

## A Study of Stress Level Contributing To the Superstitious Behavior

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### ABSTRACT

In this research, researcher studied the relation between stress and superstitious behavior. This study carried out in UP. To assess the level of stress, stress scale of M.Singh (2002) has been used and to assess superstitious behaviour self-constructed scale has been used. Chi square technique has been used for data analysis. The relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. Hence, it has been concluded that high stress lead to high superstitious behaviour.

*Keywords: Stress, Superstitious Behavior*

In the literature, there are several definitions of superstition. Most authors agree on the fact that superstitions are beliefs or behaviors that are contrary to rational norms within a specific society. It implies that superstitious behaviors cannot be interpreted or explained according to religious beliefs which are usually not considered as irrational by members of a given society (Campbell, 1996). Superstitions are culturally anchored and differ according to countries. For example “Simmons and Schindler (2002)” demonstrate that, in China, prices ending with the digit 8 are very common because there is a local belief that number 8 brings luck, prosperity, and happiness. On the contrary, prices ending with digit 4 are under – represented because this number brings bad luck.

According to Devenport and Holloway, (1980), superstitious rituals are usually taking place in contexts of uncertainty. In a later article (Skinner, 1953), he suggested that seeing a causal relationship between behavior and the “consequences” also could explain the occurrence and maintenance of superstition in humans. A second, complementary explanation may be derived from Langer and colleagues’ (Langer, 1975, 1977; Langer & Roth, 1975) work on illusion of control. Langer stated that, in general, people are inclined to see themselves as a cause, even in situations in which they are not influencing the situation. This explanation holds that people carry out superstitious behaviours in order to influence situations in which, in reality, they have

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no control. According to Langer, this is especially true in situations in which chances as well as skill play a role. In competitive sports, there is always a mixture of chance as well as skill that determines the outcome of a match. Therefore, in these situations, people will probably be more prone to the illusion of control and superstition.

Sigmund Freud called such superstitions “faulty actions”. Some psychologists consider them expressions of inner tensions and anxieties. Other believes intense superstitious feelings indicate some sort of mental disorder. However, there has been no reliable clinical correlation between superstitious beliefs and mental illness.

It is defined as “beliefs and/or practices that have no religious no scientific foundations and which lead people to think that certain facts (external events or one’s own actions) or objects can bring good or bad luck, or be signs announcing positive or negative consequences” by Eva Delacroix and Valerie Guillard.

Although science make progress, but still people stick to believe in superstitions and follow the superstitious rituals. What are the reasons behind it? Is it rational or some sort of psychological factors lying behind it? In present study researcher study the relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour.

### ***Research problem:***

*“Is stress level is responsible for superstitious behaviour?”*

### ***Objectives:***

- 1) To study the relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour among Rural Female.
- 2) To study the relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour among Rural Male.
- 3) To study the relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour among Urban Female.
- 4) To study the relation between stress level and superstitious behaviour among Urban Male.

**Flanagan, E.** (2013) found that “athletes coincidentally happen to find a link between enacting superstitious rituals and a desired performance outcome. **Keinan, G.** (2002) studied on “The effect of stress and desire for control on superstitious behavior” found that frequency of magical thinking and superstitious behavior increases under conditions of stress. A possible explanation for this finding is that stress reduces the individual’s sense of control she or he engages in magical rituals or superstitions.

According to Malinowski (1948), superstitions are used to fight anxiety and distress by filling the psychological gap caused by uncertainty. Superstitious thoughts or behaviors are used as a substitution to instrumental acts that people would have liked to achieve in order to influence the situation. Modern societies are characterized by their orientation.

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### *Variables*

- **Independent Variable**

Level of stress is the independent variable in this research. Stress is defined neither by the conditioning acting on the person (stressor) nor by the state of the person (coping resources, ego-strength etc.) nor by his reactions (stress responses), but rather by the inter-play of the three. Hans Selye defined stress as, “Stress refers to non-specific response of body to any demand made upon it.

- **Dependent Variable**

Superstitious behaviour is the dependent variable in this research. A stricter definition of the superstition (which, following Hood 2010, we henceforth refer to as a ‘supernatural superstition’) is one where there are no rational grounds to believe in a relationship between action and outcome, so that the agents prior belief is that the relationship is unlikely.

### *Hypothesis of the research are:*

- 1) There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among rural female.
- 2) There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among rural male.
- 3) There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among urban female.
- 4) There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among urban male.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### *Sample and Sampling*

Sample is divided into four categories: - Rural Female, Urban Female, Rural Male and Urban Male.

Total 300 people has been included in the sample from UP.

“Quota sampling” has been used in this research.

Uttar Pradesh is the area chosen for sampling. Age limit of sample is 20 years to 40 years.

“Ex-post facto” research design has been used for this research.

### *Tools*

- To assess level of stress in subjects “Stress-scale” of M.Singh (2002), Institute of Research and Test Development, will be used. Reliability coefficient of the scale was estimated by Split-half method and Test-retest method and correlation was found 0.82 and 0.79 respectively. Validity coefficient was computed with Bist Battery of stress scale (Abha Rani Bist) and correlation was found 0.61. .
- To assess superstitious behaviour, scale has been developed by researcher. Reliability coefficient of scale has been found by test-retest method. The Scale has shown content validity on the basis of experts rating, which were considered satisfactory.

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### *Statistical method used*

Chi Square has been used as statistical method to calculate the result.

### **RESULT**

$H_1$  = There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among rural female.

#### **Rural Female**

*Table 1: Percentage table*

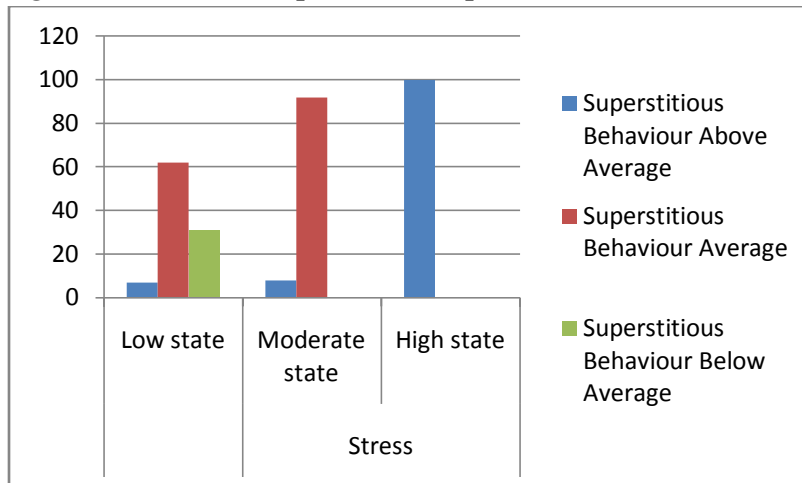
| Superstitious behaviour | Above Average | Average | Below Average |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Stress                  |               |         |               |
| High State              | 100           | 0       | 0             |
| Moderate                | 8             | 92      | 0             |
| Low State               | 7             | 62      | 31            |

*Table 2: Contingency Table*

| Superstitious Behaviour | Above Average | Average    | Below Average | Total |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------|
| Stress                  |               |            |               |       |
| High State              | 4 (0.48)      | 0 (2.56)   | 0 (0.96)      | 4     |
| Moderate                | 1 (1.56)      | 12 (8.32)  | 0 (2.56)      | 13    |
| Low State               | 4 (6.96)      | 36 (37.12) | 18 (13.92)    | 58    |
| Total                   | 9             | 48         | 18            | 75    |

After calculation the value  $X^2 = 36.754$ , on  $df = 4$  thus  $P$  lies below 0.01. It has been clear from above table that relation between stress and superstition is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. Hence hypothesis is accepted. Result indicates that Rural Female show high superstitious behaviour in high stress situations.

*Graph 1: Percentage shows relationship between superstitious behaviour and stress level*



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### Rural Male

H<sub>2</sub> = There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among rural male.

**Table 3: Percentage Table**

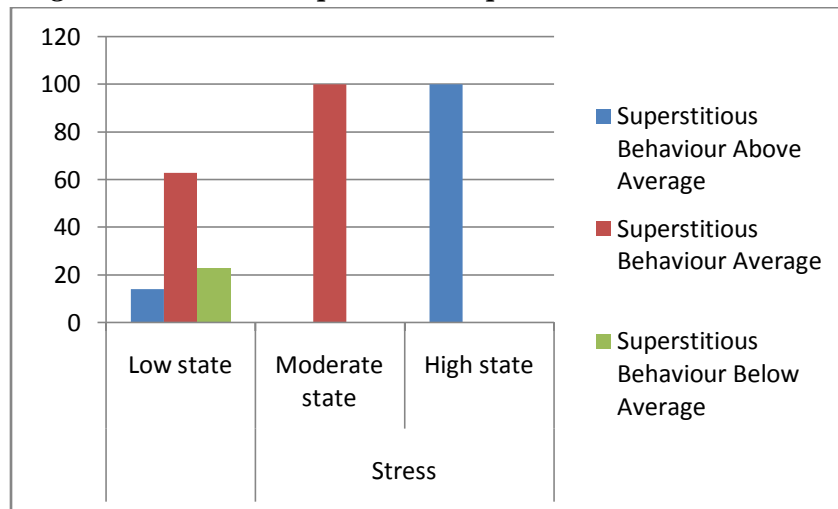
| Superstitious behaviour | Above Average | Average | Below Average |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| High State              | 100           | 0       | 0             |
| Moderate                | 0             | 100     | 0             |
| Low State               | 14            | 63      | 23            |

**Table 4: Contingency Table**

| Superstitious Behaviour | Above Average | Average    | Below Average | Total |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------|
| High State              | 6 (1.12)      | 0 (3.84)   | 0 (1.04)      | 6     |
| Moderate                | 0 (2.43)      | 13 (8.32)  | 0 (2.25)      | 13    |
| Low State               | 8 (10.5)      | 35 (35.84) | 13 (9.7)      | 56    |
| Total                   | 14            | 48         | 13            | 75    |

After calculation the value  $X^2 = 35.27$ , on  $df = 4$  thus  $P$  lies below 0.01. It has been clear from above table that relation between stress and superstition is significant. Hypothesis is accepted. Result indicates that Rural Male show high superstitious behaviour in high stress situations.

**Graph 2:-Percentage shows relationship between superstitious behaviour and stress level.**



H<sub>3</sub> = There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among urban female.

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### Urban Female

**Table 5: Percentage Table**

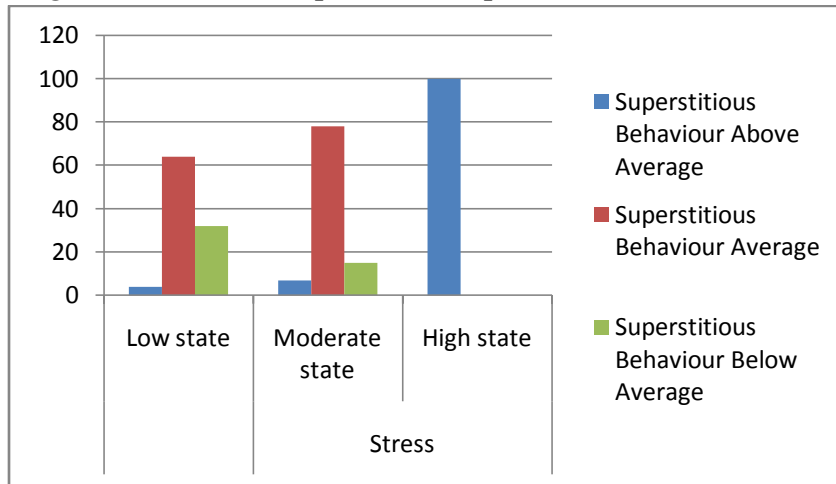
| Superstitious behaviour |               |         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Stress                  | Above Average | Average | Below Average |
| High State              | 100           | 0       | 0             |
| Moderate                | 7             | 78      | 15            |
| Low State               | 4             | 64      | 32            |

**Table 6: Contingency Table**

| Superstitious Behaviour |               |           |               |       |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Stress                  | Above Average | Average   | Below Average | Total |
| High state              | 8 (1.17)      | 0 (4.8)   | 0 (2.03)      | 8     |
| Moderate                | 1 (1.9)       | 10 (7.8)  | 2 (3.29)      | 13    |
| Low state               | 2 (7.92)      | 35 (32.4) | 17 (13.68)    | 54    |
| Total                   | 11            | 45        | 19            | 75    |

After calculation the value  $X^2 = 53.71$ , on  $df= 4$  thus  $P$  lies below 0.01. It has been clear from above table that relation between stress and superstition is significant. Hypothesis is accepted. Result indicates Urban Female show high superstitious behaviour in stressful situations.

**Graph 3:-Percentage shows relationship between superstitious behaviour and stress level**



$H_4$  = There is significant relationship between stress and superstitious behaviour among urban male.

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Urban Male

*Table : Percentage Table*

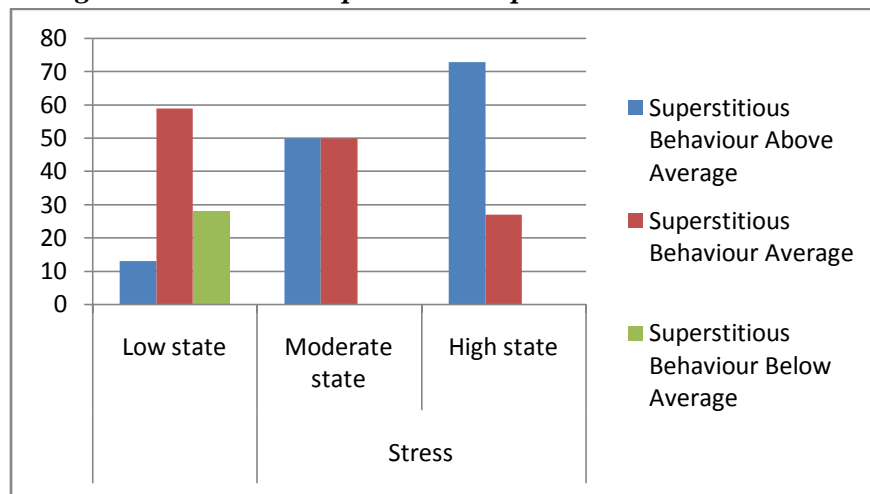
| Superstitious behaviour |               |         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| Stress                  | Above Average | Average | Below Average |
| High State              | 73            | 27      | 0             |
| Moderate                | 50            | 50      | 0             |
| Low State               | 13            | 59      | 28            |

*Table : Contingency Table*

| Superstitious Behaviour |               |          |               |       |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Stress                  | Above Average | Average  | Below Average | Total |
| High state              | 8 (2.93)      | 5 (2.67) | 7 (14.4)      | 20    |
| Moderate                | 3 (5.87)      | 5 (5.33) | 32 (28.8)     | 40    |
| Low state               | 0 (2.2)       | 0 (2)    | 15 (10.8)     | 15    |
| Total                   | 11            | 10       | 54            | 75    |

After calculation the value  $X^2 = 22.214$ , on  $df= 4$  thus  $P$  lies below 0.01. It has been clear from above table that relation between stress and superstition is significant. Hypothesis is accepted. Result indicates Urban Male show high superstitious behaviour in stressful situations.

*Graph 4 :-Percentage shows relationship between superstitious behaviour and stress level.*



## DISCUSSION

Results indicate that as the level of stress increases people follow the superstitious behavior. Result supported by previous researches of Futrell, B. (2011), Keinan, G. (2002), Malinowski (1948). The etiology of superstitious behaviours appears to arise as response to uncertainty or distress when an individual faced with uncontrollable and random circumstances. According to psychoanalytic theory, superstition is a form of magical thinking that is characteristic of the anal

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stage in Freud's psychosexual stages theory. In adulthood, superstition might reappear in periods of distress through regression as a defence mechanism (piaget, 1928). Although it has been proved through this research that superstitious behavior is helpful in relieving stress, but it should not be followed by people because it is a self-deceiving process. Counselling and stress management techniques should be used to relieve from stress.

### CONCLUSION

Present research work try to fill the knowledge gap of underlying phenomena behind superstitious behavior. This research concluded that people usually believe or follow superstitious behavior when they are in high stress situations, because in these situations they face uncertainty in their life. In this condition they try to control the situation, by following superstitious behaviour.

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**Conflict of Interests:** The author declared no conflict of interests.

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