

How Superstitious Are Academicians?

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ABSTRACT Superstitions have existed from the primeval era until now and give shape to human behaviors. These beliefs arise out of some socio-cultural, socio-economic, and psychological factors that affect people in different ways in terms of their age, education and cultural gains. Keeping this in mind, it is aimed to search superstitious beliefs of academicians, the relation between their tendency to these beliefs and some socio-demographic features and how the cultural environment affects their point of view in this paper. The research is conducted between July 2014 and August 2014 in Abant Izzet Baysal University Science and Literature Faculty. At the end of the research it is found out that academicians have different superstitious beliefs related to their gender and cultural background.

INTRODUCTION

People come across superstitions in different ways in their daily lives. Superstitions affect people's lives without any distinction, either because of their education level or their ethnic background and appear in different ways in every society. Visiting shrines and tilts come into prominence to overcome problems in daily lives in Turkey, whereas knocking on wood is thought to bring good luck and passing under a ladder brings bad luck in America (Can et al. 2011; Henriata 1989; Meydan 2013). In other words, the existing culture of the society affects their superstitious beliefs. Moreover, the psychological state, socio-cultural and socio-economic features are also the factors affecting emergence of superstitions in the society.

Apart from these, other factors that can be the source of superstitions could be curiosity, fear, anxiety and despair (Blum and Blum 1974; Ulu 2012). For example, expressions such as, "If you take soup or scissors from another person's hand, distention rises." or "You will have an accident if a black cat passes in front of you." show that there is a causal relation between the negative situation and predicted event. Meanwhile, willingness to learn the events beforehand increases the fear in people regarding the possibil-

ity of it happening in the future. Therefore, people try to ease themselves by going to the mediums and fortune-tellers to have their fortune's told, or going to shrines or tilts (Arslan 2005; Dundes 1961; Lorie 1992; Vyse 2013).

The term used to reject different beliefs is solecistic and invalid, or to refer to deviant and extreme partisanship in a religion. For example, in the West the term superstition was used to exclude other religions in the beginning but afterwards it was used in terms of beliefs and attitudes alien to the principles of Christianity. Whereas in Turkey the term is used as a normative articulation including beliefs and attitudes alien to the religion. In this respect, the term superstition gives the impression that it does not have an objective usage (Arslan 2005; Karaca 2001). Hence, it stands out and some researchers tend to use other terms instead of the term superstition. While Eren (2013) and Tatlıođlu (2000) mention that *folk religion* can be used instead of the term, Kaneko preferred to use *folk observance* as he thought that the term *superstition* has some pejorative meanings (Kaneko 1990).

However, there are some researchers who think that a distinction must be made between the terms *folk religion* and *superstition*. To give an example, Gustave Mensching asserts that folk religion settled in high typological and organized religion fields can be handled as a part of primitive religions. Indicating that it is quite different from the term superstition, which does not have any holy characteristics and is based mainly on magical descriptions, he also declares that there should be a strict distinction between these terms

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(Mensching 2004). As a matter of fact, folk religions and customs are general terms as that they include all folk traditions and customs (Arslan 2005). Therefore, keeping a nuance of difference between superstitions and folk religions, the researchers have chosen to use the term *superstition* in this paper.

Some researches on superstitions have been done both in other societies and Turkey. Some variables have been interrogated and different conclusions have been reached. In this research paper, an interview was conducted with academicians and their ideas on superstitions were interrogated. Cultural factors lying under these beliefs were searched and some results acquired.

Superstitions

It is difficult to make a general description of the term superstition, which is widely seen in the society. The reason for this situation is that phenomena accepted as normal and common in one society may be accepted as abnormal and unreasoning in another one (Kose 2009). To make a description of the term anyway, superstitions are beliefs that cannot be explained logically and that are not accepted by both science and valid religion (Eren 2013; Gunduz 1998; Olguner 1992). In other words, superstition means believing in unreal and illogical things (Damish et al. 2010; Gilovich 1991; Ulu 2012).

Superstitions dates back to very old times and are widely believed nowadays though science and technology have improved just as rapidly. It is possible to see the traces of superstitious beliefs in daily lives. However, as a result of differences in lifestyles and cultural backgrounds superstitious, beliefs change from one society to another (Ozguven 2013; Ulu 2012).

Different factors affect the emergence of superstitions. Some of these factors are social and natural. Therefore, it is possible to say superstitions are in relation with the social structure and are caused by this structure. As a matter of fact, people have some superstitions based in the frame of their social belongings. Meanwhile, such cultural features as politics, economy and morality, have an important functions to develop superstitious beliefs in a society. To give an example in Christianity, the number 13 is thought to bring bad luck, whereas spreading dishwater outside in the evening is avoided by Islam (Aslan 2004; Kose 2009).

Regardless of whatever illogical superstitions may be seen in the society, these are valid nearly in all eras. People respect these beliefs that are considered to be heritage from their ancestors in every phase of their lives. For example, both Romanians and Turks believe the right side to be good and left side as bad from old ages. As Islam says that right side is good for people, it is possible to say that the reason behind Turks idea comes from their Islamic beliefs (Ulu 2012). Apart from this idea, superstitions are thought to be caused by the people conditioning themselves. To give an example, if a student thinks that s/he is successful thanks to the pencil that s/he has used that day, s/he may have a tendency to use this pencil in every exam s/he sits for. Or if a person thinks that bad things occur to him/her because of the clothes s/he is wearing that day, s/he may have a tendency not to wear those clothes again (Ayhan and Yazar 2005; Matute 1995).

Another factor lying behind the sources of superstitions is trying to teach something by building fear or in order to save them (Ulu 2012; Saenko 2004). For example, cutting nails at night is thought to bring bad luck. However, the main reason for this idea dates back to the times when there was no electricity. As it was thought that people might harm themselves under candlelight, they tried to prevent them by building this fear of bad luck. In the same perspective, opening an umbrella inside the home is also thought to be unlucky. The main reason for this idea is to prevent some items from breaking. Apart from these social and natural factors, there are some psychological factors in the source of superstitious beliefs. In this sense, the people's willingness to learn about the future, get rid of unclear conditions, the feelings of fear, despair and stress, to feel more secure, to reach their aims and to get rid of responsibility can be counted as basic sources of superstitious beliefs (Arslan 2005; Vyse 2013; Damish et al. 2010; Dundes 1961; Gilovich 1991; Kose 2009; Watt and Wiseman 2004).

Therefore, as a first step for the research, the types superstitious beliefs are focused on and five titles are determined. Some short information is given in the following parts.

Evil Eye

The term evil eye is called *nazar* in Turkish. This word comes from Arabic originally and it is

a social product widely seen from the West to the East in the world. It means *eyeing* or *glance* in both languages. Evil eye has different connotations, one of which means being affected by the evil eye. In a different folk belief the term evil eye means a potential, which harms people, children, pets and objects caused by the harmful power of some people's glances (Kusat 2003; Reminick 1974; Thomsen 1992; Yurtbas 2013). In folk religion it means being affected, distracted or touched by an evil eye (Baykal Ertem 2009; Ciblak 2004; Er 2005). It is more possible for newly born babies, children, successful, handsome men or beautiful women to be affected by evil eye. However, any creature or object may be affected by an evil eye (McCartney 1992; Sahin 2011).

Another belief about the evil eye is that some psychological and physical changes are seen in a person affected by it. Physical changes may be seen as dizziness, nausea, blurred vision, clumsiness and so on. As for psychological changes, waking up with a start, habit spasm, fatigue, depression and stress can be counted (Baykal Ertem 2009; Ciblak 2004; Reminick 1974).

In order to get rid of and prevent these negative effects of the evil eye, people resort to such ways as wearing amulets, keeping tortoise shell or seashells at home, praying, and casting lead. However, precautions against the evil eye differ from society to society (Baykal 2009; Ciblak 2004; Er 2005). For example, Turks who see evil eye as a part of their lives head for religion and try to keep it out of their lives. Though Islam prohibits using objects as a precaution, Turks go on wearing a blue bead, casting lead and burning *harmal* seeds (Kayabasi and Yanar 2013). Jewish people try to heal a person affected by the evil eye with a special technique. They put seven pieces of burning wood in a glass of water and pray as "People cried Moses. Then the fire went away." Finally they give this glass of water to the person to drink. Through this they think that the person will be healed (Brav 1992).

Magic

Malinowski (2000) defines magic as a series of actions put through as a tool of an aim from a sociological point of view. Magic, whose content is humanistic, confronts people with humanistic activities and situations, hunting, agriculture, fishing, love games, illness and death. From a different viewpoint, magic explained as a charm processes aiming at an enemy, hunting animals

or pain, illness, death, natural events that primitive religions cannot explain and therefore trying to affect their normal process (Asimgil 1999; Uygur 2013). Magic tradition played a very important role in primitive communities and focused on cult with magic rites (Malinowski 2000).

Magic has taken hold of different societies not only in primitive ages but also in different ages. For example, in Babel where social life is built upon magic for every type of facility, including trading, art, religion, war and fighting is provided with magic. In addition to Babel it is known that some famous magicians lived in such different societies as Egypt, Iran, China, India, Greece and Rome (Asimgil 1999).

Different Turkish societies have also dealt with magic. In Ancient Turkish societies the magicians were called *kam* and they were believed to get in touch with spirits, gods and genies, and to know what people have in their minds and to give news about the future. Even though Islam refers to magic amongst one of the great sins, Turks have carried on with magic for some small changes (Asimgil 1999).

As can be understood clearly from the definition of the term magic, it has grown out of the people's aspiration to get everything they want (Asimgil 1999; Gunay 2002). Because people care about their benefits so much and interfere in the events, a strict division should be made between religion and magic (Tambiah 2002; Vyse 2013). In other words, as magic does not deal with the ones that belong to god, magic is not accepted in other religions. Even the magic done as a part of religious life is not taken kindly (Akkaya 2002).

Fortune-telling

The term fortune-telling is defined as the art of putting forth people's hidden features, letting them know about the future and unknown with some special techniques in the Islam encyclopedia (Aydin 1995). Fortune-telling is the job to make a prediction with some techniques and vehicles and to make interpretations about the present and the future (Asimgil 1999). As people are quite diligent about understanding and solving the future, fortune-telling has affected nearly all societies in terms of their cultural property and religion. Fortune-telling is a primarily social and then individual phenomenon because of the fact that its interlocutors come from different phases of the society (Sumbullu 2010).

In other words, the people's willingness to be informed about the future and to minimize the negativity has resulted in transforming beans, scapula, fire, water, birds' flight and holy books into tools of prophecy. In this sense, there are different types of fortune-telling and these change from one society to another (Gultekin 2014; Sumbullu 2010). For example, fortune-telling has been passed to Turkish culture from Shamanism. Turks used scapulas and astragaluses of sheep, goat, horse, cattle, cowpat, bean, pea, fire, arrow and bow as tools of fortune-telling (Sumbullu 2010).

Fortune-telling has become a part of popular culture nowadays. However, there are some changes in the context, technique, structure and place of fortune-telling in the course of time. Fortune-telling has been moved to the cities with instant, accessible places reached by mass population to the virtual environment and it has turned into a daily, casual, tidbits, belvedere practice. In this sense, fortune-telling has turned into a trading tool and fortune-telling cafes, fortune-telling science centers, and fortune-telling consultations have opened in highly populated cities and fortune-telling is now carried out by professionals. Moreover, with the improvements in technology it has turned into an activity on the Internet and via telephone (Gungor 2005).

Horoscopes

Horoscopes used as a type of fortune-telling method was formed by looking at the sky to learn what people wondered about themselves. When positive sciences began to develop in the West, horoscopes lost their significance. However, horoscopes have gained significance again with their popular meaning today. Their daily, weekly, monthly or yearly explanations are printed in newspapers, and magazines. Moreover, astrology departments have been opened at some universities (Aphok and Tobin 1990; Snyder 1974).

Luck and Bad Luck

The terms luck and bad luck are closely related to superstitions. They are interpreted according to the results of superstitious believes. Therefore, luck is used to define superstitions whose results are positive whereas bad luck is used to define superstitions whose results are negative. From this point of view, people attribute mean-

ings to objects, animals, dates and so on as they bring good or bad luck. For example, in America seeing a black cat and the number 13 are thought to bring bad luck. In this sense, people have a tendency to give shapes to their lives according to their superstitious believes. Apart from these such actions as wearing amulets or knocking on wood are thought to bring good luck and prevent people from danger (Wiseman and Watt 2004). In China, the number 8 and the color red are thought to bring luck. Therefore, the China Bank was opened on August 8th, 1988. However, the number 4 and the color black are thought to bring bad luck. So the Chinese do not have a 4th floor in any of their buildings (Ozguven 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Aim and Importance of the Research

Religions and traditions are the situations that are faced with frequently in social life. Rituals, understandings and ceremonies that occur are being accepted and changed in different geographies (Sagir 2012). When searched more in detail about superstitions, it is clearly seen that there are different superstitious believes in different cultures.

At this point when Turkish literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are some important studies in terms of their quality and quantity. These studies are variable. Some of them are analyzed by such disciplines as sociology, folk sciences, anthropology, religion and philosophy with their special methods. Moreover, some master theses are conducted on this subject. Some researches especially focus on superstitious believes of certain provincials (city, countryside and village). The studies on visiting places, rituals, and mythology are closely related with studies on superstitions. Therefore, taking all articles and books into account it can be said for sure that the literature is quite wide (Eren 2013). In this research the relationship between superstitions and academicians' socio-demographic features and the places they live in will be analyzed with the help of the questions arising in the theoretical background section. Therefore, this research hopes to help with the interpretations of the field's questions and to contribute to the literature by holding a light for the future studies (Orucu and Simsek 2011).

This study is built upon three important titles. First of all, some short descriptions about superstitions and their social reflections are given in the study, which focus on superstitious believes. In the form of interviews and readings, some important titles (evil eye, magic, fortunetelling, horoscopes and luck and bad luck) are specified and explained in detail. In the second part of the study, the methodology of the research is explained and finally the results are analyzed with a sociological point of view.

The aim of the research is to analyze the relationship between academicians' superstitious believes and demographic variables and cultural backgrounds. There are some researches about superstitions that affect all societies widely. Conducting the research with academicians will help gain a different point of view. The sample of the research comprises of people who are highly educated. In this way the lack of trying to explain human behaviors just by taking education into account is mentioned and it is aimed to show how cultural factors can be affective here.

Universe and Sample

Before starting the research, all the academic staff working in July-August 2014 in the university was reached out to. As the number was quite high, the universe of the research was narrowed. While narrowing the universe, the faculties were found. From this point of view, the research was narrowed to the Science and Literature Faculty because this faculty consists of both numerical and linguistic departments and it is easy for the researchers to reach them. Thus, the data was collected in July-August 2014 and 20 academicians working in the Science and Literature Faculty were interviewed.

Collection and Analysis of Data

This study comes out of the question, "*Do demographic variables and cultural backgrounds have an effect on superstitious beliefs?*" Starting from this point of view, literature was scanned and the sources directly or indirectly related with the topic were searched in the first step. Books and works of religion, psychology and sociology written on this subject were the first sources looked at.

The types of superstitious beliefs were determined after a pilot study was done with the

academicians. Initially, the superstitions' names repeated most by the academicians during interviews were chosen and five titles were determined. Thus a shape was given to the research.

After theoretical explanations, the results of the interviews are held in the study. The data was analyzed using the *Categorical-Content Perspective Technique*. In this sense, the data was collected according to interview questions and this data was turned into written text by the making necessary readings. Then the problems of the research and the data collected under the titles determined by the theoretical frame were categorized. These categorized texts were read repeatedly and subtexts and themes were determined and sorted. The expressions of 20 academicians and subtitles were assessed altogether and as a whole. Which expression belongs to whom was indicated with abbreviations in the text. The women were called and sorted as I.W.1, 2, 3 or *interviewed women 1, 2, 3*, whereas the men were called and sorted as I.M.1, 2, 3 or *interviewed men 1, 2, 3* and so on (Lieblich and Tuval 1998 quoted by: Kolukirik 2004).

The data was collected using the interview technique. The interviews took nearly 30 minutes and all interviews were done in each of the academician's office. The participants were voluntary, which was the main principle for the data collection process and the academicians who did not want to take part in the research were not forced. The interviewees were informed about the aim of the project beforehand. Validity and credibility were ascertained with a pilot study that was carried out with 5 academicians before the field research. Ipek Beyza Altiparmak and Gulcin Aktas did the interviews themselves.

FINDINGS

Socio-demographic Features

Superstitions can easily affect people from each part of the society. However, some groups of people are more prone to having superstitious beliefs and live accordingly. For example, some researches show that women have a tendency to believe in superstitions more than men. Moreover, in the course of time men believe less in superstitions whereas women never change their ideas about the topic (Wagner 1928).

When the relationship between superstitious beliefs and age factor is analyzed, the results are

quite variable. Some young people have a tendency to believe in one type of superstition more whereas some old people have a tendency to believe in another type of superstition more (Kose 2009). As Wagner mentioned in his study, young people are more prone to believe in irrational things than old people (Wagner 1928).

As mentioned before, this paper is a sociological study that focuses on superstitious beliefs of academicians. In the first step of the research analysis part, the socio-demographic features of the academicians were found out. In this sense, the interviews were conducted with 10 women and 10 men academicians. When the age groups are analyzed, it is seen that 9 academicians are between 20 and 30 years old, 5 academicians are between 31 and 40, and 6 academicians are between 41 and 50. The average age of the academicians is intensified between 20 and 30 years old. As for the places they were brought up, it is seen that 5 people were brought up in cities, 10 people were brought up in counties and the rest 5 people were brought up in villages. Therefore, it can be said most of the interviewees were brought up in less populated rural areas. When it comes to the statuses of the interviewees, 2 people are professors, 3 people are associate professors, 5 people are assistant professors, 1 person is prelector and the rest 9 people are research assistants. Half of these academicians work in numerical departments and the other half of these academicians work in linguistic departments.

Attitudes about Superstitions

Evil Eye

When people could not find solutions to their failures in social and technological relations and biological problems, they thought these all must be caused by supernatural powers or other objects. Therefore, they produced the terms evil eye, magic, fortune-telling, horoscopes and luck and bad luck (Baykal Ertem 2009). To give an example, the belief in the evil eye dates back to very old ages. Such that the evil eye term was encountered in the tablet remained from Sumerians. Thus, it is among the predictions that belief in the evil eye exists for more than five thousand years (Langdon 1992).

Even today, the evil eye is a ritual that is widely believed and some expressions are uttered on.

When it comes to the interviewees' attitudes towards evil eye, it is found out that 17 people believe in it while the rest 3 do not. Most of them say that their families are highly effective in terms of their belief in evil eye.

I.W.1 "I believe in evil eye. One of neighbors is told to have an evil eye. One day I encountered that woman. While I was getting on the car, I hurt my finger. Then I thought that I was touched by the evil eye because of that woman."

I.M.7 "If some people say good things about my car or me, the amulet falls and is broken without any reason. Or if they say that my T-shirt is quite nice, I spill tea or coffee on it."

I.M.6 "When I am affected by evil eye, I become very clumsy. I fall and so on. And when people say some good things about my kid, he becomes very ill the other day."

It is found that the department of the academicians also affects their ideas on evil eye. For example, the interviewees in the numerical departments explain evil eye as an energy or wave.

I.M.5 "Every person has their own magnetic wave. Every magnetic wave has an ability to affect another magnetic wave. This may have good and bad results. And people have an ability to affect other people with their eyes. Therefore I believe in evil eye."

I.M.3 "In my opinion evil eye is directly related with negative energy."

I.W.6 "I don't believe in evil eye as people explain but I believe in the power of energy."

I.M.8 "It affects the causality of life with unexpected, unrelated events. People are affected by evil eye if other people do not have positive feelings about you. I mean they are giving negative energy to you."

I.W.8 "Evil eye exists as sending out positive and negative energy. If a person gives out negative energy, people around him or her are touched by evil eye."

When interviewees are asked if they do anything to protect themselves from evil eye, 6 people said that they do not do any special thing. However, the rest 14 people said that they wear amulets, pray, have lead cast, have salt spilt over them, burn *harmal* seeds or eat consecrated nigella.

I.W.3 "I pray. Or I have salt split over me."

I.W.1 "People burn harmal seeds in our village. Then the person who is affected by evil eye smells the smoke. I wear amulets. I also believe

that casting lead prevents people from evil eye. Therefore I would like to have lead cast if I can find a person who can do it.”

I.W.7 “I apply to motivating things. I pray, have lead cast. I like all these because they all make me feel relaxed psychologically. However I cannot say that they are all logical to do.”

I.M.5 “The only thing I do is to pray to get rid of evil eye. I have some prayers to read when I am affected by evil eye. I believe that this is a quite effective way. Because prayers also have some effects as music does. There are some scientific researches on this topic. They did this research on water. First of all they made some water listen to rock music, classic music and Quran. They observed some crystallization on water and made interpretations about it.”

I.W.9 “Blue beads do not have any use. I searched it. You can use turquoise stone. It absorbs negative energy”

Magic

Some treatments called magic in public are applied in order to affect potentials beliefs to appear in nature, to change the order of events, to come across with good events and get rid of bad events. Magic is widely believed, however not so much as evil eye. Interviewees insist that there are some people around them believing in magic. 16 people mentioned that there are people around them believing in magic while 4 people mentioned that there aren't. When academicians are asked whether they believe or not, half of them said that they believe in magic while the rest said that they don't. The ones who believe in magic gave some examples about their own families. From this point of view, it can be argued that people who were brought up in rural areas believe more in magic.

I.M.5 “We live in a small village. Because of this I have heard lots of things about magic. I mean rubbing bacon on the doors or hiding mascots somewhere at home.”

I.W.3 “Magic is a confusing subject for me. Sometimes, I think that people do magic with some trading concerns. However, sometimes, some events that I encounter with make me feel confused about whether magic may exist. For example, my aunt went to a hodja for some reason one day. He told her that someone did magic and would come to her house to get rid of magic. When he came home he found a shell

with something in it. I find these event a bit strange, in fact.”

I.M.6 “In Black Sea Region, people do magic frequently. They do it on every purpose including love affairs, breaking-up, and marriage and so on.”

I.W.6 “In the city I lived before I moved here, people were keen on magic. Even academicians were dealing with magic.”

I.W.10 “I was brought up in a small city. People were doing magic for everything. They were writing mascots for breaking-up.”

Fortune-telling

These days fortune-telling takes different shapes. People mostly go to a fortune teller in order to learn about their future and the things that they wonder about. In this study, it is found out that going to a fortune teller and believing in fortune-telling is an important ritual for some academicians. 4 people said that they have never gone to a fortune teller in their lives while the rest 16 said that they have. When they are asked about what they wonder most when they go to fortune tellers, 10 people said that they wonder most about their jobs. The rest of them wonder about their health, family or love affairs. From this point of view it can be argued that the academicians worry and wonder most about their jobs in their lives.

I.W.9 “I believe in fortune-telling. I have my fortune told twice in a day.”

I.W.7 “I have my fortune told. In my opinion fortune-telling resembles thematic perception test. In psychology you look at some ink stains. You tell what you think about the stains according to your feelings that time. It is something like selective perception. Fortune-telling is just like this.”

I.W.10 “I like having my fortune told. I have my fortune told everyday just like a tradition. I am interested in coffee fortune-telling. But I was interested in tarot cards in the past. I never visit a fortune-teller. However, people who are kind-hearted can tell one's fortune very well. For example, my mum is quite good at fortune-telling.”

I.M.8 “I rarely have my fortune told. Just for fun.”

Horoscopes

Horoscopes are another an important subject among academicians because they describe

personal features and warn people about their future to take some precautions beforehand. Academicians believe in horoscopes because they give some information about people's personal features. All interviewees mentioned that they believe in horoscopes. They also added that they believe in horoscopes because they are based on science and date back to very ancient times. Half of them said that they read horoscope analysis regularly while half of them sometimes read it.

I.M.9 "I believe that horoscopes affect personal features. They are based on science. They exist from the very early times. I have also read about horoscopes in old written texts."

I.W.10 "I absolutely believe that horoscopes affect personal features. But rising sign is also important. I mainly read yearly horoscope analysis but I sometimes read monthly analysis, too."

I.M.10 "I absolutely believe in that subject. Because it is a magnetic event too. Planets have gravity force just like the moon does. The moon's position always changes. The earth's position always changes in the universe. Suppose that you were born in September. The baby who was born in July is exposed to different cosmic spaces from the baby who was born in September. I believe that these cosmic spaces have a direct effect on people."

I.M.1 "I know my own horoscope and I think I have the same features with my horoscope."

I.M.9 "I love reading horoscope analysis. I read them regularly."

Luck and Bad Luck

Luck and bad luck can be explained as the attitudes, which are built by negative and positive events that occur repeatedly in life. Among the interviewees, 8 people said that they have some objects and events they believe to bring luck to them. However, 12 people mentioned that they do not believe in such things. These people explained their situations in different ways.

I.W.6 "My son is my luck. And the numbers 8 and 26 always repeat in my life. Therefore these numbers make me feel better."

I.M.9 "I don't believe that anything brings me good luck."

I.M.7 "I have got a lucky pencil. I keep it at home. I pass every exam that I sit for with my pencil."

I.M.8 "I have got a lucky pencil. I can solve every problem with it. My Fenerbahçe uniform is also lucky for me."

I.M.2 "I used to wear a band in the matches. However I do not wear any more. Therefore I can say that I don't have lucky items."

I.W.10 "I bought a necklace with an amulet on it. Maybe to protect myself from evil eye but I love carrying it. When pigeons come, I feel that some good events will happen."

6 people answered the question, "Do you have any unlucky events or things in your life?" affirmatively. The rest 14 people said that they do not have any beliefs like this. However, this title is less favorable than other superstitious beliefs among academicians.

I.W.10 "People sort lots of events that will bring bad luck. Cutting your nail at night, chewing gum or sitting on threshold. I don't cut my nails at night. But I do not care about the others. In my opinion some people bring back luck because of their energy."

I.M.2 "When I encounter the events that are thought to bring bad luck in public, I think whether it will bring bad luck or not. Other than I do not have any special ideas."

I.W.6 "I think some people bring bad luck. Negative and judging people make me feel that they will bring bad luck that day."

I.M.7 "No. Whenever I face negative events, I put my clothes that I am wearing that day into waste bin in order not to remind me of that bad day again and again."

I.W.4 "My mum has left me lots of these ideas. So I am quite afraid of them. As I do not know spiritual sides of them, I hesitate. I guess my mum's subconscious is settled in my mind."

DISCUSSION

Superstitious beliefs and behaviors, which do not fit in the society's knowledge and understanding partially, are seen as meaningless but help people psychologically take their place as a part of popular culture in modern society. In this sense they are the acceptances of people's minds produced by such feelings as fear, missing, curiosity and despair. These beliefs can be seen in all parts of the society with slight differences (Kose 2009).

The analysis of data shows that women are more prone to believe in superstitions when compared to men. In the same way, Wiseman and Watt (2004) worked on the people's superstitious beliefs with different variables. He found that women have more superstitious beliefs than

men when he analyzed the topic on gender variable.

Another finding of the research is that people who are raised in rural areas have more superstitious beliefs than the others. Wagner's work on this idea supports these findings. Wagner (1928) did his research on high school students living in rural areas and cities. According to the results of the study, although both groups were at the same level of education, the students living in rural areas had more superstitious beliefs compared to the students living in cities. It can be concluded that even if people have the same level of education, their cultural background affect them in terms of their superstitious beliefs. In this research most of the interviewees were brought up in rural areas and they had a license degree later. Therefore, their beliefs are quite affected by the place they were brought up.

The attitudes of people towards superstitions are also analyzed according to the variable education. There are two different points of view in science world on this idea. The first one says that as academicians are highly educated and dealing with positive sciences, they are expected to not to have any superstitious beliefs. The other one says that even scientists may develop such beliefs (Kose 2009). According to the recent study, it is possible to say that scientists working in Abant İzzet Baysal University highly believe in superstitious beliefs. At this point it can be concluded that although these academicians are dealing with positive sciences, their behaviors and beliefs are affected by their socio-cultural features.

CONCLUSION

There are different types of superstitious beliefs in public life. These beliefs are interpreted in different ways by different individuals. Starting from this point of view, how education level and cultural background of people affect their superstitious beliefs are analyzed. The research shows that academicians believe in superstitions. Another result is that although they have the same education level, cultural backgrounds of the academicians affect the strength of their belief in superstitions. Meanwhile, the idea that women and people grown up in rural areas are more prone to believe in superstitions are among the other results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the study such recommendations as sorted below can be made:

1. The research can be applied on different groups of people by using different research techniques.
2. A study researching different points of view can be made by taking the gender into consideration.
3. Research area can be narrowed by concentrating on a micro subject. For example, only magic, evil eye and so on.

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