggression</b>	18–21, 23	Internalizing or mirroring perpetrator aggression
<b>Replacing one's agency with that of the perpetrator</b>	1, 5, 9–11	Loss of personal agency, acting as the perpetrator wants
<b>Becoming hypersensitive to the perpetrator</b>	4, 6–8	Awareness of perpetrator's thoughts, feelings, and potential danger

**Note:** Subscale scores are **calculated as the mean of the items within each factor**.

**Example:** If Subscale 1 items are scored 40, 50, 60, ..., 70 → Subscale mean = 55

## 5. Psychometric Properties

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Property	Evidence
<b>Factor Structure</b>	Four factors confirmed via EFA and CFA (n ≈ 318–368), consistent with the theoretical model
<b>Internal Consistency</b>	Cronbach's $\alpha$ high for total scale and all subscales
<b>Criterion Validity</b>	Correlates with dissociation, PTSD, trauma-related guilt
<b>External Validity</b>	Differentiates based on abuse history, severity, and perpetrator type
<b>Published Use</b>	Applied in multiple research studies and clinical samples with adults aged 18+

## 6. Practical Considerations

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- ▶ Suitable for **any adult (18+)** who has experienced abuse by another person.
- ▶ Examples (childhood maltreatment, IPV, war-related abuse) are **illustrative**, not restrictive.
- ▶ Third-person phrasing reduces stigma and encourages more candid responses, thereby minimizing social desirability bias.
- ▶ Subscale scores are calculated by **averaging items within each factor**.
- ▶ Researchers can select **specific abuse incidents** or the **most severe experience** for participant reflection.
- ▶ **Language Availability and Translation:**

The scale is currently available in English and Hebrew. A Korean version (K-IAS) has been developed and validated in a sample of individuals with a history of interpersonal violence. The translation process included forward–backward translation and equivalence evaluation procedures. The Korean version demonstrated a four-factor structure, good reliability, and evidence of convergent, discriminant, criterion-related, and incremental validity (Lim, Kim, & Hong, 2023). Notably, several items were removed during the validation process, resulting in a 19-item version.

Researchers are encouraged to consider potential cultural and structural differences when using or comparing translated versions and to ensure appropriate cultural adaptation and validation when administering the scale in new linguistic or cultural contexts.

## 7. References

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## 8. Further Reading / Additional Studies Using IAS

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	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>18</b>	Some people believe that they are as aggressive as their perpetrator										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>19</b>	Some people believe that they resemble their perpetrator										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>20</b>	Some people believe that they too can be as aggressive as their perpetrator										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>21</b>	Some people feel that they and their perpetrator are in fact not so different from one another										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>22</b>	Some people identify with their perpetrator										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%
<b>23</b>	Some people feel that they behave like their perpetrator										
	0%	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100%

**Note:** The official and citable version of the IAS is the standalone PDF file provided in this repository. This appendix is provided for reference purposes and user convenience only.

**.Contact For further questions:**

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**Final Note:** The IAS is provided as an open-access research tool. Researchers are encouraged to use, translate, and disseminate it freely, while maintaining the original item wording and response format.