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Superstitious Beliefs and Happiness: A Correlation Study of Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Superstitious beliefs are formed by opinions passing on generation to generation. Superstitious beliefs are social phenomena (Roghayyeh Ebrahimi Zad, 2014). Objective of present research was to study the relationship between superstitious beliefs and happiness among young adults. The current research also explored differences for superstitious beliefs and happiness among young male and female adults from rural and urban backgrounds. Economic and social status affect in the tendency towards superstitious behavior. Study remained successful to reflect the superstitious behavior patterns among males and females. Superstitious belief of young male participants was higher ($M = 38.95$, $SD = 18.05$) as compared to young females ($M = 24.15$, $SD = 10.39$) and differences between male and female for their superstitious belief reached to the significant level ($t = 5.50$, $df = 118$, $p < .01$). Rural participants were higher ($M = 36.13$, $SD = 19.48$) than urban participants ($M = 26.97$, $SD = 11.08$) and significantly different ($t = -3.16$, $df = 118$, $p < .01$) for their superstitious belief scores. Findings revealed higher level of happiness among females than in males. Overall there is a need of further research on larger sample size and different population.

Keywords: Superstitious beliefs, happiness, young adults, gender, rural and urban.

1. SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

The term superstition is derived from the Latin superstition, meaning “to stand over in awe.” Superstition refers to belief that certain event or things will bring good or bad luck. Superstition has different meanings in different cultures. Pandit and Sanskrit scholars in India set some taboos or inhibitions of human behavior. Many superstitions still rule the lives of the backward classes and tribal people. Most of us are superstitious

in some way or the other people are not able to overcome the traditional snag of the past. Superstition is simply nothing rather believing blindly in something without verification (Kalita, 2016).

Earlier superstitions were created as a way to deal with the ignorance and fear of the unknown things. Often, superstitions are born from casual coincidences. For example, if an athlete wears a particular pair of shoes on a day he performs particularly well, he may continue to wear the same pair of shoes in the belief that the shoes were responsible for the success. B.F. Skinner in his writing on Superstition in the Pigeon revealed that superstitions are not only human in nature rather available in other organisms as well (Skinner, 1948). Theories of modern superstition produce by Colin Campbell (1996) define the fact that continuing problem of humans and their culture superstition persists in modern industrial societies. This aspect shows disagreement about fading out of superstition in the face of rationalism and empiricisms.

For several centuries, various superstitious behaviours have dominated Indian way of living, but none has ever thought that how exactly these came into existence. The most of the researchers said that majority of youth is breaking these superstitions and taking initiatives to make people aware about its uselessness.

2. HAPPINESS

The word “happiness” is used for different meanings, and these all meanings require different measure. Happiness refers as concerning the mind or emotional state of well-being defined by position or polite emotions pasturing from contentment to extreme joy we have so many definitions of happiness that is given by different people. According to the Mahatma Gandhi “happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” Every individual has his own definition of what makes him/her happy. Most of we use the term to describe happiness that positive emotions, joy, pride etc. Research on well-being has been obtained from two common perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in term of happiness attainment and pain avoidance.

In the 1960s American survey organizations started asking questions about happiness and satisfaction. This led to some early classics works, Cantril (1965), the pattern of human concerns, international survey with 23,875 respondents; Bradburn (1969), the structure of psychological well-being, which used an NORC survey; and Campbell, Converse, and Rogers (1976), the quality of American life, from the survey research center at the University of Michigan. In 1994 Veenhoven brought out his massive three-volume correlates of Happiness. Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz edited a large volume, Foundations of Hedonic Psychology (1999), based on a conference at Princeton on happiness research.

The psychological and philosophical search of happiness began in China, India and Greece nearly 2,500 years ago with the works of Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, and Aristotle. They explored the ideas of major thinkers, from East and West, who dedicated much of their lives to the search of happiness. They argued that progress of living-conditions in a society will make life more pleasurable. In North American culture, happiness defined as terms of personal achievement. In East Asian culture, happiness defined in term of interpersonal connectedness. The scholars have shown the cross culture variations and similarities of subjective well-being and happiness.

When individual repeats a positive action many times, at certain time it becomes automatic, effortless and highly rewarding. The term happiness is unclear and weird. Well known fact that relationships are

main cause of happiness and therefore, essentially a part of psychological research. For some individual happiness is not a supreme value. It depends on culture to culture or person to person.

Kalita (2016) studied different types of superstitious behavior taking 80 students. No significant differences between male and female students towards superstitious beliefs were found and also no significant differences between graduate and post-graduate students towards superstitious beliefs were observed.

Anning Hu (2015) examined how deductive adaptation and scientific knowledge interact with people's this-worldly adapt superstition by presenting a case study of school teenage in urban China. Experimental results show that both scientific orientation and scientific knowledge have a significantly negative effect on superstition and their effects are independent from each other.

TerKeurst (2015) investigates that to what extent is the home a source of belief and disbeliefs in superstitions. The result shows that the individual sources of superstitious beliefs, the social and educational factors that contribute towards the learning and unlearning of unfounded ideas.

Jeremy J. Sierra et al. (2015) they want to investigate understanding of antecedents and result of superstitious beliefs. For survey they take 206 South Korean and 218 us respondents. The result was found that both models support the horoscope importance path and the behavioral superstitious beliefs path. This study augments the superstition literature by exploring carefully selected yet under-researched determinants and consequences of superstitious beliefs across eastern and western groups.

Saenko (2014) discovered the superstitions of today's college students. The study shows that student superstitious beliefs frequently connected with their final exams and they feel these beliefs protect those negative feelings. That shows superstitions beliefs play an important role of student's life.

Joshanloo M (2014) the purpose of this review is to compare and contrast western and eastern conceptualizations of happiness and optimal functioning. Towards this end, accounts of happiness and optimal functioning provided in western philosophy and scientific psychology are compared with those in some eastern schools of thought. Six fundamental differences in western and eastern conceptualizations of the good life are identified and discussed in the context of broader psychological theory. It is hoped that this theoretical analysis will stimulate more culturally informed research among happiness researchers.

Swami et. al., (2011) they conducted two studies, in first they correlate between conspiracy ideation and a range of individual psychological factors. In this 817 Britons that shows agreement with conspiracy ideation, and they complete a battery of individual difference scales. Results found that in Britons have stronger belief in 7/7 conspiracy theories predict by stronger belief in other real-world conspiracy theories, greater support for democratic principles, more negative attitudes to authority, lower self-esteem, and lower Agreeableness. In 2nd study, 281 Austrians shows their agreement with an entirely fictitious conspiracy theory and complete a battery of individual difference measures not examined in Study 1. Results found that belief in the entirely fictitious conspiracy theory is significantly associates with stronger belief in other real-world conspiracy theories, stronger paranormal beliefs.

Wiseman (2003) conducted a study a ten-year scientific study into the nature of luck has revealed that, to a large extent, people make their own good and bad fortune. The results also show that it is possible to enhance the amount of luck that people encounter in their lives.

Jeffrey Rudski (2000) to see the impacts of fortification timetable and rivalry on producing superstitious practices and convictions were probe 72 individuals. Ascribing significance to the inert lever, an example of exchanging between levers, or to the enlightenment of the lights was thought to be superstitious convictions. Members were either run alone or in sets, and control of the fortification calendar brought about gatherings which were coordinated in likelihood of support, and in addition in bunches which were crisscrossed. The outcomes are talked about in term of connections between superstition, the deception of control, and self-adequacy. Contrasts between tentatively initiated and regularly held superstitions are likewise talked about. **Vernon R. Padgett (1982)** examined there was economic threat that predicted the level of superstition in Germany. That was measured by levels of real wages, unemployment, and industrial production. The economic threat variables significantly predicted level of superstition in two of the three superstition indexes. The results support Fromm's thesis that threat produces authoritarianism and corroborate Sales' investigation of U.S. archival data.

3. OBJECTIVES

In the light of above literature review following objectives were framed in the present research:

- To study the level of superstitious belief among young adults.
- To study the level of happiness among young adults.
- To examine the relationship between superstitious belief and happiness among young adults.
- To investigate the differences between superstitious beliefs of young male and female adults.
- To investigate the differences between happiness of young male and female adults.
- To examine the differences between superstitious beliefs of rural and urban participants.
- To investigate the differences between happiness of rural and urban participants.

4. HYPOTHESES

- There is no superstitious belief among young adults.
- There is no happiness among young adults.
- There exists no significant relationship between superstitious beliefs and happiness of young adult individuals.
- There are no significant differences between superstitious beliefs of male and female young adults.
- There are no significant differences of happiness among male and female participants.
- There exist no statistical significant differences in superstitious beliefs and happiness of urban and rural participants.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

This study followed the correlation type of design to collect primary data. Further, to assess the variables scales as described in tool section were used. For the present study a sample of 120 participants in the age

range of 20-30 years from colleges, universities and offices were selected who reside in urban and rural residential areas of Jalandhar, Phagwara and Ludhiana districts of Punjab state in India. Further the sample was distributed among male (30) and female (30) participants each from rural and urban backgrounds. Convenient sampling method was used to include the participants in study sample. Statistical analysis was computed for the collected data and the results are demonstrated by preparing the Table and graphs as follows.

Tools

Keeping in view the aim and nature of the study and variables to be examined appropriate study design was prepared.

- **A Scale to measure the Superstition beliefs** developed by **Md. Mahfuzul Huque and Ataharul Huque choudhary** was administered. It is a 20-item scale and the reliability of the scale is 0.85. There are four options to respond -high, medium, low and not at all. The scoring is done as per the scoring norms. The possible minimum to maximum score range is 0 to 60. Lowest scores indicate low level of superstitions whereas high scores indicate high level of superstitious behavior.
- **The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire** developed by **Michael Argyle and Peter Hills** at Oxford University was administered on participants. Its reliability is 0.78. The minimum to maximum possible score range is 01 to 06. Lowest scores indicate low level of happiness whereas high scores indicate high level of happiness.

Statistical Techniques

The statistical analyses reflect the difference among participants from. Also male and female participants with regard to their residential areas were examined. Graphical presentation of the findings facilitated the understanding of results. Following statistical techniques were used in order to analyze the data.

1. Descriptive statistics including mean (central tendency).
2. Correlation to find out the relationship strength
3. Inferential statistics - Independent Sample Student's - *t* test'

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results and Discussion chapter represents the statistical analysis on obtained data on variables undertaken in the study. The analysis is interpreted in accordance of the objectives of the study. In any research analysis of data is careful and essential step to obtain the trends of findings. Logical interpretation is based on the statistical indexes available after analysis. Distribution of different characteristics of sample and understanding of variables is only possible through results of analysis and relevant discussion by the investigator. The current study analyzed the recorded data with mean, SD, and *t*-statistics to bring out the trends inside the responses of the respondents for their superstitious behavior and level of happiness. Findings were tabulated and demonstrated by plotting the results in graph as shown in the following section.

Objective 1: To study the level of superstitious belief among young adults.

Table 1

		<i>Superstitious</i>			
		<i>Low Superstitious</i>	<i>Average Superstitious</i>	<i>High Superstitious</i>	
Gender	Male	N	4	40	16
		%	6.7%	66.7%	26.7%
	Female	N	18	42	0
		%	30.0%	70.0%	0.0%
Total		N	22	82	16
		%	18.3%	68.3%	13.3%

Interpretation: By the observation of above table we came to know that the young male who are with average superstitious behavior are maximum in number (66.7%) whereas 70.0% of the total females are in category of average superstitious behavior. Thus it can be concluded that young male and female have superstitious behavior and interestingly, male (26.7%) were also noticed having high level of superstitious behavior in comparison to the female (0%) participants. Also female 30% of the total females in the study exhibited low level of superstitious belief.

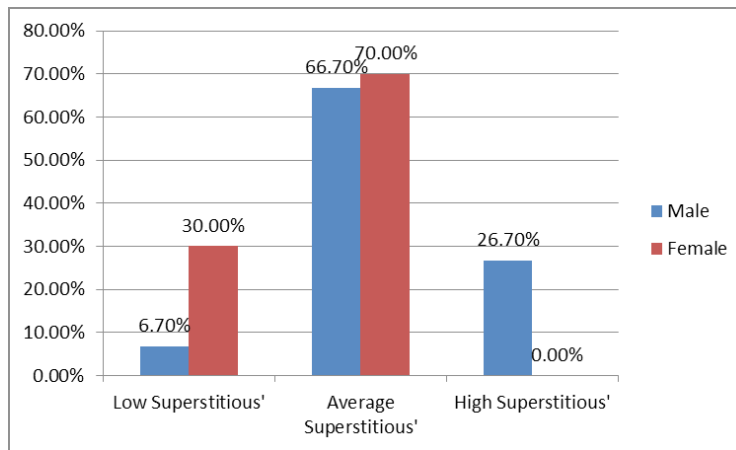


Figure 1: Percentage of male and female participants among three levels of superstitious belief

Objective 2: To study the level of happiness among young adults.

Table 2

		<i>Happiness</i>		
		<i>Not particularly happy or unhappy</i>	<i>Moderately happy</i>	<i>Very happy</i>
Male	N	15	33	12
	%	25.0%	55.0%	20.0%
Female	N	10	34	16
	%	16.7%	56.7%	26.7%
Total		25	67	28
		20.8%	55.8%	23.3%

It is clear from the above Table that according to the gender the majority of the young females (56.7%) are with moderate happy level. Whereas 55% of the total males were observed in moderate level of happiness. 26.7% of the female participants reflected very high level of happiness and similarly 20% males also reflected very happy level on the scale.

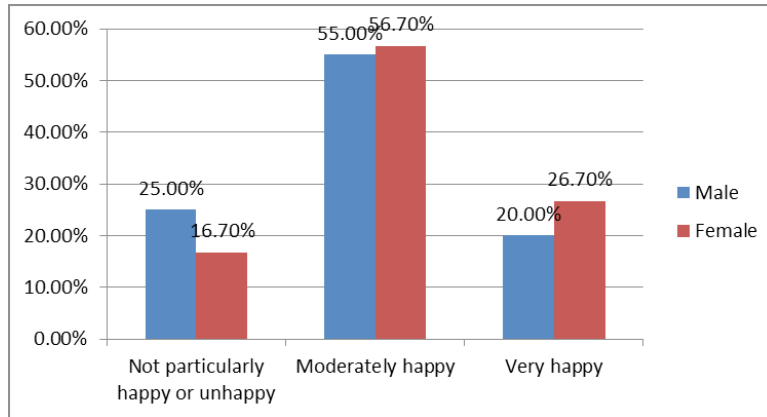


Figure 2: Percentage of Male and female participants among three levels of happiness

Objective 3: To examine the relationship between superstitious belief and happiness among young adults.

Table 3.1
Descriptive Statistics

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Happiness	117.03	17.217	120
Superstitions	31.55	16.441	120

Table 3.2
Correlations

		<i>Happiness</i>	<i>Superstitions</i>
Superstitions	Pearson Correlation	-.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	
	N	120	120

It is clear from the above table that there is no significant relationship between superstition and happiness of the young adults. Because the value of correlation reached only -0.14 coefficient index which shows the negative correlation but not significant. Hence the null hypothesis that there exists no relationship between superstitious behaviour and happiness is accepted.

Objective 4: To investigate the differences between superstitious beliefs of young male and female adults.

Table 4.1

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Superstitions	Male	60	38.95	18.05
	Female	60	24.15	10.39

Table 4.2

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Superstitions	Equal variances assumed	4.243	.042	5.504	118	.000

The superstitious belief of young male is high (M = 38.95, SD = 18.05) as compared to young females (M = 24.15, SD = 10.39). This shows the male having comparatively higher level of superstitions in their behaviour. The differences between male and female for their superstitious beliefs reached to the significant level ($t = 5.50$, $df = 118$, $p < .01$).

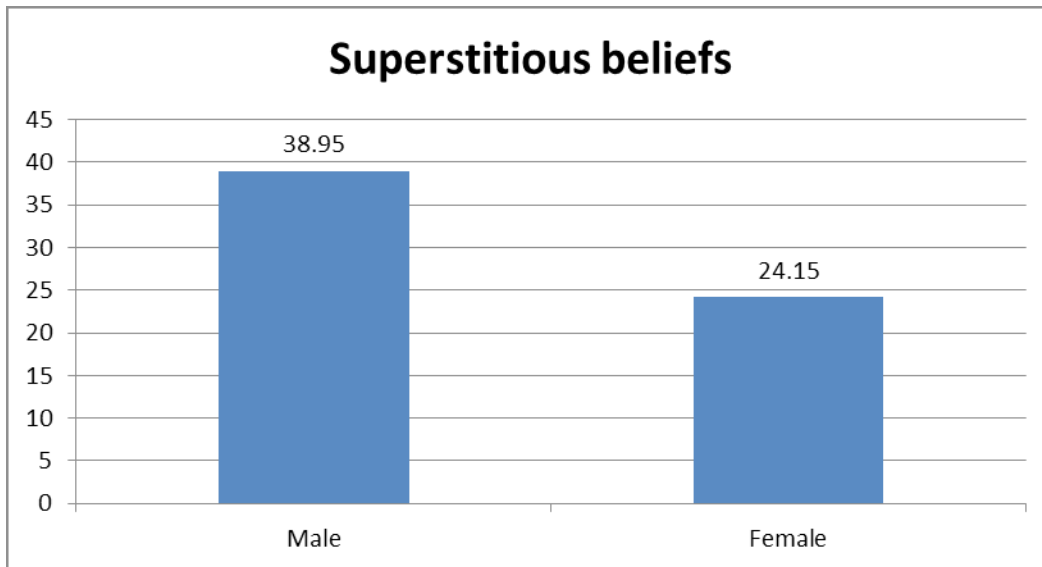


Figure 3: Levels of superstitious beliefs among male and females

Objective 5: To investigate the differences between happiness of young male and female adults.

Table 5.1

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Superstitions	Male	60	114.37	18.13
	Female	60	119.70	15.95

Table 5.2

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Happiness	Equal variances assumed	.708	.402	-1.710	118	.090

The happiness level of young females is high (M = 119.70, SD = 15.95) as compared to young males (M = 114.37, SD = 18.13). The female participants seem to have higher happiness. However, the difference could not reach to a significance level, ($t = -1.71$, $df = 118$, $p > .05$). This means both, male and female have the happiness feelings but females are superior to live a happy life.

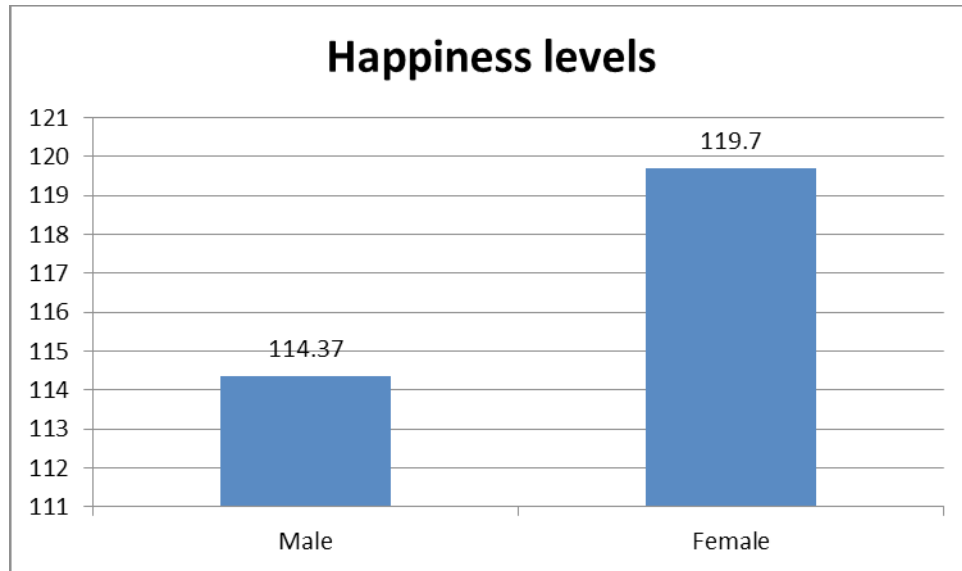


Figure 4: Levels of Happiness among male and females

Objective 6: To examine the differences between superstitious beliefs of rural and urban participant.

Table 6.1

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Superstitions	Urban	60	26.97	11.08
	Rural	60	36.13	19.48

Table 6.2

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>		
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Superstitions	Equal variances assumed	4.999	.027	-3.168	118	.002

The superstitious belief of rural people are high (M = 36.13, SD = 19.48) as compared to Urban people (M = 26.97, SD = 11.08). The differences between the two groups reached to a significant level ($t = -3.16$, $df = 118$, $p < .01$). From the results it seems that rural population is following the traditional life style and believe in ancient patterns of behaviour having higher superstitious patterns in their day-to-day behaviour.

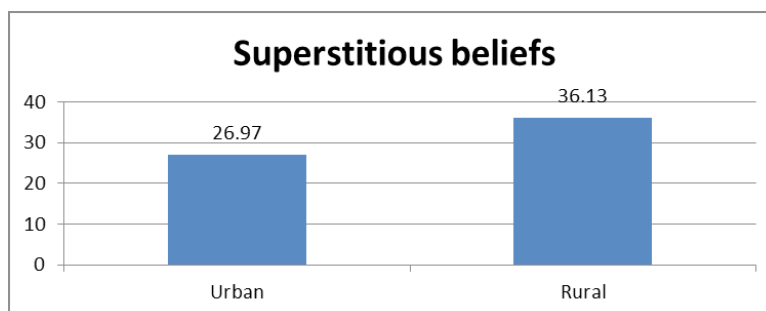


Figure 5: Superstitious beliefs among urban and rural population

Objective 7: To investigate differences between happiness of rural and urban participant.

Table 7.1

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Superstitions	Urban	60	117.07	16.913
	Rural	60	117.00	17.658

Table 7.2

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>		
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Happiness	Equal variances assumed	.141	.708	.021	118	.983

The happiness level of rural people is almost similar to the urban people, because the mean value is 117.07 of urban people and 117.00 of rural people. Also the difference could not reached to a significant level ($t = .021, df = 118, p > .05$).

7. CONCLUSION

To raise the important aspects in relationships between superstitious beliefs and happiness current study remained successful to reflect the behavior patterns of males and females. To conclude this may be said that female are changing their established behavior and learning new aspect of modern education system so as they demonstrated less amount of superstitious believes in comparison to their counterparts, that is, males in the current research. The males from rural residential areas demonstrated higher level of superstitions following the conventional life styles and traditional methods of their functioning in day-to-day life. Interestingly findings are contradictory to the earlier research on rural and urban population in which urban participants were found to have higher level of superstitious belief (George, & Sreedhar, 2006).

Happiness level among female again demonstrated their life style not conflicting with much of the environmental aspects and showed higher level of happiness in comparison to male members who keep on interacting at larger level from outer world and so are also following various beliefs including superstitions. The findings in partial are supported by the earlier study conducted by (Kalita, 2016) showing insignificant differences in terms of superstitious beliefs. The social and educational factors seem to play their roles in changing belief system and improving happiness aspects of the individuals.

Though it is illusive and temporary, superstitions give a sense of control and boosts self-confidence. However, it is also true that superstitions have taken lives of innocents, bad effects on health, broken families, loss in business, increased traffic accidents and so on. A cost-benefit analysis suggest never to live the life under superstitious beliefs rather start to live a rational life. Lives attached to rational behaviours are expected to enjoying long lasting pleasant experiences than superstitious momentary experiences which ensures happiness in true sense.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The current study was conducted with limited time options and could not explore more on superstition beliefs dimensions.

- While collecting of data some people are not interested to give proper responses.
- Because of the majority of literate people, we found less superstition.
- The sample size was small.

9. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This is well known fact that research is a continuous process. One research solves some current queries but raises many other future queries. Superstitious beliefs can be studied for their influence on behavior and happiness from different aspects. A larger sample can be studied to find out the more relevant findings on the superstitious beliefs and happiness of individuals.

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