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A Comparative Study Of Paranormal Beliefs, Personality And Gender **ADITYA FARSOLE***

ABSTRACT

A comparative study of paranormal beliefs, personality and gender was done on sample of 344 college students collected from 8 colleges in the city of Pune. The age range of the sample was 18 years to 23 years. The sample belonged to the middle class and studied in English medium schools. The sample was administered the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (Tobayck, 1988) and the Revised Eysenck's personality Questionnaire (Eysenck, 1991) The first part of the study compared men and women on paranormal beliefs and the second part compared the individuals who were high and low on Psychoticism, Extraversion and Neuroticism on their paranormal beliefs.

The data was analysed using t-test to test the hypotheses formulated. Analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between the males and females on paranormal beliefs (t value = -.646, level of significance was .519). There was no significant difference between the individuals with high psychoticism and low psychoticism on paranormal beliefs (t value = 1.635, level of significance was .104). There was no significant difference between the individuals with high extraversion and low extraversion on paranormal beliefs (t value = -.581, level of significance was .562). There was a significant difference between the individuals with high neuroticism and low neuroticism on paranormal beliefs (t value = 2.419, level of significance was .017).

Keywords: Paranormal Beliefs, Personality, Gender

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 PARANORMAL BELIEFS

Beliefs in the paranormal phenomena are known as paranormal beliefs. Paranormal phenomena are scientifically impossible events or phenomena that violate the basic limiting principles of current scientific understanding. (Broad, 1949)

Some of the well known paranormal beliefs are traditional religious beliefs, psi beliefs, witchcraft, superstition, spiritualism, extraordinary life forms and precognition (Tobacyk, 1988).

1.2 Gender

It refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex They are combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female. Gender identity refers to "one's sense of oneself as male, female or transgender" (American Psychological Association, 2006).

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2. PRESENT STUDY

This is a comparative study between Gender and Para-normal Beliefs.

2.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

To compare paranormal beliefs amongst men and women.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.2.1. GENDER DIFFERENCES AND PARANORMAL BELIEFS.

Dag(1999) studied the paranormal beliefs, locus of control and psycho-pathology in a Turkish college. In this study he took a sample of 350 participants containing 233 females and 117 males and they were administered a Turkish version of Tobacyk's revised Paranormal Belief Scale (PBS-R), Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (IELOC), and Symptom Check List-90-Revised (SCL-90-R). The data was collected and analysed and the results indicated that Females were significantly higher in Superstition. (Dag,1999).

Wolfradt (1997) studied the relationship between dissociative experiences, trait-anxiety and paranormal beliefs among students. This study was done by administering the Dissociative Experience Scale (DES) by Bernstein and Putnam (1986) and the revised Paranormal Belief Scale by Tobacyk (1991) to the sample and the data was analyzed on the dissociative experiences and paranormal beliefs. This study showed significant gender differences between males and females. The females scored higher than males on the subscales of the revised Paranormal Belief Scale (Tobacyk, 1991), such as psi belief, witchcraft, superstition and precognition (Wolfradt, 1997).

Another study was done by Aarnio and Lindeman (2005) on Paranormal beliefs, education, and thinking styles. This study examined connections between paranormal beliefs and educational level, discipline, length of education, gender, and analytical and intuitive thinking. Finnish students (N = 3141) from 14 university and six vocational school disciplines filled in an Internet-based questionnaire. The results showed that Women's higher intuitiveness and lower analytical thinking partially explained their higher amount of paranormal beliefs compared to men (Aarnio and Lindeman, 2005).

[Darwin](#), [Neave](#) and [Holmes \(2011\)](#) studied Belief in conspiracy theories and the role of paranormal belief, paranoid ideation and schizotypy. This study investigated the relationship between conspiracy theory beliefs, paranormal belief, paranoid ideation, and schizotypy, in a study involving 60 females and 60 males aged 18–50. Sex differences were found in paranormal belief, with females scoring significantly higher than males in spiritualism, precognition, psi, and overall paranormal belief ([Darwin](#), [Neave](#) and [Holmes, 2011](#))

Based on the above review, the hypothesis stating that "There will be a significant difference between males and females on paranormal beliefs" was formulated.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Independent variable

3.1.1. Gender

Gender refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (American Psychological Association, 2006).

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They are combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female. There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia (American Psychological Association, 2006).

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Gender identity refers to "one's sense of oneself as male, female or transgender" (American Psychological Association, 2006).

In the study gender was determined by the person's response on a demographic datasheet. Only males and females were selected for the sample.

3.2. Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study was paranormal beliefs which refer to the beliefs in the Para-normal phenomena. Paranormal phenomena are defined as those which, if genuine, would violate basic limiting principles of science. These phenomena are beyond the range of normal experience or scientific explanation and pertain to events or perceptions occurring without scientific explanation, such as clairvoyance or extrasensory perception (Broad, 1953 cited in Tobayck, 1988).

In this study, the paranormal beliefs were measured by the revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS) by Tobayck (1988, 1991). This scale measures seven forms of Para-normal beliefs. They are traditional religious belief, psi belief, witchcraft, superstition, spiritualism, extraordinary life forms and precognition (Tobayck, 1988). A brief description of each of the sub scales is given below.

Traditional Religious Beliefs these are the beliefs that a person incorporates from his family and surrounding about his own religion and traditions (Tobayck, 2004).

Psi beliefs are the Psychic Ability which deals with thoughts, causing physical changes where in a person's thoughts can influence the movement of a physical object (Tobayck, 2004).

Witchcraft is the practice that deals with phenomenon such as voodoo and magic (Tobayck, 2004) whereas, superstition includes the beliefs in unlucky numbers, unlucky animals (Tobayck, 2004).

Spiritualism deals with believing in phenomenon where your mind or soul can leave your body (Tobayck, 2004) and extraordinary Life Forms are the beliefs in the phenomenon such as snowman and Big Foot (Tobayck, 2004).

Precognition refers to the power of predicting the future (Tobacyk, 2004).

Superstitious, magical, paranormal, supernatural, and religious beliefs are found to partly overlap and therefore Superstitions as well as religious beliefs have been conceptualized as part of paranormal beliefs (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983).

High scores on any of the sub scales would indicate higher belief in paranormal belief. Global paranormal belief score can be obtained by adding the scores of each sub scale.

3.3. HYPOTHESES

Based on past studies and literature review, the following four hypotheses were formulated-

- There will be a significant difference between males and females on paranormal beliefs.

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3.4 METHOD

3.4.1 SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 162 males and 182 females of the age ranging from 18 to 23 years. They were randomly selected from the colleges in Pune. The sample was English speaking and belonged to middle class strata of the society.

3.4.2 PROCEDURE

The sample pool was selected randomly from colleges, and societies from Pune city. The sample was administered the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS). They were given instructions and their queries were answered. The sample was assured that their results would be used for research purposes only and they would be kept confidential. After the completion of the test, the data sheets along with the questionnaires were collected. The participants were debriefed and thanked for their cooperation. Further the data was statistically analyzed. The data was then analyzed.

3.4.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

t- test was used to study the difference between the means of men and women on Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS)

4.1 DISCUSSION

4.1.1 GENDER AND PARANORMAL BELIEFS

It was seen that the level of significance achieved was .52 and the t-value was found to be .646 showing no significant difference between the males and females on paranormal beliefs. Thus the hypothesis stating that “There will be a significant difference between males and females on paranormal beliefs” was rejected.

5.1 CONCLUSION

After analysis of the data the following conclusions were drawn -

- There was no significant difference between the males and females on paranormal beliefs. Thus the hypothesis stating that “There will be a significant difference between males and females on paranormal beliefs” was rejected.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study could be the much needed impetus in the Indian cultural context that can be the precursor to further exploration on parapsychology, paranormal beliefs and psychological variables.

Since the findings of the study indicate that there wasn't a significant difference in the paranormal beliefs between men and women, thus it can be used in the gender studies and feminist studies, as an evidence against the prejudice and stereotypes against women of being more believing in the paranormal than the men.

This study can be used in the other researches on the parapsychology and gender.

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