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An Exploratory Analysis of Beliefs in Superstitious among the People of Multan and Ghotki

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Abstract

Superstitious beliefs are normal in Asian cultures. Most individuals adhere to certain superstitious beliefs. Superstitious rituals are practiced differently by people of different ages, different educational backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, cultures, castes, creeds, etc. Our civilization is profoundly ingrained with superstitious beliefs. This study aimed to explore the prevalence (practices) and nature of superstitious beliefs and investigate the demographic and socio-economic factors influencing superstitious beliefs among the people of certain areas of Pakistan namely Multan and Ghotki. This Cross-sectional study used a quantitative approach to examine superstitious beliefs among the Multan and Ghotki populations. A structured survey questionnaire was distributed among a representative sample of the population. The survey included questions about specific superstitions, frequency of belief, and demographic information. Our study results reveal a high prevalence of superstitions in the region, with significant variations across different demographic groups.

Keywords: *Superstitious belief, Demographics, Social factors, Multan, Ghotki.*

1. Introduction

The social context in which superstitions arise shapes them as social phenomena. In many communities, superstitions have a significant influence on daily activities, choices made, and

cultural standards. Because superstitious beliefs are often linked to gambling and taking financial risks, they can harm people's social well-being in society. (Block and Kramer, 2009) and (Dagnall, Parker and Munley, 2009). A few factors that led to the development of the field of social phenomena include the spread of superstitious beliefs, cautious reflexes, historical ignorance of reality, and human fear of spiritual and material circumstances. The notion that some folktales are local, while others are national or worldwide, is the subject of numerous folklore beliefs. Many things are present in most human societies, such as unchangeable speed, fate, nature, luck, eye sores, the unsettling number thirteen, etc. They have formed beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation, changed throughout time and space, and expanded upon or diminished. (Conklin, 1919) Superstitious beliefs thrive in an ignorant setting, and they exist in almost every human community. People tend to become superstitious because wisdom is difficult to apply and inconvenient to live by (Maller and Lundeen, 1933; Martin, 2009; and Mandal, 2018). Superstition had numerous recurring motifs all around the world. Each nation had its own, distinct perspective on each theme. Different social and psychological factors can affect superstition. Social aspects like setting, socioeconomic status, etc.; psychological elements like dread, locus of control, confidence level, etc. (Afreen Faizal, 2018); (Shrivastav and Kotnala 2015). A greater inclination towards experiential thinking was associated with a larger belief in superstitions, whereas a greater inclination towards rational thinking was associated with a lower belief in superstitions (Maqsood, Jamil and Khalid 2018).

Pakistan, with its diverse and rich cultural heritage, presents a fertile ground for exploring superstitious beliefs. In Pakistan, superstitions often intertwine with religious beliefs and cultural practices, shaping social interactions and personal decisions. Cultural practices and traditions that have been passed down through the centuries are frequently the foundation of superstitions (Farooq and Kayani, 2020; Sehar et al., 2022). Pakistan's Ghotki (Sindh) and Multan (Punjab) are renowned for their rich cultural histories. Multan, commonly referred to as the "City of Saints," has a rich history of spiritual practices and Sufi traditions, which can greatly influence regional superstitions. Ghotki, on the other hand, provides a rich and varied cultural backdrop with its combination of rural and urban areas as well as a range of cultural influences. These distinctive settings offer a priceless chance to investigate the frequency and underlying causes of superstitious beliefs among the local populace. Considering all of the aforementioned elements, the purpose of this study is to investigate different facets of superstitious beliefs held by the residents of this particular area, with an emphasis on the

cultural and demographic elements that support these beliefs. In addition to offering a scholarly contribution, this study provides insights that can help raise cultural awareness and encourage reasoned decision-making in the area. The research intends to provide a comprehensive view of the persistence and evolution of superstitions in Pakistani culture by examining these beliefs and revealing the range and depth of superstitions.

Research Objectives:

- To explore the prevalence of beliefs in superstitious among the people of the given region.
- To explore the underlying relation between socio-demographic dimensions and superstitious beliefs.

2. Methodology

Study Area: The current study's field survey has been conducted in the major rural and urban areas of Multan and Ghotki Pakistan.

- **Data Collection:** Primary data was used in the study. By distributing questionnaires to residents of the study region primary data have been gathered. Using the convenience sampling method, 300 respondents were given questionnaires to gather the essential primary data. We got responses from 254 participants.
- **Research Instruments:** The survey tools employed in this study were questionnaires. Questionnaires were the survey instruments used in this study. The survey comprised two sections: the first part asked questions about demographics and socioeconomic status. The second section asked respondents to indicate whether they believed in the 12 superstitious statements by selecting "Yes" or "No".
- **Statistical Analysis of Data:** The collected data has been processed and analyzed by using the IBM SPSS v26 and MS Excel v2206. Data cleaning has been carried out in MS Excel. The following statistical methods have been employed in SPSS to get a better insight into the data.
    - Frequency and Percentage Distribution
    - Cross-Tabulation
    - Chi-Square Test

3. Empirical Results

There were 254 people in the study sample. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the study participants, whereas Tables 2 and 3 display the prevalence of the beliefs regarding superstitions and their relationship with underlying factors.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Dimensions of the Sample

Socio-Demographic Dimensions	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	128	50.39
	Female	126	49.61
Age	< 20	52	20.47
	21-30	111	43.70
	31-40	37	14.57
	41-50	32	12.60
	51 and above	22	8.66
Location (Area)	Rural	117	46.06
	Urban	137	53.94
Employment Status	Working	133	52.36
	Not-Working	121	47.64
Education Level	Illiterate	40	15.75
	Primary	41	16.14
	Secondary	58	22.83
	Master and above	115	45.3
Socio-Economic Status	Lower Class	90	35.43
	Middle Class	120	47.22
	Upper Class	44	17.32

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic dimensions of the sample of 254 respondents considered in this study. The socio-demographic information about participants offers a structure for comprehending the frequency and type of superstitious beliefs among various groups in Multan and Ghotki.

The results showed (50.39%) are male and (49.61%) are female, this suggests that both genders are almost equally represented in the research. Because both genders are represented fairly, it is possible to investigate whether and to what extent men and women hold different superstitious beliefs. It makes it possible to investigate any gender-specific superstitions and the extent to which each gender holds them. (Mameniškienė et al 2024). This finding implies that the study's findings likely represent both male and female viewpoints about the beliefs. The age range of 21-30 comprises 40.73% of the participants. This implies that a considerable proportion of the participants are young adults. Out of them, 53.94% are city dwellers.

Rural regions account for 46.06% of the population. The proportion of urban dwellers in the sample is somewhat higher than that of rural residents. 52.36% of the workforce is employed and 47.64% do not have a job. Most respondents more than half have jobs.

The lower class comprises (35.43%), which implies a stronger reliance on superstitions might occasionally result from financial difficulties and restricted access to education.

Middle class comprised (47.22%) which indicates that people from the middle class may have been exposed to both traditional customs and contemporary scepticism more frequently. Also, the upper class comprises (17.32%): Despite its lesser percentage, the upper class is crucial to comprehending how wealth and a better social standing affect the acceptance or rejection of superstitions, as they have more access to knowledge and information, members of the upper class may follow various superstitious beliefs or be more affected by rational and scientific viewpoints.

Table 2: Prevalence of Superstitious Beliefs among the Participants

Superstitious Beliefs Statements	**Prevalence of Superstitious Beliefs**	
	Frequency	**%age**
Position of stars and planets		
Believers	144	56.7
Non-Believers	110	43.3
Reading the palm lines		
Believers	145	57.1
Non-Believers	109	42.9
Breaking of the mirror		
Believers	100	39.4
Non-Believers	154	60.6
Houses are haunted by the ghosts		
Believers	204	80.3
Non-Believers	50	19.7
Sweeping the floor during the evening		
Believers	198	78

Non-Believers	56	22
The month of Safar is a sign of danger		
Believers	136	45.7
Non-Believers	138	54.3
Crossing of a black cat		
Believers	112	44.1
Non-Believers	142	55.9
Caws of crow		
Believers	141	55.5
Non-Believers	113	44.5
Wearing jewelry made of some crystals		
Believers	139	44.5
Non-Believers	115	45.5
The weeping of the cat is a sign of danger		
Believers	195	76.8
Non-Believers	59	23.2
Trees are haunted by ghosts		
Believers	197	77.6
Non-Believers	57	22.4
To step out during an eclipse is dangerous		
Believers	133	52.4
Non-Believers	121	47.6

The information on particular superstitious beliefs held by the 254 respondents sheds light on the frequency of particular behaviors and viewpoints. The results are interpreted as follows: Stellar and planet positions (56.7%), the vast majority of the 144 respondents think that their lives are impacted by the positions of the stars and planets. This suggests that astrological views are highly prevalent in the sample. When making decisions on important life events like marriage, launching a business, or making financial investments, astrological techniques may be included. While (43.3%) Out of 110 responders, a sizable proportion do not think that stars and planets have any influence. This implies that a sizable segment of the populace either disapproves of astrological beliefs or favors more logical, scientific answers.

Comparably, 57.1% of respondents think that palm reading is real. The assertions that are more common in these beliefs are given more weight. Also, 204 respondents, or a sizable majority, said they thought spirits could haunt dwellings. This shows that a significant portion of the respondents believed in ghosts and other paranormal phenomena, demonstrating how deeply embedded these superstitions are in the collective consciousness. Each of the aforementioned claims about irrational beliefs showed that a greater number of people hold these ideas.

Table 3: Association among Socio-economic factors and Superstitious Belief

Socio-Demographic Dimensions	Categories	Superstitious Beliefs		Results of the Analysis
		Believers	Non-Believers	p-value
Gender	Male	77	51	
	Female	68	58	0.004
Age	< 20	38	32	
	21-30	55	43	
	31-40	48	23	0.001
	41-50	60	30	
	51 and above	38	22	
Location (Area)	Rural	125	66	
	Urban	65	59	0.000
Employment Status	Working	87	54	
	Not-Working	50	68	0.389
Education Level	Illiterate	92	4	
	Primary	45	16	0.002
	Secondary	40	14	
	Master and above	32	10	
Socio-Economic Status	Lower Class	90	15	
	Middle Class	56	24	0.000
	Upper Class	40	35	

The above table 3 shows that Chi-square tests indicate strong associations between superstitious beliefs and variables such as age, gender, area, education level, and most importantly economic status of the participants. The results of the Chi-square tests show that superstitious beliefs are influenced by a person's gender. There may be superstitions that are exclusive to one gender or a propensity for one gender to be more superstitious than the other.

Also, older generations may be more prone to superstitions, maybe as a result of their extended exposure to traditional cultural practices. The degree of superstition is strongly correlated with one's residential area (rural versus urban). In contrast to urban respondents who may be affected by contemporary and reasonable viewpoints, rural respondents may hold more to traditional superstitions.

4. Conclusion

Although a significant number of respondents continue to follow certain superstitions, there is a discernible shift towards scepticism, especially among younger, more educated, and urban people. It may be possible to encourage more logical and informed decision-making by addressing the socioeconomic and educational elements linked to these beliefs, which would ultimately aid in the social and cultural advancement of the areas under study.

The results reveal a high prevalence of superstitions in Multan and Ghotki, with notable differences observed between various demographic groups. Superstitious views are strongly associated with age, gender, location, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment, according to chi-square tests. The results emphasize the cultural significance and ingrained character of superstitions in this region. This research adds to the growing body of knowledge about superstitions in cultural psychology and social anthropology and provides important new perspectives on how superstitions shape society's attitudes. The necessity of the present is the consequence of encouraging logical decision-making and cultural awareness.

5. Suggestions for Further Research

The precise causes of some beliefs' enduring influence and others' collapse require more investigation. A deeper understanding can be obtained by looking into the roles played by social media, religion, and the media itself. Understanding how superstitious beliefs develop over time, particularly in reaction to continuing social and economic changes, may be aided by longitudinal research.

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