

The Helping Attitude Scale

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to develop a multidimensional attitude scale which measures beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to helping. Four-hundred and eight undergraduate students took part in one of four studies used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Helping Attitude Scale (HAS).

These preliminary studies suggest that the HAS is a reliable and valid measure of helping attitudes. The results also indicated that women had a more positive attitude toward helping.

Introduction

In the study of prosocial or helping tendencies, the role of situational factors, and the measurement and observation of specific helping behaviors has dominated the field. Recently, social psychologists have considered the possibility of an altruistic or helping personality (Batson, 1991) and its influence on prosocial behavior. Is it possible to measure these helping tendencies using a self-report method? Rushton, Chrisjohn, and Fekken (1981) developed the Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA) to measure helping or altruistic traits based on the frequency of helping behaviors. However, the SRA scale focuses entirely on helping behavior and several of the SRA items are culture specific. The Helping Orientation Questionnaire (HOQ) developed by Romer, Gruder, and Lizzadro (1986) measures four helping orientations: altruistic, receptive giving, inner sustaining, and selfish. Other self-report measures have included only a subscale related to helping behavior. The purpose of the present study was to develop a multidimensional helping attitude scale which measures beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to helping using the method of summated ratings or Likert scaling.

Participants

Four-hundred and eight undergraduate students (122 males, 276 females, and 10 whose sex was not specified) took part in one of four studies used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Helping Attitude Scale (HAS). The descriptive data for these four studies are shown in Table 1.

Procedures and Results

Study 1

First, 60 statements related to helping beliefs, behaviors, and feelings were developed. These items were pre-rated in terms of being positive or negative toward helping by 45 students.

One-hundred and twenty-eight participants (54 males, 73 females, and 1 whose sex was not specified) were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) for each of the 60 items. Twenty-one of the statements were worded such that agreement indicated a negative attitude towards helping. After reversing the scores for these negative items, total scores were obtained for each participant by summing the scores on the 60 items. In addition, subjects completed the Social Desirability Scale (SDS) by Crowne & Marlowe (1964). This scale measures the tendency to answer questions that makes the participant appear in a favorable light.

The 60 attitude statements were then analyzed using the item analysis procedure outlined by Edwards (1957). Six items were excluded from the final scale based on low item-total correlations ($\underline{r} < .25$). Eight items were eliminated because their correlation coefficient with the Social Desirability Scale was .15 or higher. From the remaining 46 items, the final scale consisted of the 25 statements that best discriminated between the participants with the 25% highest and 25% lowest scores. The final version of the HAS consisted of 25 five-point Likert items, 15 expressed positive attitudes toward helping and 10 expressed negative attitudes (See Appendix A). The internal consistency for the 25 items (Cronbach's Alpha) was .869. The HAS was not significantly correlated with the Social Desirability Scale, $\underline{r}(124) = .136, p < .128$.

Study 2

The purpose of this study was to examine the test-retest reliability of the HAS. Participants were 58 students (28 males and 30 females) who completed the HAS twice, administered one month apart. Overall, a statistically significant, test-retest correlation was found, $\underline{r}(56) = .837, p < .001$.

Study 3

The objective of Study 3 was to collect evidence for the construct validity of the HAS. One-hundred and sixteen

participants (15 males, 95 females, and 6 whose sex was not specified) completed the HAS, the Self-Report Altruism Scale (SRA), the Helping Orientation Questionnaire (HOQ), and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980) which measures empathy, which includes four subscales. Each participant completed the scales in random order. As expected, the HAS was positively correlated with the SRA, $r(114) = .403$, $p < .001$.

The HAS was positively correlated with the overall total score from the IRI, as predicted, $r(114) = .362$, $p < .001$. Based on Batson's (1991) empathy-altruism hypothesis, the HAS was predicted to be strongly related to the Empathic Concern (EC) subscale. The HAS and the EC were strongly related, $r(114) = .526$, $p < .001$. HAS was also found to be related to the Perspective-Taking (PT) subscale, as predicted, $r(114) = .338$, $p < .001$. Unexpectedly, the HAS was not related to the Personal Distress (PD) subscale, $r(114) = -.019$, $p < .839$. As predicted, the HAS was not related to the Fantasy Scale (FS), $r(114) = .141$, $p < .131$.

In relation to the HOQ, the HAS was hypothesized to be positively correlated with altruistic and receptive giving orientations, and negatively correlated with the inner sustaining and selfish orientations. The HAS was strongly correlated with altruistic orientation, $r(107) = .434$, $p < .001$, and weakly

related with the receptive giving orientation, $r(107) = .154$, $p < .11$. The HAS was negatively related to inner sustaining orientation, $r(107) = -.486$, $p < .001$, and the selfish orientation, $r(107) = -.474$, $p < .001$.

Study 4

The objective of Study 4 was to collect additional construct validity data. One-hundred and six participants (25 males, 79 females, and 2 whose sex was not specified) completed the 25-item Helping Attitude Scale (HAS), the Social Responsibility Scale (SRS) (Berkowitz and Daniels, 1964), the Just World Scale (JWS) (Rubin and Peplau, 1975), and the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966). Each participant completed the scales in random order. It was expected that the HAS would be positively correlated with higher social responsibility, an internal locus of control, and higher beliefs in a just world.

As expected, the HAS was positively correlated with the Social Responsibility Scale, $r(104) = .544$, $p < .001$, internal locus of control, $r(103) = .261$, $p < .007$, and higher beliefs in a just world, $r(104) = .234$, $p < .016$.

Additional Analyses

Combining the results of the four studies, the mean score for the 25 item HAS was 97.559 with a standard deviation of 10.047. A significant sex difference was also found, $t(396) =$

7.121, $p < .001$. Women ($\underline{M} = 99.793$) had a more positive attitude toward helping than men ($\underline{M} = 92.426$).

Conclusions

Overall, the Helping Attitude Scale (HAS) is a Likert Scale developed to measure positive and negative attitudes toward helping others. These preliminary studies suggest that the HAS is a reliable and valid research instrument. Additional validity studies comparing the HAS with actual helping behaviors are needed to support the validity claims. Further studies are also needed that are based on nonstudent populations.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Helping Attitude Scale

<u>Statistic</u>	<u>Study 1</u>	<u>Study 2</u>	<u>Study 3</u>	<u>Study 4</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>N</u>	128	58	116	106	408
<u>M</u>	94.250	97.155	99.371	99.792	97.559
<u>Mdn</u>	94.000	96.000	101.00	100.00	98.000
<u>SD</u>	11.043	9.468	8.931	9.254	10.047
<u>Min</u>	42	78	69	74	42
<u>Max</u>	116	118	117	122	122