

A Study on the Relationship between Religious Attitude and Superstition Across Adulthood

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ABSTRACT

Religion and superstition both address humanity's quest to comprehend and influence the world in a direct way. While religion can provide a systematic worldview, superstition tends to reflect individual and cultural attempts to exert control over unpredictable aspects of life. This study aims to analyze the significant relationship between religious attitude and superstition across three different age groups. This study uses questionnaire on religious attitude and superstitious attitude which reveals the relationship between religion and superstition. This study adopts a empirical research design. Out of 58 participants males were 17 and females were 41. Variables like 'education', 'visit to temple' showed significant relationship with religious attitude, and superstitious attitude showed a significant relationship with variable like 'education'. Education must be tailored to curb blind religious faith and belief in superstition.

Keywords: Religious attitude, Superstitious belief, Religion, Superstition, Adult

INTRODUCTION

Religion and superstition are two interconnected aspects of human belief systems that often influence the cultural practices and individual behaviours. Religion typically involves organised system of worship, rituals and moral codes centred around a divine power. According to Emile Durkheim (1995), Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into single moral community called church, all those who adhere to them. Superstition is the irrational belief that is deep rooted in the fear of unknown. According to Dale Martin (2004), superstitions are an outgrowth of long standing popular beliefs that contradict modern scientific understanding of cause and effect and have been rejected by modern science.

Literature Review:

Review of related literature is an important research

effort as it provides comprehensive understanding of what is already known about the topic. The main function is to provide a basis for developing a frame work. The present research work has been carried out on the adults belonging to Hindu religion.

Chelwani *et al.* (2023) conducted a study with 247 participants aged 18 to 42 years, finding that Hindu participants exhibited the highest number of superstitious beliefs, while atheists displayed the lowest. Similarly, Zaidi and Rahaman (2020) revealed a significant difference in religious attitudes between male and female students, with females showing higher religiosity. Additionally, rural students were found to have stronger religious attitudes compared to their urban counterparts. Kajavintihan (2015) made similar observations, noting that female students had more religious attitudes than their male counterparts, and students from towns exhibited more religiosity than those from villages. Nagaiyarkarasi and Selvakumar (2020) further supported these results, noting that female students in Tamil Nadu demonstrated greater religiosity

than male students. In an old but relevant study by Conklin (1919) a longitudinal research was conducted on superstition among college students. The finding was that women were generally more superstitious than men, with their superstitions focusing on domestic and social affairs, whereas men's superstitions were linked to sports and business activities. Javed and Malik (2021) also found that women with high religiosity were less superstitious, while those with moderate religiosity tended to hold more superstitions. In contrast, Tripathi (2023) found that young adults with higher levels of religiosity were more likely to hold superstitious and paranormal beliefs. Stanke (2004) found no correlation between religiosity and superstitious beliefs, although gender differences were observed, with females showing higher paranormal beliefs than males. Similarly, Blum and Blum (1974) found that women were more superstitious than men, and that superstition was negatively correlated with formal education. Saenko (2005) concluded that college students often turned to superstitions in extreme situations, while Park and Kamble (2020) examined the relationship between religious beliefs, distress, and well-being among 178 college students, finding that religious beliefs had no significant relationship with service attendance or prayer importance, but were positively associated with depression, anxiety, and the meaning of life. In addition, Trabelsi *et al.* (2022) found that religious fasting, alongside other religious assets, can provide several opportunities across multiple levels of scale ranging from the individual to the community, population, environmental and planetary level.

The purpose of the present study is thus to find out the relationship between religious attitude and superstitious attitude among three age groups across adulthood.

Objectives of the Study:

- To find out whether there is any relation between religious attitude and superstitious attitude.
- To find out whether the educational status/ gender/ age of the participants influences the attitude towards religion and superstition.
- To find out whether temple visitation influences the attitude towards religion and superstition.
- To find out whether keeping religious fast influences the attitude towards religion and superstition.

Hypotheses:

- H_0 There is no significant relationship between

religious attitude and superstitious attitude.

- H_0 There is no significant relationship between religious attitude and gender/ age/ education.
- H_0 There is no significant relationship between superstitious attitude and gender/ age/ education.
- H_0 There is no significant relationship between religious attitude and temple visitation/ practice of keeping religious fast.
- H_0 There is no significant relationship between superstitious attitude and temple visitation/ practice of keeping religious fast.

Sample:

The participants for the present study consist of 58 adults from Kolkata and adjacent areas. The sample was predominantly female 41 (70.68%) and males were 17 (29.31%). The age of the participants ranges from 18 to 83 years (Table A).

Table A : Distribution of gender sorted by age

		Age			Total
		Early adult	Middle adult	Late adult	
Gender	Male	11	2	4	17
	Female	33	6	2	41
Total		44	8	6	58

Composition of the Sample:

Here, As mentioned by Erikson (1963) ages have been categorized into three groups. Early adults refers to participants who are aged between 18 to 39, Middle adults refers to participants who are aged between 40 to 61 and Late adults refers to participants who are aged between 62 to 83.

METHODOLOGY

Tools used :

General Information Schedule:

An information schedule was designed by the investigator to produce demographic and biographical information from the sample required for the study.

Religious Attitude Scale :

In the present study a standardized questionnaire, Religious Attitude Scale was used to collect data from the selected samples. This Religious Attitude Scale was developed by Dr. M. Rajamanickam (1975), which consists of 30 items or statements on 5 Point Likert Scale. The scale has a Split Half reliability coefficient by using

Gutman formula was found to be 0.98, which is significant at $p=0.001$ level. The Criterion validity coefficient was found to be 0.86, which is significant at $p=0.001$ level of this scale (Kapoor, 2020).

Superstitious Attitude Scale:

In the present study Superstitious Attitude Scale by Dr. Shailaja Bhagwat (2004), was used to collect data from the participants, this scale has 24 items on 5 point Likert scale. Reliability and Validity of this test were, respectively 0.91 and -0.86 (Naaz, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the distribution of age groups in relation to their attitudes towards religion, revealing some notable patterns. Among early adults (ages 18-39), the majority fall into the neutral category (33 participants), suggesting a more balanced or indifferent stance towards religion. A small number of early adults are found in the extremely pro-religious (1 participant) and moderately anti-religious (1 participant) categories, indicating a slight diversity in their religious views. Additionally, there were a small number of moderately pro-religious individuals in this group (9 participants).

In contrast, middle adults (ages 40-61) show a much smaller sample size, with only 8 participants overall. Of these, 6 participants are categorized as neutral, while 2 participants fall under the moderately anti-religious category. No middle adults are represented in the extremely pro-religious or moderately pro-religious categories, highlighting a potential shift towards less

pronounced religious views as individuals reach middle adulthood.

For late adults (ages 62 to 83), the distribution is more evenly spread, though still limited in sample size (6 participants). Within this group, 3 participants are classified as moderately pro-religious, and 3 are neutral, with no participants identified as either extremely pro-religious or moderately anti-religious. This suggests that later adulthood might bring more moderate views towards religion, though again, the small sample size must be considered.

Overall, the findings suggest that early adults are more likely to have a neutral or indifferent stance towards religion, with a minority expressing more extreme attitudes. Both middle adults and late adults exhibit fewer extreme religious views, with middle adults particularly showing a higher proportion of moderately anti-religious attitudes. The data highlights a general trend of less religious intensity as individuals age.

Table 2 presents the distribution of age groups in relation to their attitudes towards superstition, revealing distinct differences across the categories. Among early adults (ages approximately 18-39), the majority of participants display a low attitude towards superstition (27 participants), with a smaller number holding a moderate view (16 participants) and only one participant exhibiting a very low level of superstition. This suggests that early adults tend to have a moderate to low belief in superstition.

In middle adults (ages 40-61), the distribution is more concentrated in the low superstition category, with 8 participants in this group. Interestingly, no middle adults were found in the moderate or very low categories,

Table 1 : Distribution of Age Sorted by Attitude Towards Religion

		Attitude Towards Religion				Total
		Extremely Pro Religious	Moderately Pro Religious	Neutral	Moderately Anti Religious	
Age	Early Adult	1	9	33	1	44
	Middle Adult	0	0	6	2	8
	Late Adult	0	3	3	0	6
Total		1	12	42	3	58

Table 2 : Distribution of Age Sorted by Attitude Towards Superstition

		Attitude Towards Superstition			Total
		Moderate	Low	Very Low	
Age	Early Adult	16	27	1	44
	Middle Adult	0	8	0	8
	Late Adult	3	2	1	6
Total		19	37	2	58

indicating that those in this age group might either hold lower superstitions or have a minimal inclination towards them.

For late adults (ages 62-83), there is a more balanced spread across the categories, though with fewer participants overall (6 in total). Among them, 3 participants held a moderate attitude, 2 had a low level of superstition, and 1 exhibited a very low attitude. This suggests that superstition remains a moderate or low belief in late adulthood, though the sample size is small.

Overall, the findings suggest that early adults have the highest proportion of participants with moderate to low superstition, with a very small minority showing very low superstition. Middle adults, while having fewer participants, tend to fall into the low superstition category. Late adults show a wider distribution across the categories, but with no significant extremes in belief. These patterns suggest that as individuals age, there is a tendency towards lower levels of superstition, although the results are influenced by the relatively small sample sizes in some groups.

Table 3 presents the distribution of gender in relation to attitudes towards religion. Among males, the majority are categorized as neutral (13 participants), with a smaller number holding moderately pro-religious (3 participants) or extremely pro-religious (1 participant) views. Notably, no males fall into the moderately anti-religious category, suggesting that negative religious attitudes are less common in this group.

In contrast, females show a more varied distribution. While the majority are also neutral (29 participants), a higher proportion of females are moderately pro-religious (9 participants), compared to males. Additionally, there are a few females who identify as moderately anti-

religious (3 participants), though none are extremely pro-religious.

Overall, the data reveals that both males and females predominantly hold neutral attitudes towards religion, with females showing a slightly higher tendency towards being moderately pro-religious. The small number of individuals in the extreme categories suggests that most participants, regardless of gender, lean towards more moderate or neutral religious views.

Table 4 shows the distribution of gender in relation to attitudes towards superstition. Among males, the majority of participants fall into the moderate (8 participants) or low superstition categories (8 participants), with only 1 male participant showing a very low level of superstition. This indicates a somewhat balanced view of superstition among males, with no extreme tendencies in either direction.

In contrast, females show a different distribution, with a larger number of participants in the low superstition category (29 participants), followed by moderate superstition (11 participants). Similar to the males, only 1 female falls into the very low superstition category. This suggests that while the majority of females hold relatively low superstitions, there is still a moderate presence of belief in superstition within this group.

Overall, the findings suggest that both males and females tend to show a low to moderate attitude towards superstition, with females showing a stronger inclination towards low superstition compared to males. However, the relatively small number of participants in the very low superstition category suggests that superstition remains a relevant belief for many, though the overall trend is towards lower levels of superstition.

From Table 5 it is evident that the contingency

Table 3 : Distribution of Gender Sorted by Attitude Towards Religion

		Attitude Towards Religion				Total
		Extremely Pro Religious	Moderately Pro Religious	Neutral	Moderately Anti Religious	
Gender	Male	1	3	13	0	17
	Female	0	9	29	3	41
Total		1	12	42	3	58

Table 4 : Distribution of Gender Sorted by Attitude Towards Superstition

		Attitude Towards Superstition			Total
		Moderate	Low	Very Low	
Gender	Male	8	8	1	17
	Female	11	29	1	41
Total		19	37	2	58

Table 5 : Results of Contingency Correlation

Cross Tabulation of Variables	Contingency Coefficient (C)	Significance	Inference
Gender * Attitude Towards Religion	.249	.282	Non Significant
Gender * Attitude Towards Superstition	.221	.226	Non Significant
Age * Attitude Towards Religion	.415	.061	Non Significant
Age * Attitude Towards Superstition	.373	.052	Non Significant
Education * Attitude Towards Religion	.520	.044	Significant
Education * Attitude Towards Superstition	.475	.031	Significant
Practice Of Keeping Fast * Attitude Towards Religion	.592	.000	Significant
Practice Of Keeping Fast * Attitude Towards Superstition	.405	.076	Non Significant
Visiting Temple * Attitude Towards Religion	.627	.004	Significant
Visiting Temple * Attitude Towards Superstition	.317	.891	Non Significant

Table 6 : Results of Pearson Correlation

Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (R)	Significance	Inference
Gender * Attitude Towards Religion	.125	.352	Non Significant
Gender * Attitude Towards Superstition	.145	.276	Non Significant
Age * Attitude Towards Religion	-.045	.739	Non Significant
Age * Attitude Towards Superstition	-.001	.996	Non Significant
Attitude Towards Religion * Attitude Towards Superstition	.412	.001	Significant

coefficient for the cross tabulated variables education and attitude towards religion is significant ($c=.520$, Sig. .044). Hypothesis no. ii. is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, with respect to education. The study by Park and Kamble (2020) is relevant in this context. They found that among 178 college students religious beliefs were positively associated with negative emotions like depression, anxiety and the meaning of life.

From Table 5, it is also evident that the contingency coefficient for the cross tabulated variables education and attitude towards superstition is significant ($c=.475$, sig. .031). Hypothesis iii. is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, with respect to education. These findings partially aligned with those of Blum and Blum (1974) as they found that superstition was negatively correlated with formal education. In the present study as the sample size is predominantly female it was not possible to distinguish the result gender wise.

From the mentioned Table 5, it is evident that the contingency coefficient for the cross tabulated variables practice of keeping religious fast and attitude towards religion is significant ($c=.592$, Sig. .000). Hypothesis No. iv is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, with respect to practice of keeping religious fast. This finding is supported by the study of Trabelsi *et al.* (2022).

From Table 5 it is evident that the contingency Coefficient for the cross tabulated variables visiting temple and attitude towards religion is significant ($c=.627$, sig. .004). The hypothesis No iv. is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, with respect to visiting temple. These findings disagree with those of Park and Kamble (2020) as their study found that religious beliefs were unrelated to frequency of (church) service attendance and importance of prayer. Results reported in Table 5 indicate the acceptance of null hypothesis in the other cases.

From Table 6 the Pearson correlation coefficient for the variables attitude towards religion and attitude towards superstition is significant ($r=.412$, sig. .001). Hypothesis No. i is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. These finding are congruent with that of Chelwani *et al.* (2023) as they studied five religious groups and found that Hindu participants had the maximum number of superstitious beliefs. In this context it may be mentioned that Tripathi (2023) found that individuals who have higher level of religiosity more likely to hold superstition and paranormal belief. Results reported in Table 6 indicate the acceptance of the null hypothesis in the other cases.

Conclusion:

It seems that education of participants has positive relationship not only with attitude towards religion but also with attitude towards superstition. This is not a healthy trend as the more educated persons in the sample tend to be more religious and more superstitious. Education has to be tailored to curb blind faith in religion and belief in superstition. The findings of the study need however to be subjected to verification with a larger sample.

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