

A STUDY OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AMONG THE UNDERGRADUATES OF GOVT DEGREE COLLEGE WOMEN ANANTNAG

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ABSTRACT

The current research paper explores superstitious beliefs among the undergraduate students of GDC Women Anantnag. The study which was descriptive in nature and was conducted on 200 Students, out of which 100 belonged to Arts Stream and 100 belonged to Science Stream. The students were sampled by using simple random technique (Lottery Method). Data were collected by using a non-standardized self-developed tool. The data were analyzed by t- test. The major finding of the study revealed that superstitious beliefs of undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag were independent of stream.

Key Words: Superstitious Beliefs, Simple Random Sampling, t-test.

INTRODUCTION:

The Longman's dictionary of English language (1984) defines superstition as a belief or practice resulting from ignorance fear of unknown trust in the magic or changes or miss understanding of cause and effect and an irrational object attitude of

the mind towards the supernatural nature of god resulting from superstition. Further New Columbia encyclopaedia (William, 1975) describes it as an irrational belief or practice resulting from ignorance or fear of the unknown. The validity of superstitions is based on the belief

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in the power of magic and witchcraft and in such invisible forces as spirits and demons. In the words of Halsey and Louis (1977) superstitions is an irrational belief based on assumptions that are without bases in scientific fact or in religious doctrine. Peter (1979) added that it may involve either belief or half belief. In the words of Voltaire (1984) “Superstition is to religion what astrology is to astronomy the made daughter of a wise mother. These daughters have two long dominated the earth.” Superstition is a belief in supernatural causality; that one event leads to the cause of another without any physical process linking the two events, such as astrology, omens, witchcraft, etc. that contradicts natural science. (Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1982). For example, some superstitious people believe that if a black cat crosses their path, they will have bad luck. Others believe that dropping of glass or other utensils on the floor means guests are coming. It is not only difficult but impossible to find a person on earth having no superstitious belief. Most people in the modern world very vehemently deny that they are superstitious. Are their denials always sincere and true? No, never. All are superstitious. There is a difference of degree only.

TYPES OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS:

There are different types of superstitious beliefs, which have been discussed under;

- Some superstitions deal with important events in a person’s life. Birth, marriage, pregnancy and death are important events in our life. Superstitious associated with

such events supposedly ensure that a person will pass safely from one stage of life to the next.

- Some superstitions involve type of magic. For example number 7 means lucky, and number 3 is unlucky. Among the Muslims 786 is a lucky number. According to Japanese belief, a sick person should be given a potted plant instead of cut flowers. A live plant represents hope for the patient’s recovery, but cut flowers are dead and soon wither.
- There are number of superstitions which involve someone’s taking a deliberate action to cause something to happen or prevent something from occurring. These causal superstitions involve making something good happens or to ensure good luck and avoid bad luck. For example, many people avoid shaving on Thursday. Some people do not start a trip on Wednesday. Christians avoid number 13 etc.
- Some superstitions fall in the category of foretelling on even without any conscious action by the person involved. For example, a howling dog means someone’s death is near.

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS IN INDIAN SOCIETY:

Superstitions are by and large, the result of ignorance. Such beliefs though odd and absurd, governed the lives of primitive people and were

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generally associated with backwardness and lack of education. Blind faith in certain practices, stemming from the fear of displeasing Gods and Goddesses and incurring their wrath, continued to be a feature of social life for centuries. It is not an easy task to give a clear picture of the superstitious belief of the peoples living in India

even in this modern day and age. People of India continue to uphold beliefs and values passed down through generations due to the mythological dominance over the major part of culture and routine life of individual. Some of the major superstitious beliefs which are prevalent in Indian Societies are:

1. Warding off evil with Lemon and Chillies:



Hanging a lemon and seven chillies strung together in the house at the front door or under the front bumper of your vehicle to protect against an evil eye and spirits is one of the most common superstitious beliefs in India. It is believed to have some scientific reason too, as to why this Indian superstition is practised. It's said that lemon and chillies work as effective natural pesticides and natural antibacterial, thus protecting the home or whichever environment it is hung in.

2. Adding one Rupee to a Gift:



birthdays to weddings and festivals. A one rupee coin is added to the total amount, for it's considered auspicious. This Indian superstition is especially relevant when it comes to gifting cash as a wedding gift.

In some parts of India, it is believed that if you give round figures like INR 500/1000 it signifies an end, but the added 1 rupee signifies that you wish the person to continue to get wealthy. In some other parts, this particular superstitious belief tends to involve superstitious mathematics. For a wedding gift, it is believed that a number not divisible by two means that the remainder of the equation

Giving cash as gifts is common practice in various Indian occasions, ranging from

brings the couple together. However, an even number leaves no remainder when divided by

3. Curd before going out:



One of the most common Indian superstitions is to have a spoonful of curd with a little sugar before going out or embarking on a new

4. The Mynah Chronicles:



2, and would, therefore, represent a nullifying metaphor of the marriage.

journey to guarantee good luck. It is believed that the sweet starting note makes any task *shubh or good* and the day goes well. The root of this Indian superstition of having *dahi-shakkar or curd with sugar* might be related to the tropical climate—where eating curd has a cooling effect on your digestive system, while sugar adds energy.

While the Indian superstition of spotting a specific number of mynah birds or magpies might have originated from a British superstition, its origins cannot be determined. Seeing one common mynah bird is believed to bring bad luck, but seeing a couple of them is supposed to bring good luck. There is a bonus: If you see six of them together, it means you are going to receive some money.

5. No Cleaning the House after Sunset:



Cleaning or sweeping the house after sunset is believed to scare off the Hindu goddess of wealth Lakshmi. There is some simple logic behind this Indian superstition. When it originated, there was no electricity, so it was a matter of practicality to have finished all the housework in daylight when everything was visible.

6. Cutting Hair and Nails after Sunset:



Another one of the most common superstition in India determines when to cut your hair and nails. If you cut your nails and hair on Thursdays and Saturdays it is said to bring bad luck. It is believed that such an act angers the planet Saturn (Shani), bringing on misfortune. In some parts of India, cutting your nails after sunset is also considered bad luck.

7. Kaajal Dot on Baby's Forehead



The evil eye is a big deal in India. Therefore, Indians use different methods (or practices) to avoid it. The belief that even toddlers can be the victim of an evil eye spurs a superstition that calls for protection. In order to prevent unfortunate accidents, a lot of infants in India have a small spot (or several) of kaajal on their forehead and/or cheeks, even under their feet. Sometimes their eyes are lined with black kaajal too. This is supposed to ward off the evil eye.

8. Omitting the Thirteen Floor



This isn't just among the superstitions in India, fear of the number 13 is a common superstition around the world. It's said to have originated from the fact that Jesus' 13th disciple Judas was the one who betrayed him. It has trickled down to India too, along with the advent of Christianity. So much so that certain airlines often leave the 13th row in flights empty, while some hotels are built without labelling the 13th floor.

9. Upside down slippers



In some Indian households, it is believed that leaving your flip-flops turned upside down will bring bad luck.

10. Eye Twitching



Eye twitching is related to your destiny according to Indian superstitions. But, it also depends, which eye twitches as well as your gender. A twitching right eye brings good luck for men, while a twitching left eye brings good news for women.

11. Black Cat crossing the Road



A black cat crossing your path is meant to signal that tasks get delayed or postponed. To reverse it, a passer-by must spit, and drivers must make short crosses on the right side of their windshield. Some even wait till others walk by so that they are saved, the logic behind this is that the others will bear the brunt of the ‘curse’.

12. Don't step out during an eclipse



According to Indian superstitions, observing the sun during a solar eclipse should be avoided. Doing so may cause retinal burns or eclipse blindness. It is also suggested to not consume anything during the celestial event. Pregnant women are advised to remain indoors during the entire time as well.

13. Breaking a Mirror



According to this superstition, if a mirror breaks, it means seven years of bad luck. The curse can only be nullified if one takes the pieces outside and buries them under the moonlight. Also, if an undisturbed mirror in a house suddenly falls and smashes, it means that there will soon be a death.

GENERAL SUPERSTITIONS AMONG THE STUDENTS

The most common Superstitious beliefs among the students include;

- Crossing your fingers before the start of the exam or before the declaration of the result is the most common superstition during exams.
- If you wear the clothes that your sister has purchased for herself during exam days it will bring good fate
- Not shaving during exams is considered another charm.
- If the first paper goes well one shouldn't change anything about his or her looks.
- There are also certain exam clothes. Wearing the same pair of jeans in all exams or the same sweater helps in getting good results.
- Using the same pen in all exams is another popular belief. According to this belief if you use someone else's pen or some different pen then your paper will not go well.
- Then there are exam pens. Some are the big, fluffy pink variety or the one that has been blessed by the priest.
- Some students arrive early to an exam to sit in certain places in the hall where they feel lucky.
- Others sleep with the textbook under their pillow, hoping to absorb information while sleeping.

- Some believe that a coin in the left sock, touching the sole of the foot, will help reduce tension before an exam.
- Entering the college from the same entrance establishes a good flow of good luck. Entering from any other entrance will bring bad luck.
- While filling personal particulars like roll no. etc., if you make a mistake your paper will not go well.

Causes of Superstitions among Students

- **Fear of Examinations:** With the semester's exams in full swing, students are not just indulging in last-minute cramming and borrowing notes, they're also turning to rituals and superstitions to help them pass the exams with flying colours. Student superstitions have always been motivated by the same thing: fear of the unknown. According to various researches made over the years, it has been established that superstition is tied to anxiety. And it tends to be readily communicated by the young mind. Examination season brings about out a host of strange behaviours amongst them. Students would start to avoid any cracks in the gym floor, cutting hair short to let the knowledge flow freely, growing hair long to keep the knowledge in while others focused on eating certain food during exams for success.
- **Lucky Experiences:** Most of the superstitions are based on indulging in a

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certain pattern of behaviour which is a result of experiencing success while indulging in them on earlier occasions. Like a certain student who was not good at mathematics, happened to wear black clothes on the D-day and he happened to have a good go at the exam. Or some student who as a kid remembers eating orange ice-cream bringing good result just before his test which became a norm for him in due course of time. It can also be a person with whom if you stick along until entering the exam room will result in an easy paper are some of the examples.

- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:** It is a type of mental disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts that produce anxiety, by repetitive behaviours aimed at reducing anxiety, or by combinations of such thoughts (obsessions) and behaviours (compulsions). These behaviours have also been found a remedy to beat exam blues by the students.
- **Foreign or Outstation Students:** Many students who are immigrants to English speaking countries from all corners of the globe tend to find a support in the foreign land. More often than not they tend to end believing in local superstitions. These divergent backgrounds also provide fertile ground for stimulating discussions of superstition and belief.
- **Study of Tradition and Culture:** Our traditions and cultures are full of stories

like that of fairy, vampires, werewolf's etc. that they create a long-lasting impact on minds which have been exposed to such beliefs since childhood. Certain stories are just made up by parents in order to make their children obedient towards them.

- **Role of T.V:** Certain T.V. programmes are totally focussed on witches, vampires, werewolf's, demons etc. These confuse the students as to what is the exact reality. Real life like effects used in these affirms the young minds believe in these things. News channels also play a big role in making a mound out of a molehill. Repetitive and the mere fact that those dealing in information are themselves promoting superstitions in the name of TRP makes believe in them even more.
- **Superstition Based Movies:** There is no dearth of movies which are based on number 13 or any other number or any other superstition. These also assert the fake reality of supernatural powers based on certain false beliefs.
- **Novels and Literature:** Similar is the case of tons of literature and books which form the basis of the existence of superstitions in our society. While the publishers and authors are making money they are also making a certain section of society believe in their fiction
- **Human Tendency:** It is a human tendency to fear the unknown and form opinions

which shape up to become non-existent realities.

- **Personal Anecdotes:** People from the earlier times were uneducated and created their own lucky charms and tales of horror and bad luck merely out of the lack of education and improper understanding of things around them. Our grandparent's beliefs have been passed onto the next generation and most of us not only remember them but also believe in them.

Effects of Superstition on Student Life

- **Loss of Concentration:** Indulging in activities of superstition can have a negative impact on the study of a student. A mind which waivers towards beliefs and curriculum lacks concentration. One may not be able to give his full output or may fail in his or her exams.
- **Lack of Interest in Studies:** The knowledge of unknown becomes a matter of excitement for kids. They might start finding the discovery of something different more interesting as compared to the repetitive school curriculum. This can lead to a lack or total loss of interest in studies
- **Mental Disorders:** When a person's personal experience in superstition leads to a strong belief, it becomes a tough task to make him or she realise the reality from truth. The foundation of a personal experience is closer to one's intellect than

other's fact-based realities. It can result in paranoia and other mental conditions which may inhabit unnatural behaviour and unknown fears

- **Hampering the Development of an Individuals Personality:** Change of focus amongst the students hampers the development of one's personality. Instead of acquiring virtues necessary for an individual to live in a society, the individual is seeking in seemingly beneficial tasks.
- **One's Belief Strengthens Another's:** Just like a communicable disease superstition can manifest itself through the word of mouth. For a teenager who has a slight inclination towards such beliefs, a casual conversation with a superstitious can spread and strengthens his or her's own personal beliefs in such matters.

Proposed Remedies

- **Thinking Positive:** One should think positive and try to develop a positive attitude towards challenges and arduous tasks. This can be achieved through reading, listening and watching positive material in form of books, biographies, audio-video means etc.in order to get rid of the 'failure' syndrome.
- **Parental Guidance:** Parents play an important part in removing all the fears and beliefs in superstitions through personal guidance and real-life examples.

- **Teachers Guidance:** Teachers should encourage healthy discussions in the classroom to get a clear picture of what's the truth and what's a lie. This can dispel student's beliefs in superstitions.
- **Campaigns and Other Events:** Government and other non-governmental organisations can enlighten the clouded minds of various events and campaigns which can be effective tools in eliminating myths.
- **Role of Media:** Various means of media can contribute to a large extent by bringing a change in attitude towards these beliefs. The media should act more responsibility towards the young generation rather than worrying about their TRP's.
- **Consulting Specialists:** Researchers and intellectuals can also play a vital role in making superstition actually a superstition through debates and presentation of actual facts.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Various research studies have been conducted by different researchers across the globe on superstitious beliefs. Some of them have been presented in a chronological manner as mentioned below:

Christian Gandeza, Claire Antonette Santisteban and V Santisteban (2023) conducted a study titled Superstitious beliefs Unveiling the Truth. The

study suggests that faith healers can serve as excellent role models for secondary prevention, which involves early diagnosis and prompt treatment if properly advised to refer patients on time while maintaining their healing process, should only be non-harmful. Continue to carry out our traditions and custom regarding superstitious as part of our beliefs.

Hariom Sharma and Samreen Naz (2018) conducted a study titled Superstitious Beliefs and Happiness: A Correlation Study of Young Adults. Findings of the study revealed higher level of happiness among females than in males.

Sinha (1982) conducted a survey on dominance of superstition of the life of pandos, suggesting that superstitious belief and practices play a very dominating role in shaping and regulating life of illiterate pandos, and has further argued that it has also influenced there thinking about their day to day happenings and development in relation to some superstition. According to the result adopted illiteracy is the base of superstition while the superstition, a subject somewhat more complex than the previous one, is owing to a variety of underlying causes.

Muhammad Al- Salameh (2010) investigates the irrational beliefs among Jordanian college students and relationship with self-confidence. To fulfil this, (500) students were randomly. Results of the study may be summarized as follows: There was a statistically significant counterproductive relationship between irrational beliefs and self-

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confidence, there was a statistically significant effect of gender and educational level on the irrational belief; males and first year students were more acceptable to irrational beliefs, and There was a statistically significant effect of gender and educational level on self-confidence level in favour of females and fourth year students.

After reviewing the literature, it was found that various research studies have been conducted on superstitious belief but none was conducted in Jammu and Kashmir especially in Anantnag with undergraduate students. Thus the present study was conducted;

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM;

A STUDY OF SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AMONG THE UNDERGRADUATES OF GDC WOMEN ANANTNAG

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

To measure the extent of superstitious beliefs among the Undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag based on their Stream.

HYPOTHESIS:

there will be no significant difference among the superstitious belief scores of undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

The study is descriptive in nature.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY:

The population of the study comprised of the

undergraduate students of GDC Women enrolled for the session 2024-25.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

The study was conducted on 200 students. Out of which 100 belonged to Arts stream and 100 belonged to Science Stream.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

The sample for the present study was selected by using simple random sampling technique.

TOOLS:

Non-standardised self-developed questionnaire was used for collection of data.

PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION:

Data were collected from 200 undergraduate students of GDC Women enrolled for the session 2024-25.. After taking the prior permission from the principals, the respondents selected for the current study were made aware about the objective of the research and were assured that their responses are being used for research purpose only and will be kept confidential.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Data was analysed by using t-test.

FINDINGS:

For the purpose of studying the superstitious beliefs among the undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag with respect to Stream, the following null hypothesis was formulated

H₀₁: There will be no significant difference among the mean superstitious belief scores of undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag with respect to Stream.

To test this hypothesis, Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error of Mean, independent sample t-value, degrees of freedom (df), and level of significance of the scores obtained from attitude scale was calculated with respect to variable Stream. Following Table 1.1 represents the results.

From the Table 1.1, it is clear that t-value was found to be 0.242, whose 2-tailed p-value was .809 with df =198. This P-value is greater than the 0.05 alpha level of Significance, thus, the t-value is not significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that the mean superstitious belief scores of Arts and Science undergraduate students of GDC Women Anantnag do not differ significantly at 0.05 level of significance. So, the null hypothesis, "There will be no significant difference among the mean superstitious belief scores of undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag with respect to stream" was not rejected at 0.05 level.

Table 1.1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error of Mean, t-value, degrees of freedom (df), and level of significance of the Superstitious belief scores with respect to Stream

Stream	N	MEAN	SD	SEM	df	"t"	p-value (2-tail)
Arts	100	333.69	56.65	5.66	198	.242	.809
Science	100	335.98	75.94	7.59			

Thus, it can be concluded that superstitious beliefs of undergraduates of GDC Women Anantnag were independent of stream.

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