



## SUPERSTITIONS AMONG FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

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### Abstract

*Superstitions are beliefs or feelings which are irrational and cannot be explained by reasons or facts. Even in this age of science, space and technology people still are in the grip of superstitions. The main objective of the study was to know the level of superstitions among the girls of age- group 14 to 16 years and to know the difference in the level of superstitions among girls grouped on the basis of type of school, income and education of their parents. Superstition Scale by Dixit and Dubey was used to collect data for the study. The sample consisted of 86 convent and 122 government school girls and hence, 208 girls from both the schools. The study found that most of the girls were not superstitious. There was found a significant difference in the superstition level of girls grouped on the basis of the type of school, income and education of parents.*

**Keywords:** *Superstition, female adolescents, type of school, education-income, parents*



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**Introduction:** Superstition can be defined as belief or feeling that is irrational and cannot be explained by fact or reason. It is the belief in supernatural causality that one event causes another without any natural process linking the two. It a common and blind belief that certain events bring good luck or bad luck for a person and that future happenings can be foretold by specific unrelated prior events. Superstitious persons have faith in luck, prophecy, ghosts, evil, spirits, omens, supernatural powers, spiritual healing, etc. They think that these powers govern our lives and are responsible for our success and failures. In fact, fear and insecurity at unconscious level of human mind has given birth to superstitions.

Superstitions are as old as the mankind. It is worldwide phenomenon which is prevalent everywhere and is not confined to any particular country, race, culture, religion, community or civilization. In this era of science and technology even the people in the countries likes USA, UK, Australia, China, France, etc. are not free from such beliefs. Superstitions are prevalent

more in less developed countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh etc. There are certain common superstitions which are shared by people in almost all the countries but some specific superstitions are confined to some particular races, civilizations and religions. Belief in spirits, ghosts, witches, luck and prophecy is there at global level. Considering 13 as an unlucky number is a wide spread superstition and is so common that many apartments and hotels omit 13<sup>th</sup> floor, some airlines fly without a 13<sup>th</sup> row and even the city Chandigarh in Punjab state has no 13<sup>th</sup> Sector. People in the world still regard spilling of salt, going under ladder, cries of certain birds, mewling of cats, hooting of an owl, howling of a dog as signs of death, danger or any other mishap. In India, when going out, the cat crossing one's path, seeing a brahmin, sneezing or calling by someone are considered as bad signals. Hanging an black painted earthen pot or ugly face on the newly built house keeps away the evils, finding a horseshoe and also placing a horseshoe over the entrance of home, with open end down, is taken as good luck. Opening umbrella inside, placing shoe on table, leaving shoes upside down, leaning a broom against bed, keeping broken mirror, etc. are taken as bad signs. Almost all the seven days and some months are fixed for good or bad luck. Many customs and traditions that we take for granted as being normal part of our culture, have evolved from superstitious beliefs of the past, eg. in modern days marriages in modern days marriages- choosing date and day, colour of the wedding dress, specific ornaments, performing all the ceremonies in traditional and ritual ways, etc.. In fact, one or the other common superstition still has a place in our lives.

In 1948, behavioural psychologist, B.F. Skinner described his pigeons exhibiting what appeared to be a superstitious behavior. He then extended this as a proposition regarding the nature of superstitious behaviour in humans. Skinner has used 'reinforcement effect' to explain superstitious behavior in human beings. There are many factors considered responsible for superstitious behavior of human beings. Ignorance and illiteracy are the major causes of such behaviours. Primitive people were ignorant and worshipped the sun, moon, fire, wind, water, storm, etc. Even in the modern society all people of different religions believe in one or the other kind of worship and these beliefs are being transmitted from one generation to another. Superstitions are culture based, people of particular culture start taking superstitions as traditions of that culture. Religion is another cause of superstitious behavior. Often beliefs and traditions of one religion are considered superstitions by other religions. Religious priests like gurus, pandits, babas and bapus either in person or through media are promoting unscientific and

irrational beliefs among people. Whatever the types and causes may be, the nature and the level of superstitions prevailing in the society should be investigated. This study is significant as it helps in knowing the level of superstitions among adolescent girls. It also has investigated whether the type of school, education and income of their parents has any impact on the superstitious behaviour of the adolescents.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To know the level of superstitions among the adolescent girls of age group 14 to 16 years.
2. To find out the difference in the superstition levels of girls studying in the convent and government schools.
3. To know the difference in the superstition levels of the daughters (the adolescent girls) of less- income and more- income parents.
4. To find out the difference in the superstition levels of the daughters of less- educated and more-educated parents.

### **Hypotheses of the study**

1. More of the adolescent girls are superstitious by nature.
2. There is a significant difference in the superstition levels of the girls studying in convent and government schools.
3. There is a significant difference in the superstition levels of the daughters of less- income parents and more –income parents.
4. There is a significant difference in the superstition levels of the daughters of less- educated parents and more – educated parents.

**Sample of the Study:** Purposive sampling for the selection of schools and the sample subjects was made. The data were taken from the girls studying in St. Joseph Convent School and Govt. Sr. Sec. School for Girls of Ferozepur. The sample of the study consisted 208 girls of age group 14 to 16 years. Among them 86 girls were of Convent and 122 were of Govt. school.

### **Tools employed for data collection**

1. To collect data relating to superstitions, Superstition Scale developed by Dixit and Dubey was used which is a fairly valid and reliable scale.
2. Data relating to education and income of the parents were taken from the personal data- sheet filled up by the sample subjects.

**Statistical Techniques used:** 1. Students were distributed under different levels of superstitions and their percentage under each of these levels was calculated. 2. To know the difference in the level of superstitions among different groups of girls, mean values were computed. To know the significance of difference between means, t- value was applied and the level of significance was determined. The tables and diagrams were prepared for clear presentation and rapid comparison of results.

**Findings of the study:** The findings relating to superstitions among the adolescent girls of age group 14 to 16 year have been presented as per the objectives of the study.

**Findings relating to Objective-1 of the study:** Percentage of Girls under different levels of Superstitions as given in the Manual of the Superstition Scale was calculated and is shown in the following table.

**Table -1: Percentage of Girls under different levels of Superstitions**

Level	Girls	Percentage
Highly Superstitious	10	4.81
Superstitious	27	12.98
Moderate	37	17.79
Non-Superstitious	39	18.75
Highly non - Superstitious	95	45.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100%</b>

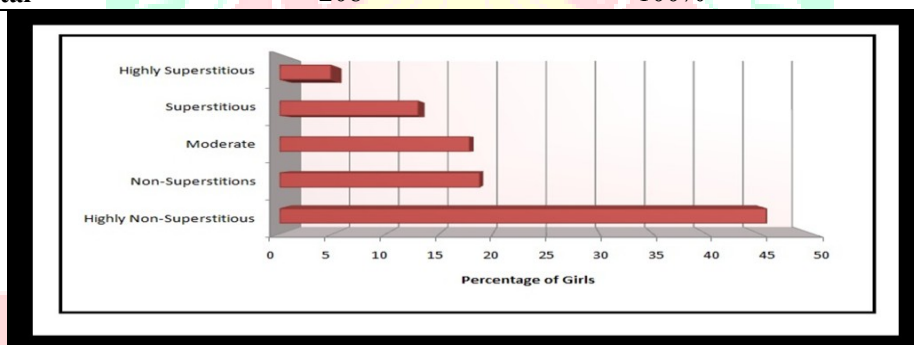


FIG. 1: Percentage of girls under different levels of Superstitions

Table -1 shows that 64.42% of the girls are non- superstitious/ highly non- superstitious and 17.79% of the girls are superstitious/ highly - superstitious by nature. 17.79% among the girls are moderately superstitious which means that they are neither too superstitious nor are free from superstitions. The hypothesis that more of the girls are not superstitious by nature was rejected as most of the girls were found not-superstitious.

**Findings relating to Objectives-2, 3 and 4:** To analyse the data in accordance with the objectives- 2, 3 and 4, all the 208 girls were classified into two groups for each variables which are the type of school, income and education of the parents. Those parents who had income less than Rs. 5000/- per month were considered as less –income parents and the remaining were taken as more –income parents. The parents who were illiterate or had education upto matriculation, were considered as less- educated parents and all others were taken as more-educated parents. The number of sample girls in each of the groups is as shown in the following table:

**Table -2: Number of Convent and Govt. school girls corresponding to each variable of the study**

	Variables	Convent Girls	Govt. Girls	Total
Parents	School	86	122	208
	More-Income	81	31	112
	Less-Income	5	91	96
	More- Educated	78	36	114
	Less- Educated	8	86	94

Mean values of the superstition scores of the groups formed on the basis of type of school, income and education of the parents were calculated and the significance level for the difference in means was determined which is shown in the table given below:

**Table -3: t- values for the difference in superstition level of the different groups**

	Group	Girls	Mean	S.D.	S.ED	t-value
Type of school	Convent school	86	58.66	15.66	2.21	10.86**
	Govt. school	122	82.7	15.75		
Income of parents	Less income	96	80.5	16.38	2.42	6.53**
	More income	112	64.7	18.43		
Education of parents	Less educated	94	80.21	3.93	1.77	8.38**
	More educated	114	65.37	18.35		

\*\* significant at 0.01 level of significance

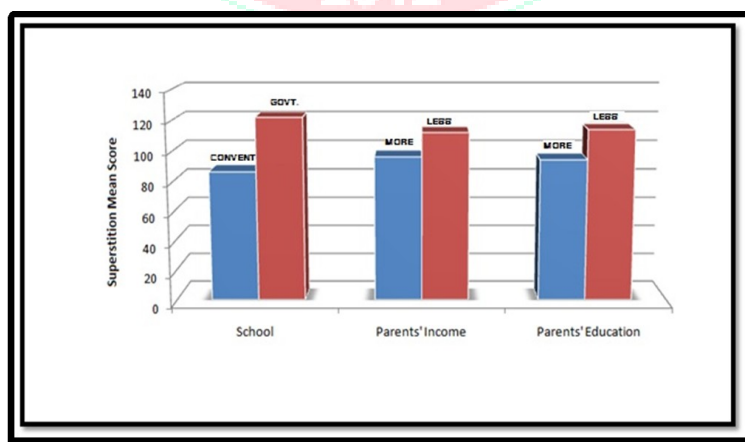


Fig. 2 Showing the difference in superstition level of the different groups

Table- 2 indicates that mean value for superstition scores of convent school girls is 58.66 and that of Government school girls is 82.7. The difference between the two means is 24.04. To

know whether the difference between the means is significant or not, t-value was calculated. The t-value 10.88 is significant at 0.01 level of significance. So, the difference between the two means was found significant.

Table- 2 also indicates that the mean value for the superstition scores of the daughters of less-income parents is 80.5 and of the daughters of more- income parents it is 64.7. The difference between the means is 15.8. The t-value calculated for the difference between means is 6.53, which is quite significant at 0.01 level of significance. It conveys that the difference between the two means is significant.

Table -2 shows that mean value is 80.21 for the superstition scores of the daughters of less-educated parents, whereas it is 65.37 for the daughters of more- educated parents. The mean difference is 14.84 and the t – value for the difference between means is 8.38 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. It shows that the difference between the means is significant.

All the three t-values shown in table-2 are significant at 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of superstitions of girls studying in convent and government schools, belonging to less and more- income parents and less-educated and more-educated parents. On the basis of these results hypotheses 2,3 and 4 were accepted.

### **Conclusions of the study**

1. Most of the girls, say nearly two-third of the girls, were less superstitious or not superstitious by nature. Almost one-sixth were moderately superstitious and the others were very superstitious. So, it is concluded that most of the girls did not believe in supernatural causality that one event or happening causes another without any natural process between the two. Some of the girls, no doubt, had faith that certain events bring good luck or bad luck for a person.
2. The significant difference, found in the superstition levels of convent school girls and government school girls, conveys that government school girls were more superstitious by nature as compared to convent school girls. As interpreted in the Superstition Scale the person getting scores below 71 is highly non –superstitious. The mean value 58.66 of superstition scores of convent school girls clearly indicates that most of the convent girls were non-superstitions. It may be due to the fact that they are getting education in better school, leaving aside a few, their parents are also more educated and have more income in comparison to the government school girls. So, it conveys that the convent school girls are more privileged in all aspects and so, are less superstitious.



3. A significant difference in the superstition level of the daughters of less-income parents and more income parents indicates that the daughters of more income parents were less superstitious. The mean value (64.7) of superstition scores of more-income group again indicates that most of these girls were highly non- superstitious by nature. So, it is concluded that the economic status of the parents effects the superstitious behaviors of children.

4. The daughters of the more-educated parents were less superstitious as compared to those of less-educated parents. It clearly indicates that education plays a significant role in developing analytical, critical and logical thinking among individuals. Educated parents mostly do not have blind faiths because of their scientific knowledge and outlook. The same beliefs are transmitted from parents to children. The home environment thus, is a major factor in making up the beliefs of the children rational or irrational.

5. Overall, peeping deep into the findings of the study by relating data in Table-2 to the results in Table-3, it is clear that if most of the adolescent girls were found non- superstitious/ highly non- superstitious by nature, it is due to the fact that almost all the convent school girls were highly non- superstitious. If daughters of more- income and more- educated parents are found not superstitious, it again is due to the education and the economic status of the parents of convent school girls. Thus, the study concludes that the education and the economic status of the parents, in other words the home environment, plays a significant role in making children superstitious or not- superstitious.

### **Recommendations**

If education has a major role to play in decreasing superstitious behaviour of an individual, then it is the teacher who is accountable for such behaviours of the students. The subjects like geography, general science, physics, chemistry, biology and social studies taught in the schools are such subjects which do not allow students to develop such beliefs that there are some ghosts, witches, evils, omens, souls or supernatural powers who dictate or rule our day today life. So, if taught properly these subjects surely will be helpful in developing scientific knowledge and outlook among students. Subject matter of the Languages taught in schools also can play a major role in this direction.

In the schools, where students come from slum areas and belong to illiterate and poor parents, the authorities should organize some awareness programmes regarding superstitions. They may arrange special lectures, seminars, debates, panel discussions, plays, skits, etc. relating

to superstitions prevailing in the society. Parents should also be invited on such programmes. Some N.G.Os, as is the *Tarksheel Society* in Punjab, are engaged in eradicating superstitions from the society. Such social workers can play a great role in shaping the beliefs of students.

From the media and from our day today observations, we find that even our bureaucrats, politicians and highly educated people are in the grip of superstitions. The priests, pandits, preachers, saints, babas and such like people are exploiting the ignorant and innocent people. Some T.V channels are adding fuel to the fire. The present and prevailing degree of superstitions is a challenge for the educational authorities and planners as our educational system is always blamed for every evil prevailing in our society. So, our curriculum must develop scientific outlook and beliefs among students in real sense. We must be watchful and alert so as not to allow blind and irrational beliefs to dominate and dictate the ability of reasoning and logical thinking of our children.

Roots of superstitions are so deep in our society that hardly is there any society or person who is completely free from superstitions, so a selective approach can work better. Some little innocent superstition whims and notions, which do good without doing any harm, fortify confidence and inner strength and thus provide psychological support in making adjustments can be left free. But those which do more harm than good, weaken the mind and develop fears and insecurity must be eliminated from the society by educating people.

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