

Prevalence of Superstitious Beliefs Among Dental Students of Age (21-25) in Telangana – A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract: The word superstition is defined as falsehood and nonsense talks; it is also seen as a perception of weakness. Most important causes of these superstitious beliefs would be ignorance, fighting the religion, opportunistic abuse or ignorant caring of some scientific weaknesses.

Keywords: superstitious beliefs, dental students

1. Introduction

Among many aspects of our life, superstitious beliefs affect a wide range of decisions and activities in our day to day life and it received attention in the behaviour literature. The word superstition is traditionally used by dominant religions to denigrate not so sophisticated group or attitude [3]. The word “superstition” is taken from Latin, which means “to stand over in awe” [6]. Superstition is defined as a behaviour that developed because of fear regarding the unknown and faith in magic or luck [4] or it is also considered as an attitude that would include some affective components such as diverse emotional states towards objects of superstition such as fear, anxiety, joy, rapture, surprise, etc. [1]. This can be categorized by obsessive reverence for charms, omens and others [3]. The most important causes of superstitious beliefs are:

1. Ignorance, this is the most important cause that creates superstitious beliefs. It can be explained by the example of superstitious belief behind sneezing. It is believed that sneezing is a warning signal while in medical view it is just a bodily response shown when a foreign object specifically a soft one is present in the nose. In similar way ignorance made numerous superstitious beliefs in our lives.
2. Opportunists abuse, some opportunistic people have used it as a portal that would lead them to gain wealth. So many people earn much financial revenue through prayer waiting, daily horoscope predictions and much more. Many women are being subjected to sexual and moral abuse [4]. When discussed about the prevalence of superstitious beliefs can be seen from old primitive cultures in the form of magical,

paranormal and superstitious activities to present period [7] as they are deeply rooted in our society [1].

It can be proved by the fact that the debit business in united states which showed loss of \$800 and \$900 millions on 13th Friday of every year [7].

2. Methodology

A cross sectional questionnaire based study involving 195 students was conducted college in Khammam. From 30-07-2019 to 3-08-2019 for a period of one week. Permission was taken from Head of the department of Public health dentistry.

Self-structured questionnaire was prepared. Informed consent was taken prior to the study from study objects. Information included in the questionnaire was demographic data like age, sex, course, year of study and 15 questions. All these questions are provided with multiple choice answers.

Questions are provided related to their opinion regarding superstitious beliefs. Pilot survey was conducted among 20 students through self-prepared questionnaire to know the feasibility of the study. All the final year undergraduates, interns, those who are willing to participate on the day of study are included. Students those who are not interested to participate are excluded from the study. Survey was conducted among 195 student’s questionnaires were distributed to the students in the working hours from 9 Am to 4 Pm.

Students were asked to select their option for the respective options. All the data collected was entered into excel sheet by giving codes respectively for each aspect and sent for analysis.

TerKeurst investigates that to what extent is the home a source of beliefs 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.

Saenko discovered the superstitions of today’s college students. The study shows that student superstitious beliefs frequently connected with final exam and they feel these beliefs

protect those negative feelings. That shows superstitious beliefs play an important role in student's life.

According to Malinowski, superstitions are used to fight anxiety and distress by filling the psychological gap caused by uncertainty. Superstitious thoughts or behaviours are used as a substitution to instrumental acts that people would have liked to achieve in order to influence the situation

Purpose of the study:

- To determine the prevalence of superstitious beliefs among dental students.
- To explore the sex predominance regarding superstitious beliefs.
- To determine the source of knowledge about superstitious beliefs.
- To know if people change their way of life in order to abide by their beliefs regarding superstition.

3. Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was done by using spss25. Descriptive statistics were performed; chi square test was used to find the association among categorical variables.

4. Results

Number of students included in the study are 195. Mean age of the study group is 22.75, standard deviation is 0.875. In this study, there were 139 females (71.3%) and 56 males (28.7%). Majority of the students were final year undergraduates (50.3%) and remaining people were interns (49.7%).

Table 1
Demographic data of study participants

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender : | | |
| Male | 56 | 28.7% |
| Female | 139 | 71.3% |
| Year of study | | |
| Final years | 98 | 50.3% |
| Interns | 97 | 49.7% |

Table 2
Do you believe in superstitions or superstitious beliefs?

| Variable | Frequency | Valid percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Strongly believe | 40 | 20.5 |
| Believe them sometimes | 88 | 45.1 |
| Neutral | 31 | 15.9 |
| Don't believe it | 36 | 18.5 |
| Total | 195 | 100 |

Table 3
How often do you check your horoscope?

| Variable | Frequency | Valid percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Yes | 36 | 18.5 |
| No | 76 | 39 |
| On an important day | 83 | 42.6 |
| Total | 195 | 100.0 |

Majority of the students (45.1%) believed in superstitious beliefs only sometimes; few of them (20.5%) believed strongly;

some of them were neutral (15.9%); quite few students (18.5%) don't believe in superstitious beliefs.

Statistically significant analysis was observed $P < 0.05$.

Most of the students (42.6%) never checked their horoscope; less than half of them (39%) check their horoscope on an important days; few students (18.5%) check their horoscope every day.

Statistically significant analysis was observed $P < 0.0$

Table 4
Do you believe that following superstitious beliefs bring change in your life?

| Variable | Frequency | Valid percent |
|----------|-----------|---------------|
| Yes | 72 | 36.9 |
| No | 123 | 63.1 |
| Total | 195 | 100.0 |

More than half of the students (63.1%) do not believe that following superstitious beliefs bring change in their life, whereas less than half of the students (36.9%) believe that following superstitious beliefs bring change in their life.

Statistically significant analysis was observed $P < 0.05$.

Table 5
Whom do you think are more particular regarding superstitious beliefs?

| Variable | Frequency | Valid percent |
|----------|-----------|---------------|
| Yes | 22.6 | 22.6 |
| No | 151 | 77.4 |
| Total | 195 | 100.0 |

Majority of the students (77.4%) felt that females were more particular regarding the superstitious beliefs while less than quarter (22.6%) felt that males were more particular regarding superstitious beliefs.

Statistically significant analysis was observed $P < 0.05$

5. Discussion

Superstitious beliefs and their practice has been common among adolescents, even among college students. The result shows that majority of the students i.e., 45.1% believed or practiced superstitious beliefs only sometimes, this may be due to the importance given to the situation, being overcautious so that nothing goes wrong and for some people it has become habitual which is inherited from their parents or from family. When it comes to horoscope many of them opt to check their horoscope on an auspicious day or on an important day.

According to the results, most of the students including both men and women felt that females were more particular regarding the superstitious beliefs. This shows the rate of prevalence of superstitious beliefs among females. This may have occurred due to the fact that women are more sensitive when it comes to religious or superstitious beliefs and some women get overcautious regarding their loved ones which makes them to get involved in these beliefs.

6. Conclusion

Superstitious beliefs exist among most of the individuals

every despite of the tremendous success of contemporary technology.

Main findings of the study are:

- Majority of the respondents believe in superstitions in some situations of their life.
- According to our study, females were more particular regarding superstitions when compared to males.
- This study shows that the source for these beliefs for most of the respondents was through their family or patients

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