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Title of Research Paper: Prevalence of Superstition among the people of Dipatoli village in Mahuadanr, Latehar, Jharkhand: An Analysis

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Abstract

Beliefs and superstitions are an inseparable part of human society, with each community preserving its traditional knowledge through cultural beliefs, customs, and rituals. Many of these superstitious beliefs in the study area are not grounded in rational thinking or scientific understanding, but are instead shaped by long-standing taboos and faith-based explanations. Despite rapid advancements in science, technology, and education, beliefs in supernatural forces, rituals, and traditional practices continue to influence everyday life. The present study examines the common belief systems of the people of Dipatoli village in the Mahuadanr block of Latehar district, with an emphasis on identifying which beliefs hold social significance and which lack rational basis, particularly focusing on superstitions related to death and health.

Keywords: Superstition, Belief, Health, Death, Supernatural Powers, Culture, Traditions

Introduction

Dipatoli, one of the villages of Mahuadanr, a sub-division in Latehar district of the state of Jharkhand. It has the total geographical area of village is 20 hectares. According to Government Census 2011, the total population of the village is around 1,192, out of which male population is 593 while female population is 599. The total Literacy rate of this Diptatoli village is 67.45%, out of which 74.03% males and 60.93% females are literate according to 2011 census. In Dipatoli village near about 237 houses and its inhabitants belong to different religion and different tribes.

Thus there are various religious and tribal beliefs and practices in the village and many of them are considered superstitions. Sumit Agarwal in his work *Superstition and Asset Markets*

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states that “the people start to believe in superstitions when they get a feeling that humans are at the mercy of natural elements. As a result, people worship forces of nature for a longtime.” Some superstitions are thus created because of social values. He further says that “the gap, between what is superstitious and what is not widens even more when considering the opinions of the general public and scientists. The word superstition denotes the fear of the unknown or a belief in supernatural and magical powers which apparently control our lives and fate. Superstitious persons could be mostly uneducated and without any access to scientific knowledge”.

Database and Research Methodology

The research work carried out on the basis of the sample comprised villagers, including 593 males and 599 females. A structured questionnaire containing 20 items was designed to evaluate the prevailing superstitions and myths related to death and health within the village. Data collection was conducted through a door-to-door survey by students accompanied by faculty members, using the interview method. The collected data were analyzed using the percentage method.



Figure 1: Research Site Map

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Figure 2: Photographs taken during village survey.

Results and Analysis

Table 1. 1 showing literacy rate and number of people believing in superstition

Particulars	Sample Population	Literate Population of Sample	Devotee and Adherents	% of Adherents	Non-Adherents	% of Non-Adherents
Females	130	80	27	33.75	53	66.25
Males	100	70	15	21.42	55	78.57
Total	230	150	42	28	108	72

Source: Based on Field Survey data, Mahuadanr block, Latehar district, 2023

Table 1. 2 showing illiteracy rate and number of people believing in superstition

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Particulars	Sample Population	Illiterate Population of Sample	Devotee and Adherents	% of Adherents	Non-Adherents	% of Non-Adherents
Females	130	50	42	84	8	16
Males	100	30	20	66.67	10	33.33
Total	230	80	62	77.5	18	22.5

Source: Based on Field Survey data, Mahuadanr block, Latehar district, 2023

Table 1. 3 Believers and non-Believers of different occupations

Occupation	Total no. of Families	Believers	Non-believers
Business	12	10	2
Educators	5	2	3
Agriculture	8	4	4
Laborers	11	6	5
Others	4	2	2

Source: Based on Field Survey data, Mahuadanr block, Latehar district, 2023

Table 1. 4 Showing response for different superstitious behavior

Superstitious behavior	Number of Response From the families	
	%-yes	%-No
1.Common superstition		
1. Sneezing during the time of departure, people consider it Unlucky	82	18

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2. Eating curd before the start of any job/exam/interviews Considered auspicious	84	16
3. Not using the broom after sunset	89	11
4. Not opening the scissors without cutting anything	66	34
5. Not looking at oneself final broken mirror	83	17
6. Not cutting nails at night	92	08
7. Hanging and Usefulness of lemon and chilies outside house above door removes evil Eye	96	04
8. Not washing hair on Tuesday or Thursday	72	28
9. Stopping and waiting to someone else to cross while cat Crosses the path	80	20
10. Women are not permitted to enter the kitchen or temples during menstruation / periods.	77	23
2. Death Superstition		
1. Dog crying at night indicating death	88	12
2. Eagle flying over a house indicating death	47	53
3. Health Superstition		
1. Not sleeping with head facing North	79	21
2. Avoid drinking water while standing	54	46
3. Sleeping under the tree during night leads to mental ill health	87	23
4. Not giving bath to new born baby, it lowers body temperature	72	38
5. A prevailing superstition holds that pregnant women should not step outside the house during an eclipse.	94	06
6. Drinking milk and eating fish causes skin diseases	71	29

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7. Cracking fingers causes arthritis	80	20
8. Not to drink cold water after having a hot tea	90	10

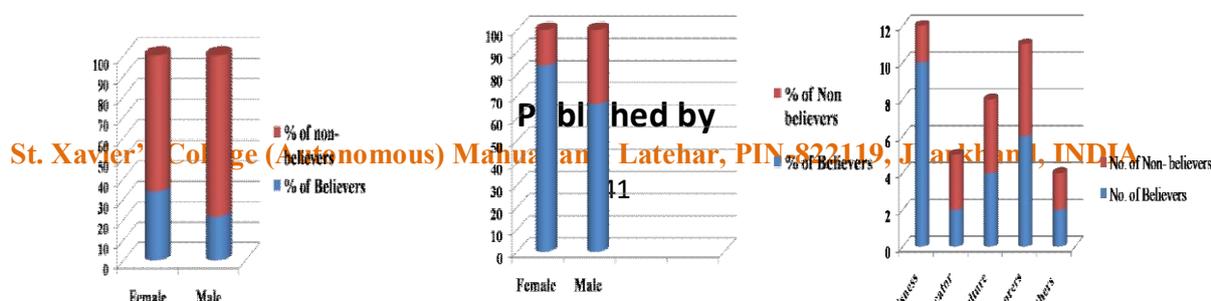
Source: Based on Field Survey data, Mahuadanr block, Latehar district, 2023

Details Description of the Study

The current study and research work highlights the various superstitions and misconceptions and wrong perceptions practiced by the people of villagers. Mehak Gupta Grover, in her article *Blind Belief Is Dangerous*, aptly states that “God has endowed human beings with intellect, and it is our responsibility to use rational thinking to understand the world; failing to do so places individuals on the verge of superstition.” The findings indicate that lower levels of rational thinking are more prevalent among women than men, and consequently, female superstitious believers outnumber male believers. The study further demonstrates that many villagers are unable to apply their reasoning abilities and therefore easily become victims of superstitious practices. Interestingly, the findings show that even some villagers engaged in business activities tend to rely more on luck than on hard work and rational planning for achieving success.

The study also shows that how various meaningless superstitious activities such as sleeping under the tree during night leads to mental health, cracking fingers cause arthritis etc., are blindly practiced by the villagers. There may be some scientific reasons behind some of the practices however mere believing them and practicing them blindly results only in disaster. It is true that Indian culture, traditions and beliefs hold great value in the society therefore it is necessary to assess their impact on one’s physical, mental, and social well being. No matter how much these traditional beliefs are outdated they still have great influence in the people. Therefore education and public policies should be aimed at the promotion of rational beliefs to counter the superstitions.

The study being limited too unparticular village has its own limitations. Thus, in order to have better understanding, similar studies can be conducted in both rural and urban areas.



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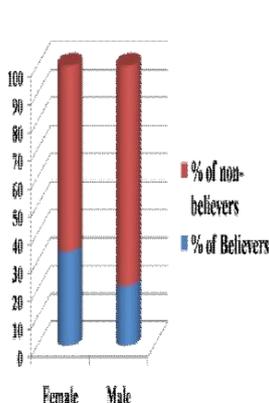
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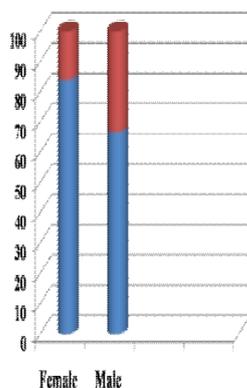
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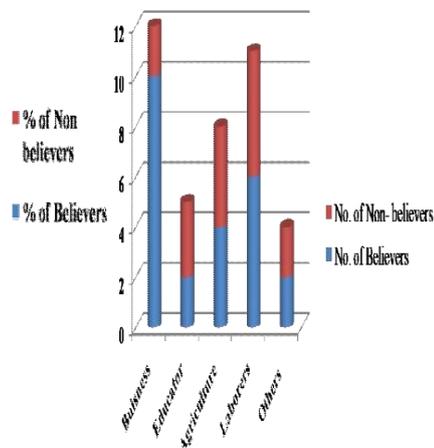
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Graph 1: Showing % of Believers and Non-believers among the literate group



Graph 2: Showing % of believers and Non-believers among the illiterate group



Graph 3: Showing Believers and Non-believers of different Occupants

Suggestions and policy recommendations

- Students both in schools and colleges should be made aware of the wrong practices prevailing in their society.
- Parents should also be made aware of such superstitions which could impact the lives of children.
- Anti-superstition campaign should be conducted in the rural areas to help people,

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develop a practical and rational mind set.

Conclusion

Although superstition lacks legitimate reasoning, it has persisted over time and remains prevalent despite scientific and technological advancements. Even today it continues to sting our society as it not only hinders our mental and rational growth but it also sets platform for various crimes and absurdities. Women and individuals who are emotionally susceptible are most vulnerable victims of superstitions. Therefore, the best solution to counter such problem is to give education to the people.

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