

Relationship Between Locus Of Control, Paranormal Beliefs, And Magical Ideation Among Young Adults Of Pakistan

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Abstract

Objective: Paranormality, often seen as violating fundamental scientific principles, includes beliefs in phenomena such as spirits, extrasensory perception, and fortune telling. These extraordinary beliefs are linked to belief. Locus of control (LOC), which refers to an individual's perception of control as internal or external, is a well-studied concept. This study aimed to explore the relationship between locus of control, paranormal beliefs, and magical ideation in early adulthood, and to examine how individual differences affect these variables.

Methods: A sample of 142 college and university students aged 18-25 were selected using a convenience sampling technique through social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, due to COVID-19 and quarantine restrictions. The Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale (MLOCS), Paranormal Belief Scale, and Magical Ideation Scale were utilised for data collection. The data were analysed using SPSS version 26.

Results: Descriptive analysis for demographic variables and correlation analysis showed that locus of control positively correlated with internal LOC (ILOC), external LOC (ELOC), and paranormal beliefs, but negatively with magical ideation. Specifically, ILOC was positively correlated with paranormal beliefs and negatively with magical ideation, while ELOC showed the same pattern. Paranormal beliefs were negatively correlated with magical ideation. An independent sample t-test revealed no significant gender differences.

Conclusion: The study highlights the complex relationships between religiosity, locus of control, and superstitious beliefs. Although there may be a link between religiosity and superstitious belief, this connection is not straightforward. A limitation of the study is the reliance on a convenience sample from social media, which may not be fully representative of the broader population.

Keywords: Locus of Control, Paranormal-Beliefs, Magical Thinking, Superstitions, Religiosity, Social Media, Quarantine.

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1. Introduction

The idea of locus of control (LOC) is extensively studied within the context of the sense of control and is highly influential. The concept pertains to an individual's ascriptions of control, categorised as either internal or external.¹ Individuals who possess a predominantly internal locus of control hold the belief that they have control over the events that occur in their lives.² Conversely, individuals with a predominantly external locus of control believe that these events are influenced by external factors, such as chance, fate, God, or powerful individuals, and they perceive limited or no control over the outcomes of these events in which they are engaged.³ The concept of external locus of control refers to a cognitive tendency to attribute life occurrences to external variables. Individuals with greater degrees of external locus of control tend to assume that events are the

result of luck, chance, or the influence of others.⁴ The presence of an external locus of control contributes to the development of paranormal beliefs, such as premonitions, luck, and black magic, among those who perceive events as being influenced by external forces.⁵

The psychological well-being and stability of individuals can be negatively impacted by internal factors. The attainment of an internal orientation typically necessitates the presence of competence, self-efficacy, and opportunity, hence enabling individuals to effectively cultivate a sense of personal control and responsibility.⁶ Individuals who possess a deficient level of internal resources, such as competence, efficacy, and opportunity, may experience psychological distress characterized by neuroticism, anxiety, and depression. Put differently, individuals must possess a practical understanding of the extent to which they can exert control or influence on their surroundings to achieve a state of 'success'.⁷

Individuals who possess an external locus of control tend to exhibit a disposition characterized by ease, relaxation, and happiness in their lives. Various criteria have been employed to delineate the scope of paranormal beliefs.⁸ These tenets have been characterized, for instance, as principles that are based on a lack of knowledge, irrational thinking, or deceptive perceptions.⁹ Another frequently cited argument states that paranormal phenomena are in direct contradiction to the fundamental principles of nature that have been established via scientific inquiry. Certain scholars have provided more precise definitions of paranormal beliefs, characterizing them as misconceptions that involve a misinterpretation of the essential characteristics of physical, biological, and cognitive processes. For instance, one such misconception is the notion that thoughts possess the ability to manipulate objects in the external world.¹⁰ Despite the varying emphases, there is a consensus within the scientific community that paranormal beliefs lack a solid foundation.

The delineation of distinct attributes linked to superstition can aid in mitigating the numerous hazards, such as health-related worry, illogical conduct, and emotional maladaptation, that are inherent in fervent adherence to superstitious beliefs.¹¹ The COVID-19 pandemic has generated an unparalleled level of uncertainty, which has in turn induced anxiety among individuals. Additionally, the implementation of health regulations has further exacerbated a sense of loss of control.¹² Previous studies have indicated that during periods of crisis, certain individuals employ superstitious beliefs as a means of managing stress. However, the relationship between superstition and fear of COVID-19 amidst the ongoing pandemic, as well as the influence of individuals' locus of control in this context, have yet to be definitively established.¹³

Several research has been undertaken to investigate the association between personality traits and belief in the paranormal. Findings from these studies suggest a positive correlation between belief in the paranormal and high scores on scales assessing narcissism and religiosity.¹⁴ Paranormal beliefs can be differentiated from conventional religious ideas through various significant aspects. Religion is widely regarded as a nearly ubiquitous phenomenon, characterized by a diverse and extensive historical presence across various cultures worldwide.¹⁵ The phenomenon of

magical (primitive) thinking, characterized by the belief in phenomenalist causality that underlies the perception of control over illusions, is commonly observed in children. However, it is noteworthy that this cognitive tendency does not completely vanish in maturity, although it tends to diminish with the influence of modern education.

There has been a longstanding association between religious beliefs and paranormal beliefs. According to McCoy et al, studies have identified societal acceptability as the primary distinguishing factor between religious beliefs and paranormal beliefs.¹⁶ Religious views, similar to paranormal beliefs, encompass the acceptance and attribution of significant value to entities that are neither observable nor verifiable. Religious views are commonly regarded as conforming to societal norms, primarily influenced by the component of traditionalism.¹⁷ According to research, it has been proposed that individuals who are actively engaged in religious practices may have embraced a paranormal belief system as a potential alternative or supplementary means of achieving a sense of control and efficacy in their surroundings.¹⁸

Furthermore, it is important to note that global assessments of locus of control and paranormal beliefs may be flawed. This is because superstition and spiritualism, which encompass beliefs in ghosts, fall under the umbrella of paranormal beliefs and suggest a belief in predetermined outcomes and a lack of personal agency (e.g., the notion that breaking a mirror will result in bad luck), psi belief, which encompasses telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis, implies that in the personality.¹⁹ Hence, it may be argued that there exists a positive correlation between superstition and spiritualism, while a negative correlation can be observed between psi belief and external locus of control, as shown by research.

The study aimed to gather the relationship between locus of control, paranormal belief, and magical ideation among young adults. As per the limited knowledge and empirical testing using these variables in Pakistani culture brings forth the step to conduct this study. These variables as tested in a combined empirical model are limited as for sample is unique as religion is being studied more in middle or late adulthood. This study gathers the growing connections between paranormal beliefs and magical

ideation and how they were related to internal and external locus of control. The finding may be beneficial for developing and growing information among locus of control, paranormal ideals, and magical ideation in early adults. The findings will be extensively contributed.

2. Materials & Methods

The research design was cross-sectional in the research study to find out the relationship between the variables. The sample was selected through convenient sampling techniques. Data was collected from men and women of age ranging from 18 to 25 years from different university students. The sample size for the research was 200 (100 female and 100 male). Individuals suffering from any diagnosed psychological problem did not participate in the study. Multidimensional Locus of Control scale item 24 was used to measure the LOC on 6-point response format.²⁰ Where's (1) for strongly disagree to 6 for slightly agree. It consists of a tree subscale each of the internal, second subscale is Powerful Others and Chance subscale. The total score ranges from 0 to 48 and it is computed by summing the responses for the items of the peach tree subscale and adding + 24 to each of the tree totals. The two subscales, powerful others and chance are taken together as ELOC. Strong External Locus of Control will be indicated if there are high scores on chance and powerful other scale.

Revised Paranormal Beliefs Scale 27 items were used to measure paranormal beliefs on a 5-point Likert-type scale response rate from 1 strongly agree to 5. Strongly disagree. The reliability coefficient of paranormal belief $\alpha = .92$, Tobacyk & Miller.²⁰

A magical Ideation Scale of 30 items was used to measure the magical ideation on a 5-point Likert type ($\alpha = .61$).²¹ It is a five-point Likert type Scale ranging from 1-5 from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The item response indicated that regarded their personal experience. Items of this scale 23, 22, 18, 16, 13, 12, and 7 scored 1 if the responses of those items are Agree. All other items are scored 1 if the responses of those items are disagreed. Higher scores show magical

ideation. The correlation of 0.82 and 0.85 for men and women shows MIS has good internal consistency.

It was the first step to obtaining permission from the author of the scale that the researcher would like to use your scale. After making the Google form the researcher used social media like Facebook and WhatsApp to collect the data and asked participants to fill up the questionnaire according to the study requirement. The researcher assures the participants that what information given to the researcher will remain confidential between the researcher and the research supervisor and was used for just academic purposes. The researcher provided the questionnaire to the participants. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. Descriptive analysis was used for demographical variables and correlation analysis was also used for relationships.

3. Results

Table 1 Frequency of the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N= 142)

Variable	Male	Female	Final
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>
Gender	72	70	142
Education			
Intermediate	14	3	17
Graduation	43	20	63
Masters	11	24	35
M.S/ M.Phil.	4	23	27
Family System			
Joint	34	20	54
Nuclear	38	50	88

Note. f = Frequency, % = Percentage

The table 1 shows the frequency of the participants in the study. The N=142 of the study in which 72 were male participants and 70 were females. The age range of the participants was 18-25 early adulthood. Of the participants who were students of intermediate 17 of 14 were male and 3 were female. The participants of graduation were 63 of which 43 were male and 20 were female. The total participants of the master's were 35 including 11 males and 24 females while the M.S/M.Phil. participants were 27, 4 males and 23 females.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha of Locus of Control, Paranormal Beliefs and Magical Ideation (N=142)

Variable	No of Items	Alpha (α)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum Scores	Minimum Scores
Locus of Control	24	0.79	79.77	7.70	3.82	2.57
Internal locus of Control	8	0.61	22.23	3.1	3.41	0.258
External Locus of Control	8	0.59	27.09	3.71	3.79	2.79
Paranormal Beliefs Scale	26	0.71	75.35	10.07	4.57	1.70
Magical Ideation Scale	30	0.73	46.97	4.93	1.23	1.83

Note. α = Cronbach's Alpha

Table 3: Pearson Correlation, Mean and Standard Deviation on Locus of Control, Paranormal Beliefs and Magical Ideation (N=142)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1 LOC	...	0.593***	0.877***	0.500***	-0.208*
2 ILOC	...	...	-0.188*	0.410***	-0.158*
3 ELOC	...	...	...	0.308***	-0.280***
4 PBS	...	...	...	...	-0.280**
5 MIS	...	...	...	...	...

Note: LOC=Locus of control, ILOC= Internal Locus of Control, ELOC= External Locus of Control, PBS=Paranormal Beliefs Scale, MIS=Magical Ideation Scale * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2 shows that LOC consisted of 24 items with three subscales named as internal locus of control, Chance and powerful scale having reliability as .79 of Locus of Control. ILOC is .61 and the external locus of control subscale has .59 reliability. Similarly, the paranormal beliefs consist of 26 items has .71 reliability. Similarly, the Magical ideation scale has .73 reliability.

Table 3 shows the Pearson's Correlation among Locus of Control, and Paranormal Beliefs in early adulthood. The results show positive correlation of locus of control with its subscales as ILOC and ELOC and highly significant $p < .001$ while the locus of control is positively correlated with paranormal beliefs significantly and negatively correlated with magical ideation $p < .05$. Positive correlation of ILOC with paranormal beliefs while correlated negatively with magical ideations in early adulthood. Moreover, positive correlation between ELOC with Paranormal Beliefs and a negative correlation with magical ideation. The paranormal beliefs are negatively correlated with magical ideation $p < .01$

4. Discussion

The study aimed to find out the relationship between locus of control, paranormal beliefs, and magical ideation in early adulthood and how individual differences will affect them. The hypothesized model shows the relationship between the study measures. The analysis comprised the descriptive analysis and

correlation analysis. The study showed that there is a strong relationship between study variables. The results of correlation analysis showed that locus of control has a positive correlation with paranormal beliefs and a negative relationship with magical ideation. Similar to the study on fortune with power related to external locus of control has a positive relationship. Few people built up an unlikely nonsensical perspective of fortunes which considered whitened power that impacted occasions and distinctive circumstances in their particular support, albeit some different people appeared to hold consistent, practical reasonable convictions which alluded to the possibility that fortunes were arbitrary and temperamental.²² Moreover, the idea of good fortunes demonstrated a lot of strength after some time and was essentially identified with an external locus of control. In the past studies explored the connection between myth and locus of control, the study tells that a person who has an external locus of control has faith in their ability.

There is a negative relationship between magical ideation with locus of control (both internal and external) and paranormal beliefs. Research has stressed more on other correlates of paranormal beliefs, only a few have associated relationships between paranormal beliefs and locus of control. Locus of control can be the extent to which people believe their lives are controlled by the outcomes of events. Which can be further divided into external locus of control and internal locus of control. People who are believed to have an internal

locus of control oversee their own decisions and do not blame on external factors for any negative circumstances. Whereas people with external locus of control believe that occurrences in their lives are controlled by external factors over which they do not have any control. Early research demonstrated a relationship between a more external locus of control and greater belief in paranormal phenomena.²³

Despite all the research that has been done examining correlates of paranormal belief, little research has focused primarily on possible correlates of superstitious behaviours that are encountered in Western culture. Given that superstitious beliefs can be associated with risky behaviour and that there is significant variation in individuals' beliefs, it would be helpful to understand some of the major correlates of superstitious beliefs.²⁴ This study focuses on two possible correlates: religiosity and locus of control. Although there may be a link between religiosity and superstitious belief, the connection may not be as simple as this study attempted to make it to be.²⁵ Previous research has often looked at the relationship between more specific personality characteristics in addition to religiosity as they relate to superstitious beliefs.²⁶

The study's reliance on a convenience sample from social media may limit the generalizability of the findings. The cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, and the use of self-reported data may introduce response biases. The sample was also homogeneous, consisting mainly of college students, which might affect the applicability of the results to a broader population. Additionally, the study did not account for other factors such as cultural background or socioeconomic status, which could influence the observed associations.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between locus of control (LOC), paranormal beliefs, and magical ideation among college and university students aged 18-25. It found that both internal and external loci of control were positively associated with paranormal beliefs but negatively associated with magical ideation. Additionally, paranormal beliefs were negatively correlated with magical ideation, and no significant gender differences were observed. The results underscore the intricate connections between individual control beliefs and paranormal or magical thinking,

suggesting that while religiosity might influence superstitious beliefs, the relationship is more complex than initially anticipated.

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R.M - Conception of study

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S.A - Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion

R.M - Manuscript Writing

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- Facilitation and Material analysis

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