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Empirical Analysis of Helping Attitudes Among Undergraduates: A Quantitative Study Using Statistical Models

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Abstract- This present research was carried out to study "Helping Attitude among undergraduate students (based on the Faculty of Technology and Faculty of Arts and Culture of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka). The objective of the study was to find out the level of helping attitude of undergraduates at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka and to compare the level of helping attitude based on their demographic variables. The sample for this study was selected using simple random sampling from the aforementioned faculties. The study was conducted on 200 undergraduate students (100 from each faculty). The age range of the participants was from 21 to 25 years. To assess the helping attitude, the standardized questionnaire named Helping Attitudes Scale (HAS) developed by Nickell, G.S (1998) was used. The 't'-test and ANOVA were the statistical analyses done for this research. Results indicated that the helping attitude of undergraduates is notable. The result also revealed that out of eight demographic variables in this study, seven variables -explicitly faculty, gender, age, father's education, mother's education, parents' occupation, and family income were significantly different with the helping attitude of undergraduates. And also, only one variable, family type, was not significantly different from the helping attitude of undergraduates.

Keywords- helping attitude, undergraduate students, father's education, mother's education, parent's occupation, and family income.

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1. Introduction

A helping attitude refers to voluntary actions intended to help others. It is about caring for others and acting to help them. Helping others can improve the positive attitude and enhance the joys. A helping attitude is the quality of an individual that benefits both parties, the giver and the receiver. It is the quality of generous concern for the welfare of others, not putting themselves first, but a willingness to give their resources like time, money, effort, advice, etc., for the benefit of others. Helping others can improve positive thoughts and positive self-esteem. Generally, people's helping attitude involves expectation or exchange of material goods as well as goodwill like service, love, and information status (Baron & Byrne, 1999).

A helping attitude is characterized by a genuine inclination to offer assistance, support, or aid to others in need without expecting personal gain or reward (Penner et al., 2005). It involves attentiveness to the needs of others, empathy, and a proactive approach to providing assistance or alleviating suffering (Sturmer & Snyder, 2010). Individuals with a helping attitude are motivated by a sense of social responsibility and a desire to contribute positively to the well-being of others (Batson, 1991). A helping attitude is the quality of an individual that benefits the giver as well as the receiver. A helping attitude is a willingness and concern for the welfare of others. It refers to voluntary actions intended to help others, maybe in lieu of money or some returns or purely selfless help. In simple words, it is caring about the welfare of other people and acting to help them. According to Nickel (1998), a helping attitude is a set of attitudes, sentiments, and actions centered around assisting others. Altruism, sometimes used as a synonym for helping behavior, is defined as activities or behaviors that are designed to assist another person (Snyder, Lopez & Pedrotti, 2011). A person can lessen a wide range of unpleasant emotions from their everyday life and enjoy assisting others when they have a positive attitude, such as a helping attitude. One feels happy when they perform acts of compassion. The more unselfish or giving, the happier he appears to be with life. Thus, it seems that helping behavior could be considered as beneficial for the person who helps because it is likely that the person who helps another person will experience the joys of helping others.

Social psychologists investigate the situations in which people volunteer their assistance to others. According to research, when there are several people around, people are less inclined to provide assistance to someone who is in need. We refer to this as the bystander effect. The social exchange theory is a tool used by some social psychologists to explain why people assist others. They contend that people are altruistic because they wish to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Helping behaviour is also explained by the social responsibility norm. A social convention known as the "social responsibility norm" dictates that people should support those in need, even at great financial expense.

Another norm that describes helping behaviour is the reciprocity norm, an unspoken social law that requires people to assist those who have assisted them. Either comparatively selfless or comparatively selfish motivations serve as the basis for helping (Baron & Byne,1999). For generations, people have believed that human behaviour is driven solely by egoism, even when it comes to assisting others. The selfish desire to pursue benefits or personal gain through a specific activity, such as lending a helping hand to others, is referred to as egoism. However, egoistic reasons always, in certain cases, account for the assisting. Conversely, empathy is an affective reaction that describes sentiments of tenderness, sympathy, compassion, and the like, or the ability to understand the situation of another person without any condition.

Most college students are young adults in transition. Emerging adulthood is the time from the end of adolescence to young adult responsibilities of a stable job, marriage and parenthood.

Emerging adulthood is defined by Arnett (2000) as a time of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, potential, and in-between feelings. When a person's intellectual, emotional, and social capacities are at their highest to handle the demands of a job, marriage, etc., it is a time of optimal mental functioning. Some psychologists draw distinctions between several phases and transitions in early to middle adulthood, which are marked by life crises or revaluations that lead to judgments on new goals or commitments. People acquire a sense of temporal constraints and revert to earlier behavioural habits in their middle age.

Adult college students today have a distinct identity and image in society. In their daily activities, social standing, self-identity, and self-image become increasingly significant concerns. Their perspective on each activity has also evolved. Humans are social creatures by nature, and because of this empathy, they will support one another in trying times. People are inherently prosocial, helpful, and selfless when they engage in social interactions with one another. It follows that the majority of people are eager to assist those in need. However, given how mechanistic human existence has become, it makes a lot of sense in the current environment to investigate positive aspects of human existence, including a helpful attitude. The positive element, or helpful attitude, will be the focus of this study.

2. Literature Review

Understanding the helping attitude among undergraduate students is crucial for assessing their potential for prosocial behaviour and community engagement. Several studies have explored various factors influencing helping attitudes in this demographic. One significant aspect is the role of empathy. Research by Eisenberg and Miller (1987) suggests that individuals with higher levels of empathy tend to exhibit a stronger inclination towards helping others. This finding implies that interventions aimed at improving empathy could potentially foster a more pronounced helping attitude among undergraduate students (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

Furthermore, social norms and peer influences play a crucial role in shaping helping attitudes. Studies by Cialdini et al. (1990) have highlighted the impact of social norms on prosocial behaviour. For undergraduate students, perceptions of peer behaviour and societal expectations regarding helping others can significantly influence their own attitudes and actions (Cialdini et al., 1990). Additionally, the relationship between self-efficacy and helping behaviour is worth exploring. Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy suggests that individuals who believe in their ability to make a difference are more likely to engage in helping behaviours. Thus, interventions aimed at boosting self-efficacy could potentially improve the helping attitude among undergraduate students (Bandura, 1977).

Moreover, cultural factors may influence helping attitudes among undergraduate students. Research by Oyserman et al. (2002) suggests that cultural background and values shape individuals' perceptions of their social responsibilities. Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for designing effective interventions to promote a helping attitude among diverse student populations (Oyserman et al., 2002). In summary, the helping attitude among undergraduate students is influenced by factors such as empathy, social norms, self-efficacy, and cultural background. Future research should continue to explore these factors and their interplay to develop comprehensive strategies for fostering a stronger helping attitude among this demographic.

Helping Attitude Based on Demographic Variables Among Undergraduate Students

Understanding the demographic factors that influence helping attitudes among undergraduate students is crucial for tailoring interventions and support systems effectively. Research has examined how variables such as faculty, gender, family type, age, parental education, parental occupation, and family income impact attitudes towards helping others. Research by Smith et al. (2015) suggests that students from different academic faculties may vary in their tendency to engage in helping behaviours. For instance, students in social sciences or humanities faculties might exhibit a stronger inclination towards altruistic actions compared to those in STEM disciplines (Smith et al., 2015).

Gender differences in helping attitudes have been explored extensively in literature. Studies by Eagly and Crowley (1986) have found that women tend to exhibit greater levels of nurturance and empathy, leading to a stronger propensity for helping behaviour compared to men. However, these differences may vary across cultural contexts and socialization processes (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

The family environment significantly shapes individuals' attitudes and behaviours. Research by Amato and Keith (1991) suggests that adolescents from intact families may demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behaviour compared to those from divorced or single-parent households. Family cohesion, communication, and support play vital roles in fostering a positive helping attitude among undergraduate students (Amato & Keith, 1991).

Age-related differences in helping attitudes among undergraduate students have been studied. While some research suggests that older students may exhibit greater empathy and altruism (Oliner & Oliner, 1988), other studies have found no significant correlation between age and helping behaviour (Liu et al., 2018).

Socioeconomic status (SES) indicators such as parental education, occupation, and family income can influence students' attitudes towards helping others. Higher SES is often associated with greater access to resources, social capital, and opportunities for engagement in prosocial activities (Piff et al., 2010). However, the relationship between SES and helping behaviour can be complex and multifaceted, influenced by factors such as values, social networks, and community norms (Piff et al., 2010).

In summary, demographic variables such as faculty, gender, family type, age, parental education, occupation, and family income can significantly impact undergraduate students' attitudes towards helping others. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions and support strategies to promote a culture of altruism and social responsibility on college campuses.

Problem Statement

In general observation, we can see that the younger generation is not willing to help other people regardless of their education level. Therefore, to ensure the reality of this observation, the present study was carried out among the undergraduates of the faculties of Arts and Culture and Technology of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka. Further, the present investigation intended to understand the significant factors influencing this behaviour.

Importance of the study

Young adulthood is a distinctive developmental period that occurs between the ages of 18 and 25 years, during which there are significant developmental tasks that allow the young adult to participate in different unique tasks. Many factors influence their behaviour, especially personal and social factors that become more important in their lives. Young adults' hoods acquire

characteristics mostly through school and society. Hence, the young people in our society reveal the utmost conflict.

As human beings are inherently sociable, capable of empathy that one person will help another when problems arise. When people interact with others in the social setting, they are prosocial, helpful, and often altruistic. Generally, people like to help others, but the contemporary, mechanical world is demolishing such attitudes. Therefore, the study of human characteristics such as helping attitude has great rational in the present milieu.

Objective

The following objectives are made for the present research.

- 1. To find the level of helping attitude of faculty of Technology and Faculty of Arts and Culture undergraduate students.
- 2. To compare the level of helping attitude of faculty of Technology and Faculty of Arts and Culture undergraduate students.
- 3. To find the level of helping attitude undergraduate students based on their gender, family type, age, father's education, mother's education, parents' occupation and family income.
- 4. To compare the level of helping attitude undergraduate students based on their gender, family type, age, father's education, mother's education, parents' occupation and family income.

Hypothesis

- H₁: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their faculty.
- H₂: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their gender.
- H₃: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family types.
- H₄: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their ages.
- H₅: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their father's education.
- H₆: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their mother's education.
- H₇: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their parent's occupation.
- H₈: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family income.

3. Methodology

Sample

The sample population was selected from the Faculty of Technology and the Faculty of Arts and Culture of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, where 200 respondents (100 each from the Faculty of Technology and Faculty of Arts and Culture) were drawn for this study using simple random sampling.

Description of the tools

The helping attitude scale developed by Nickell (1998) was used to assess the helping attitude of the participants. The personal information schedule developed by the researcher was used to collect the demographic data of the participants.

Description of Measure

A 20-item measure of respondents' beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with helping behavior. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Scoring

Items 1, 5, 8, 11, 18, and 19 are reverse-scored. The scores for each item are summed up to form an overall score ranging from 20 to 100. According to the author, a 60 is a neutral score. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively; the data was systematically compiled, tables and drawings were obtained by the software, and the results of the analysis of the data were obtained through SPSS.

4. Results of the study

Table 1 *Showing Mean, SD and t-value of undergraduate on helping attitude on the basis of faculty.*

Faculty	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	LS
Arts & Culture	100	68.13	6.263		S
Technology	100	61.07	12.937	6.303	0.01

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their faculty. The Mean, SD, and t-value computed for different faculty groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 1.

It is observed from the above table that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant at a level of 0.01(6.303). Hence, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their faculty is accepted. And also, here mean value 60 is a neutralscore. Therefore, the helping attitude of undergraduates is good. The helping attitude of undergraduates in arts and culture is (68.13) higher than that of technology undergraduates (61.07).

Table 2 *Showing Mean, SD and t-value of undergraduate on helping attitude on the basis of gender.*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	LS
Male	55	60.30	10.775		S
Female	145	63.45	11.027	2.930	0.05

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their gender. The Mean, SD and t-value computed for different faculty groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 2.

It is observed from the above table that the difference between the two groups is a statistically significant level of 0.05 (2.930). Hence, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their gender is accepted.

Table 3 *Showing Mean, SD, and t-value of undergraduates on helping attitude on the basis of family type.*

Family Type	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	LS
Joint family	171	64.76	11.268	0.494	NC
Nuclear family	29	63.66	10.251	0.494	NS

NS-Not Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family type. The Mean, SD, and t-value computed for different faculty groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 3.

It is observed from the above table that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. Hence, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family type is rejected.

Table 4 *Showing Mean, SD, and F-ratio of undergraduates on helping attitude on the basis of age*

Age	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	LS
21-22 Years	57	62.55	1.920		
23 -24 Year	127	64.60	1.042	3.236	S 0.05
25 & above	16	69.53	1.946	3.230	0.03

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their ages. The Mean, SD and F-ratio computed for different age groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 4.

The undergraduates who belong to the 25 & above age group have a mean score of (76.29) and seem to have more scores in helping attitude than other age groups. The difference among these age groups is confirmed by the F-ratio (3.236), as the computed value is significant at the level of

0.05. Hence, it is inferred that the age of the undergraduates is a factor that has a relationship with their helping attitude. Therefore, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their ages is accepted.

Table 5Showing Mean, SD and F-ratio of undergraduates on helping attitude on the basis of father's education.

Father's Edu	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	LS
Below Grade 8	68	66.78	7.572		
Grade 8 to G.C.E. (O/L)	64	65.47	12.383	2.071	S 0.05
G.C.E. (A/L)	57	61.12	12.645	2.971	
Degree & Post Graduation	11	63.78	9.536		

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their father's educational level. The Mean, SD and F-ratio computed for different age groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 5.

This study found that the father's education level had a relationship with the helping attitude of undergraduates. The undergraduate's father's educational level is below grade 8 level (66.78) and seems to have a more mean score in helping attitude than other educational groups. The difference in this father's educational level is confirmed by the F-ratio (2.971) as the computed value is significant at 0.05 levels. Hence, it is inferred that the father's educational groups of the undergraduates are a factor that influences their helping attitude. Therefore, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their father's education is accepted.

Table 6Showing Mean, SD, and F-ratio of undergraduates on helping attitude on the mother's education level.

Mother's Education	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	LS
Below Grade 8	77	68.68	6.806		
Grade 8 to G.C.E. (O/L)	70	66.27	11.118	12.826	S
G.C.E. (A/L)	45	57.02	12.219	12.020	0.01
Degree & Post Graduation	08	48.17	5.076		

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their mother's education. The Mean, SD and F-ratio computed for different age groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 6.

The undergraduate's mother's educational level is below grade 8 level (68.68) and seems to have more mean score in helping attitude than other educational groups. The difference in the mother's educational level is confirmed by the F-ratio (12.826) as the computed value is significant at 0.01 levels. Hence, it is inferred that the mother's educational groups of undergraduates are a factor that influences their helping attitude. Therefore, the stated hypothesis that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their mother's education is accepted.

Table 7Showing Mean, SD, and F-ratio of undergraduates on helping attitude on the basis of parent's occupation

Parents's Occupation	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	LS
Government Job	29	60.43	13.152		
Self-Employee	136	65.78	10.503	2.271	S
Non-Government	09	62.33	9.6.9	3.271	0.05
Foreign	26	58.43	11.953		

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their Parents's occupation. The Mean, SD and F-ratio computed for different age groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 7.

The result indicates that the undergraduates whose parents' occupation is self-employee seem to have a higher mean score (65.78) than the other groups. However, the difference among these various groups is statistically significant at 0.05 levels, established by the F-ratio (3.271). Therefore, the stated hypothesis that the undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their parents' occupation is accepted.

Table 8 *Showing Mean, SD, and F-ratio of undergraduates on helping attitude on the family income.*

Family Income (SL Rupees)	N	Mean	SD	F-Value	LS
Below 10,000	29	55.47	11.732		
11,000 – 25,000	36	65.41	12.780		

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26,000 – 50,000	69	68.11	8.090	7.975	S 0.01
51,000 - 100,000	58	64.31	10.097		0.01
Above 100,000	08	65.00	31.113		

S – Significant

Hypothesis: Undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family income. The Mean, SD, and F-ratio computed for different age groups for the scores of helping attitude are furnished in Table 7.8

The result indicates that the undergraduates whose family income is Rs. 26,000 - 50,000 seem to have a higher mean score (68.11) than the other groups. However, the difference among these various groups is statistically significant at 0.01 levels, established by the F-ratio (7.975). Therefore, the stated hypothesis that the undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family income is accepted.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

The finding of the present study revealed that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their faculty. The result indicates that the mean (68.13) score of Arts & culture undergraduates is greater than that of Technology faculty undergraduates (61.07) in their helping attitude. Similar research consistently indicates that Smith et al. (2015) suggest that students from different academic faculties may vary in their propensity to engage in helping behaviors. For instance, students in social sciences or humanities faculties might exhibit a stronger inclination towards altruistic actions compared to those in STEM disciplines (Smith et al., 2015).

Moreover, undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their gender. This study found that the mean (63.45) score of females is greater than male undergraduates (60.30) in their helping attitude. The research finding is supported by previous studies by Eagly and Crowley (1986) have found that women tend to exhibit greater levels of nurturance and empathy, leading to a stronger propensity for helping behavior compared to men. However, these differences may vary across cultural contexts and socialization processes (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

Furthermore, undergraduates significantly do not differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family types. This finding is contrary to previous research results by Amato and Keith (1991), which suggest that adolescents from intact families may demonstrate higher levels of prosocial behavior compared to those from divorced or single-parent households. Family cohesion, communication, and support play vital roles in fostering a positive helping attitude among undergraduate students (Amato & Keith, 1991).

This study found that the age of the undergraduates has a relationship with their helping attitude. The undergraduates who belong to the 25 & above age group have a higher mean score (69.53) in helping attitude than other age groups. The present study was supported by previous studies, which indicated that age-related differences in helping attitudes among undergraduate students have been studied, albeit with mixed findings. While some research suggests that older

students may exhibit greater empathy and altruism (Oliner & Oliner, 1988), other studies have found no significant correlation between age and helping behaviour (Liu et al., 2018).

This study found that the father's education level had a relationship with the helping attitude of undergraduates. The undergraduates' father's educational level is below grade 8 level (66.78) and seems to have a higher mean score in helping attitude than other educational groups. Also, this investigation found that the mother's education level had a relationship with the helping attitude of undergraduates. The undergraduate's mother's educational level is below grade 8 level (68.68) and seems to have more mean score in helping attitude than other educational groups.

The finding of the present investigation reveals that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their parent's occupation. The result indicates that the undergraduates whose parents' occupation is self-employee seem to have a higher mean score (65.78) than the other groups. This inquiry shows that undergraduates significantly differ in their helping attitude on the basis of their family income. The result indicates that the undergraduates whose family income is Rs. 26,000 – 50,000 seem to have a higher mean score (68.11) than the other groups. The present study was supported by previous findings indicating that socioeconomic status (SES) indicators such as parental education, occupation, and family income can influence students' attitudes towards helping others. Higher SES is often associated with greater access to resources, social capital, and opportunities for engagement in prosocial activities (Piff et al., 2010). However, the relationship between SES and helping behavior can be complex and multifaceted, influenced by factors such as values, social networks, and community norms (Piff et al., 2010).

Conclusion

The following conclusions were obtained from the analysis of this study. The analysis highlights notable disparities based on faculty and gender, indicating the nuanced nature of attitudes toward assisting others within educational contexts. Interestingly, family types do not seem to impact helping attitudes significantly, suggesting a potential area for further exploration. Moreover, age emerges as a factor influencing helping attitudes, alongside students' parents' educational levels and occupations. Notably, family income also plays a crucial role in shaping these attitudes. These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of undergraduates helping attitudes, shedding light on the complex interplay of individual, familial, and societal factors that contribute to their formation. Further research in this area could offer valuable insights for fostering a more supportive and altruistic academic environment.

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