

Impact of Paranormal Beliefs on Spiritual Wellbeing of Young Adults

Tanya Kaushik^{1*}, Deena Dixon²

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of paranormal beliefs on the spiritual well-being (SWB) of young adults in India. Analyzed were the data from 149 individuals, which were acquired through Google Forms, considering ethical rules and reliable scales. The study utilized the Revised Paranormal Beliefs Scale and the Spiritual Wellbeing Scale, specifically targeting persons between the ages of 18 and 30. Utilizing IBM SPSS, a quantitative study demonstrated a statistically significant positive connection between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being (SWB) at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. However, the impact of PB on SWB was found to be minimal, accounting for just 5%. There was no statistically significant difference between genders in terms of paranormal beliefs or spiritual well-being (SWB) respectively among young adults. These findings emphasize the complex connection between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being (SWB) among young adults.

Keywords: *Paranormal beliefs (PB), Spiritual wellbeing (SWB)*

Parapsychology is the systematic study of alleged psychological phenomena involving the transfer of information or energy that cannot be explained in terms of presently known scientific data or laws. Spirituality is a concern for or sensitivity to things of the spirit or soul, especially as opposed to materialistic concerns, more specifically, a concern for God and a sensitivity to religious experience, which may include the practice of a particular religion but may also exist without such practice or the fact or state of being incorporeal.

Paranormal beliefs

A collection of convictions, theories, or conceptions related to events or situations that are often regarded as existing outside the purview of accepted scientific knowledge or interpretation are referred to as paranormal beliefs. These beliefs can include ideas like ghosts, psychic powers, extraterrestrial life, and other strange or unconfirmed phenomena. They frequently incorporate supernatural, unexplained, or mystical components. Lack of empirical support is a common feature of paranormal beliefs, which can also run counter to accepted scientific theories and the laws of nature. They are a topic of interest for many

¹M.sc Clinical Psychology Student, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, Karnataka (India)

²Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru, Karnataka (India)

*Corresponding Author

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academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and parapsychology, since they investigate the human predisposition to see and understand phenomena that lay outside the purview of conventional science. Different criteria have been used to classify paranormal beliefs. They've been described as beliefs rooted in delusion, irrationality, or ignorance. The claim that the paranormal reflects a phenomenon that defies the fundamental rules established by science in the natural world is another one that is stated often (the "para" in paranormal implies defying these rules). The term "paranormal belief" (PB) refers to beliefs that contradict established scientific theory. It is common in India among both the general public and those who are mentally ill. It is frequently linked to beliefs in witchcraft, malevolent spirits, astrological influences, karmic consequences from previous lifetimes, and sin-related punishment.

When someone has mental health problems, their explanatory model (EM), or conceptualization of their disease, may be influenced by PB. This socio-anthropological method can be used in psychiatric practice to better comprehend the individual experiences of distress. In the end, the results of mental illnesses might be impacted by EM and PB's effects on treatment adherence and satisfaction. Sceptics contend that those who believe in paranormal phenomena could be more receptive to advice from conventional healers, which could result in them not taking their prescription drugs as directed. Books, movies, TV series, and video games are only a few examples of the media and entertainment that frequently propagate and popularize paranormal ideas. These representations could involve made-up stories about paranormal activity, explorations of supposedly haunted places, and portrayals of psychic powers and alien contacts. Even though these portrayals often make it difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction, they have a big impact on how the general public views the paranormal and how society views it. The broad category of paranormal beliefs includes a variety of ideas that go against accepted scientific knowledge and pique people's interest in the secrets of the cosmos. Although examining claims of paranormal experiences requires skepticism and critical thinking, these ideas still hold sway over people's imaginations and encourage curiosity about the unknown.

Spiritual wellbeing

Moreover, existential and religious well-being are two related characteristics that help to understand spiritual well-being. The horizontal (existential) dimension includes self-integration, dependence on inner resources, and life purpose and happiness. The vertical (religious) dimension, on the other hand, deals with a person's perception of their relationship to God, a transcendent being, or a higher power. Individual viewpoints, interpretations, and the extent to which these views are incorporated into one's entire belief system can all have an impact on the relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being. For some people, there might be a connection or even a synergy between the two, but for others, there might be tension or they might exist independently. The complex tapestry of spiritual and supernatural traditions with deep historical origins in India has an impact on the link between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being. Owing to India's rich spiritual legacy, paranormal beliefs can become intricately linked to spiritual health. People may view paranormal experiences as proof of their spiritual development, which strengthens their feeling of direction, significance, and heavenly connection. Key concepts coming under Spiritual wellbeing could be, Meaning and Purpose entails thinking critically about the meaning of life, the principles that control one's behaviour, and the objectives that provide direction. Achieving spiritual well-being frequently entails developing a sense of contentment and satisfaction in one's endeavours as well as establishing harmony between one's actions and personal values. A strong bond with oneself, as well as self-awareness,

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self-acceptance, and self-compassion, are necessary for spiritual well-being. Having a sense of community and connection to others is another crucial component of spiritual health. This entails developing kindness, empathy, and compassion for other people as well as genuine connections built on mutual respect, trust, and support. Recognizing the interdependence of all beings and acting kindly and selflessly to advance the well-being of society are common components of spiritual well-being. Several spiritual traditions place a high value on having a connection to nature as a source of healing, insight, and inspiration. A sense of transcendence beyond the bounds of everyday living and an understanding of life's mysteries are frequently associated with spiritual well-being. This can involve having feelings of amazement, respect, and awe for the unknown in addition to being open to delving into existential and philosophical issues regarding the nature of reality, consciousness, and the cosmos. Many individuals associate faith and belief in a higher power, divine presence, or ultimate reality with spiritual well-being. The final one is inner peace and equanimity that states Cultivating inner calm, serenity, and equanimity in the midst of life's obstacles and uncertainties is often a prerequisite for spiritual well-being. This means growing resilient and achieving emotional balance, as well as discovering a sense of serenity and acceptance in the face of hardship.

There is a complex and diverse relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being that is influenced by a wide range of factors such as individual characteristics, personal experiences, and cultural upbringing. In India, the relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being is intricately linked to the country's rich cultural, religious, and philosophical heritage. India has a rich tapestry of religious and spiritual traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and indigenous belief systems. Many of these traditions believe in paranormal occurrences such as rebirth, karma, divine intervention, and the existence of supernatural creatures such as gods, goddesses, and spirits. These ideas are frequently firmly embedded in the cultural fabric of Indian society and play an important part in defining people's spiritual outlooks. Spiritual well-being in India is frequently promoted through a variety of practices and rituals aiming at connecting with the divine, experiencing inner calm, and achieving enlightenment. These practices may include meditation, yoga, prayer, chanting, pilgrimage, and participation in religious festivals and ceremonies. Belief in paranormal events is frequently integrated into these activities, with people seeking spiritual growth and transcendence through contact with the unknown. Indian philosophy provides fundamental insights into the nature of reality, consciousness, and the human condition, influencing both spiritual beliefs and paranormal interpretations. Maya (illusion), Atman (self), Brahman (ultimate reality), and Dharma (cosmic order) are all concepts that help us understand the interdependence of all existence and the transcendent nature of spirituality. Paranormal beliefs can be interpreted as expressions of invisible forces functioning inside the cosmic fabric, reflecting the strange and incomprehensible parts of the divine. In the face of life's difficulties, paranormal beliefs frequently function as coping mechanisms, providing comfort, peace, and a sense of purpose. Belief in concepts such as karma and reincarnation can provide explanations for pain and hardship, implying that they are part of a broader cosmic plan for spiritual development and advancement. Similarly, encounters with supernatural creatures or divine manifestations might be seen as signs or favours from higher forces that provide comfort and guidance during tough times. India's religious and cultural environment is marked by syncretism and adaptation, with beliefs and practices from various traditions frequently merging to generate distinct hybrid systems. This mobility enables the coexistence of various perspectives on the paranormal and spiritual realms, producing a pluralistic culture that values multiple routes to spiritual well-being. Individuals can draw inspiration from a variety of sources, mixing components of

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Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and other traditions to create personalized spiritual practices that are relevant to their specific spiritual journeys.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study was done to look at the relationship between university students' eight categories of paranormal beliefs and five personality traits that stated and indicated that people who exhibit high degrees of neuroticism typically have stronger Traditional religious beliefs (Kumar et al., 2020).

The idea that spiritual and paranormal phenomena exist is engrained in Indian countries' cultures and belief systems. From the beginning of time, external supernatural powers like evil spirits have existed and influenced our collective awareness. The elder generation imparts knowledge about these outside pressures to adolescents and young adults. Teenagers and young adults participated in the study, which found a substantial variation in their views on paranormal activity. Additionally, a significant gender difference was noted, with women showing a higher propensity than men to believe in paranormal phenomena. (Kedar et al., 2023)

Stressors in life can have a permanent negative impact on young adults by causing emotional and cognitive decline that can develop into functional neurological symptom problems. This study evaluated individuals with functional neurological symptom disorder for maladaptive emotional schemas and paranormal beliefs. In conclusion, the study discovered a robust and positive relationship between maladaptive emotional schemas and paranormal beliefs, with psi belief being more significantly associated with these schemas in patients who had functional neurological symptoms. (Roohee et al., 2023)

Beliefs in the paranormal are not unusual among those suffering from mental illness. These ideas may influence how patients view their condition, how happy they are with their care, and how closely they follow their prescription schedules. Using standardised evaluation instruments, the goal of this study was to determine the degree of paranormal beliefs and investigate how they relate to explanatory models of illness, treatment adherence, and treatment satisfaction. The results of this study suggest that different demographic characteristics may have an impact on the degree of paranormal beliefs. Furthermore, among patients with mental illness in remission, the study found a favourable association between adherence and patients' explanatory models of illness and paranormal beliefs. (Ram et al., 2016)

The purpose of this study was to look at any relationships that might exist between modernity, religiosity, and the Big Five personality traits and paranormal belief. It also looked at how these three individual differences together affected the belief in the paranormal. Each participant was born into a conventional Hindu family. The study only took the total paranormal belief score into account, not any individual scales. The results showed a somewhat favourable connection between paranormal belief and extraversion and openness. Interestingly, there was a significant positive association found between religious belief and paranormal belief. Socio-religious and marriage showed the most negative correlations with paranormal belief among the modernity scales. The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the personality, religiosity, and modernity variables taken together explained 34.3% of the variance in the belief in paranormal phenomena worldwide. Significant variables in this model included neuroticism, openness, extraversion, modernity of the marriage system, and religion. (Darolia et al., 2022)

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The mechanisms through which education impacts paranormal beliefs remain unclear. This study sought to investigate the impact of education on paranormal beliefs in students at different educational levels, namely school and college. The findings indicated that school-going children scored notably higher compared to their college-going counterparts. Furthermore, a significant discrepancy was observed across all seven dimensions of scale between school-going children and college students. (Ali et al., 2013)

Very little research has been done on the supernatural beliefs that people with schizophrenia have. The main goal of this study was to examine the personal views, etiological models, and help-seeking behavior of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. In summary, it was discovered that a significant portion of people with schizophrenia had supernatural beliefs, and that these beliefs are linked to their symptoms of mental illness. (Kate et al., 2012)

Significant associations between paranormal beliefs and characteristics related to sleep have been shown in earlier study. Still, these studies have mostly been small-scale affairs that have looked into a restricted range of sleep-related factors. This study attempts to fill a vacuum in the literature by investigating paranormal beliefs in a large sample size in relation to a wide range of sleep-related characteristics. The results of this investigation show that there are, in fact, relationships between many characteristics of sleep and paranormal beliefs. With psychoeducation, this understanding may improve our capacity to promote sleep. But it's crucial to remember that the mechanisms underlying these correlations are probably complex, and further research is required to fully comprehend why people occasionally report seeing strange things at night. (Rauf et al., 2023)

This study looked at how students' beliefs about paranormal and pseudoscientific topics changed after taking a science and critical thinking course that specifically addressed these topics, and how much their religion, gender, and fantasy thinking propensity correlated with these changes. Pre-course views in pseudoscientific and paranormal themes were found to be positively correlated with higher scores on some fantasy thinking instruments. There were other consequences according to religion and gender. Compared to men, women believed in all subcategories of pseudoscience and the paranormal more often than men did. Another important factor was religion and how often one attended religious services. Compared to religious students, agnostic or atheist students typically had fewer beliefs about the paranormal and pseudoscientific issues. Students who attended religious services both frequently and seldom tended to have fewer views about the paranormal and pseudoscientific subjects. Students generally showed lower beliefs in the paranormal and pseudoscientific subcategories after finishing the critical thinking course. Notably, there was no discernible shift in the belief in superstition. Gender and religion also had an impact on the changes in belief, with females and religious students generally experiencing more significant declines. (Wilson, 2018)

This study investigates the concept of paranormal belief (PB) and distinguishes between its explicit (conscious) and implicit (automatic) components. It's interesting to note that there was no discernible relationship between implicit and explicit PB. On the other hand, it moderated the association between participants' knowledge of paranormal experiences and explicit PB. Individuals with weak implicit PB showed constant knowledge scores, independent of the presence or absence of strong explicit PB. On the other hand, when their explicit PB was strong as well, participants with strong implicit PB scored higher on knowledge tests than those with weak explicit PB. These results suggest that PB, both

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implicit and explicit, can affect a person's performance on a knowledge test concerning paranormal phenomena when they are inconsistent. (Stieger & Hergovich, 2013)

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the spiritual health and overall well-being of senior citizens residing in Tehran, Iran's Kahrizak Senior Home. The results showed that the participants' quality-of-life ratings and spiritual well-being were positively correlated. This emphasizes how important it is to recognize and attend to spiritual well-being when providing care for the elderly, implying that including spiritual support into daily activities is crucial. (Jadidi et al., 2015)

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

- To study the impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual well-being of young adults,
- To see the relationship between these two variables and,
- To see the gender difference in regard to each variable respectively among young adults

Hypothesis

- **H01.** There is no significant relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual wellbeing of young adults.
- **H02.** There is no significant impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual well-being of young adults.
- **H03.** There no significant gender difference in regard to paranormal belief systems among young adults.
- **H04.** There is no significant gender difference in regard to spiritual well-being among young adults.

Variables

Paranormal beliefs (Independent variable), and Spiritual wellbeing (Dependent Variable)

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design.

Sample

The study's sample size is 150 (85- females, 65-males). The age range was 18-30 years. Convenient sampling technique was employed to acquire the samples for the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The sample was obtained from students, undergraduates, postgraduates and working individuals in the age group of 18 to 30 yrs. The samples were collected from literate people. The sample from outside India was excluded from the study. The study excluded samples from illiterate people. The study excluded the data from all other age groups other than young adults.

Tools for the study

The Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS)

The Spiritual Wellbeing Scale (SWBS)

Description of the tool

Revised Paranormal Belief Scale

A 26-item RPBS provides a measure of degree of belief in each of seven dimensions: Traditional Religious Belief, Psi, Witchcraft, Superstition, Spiritualism, Extraordinary Life Forms, and Precognition. Improvements from the original 25- item Paranormal Belief Scale (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983) include adoption of a seven-point rating scale as well as item changes for three subscales: Precognition, Witchcraft, and Extraordinary Life Forms. These improvements provide greater reliability and validity, less restriction of range, and greater cross-cultural validity.

Spiritual Well-Being Scale

The Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) Scale was developed By Raymond F. Paloutzian as a general measure of the subjective quality of life. It serves as a global psychological measure of one's perception of spiritual well-being. SWB is understood to be wholistic. The scale is intended to measure people's overall SWB as it is perceived by them in both a religious well-being (RWB) sense and an existential well-being (EWB) sense. The internal consistency reliability coefficients, based on data from over 900 subjects across seven studies, ranged from .82 to .94 for RWB, .78 to .86 for EWB, and .89 to .94 for SWB. These data indicate high internal consistency and reliability. The SWBS has good face validity as is evident by the content of the items.

Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 was used for conducting the statistical analysis on the data. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) will be used to summarize paranormal beliefs and Spiritual wellbeing test scores. To address the research questions, correlation, linear regression, and independent samples t-test will be used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to study the Impact of Paranormal beliefs on spiritual wellbeing of young adults aged between 18-30 years. A total sample of 150 participants was collected.

Table 1 indicates descriptive statistics and correlation of SWB and PB

Variables	n	Mean	SD	1
Paranormal Belief	149	107.19	24.411	.006
Spiritual Wellbeing	149	84.32	14.946	.006

H01: There is no significant relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual wellbeing of young adults

Table 1 shows the Pearson correlation analysis done to see the relationship between Paranormal beliefs and Spiritual wellbeing of young adults. The results revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between Paranormal beliefs and spiritual wellbeing of young adults, n= 149, p < 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between paranormal beliefs and spiritual wellbeing of young adults is rejected.

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Table 2 indicates B score, standard error, beta value, F score, t score, p value, R score and R square score between Paranormal beliefs and Spiritual wellbeing square score between Paranormal beliefs and Spiritual well being

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients B	Std. error	Standardized coefficients β (Beta)	Model Summary
Paranormal Beliefs	.138	.049	.225	F= 7.818 t= 2.796 Sig= .006 R= .225 Rsquare= .050

Dependent Variable: Spiritual wellbeing

H02: There is no significant impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual well - being of young adults.

Simple linear regression was conducted to assess whether there is a significant impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual wellbeing of young adults. The findings reveal that there is a significant impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual wellbeing of young adults, $n=149$, $p < 0.05$. The R square value of .050 indicates that there is a weak impact of PB on SWB i.e., approximately 5%. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant impact of PB on SWB of young adults is rejected.

Table 3 Independent t- test of Paranormal beliefs among young adults based on gender

Paranormal Beliefs	n	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Male	64	104.97	24.248	3.031	.963	147	.730
Female	85	108.86	24.543	2.662			

H03: There no significant gender difference in regard to paranormal belief systems among young adults.

An Independent sample t- test was conducted to assess the gender difference in regard to PB systems among young adults. Findings reveal that there is no significant gender difference, $n=149$, $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4 Independent t- test of Spiritual wellbeing among young adults based on gender

Spiritual wellbeing	n	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	p
Male	64	82.84	16.289	2.036	1.048	147	.178
Female	85	85.44	13.844	1.502			

H04: There is no significant gender difference in regard to spiritual well- being among young adults.

An Independent sample t- test was conducted to assess the gender difference in regard to spiritual wellbeing among young adults. Findings reveal that there is no significant gender difference, $n=149$, $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION

This research study was conducted to study the impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual well-being of young adults. From analysis done it has been proved that there is a significant impact (weak impact) of paranormal beliefs on spiritual wellbeing of young adults. Moreover, the analysis proved that there is significant positive relationship between these two variables. Talking about gender difference then the analysis done showed no significant gender differences in regard to each variable (PB and SWB) respectively among young adults.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are crucial to recognize in every research study because they provide context for evaluating the findings and identify possibilities for further researches. The quantitative study titled 'Impact of Paranormal Beliefs on Spiritual Wellbeing of Young Adults' may have the following limitations,

- **Sampling Bias.** Because the data was collected online using Google Forms, there may be a sampling bias toward people who are more familiar with technology or have access to the internet. This may restrict the findings' generalizability to a larger population of young people.
- **Self-Selection Bias.** Because participants volunteered to take part in the study, self-selection bias may have occurred. People who held strong convictions or had personal experiences with paranormal beliefs or spiritual well-being were more likely to participate, potentially skewing the results.
- **Response Bias.** Data obtained through online surveys may be prone to response bias, which occurs when participants provide socially desired answers or overstate their opinions or well-being levels, resulting in potential mistakes.
- **Measurement Validity.** While the study used accurate and reliable scales to assess paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being, self-reported assessments may be impacted by personal views and biases. This may have an impact on the data's correctness and the strength of the observed associations.
- **Limited control of variables.** As a quantitative study, there may have been little control over extraneous variables that could have influenced the association between paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being. Cultural background, religious views, personal experiences, and psychological factors could have influenced the outcomes.
- **Sample Size and Power.** The sample size of 150 individuals may be insufficient for performing complicated analysis and finding tiny effects. This may have an impact on the study's statistical power and ability to generalize its findings to wider populations.

Suggestions for future Research

After completing quantitative research on the impact of paranormal beliefs on spiritual well-being among young adults and investigating gender differences in these variables, there are various suggestions for future research that could be pursued,

- **The Longitudinal Study.** Conduct a longitudinal study to observe how young persons' paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being change over time. This could provide information about the stability of these beliefs and their impact on well-being as people progress through life stages.

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- **Cultural comparison.** Examine cultural disparities in paranormal beliefs and their relevance to spiritual well-being. Compare data from various cultural backgrounds to better understand how cultural influences influence these beliefs and their impact on well-being.
- **The Qualitative Study.** Complement the quantitative findings with a qualitative study to acquire further insight into young adults' subjective experiences and views of paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being. Qualitative methods like as interviews and focus groups can yield rich, detailed data.
- **Intervention Study.** Create and implement interventions to promote good spiritual well-being among young individuals who hold varied degrees of paranormal beliefs. Assess the efficacy of these therapies using pre- and post-intervention data.
- **Age Group Variation.** To further understand potential developmental implications, investigate how paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being change among young adults of different ages (e.g., early 20s vs. late 20s).
- **A Qualitative Analysis of Gender Differences.** Utilize qualitative analysis techniques to explore deeper into the intricacies of gender disparities in paranormal beliefs and spiritual well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests and that there were no competing interests.

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