

Belief in Black Magic Among the Young Adults: Does Personality and Religion Matters?

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between belief in black magic and personality traits concerning religion, as well as to examine mean differences between Muslims and non-Muslims on this variable. Personality traits were operationalised as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design and a convenience sampling technique to collect data from 84 participants (both males and females, including Muslims and non-Muslims) aged 18 to 30 years. Two instruments were utilised: the Black Magic Belief Scale and the Big Five Inventory (BFI). The correlational analysis revealed that only extroversion and openness had a positive and significant relationship with Belief in Black Magic. Further analysis revealed significant mean differences between Muslims and non-Muslims for scores on the Belief in Black Magic. The study concluded with comprehensive implications.

Keywords: Black Magic, Personality Traits, Religion, Muslims, Non-Muslims.

Introduction

Belief in Black Magic is the notion that some individuals can harness supernatural powers to inflict harm, control others, or influence events in a negative manner (Chireau, 2003; Toulassi, 2025). This belief has been prevalent for thousands of years in various cultures worldwide (Jacob, 2019). People often associate black magic with witches, curses, spells, evil spirits, or rituals meant to bring bad luck. For example, in some communities, if a person suddenly falls ill or experiences repeated misfortunes, others may believe it is the result of a curse. A common superstition is that black cats bring bad luck if they cross one's path (Mikhnin, 2015).

Cultural traditions, personal experiences, and religious views often shape belief in black magic. In some religions, such as Islam and Christianity, black magic is strictly forbidden and considered sinful (Chireau, 1997; Mohyuddin & Rehman, 2015). Even today, belief in black magic remains common. Many people turn to spiritual healers or religious leaders to remove curses or protect themselves from harm (Naz & Aslam, 2023). While science does not support the existence of supernatural powers, belief in black magic continues to influence how people explain misfortunes and respond to them (Subbotsky, 2010).

Beliefs about supernatural forces, particularly black magic and jinn possession, continue to shape perceptions of mental illness in South Asian societies. Studies highlight that religion and

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demographic factors significantly influence these interpretations, with individuals often attributing psychological distress to spiritual or mystical causes rather than clinical explanations (Ayub, 2021). Research further shows that cultural narratives and religious practices reinforce these beliefs, especially in Muslim-majority contexts, where supernatural explanations remain socially validated. Conversely, individuals identifying as non-religious are more likely to attribute such behaviours to mental illness, reflecting the intersection of cultural, religious, and psychological perspectives.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of cultural competency in healthcare, often framed within the context of the knowledge, skills, and awareness model. Studies examining Islamic, Hindu, and African perspectives reveal that illness is frequently explained through spiritual forces, including black magic, spirit possession, or the influence of supernatural beings. While these beliefs remain central within cultural frameworks, they are often marginalised in mainstream psychology. This marginalisation has fuelled debates about whether distinct frameworks, such as Islamic, Hindu, or African psychology, are needed. Scholars emphasise the importance of integrating cultural beliefs, including those related to magic, into healthcare teaching, research, and practice (Laher, 2014).

Belief systems, such as black magic, reflect human attempts to explain and influence life experiences beyond ordinary understanding (Stein et al., 2024). Research on the Big Five personality traits about belief in the paranormal is limited and shows mixed results. Some evidence suggests a relationship between paranormal belief, neuroticism, and extraversion (Thalbourne & Delin, 1994).

The Latin word *persona* originally referred to the theatrical masks actors wore to assume roles or conceal their identities (Sollod & Monte, 2008). Personality refers to the distinct patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that define an individual across different contexts. Both biological and environmental factors—such as genetics, upbringing, culture, and personal experiences—shape personality. According to trait theory, personality consists of enduring traits that define one's typical patterns of behaviour and thinking (Baumert et al., 2017). Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are the five fundamental aspects of personality (John, 2021). The most widely accepted way to describe these traits is the Five-Factor Model, known by the acronym OCEAN: Openness, Conscience, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (McCrae & John, 1992; Soto & Jackson, 2013). Everyone falls somewhere along each of these dimensions, with varying degrees of low, medium, or high expression.

When we observe people, one of the first things we notice is how different they are; some are quiet, while others are talkative. Some are energetic, while others are more relaxed. Some appear anxious or worried, while others remain calm. Words such as "talkative," "quiet," "active," or "anxious" describe personality—those unique ways individuals differ from one another. Psychologists study these differences to gain a deeper understanding of human behaviour (Qanwal & Ghani, 2019).

Personality can influence how people perceive and respond to black magic. Specific traits make some individuals more likely to believe in supernatural forces. For example, people high in openness may be curious about unusual ideas, spiritual practices, or mystical traditions, making them more likely to believe in black magic (Betsch et al., 2020). Conversely, individuals high in neuroticism, who often feel anxious or worried, may be more likely to fear curses or spells because they are more sensitive to uncertainty and danger (Anyaegebunam et al., 2021).

Religion also plays a vital role in shaping beliefs about black magic. Religious teachings often influence whether black magic is viewed as a superstition, a forbidden practice, or a genuine spiritual threat. For instance, in many Islamic contexts, belief in black magic is tied to the concept of jinn and sorcery, which are condemned in religious texts but still perceived as powerful by believers (Zadeh, 2015). Religious affiliation, therefore, not only shapes how individuals interpret the existence of black magic but also affects the intensity of their belief in it (Kamali, 2011).

According to the literature, certain personality traits are correlated with belief in black magic. However, such studies are limited in Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between belief in black magic and personality traits. A research gap also exists regarding differences in belief in black magic between Muslims and non-Muslims in Pakistan. Addressing this gap will provide practical implications for Pakistani society by helping to reduce misconceptions and promote healthier, more prosperous lives.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between Belief in Black Magic and Personality Traits.
2. To examine the differences between religious groups in Belief in Black Magic.

Methodology

This study aims to examine the relationship between Belief in black magic and personality traits, as well as religion, among young adults in Balochistan.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design and used a convenience sampling technique to collect data from 84 participants. Individuals with at least 12 years of education and falling within the age range of 18 to 30 years were included in the study.

Instruments

Black Magic Belief Scale (BMBS)

The Black Magic Belief Scale (Naz & Aslam, 2023) comprised 22 items, including three reverse-scored items. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher composite scores (ranging from 22 to 110) indicated stronger belief in black magic. The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.85 to 0.91.

Big Five Inventory (BFI)

Personality traits were measured using the 44-item Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), which assesses the five dimensions of personality: extraversion, agreeableness, conscience, neuroticism, and Openness. Respondents rated each statement on a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree a little, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree a little, 5 = strongly agree). The scale included 16 reverse-scored items.

Procedure

To collect data, approval was first obtained from university officials by submitting an application detailing the aims and ethical considerations of the study. After permission was granted, participants were briefed about the purpose and nature of the research. They were assured that their information would remain confidential, that their participation was voluntary, and that they had

the right to withdraw at any time; their identities would also remain anonymous. Informed consent was obtained before data Collection. The data was analysed using SPSS version 26.

Results

To full fill the objectives of the study several analyses was carried out.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	<i>F</i>	%
Gender		
Men	14	16.7
Women	70	83.3
Age		
18 to 20	24	28.2
20 to 22	45	52.9
22 to 24	10	11.8
24 to 26	3	3.5
26 to 28	2	2.4
Religion		
Muslim	60	71.4
Non-Muslim	24	28.6

Note: *N* =84.

The above table shows that the study sample comprised 14 men (16.7%) and 70 women (83.3%). Regarding age categories, 24 respondents (28.2%) were between 18 and 20 years old, 45 respondents (52.9%) were between 20 and 22 years, 3 respondents (3.5%) were between 24 and 26 years, and 2 respondents (2.4%) were between 26 and 28 years. The religion category indicates that most participants were Muslims (60; 71.4%), while a minority were non-Muslims (24; 28.6%).

Table 2: Psychometric Properties and Score Distribution for Scales

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Cronbach's α
BFI_EXT	25.58	4.68	14-38	.57
BFI_AGR	33.92	4.82	18-43	.49
BFI_CON	28.16	5.48	13-40	.54
BFI_NEU	26.03	5.96	10-39	.67
BFI_OPEN	35.38	6.44	10-50	.26
BMBS	76.89	13.52	36-103	.85

Note: *M*= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation, BFI= Big Five Inventory, EXT= Extroversion, AGR= Agreeableness, CON= Conscientiousness, NEU= Neuroticism, OPEN= Openness, BMBS= Black Magic Belief Scale.

The above table presents the score distribution and psychometric properties of the scales used in this study to measure the study variables. The Cronbach's α value for most personality traits displayed satisfactory to good reliability coefficients, only openness scale showed relatively low coefficient. Similarly Black Magic Belief Scale also displayed good reliability coefficient. Overall, all scales showed satisfactory reliability.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient for Belief in Black Magic and Big five Inventory

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Extroversion	-	.107	.392**	-.308**	.213	.262**
2.Agreeableness	-	-	-	-.154	.363**	.262**
3.Conscience	-	-	-	-.246*	.281**	.056
4.Neuroticism	-	-	-	-	.048	-.066
5.Openness	-	-	-	-	-	.278**
6.Black Magic	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: $N=84$, $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$.

The above table shows that extroversion and openness have positive and significant (** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$) relationship with Black Magic Belief scale for other subscales including agreeableness, openness and neuroticism results indicates non-significant correlation.

Table 4: Mean Differences on Belief on Black Magic with Respect to Religion.

	Muslims (n=60)		Non-Muslims (n=24)		$t(82)$	P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Black Magic	74.70	13.63	82.37	11.79	-2.41	.01*	0.59

Note: $N=84$, * $p<.05$

The table shows mean differences of Muslims and Non-Muslims. The results indicate that non-Muslims scored significantly higher on Belief in Black Magic than their counterparts.

Discussion

The study aimed to examine the relationship between Belief in Black magic and Personality Traits and to evaluate differences in these variables concerning religion, focusing on individuals aged 18 to 30 years. The purpose was to fill a gap in the literature and provide practical implications.

Psychometric properties of scales were assessed through several analyses, and the results indicate that extraversion and openness showed a positive and significant (** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$) relationship with Belief in Black Magic. For the other subscales, including agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism, the correlations were non-significant. One possible explanation is that individuals with a high level of extroversion and openness may interpret belief in black magic as a moral or religious explanation for misfortune or adversity. Such individuals may view these beliefs as integral to their ethical or spiritual worldview, aligning them with cultural or religious teachings. Extraverted individuals, given their greater social exposure, may also be more influenced by communal narratives that reinforce belief in supernatural forces. Conversely, openness—typically linked to curiosity and the acceptance of diverse ideas—may reduce reliance on traditional supernatural beliefs, as those high in openness may turn toward alternative worldviews, scepticism, or scientific explanations. These results align with previous literature suggesting that the cultural salience of a belief system strongly influences the psychological mechanisms underlying it (Baumert et al., 2017; John, 2021; Shahid et al., 2022).

The mean difference analysis revealed that non-Muslims scored significantly higher than Muslims on belief in black magic. Previous studies have also shown that both groups hold such beliefs (Deslippe, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2011). However, some studies in the Indian context have

demonstrated that non-Muslim Hindus are more inclined toward black magic practices than Muslims (Rocklin, 2016).

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between Belief in Black Magic, with a particular focus on religious affiliation among young adults. The findings suggest that while personality traits such as extraversion and openness had a positive and significant relationship with Belief in Black Magic. These results highlight the complex interaction between cultural beliefs, religious orientation, and personality dimensions within the Pakistani context.

Implications

This study contributes to the understanding of Belief in Black magic and personality traits within religious contexts. In Pakistan, where traditional and spiritual beliefs are deeply embedded in social life, the findings suggest that certain personality traits may predispose individuals toward greater susceptibility to black magic beliefs. Practically, the results may inform mental health practitioners, religious scholars, and educators in designing culturally sensitive awareness programs that address irrational beliefs while respecting religious values. Additionally, the study highlights the need to integrate cultural psychology into personality research, acknowledging the profound role of sociocultural context in shaping both personality and belief systems.

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