

Socio-Economic Impacts of Superstitions among Pakhtoon Women

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Abstract:

Superstition is an irrational belief about the relation between certain actions. Many superstitions emerged from the notion of good luck and bad luck; some superstition emerged from old traditions which are transmitted from generation to generation. People performed different practices to protect themselves from troubles. The present paper aim to analyse the social and psychological and economic impacts of superstitious believe among women in the form of negative attitude towards food products and spending much money to visit peer, faqeer and ziarat etc. social impacts like change in behaviour, less interaction, weak decision making and psychological impacts in the form of lack of confident, belief in many God, stress, anxiety, tension and depression. In this paper an attempt has been made to identify different types of superstitions like amulet, magic touching wood, unlucky Friday, black cat crossing the path, spilling salt because in past salt were consider as highly valued and purifying substance and capable of driving away evils, walking under a ladder personality etc. Usually these types of beliefs are arising from the misperception and lack of religious knowledge, and people become stuck with these beliefs and practices. People associate things with others things and events like in Pakhtoon society, the women are going to the Shrines for various purposes, like for good and Bad luck, for the desire of male

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child and for the employment of their husband and a lot of more. The article deals with the information about superstites believe in the Bathhela Malakand Dir-Lower, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Pakistan. The data presented in this paper has been collected by using qualitative and quantitative mix approach and anthropological research technique while used purposive sampling.

Key words: superstitious, socio, psychological, economic, impacts, believes

Introduction

Superstition is derived from Latin word “superstitio” which means standing over or above and something that is opposed to the common knowledge or beliefs (William, 2002). A superstition is irrational and invalid belief which has no proof, both scientifically and logically. The history of superstitious belief in our society dates back to the sub-continent, where the Muslims and Hindus lived together. These beliefs and practices are the product of such living together, because it is the nature of human being, where they used to live, they must communicate and share their ideas and views. These beliefs and practices are lawful in their religion, while in Muslims societies it is not allowed, another important figure is Islam strictly opposed such types of beliefs and practices which are groundless and no reality. As there was no religious knowledge that to re-construct these individuals and their tendency towards these types of beliefs and lack of education ultimately indulge the Pakhtoon women in superstitious beliefs. Superstitious beliefs are universal but its practice are varies from to place to place, usually these types of beliefs and practices are arise from the misperception , lack of religious awareness, which indulged people in such types of beliefs and practices. Superstition is actually irrational belief on an object, action and circumstances which is due to the false

interpretations of natural events. The difference between rational observation and superstitious practices is considerable. With rational observation, we can measure behaviours and methods that either work reliably or not. When the results are unpredictable, we can eliminate those influences that had no impact on outcome. On the other hand, superstitions work completely on irrational belief systems where one successful mental correlation responds many unsuccessful results. If our mental "magic" seems to work once, we focus on attempting to recreate the success by trying to reproduce the same magic repeatedly (George, 2006).

Superstition may be classified into three categories, Religious, Cultural and Personal. All religious beliefs and practices may seem superstitious to the person without religion. Superstitious that belongs to cultural traditions are enormous in variety e.g. folk, traditions, evil eye and efficiency of amulet. Personal superstitions are those which are related to individual belief e.g. horse player may be convinced that black horse may be well for him. When people feel desperate to find reasons for all misfortunes they come across and being superstitious, they help them to get ride their mistakes by blaming luck which according to them no one can control except those particular things (Gross et al, 1994).

People associate things with other events like in Pakhtoon society; the women are going to the shrines for various purposes like good and bad luck, desire of male child, marriages and employment of their husband. Some of the older forms of superstition like walking under a ladder, stepping on cracks in pavement, spilling salt, breaking mirrors or other "bad omens" are common. Many superstitions that can be linked to the past carry on to have influence today, these including black cat crossing path and mirror broken is bad luck. Superstations are hard-wired into the human brain regardless of educational level or ethnicity, they do effect on people socially and psychologically like not thinking reasonably, lack of

confidence, loss of concentration, influencing behaviour and interaction, fear from unknown things, polytheism, secularization, lack of interest in daily activities, mental disorder, and weak decision making and hamper the development of an individual personality.

Theoretical Framework

Loss of Control Fuels Superstitions, Rituals, Conspiracy Theories

“The less control people have over their lives, the more likely they are to try and regain control through mental gymnastics,” said Galinsky. “Feelings of control are so important to people that a lack of control is inherently threatening. While some misperceptions can be bad or lead one astray, they’re extremely common and most likely satisfy a deep and enduring psychological need.” According to Whitson and Galinsky, that psychological need is for control, and the ability to minimize uncertainty and predict beneficial courses of action. In situations where one has little control, the researchers proposed that an individual may believe that mysterious, unseen mechanisms are secretly at work. To test their theory, the researchers created a number of situations characterized by lack of control and then measured whether people saw a variety of illusory patterns.

Locale of the Study

Locale of the present study is Batkhela. Batkhela is the main tehsil and capital of Malakand District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. According to the 1998 census, the population of Batkhela is 38,222, and it is estimated to be 39,703 according to the World Gazetteer. Batkhela is a popular business city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. This beautiful valley is covered by tall hills from all sides and there are many fast flowing rivers which are contribution to its wonderful

landscape. One water canal that pours into a small dam in Jaban area is main source of electricity production. Batkhela General Civil Headquarters Hospital is main hospital of the district Malakand. Batkhela main bazaar is more than 2 kilometers long; there are no intersections (junctions) so no traffic lights. Therefore it is the longest bazaar in Pakistan that has no traffic lights or junctions (intersections) on it.

Research Methodology

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study, or the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. The nature of study is both qualitative and quantitative. It is qualitative because the entire phenomenon is thoroughly discussed in tables and brief discussion. A detail research activity is determined on “The socio-Psychological impacts of Superstitious beliefs on Pakhtoon Women’s” by questionnaire and interview and secondary information got by research article, books and internet. The purposive sampling has been used to conduct this study because researcher looked into the need of fulfilling the research study. The objectives of the study are to know about the Psychological impacts of superstitious beliefs among Pakhtoon women. And various causes for doing such practice like imaginative stories, study of culture and traditions, myths, worrying about life, older knowledge, lucky experiences, obsessive compulsive disorder (anxiety), media, reading of novels and personal anecdotes. The aim of study is also to know about social impacts of Superstitious beliefs among Pakhtoon women.

Results and Discussion

Table-1 Monthly Income of Respondents

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
20000-25000	8	26.7			

25001-35000	13	43.3			
35001-45001	7	23.3	2.10	2.00	2
Above then 45000	2	6.7			
Total	30	100.0			

Monthly income is an important source of determining the status of individual. The table illustrate the monthly income of the respondents. However, among the total respondents i.e. 30 (100%), 8 (27%) belong to category (20000-25000). Besides, 13 (43%) respondents favour monthly income category (250001-30000) while 7 (23%) respondents were from monthly income (35001-45000). In the last 2 (7%) respondents belong to category (more than 45000) which represent the monthly income of the respondents. In nutshell, majority of the respondents belong to monthly income (25001-3500). Because the people in the area were from middle class and knows the depth of information about the issues concerned. However, the descriptive statistic is use in the form of mean, median and mode. The numerical values of measure of central demonstrate that the results fall in the acceptance region in relation to normal distribution or symmetric diagram.

Table-2 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Frequencies	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Married	21	70			
Un-married	9	30	1.30	1.00	1
Total	30	100			

Majority of the respondents are married, as; 21 (70%) are married while 9 (30%) are un-married.

Table-3 Family Type of the Respondents

Family type	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Joint family	17	56.7			
Nuclear family	13	43.3	1.43	1.00	1
Total	30	100			

Pakhtoon used to live together, in this regard 17 (57%) respondents belongs to joint family, where from grandfather to

grandson living together, beside this there are also find the nuclear families such as 13 (44%) respondents presented that they belong to nuclear family.

Table-4 Knowledge about Superstitious Beliefs

Superstitious beliefs	Frequency	Per cent	Mean	Median	Mode
Unawareness about superstitions.	4	13.3			
An irrational belief system.	11	36.7			
It refers to the false notions.	3	10	2.20	1.50	1
Related to shrines, amulets, magic and devils etc.	11	36.7			
Any other	1	3.3			
Total	30	100			

From the analysed data it was extracted that 13.3% of the women were not known of the superstitious beliefs while 86.3% have knowledge about superstitious beliefs. Further Women represent almost half of the population (census report, 2011). Although, women represent 50% of the population still they have no such access to education (population bureau, 2011). Besides, their lower level of education, they have no wisdom and thinking about modern means of technology etc. With regard to current study, it has been observed that out of 30 respondents, only four respondents 13.33% women were don't know about superstitious beliefs and it's practices, while the entire population shows their views such as; 11 respondents 36.7% of the opinion that it is an irrational belief system, 3 respondents 10% say that it is false notions, 11 respondents 36.7% says that it is related to shrines, amulets, devils and magic, and only 1 respondent 3.3% have the opinion of any other. Superstitions are as old as darkness itself. Fear of the unknown and inability to control or predict our own future have led people to all kinds of irrational acts and beliefs. They were often used to teach as it was easier to scare someone into doing or not doing something than to use lengthy explanations -- especially for children," says Alice Wood (Sanguinari, 2009).

Table-5 Involvement in Superstitious Beliefs

Involvement	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Yes	9	30			
No	21	70	1.70	2.00	2
Total	30	100			

Pakhtoon women's are limited to the four wall of the house and majority have no access to education, the old grand mothers are socializing their offspring in a traditional way which leads to superstitious beliefs, although 9 (30%) respondents show that they are involve in the superstitious belief, while 21 (70%) of the opinion that they don't have involvement in superstitious beliefs. Women are more superstitious than men, and young people more than old. Superstitious beliefs are prevalent among women than men because fewer women are educated², compared to men (Wiseman, 2003).

Table-6 What Type of Involvement

Category of involvement	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
No superstitious beliefs	10	31			
Belief on Shrines	3	10	.57	.00	0
Belief on Amulets	25	77.5			
Belief on Magic	2	6.7			
Total	30	100			

Here elaborated that majority of the respondents such as 10 (31%) mark that they are not involved in superstitious beliefs, while the entire respondents gives their ideas variously, as 3 (10%) respondents have belief on shrines, 25 (77.5%) has belief on Amulets, while the remaining 2 (7%) had presented their views that they are stuck with the belief on magic. Amulets and talismans vary considerably according to their time and place of origin. A religious amulet might be the figure of a certain god or simply a representation of the deity. Many Yoruba Muslims believe in the protective and healing power of amulets and

talismans. Talismans used by these people can be broken into three main categories: The first are the types carried or worn on the body; the second version of a talisman is one which is hung upon or above the bed of an infirm person and the last classification of talisman is one with medicinal qualities. The latter category of magical item can be further divided into external and internal; in the former, one could for example, place this type of amulet in a bath. The power of the amulet would be understood to be transmitted to the water, and thus to the bather. In the latter, magical inscriptions would be written or inscribed onto food, which will then be boiled³. The resulting broth, when consumed, would transfer the healing and magical qualities engraved on the food into the person that consumed it. An amulet can also be seen as a charm (Mushin, 2011).

Table-7 Psychological Impacts of Superstitious Beliefs

Psychological impacts	Frequency	percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
No psychological impacts.	5	16.7			
It creates tension.	6	20	2.37	3	4
It causes anxiety.	2	6.7			
It creates stress and strain.	7	23.3			
It causes fear and mental disorder etc.	10	33.3			
Total	30	100			

From the analysed data it is concluded that 16.7% of the respondents argued that Superstitious beliefs do not have psychological impacts on women while 83.3% favoured that it has impacts. Further among that 83.3%, 20% respondents stated that it creates tension, 6.7% say that it causes anxiety, 23.3% shows their interest in the stress and strain while the

²UK Superstitious survey, 2010, volume 3, prof; Richard Wiseman, department of psychology, university of Hertfordshire.

entire 33.3% of the opinion that it causes fear and mental disorder.

Table-8 Superstitious Beliefs and Tension

Creation of tension	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Strong belief on irrational things	11	36.7	2	2	1
Fear of the unknown	8	26.7			
Fear from the good and bad luck	11	36.7			
Total	30	100			

It has been observed that superstitious beliefs cause tension among Pakhtoon women. In this regard 36.7% stated that strong belief on irrational things leads to tension, 26.7% were the opinion that fear of the unknown things leads to tension and the remaining 36.7% says that fear from the good and bad luck leads to tension. David Phillips published the results of an extensive study of the effect of superstitions on the life of those who believed them in 2002 and stated that superstitions can raise stress and anxiety levels (Carole Somerville, 2009).

Table-9 Superstitious Beliefs and Fetishism

Fetishism	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Does not cause fetishism	4	13.3	2.23	2	3
Decreases the level of religiosity	4	13.3			
Belief on ghost/devils instead of God	9	30			
Belief on shrines reinforce fetishism	5	16.7			
Total	30	100			

Fetishism is a belief which is strongly associated with superstitious beliefs. As 13.3% respondents gives their opinion that superstitious beliefs does not cause fetishism. 13.3% of the respondents argue that superstitious beliefs decrease the level of religiosity, 30% respondents shows their intentions that belief on ghost and devils instead of Allah leads to fetishism, while 16.7% says that belief on shrines reinforce the fetishism.

Women also visit graveyards or shrines of saints (both local and non-local) as to ask for a male issue and mostly they follow it weekly, and particularly on Thursday. The desire of male child of a woman is a source of income for Pirs, Mullahs and Malangans (tombs bearers). These people get rich gifts including cash, animals, clothes and sometime property, donation (Arab Naz, 2011).

Table-10 Superstitious Beliefs and Social Impacts

Social impacts	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
No social impacts	2	6.7			
It causes the personality disorder	3	10	2.67	3	3
Lack of confident	6	20			
Weak in decision making	11	36.7			
Involvement in any other activity	8	26.7			
Total	30	100			

Besides to the psychological impacts, superstitious beliefs have also social impacts on women's. In this regard Superstitious as found among Pakhtoon women have negative impacts on social and cultural standing of women and gender development because such beliefs and practices trap women and further exploits them economically.

The habitual saying of "God bless you" after someone sneezes, rather showing politeness came from a superstition. Superstition affects the behaviour of the people⁴ (Travis Ng and Chong, 2009). Block and Kramer (2009) find that superstitious beliefs cause some consumer to buy things that are inconsistent with economic predictions, for instance, buying a product set with a low but luck (versus greater but neutral) quantity in the package.

Table-11 Superstitious Beliefs and Confidence

Confidence	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Confidence in decision making	5	16.7			
It stops the positive personnel growth	8	26.7	1.87	2	3
It leads to personality disorder	3	10			
Strong belief on black magic leads to familial disorganization	14	46.7			
Total	30	100			

From the table it is concluded that 16.7% respondents stated that superstitious women's are confident in decision making, 26.7% says that it stop the positive personnel growth of the women, 10% respondents gives their opinion that it leads to personality disorder, while 46% of the respondent s views that strong belief on black magic leads to familial disorganization.

Throughout history, people have recognized that good and bad luck can transform lives. A few seconds of ill fortune can lay waste years of striving, and moments of good luck can save an enormous amount of hard work. Superstition represents people's attempts to control and enhance this most elusive of factors. And the enduring nature of these superstitions beliefs and behaviours reflects the extent of people's desire to find ways of increasing their good luck. In short, superstitions were created, and have survived, because they promise that most elusive⁵ of holy grails – a way of enhancing good fortune (Richard, 2003).

Table-12 Superstitions and Bad Activities

Bad activities	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Median	Mode
Superstitious belief doesn't indulge the women into	2	6.7			

other bad activities.			1.93	1.50	1
Constantly visits to the shrines can affect their economy.	13	43.3			
Physical exploitation by these soothsayers.	1	3.3			
It stops the positive attitude.	13	43.3			
Any other	1	3.3			
Total	30	100			

As there is no awareness among Pakhtoon women's about bad impacts of superstitious beliefs, in this regard it is analysed that how much women's are involved in bad activities. 6.7% respondents elaborated that superstitious belief does not indulge the women's into other bad activities, 43.3% respondents presented that constantly visits to the shrines can affect the economy of superstitious women's, 3.3% respondents shows that due to the physical exploitation of the soothsayers can indulge the women into bad activities, 43.3% respondents clarify that it stop the positive attitude of women's and only one respondent 3.3% has the opinion that it leads to others bad activities.

Table-13 Superstitions and the Structure of Society

Structural disturbance	Frequency	Per cent	Mean	Median	Mode
Superstitious beliefs does not disturb the structure of society	2	6.7			
Deviation from religious beliefs and practices	21	70	1.17	1	1
It hampers the development of the society	7	23.3			
Total	30	100			

This is also a major concern of the study that how much these beliefs affect the structure of the society. 6.7% of the respondents elaborated that superstitious beliefs does not disturb the structure of society, 70% respondents says that

deviation from religious beliefs and practices leads to structural disturbance and 23.3% respondents argue that it hampers the development of the society. The ethnographic details of the area entail that these superstitious beliefs are major sources of creating fear and tension among women in area. Women who do not follow shrines, or saints, or they move against them or do not accept their beliefs, are warned of evil forces or spirits endangering (Put into danger) them or their children. Few of women were also found in a kind of psychological fits called *Chappa* in which they remain unconscious for a specified period and act in abnormal manner. They are believed to be under strong spell and control of a spirit (Jinn or Peryan). Such women are then taken to Pirs and a kind of treatment is then suggested. Women remain more careful in observing not to violate dictation of such Pirs because they are considered as celestial (extra-ordinary) beings. However, majority of males do not believe on such superstitions but still they visit shrines and Pirs with their women. The mind-set of female has been framed in such a way that they cannot find other way to cure their family; son, daughter and other family members. Such practices are according to Pakhtoonwali (Pakhtoon code of life).

Table-14 Superstitious and Dependency

Dependency & Superstition	Frequency	Per cent	Mean	Median	Mode
Superstitious beliefs does not bring dependency among women	5	16.7			
Frequently visits to the shrines bring dependency	4	13.3	2	2	3
Belief on amulets causes dependency	7	23.3			
Belief on magic and written scriptures leads to dependency	14	46.7			
Total	30	100			

Superstitious beliefs bring dependency among women, such as visits to the shrines, soothsayers and many more; here we

discuss certain which clarify the concept. 16.7% respondents were does not cause dependency, 13.3% says that constantly visits to the shrines bring dependency, 23.3% stated that belief on amulets causes dependency, 46.7% respondents gives their opinion that belief on magic and written scriptures leads to dependency.

A superstitious individual can never be confident in taking decisions nor can he ever have a clear faith in the fact that it is only one God who alone is running the affairs of this world. It is a part of the belief of a superstitious individual that many different, unrelated forces cause events to happen in this world. Throwing spilt salt over your shoulder is supposed to damage the devil that is standing behind you. To a devoutly religious person, anything which harms the devil is good, even wasting precious salt (Kaminski, 2009).

Table-15 Interest in the Superstitious Beliefs

Interest	Frequency	Per cent	Mean	Median	Mode
The respondents have no interest in the superstitious beliefs	3	10			
Because we have found our parents and elders on such beliefs	12	40	1.67	1.50	1
It is amalgamated in the norm and values of our society	7	23.3			
It is a part of culture	8	26.7			
Total	30	100			

One of the dimensions of the study was that, to know about the interest of the people about superstitious beliefs and its practices. 10% respondents argue that they have no interest in the superstitious beliefs, here arise the question that if they haven't interest then why practice it. In this regard 40% respondents stated that we have found our parents and elders that's why we practice it, 23.3% says that it is amalgamated in the norms and values of our society, and 26.7% shows their intentions that it is a part of culture that's why we practice it.

Table-16 Superstitious and Deviation from Religion

Deviation from Religion	Frequency	Per cent	Mean	Median	Mode
It affects the reverence of the followers	5	16.7	3.07	3.50	4
It affects the efficacy of prayers	3	10			
Belief on strange things affects the religion	7	23.3			
Trust on magic and amulets weakened the religion	15	50			
Total	30	100			

It is believed that some superstitions originated from religious practices and they continued to be observed by people who no longer adhere to the religion that gave birth to the practice, these practices would lose their original meaning in this process and in other instances, the practices are adapted to the current religion of the practitioner. Islam is a religion of knowledge, enlightenment and conviction. It does not condone any practice or belief that is based on slavish adherence or follower ship. Pakhtoon women are losing their tendency toward religion, because of these evil practices and beliefs which affect the religious side of the believers, 16.7% respondents stated that it affects the reverence of the followers towards religion, 10% respondents says that it affects the efficacy of prayers, 23.3% elaborated that belief on strange things affects the religion, and 50% of the majority says that trust on magic and amulets weakened the religion.

Conclusion

Every society has its own traditional beliefs and practices which mould the individual in a particular way. Some belief and practices are effective whereas other may be harmful or ineffective. Among those beliefs superstitious beliefs is one of

them which have no proof scientifically and logically but people blindly follow it. Like other societies of the world, superstitious beliefs are also found in Pakhtoon Society, but the belief system and practices are different in nature like, itching of eyes, putting the dagger into the head of the baby, sitting of crow in the wall of house means that the guests are coming etc. Besides to these beliefs there also found belief on amulets, belief on magic, belief on devils and a lot of more others. These beliefs have bad impacts on the structure of the society and also a controlling factor over their behaviour and psyche of the individuals. Superstitious beliefs which are present among Pakhtoon women are menace. From the field data the researchers observed that majority of women are constantly busy on practicing such type of evil practices, even these women's don't know about that they are indulge in such types of beliefs and practices. Usually these types of beliefs are arising from the misperception and lack of religious knowledge, and people become stuck with these beliefs and practices. People associate things with others things and events like in Pakhtoon society, the women are going to the Shrines for various purposes, like for good and Bad luck, for the desire of male child and for the employment of their husband and a lot of more. Superstitious beliefs are culturally shared and socially transmitted from generation to generation. Pakhtoon women's are stuck to these types of beliefs due to lack of religious knowledge and norms and values of our society. This was the main purpose of the study that to know about the superstitious beliefs which are present in Pakhtoon society, its various forms and its impacts on the women's. Pakhtoon women's are limited to the four walls of the house, and also have no access to education thus leads to superstitious beliefs, so this was a major motive of the study that to aware these women's regarding these evil beliefs and practices in order to remove it from the society was the major concern of the study.

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