



ORIGINAL

Factor structure and psychometric properties of the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale Revised in Colombian undergraduates[☆]



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Cognitive therapy

Abstract The Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS) is a classic, 40-item measure of dysfunctional schema – a key construct of the cognitive model of depression. However, some controversy exists regarding the factorial structure of the DAS. Accordingly, a revised version of the DAS (hereafter, the DAS-R) has been recently proposed using confirmatory factor analysis and consisting of 17 items. The DAS-R contains two correlated factors: Perfectionism/Performance evaluation and Dependency. In a previous study with a Spanish sample, a hierarchical factor model with these two first-order factors and a general factor showed the best fit of the data. This study analyses the factorial structure and psychometric properties of the DAS-R in a sample of 762 Colombian undergraduates. The results were very similar to the ones obtained in the Spanish sample. The hierarchical factor structure showed the best fit of the data, and the DAS-R showed good internal consistency and discriminant and convergent validity. In conclusion, the DAS-R seems a good option to measure dysfunctional schema in Colombia. Furthermore, the replication of the hierarchical factor structure indicates that the DAS-R provides general and specific measures of dysfunctional schema that are theoretically meaningful.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Escala de actitudes disfuncionales revisada;
Depresión;

Estructura factorial y propiedades psicométricas de la Escala de Actitudes Disfuncionales Revisada en universitarios colombianos

Resumen La Escala de Actitudes Disfuncionales (DAS) es una medida clásica de 40 ítems de los esquemas disfuncionales, un constructo central en el modelo cognitivo de la depresión. Sin

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embargo, existe alguna controversia en torno a su estructura factorial. Recientemente se ha propuesto una versión revisada del DAS (de aquí en adelante DAS-R), consistente en 17 ítems, usando un análisis factorial confirmatorio. El DAS-R contiene 2 factores correlacionados: perfeccionismo/evaluación del rendimiento y dependencia. En un estudio previo con una muestra española, una estructura jerárquica con estos 2 factores de primer orden y un factor general mostró el mejor ajuste a los datos. Este estudio analiza la estructura factorial y las propiedades psicométricas del DAS-R en una muestra de 762 estudiantes universitarios colombianos. Los resultados fueron muy similares a los obtenidos en la muestra española. La estructura factorial jerárquica mostró el mejor ajuste a los datos y el DAS-R mostró buena consistencia interna y validez discriminante y convergente. En conclusión, el DAS-R parece una buena opción para medir los esquemas disfuncionales en Colombia. Además, la replicación de la estructura factorial jerárquica indica que el DAS-R provee medidas generales y específicas de los esquemas disfuncionales que son teóricamente significativas.

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Dysfunctional schemata are extremely inflexible beliefs that are the main cognitive vulnerability to depression according to the cognitive model advocated by Beck, Rush, Shaw, and Emery (1979). They are thought to be shaped by early negative life experiences, to be relatively stable, and to remain latent until the individual encounters negative events that activate them. In this case, dysfunctional schemata would skew the information processing system, leading to the production of negative automatic thoughts that constitute the cognitive triad (i.e., negative views about oneself, the world, and the future).

The measurement of dysfunctional schemata has been mainly conducted by applying the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS; Weissman & Beck, 1978). Most of the studies have relied on the total score of the DAS as a general cognitive vulnerability to depression, as exploratory factor analyses (EFA) have yielded mixed results regarding the number of factors extracted, with studies finding between two- to four-factor solutions (e.g., Cane, Olinger, Gotlib, & Kuiper, 1986; Chioqueta & Stiles, 2006; Sanz & Vázquez, 1993). Accordingly, de Graaf, Roelofs, and Huibers (2009) used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to compare the fit of the previously proposed factor structures using a Dutch version of the DAS with a very large general population sample ($N=8960$). The authors found that the two-factor solution was the most adequate fit of the data and revised the DAS by retaining 17 items of the 40 original ones. This revised version (hereafter the DAS-R) consists of two correlated factors labeled as perfectionism/performance evaluation and dependency.

De Graaf et al. (2009) recommended the use of the DAS-R because it has some advantages over the full version. First, the DAS-R showed a clearer factor structure than the DAS and possesses good psychometric properties in terms of model fit, reliability, and convergent construct validity. Second, the DAS-R can considerably shorten the administration time with respect to the full DAS scale. Lastly, the DAS-R contains two theoretically meaningful subscales that measure specific dysfunctional schemata. This constitutes an advance in the analysis of the cognitive model of depression because, according to Beck (1987), vulnerable individuals might show only specific dysfunctional schemata rather than the whole range of dysfunctional beliefs measured by the DAS.

Following the work by de Graaf, Roelofs, & Huibers (2009), Ruiz et al. (2015) analyzed the factor structure and psychometric properties of the DAS-R in a Spanish sample mostly formed by undergraduates using the DAS version by Sanz and Vázquez (1993). The DAS-R showed excellent internal consistency and discriminant and convergent validity. The same two-factor structure as in de Graaf et al.'s study was found. Further, Ruiz et al. provided evidence of a hierarchical structure with two first-order factors (perfectionism/performance evaluation and dependency) and a second-order factor that reflects dysfunctional schemata in general. This finding is particularly important because it supports the common practice of aggregating DAS items into only one score versus calculating the subscales scores. This way, researchers and clinicians have more flexibility because they can obtain a global score of the DAS-R or separate scores of its two first-order factors depending on their interests.

To our best knowledge, neither the DAS nor the DAS-R have been validated in Colombia. The current study aimed at analyzing the psychometric properties and factor structure of the DAS-R by Ruiz et al. (2015) in a Colombian sample of undergraduates ($N=762$).

Method

Participants

The sample included 762 undergraduates (age range 18-63, $M=21.16$, $SD=3.76$) from four universities of Bogotá. Forty-six percent of the sample were Psychology undergraduate students. The other majors included Law, Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics. Sixty-two percent were women. Of the overall sample, 26% of participants had received psychological or psychiatric treatment at some time, but only 4.3% were currently in treatment. Also, 2.9% of participants were taking some psychotropic medication.

Instruments

Dysfunctional Attitude Scale – Revised

(DAS-R; de Graaf et al., 2009; Weissman & Beck, 1978; Spanish version by Ruiz et al., 2015). The DAS comprises 40 items

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