



## **Superstitious beliefs and some of its causes (Case Study: Ghachsaran Citizens)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Around the world and in popular cultures, we can see ideas and beliefs that, in terms of modern thought, they are classified in superstitious beliefs class. Similarly, latent and manifest, positive and negative functions that these ideas have in today's society, discussing them is considerably important. Aim of the present study is to explore the range and influence of some aspects related to superstition that exists among Ghachsaran citizens. Accordingly, using the questionnaire and survey method, it was concluded that:*

*Women's tendency to superstitious beliefs is much more than the men's.*

*There is a significant relationship between religious belief and superstition belief*

*Social and economic status of people plays an important role in the tendency to superstition so that people with low social and economic statuses have more tendencies to superstition.*

*To find out the effect of each independent variable on superstition, we used Multivariable regression. It revealed the factors influencing predicting superstition based on their priorities include: gender with 0.49 causal effect in the first order, socio-economic status with 0.37 causal effect in second order, religious beliefs influence with 0.25 causal effect in the third order, ethnicity with 0.17 causal effect and in the fourth order and life satisfaction with 0.13 causal effect is placed in the final order.*

*Keywords: Superstitious belief, religious beliefs, ethnicity, socio-economic status (SES), gender, Ghachsaran*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Superstitions are social phenomena and product of social context and conditions. Amongst the factors which provided the emerging field of social phenomena is the fear of human being from spiritual and material circumstances, precautions reactions, human ignorance of reality during the history and transmission of superstitious ideas.

A large part of folklore beliefs are devoted to believes that some of them are regional and some national or international ones. For example, unalterable speed, fate, nature, luck, eye sore, ominous of number thirteen etc. are so widely present in most human societies. Actually they are formed opinions that have been passed on from generation to generation, changed in the passage of time and place, and added or removed. People usually do not believe them in the same value. These believes are changeable and vary from total dependency to lack of believe. Some consider them superstition and some believe them firmly (Sadeghi, 1996).

Superstition believes grow in the context of ignorance, and nearly all human societies have some superstitious tendencies are. Common people tend to superstition, because wisdom is usually difficult and troublesome. Therefore, humans prefer superstition to reasoning and imagination to the truth. However, religion has always called them to reasoning (Jahovda, 1992).

Emphasis on measuring the supersitious believe in this society refers to this fact that they are acceptable believes and values of people and make the overall values of society. Its positive and negative aspects can respectivley prepare a bed for backwardness or progress of society.

One of the issues that are occasionally considered is different kinds of superstition, subjective, objective, intellectual, behavioral, and rate of its prevalence in the community. Those who fear from the presence of superstitious in the community, they have at least two growing concerns: first, negative consequence and results of superstition in understanding the reality, wisely organization of the life and social relations, and secondly, from their view, growth, spread and influence of superstition in different fields of life and when the scientific thought and religious life become infected with this virus, it is frustrating (Tavassoli, 2001).

Perhaps superstition, as a man-made phenomenon, is the only problem that, despite the changes and development of societies, still exists and not only its intensity is not diminished in the twenty-first century, but also it seems that its supporters increased. These beliefs are called superstitions established based on

the intuitive nature and there have sometimes agreements and disagreements. A number of these beliefs are regional and recognized in a particular geographic area, while some of these beliefs are international, for example, number 13, in many cultures and nations is almost known for being unlucky and it has unbelievably spread among people.

It is important to note that due to the relationship between superstitious beliefs and infrastructure of ethnic feeling and a sense of existential security, they have earned such value and reputation that almost they do not tolerate any conflicting beliefs (Farasatkah, 1992). Historical, social, cultural and biological ancestors created us a society that could never engage in rational measurements and find the necessary relation between phenomena and objects (Sedghi Nejad, 2004). This study, with a case study of Gachsaran city, tries to assess the tendency toward superstition and also represents the relationship between its components.

### **Superstition Definition**

In Dehkoda dictionary, literally meaning of superstition is distracted and irrelevant speech. This word is the plural form of "Kharafe" which means "collecting the fruits" and name of a man from the Azreh tribe. People did not believe him and said that he always says nonsense.

According to Robert Ingersoll, superstitions are:

believing to phenomenon that there is no experimental evidence for them, estimating a mystery by another mystery; Believing that the world is directed by chance;

offering the thoughts, desires and intentions with reference to their original nature;

Belief in the supernatural, miracle, magic and divination (Inglehart, 2002). According to him, superstition is based on ignorance and its infrastructure and origin are false hopes.

### **Superstition and its Consequences in Religion**

Water is clear when it comes out from spring, but flowing in the path may make, tangible or intangible, contamination in it. In the spiritual events also it may happen. The origin of the spirituality is first smooth and clean with no pollution; gradually the thoughts of others transfer it from generation to generation. Contamination which may be perceptible or intangible or it could just be seen by Microscopy and the thinkers (Motahari, 2004). In general, the superstitious tendency toward religion can make two currents:

- Superstition becomes the origin of the formation of religion;

Superstition leads religion to decline.

There is no doubt that, in the ancient civilization, human knowledge and reason was still in the early and mythical stages and the true nature was less known and understood. Gradually the scientists and thinkers of the ancient times could form superstitious beliefs through well-organizing and integrating their beliefs using different theories, such as the four elements and the constellations, so that they could substantially and slowly close to mythological gods and types of stars. Among them, there were variety of mythical cultures, such as Hellenistic, Roman, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Babylonian, Syriac, Persian, and god stars such as Zeus, Rihanna, Apollon and Aphrodit in Hellenistic mythology, Jupiter, Zeus, Mercury and Mars in Roman mythology and Anahita, Mitra, Zavsh, Mars, Keyvan and Esther (Vakili, 2006). Thus, traces of superstition can be followed and realized in the philosophy of some ideas that lead to dissolution and intrusion of religion and also transformation of religion into superstition. This trend is seen in all religions which have their roots in superstition or divine religions. Although the supernatural factors are part of divine religions, when the most subtle phenomena are attributed to supernatural causes and ways of scientific thinking and reasoning is closed, superstition will be the logical conclusion of this process. Some of religious beliefs prepare bed for superstition.

But we can say that they are placed next to each other and accepted together.

Set of religious beliefs give us a worldview that destroys this notion and never lead to such a result. Religious beliefs are known in three factors (Vakili, 2006).

Among these three factors, superstitious beliefs are much stronger than ethics and provisions, because in the dos and don'ts part of values, superstition does not have main role, but in the provisions, superstitions have opportunity to develop, extend and theorized or be present in human life.

In the range of opinions, belief in supernatural ones make main and striking forms of religious believes, there is a place for final influential factors and invisible variables in human life which facilitates the supernatural factors to be conceptualized directly or indirectly.

Therefore, superstitious beliefs, related to the theoretical doctrine, are formed in various forms. In the provisions' realm, the superstitious beliefs can form advices, so superstitious practices are evident in this area. For example, abominate cleaning the bones, because the ghosts eat them.

In superstition atmosphere, there is no attempt to achieve goals and rationality is replaced by superstition, the value of action is reduced, hoping to supernatural agents, false comfort is made in the hearts and there is a new preoccupation. It causes the consciousness of the present and future to be vanished and prepares a bed for domination and oppression. In this process, economic cycle moves slowly and causes

retardations. On the other hand, corruption in perceptions prepares a bed for idolatry and the deviation. It also changes the function of religion as something beneficial and makes it a factor moving forward the chaos and misery (Aaron, 2000).

### **Literature**

History shows that the baseless beliefs (what they are now called Superstition) were born out from the beginning of history, with the rising sun on blue sky and appearance of the moon on a dark night. Will Durant believes that no civilization in terms of illusions and superstitions is like the Babylonian civilization. Each incident from abnormal birth to various forms of death was wonderfully interpreted by magic priests.

Movement of water and different types of stars, dreams and extraordinary works of animals and humans were all things that helped the experts to anticipate and predict the future. Will Durant believes that on the basis and foundation of all new and old civilization, we can find a sea of magic and superstition which is still continuing. Superstition in all stages of civilization, without some modification, has aged. Only a few religions have generally separated from the ancient magic (Freeze, 2005).

Sepehr and colleagues (1996) in a study entitled "studying the best evidences, risk factors, causes and ways to combat superstition, imagination) they come to this conclusion that women believe to these issues significantly more than men and less educated people. It also showed that when the age increases, the prevalence of superstition increases, too.

Foroughi and Asgari Moghadam (2009) in a research "tendency towards superstition among Tehran citizens" concluded that people who have closer communication with modernism, wisdom and empiricism, they are less likely to have superstitious beliefs. Also, fewer men are involved in these ideas

Safai et al (2009) in a research project studied the factors associated with a superstition through giving technical questions to Hamadan citizens and concluded that women are more superstitious than men. With increasing the age and feeling of inequality, there will be more tendency towards superstitious believes. They also found out that with increasing the education level, awareness, feeling of security and life satisfaction, there would be less tendency towards superstitious believes. Purcell (1988) in a study "astrology and fatalism among the female workers of factory", through participatory observation among semi-skilled workers in a factory in southern England, concluded that according to their interests in spiritualism, astrology, fatalism and the supernatural forces, women concern with the future a lot. They accept many of the practices and ideas called and described as fate.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was a descriptive-analytic one. The population comprised all Ghachsaran citizens who were 67,870 people from whom we choose 386 ones through Cochran formula with 95% confidence coefficient. Sampling method was quota proportional sample. According to population of each district, the proportion of the target population is determined. Also, data collection tool was questionnaire with 64 questions based on the theoretical foundations, research background, definitions of concepts and variables.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic characteristics of Respondents**

- Among 195 respondents, we had 54.5% females and 45.5% males.
- The average age of respondents was 31 years: minimum age was 18 years and maximum age was 65 years.
- About their marital status, 72.2% of the respondents were married and 52.7% were single. Also, 3% of the respondents were divorced or widowed.
- Among the respondents, 31.9% were employed, 29.2% housewife, 21.9% student, 9.9% unemployment, 6.2 % retired, 2.1% non-labor income, and 0.8% were disabled.

Most of the respondents, 214 people, belonged to Lor tribe, 99 Turk, 47 Persian and 26 from other ethnic groups.

### **Testing hypotheses**

First hypothesis: There is a relationship between gender and tendency to superstition.

T- Test was used to test this hypothesis. Results of the test indicate that there was difference between men and women's superstition believes. Mean superstition among women was 77.48 and mean superstition among men was 65.60.

**Table: T-Test for comparing the superstition mean among males and females**

		Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean Deviation Error
<b>Superstition</b>	females	195	77.4872	21.79103	1.56.49
	males	180	65.6056	19.71317	1.46933

Since a significant degree of Levene test is 0.214, so the assumption of equal variances not be accepted. So the second row of the table is used. As seen in the table below, due to a significant degree with 0.000, the assumption of mean differences between men and women superstitious believes is accepted.

**Table 2: T-Test for significance of mean difference among men and women**

		Levene's test for equality of Variances		T test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.	Mean difference	Std. Error Deference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Superstition	Equal variance assumed	1.549	0.214	5.521	374	0.000	11.88162	2.15198	7.65009	16.11316
	Equal variance not assumed			5.543	372.852	0.000	11.88162	2.14338	7.66700	16.09625

**Second hypothesis: there is relationship between the socio-economic status and belief in superstition.**

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

**Table3: correlation between superstition and socio-economic status**

superstition and socio-economic status	
Pierson correlation	-0.293
Sig.	0.000
Number	318

As the table results shows, superstition has a inverse relationship with socio- economic status. That is, when the socio-economic status is lower, the greater the belief in superstition and vice versa.

**Third hypothesis: There is a relationship between the ethnicity of individuals and superstitious belief.**

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

**Table 4: correlation between superstition and ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Frequency	Average tendency to superstition	F	Sig.
Persian	33	38.2		
Lor	21	43.6		
Turk	99	42.1	7.35	0.002
Others	34	39.7		
Total	384	40.8		

Table 4 shows the mean differences in respondents' tendency towards superstitious beliefs based on their ethnicity. As can be seen, the belief in superstition among participants in Lor and Turk ethnics, with average 4.36 for Lor ethnic and 42.1 for Turk ethnic have the highest frequency. Also with respect to F= 7.35 and significance level of 0.002, the difference between ethnic groups was significant and hypothesis is accepted. Lor and Turk tribes have more tendencies to superstitious beliefs.

**Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between life satisfaction and superstition believes.**

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

**Table 5: correlation between superstition and life satisfaction**

superstition and life satisfaction	
Pearson correlation	0.077
Sig.	0.160
N	338

Results of Pearson correlations between superstition and life satisfaction show that there is no significant relationship between these two variables. That is, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life among the population does not lead to the tendency to superstitious beliefs. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

**Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between religious beliefs and superstition.**

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

**Table 6: correlation between superstition and religious believes**

superstition and religious believes	
Pearson correlation	0.186
Sig.	0.000
N	372

The findings of Table 6 show that we studied the relationship between two variables. According to table 6, there is a direct and significant relationship between superstition and religious beliefs. In 0.95 confidence level, Sig was 0.000. It shows that the relationship between two variables was significant.

**Table7: priorities of independent variable on superstition**

Independent variables	Causal effects	Priorities
Gender	0.49	1 <sup>st</sup>
Socio economical status	-0.37	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Religious believes	0.25	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Ethnicity	0.17	4 <sup>th</sup>
Life satisfaction	0.13	5 <sup>th</sup>

As the findings of Table 7 shows, influencing factors on predicting the superstitions are as follows: gender with 0.49 causal effect in the first order, socio - economic status with -0.37 causal effect in the second order, religious beliefs with 0.25 causal effect in the third, ethnicity with 0.17 causal effect in the fourth and life satisfaction with 0.13 causal effect is placed in the final order.

**Research proposals**

According to the results of this study, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Increasing the awareness of people by encouraging them to study and participate in academic and research areas;
2. conducting Longitudinal studies to evaluate and compare the tendency to superstition;
3. Deal with the media promoting superstition;
4. Case Study of some superstitions such as divination, astrology, etc;
5. doing the research projects related to superstition with an pathological emphasis on functional aspects.

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