

Superstitious Attitude Level of Under Graduate Level Students – A Case Study

Ringprangdi Thaosen

Department of Education, Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur-784001, Assam, India

Email – thaosenringprangdi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Superstition means blind belief and practices, especially with regard to the unknown, surrounding luck, fate, magic, astrology, fortune telling, spirits and certain paranormal entities. The investigator in this paper tried to study the superstitious attitude among Under Graduate level students. The objectives of the study included were to study the level of superstitious attitude among the students of Undergraduate level and also to study the superstitious beliefs of Undergraduate level students in respect to gender. Descriptive Case study method was applied for the present study. A sample of 200 students (100 males and 100 females) were randomly selected from Arts stream of Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam using Random Sampling technique. Superstitious Attitude Scale by Dr. (Smt.) Shailaja Bhagwat was used as a tool for collecting the data. Simple Percentage was used as statistical technique for analyzing the data, along with Statistical Graph for representation of statistical data. The study revealed that most students of Undergraduate level disagree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions, however, few students possess high superstitious attitude.

Keywords: Superstitious attitude, under graduate level, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, superstition has had a profound effect among Indians and also the people of different countries worldwide. So, a considerable attention towards superstition was received in several fields, including popular psychology (Shermer 1998; Vyse 2000; Wheen 2004), philosophy (Scheibe & Sarbin 1965), abnormal psychology (Devenport 1979; Brugger et al. 1994; Shaner 1999; Nayha 2002) and medicine (Hira et al. 1998; Diamond 2001). Behavioral psychologist, Skinner, in one of his experiments also reported superstitious

behavior in pigeons. Superstition can be traced back to religion, culture or personal belief system. These practices or beliefs differ from one person to another, and also from one culture to another culture. In a country like India, where there is diversity in culture and traditions, superstitious belief is a common phenomenon which becomes a daily part of people lives. Superstition is a practice or belief in supernatural forces related to luck, prophecy and spiritual things, contradicting modern sciences. Many superstitions also deal with important events in a person's life such as birth, entering adulthood, marriage, pregnancy, and death. People with low self-esteem, uneducated and living in rural areas are more superstitious than people living in urban areas.

Untouchability was one of the worst superstitious beliefs of Indian people. Other common superstitious beliefs include not cutting nails at night, not looking at oneself in a broken mirror, considering black cat crossing the way as unlucky, black magic, hanging lemons and chilly in front of house doors and shops, animal sacrifices, adding one rupee to a gift sum, putting a small spot of kohl ("kajal" – a traditional dark cosmetic for the eyes) on a baby's forehead etc. Many people suffer the exploitation by the 'Babas' and 'Sadhus' too. These beliefs have a negative impact on the development and advancement of society and also social well-being of people. Efforts were seen from the side of Government, where the Government of India has passed several laws for fighting against this issue, some of which include Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act in 2013, Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill, The Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954 etc.

Assam, like many other states of India is also witnessing several superstitions among the people, of which, witch-hunting is one of the most evil acts that lead to frequent cases of death in the state. Studies have found that a total of 107 people have been killed in witch-hunting incidents in Assam since 2011-2016 (Source: India Today). The State of Assam passed the legislation- Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 to eradicate the problems of superstitions from the state. Even though the Government is making efforts to tackle this problem from the society at various levels, still it is a very difficult task to deal with it in a diverse country like India, where people from different cultural backgrounds live together. Until and unless the mindset of people is not changed and a scientific attitude and temper along with knowledge is not developed, superstitious attitude of Indians cannot be changed. Education is one of the most important tools

in eradicating superstition from society. It should aim in such a way that a scientific attitude and temper is developed among the learners with the help of education. Educated people, religion heads, teachers, political leaders, social activists, NGO's, etc. should come forward and work collectively for bringing about a change in the mindset of people.

In this age of advanced science and technology where scientific explanations and information are in the fingertips, even students are seen believing in superstitions. Crossing fingers before the start of exam or before the result is declared is one of the most common superstitions among the students. Using same pen in every paper of exam, visiting temples before exam is another superstitious belief among students. From students arriving early during exams in the hall to sleeping with the textbook under the pillow with the hope to absorb information, are some common examples of superstitious attitude among the students.

However, superstitious attitude among people can be lessened if education is implemented through a well-planned scientific temperament fostering critical thinking that allows people to question ungrounded beliefs and understand real causes behind phenomena rather than accepting blind faith. The formal education in India comprises of three distinct stages, the stage of primary education, the stage of secondary education and the higher stage of education. Undergraduate level of education is the post-higher secondary education, leading to Bachelor Degree. The undergraduate stage of education occupies an important place in the education system of a country. It is the stage of education which prepares the students to mould their character and personality and build themselves as human resources which is the great contribution for national development. If the students of undergraduate level possess superstitious attitude, they may experience negative consequences such as academic failure accompanied by increased mental health issues. So, the study of superstitious attitude of Undergraduate level students is the important area of study. The investigator considering this ongoing social practice felt the need to study the superstitious attitude of Undergraduate level students of Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, under Sonitpur district of Assam, India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of superstitious attitude among the students of Undergraduate level.
2. To study superstitious attitude of Undergraduate level students in respect to gender.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Some of the important terminologies used in the present study are given below:

Superstitious attitude– Superstitious attitude means a person belief in unseen or unknown forces, which is not based on any reason or scientific knowledge. This belief is often based on irrational fear and linked to a desire to control outcomes or avoid misfortune.

Under graduate level-It refers to the education imparted after twelfth standards, either in colleges or universities.

Gender- It refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman or non-binary people.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. For the study, the investigator has chosen only one college, i.e., Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam, India
2. Only the students of Undergraduate level were under taken for the study.
3. The study covered only students from Arts stream.
4. Only one variable is considered in this study, i.e., gender (male and female)

STUDY AREA : Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam, India. (A Profile)

Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam, formerly affiliated to Gauhati University in 1953 was established in the year 1945 by the people of Tezpur. It is located in Tezpur town of Sonitpur district in Assam, India. Presently it has got an autonomous status, starting from 2025 by following the relevant UGC regulations and statutory provisions. This institution offers courses from Higher Secondary level to Post Graduate level in all the three streams (Arts, Science and Commerce). Apart from providing general education, it also acts as a center for distance education, offering courses under IGNOU, GUCDOE, KKHSOU. This institution has over 100+ faculty members from 27 departments and around 5000 students from all over Assam and Northeast India.

REVIEWS OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gupta (1999) found in his study that the level of superstitious attitude of law students is more than the medical and engineering students. Sempala (2013) in his study found out that the level of scientific attitude among students was very low. No relationship was observed between gender, religion, tribe and the level of scientific attitudes among students. Saenko (2014) in his study found that superstitious beliefs play a very important role in student's life. The study also shows that the superstitious beliefs of the students are connected with their final exams. Ter Keurst (2015) in his study 'The Acceptance of Superstitious Beliefs among Secondary School' studied to what extent a home can be a source of belief and disbeliefs in superstitions. From the study, it was concluded that social and educational factors, individual sources of superstitious beliefs contribute towards the learning and unlearning of unfolded ideas. Chakraborty, S. and Gogoi, M. (2016) revealed in their study that superstitious beliefs still exist among the people of Dibrugarh district. Students of rural areas are found to be more superstitious than the students of urban areas. Also, students studying in Bengali medium and Assamese medium schools are found to be more superstitious than the students studying in English medium. Vijay, et.al. (2017) in his study found that superstitious beliefs are more in case of women, people with lower intellectual level, lower socio-economic status and amongst the rural community. Conklin (1919) in his study, 'Superstitious belief and practice among college students' reported female students to be more superstitious than male students. The superstitions of females were concerned chiefly with domestic, intimate and social affairs, whereas males were concerned more with sports and business. Olorundare (2019) identified the nature, prevalence and effect of superstitious beliefs in his study and also analyzed the types and degree of

superstitious beliefs. Naaz, K. (2019) found that the level of superstitious attitude was varying among graduate and post-graduate students, and also among the male and female students. Janardhana & Murthy (2020) revealed in their study which was conducted among college students that gender, age, and nature of course have significant difference on adjustment among college students. Superstitious attitude is considered harmful for the development of society and teacher should always help students to develop rationally and scientifically in taking day-to-day decisions. The present study was undertaken with a view to study the relation between superstitious attitude and adjustment level of the perspective teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Method Used: Descriptive Case Study Method was used for the present study.

Data:

Primary Data : Primary data was collected using Superstitious Attitude Scale by Dr. (Smt.) Shailaja Bhagwat.

Secondary Data : Secondary sources like journals, articles, e-resources, etc. were used for collecting information for the study.

Population: All the students of Undergraduate level (Arts stream) of Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam was the population of the study.

Sample: The total sample undertaken for the study was 200 students, from Undergraduate level (Arts stream) of Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Assam.

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used for the present study. Two groups were stratified on the basis of Gender (male and female). 100 cases were selected from each of the two strata randomly, leading to 200 total number of cases. The units of the sample are shown in the table below:

Gender	No. of students	Total
Male	100	200
Female	100	

Tool Used: Superstitious Attitude Scale by Dr. (Smt.) Shailaja Bhagwat was used as a tool for collecting the data. The questionnaire consists of 24 items in total, expressing opinions on 'Superstitions'. Out of 24 items, 12 items are favorable (Item No. 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24) and 12 unfavorable items (Item No. 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23). 5(five) point Likert Scale was used for calculating the scores of each student. Five categories included were, SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, U: Undecided, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree. 5,4,3,2,1 against SA, A, U, D, SD was to be given as scores for favorable items, whereas, 1,2,3,4,5 against SA, A, U, D, SD for unfavorable items. The total sum of all items is the total score of a student. Higher the total score of a student, higher will be his degree of superstitious attitude.

Statistical Technique Used: Simple Percentage Method along with statistical graph as graphical representation of statistical data were used for the present study by the investigators.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

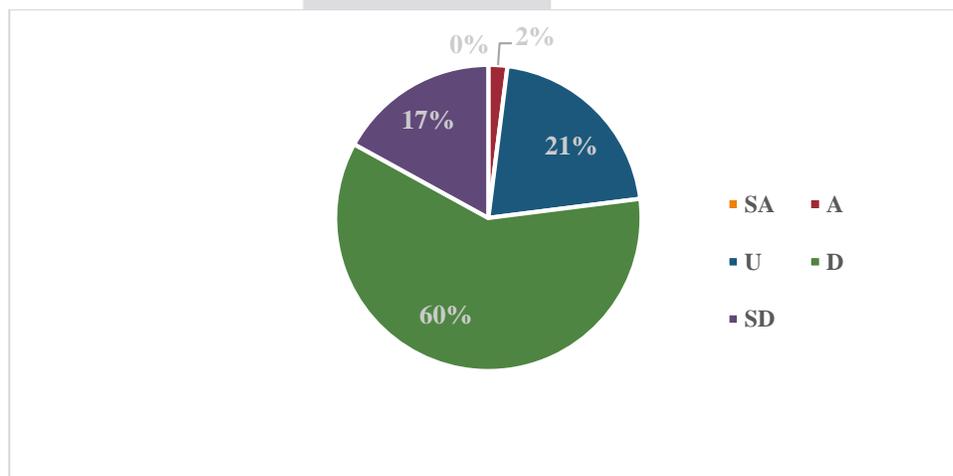
Objective 1: *To study the level of superstitious attitude among the students of Under Graduate level.*

Table:1

Percentage showing the level of superstitious attitude among Under Graduate level students.

Items/Category	N	%
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	4	2
Undecided	42	21
Disagree	120	60
Strongly Disagree	34	17
Total	200	100%

Figure No.1: *Graph showing the level of superstitious attitude among the students of Undergraduate level*



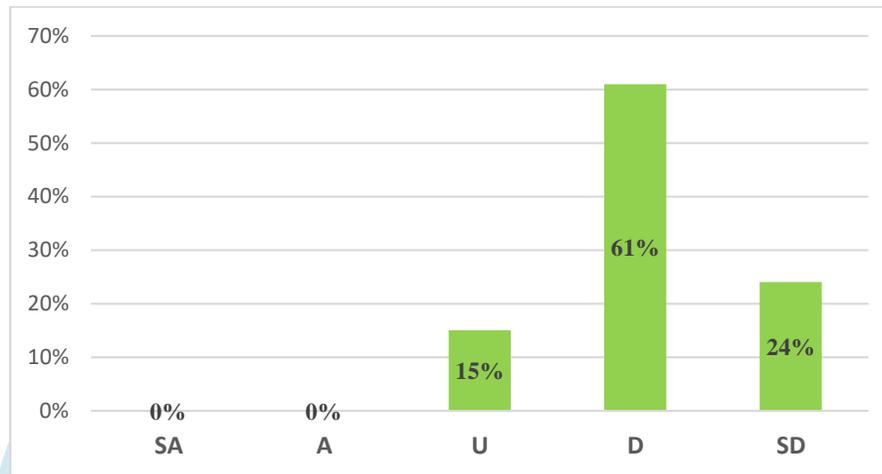
From Table No. 1 and Figure. No. 1, it can be observed that there is no student who strongly agree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. Only 2% student agree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 21% students were not so sure and marked undecided against the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 60% students disagree to the items favoring superstitious belief and 17% student strongly disagree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.

Objective 2: To study superstitious attitude of Undergraduate level students in respect to gender.

Table No.2

Percentage of superstitious attitude level among male students of Under Graduate level.

Items/Category	N	%
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	0	0
Undecided	15	15
Disagree	61	61
Strongly Disagree	24	24
Total	100	100%

Figure 2. Graph showing the percentage of superstitious attitude level among male students of Under Graduate level.

From Table No. 2 and Figure. No. 2, it can be observed that there is no student who agree and strongly agree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 15% student were not able to decide to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 61% students disagree to the items favoring superstitious attitude and 24% student strongly disagree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.

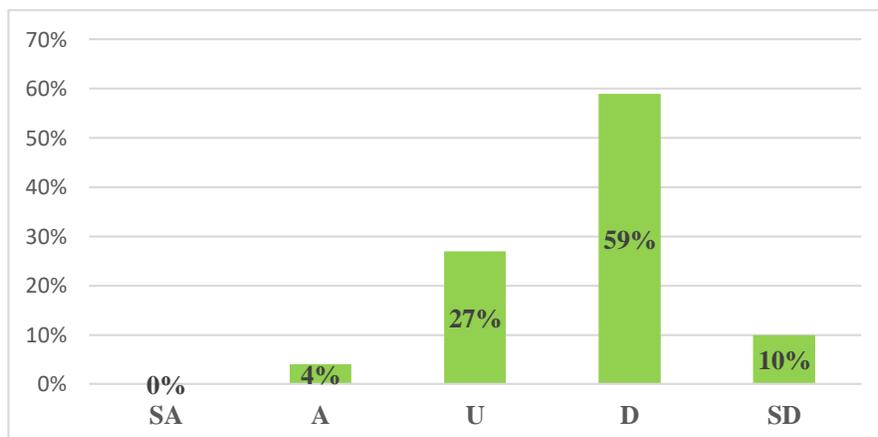
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Table 3

Percentage of superstitious attitude level among female students of Undergraduate level.

Category	N	%
Strongly Agree	0	0
Agree	4	4
Undecided	27	27
Disagree	59	59
Strongly Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100%

Figure 3. Graph showing the level of superstitious attitude among female students of Undergraduate level.



From Table No. 3 and Figure. No. 3, it can be observed that there is no student who strongly agree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. Only 4% student agree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 27% student were not able to decide to the items expressing opinions on superstitions. 59% students disagree to the items favoring superstitious attitude and only 10% student strongly disagree to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study include-

1. From the study it was found that there is no student who 'strongly agree' to the items expressing opinions on superstitious beliefs.
2. Only 2% student (female) falls under 'agree' category of the items expressing superstitious beliefs, showing high level of superstitious attitude.
3. Maximum students (60%) 'disagree' to the items favoring superstitious beliefs, having low level of superstitious attitude.
4. Only 17% students 'strongly disagree' to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.
5. It was found from the study that 15% male student and 27% female student were not able to decide to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.
6. Also, it was found that 61% male student and 59% female students 'disagree' to the items favoring superstitious attitude.
7. Only 24% student in case of male and 10% in case of female student 'strongly disagree' to the items expressing opinions on superstitions.

DISCUSSION:

The main objectives of the present study were to study the level of superstitious attitude among the students of Undergraduate level in respect to gender, which was undertaken in Darrang College (Autonomous) Tezpur, Sonitpur district of Assam, India. The investigator assessed the levels of superstitious attitude among the Undergraduate level students between male and female. It is observed that the highest number of students (60%) 'disagree' to the items favoring superstitious beliefs. It is also observed that there is no student who 'strongly agree' to the items expressing opinions on superstitious beliefs. However, in relation to this, 17% student 'strongly disagree' to the items expressing opinions on superstitions beliefs. So, it can be said that although maximum students are not in favor of items expressing opinions on superstitions, but still, few number of students possess superstitious attitude.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From the study it can be concluded that superstitious belief is the biggest stumbling block in our path to a healthy society. Most Indian people still fall a prey to superstitions. Even students cannot escape from the irrational and illogical beliefs of superstitions. Though, not all students believe in superstition and regarded it as unscientific still they get caught up in the complex way of superstitions, one way or the other. Most of the superstitious belief among students can be seen for the fear of examination. Superstition in a society is such a blind belief which has been following in India and other parts of it by almost every people that even the students living in the age of modern science and technology cannot escape from it. Few suggestions based on the study can be put forward, which are discussed below-

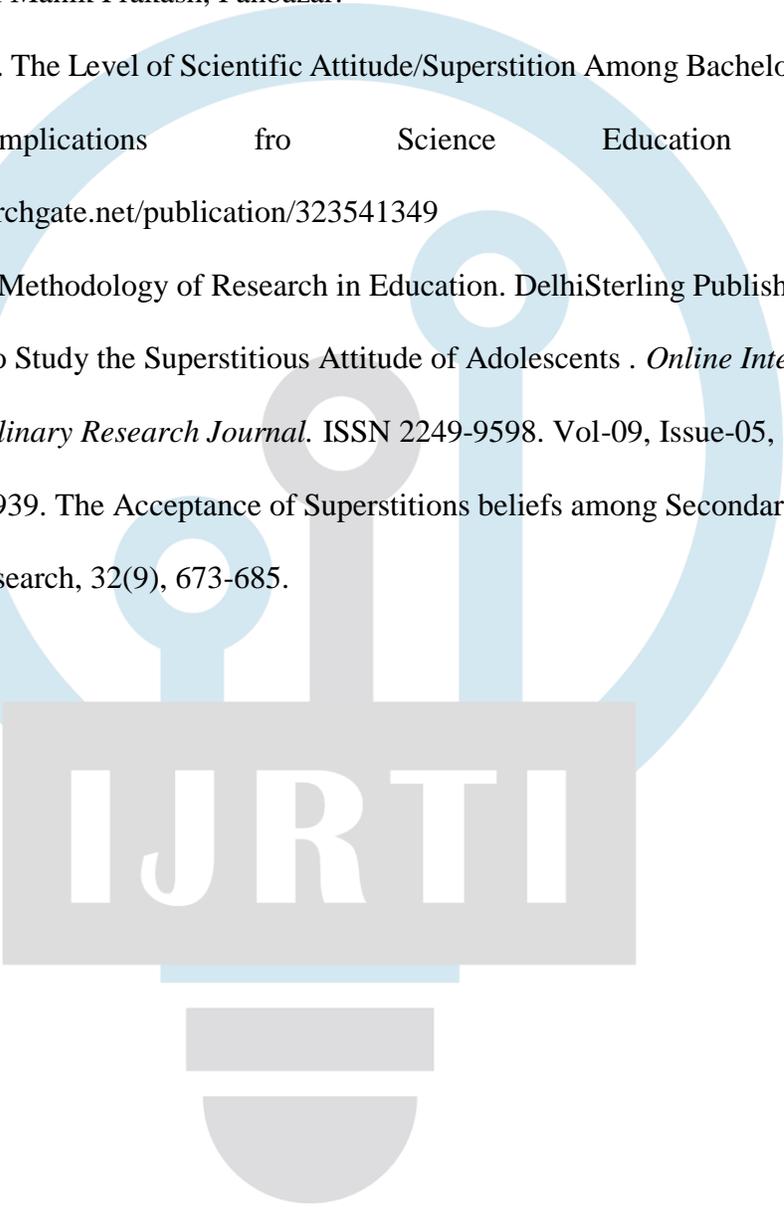
1. Education helps in bringing changes in the false belief of superstition by improving an individual's cognition and ability of reasoning. Educating the masses can help in exposing the bluff behind obscure and orthodox practices.

2. Various awareness programs like seminars, workshops, exhibition etc. must be conducted in educational institutions and encourage the students and parents too to equally participate in such events.
3. Teachers play a very important role in student's life, so it is the duty of the teacher to explain the students about the scientific truths of various blind beliefs.
4. Superstitious beliefs among students can be eradicated when teacher encourage healthy discussions in the classroom.
5. Modern science and technology related subjects must be given more importance in all levels of education so that a scientific temper and attitude is developed among all students and they very well understand that behind such false beliefs there is a scientific explanation.
6. The curriculum of students must include chapters on superstitions and life story of great personalities like Narendra Dabholkar, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Birubala Rabha etc. who fought against the eradication of superstitions from the society.
7. Teachers along with managing authorities of an educational institution must take necessary steps forward to screen educational movies based on superstitious beliefs and its ill impact in the society and for the well-being of people.
8. Students must be encouraged to get involved in extension activities and awareness rising camps to create awareness among their parents, in their locality, to a group of illiterate people etc.
9. It's the duty of teachers and educated people to make aware the students and public about various governmental and non-governmental laws that were put forward to eradicate or lessen the superstitions from the society.
10. Government along with educated people of the society must take the responsibility to educate the masses and create awareness where ever possible so that desirable changes may occur through education.

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