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Attitudes towards social policies: from individual indicators to latent constructs**Actitudes hacia las políticas sociales:
de indicadores individuales a constructos latentes****Atitudes em relação às políticas sociais:
dos indicadores individuais aos construtos latentes**Cecilia Reyna¹, ORCID 0000-0002-6097-4961Pablo Correa², ORCID 0000-0001-7597-7180Débora Jeanette Mola³, ORCID 0000-0002-7810-2424María Victoria Ortiz⁴, ORCID 0000-0002-5923-8107¹ *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas,
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The objective of this study was to identify latent dimensions of attitudes towards social policies from a series of items commonly used in locally relevant literature on the subject. Specifically, we analysed evidence of structural validity and internal consistency of a set of 24 items on attitudes towards social policies. A total of 442 people aged 18 to 64 from Gran Córdoba (Argentina) participated. Exploratory and confirmatory (two factors, three factors, four factors, second order) models were assessed. The exploratory evidence did not provide satisfactory results. In the confirmatory analyses, the four-factor model showed an acceptable fit, with the following item clustering: targeted beneficiary-centred policies that tend towards social welfare (7 items), targeted beneficiary-centred policies that tend toward social advancement (6 items), targeted contributor-centred policies (4 items), and universal policies (7 items). All items showed factor loadings greater than .40. The internal consistency values were higher than .70. The results showed the possibility of considering latent dimensions on attitudes towards social policies. We underline the need to develop interdisciplinary and contextualized research in this regard.

Keywords: social policies; attitudes; psychometric properties; reliability and validity

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue avanzar hacia la identificación de dimensiones latentes a partir de una serie de ítems comúnmente utilizados en la literatura sobre políticas sociales con relevancia local. Específicamente, se analizó la evidencia de validez estructural y de consistencia interna de un conjunto de 24 ítems sobre actitudes hacia políticas sociales. Participaron 442 personas de 18 a 64 años del Gran Córdoba (Argentina). Se evaluaron modelos de manera exploratoria y confirmatoria (dos factores, tres factores, cuatro factores, segundo orden). La evidencia exploratoria no arrojó resultados satisfactorios. En los análisis confirmatorios el modelo de cuatro factores mostró un ajuste aceptable, con el siguiente agrupamiento de ítems: políticas focalizadas centradas en el beneficiario que

Note. The authors Pablo Correa, Débora Jeanette Mola and María Victoria Ortiz contributed equally to this study and should be considered in second order of authorship, which is why they were ordered alphabetically by last name.



tienden a la asistencia (7 ítems), políticas focalizadas centradas en el beneficiario que tienden a la promoción (6 ítems), políticas focalizadas centradas en el contribuyente (4 ítems) y políticas universales (7 ítems). Todos los ítems mostraron cargas factoriales superiores a .40. Los valores de consistencia interna fueron superiores a .70. Los resultados evidencian la posibilidad de considerar dimensiones latentes a las actitudes hacia políticas sociales. Se destaca la necesidad de desarrollar trabajos interdisciplinarios y con anclaje local en relación a la temática.

Palabras clave: políticas sociales; actitudes; propiedades psicométricas; confiabilidad y validez

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi avançar na identificação de dimensões latentes a partir de uma série de itens comumente utilizados na literatura sobre políticas sociais com relevância local. Especificamente, analisamos as evidências de validade estrutural e consistência interna de um conjunto de 24 itens sobre atitudes em relação às políticas sociais. Participaram 442 pessoas de 18 a 64 anos da Grande Córdoba (Argentina). Os modelos foram avaliados de forma exploratória e confirmatória (dois fatores, três fatores, quatro fatores, segunda ordem). Os resultados da evidência exploratória foram insatisfatórios. Em análises confirmatórias, o modelo de quatro fatores mostrou um ajuste aceitável. Esse modelo implica o agrupamento dos itens nas seguintes dimensões: políticas direcionadas ao beneficiário que tendem a cuidar (7 itens), políticas direcionadas ao beneficiário que tendem a promover (6 itens), políticas direcionadas ao contribuinte (4 itens) e políticas universais (7 itens). Todos os itens apresentaram cargas fatoriais superiores a 0,40. Os valores de consistência interna foram maiores que 0,70. Os resultados mostram a possibilidade de considerar dimensões latentes nas atitudes em relação às políticas sociais. Destacamos a necessidade de desenvolver um trabalho interdisciplinar e ancorado localmente.

Palavras-chave: políticas sociais; atitudes; propriedades psicométricas; confiabilidade e validade

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Social inequality is one of the most important problems facing contemporary societies. Latin America is one of the most unequal regions on the planet (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2018). This situation has been exacerbated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Argentina (ECLAC, 2020). Latin American governments have implemented different social policies to reduce inequality in the region (Duryea, 2016).

Finding an unequivocal definition of social policies is as complex as the problems they seek to solve. According to De Sena (2014), social policies have a direct impact on the conditions for the production and reproduction of people's lives, and desirable models of society underlie them. Herein lies the difficulty in its conceptualization. There is some consensus, however, on the method to determine eligibility for social policies. There are three main criteria: need (targeted tools or targeting, Filgueira, 2014; targeting model or social welfare policies, Home Arias, 2012; targeted social policies, Ochman, 2014), contribution (contributory models, Filgueira, 2014) and citizenship (universalism or universal policies, Danani, 2017; non-contributory universal models, Filgueira, 2014; universalism or universal policies, Home Arias, 2012).

In Argentina, different types of social policies coexist. The basis of social policies has historically been the Argentine pension system, which is related to the formal salaried employment, i.e., the contributory system. There are also universal public institutions of education and health as well as particular interventions aimed at people in vulnerable situations or those who meet specific criteria (e.g., conditional cash transfers) (Boga, 2018).

The focus of this paper is the analysis of attitudes toward universal and targeted social policies, both types have advantages and disadvantages. The debate on universalism versus targeting became relevant in the 1990s, some authors state that it was a result of the country's impoverishment and the spread of neoliberal ideas supporting the allocation of resources only to those who needed them the most, thus challenging the universal models (Danani, 2017; Home Arias, 2012).

Advocates of targeting argue that this type of policy is cost-effective, as it allows rationalizing public spending (Filgueira, 2014; Home Arias, 2012; Ochman, 2014). On the other hand, those who are against, argue that the high administrative costs generated by determining who is the deserving group of the social policy neutralize such fiscal efficiency and, in turn, such determination is often inaccurate, resulting in inclusion/exclusion errors (Garriga & Rosales, 2013; Home Arias, 2012; Ochman, 2014). In sum, defining the need is a difficult task, but demonstrating it also entails a cost, particularly for poor people who must overcome symbolic (e.g., lack of skills and abilities) and bureaucratic (e.g., paperwork, travel) barriers in order to be beneficiaries of a given policy (Ochman, 2014). Another argument against this is the stigmatization produced by being singled out as a recipient of a certain policy, which promotes processes of inequality and even fraudulent behaviour or clientelism (Filgueira, 2014; Garriga & Rosales, 2013; Home Arias, 2012).

On the other hand, universal social policies mitigate many of the disadvantages of targeted policies since they contribute to the consolidation of a sense of equality and citizen solidarity (Home Arias, 2012), promoting the goal of social cohesion (Filgueira, 2014). In turn, universalism makes middle-class people beneficiaries, which generates the necessary political support for their sustainability (Garriga & Rosales, 2013). However, although they circumvent the high administrative burdens of defining the recipient group, universalism is costly and requires a strong tax resource base (Filgueira, 2014; Home Arias, 2012).

From the psychological perspective, there is evidence that contributes to a better understanding of the support that social policies receive from citizens. For example, theoretical models have been developed on the role of altruism and its relationship with preferences for redistributive policies (Dimick et al., 2018), and the role of beliefs about inequality and their impact on support for redistributive policies (e.g., García-Sánchez et al., 2020) as well as on attitudes towards redistribution (e.g., García-Castro et al., 2022).

The study of people's attitudes towards social policies is fundamental if we consider that citizen support is essential to grant legitimacy to political action (Castillo & Olivos, 2014). Attitudes can be understood as people's assessments of a given object (Albarracín et al., 2005). In general, attitudes towards social policies have been studied as a one-dimensional construct and measured through one or a few items (e.g., International Social Survey Programme, General Social Survey, and World Values Survey). However, a recent study has investigated a structure composed by different dimensions (Cavaillé & Trump, 2015).

According to Steele and Breznau (2019), a single-item measurement of attitudes toward social policies is unreliable because it overlooks latent dimensions of redistributive policies. Along these lines, Cavaillé and Trump (2015) point out that

attitudes towards redistributive policies are not one-dimensional and comprise two broad dimensions: 1) *redistribution from*, linked to income maximization (self-oriented) whereby individuals perceive themselves as potential beneficiaries of redistribution from rich people, so they could receive material gains, and 2) *redistribution to*, linked to social affinity (other-oriented) whereby individuals perceive themselves as potential contributors to redistribution to poor people and their motives are oriented to consider others (e.g., empathy for the recipients of redistribution). In summary, these authors consider that these attitudes are empirically distinct from one another.

It should be noted that, even when social policies have been characterized as targeted or universal, centred on the contributor or the beneficiary, it is possible to observe certain targeted social policies in Argentina that promote welfare (e.g., conditional cash transfers; Bráncoli, 2021) or social advancement, improving certain living conditions (e.g., the ProHuerta food safety program; Vinocur & Halperin 2004). In this line, Home Arias (2012) points out that in Argentina the model of intervention on poverty has been built on the basis of social welfare and social advancement policies. Social welfare policies are considered as short-term, palliative measures, often associated with the delivery of material resources (in kind or cash). On the other hand, social advancement policies are characterized by generating changes at the subjective level of the recipients and are associated with non-material aspects of poverty.

In order to measure the attitudes towards these social policies, this paper recovers a series of items commonly used in the field on social policies, locally relevant, as a first approximation towards the identification of latent dimensions of the construct of interest. Therefore, we analyse evidence of structural validity and internal consistency of a set of items on attitudes towards social policies in a sample of citizens of Gran Córdoba (Argentina). This approach would be complementary to the traditional one-dimensional measurement of attitudes towards social policies.

Method

Design

The study involves an instrumental design (Montero & León, 2007).

Participants

The sample consisted of 442 people of different genders (female = 333, 75.3 %; male = 106, 24 %; other = 3, 0.7 %) aged 18-64 ($M = 38.61$, $SD = 14.23$) from Gran Córdoba (Argentina). The socioeconomic status of the individuals was marginal and lower low = 32, 7.2 %; higher low = 76, 17.2 %; lower middle = 131, 29.6 %; middle = 139, 31.4 %, higher middle and high = 64, 14.5 %.

Instruments

A set of 24 items addressing attitudes toward social policies employed in different previous studies (Alesina & Giuliano, 2009; Castillo & Olivos, 2014; Castillo et al., 2011; Cruces et al., 2013; ESS ERIC, 2018; Martín-Artiles et al., 2011; Plata, 2011; Weihua & Ye, 2017; see detail in Appendix A) was used. The items were tested among the team, particularly in terms of clarity and local relevance. The rating scale was unified. Specifically, a 5-point Likert-type response scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

In addition, socio-demographic information was collected. To calculate the socioeconomic level, the following variables were taken into account: educational level, type of occupation, ratio between the number of contributors in the household and the number

of inhabitants in the household, and health coverage (Comisión de Enlace Institucional [Argentine Institutional Liaison Commission], 2015).

Procedure

Data collection was performed within the framework of another study in which related variables not covered in this report were addressed. Participants were invited through social networks (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp) and email. People responded to an online survey available on the LimeSurvey platform and were entered into a prize draw for cash prizes as a way of encouraging participation. The database, scripts, questionnaire, and appendix are available at https://osf.io/5vhjd/?view_only=1b763e775dc0482eb72771541bd27bc5.

Data analysis

In order to analyse the underlying structure, two strategies were employed: an exploratory one, to examine the latent constructs, and a confirmatory one, to evaluate the data fit to models defined from the literature. For this purpose, the sample was randomly divided into two halves (A and B). With each sample, descriptive statistics were calculated for the different items. Factor structure analyses were conducted with sample A ($n = 221$). The sedimentation plot was considered and two- to four-factor models were estimated. The weighted least squares mean and variance adjusted (WLSMV) and also the maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) method of estimation were employed. These are the methods suggested when working with ordinal variables that admit non-normal distributions (Rhemtulla et al., 2012; Schmitt et al., 2018). Geomin rotation was employed to facilitate the interpretation of the factors (Sass & Schmitt, 2010). Tucker-Lewis index ($TLI > .95$) and comparative fit index ($CFI > .95$), root mean square error of approximation ($RMSEA < 0.05$, 90 % CI), and standardized root mean square error ratio ($SRMR, < 0.05$) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Lloret et al., 2017).

A confirmatory analytical strategy was adopted for sample B ($n = 221$). The following models were evaluated using a confirmatory approach: 1) two factors: targeted policies and universal policies; 2) three factors: targeted beneficiary-centred policies, targeted contributor-centred policies, and universal policies; 3) four factors: beneficiary-centred targeted policies tending toward social welfare, beneficiary-centred targeted policies tending toward social advancement, contributor-centred targeted policies, universal policies; 4) second-order factory analysis: a second order dimension groups together targeted policy factors from model 3, which is linked to the universal policy factor. In the confirmatory analyses, the same estimation methods and overall fit indices were used as in the exploratory analyses. Covariance was admitted between errors of the same dimension after inspection of modification indices and residual analysis. The standardized regression coefficients of the best fitting model were interpreted. Finally, internal consistency was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) and McDonald's omega coefficient (McDonald, 1970).

The programs *MPlus 7* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2011), *R 4.0.2* (R Core Team, 2018), and the *MBESS* package (v4.8, Kelley, 2007) were used.

Ethical aspects

The ethical guidelines for human research recommended by the American Psychological Association (2010) were followed. Individuals provided informed consent before completing the online survey and after receiving information about the conditions of anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntariness of participation.

Results

Descriptive analysis

The items of each sample were analysed separately. Table 1 shows the values of *M*, *SD*, skewness, and kurtosis. Appendix B shows the frequencies. As can be seen in Table 1, almost all the items presented negative skewness, which indicates medium to high degrees of agreement with the different policies. Items 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 22, and 23 showed high values of negative skewness and high kurtosis (higher by ± 1.5). Particularly, the items referring to a good job (item 11) and good education (item 14) for all showed a high degree of agreement. On the contrary, in both samples, item 6 referring to the increase in taxes for the middle class showed the lowest degree of agreement.

Factor analysis

Table 2 shows the overall fit indices for the models evaluated in exploratory and confirmatory analyses. In the exploratory models, the sedimentation graph suggested the extraction of two factors. Two-to-four-factor models were evaluated. The four-factor model estimated with WLSMV showed an acceptable overall fit. However, inspection of the factor loadings revealed a complex matrix that was difficult to interpret in theoretical terms, and the second factor did not include items with high loadings. The three-factor model, which showed an acceptable overall fit only according to some overall indicators (CFI and TLI estimated with WLSMV), also presented a complex factorial matrix, with only one item with high loadings in the third factor. Table 3 shows the factor loadings of the four-factor model with MLR estimator to demonstrate factorial complexity; similar results were obtained with WLSMV.

Regarding the confirmatory models, the four-factor model showed an acceptable fit (CFI and TLI estimated with the WLSMV method, and RMSEA estimated with MLR). Table 3 shows the factor loadings derived from the model estimated with MLR, which is very similar to that obtained with WLSMV. The model involves clustering the items into the following dimensions: targeted beneficiary-centred policies that tend toward social welfare (6 items), targeted beneficiary-centred policies that tend toward social advancement (7 items), targeted contributor-centred policies (4 items), and universal policies (7 items). The relationship between the dimensions was .47 to .89.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the attitudes toward social policy items (samples A and B)

Item	Sample A (n = 221)				Sample B (n = 221)			
	M	SD	S	K	M	SD	S	K
01. The government should reduce the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes.	3.98	1.07	-1.01	0.43	4.03	1.18	-1.13	0.41
02. The government should increase taxes on people in the upper class.	3.56	1.24	-0.59	-0.64	3.77	1.17	-0.66	-0.50
03. The government should give money to people living in poverty.	3.51	1.24	-0.47	-0.80	3.45	1.29	-0.29	-1.11
04. The government should continue to implement the Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program.	3.69	1.25	-0.87	-0.24	3.76	1.23	-0.74	-0.44
05. The government should provide decent living conditions for people who are unemployed.	4.10	0.89	-1.02	1.10	4.10	1.01	-1.06	0.62
06. The government should increase taxes for middle-class people.	2.14	0.96	0.76	0.23	2.11	0.94	0.79	0.26
07. The government should help with food for people living in poverty.	4.02	0.96	-1.20	1.41	4.11	1.00	-1.25	1.35
08. The government should guarantee food for all.	4.20	0.99	-1.42	1.82	4.18	1.03	-1.24	1.06
09. The government should continue to grant pensions to housewives.	4.18	0.98	-1.47	2.07	4.32	0.91	-1.44	1.85
10. The government should help people living in poverty to find a good job.	4.55	0.76	-2.38	7.43	4.51	0.87	-2.24	5.38
11. The government should promote a good job for everyone.	4.68	0.63	-2.90	11.64	4.60	0.74	-2.65	8.95
12. The government should reduce welfare programs (e.g., Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program, Argentina's Student Support Program).	3.21	1.36	-0.24	-1.14	3.18	1.39	-0.19	-1.19
13. The government should provide better educational opportunities for people living in poverty.	4.57	0.70	-2.07	5.79	4.58	0.75	-2.26	5.95
14. The government should provide access to good education for all.	4.72	0.53	-2.53	10.64	4.77	0.52	-3.00	13.40
15. The government should guarantee access to health care for people living in poverty.	4.59	0.62	-1.70	4.42	4.62	0.67	-2.42	8.04
16. The government should guarantee health care coverage for all.	4.54	0.77	-2.00	4.63	4.57	0.73	-2.02	4.61
17. People with higher incomes should pay higher taxes than people with lower incomes.	3.62	1.31	-0.61	-0.76	3.72	1.23	-0.75	-0.39
18. The government should facilitate access to decent housing for people living in conditions of poverty.	4.14	0.96	-1.19	1.25	4.15	1.02	-1.26	1.19
19. The government should facilitate access to housing for all.	4.31	0.96	-1.57	2.10	4.30	0.97	-1.56	2.19
20. The government should facilitate transportation for people living in poverty.	4.04	1.02	-1.09	0.77	4.13	0.97	-0.97	0.35
21. The government should promote better transportation for all.	4.60	0.65	-1.89	4.13	4.60	0.68	-2.31	7.32
22. The government should generate better job opportunities for people living in poverty.	4.50	0.69	-1.80	5.20	4.47	0.82	-1.75	3.22
23. The government should provide better public services for all.	4.68	0.55	-2.33	9.85	4.68	0.62	-2.80	11.46
24. The government should invest more in helping people living in poverty.	4.05	0.97	-0.90	0.41	4.00	1.06	-0.99	0.47

Note. *The rating for item 12 was inverted to calculate the *M* and *SD* values, and for all subsequent analyses.

Table 2*Overall fit indices for exploratory and confirmatory models of the attitude toward social policy items*

Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA (CI 90%)	CFI	TLI	SMRS
Exploratory (sample A, $n = 211$)						
Two factors - WLSMV	696,553	229	0.096 (0.088-0.104)	0,934	0,921	0,064
Two factors - MLR	616,811	229	0.088 (0.079-0.096)	0,798	0,757	0,058
Three factors - WLSMV	542,537	207	0.089 (0.077-0.094)	0,953	0,937	0,057
Three factors - MLR	598,091	207	0.092 (0.084-0.101)	0,797	0,729	0,049
Four factors - WLSMV	439,578	186	0.079 (0.069-0.088)	0,964	0,947	0,049
Four factors - MLR	432,580	186	0.077 (0.068-0.087)	0,872	0,810	0,043
Confirmatory (sample B, $n = 211$)						
1) Two factors - WLSMV	719,912	243	0.094 (0.086-0.102)	0,938	0,929	
1) Two factors - MLR	565,222	244	0.077 (0.069-0.086)	0,814	0,789	
2) Three factors - WLSMV	726,276	246	0.094 (0.086-0.102)	0,937	0,930	
2) Three factors - MLR	544,901	243	0.075 (0.067-0.083)	0,825	0,801	
3) Four factors - WLSMV	664,246	245	0.088 (0.080-0.096)	0,945	0,939	
3) Four factors - MLR	521,663	242	0.072 (0.064-0.081)	0,838	0,815	
4) Second order - WLSMV	746,407	247	0.096 (0.088-0.104)	0,935	0,927	
4) Second order - MLR	558,418	245	0.076 (0.068-0.084)	0,818	0,795	

Note. Confirmatory models: 1) Two factors: targeted policies and universal policies; 2) Three factors: targeted beneficiary-centred policies, targeted contributor-centered policies, and universal policies; 3) Four factors: beneficiary-centred targeted policies tending toward social welfare, beneficiary-centred targeted policies tending toward social advancement, etc., contributor-centred targeted policies, universal policies; 4) Second order: a second order dimension groups together targeted policy factors from model 3 and is linked to the universal policy factor.

Table 3*Exploratory and confirmatory factor loadings of attitudes towards social policies items and internal consistency indices*

Item	Exploratory model: Four factors (MLR)				Confirmatory model: Four factors (MLR)			
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F1	F2	F3	F4
01. The government should reduce the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes.	.592*	.091	.081	.024			.581	
02. The government should increase taxes on people in the upper class.	.714*	.062	.030	-.144			.818	
03. The government should give money to people living in poverty.	.737*	-.017	.036	.019	.752			
04. The government should continue to implement the Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program.	.803*	-.185	.060	.010	.774			
05. The government should provide decent living conditions for people who are unemployed.	.529*	-.024	.176	.108	.813			
06. The government should increase taxes for middle-class people.	.691*	-.148	-.138	.051			.437	
07. The government should help with food for people living in poverty.	.366*	.295*	-.111	.090	.627			
08. The government should guarantee food for all.	.301*	.200	.194	.192				.607
09. The government should continue to grant pensions to housewives.	.473*	.132	.125	.002	.585			
10. The government should help people living in poverty to find a good job.	.077	.102	.309*	.047		.428		
11. The government should promote a good job for everyone.	.056	.236	.443*	.038				.541
12. The government should reduce welfare programs (e.g., Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program, Argentina's Student Support Program).	.791*	-.072	-.018	-.005	.707			
13. The government should provide better educational opportunities for people living in poverty.	-.042	.739*	-.011	.270*		.518		
14. The government should provide access to good education for all.	.091	.720*	.161	-.033				.518
15. The government should guarantee access to health care for people living in poverty.	.203*	.334*	.182	.102		.632		
16. The government should guarantee health care coverage for all.	.025	.218	.570*	.008				.657
17. People with higher incomes should pay higher taxes than people with lower incomes.	.706*	.060	-.129	-.061			.667	

Item	Exploratory model: Four factors (MLR)				Confirmatory model: Four factors (MLR)			
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F1	F2	F3	F4
18. The government should facilitate access to decent housing for people living in conditions of poverty.	.208	-.001	.034	.767*		.756		
19. The government should facilitate access to housing for all.	-.015	-.159	.637*	.349*				.673
20. The government should facilitate transportation for people living in poverty.	.149	.029	.040	.717*		.757		
21. The government should promote better transportation for all.	.000	.032	.711*	.045				.614
22. The government should generate better job opportunities for people living in poverty.	-.013	.519*	.038	.394*		.690		
23. The government should provide better public services for all.	-.012	.285	.660*	-.061				.675
24. The government should invest more in helping people living in poverty.	.427*	.178*	-.067	.426*		.822		
Correlations								
F2	.362*				.885			
F3	.302*	.395*			.824	.626		
F4	.595*	.335*	.403*		.653	.790	.466	
Reliability								
Cronbach's Alpha					.861 (.832-	.853 (.817-	.710 (.630-	.794 (.741-.887)
McDonald's Omega					.874 (.849-	.862 (.831-	.736 (.672-	.801 (.751-.899)

Note. All values in the confirmatory model and asterisked values in the exploratory model are significant at a p -value < .05.

Internal consistency analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the internal consistency analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega values are above .80 for factors 1 and 2, and above .70 for factors 2 and 3, which indicates good internal consistency properties.

Discussion and Conclusions

The study of attitudes towards social policies contributes to the understanding of their support by citizens and their continuity over time. This research builds on a set of items collected in the literature on social policies relevant to the context in order to move towards the identification of latent dimensions. Thus, this is a complementary approach to the classic study based on single items.

In descriptive analyses prior to exploring the underlying dimensionality, a high level of agreement towards the different social policies was observed. The lower degree of agreement shown by item 6 ("The government should increase taxes for middle-class people") may be associated with the high percentage of participants of that socioeconomic level in conjunction with the perception of people belonging to the middle class (Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica [Latin American Strategic Center for Geopolitics], 2020; Elbert et al., 2020). In turn, the high degree of agreement in relation to item 14 that alludes to educational policies ("The government should provide access to a good education for all") is noteworthy, a policy that is constituted as a way par excellence to reduce inequality (Tedesco, 2017).

The exploratory analyses did not provide acceptable overall fits. For the confirmatory analyses, dimensions that are commonly used to characterize social policies (targeted and universal) were considered. Furthermore, dimensions that facilitated the distinction between targeted policies focused on the beneficiary or on the contributor (Cavaillé & Trump, 2015) were taken into account. The whole research was framed within the particularities of the local context (targeted policies focused on the beneficiary that tend toward social welfare or social advancement, Home Arias, 2012).

The four-dimensional confirmatory model yielded an acceptable fit in most of the overall indicators considered, with the WLSMV estimator in CFI and TLI, and with MLR in RMSEA. This model distinguishes the following dimensions: targeted beneficiary-centred policies tending toward social welfare, targeted beneficiary-centred policies tending toward social advancement, targeted contributor-centred policies, and universal policies. All dimension items showed factor loadings above .40. The evidence of internal consistency is adequate or acceptable (above .80 or .70, respectively).

The multidimensionality would allow the assessment of individual differences in relation to social policies (García-Muniesa, 2019). In this sense, a person could agree with social advancement targeted policies but not with targeted social welfare policies. This type of evaluation would be a complementary way of analysing people's attitudes towards particular policies.

This work is not exempt from limitations. The first and foremost is that items were retrieved from different surveys that do not respond to a single model or theoretical perspective. Future studies could advance in the development of an instrument that assesses attitudes towards social policies in multidimensional terms in order to achieve a more comprehensive conceptualization of the construct. The second limitation, of a methodological nature, refers to the type of sampling employed, given that, being non-probabilistic, it makes it difficult to generalize the results. Thirdly, the lack of interdisciplinarity in the field of social policy measurement adversely impacts this work.

Psychology, Sociology or Political Science address its study, but exchanges between them have rarely been generated, which generates confusion or lack of coherence between theoretical and empirical advances (Steele & Breznau, 2019). The present study tackles attitudes towards social policies from a particular branch of psychology, psychometrics. Although considered a valuable contribution, interdisciplinary work will hopefully allow us to overcome the difficulties in each discipline and achieve a better understanding of the construct of interest.

Finally, it should be noted that the study on attitudes towards social policies should be conducted considering that they are relative and dependent on the political, economic, and social systems of each country (e.g., the attitudes of citizens towards social policies vary in societies such as the United States or those of the Nordic countries; Steele & Breznau, 2019). Therefore, the situated evaluation of this construct considering the particularities of each context is important. This point cannot be ignored in Latin American countries, where social policies have been implemented as a way to reduce historical inequality.

In summary, this paper advances the understanding of attitudes toward social policies by seeking to identify singular dimensions of a complex construct. Recognizing the strong dynamic component of this construct, linked to the spatio-temporal characteristic of social policies, this study contributes not only to the field of study of social policies, but also constitutes available evidence to guide the political actions of governments.

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Appendix A. Items about attitudes toward social policy

Item	Origin
01. The government should reduce the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes.	Castillo & Olivos (2014); Martín Artiles et al. (2011); Plata (2011).
02. The government should increase taxes on people in the upper class.	Castillo & Olivos (2014); Plata (2011).
03. The government should give money to people living in poverty.	Castillo et al. (2011); Cruces et al. (2012).
04. The government should continue to implement the Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program.	Castillo et al. (2011); Martín Artiles et al. (2011).
05. The government should provide decent living conditions for people who are unemployed.	Based on Martín Artiles et al. (2011).
06. The government should increase taxes for middle-class people.	Plata (2011).
07. The government should help with food for people living in poverty.	Castillo et al. (2011); Cruces et al. (2012).
08. The government should guarantee food for all.	Based on Castillo & Olivos (2014).
09. The government should continue to grant pensions to housewives.	Based on Martín Artiles et al. (2011).
10. The government should help people living in poverty to find a good job.	Castillo et al. (2011); Cruces et al. (2012).
11. The government should promote a good job for everyone.	Based on Castillo & Olivos (2014).
12. The government should reduce welfare programs (e.g., Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program, Argentina's Student Support Program).	Based on Weihua & Ye (2017).
13. The government should provide better educational opportunities for people living in poverty.	Martín Artiles et al. (2011).
14. The government should provide access to good education for all.	Based on Castillo & Olivos (2014).
15. The government should guarantee access to health care for people living in poverty.	Based on European Social Survey (2018).
16. The government should guarantee health care coverage for all.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009); Castillo et al. (2011).
17. People with higher incomes should pay higher taxes than people with lower incomes.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).
18. The government should facilitate access to decent housing for people living in conditions of poverty.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).
19. The government should facilitate access to housing for all.	Based on Castillo & Olivos (2014).

Item	Origin
20. The government should facilitate transportation for people living in poverty.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).
21. The government should promote better transportation for all.	Castillo & Olivos (2014).
22. The government should generate better job opportunities for people living in poverty.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).
23. The government should provide better public services for all.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).
24. The government should invest more in helping people living in poverty.	Based on Alesina & Giuliano (2009).

Appendix B. Descriptive statistics

Table B1

Frequency of the attitudes toward social policy items: sample A (n = 211)

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
01. The government should reduce the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes.	8	3.62%	15	6.79%	36	16.29%	76	34.39%	86	38.91%
02. The government should increase taxes on people in the upper class.	18	8.14%	29	13.12%	43	19.46%	73	33.03%	58	26.24%
03. The government should give money to people living in poverty.	17	7.69%	34	15.38%	46	20.81%	67	30.32%	57	25.79%
04. The government should continue to implement the Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program.	21	9.50%	21	9.50%	28	12.67%	87	39.37%	64	28.96%
05. The government should provide decent living conditions for people who are unemployed.	3	1.36%	9	4.07%	32	14.48%	97	43.89%	80	36.20%
06. The government should increase taxes for middle-class people.	59	26.70%	98	44.34%	42	19.00%	18	8.14%	4	1.81%
07. The government should help with food for people living in poverty.	6	2.71%	13	5.88%	24	10.86%	105	47.51%	73	33.03%
08. The government should guarantee food for all.	7	3.17%	8	3.62%	25	11.31%	75	33.94%	106	47.96%
09. The government should continue to grant pensions to housewives.	7	3.17%	10	4.52%	18	8.14%	88	39.82%	98	44.34%

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
10. The government should help people living in poverty to find a good job.	4	1.81%	1	0.45%	9	4.07%	62	28.05%	145	65.61%
11. The government should promote a good job for everyone.	2	0.90%	2	0.90%	2	0.90%	52	23.53%	163	73.76%
12.* The government should reduce welfare programs (e.g., Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program, Argentina's Student Support Program).	47	21.27%	56	25.34%	48	21.72%	36	16.29%	34	15.38%
13. The government should provide better educational opportunities for people living in poverty.	2	0.90%	1	0.45%	12	5.43%	59	26.70%	147	66.52%
14. The government should provide access to good education for all.	1	0.45%	0	0.00%	3	1.36%	51	23.08%	166	75.11%
15. The government should guarantee access to health care for people living in poverty.	1	0.45%	0	0.00%	10	4.52%	67	30.32%	143	64.71%
16. The government should guarantee health care coverage for all.	2	0.90%	4	1.81%	13	5.88%	56	25.34%	146	66.06%
17. People with higher incomes should pay higher taxes than people with lower incomes.	21	9.50%	27	12.22%	41	18.55%	59	26.70%	73	33.03%
18. The government should facilitate access to decent housing for people living in conditions of poverty.	5	2.26%	9	4.07%	31	14.03%	80	36.20%	96	43.44%
19. The government should facilitate access to housing for all.	4	1.81%	13	5.88%	14	6.33%	69	31.22%	121	54.75%
20. The government should facilitate transportation for people living in poverty.	6	2.71%	15	6.79%	29	13.12%	86	38.91%	85	38.46%

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
21. The government should promote better transportation for all.	0	0.00%	5	2.26%	5	2.26%	63	28.51%	148	66.97%
22. The government should generate better job opportunities for people living in poverty.	2	0.90%	1	0.45%	10	4.52%	79	35.75%	129	58.37%
23. The government should provide better public services for all.	1	0.45%	1	0.45%	0	0.00%	64	28.96%	155	70.14%
24. The government should invest more in helping people living in poverty.	4	1.81%	11	4.98%	42	19.00%	78	35.29%	86	38.91%

Note. *N* = absolute frequency. % = percentage of people who chose each option. * The score of item 12 was inverted to calculate the values of *M* and *SD*, and for all subsequent analyses.

Table 3*Frequency of the attitudes toward social policy items: sample B (n = 211)*

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
01. The government should reduce the gap between those with higher incomes and those with lower incomes.	13	5.88%	12	5.43%	36	16.29%	55	24.89%	105	47.51%
02. The government should increase taxes on people in the upper class.	10	4.52%	25	11.31%	47	21.27%	62	28.05%	77	34.84%
03. The government should give money to people living in poverty.	16	7.24%	45	20.36%	46	20.81%	51	23.08%	63	28.51%
04. The government should continue to implement the Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program.	15	6.79%	22	9.95%	44	19.91%	60	27.15%	80	36.20%
05 The government should provide decent living conditions for people who are unemployed.	5	2.26%	12	5.43%	36	16.29%	72	32.58%	96	43.44%
06. The government should increase taxes for middle-class people.	59	26.70%	103	46.61%	37	16.74%	19	8.60%	3	1.36%
07. The government should help with food for people living in poverty.	7	3.17%	9	4.07%	30	13.57%	81	36.65%	94	42.53%
08. The government should guarantee food for all.	7	3.17%	7	3.17%	38	17.19%	57	25.79%	112	50.68%
09. The government should continue to grant pensions to housewives.	3	1.36%	9	4.07%	22	9.95%	68	30.77%	119	53.85%
10. The government should help people living in poverty to find a good job.	5	2.26%	5	2.26%	10	4.52%	54	24.43%	147	66.52%

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
11. The government should promote a good job for everyone.	4	1.81%	1	0.45%	7	3.17%	55	24.89%	154	69.68%
12.* The government should reduce welfare programs (e.g., Universal Child Benefit for Social Protection Program, Argentina's Student Support Program.	50	22.62%	48	21.72%	51	23.08%	35	15.84%	37	16.74%
13. The government should provide better educational opportunities for people living in poverty.	2	0.90%	5	2.26%	8	3.62%	54	24.43%	152	68.78%
14. The government should provide access to good education for all.	1	0.45%	0	0.00%	4	1.81%	39	17.65%	177	80.09%
15. The government should guarantee access to health care for people living in poverty.	2	0.90%	2	0.90%	6	2.71%	58	26.24%	153	69.23%
16. The government should guarantee health care coverage for all.	1	0.45%	5	2.26%	10	4.52%	55	24.89%	150	67.87%
17. People with higher incomes should pay higher taxes than people with lower incomes.	16	7.24%	23	10.41%	40	18.10%	70	31.67%	72	32.58%
18. The government should facilitate access to decent housing for people living in conditions of poverty.	7	3.17%	9	4.07%	32	14.48%	69	31.22%	104	47.06%
19. The government should facilitate access to housing for all.	6	2.71%	7	3.17%	24	10.86%	62	28.05%	122	55.20%
20. The government should facilitate transportation for people living in poverty.	3	1.36%	12	5.43%	38	17.19%	69	31.22%	99	44.80%

Item	Totally disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Totally agree	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
21. The government should promote better transportation for all.	2	0.90%	2	0.90%	7	3.17%	60	27.15%	150	67.87%
22. The government should generate better job opportunities for people living in poverty.	2	0.90%	6	2.71%	16	7.24%	60	27.15%	137	61.99%
23. The government should provide better public services for all.	2	0.90%	1	0.45%	3	1.36%	54	24.43%	161	72.85%
24. The government should invest more in helping people living in poverty.	8	3.62%	11	4.98%	43	19.46%	70	31.67%	89	40.27%

Note. *N* = absolute frequency. % = percentage of people who chose each option. * The score of item 12 was inverted to calculate the values of *M* and *SD*, and for all subsequent analyses.