

**Sociological explanation of inclination to superstitions (Case Study: Isfahan and suburb villages)**Alireza Kaldi<sup>1</sup>, Maryam Karimi Ramsheh<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Literature and Humanities, Social Sciences Campus, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Iran<sup>2</sup> PhD Student in Sociology, Department of Literature and Humanities, Social Sciences Campus, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Iran[karimi\\_r20@yahoo.com](mailto:karimi_r20@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** One of the sociologists' interests is superstitions, reasons and its prevalence in the society. The word "superstition" is singular form of "superstitions". Its meaning is dementia and also false story; in other words it is action or belief which is not in conformity with wisdom. Connotatively, superstitions are false news, actions and beliefs. Therefore, superstitions are non-scientific and Anti-logic news, beliefs, thoughts, habits and actions. This article has a glance on superstitions, sociologically. We tried to describe the reasons of inclination to superstitions from the view point of sociology. Prevalence of superstitions in African mythology as a result of traditional, non-scientific system from viewpoint of Horton (Jahouda, 1992, pp. 185-186); the role of little literacy in worker class from viewpoint of Hugart (same source, p. 241); the relationship between occupation, income and people thoughts from viewpoint of Sugarmann (Alaviyoun, 1994; pp. 76-77) and finally, the spirit of inclination to destiny and superstitions in farmers class from viewpoint of Ragers (Rafiee, 2003; p.35) are among theories which have been analyzed in this article. This study found that inclination to superstitions in statistical population is less than average. We have two hypotheses: (1) inclination to superstitions in Isfahan is less than villages of Southern Baraan. (2) Inclination to superstitions in villages of Southern Baraan is less than villages of Outer jarghouyeh. The study confirmed our hypotheses. This study showed that inclination to superstitions in women is more than men. The results showed that the more education level and the stronger socio-economic status, the less inclination to superstitions. In other words, there is a reverse relationship between these two variables. Usage of media as one of study variables has a reverse and significant relationship with inclination to superstitions. Fatalism and religiosity are among variables which have direct and significant relationship with inclination to superstitions. (However, fatalism has string relationship with superstitions but there is weaker relationship with religiosity and inclination to superstitions). Modernism as a variable has a reverse and significant relationship with inclination to superstitions.

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**1. Introduction**

Superstitions are defined as wrong beliefs which are not in conformity with intellect, logic, science and reality. Inclination to Superstition is following wrong beliefs which are not in conformity with culture and science of the society which the superstitious person belongs to it. (Molavi Ganjeh, 2003, p.1).

We can define superstitions as below: "A series of beliefs and behaviors which, most of them have been formed because of people's ignorance of casual links of phenomena and are not in conformity with scientific and intellectual standards".

**Sociological description of Superstitions**

A sociologist defines superstition without previous bias or positive/negative biases and accepts it as a social reality.

Accepting superstitions as a kind of thought, we can see that superstitious actions and behaviors have roots in thought. In consequence, we can utilize cognition sociology as sociological theories regarding effective factors on thought. cognition sociology analyzes the relationship between man's thought and social background of thought. In fact "this section of sociology analyzes the relationship between thought and society as well as social and existential conditions of cognition". (Kuser, 1998, p.563).

This scheme shows complex of society and cognition as well as their mutual relationship. This relationship can be simple and

weak or casual and determined. The arrow is bilateral. It means that the function can be from one side to the other side and vice versa dependence to the conditions; also it can have functions on both sides simultaneously. Such cognition sociology emphasizes on existential (social) conditions of cognition; therefore, it links all of thinking productions such as ideologies, religions, philosophies and sciences to their social-historical frames which form and deliver them (Glover et al. 2004, pp.12-13).

Robin Horton found some similarities and observable coherences between traditional-mythological thought of African people and Western scientific thought. In agreement with his predecessors, Horton believes that there is no other formed system in contrary with traditional beliefs complex in traditional societies. However, in the developed scientific societies, people have access to many kinds of thought inferences. Since, the system of beliefs in traditional cultures is so strict, people in these societies are not able to leave such a strict system and they can not deviate from it. One of the characteristics of the traditional thought is that people can not tolerate lack of information in contrary with a scientist who is always ready to set aside inefficient theory (although he/she can not replace it with another one). In traditional societies, the concept of chance/accident has not grown up: people in these societies try to find a definite reason for each happening. (Jahoda, 1992, pp.185-186).

Hugart, Sogarmann and Ragers are among sociologists who analyzed superstitions with viewpoint of Cognition Sociology. Hugart in his book "the benefits of Literacy" analyzed prevalence of superstitions in workers class and concluded that workers believe superstitions more than other social classes because of little literacy (Jahouda, 1992, p.241). Sugarmann believes that the differences in nature of occupations result in differences in attitudes and viewpoints. Since, simple workers have little control on their future, they can not improve their situations, so they incline to fatalism, routine actions and instantaneous enjoys because of low income and few opportunities for investment. (Alavioun, 1994, pp.76-77). According to Ragers, farmers believe that destiny is the absolute power in their happiness/adversity; they think it is difficult to fight with nature for improving life level. Therefore, if they are successful in their lives, they will attribute it to metaphysic powers. ; They prefer to give up, be patient and flee from

it. He concludes that fatalism is one of factors which prevent changing and accepting re-building. (Rafiee, 2003, p.35).

## 2. Material and Methods

Methodology is dependent on subject and aims of the study as well as facilities. Since our aim was evaluating inclination to superstitions, we used survey method. We employed library method in order to forming a theoretical frame for the study and reviewing on previous researches.

Statistical population: All of people who are 15 years old and older who inhabited in Isfahan and villages around it were in statistical population of this study. There are many villages around Isfahan. The villages in Western Baraan Region selected as nearest rural region to Isfahan and the villages in Upper Jarghuyeh Region selected as farthest rural region to Isfahan.

According to National Census in 2007, 15 years old and older population of Isfahan City is around 1,263,114 people (644,244 males and 638,870 females). 15 years old and older population of villages in Upper Jarghuyeh Region is around 9,757 people (4,705 males and 5,052 females). 15 years old and older population of villages in Southern Baraan Region is around 15,213 people (7,926 males and 7,287 females). (Iranian Statistical Center, 2010).

The Volume of Sample and Sampling Method We used Cochran formula ( $n = \frac{t^2 pq}{d^2}$ ) for evaluating sample volume. The volume of sample was 320 people (for Isfahan), 200 people (Upper Jarghuyeh Region) and 200 people (southern Baraan Region). We considered more people because it was probable that some people didn't respond.

Sampling method in this study was quota sampling. The quotas were determined considering residence, gender and age.

## 3. Results

### Descriptive Results

768 people participated in this study: 50% (Isfahan), 24.6% (Villages of Upper Jarghyeh Region) and 25.4% (Villages of Southern Bararan Region). 51.04% of respondents were males and 48.96% were females. 36.9% of respondents were single and 63.1 were married. Age mean of respondents was 33.25 years old. Age minimum of respondents was 15 years old and age maximum

of them was 75 years old. The belief of 14.6% of respondents to fatalism was weak; the belief of 72.8% of them was middle. 12.6% of respondents believed into fatalism strongly. Religiosity in 4.8%, 29.6% and 65.6% of respondents was low, average and high, respectively. Socio-economic status in 22.1%, 57.9% and 19.9% of respondents was low, middle and high, respectively. Usage of media in 25%, 64.4%, and 10.6% of respondents was low, average and high, respectively. Modernism in 23.4%, 59.1% and 17.5% of respondents was

low, average and high, respectively. Inclination to superstitions in 46.2%, 47.7% and 6.1% of respondents was low, average and high, respectively.

Inferential Finding: Hypotheses Testing Gender and Inclination to Superstitions.

First hypothesis supposed that there is a difference between men and in inclining to superstitions. We used T-Test for analyzing this hypothesis (Table 1).

Table 1: T-test for comparison of superstitions inclination mean in men and women

Variables	groups	quantities	Mean	SD	t	Degree of Freedom	Dual meaningful level
gender	male	392	41.56	7.056	10.141	766	0.000
	female	376	46.06	7.151			

The output of this test showed that superstitions inclinations mean in men and women were 41.56% and 46.06% between men and women, respectively. (Range of changes has been from 15 to 85). Calculated t for above table was 10.141 which is more than table t considering error 5%. Therefore, we can say (with at least 95% confidentiality) inclination to superstitions in women is more than men. So, our first hypothesis has been confirmed.

### Marital status and inclination to superstitions

Our second hypothesis claimed that there is a difference between superstitions inclination male in single and married people. We used t-Test for analyzing this hypothesis (Table 2).

Table 2: t-Test for comparison of superstitions inclination mean between single and married people

Variables	groups	quantities	Mean	SD	t	Degree of Freedom	Dual meaningful level
Marital status	single	284	43.80	7.245	0.121	766	0.825
	married	484	43.92	7.835			

The output of this test showed that superstitions inclinations mean in single and married people were 43.80% and 43.92%, respectively. (Range of changes has been from 15 to 85). Calculated t for above table was 0.121 which is more than t in Table 2 considering error of 5%. Therefore, second hypothesis is not acceptable and this hypothesis has not been confirmed.

Correlation test between superstitions inclination and independent variables:

The results of Pearson Test on relationship between following independent variables and superstitions inclination showed that:

There is a significant and direct relationship between religiosity and first dimension of fatalism (belief in determinism) and superstitions inclination; there is a significant and reverse relationship between education, modernism, usage of media, socio-economic status and inclination to superstitions.

There is not significant relationship between age and second dimension of fatalism (belief in lack of control) with superstitions inclination (Table 3).

Multi-variable regression: the relationship between superstitions inclination and independent variables.

Regression analysis is a statistical method which we can explain/predict dependent variable considering independent variable(s). So, the function of regression method is explanation and prediction. (Saeed, 2002, p.151).

The aim of multi-variable regression is prediction of dependent variable changes through data of two or more independent quantities by Bs. Another application of regression is determining the effect of each variable (relative contribution) on dependent variable through Beta(s). (Chalabi, course pamphlet).

You can see the result of applying multi-variable regression on variables of model and inclination to superstitions at the Table 4.

Table 3: Correlation between inclination to superstitions and independent variables

Hypothesis	variable	Used test	Correlation Index	sig	effect
3	Age	Pearson correlation test	0.037	0.412	direct
4	Education	Pearson correlation test	-0.339	0.000	reverse
5	Religiosity	Pearson correlation test	0.173	0.000	direct
6	Modernism	Pearson correlation test	-0.336	0.000	reverse
7	fatalism	Pearson correlation test	0.412	0.000	direct
7-1	belief in determinism	Pearson correlation test	0.524	0.000	direct
7-2	belief in lack of control	Pearson correlation test	0.036	0.326	direct
8	Usage of Media	Pearson correlation test	-0.089	0.007	reverse
9	Socio-economic status	Pearson correlation test	-0.329	0.000	reverse

Table 4: Indices of B and Beta for variable of inclination to superstitions

X		Non-standard indices		Standard Indices	t	sig
		B	Standard fault	Beta		
	Constant	0.000	13.735		3.937	54.074
X1	education	.005	2.83	-0.108	0.260	-0.739
X2	religiosity	0.000	1.215	0.103	0.468	0.897
X3	modernism	0.000	1.709	-0.167	0.258	-0.735
X4	fatalism	0.000	2.729	0.291	0.276	0.909
X5	belief in determinism	.000	3.37	357.	109.	367.
X6	belief in lack of control	.83	217.	123.	1.86	328.
X7	Usage of media	0.115	-1.576	-0.060	0.243	-0.382
X8	Socio-economic status	0.000	-7.32	-0.23	1.03	-7.55
X9	age	0.117	1.567	0.076	0.025	0.039

According to above table, the quantities of B, Beta and their significance shows that, all of variables of the model except second dimension of fatalism (belief in lack of control), usage of multi-media and age are effective on superstitions inclination and have a role in their changes.

We can predict the changes of superstitions inclination changes considering resulting B(s) if we have the quantities of independent variables; for example, if we change education as 1 unit, inclination to superstitions will be decreased as 0.739 units. This rule can be generalized on the other variables of the model.

We can determine the effect of variables through Beta(s); we also compare the variables.

$\beta_1$  illustrates that relative contribution of education on inclination to superstitions is -0.11

$\beta_2$  illustrates that relative contribution of religiosity on inclination to superstitions is -0.10

$\beta_3$  illustrates that relative contribution of modernism on inclination to superstitions is -0.17

$\beta_4$  illustrates that relative contribution of fatalism on inclination to superstitions is 0.29

$\beta_5$  illustrates that relative contribution of first dimension of fatalism (belief in determinism) on inclination to superstitions is -0.36; it is the most Beta quantities in Regression analysis and shows the importance of this variable in changes of dependent variable.

$\beta_6$  illustrates that relative contribution of second dimension of fatalism (belief in lack of control) on inclination to superstitions is -0.123

$\beta_7$  illustrates that relative contribution of usage of multi-media on inclination to superstitions is -0.060

$\beta_8$  illustrates that relative contribution of socio-economic status on inclination to superstitions is -0.23

$\beta_9$  illustrates that relative contribution of second age on inclination to superstitions is 0.076

Direct and indirect effects of independent variables on inclination to superstitions

Table 5: direct and indirect effects of independent variables on inclination to superstitions

Independent variables	effect		Total
	direct	Indirect	
Fatalism	0/29	0/03	0/32
Gender	0/25	0/09	0/34
Modernism	-0/13	-	-0/13
Socio-economic status	-0/19	-0/08	-0/27
Religiosity	0/08	0/03	0/11
Multi-media	0/09	-0/02	0/07

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0/527	0/271	0/268

Among variables in Regression Equation, 6 independent variables have had significant effect on dependent variable. Among remaining variables in Regression Model, Fatalism, Gender, Socio-Economic Status have had the most significant effect on Inclination to Superstitions. It can explain 27% of Variance of Inclination to Superstitions through variance of linear combination of independent variables such as modernism, fatalism, religiosity, socio-economic status, multi-media and gender. The reasons of remaining changes are included complexity and multi-dimensionality of dependent variable (inclination to superstitions) and also not considering some variables which are effective on dependent variable.

#### 4. Discussions

At the following, you can see some conclusions of this study:

Inclination to superstitions in statistical population is less than supposed mean. In other words, parts of studied sample have inclined to superstitions, more or less. But, in sum, if we show the inclination to superstitions in a continuum, inclination to superstitions in studied sample is less than average on the continuum. It seems that this situation is so good. But, since there are no similar studies in this subject, we are unable to evaluate the situation as good or bad. We hope that there will be similar studies in the future and inclination to superstitions phenomenon will be analyzed better and more accurately.

The mean of inclination to superstitions in research sample in Isfahan (46.82) was less than research sample in villages of Southern Baraan (49.89); the mean of inclination to superstitions

in villages of Southern Baraan was less than research sample in villages of Upper Jarghuyeh (51.19). Mean difference of inclination to superstitions in Isfahan and villages of Southern Baraan and mean difference of inclination to superstitions in Isfahan and villages of Upper Jarghuyeh were significant in contrary with mean differences of villages of Southern Baraan and Upper Jarghuyeh.

Considering indices of development, the ranking of research location was Isfahan, villages of Southern Baraan and villages of Upper Jarghuyeh, respectively. According to Smith, Inclass and etc. the more development level, the less inclination to superstition. Our first hypothesis represented that inclination to superstitions in Isfahan was less than villages of Southern Baraan; inclination to superstitions in villages of Southern Baraan was less than villages of Upper Jarghuyeh. Our study confirmed above mentioned hypothesis.

Another findings of this research showed that inclination to superstitions in women was more than men. This finding is in parallel with most of the findings of similar researches. (Shahnooshi, 2003; zebb & Barbara, 2001; Peltzer, 2002; Griffiths & Bingham; 2003). Intentionally or unintentionally, women incline to superstitions more than men because they are less educated and their information level is less than men, they rely on their feeling more than men and incline more to follow tradition.

Findings show that there is a reverse relationship between education and inclination to superstitions. Previous researches such as Shahnooshi (2003), Ghaffari-Negad et al, (2003); Peltzer (2002) and Bukhari et al, (2002) confirmed this hypothesis. Education is the most important factor in increasing information. It can beware the people about unrealistic and irrational identity of superstitions. Therefore, the educated people have less inclination to superstitions.

There is a reverse relationship between socio-economic status and inclination to superstitions. Manheim, Cowlie, willen, Marx and etc believed that socio-economic status of people affect thought and behavior of them. Hantingone believes that inequality of opportunities affects behavior of different classes of the society as well as social attitudes of people (Hantingone, 1991. P: 82). People who are in higher social status are educated, they have more access to multi-media and etc.; therefore they will be captive of superstitious beliefs less than others and rationality and logic



have special place in their behaviors and thoughts.

Using of multi-media is one of variables which have reverse significant relationship with superstitions inclination. Inkles believes that people who use multi-media have newer attitudes. Vierner believes that every person or villages who have access to radio and journals, have newer point of views and are more developed. They accept newer roles fast in comparison with people who have not access to multi-media. (Vierner, 1978; p:145). Multi-media have significant role as Education and Training; they are able to change attitude of people against superstitions through necessary discussions, articles, movies and documentaries.

Fatalism and religiosity are among variables which have direct and significant relationship with inclination to superstitions. (Fatalism has strong relationship with superstitions but the relationship between religiosity and superstitions inclination is weak, relatively). Ragers believes that fatalism prevents people from accepting changes and reconstruction. Since, the spirit of accepting changes is necessary for not believing superstitions, people who believe in fatalism, incline to accepting superstitions more than others.

Modernism is among variables which have significant reverse with inclination to superstitions. In other words, modern person inclines to superstition less. Some experts such as Ingleharte, Smith and Inkles have recognized modernism as characteristics of Modern Person. Such a person inclines to science and is ready to accept new experiments. He has the talent of changing and creation. Obviously, such a person doesn't accept superstitions which are non-scientific and irrational. He/she always is ready to replace wrong thoughts with new and rational thoughts.

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