

Perception of Pakistani Population Regarding the Effects of Jinn, Evil Eye and Black Magic on Physical and Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the perception of patients presenting at outpatients clinic of a private hospital regarding the effects of Jinn, evil eye and black magic on physical and mental health.

Methodology: This was a descriptive, cross-sectional study conducted over a period of four months including 382 Participants. A validated questionnaire adapted on existing literature was used, consisting of 13 items. Participants were asked questions about their beliefs regarding the supernatural phenomenon, their effects on health and the preferred treating authority.

Results: Out of the respondents, 204 (53.4%) were male and 178 (46.6%) females with majority, 38.2%, in the age group of 18-30 years and belonging to urban area, 69.4%. A significant majority of respondents said that they believed in Jinn (68.8%), Jinn possession (46.4%), black magic (59.9%) and evil eye (60.6%). 44.9% attributed black magic as a cause of mental illness and 47.2% believed evil eye to cause physical illness. There was a difference in perception regarding evil eye between male and female respondents with a higher number of females (71.0%) believing in evil eye than males (52.7%), ($p=0.001$). Similarly, fewer respondents, 62.0%, in the age group 18-30 years said they believed in the existence of Jinn when compared with other age groups ($p=0.021$). Only 20.7% participants believed that doctors can treat health condition caused by Jinn.

Conclusion: There is a strong influence of religion on people's perceptions regarding health. There was also a common acceptance of the influence of these supernatural beings on one's physical and mental health. Gender and age were found to impact these notions. Subsequently, the treatment seeking patterns of the participants favored treatment by religious figure.

Keywords

Jinn, Evil eye, Black magic, Mental health.

Introduction

Muslims believe in the existence of three separate, but parallel, worlds: Mankind, Angels (messengers of God) and Jinn. Jinns are believed to be entities hidden from the human eye, so they can see the humans but are concealed from our view. Among the Muslim community, it is a commonly held belief that Jinn have the ability to cause both physical and mental harm by possession [1], which happens when an alien spirit enters and controls an individual [2]. Some Muslims also believe in black magic and evil eye [3].

According to a 2007 Gallup survey on 'Religious and Spiritual Beliefs', half of Pakistan's urban population believes that Black Magic is a plausible reality and Taweez Ganda (a kind of 'amulet') can be used to heal its ill effects. The other half disagrees. The survey, which was conducted in December 2006, revealed that 52% of the respondents expressed belief in Black Magic (Kala Jadoo) while 47% does not and a further 1% did not give any response. Similar results were observed in regard to Taweez Ganda; half of the respondents (49%) believe in it, whereas the other half (50%) does not [4].

A cross-sectional study conducted on Muslim community of Britain showed that majority of the respondents believed in the

existence of Jinn, black magic and evil eye. Moreover, over half of the respondents also believed that patients exhibiting signs of mental illness should be treated by both doctors and religious leaders [5]. The survey highlighted the need for clinicians to be aware of the supernatural beliefs of Muslim population to better understand the patients' perspective.

Various studies in Pakistani population show a significant population proportion had strong beliefs regarding the impact of supernatural forces on physical and mental health [6,7]. A study conducted among students in Punjab showed that over 30% respondents believed that causes of mental illness include Evil eye, Demonic possession and punishment from God [8]. It also showed that demographic background had a significant effect on the participants' beliefs. However, there is still a need to investigate how these beliefs or perception affect the patients' decision regarding medical treatment. The objective of this study is to assess the perception of patients presenting at the outpatient's clinics of Shifa International Hospital regarding the effects of Jinn, Evil eye and Black magic on physical and mental health. We also aimed to explore how these beliefs affect the patients' choice of treatment (medical or spiritual).

Methodology

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional study. The data was collected over a period of four months from outpatient clinics at Shifa International Hospital. All participants of age 18 years or older providing consent for the study were included, whereas non-Muslim participants were excluded from the study. Using WHO sample size calculator and taking 95% confidence level, 0.05 precision and 54000 target population, the required sample size came out to be 382.

Data was analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Qualitative variables are presented as frequency and percentage whereas mean and standard deviation is used for quantitative variables. Post stratification chi-square test was used to assess the association of demographic variables with participant's beliefs/perceptions. P-value of less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

Participants were explained the purpose of the study and those signing the consent form were provided the pre-structured study questionnaire. A designated research team member was designated to take participants' consent and answer any query.

The questionnaire was adapted based on existing literature [9] consisting of three sections. The first sections consist of demographic information, second regarding beliefs about Jinn, black magic and the evil eye and the last section included questions on the participants views on choice of treatment provider (doctor or spiritual/religious).

Results

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are given in Table 1. Out of the respondents, 204 (53.4%) were male and 178

(46.6%) females. Majority of the participants were married, 242 (51.7%). The participants belonged to different ethnic backgrounds with 35.0% from KPK, 32.5% from Punjab, 20.4% from Federal area and 6.4% belonged to other ethnicities (Sindhi, Balochi and Gilgiti). 265 (69.4%) participants belonged to urban area and 117 (30.6%) were from rural areas. The mean age of the participants was 36.2 ± 14.47 years with 38.2% in age group of 18-30 years, 26.3% in 30-40 years, 16.0 in 40-50 years and 19.5% in greater than 50 years. Regarding their socio-economic status, only 8.9% belonged to low income level with less than PKR 20,000 monthly income, whereas 75.1% were from middle income level and 15.8% from high income level. Majority of the participants had completed undergraduate level education 174 (45.5%).

Demographic characteristic		N	%
Gender	Male	204	53.4
	Female	178	46.6
Age group	18-30	146	38.2
	31-40	100	26.2
	41-50	61	16.0
	>50	75	19.6
Marital status	Married	242	63.4
	Un-married	140	36.6
Current residence	Rural	117	30.6
	Urban	265	69.4
Education level	Matric or below	118	30.9
	Intermediate - Undergraduate	174	45.5
	Graduate or higher	90	23.6
Income level (monthly income/ PKR)	<20,000	34	8.9
	20,000-50,000	287	75.1
	50,000 or above	61	16.0

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The responses of the survey participants regarding their beliefs in supernatural phenomena are given in Table 2. A significant majority of respondents said that they believed in Jinn (68.8%), Jinn possession (46.4%), black magic (59.9%) and evil eye (60.6%).

Questions	Yes		No		Maybe	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Do you believe in Jinn?	263	68.8	95	24.9	24	6.4
Do you believe in Jinn possession?	177	46.4	138	36.2	67	17.5
Do you believe in Black magic	229	59.9	113	29.7	40	10.5
Do you believe in Evil Eye?	231	60.6	104	27.3	42	10.9
Do you think Jinn can cause mental illness?	147	38.7	160	41.9	75	19.5
Do you think Jinn can cause physical illness?	131	34.3	163	42.8	85	22.4
Do you think Black magic can cause mental illness?	170	44.9	122	31.9	85	22.4
Do you think Black magic can cause physical illness?	169	44.3	125	32.8	88	22.9
Do you think Evil eye can cause mental illness?	161	42.1	148	38.8	73	19.1

Do you think Evil eye can cause physical illness?	180	47.1	130	34.1	72	18.8
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Table 2: Beliefs regarding supernatural and effect on health.

There was a difference in perception regarding evil eye between male and female respondents with a higher number of females 115 (71.0%) believing in evil eye than males 96 (52.7%), $p=0.001$. Similarly, fewer respondents, 62.0%, in the age group 18-30 years said they believed in the existence of Jinn when compared with other age groups; 78.7% in 30-40 years, 66.7% in 40-50 years and 73.4% in more than 50 years age group ($p=0.021$)

In response to the effect of supernatural phenomenon on physical health, 34.3% stated Jinn, 44.3% black magic and 47.1% evil eye. Similarly, in response to the cause of mental illness, 38.7% agreed to the involvement of Jinn, 44.9% black magic and 42.1% evil eye. There was no association of these beliefs with the respondent's demographic characteristics.

The answers regarding treatment of health issues believed to be caused by Jinn, black magic and evil eye are given in Table 3. Only 20.7% participants responded that doctors can treat health condition caused by Jinn. For the treatment of health condition associated with black magic and evil eye, treatment by a religious figure was preferred by most, 43.8% and 40.7% respectively. There was a difference in treatment seeking attitudes of participants from rural and urban areas. A higher number of respondents from rural area believed in the treatment by religious figure compared to those belonging to urban area as shown in Figure 1. 44 (42.7%) participants belonging to rural area chose religious figure when asked about who could treat illness caused by Jinn, compared to only 70 (34.0%) participants belonging to urban areas ($p=0.039$).

Questions	Doctor		Religious figure		Both	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Who can treat a health condition caused by Jinn?	79	20.7	141	36.9	162	42.4
Who can treat a health condition caused by Black Magic?	89	23.4	167	43.8	126	32.9
Who can treat a health condition caused by Evil Eye?	85	22.3	156	40.8	141	36.9

Table 3: Beliefs regarding treatment of health conditions associated with supernatural.

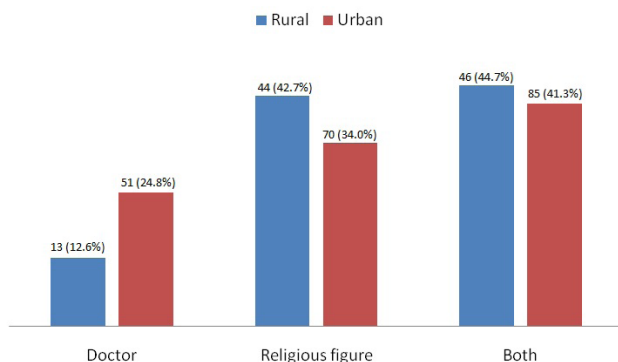


Figure 1: Who can treat illness caused by Jinn?

Discussion

Religion has a strong influence on the perception of health among Muslim population [10]. Multiple studies reporting results of data collected from both developed and under developed countries have shown that a significant proportion of general population holds beliefs regarding contribution of non-biomedical factors towards mental illness [11]. Results from the data collected reveal that a widespread belief in the existence of supernatural phenomenon likes Jinn, evil eye and black magic. This does not come as a surprise as there are many references to the world of unseen in Islamic literature. Some people regard belief in the existence of Jinn to be important in Islamic faith.

Our study showed that a greater number of females believed in evil eye than males. This is consistent with the results reported by Khalifa et. al and Mullick et. al. Similarly, the younger population, particularly in the age group of 18-30 years, was less likely to believe in the existence and influence of the supernatural beings. Similar results are published in Gallup survey of sub-Saharan Africa which reported that participants of younger age were less likely to believe in witchcraft and magic [12].

We also explored the treatment seeking attitudes of the respondents. Very few respondents reported doctors as the preferred treating authority when a health condition was suspected to be caused by Jinn, evil eye or black magic. Majority of the participants chose religious figure or both doctors and religious figure to seek treatment when suspecting illness of supernatural etiology. This is also comparable to the findings reported by Khalifa et. al. previously [3].

Another aspect of our study was to investigate the impact of socio-economic status of the participants on their beliefs. Our results did not reveal any statistically significant difference in the perception of people from different income groups. However, there was a significant difference in the perception of respondents living in rural and urban areas.

We found that people from rural areas were more likely to seek help from religious figures for the treatment of illness suspected to be caused by Jinn. These findings also highlight the health access disparity in the rural areas increasing the tendency of the inhabitants to seek treatment from non-medical figures.

Conclusion

The results of this study reveal a widespread belief in supernatural beings among the Pakistani population. There is a strong influence of religion on people's perceptions regarding health. There was also a common acceptance of the influence of these supernatural beings on one's physical and mental health. Gender and age were also found to impact these notions. Subsequently, the treatment seeking patterns of the participants also favored treatment by religious figure. There is a need for further research to thoroughly explore the factors influencing these perceptions and the impact they have on the overall health of individuals.

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