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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 is599. The total Literacy rate of this Diptatoli village is67.45%,out ofwhich74.03% 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 andtribal beliefsandpracticesinthevillageandmany of them areconsideredsuperstitions. Sumit Agarwal in his work *Superstition and Asset Markets* states

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that "the people start to believeinsuperstitionswhentheygetafeelingthathumansareatthemercyofnaturalelements. 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 denotesthe fear ofthe 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 bais. 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

Table1.1showingliteracyrateandnumberofpeoplebelievinginsuperstition

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

Table1. 2 showing illiteracyrateandnumberofpeoplebelievinginsuperstition

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Particulars	Sample Population	Illiterate Population of Sample	Devotee and Adherents	% of Adherents	Non-Adherents	%ofNon-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

Table1.3 Believersandnon-Believersofdifferentoccupations

Occupation	Totalno. ofFamilies	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

Table1.4 Showingresponsefordifferentsuperstitiousbehavior

Superstitiousbehavior	**NumberofResponse Fromthefamilies**	
1.Common superstition	**%–yes**	**%–No**
1. Sneezingduringthetimeofdeparture,people consider it Unlucky	82	18

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2.Eatingcurdbeforethestartofanyjob/exam/interviews Consideredauspicious	84	16
3.Notusingthebroomaftersunset	89	11
4.Notopeningthescissorswithoutcuttinganything	66	34
5.Notlookingat oneself final brokenmirror	83	17
6.Notcuttingnailsatnight	92	08
7. Hanging andUsefulnessoflemonandchiliesoutsidehouseabove doorremovesevilEye	96	04
8.NotwashinghaironTuesdayorThursday	72	28
9.Stoppingandwaitingto someoneelsetocrosswhilecat Crossesthe path	80	20
10. Women are not permitted to enter the kitchen or temples during menstruation / periods.	77	23
2.DeathSuperstition		
1. Dogcryingatnight indicating death	88	12
2. Eagleflyingoverahouseindicatingdeath	47	53
3.HealthSuperstition		
1. NotsleepingwithheadfacingNorth	79	21
2. Avoiddrinkingwaterwhilestanding	54	46
3. Sleepingunderthetreeduringnightleadstomental ill health	87	23
4. Notgivingbathtonewbornbaby,itlowersbodytemperature	72	38
5. A prevailing superstition holds that pregnant women should not step outside the house during an eclipse.	94	06
6. Drinkingmilkandeatingfishcausesskindiseases	71	29

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7. Crackingfingerscausesarthritis	80	20
8. Nottodrinkcoldwaterafter having a hottea	90	10

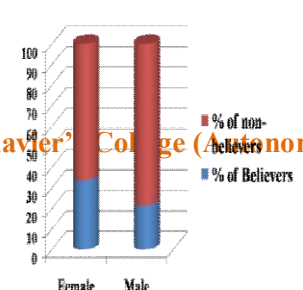
Source: Based on Field Survey data, Mahuadanr block, Latehar district, 2023

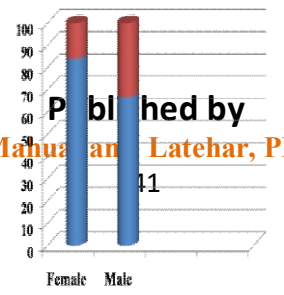
Details Description of the Study

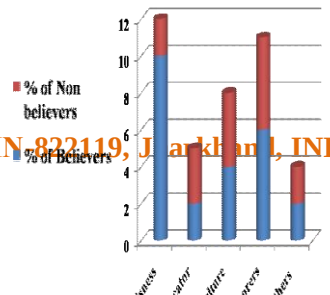
The current study and research work highlights the various superstitions and misconceptions and wrong perceptions practiced by the people of villagers. Mehak Gupta Grover, in her article *Blind Belief Is Dangerous*, aptly states that "God has endowed human beings with intellect, and it is our responsibility 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 truethat Indianculture, traditions and beliefs hold great value inthe societytherefore 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. Thereforeeducationandpublicpoliciesshould beaimedat thepromotionofrationalbeliefsto counter the superstitions.

The study being limitedtoo unparticular village has itsownlimitations. Thus, inordertohave better understanding, similar studies can be conducted in both rural and urban areas.







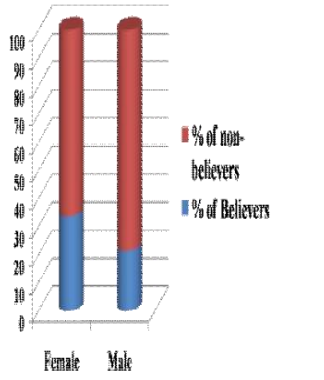
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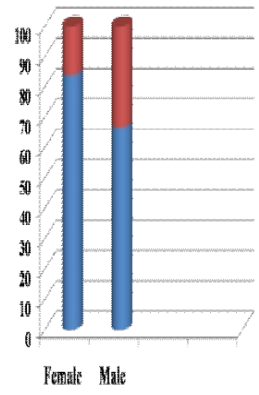
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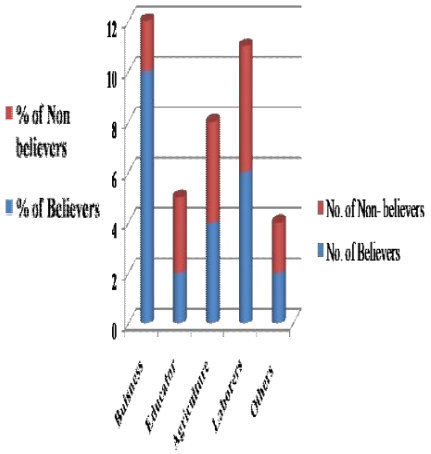
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Graph 1: Showing % of Believers and Non-believers among the literate group



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

- Studentsbothinschoolsandcollegesshouldbemadeawareofthewrongpractices prevailing in their society.
- Parentsshouldalsobemadeawareof suchsuperstitionswhichcouldimpactthelivesof children.
- Anti-superstitioncampaignshouldbeconductedintheruralareastohelppeople,develop a

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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 oursocietyasitnotonlyhindersourmentalandrationalgrowthbutitalsosetsplatformfor 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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