

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION SCALE OF HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOR FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Sidra Naz¹, Zahid Mahmood², Muhammad Nasar Iqbal³

ABSTRACT

The current research explored the patterns of help-seeking behavior among university students in the Pakistani cultural context. In the first phase, 10 students from 4 universities were interviewed individually to generate an item pool of 38 help-seeking behavior as experienced by them. After excluding duplication and repetition, the list of 29 items was piloted on 4 university students as a self-report measure of a 4-point rating scale (Help-Seeking Behavior Scale). Finally, by using a convenient sample technique, 300 university students (50% men and 50% women) were given the final list of 29 items. General Help Seeking Questionnaire (Wilson et al., 2005), and a demographic form was used. Principal Component factor analysis yielded a two-factor solution namely intrapersonal and interpersonal. The scale was found to have high internal consistency, convergent validity, and split-half reliability. The results are discussed in terms of the implications of help-seeking behavior for student counseling services.

Keywords. Help seeking behavior, university students, reliability

Introduction

Help-seeking behavior can be defined as any act of seeking help from trusted people or any health care providers from the community. Help-seeking behavior includes general support, guidance, understanding, and treatment while facing any stressful situation or feeling anxiety (Umubyeyi et al., 2015). There are two types of help-seeking behavior i.e. adaptive behaviors and non-adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is an active strategy in which an individual tries to overcome a difficulty. Individual insight, recognition, dimension of the problem as well as resources available to resolve the problem are some factors that can influence this strategy. On the other hand, in the non-adaptive type, even after understanding and experiencing the problem-solving mechanism, the behavior remains persistent. Some other factors can affect help-seeking behavior i.e. gender, culture, ego, and classism (Nelson-LeGall, 1981). A study demonstrated the factors which lead epically males to seek help or not. Results indicated socioeconomic status and high expectations are the stress-creating factors in men to apt in a gender-related frame (Timlin-Scalera et al., 2003). Another study explored gender and age differences which are correlated to help-seeking and negative attitudes towards help-seeking. Results suggested that old age people and females demonstrated more favorable intentions toward help-seeking (Mackenzie et al., 2006). A cross-sectional study demonstrated that young adults specifically males are less likely to seek help if they have any distress. Females who have mental distress and suicidal thoughts are more likely to seek help in both informal and formal ways. That's why gender differences should be carefully considered when it comes to suicide rate in males (Biddle et al., 2004). The theory of help-seeking behavior falls into two categories. Cepeda-Benito and Short (1998) believed in similarities in the procedure whereas Di Fabio and Bernaud (2008) argued that help-seeking behavior depends upon the nature of the problem.

1. Institute of Clinical Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore
2. Institute of Clinical Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore.
3. Department of Psychology, Lahore School of Professional Studies, The University of Lahore

Overall help-seeking behavior can be categorized in three ways i.e. attitudes i.e. readiness and trust towards help-seeking, intention or intent to seek help, and seeking help in actuality (Gulliver et al., 2012). Several models also describe mental help-seeking behavior. The first dynamic model focuses on why a younger individual does not seek help. This model defines the non-help-seeking behavior in terms of circular procedure i.e. avoidance cycle. Three factors influenced this avoidance cycle which are a person's understanding of the mental distress, their beliefs about the meaning of seeking help in society, and their action of seeking help (Biddle et al., 2007). The other model also focuses on help-seeking behavior in young individuals, This model describes the help-seeking behavior as the multi-step process which begins with a person's development of awareness regarding the problem, then the expression of the problems followed by a need for help towards other, Identification of suitable source available for the person to access and finally the intend and readiness of the person to seek help in actual and reveal the possible source of help (Rickwood et al., 2005).

A study finds out the correlation among mathematics, self-concept, intrinsic motivation, and help-seeking in adults. Results indicated that student achievement is one of the predictors of self-concept and help-seeking which is also associated with learning strategies (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2005). A systemic review identifies that younger adult when they encounter mental health issues are less prone to seek help. Formally or informally, some factors work as facilitators to seek help. Adults themselves are perceived as a facilitator of seeking help later on (Gulliver et al., 2010).

Talking about help-seeking behavior, in most research, it is observed in the relation to psych-social factors. Social support, gender, cultural norms, and personal belief are observed a lot in western studies. Most the studies assess the help-seeking behavior by asking semi-structured questions so the lack of an indigenous scale to measure the help-seeking behavior is the main objective of this study.

Method

Phase I: Item Generation

The first step in developing a scale is exploring phenomenology through in-depth interviews with university students. These phenomenological interviews were conducted at different institutes in Lahore. In total 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with students both males and females to get information about help-seeking behavior. After exploring phenomenology raw data was collected and items were generated based on information received from students. Items were generated by considering different domains of help-seeking behavior. Initially, 38 items were developed. After excluding repetitions, ambiguous, and slang statements, a list of 29 items was finalized.

Phase II: Try out

Try out phase was aimed to determine the reader-friendly comprehension level of the items, instructions, and layout of the measure. Four university students selected through a convenient sampling technique were given a newly developed help-seeking behavior scale. It took 15 minutes to complete the scale. No difficulties were reported in terms of comprehension of items and the layout of the scale.

Phase III: Main Study

The main study was aimed to determine the psychometric properties of the HSB.

Participants. The sample (N = 300) of the main study was selected from private and public sector universities in Lahore. The sample was divided into main strata according to gender and further sub-divided according to the age, institute, and educational level of the participants i.e., four years of BS Hons. (Under-graduation) including 79 (26%) from (BS-I), 74 (24%) from BS-II, 51 (17%) from BS-III, and 96 (32%) from BS-IV with an equal proportion of gender including 150 (50%) male participants and 150 (50%) female participants selected from two governments (150 [50%]) and two private (150 [50%]) sector universities. The age range of the participants was 18-30 years with a mean age of 20.78 (SD = 2.08).

Measures

Demographic Performa. It comprised of basic information about the participants including age, gender, and university type (Public or Private).

Help Seeking Behavior Scale. The newly developed HSB was used for measuring help-seeking behavior among university students. HSB comprised 29 items as experienced and expressed by university students. The instructions for HSB were “Following is a list of help-seeking behavior which people of your age experience; read each item carefully and rate the items to the extent in which you experience these behaviors”. The scoring options included (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) often, (3) very much.

General Help Seeking Questionnaire. The general help-seeking questionnaire is developed by Wilson et al. (2005) and consists of two sub-scales. One is about measuring personal or emotional issues and the second is measuring suicidal ideation with its relation to help seeking approach. According to the relevance of the study and its requirement, the subscale which is measuring personal or emotional issues is used as a part of validation for the indigenous HSB scale. It is consisted of 10 items, from 1-7 options while rating items according to the utilization of source as a way of seeking help from others.

Procedure. First of all, the brief aims and objectives were sent to the concerned authorities of the public and private sector universities. After obtaining official permission, the participants were conveniently selected for group testing averaging 50 participants in each university. The participants who agreed to participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy. They were assured that all the information would be collected for research purposes and they were also given the right to withdraw from the testing at any time. All the participants were given the final research protocol comprising demographic sheet, HSB, and GHSB. Lastly, a debriefing session was conducted at the end of each testing session. All 300 participants completed the information, therefore, no testing protocol was discarded. After data collection, SPSS 24th Version was used for data analysis.

Results

This section describes the factorial structure, reliability, and validity of the HSB.

Item Analysis

Item analysis was also carried out with the computation of item-total correlation on 29 items of

HSB. Table 1 shows a high inter-item correlation. Those items that had values less than .30 were not retained and by keeping in view these values, the items were being selected in their respective factors. The factor loadings of 29 selected items on two factors with item-total correlations are given in Table 1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found to be .82 ($p < .001$).

Table 1

Factor Loadings of Help Seeking Behavior Scale for University Students with Varimax Rotation

Sr. No	Item No	F1	F2
1	3	.40	.00
2	4	.45	.00
3	13	.47	.24
4	16	.43	.16
5	19	.58	.02
6	21	.41	.18
7	23	.52	.03
8	24	.55	.08
9	25	.67	.03
10	26	.51	.20
11	27	.49	.21
12	28	.55	.12
13	30	.44	.26
14	32	.57	.13
15	33	.62	.07
16	36	.34	.05
17	37	.51	.19
18	38	.63	.06
19	1	.00	.42
20	5	.06	.63
21	6	.11	.60
22	7	.02	.66
23	9	.04	.65
24	14	.14	.35
25	15	.03	.46
26	20	.01	.63
27	22	.12	.34
28	31	.19	.34
29	34	.01	.43
Eigen Values		5.27	3.51
% Variance		14.23	9.48
Cumulative %		14.23	23.72

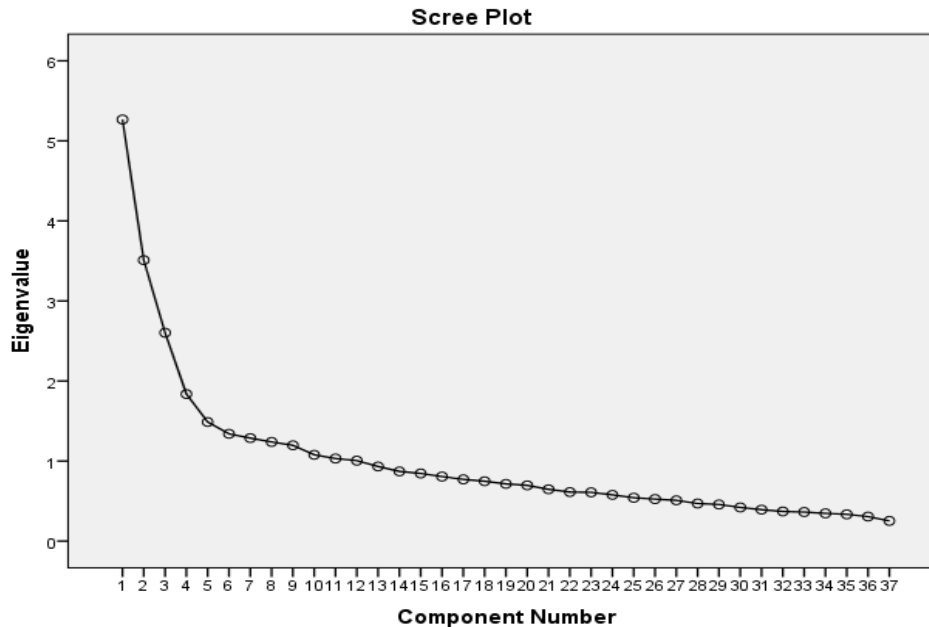
Note. Factor loading $> .30$.

The criteria for retaining items in a factor was .30 or above (Kline, 1993) and the items that had been falling within this range were retained in that particular factor. To get the best fit model 2,

3, and 4-factor solutions were also tried. The two-factor solution was found to be the best fit with minimum dubious items and a clear factor structure. Those items that had less than .30 factor loading were excluded. Also for items with dubious loading, the content of the item was considered for the appropriateness of the retention in a particular factor.

Figure 1

Scree Plot for Factor Structure Help Seeking Behavior Scale for 300 University Students



The scree plot is showing Eigen values and the number of factors that could be retained. The scree plot has helped in determining the number of factors. Kaiser-Guttman's retention criterion of Eigen values (Kaiser, 1974) revealed two factors whose Eigen value is greater than 1.

Description of Factors

Each factor was assigned a descriptive label based on commonality of themes that emerged in each factor.

F1: Intrapersonal.

The first factor is identified called "Intrapersonal Behavior, which consisted of 18 items. Example included in it are avoiding talking to others, being alone, having difficulty in decision making, avoiding the issue and being lost in thoughts.

F2: Interpersonal.

The second factor is called "Interpersonal" and consisted of 11 items. Examples including in it are trying to solve issues, accept reality, and share with others and parents as well.

Psychometric Properties of HSB

To determine the psychometric properties of HSB, construct validity, convergent validity, split-half reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha reliability were computed.

Construct validity. Table 2 indicates that Cronbach’s Alpha of HSB has good ranges similarly table 3 revealed that has a significant correlation between two factors and the total score of HSB.

Convergent validity. The convergent validity of HSB is established with GHSB (see Table 3). The correlation coefficient.

Table 2

Cronbach’s Alpha of the Help Seeking Behavior and two Factors

Scale	No. of Items	α
F1- Intrapersonal	18	.82
F2- Interpersonal	11	.72
Total Help Seeking Behavior	29	.79

Note. α = Cronbach’s Alpha

Table 2 presents the internal consistency as part of the psychometric properties of the scale. An alpha value of factor 1 of Help-Seeking Behavior is .82, an alpha value of factor 2 is .72, and .79 is the total Cronbach Alpha of Help-Seeking Behavior scale.

Table 3

Inter-correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Subscales, and General Help Seeking Behavior

Variable	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	General help seeking
Intrapersonal	-	-.43**	-.40**
Interpersonal	-	-	.39**
General help seeking	-	-	-
M	28.59	24.84	26.13
SD	8.53	4.75	6.56

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviations, ** $p < .01$

Table 3 presents the inter-correlations, means, and standard deviations of subscales of help-seeking behavior, and general help-seeking behavior. The results revealed that intrapersonal factor is negatively correlated with interpersonal factor and general help-seeking behavior while interpersonal factor is positively correlated with general help-seeking behavior.

Split-half reliability. The Odd-Even method was used to determine the split-half reliability of the HSB. The scale was divided into two halves, one comprising of all Odd 15 items (Form A) and the other of all Even 14 items (Form B). The correlation between two forms was .46 ($p < .001$). The internal consistency of Form A was .78 and for Form, B was .73.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of Help Seeking Behavior with Age

Variable	Late Adolescents (n=151)		Young Adults (n=149)		t	p<	Cohen’s d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Intrapersonal	29.81	8.57	27.35	8.34	2.51	.012**	0.29
Interpersonal	24.28	5.24	25.41	4.13	2.07	.039*	0.23

Note. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < .01$, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 4 indicates the mean differences of both factors of help-seeking behavior. The results revealed that the intrapersonal factor was found more in the late adolescent students while the interpersonal factor was found more in the young adult university students.

Table 5

Mean, Standard of Deviation and t-value of Help Seeking Behavior with Gender

Variable	Males (n=146)		Females (n=154)		t	p<	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Intrapersonal	27.41	8.56	29.70	8.38	-2.34	.020*	0.27
Interpersonal	24.95	4.89	24.74	4.61	.39	.691	0.04

Note. * $p < 0.05$, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 5 indicates that there is no significant difference between males' and female's interpersonal factors of help seeking behavior while significant its one factor which is intrapersonal and found that females have more tendencies to seek help than males.

Discussion

Talking about university students, it's a stage where individuals are passing through multiple things e.g. education, career, social circle, relationships, physical and emotional needs, gender role, and cultural norms. From children to adolescents and adults, one has to go through developmental processes e.g. cognitive, physical, emotional, and psychological. Such as in developmental psychology which basically focuses on changes and consistency and then explains such developmental changes (Baltes, et al., 1980).

This research is about the development of help seeking behavior scale for university students and finds out its validity. For this purpose, a scale was developed through the scale construction process and factor analysis was used to find out the internal consistency of the scale. The developed scale is the Help-Seeking Behavior Scale for University Students (HSB) which helps-seeking behavior in university students. Factor analysis distributed the scale into two factors. These are intrapersonal and interpersonal. These two factors show a negative correlation with each other and with the overall help-seeking behavior scale and having Cronbach's Alpha values greater than .70 that showed good reliable factors. The result shows a significant relationship. The developed scale HSB showed a negative correlation with GHSB. The results revealed that the developed scale is valid.

Talking about help-seeking behavior which is linked to biology, is also connected to the individual's social circle. Commonly, two dimensions are utilized in terms of help-seeking behavior. One is intrapersonal and the second is interpersonal. It is determined by the trait and interpersonal relationships, bonding with others, childhood experiences, and relationships with parents and siblings as well. According to the attachment theory, childhood experiences are important for the development of one's cognition, emotional aspect, relationships, and in terms of intrapersonal behaviors (Bowlby, 1969).

With the background of cultural diversity, help-seeking behavior and mental health issues vary in terms of prevalence in multiple dimensions e.g. age, gender, residency, and institute. Talking about gender and age, adolescents and females have more help-seeking behavior as compared to males in a collectivistic culture. But residency does not affect an individual's help-seeking behavior and mental health issues cause the same cultural norms and family system is shared by individuals. Help-seeking behavior is less in the joint family system because bonding and sociocultural norms or values are more preferred. Why mental health issues are less in males because they are allowed to express their emotions freely because of the association of roles and responsibilities in a collectivistic culture.

Conclusion

In a conclusion, it can be said that not a single factor is enough to explain an individual's behavior but an integrative approach. Some factors work as a predictor and some as maintaining factors. Such as help-seeking behavior which is supported or linked to personality types resulting in a ratio of mental health issues. Along with this, sociocultural factors, age, and gender are also fundamental aspects in getting an answer about a person's help-seeking behavior. Such as in research about help-seeking behavior, it was investigated that not only perception of need of help-seeking behavior but also social and biological factors are also important.

Limitations

- The sample consisted of this research was 300 university students. As it is a study of scale development, so 300 sample size is short for tool development.
- The data was collected from one province in Pakistan. It should be collected from other provinces.

Implications of the Study

Stemming from the field of counseling psychology, results must be able to utilize from least to most e.g. perception, needs, psycho-education, addressing initial signs and symptoms, assessment, management, concept formation and test development. Moreover, current study addressed possible behaviors of person of adolescents and adults because naturally there is tendency to face multiple issues. Results can be applied in field of education where students need to have counselor in their institute in order to facilitate them to get out of problematic situations. Along with this, it can be helpful in prevalence of awareness about the importance of managing early symptoms instead of waiting for serious clinical issue. It can be helpful in addressing the myths and stigmatization that a person has to face while consulting a psychologist. It can be helpful in field of counseling while dealing with the issues in terms of cultural relevance, gender difference, and importance of temperaments and individual's intrapersonal aspect in solving issues.

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