

Personality Traits and Paranormal Beliefs of Psi Experiencers

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The major aim of the study was to assess personality traits and paranormal beliefs among Psi experiencers. The sample comprised of eight subjects who reported having Psi experiences of various types such as precognitive dreams, intuitions and déjà vu. Out of these 8 subjects, four were females and four were males. Subjects were assessed on an unstructured interview in which they reported their Psi experiences, followed by NEO-FFI-3 (Costa & McCrae 2010) and Paranormal Belief Scale (Tobacyk, 1988). Results show higher levels of traditional religious beliefs, witchcraft, precognitions and spirituality and lower level of superstition among Psi experiencers. A major inclination of scores could be seen towards low extroversion trait and high openness to experience. Spearman correlation showed a significant inverse relationship between traditional religious beliefs and spirituality ($\rho = -.827$) and a positive relationship between traditional religious belief with neuroticism ($\rho = .727$). Psi experiences were positively correlated with spirituality ($\rho = .772$) and extra ordinary life forms is positively correlated with precognitions ($\rho = .736$). It is concluded that Psi experiencers have high paranormal beliefs and they are more open to experience. Their traditional religious beliefs correspond with neuroticism and spirituality and their precognitions with extra ordinary life forms..

Keywords: Paranormal beliefs, Psi, Personality, neuroticism, precognitions.

Humans have a natural tendency of attribution. Positive and non-threatening occurrences in the form of supernatural happenings are said to be the reward of God for our good deeds. On the contrary when any unpleasant or threatening situation comes up, it is attributed to devils and evil spirits suggesting God's punishment through these negative, unpleasant and threatening occurrences. This creates a space for the existence of Psi phenomenon in the society. The cross cultural prevalence is reported in several studies done in the area (Lange, 1996; Giovetti 1982; Osis and Haraldsson 1977, McDonald, 2001; Corazza, 2008). So in one form or other every culture somewhere keeps this characteristic in common.

There are many people on the globe having strong beliefs in paranormal occurrences but others are against it (Mathews, 2004; Musela, 2005). However, despite unsuccessful experimentations, Psi phenomenon evidently establishes links with personality types (Kennedy, 2005). Stories of unusual experiences and

supernatural happenings are very common and widely heard all over the world. These parapsychological concepts have had a long history. A number of studies have been conducted to find out the origin of these perceived phenomenon but no significant explanations could be found up till now (Mathews, 2004). However, people still believe that the paranormal phenomenon does not need any scientific explanations. They are purely magical and depend upon the will of the supreme power that is God. A study based on American population explains a greater involvement, belief and interest of general population in various paranormal phenomena (Gallup, 1991). This confirmed the earlier findings (Messer & Griggs, 1989). This prevalence despite of several unsuccessful attempts probably set a ground for the further studies in this area but the connections with personality somehow could not get much attention which has been received in the recent years.

An Indian study connecting childhood trauma with paranormal beliefs and personality finds a significant relationship among these three phenomenon (Prasaad & Gopal, 2017). In view of the arguments made by a relationship between paranormal beliefs and Neuroticism (Thalbourne et al, 1995), anxiety (Okebukola, 1986; Wagner & Ratzeburg, 1987; Wolfradt, 1997; Irwin, 1993; Pekala, Kumar & Marcano, 1995), extraversion (Thalbourne, 1981) can be authenticated but on the contrary there are researchers (Lester & Monaghan, 1995; Willging & Lester, 1997; Tobayck, 1982) who have found no such relationship (Lester et al., 1987; Windholz & Diamant, 1974). Hence role of individual differences in paranormal beliefs and to authenticate results in heterogonous population (Peltzer, 2002) various studies were conducted over the globe (Swami, Pietcsching, Stieger & Voracek, 2011; Lawrence, Edwards, Barraclough, Church & Hetherington, 1995).

Keeping in view prevalence of various types of paranormal phenomenon in the general population (such as reincarnation, telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance, extrasensory perceptions, intuition, precognitive dreams and déjà vu etc.) and lack of sufficient conclusive literature, the current study has been planned to focus on most prevalent experiences of Psi phenomenon i.e. precognitive dreams, déjà vu and intuitions.

Objectives:

The study was carried out with the following objectives-

- 1) To assess level of paranormal beliefs among Psi experients
- 2) To find out specific personality traits of Psi experients
- 3) To find out correspondence between paranormal beliefs and personality traits among Psi experients

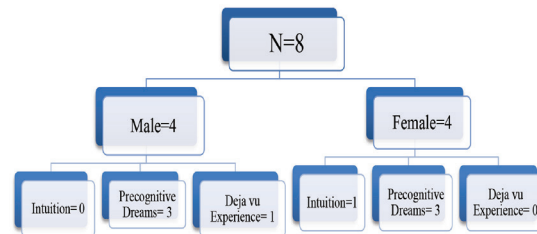
Hypotheses:

Following hypotheses were proposed with an assumption of correspondence amongst these three variables-

- 1) Psi experients would be high on paranormal beliefs
- 2) Psi experients will express specific personality traits

- 3) There would be a correspondence between psi experiences, paranormal beliefs and personality traits.

Method



Sample:

The sample size comprised of 23 adults from general population out of which 8 were found qualified for the study on the basis of the inclusion criteria. Sample included both males and females in equal distribution that is 4 each. However, equal distribution could not be made in terms of psi experiences. Males had experiences of déjà vu and precognitive dreams whereas the females had experiences of intuition and precognitive dreams. The sample lie between the age groups 21-82 years out of which included 2 males and 2 females were in the age range of 21-50 and 2 males and 2 females were in the age range of 51-82. All the subjects were had urban residential background. Snowball sampling technique was used for the purpose of data collection.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Individuals above the age of 18 years having Psi experiences such as precognitive dreams, déjà vu and intuition were included. Individuals below the age of 18 reporting experiences not falling into the criteria of precognitive dreams, déjà vu and intuition were excluded.

Design:

Within Group Design

Measures:

The tools used for the conduction of research include:

Interview: A short interview was conducted to find out the details about the different experiences of the respondents as to find out the type of psi experience they have.

NEO Five-Factor Inventory-3 (NEO-FFI-3), Form S-Adult (Costa & McCrae 2010): This questionnaire contains 60 statements each with five options that include; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. It is appropriate for respondents age 12 and older. The NEO Inventories are measures of general personality traits. The Five Factors represent the most basic dimensions underlying the traits identified in both natural languages and psychological questionnaires. The Five domains are: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness.

Paranormal Belief Scale (Jerome J. Tobacyk, 1988): A 26 item Revised Paranormal Belief Scale is introduced which provides a measure of degree of belief in each of seven dimensions: Traditional Religious Belief, Psi, Witchcraft, Superstition, Spiritualism, Extraordinary Life Forms and Precognition. Improvements from the original 25 item changes for the Precognition, Witchcraft and Extraordinary Life Forms Subscale. These improvements resulted in greater reliability and validity, less restriction of range and greater cross-cultural validity in Western Cultures.

Procedure

The data was collected by approaching the subjects through snowball sampling. Few of the bloggers who mentioned their experiences on their blogs were also contacted for the further assessment which included an interview and questionnaires. Such responses were collected through email and others were collected by conducting face to face interview. The subjective experiences were used for the categorization of the type of Psi experience. After the data was collected the respondents were also requested to give their consent in case of further details required.

Results

Descriptive reports of psi experiences of the respondents:

Case-1: A 45-year-old male reported about a dream. The dream helped the respondent to avoid a potentially fatal accident. In the dream he was driving with his daughter, it was dark outside and there was a fresh fall of snow on the road. He turned down the road and went to a hill and

there was a black ice under the snow. When he tried to stop, the car slid uncontrollably into an oncoming traffic "stop sign" and a white pick up truck smashed into the drivers side of the car.

After this he took a precaution and in his 25 years of driving got a full set of studded winter tires and changed them. Later he was driving his daughter to the daycare, there was a fresh fall of snow and the same hill that he saw in the dream. It was then when he recognized the dream and he put the brakes to stop at the stop sign but still the car slid to the bottom as it did in the dream, he gripped the steering wheel in fear. The difference was that he could hear the studs digging in the black ice and the car successfully stopped about 1 foot past the stop sign and the white pickup truck passed in front of his car and not into it. Therefore, he believes that had he not changes the tires and not had the dream he would have been unable to save their lives.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is Very High on dimensions Openness to experience, Agreeableness and High on Conscientiousness and had a Low score on Neuroticism and average on Extraversion. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-2: A male of 77 years reported of having a déjà vu experience. It occurred when a bunch of boys from the neighborhood decided to play hide and seek on bicycles and so one of them went to hide on the bicycle. They were searching him for a long time through the neighborhood, then they realized that playing hide and seek on bicycle was not a good idea as the neighborhood was huge and had many places to hide. So, they gave up and were going back in the direction where he lived and suddenly at that time he knew his experience of being on the bicycle and that shortly they would be taking a turn and down at the end of the street would be the house where he lived and that the boy who went to hide would be in the lawn of his house laying his bicycle down. He knew that this is going to happen and it was exactly what happened. He also emphasized that they had never played this game before and after this incidence.

Another experience was of a precognitive dream where he and one of his schoolmates

were playing ping-pong and practiced it after school for long time. They had the school gym where they used to keep the table in the middle and practice. Suddenly one day the coach came and asked them to find another place. So, both of them went on to find places and found a table in the nearby student union building at a college. They played there and the room had 3 feet of it's a meter behind the table at both ends and was very crumpled. After a few days once some college students found that two high school students had been playing here. Then one day while playing he recognized the place and these people and remembered that he had dreamt of it. But at that time in the dream prior to some months he was very curious to know what place it is, what table it is because it was blue and had all kinds of nicks which no table he saw had before. When the dream came true then he knew that it was this place and these were the people.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is High on dimensions Openness to experience and Agreeableness and Average on Conscientiousness and Neuroticism and had a low score on Extraversion. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes Highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-3: A female of 73 years reported of having a dream in which she saw herself awakened and as usual went to her grandmother to say "hello" and kiss her. In the dream she was going to walk through the living room to reach her grandmother's bedroom. In the middle of it she saw a big bulk; a big box. She was horrified and knew that it was a coffin in which laid her grandmother. She burst into tears and suddenly saw her grandmother get up and get out of the coffin came towards her, took her in arms and with a tenderly and affectionate voice said "Don't cry". Hearing this she woke up crying and ran to her grandmother's room, and saw her joyous and alert as usual. She left for school after breakfast and when she came home for lunch her mother informed her that her grandmother had died.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is High on dimensions Openness to experience; Average on Conscientiousness and Agreeableness and had a low score on Extraversion and Neuroticism. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that

the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-4: A female of age 56 years reported of having an experience of intuition. While leaving for a fair she suddenly told her mother that there would be a head on collision and they will not be going to the fair. Later in the day, she then had an update from the local news that there was a head on collision in the near common ground fair.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is Very High on dimensions Openness to experience and Agreeableness; Average on Conscientiousness and Neuroticism and had a low score on Extraversion. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-5: A female of 23 years reported of having a dream about a bridge with black clouds and a year ago while she was in Chennai, she had a huge accident right on that bridge with black clouds above her.

Second dream was that she dreamt of getting into Delhi University, Mata Sundiri College, and the name of which she had never heard before. Then later on she actually got admission in that college only.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is Average on dimensions Openness to experience, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism and had a low score on Agreeableness. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-6: A male of 21 years reported about a dream. In the dream he saw a pick up truck, which had an accident from the bus window. The next day while he was travelling 100km to another city he saw 3 pick up trucks at different times that had an accident, lying beside the highway.

In another dream he saw bits of paper falling down from the sky, that same day in the evening he tore a very important sheet of paper into small pieces and threw in the air. The motion of their fall instantly reminded him of the dream that he had.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is Very High on

Table 1: Individual scores and interpretation of Neo FFI-3 and paranormal beliefs scale

Case & Psi Experience	Paranormal Beliefs										NEO-FFI-3		
	Traditional Religious Belief	Psi	Witchcraft	Superstition	Spiritualism	Extraordinary Life Forms	Pre cognition	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	
Case 1 Male Precognitive Dreams	3.5 High	4.25 High	4.25 High	1 Low	5.5 High	5 High	4 High	9 Low	26 Average	40 Very High	43 Very High	38 High	
Case 2 Male Déjà vu	5.25 High	5 High	5.25 High	1 Low	6 High	3.33 Low	3 Low	17 Average	21 Low	31 High	34 High	31 Average	
Case 3 Female Precognitive Dreams	4 High	6.5 High	7 High	3 Low	7 High	4 High	4.5 High	12 Low	29 Low	37 High	31 Average	33 Average	
Case 4 Female Intuition	6.25 High	5 High	4.5 High	1 Low	4.75 High	5 High	5.5 High	24 Average	20 Low	46 Very High	44 Very High	33 Average	
Case 5 Female Precognitive Dreams	7 High	3.75 High	1.25 Low	1 Low	4.5 High	2.33 Low	3.75 High	23 Average	32 Average	29 Average	25 Low	36 Average	
Case 6 Male Precognitive Dreams	7 High	4.25 High	5.5 High	1 Low	4.5 High	3 Low	3.75 High	20 Average	24 Low	42 Very High	26 Low	29 Average	
Case 7 Female Precognitive Dreams	4.75 High	5 High	4.5 High	1 Low	7 High	2.66 Low	3.25 Low	20 Average	25 Low	30 Average	41 High	42 High	
Case 8 Male Precognitive Dreams	6.5 High	4.5 High	4.25 High	4 Low	4.5 High	5 High	6.75 High	23 Average	31 High	33 High	20 Very Low	36 High	
Total	44.25	38.25	36.5	13	43.75	30.32	34.5	148	208	288	264	278	

dimensions Openness to experience; Average on Conscientiousness and Neuroticism and had a low score on Extraversion and Agreeableness. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-7: A female of 48 years reported of having a dream. The respondent had a dream that she was driving a car and the trunk lid opened unexpectedly. The next day when she was driving, the same thing happened. She looked at the rear view mirror and saw that trunk lid was open. The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is High on dimensions Conscientiousness and Agreeableness, Average on Openness to experience and Neuroticism and had a low score on Extraversion. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Case-8: A male of 82 years reported of having a dream. The respondent had an experience of a precognitive dream. Once while he was out for some work he stayed at a hotel. When he entered the room he felt that he had seen it before the same two beds, one study table, a picture of a lady and a balcony attached to the room. Later during his stay at that hotel for several days he realized that he had viewed it in his dream.

The results of the Personality Test show that the respondent is High on dimensions: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Extraversion, Average on Neuroticism and had a low score on Agreeableness. The results of the Paranormal Belief Scale indicate that the respondent believes Highly in paranormal activities and experiences.

Table 1 indicates that irrespective of gender, experiences of déjà vu and intuitions shows similar responses on traditional religious belief (high), psi (high), witchcraft (high), spiritualism (high) Superstition (Low), neuroticism (average), extraversion (low) and conscientiousness (average). However scores on openness to experience and agreeableness intuitive females scored very high and males on déjà vu scored high. On the other hand, experiences of precognitive dreams scored high on traditional religious belief, psi and spiritualism, while on superstition both the genders score low. Total

scores indicate overall high score on paranormal belief scale of males and females. Similarly, identical findings can be seen on neuroticism for both males (two average, one low) and females (two average, one low). All the 8 respondents scored high on paranormal belief scale and majorly on openness to experience.

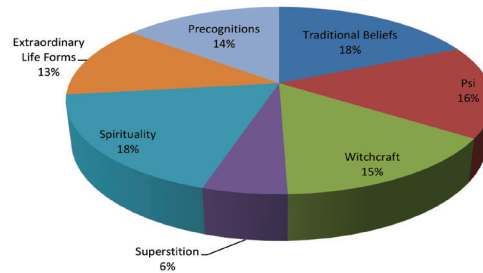


Figure 1. Graphical representation of scores of Paranormal Belief Scale

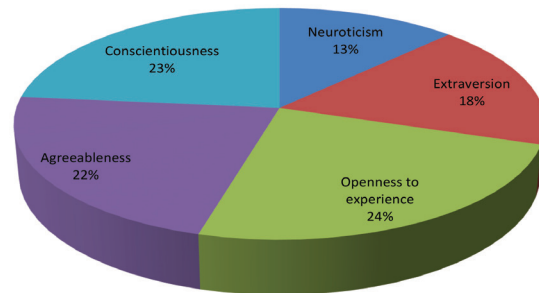


Figure 2. Graphical representation of scores of NEO-FFI-3

Table 5 shows a significant inverse relationship between traditional religious beliefs and spiritualism ($\rho = -.827$), whereas a positive relationship between traditional religious belief with neuroticism ($\rho = .727$). Psi experiences are positively correlated with spiritualism ($\rho = .772$) and extra ordinary life forms is positively correlated with precognitions ($\rho = .736$).

Discussion

The current study was conducted with the aim to assess level of paranormal beliefs among psi experts. Individual scores are indicative of high levels of traditional religious beliefs, psi, witchcraft, precognitions, and spirituality. Obtained results also show lower levels of superstitions which may be indicative of a result of a paradox emerged out of the preconscious traditional values learnt since the childhood and

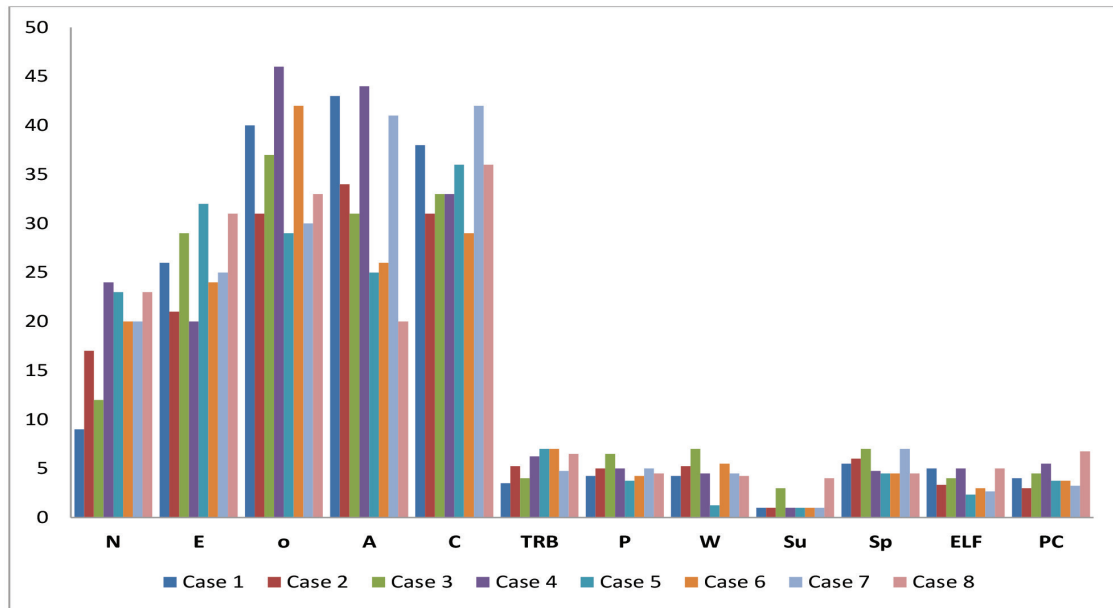


Figure 3. Case wise comparison of scores of personality dimensions and paranormal belief scale

N=neuroticism, E=extraversion, o=openness to experience, A=agreeableness, C=conscientiousness, TRB=traditional religious beliefs, P=psi, W=witchcraft, Su=superstitions, Sp=spirituality, ELF=extraordinary life forms, PC=precognition

Table 2. Spearman rank correlation between personality dimensions and paranormal belief scale

	TRB	Psi	Witchcraft	Superstition	Spiritualism	ELF	Precognition	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
TRB	1	-.525	-.206	-.063	-.827*	-.393	.012	.727*	.108	-.096	-.611	-.406
Psi		1	.665	.321	.772*	.252	.068	-.168	-.393	.135	.368	-.137
Witchcraft			1	.103	.478	-.012	-.170	-.366	-.494	.386	.145	-.646
Superstition				1	-.024	.415	.659	.008	.514	-.016	-.546	.032
Spiritualism					1	-.013	-.321	-.578	-.246	-.135	.540	.230
ELF						1	.736*	-.062	-.195	.659	.317	.000
Precognition							1	.327	.252	.503	-.108	.079
Neuroticism								1	-.048	.000	-.193	-.049
Extraversion									1	-.548	-.690	.458
Openness										1	.429	-.434
Agreeableness											1	.157
Conscientiousness												1

*0.05 level; ELF=extraordinary life forms, TRB= traditional religious beliefs

constant scientific explanations made by the progressive educative society. However, the overall score indicates higher levels of traditional beliefs in the whole sample. These findings approve the first hypothesis suggesting high paranormal beliefs among Psi experients.

The second aim of the study was to find out specific personality traits of Psi experients. Obtained individual scores show inclination towards personality traits such as openness to experience and extraversion. Hence the second hypothesis also gets approved since these two personality traits are emerged as specific personality traits among Psi experients. The findings are partially approved and supported by a previous study (Zingrone et al 1998) where openness is positively correlated with psi experiences (Palmer, 1996; Costa & McCrae, 1992). However, not much literature could be found pertaining to this dimension.

The third aim was to find out correspondence between paranormal beliefs and personality traits among Psi experients. The correlation analysis suggests a significant inverse relationship between traditional religious beliefs and spiritualism. This indicates that those who are more religious are confined to their traditional beliefs. Their spiritual orientations are not strong in comparison to their religious orientations. A direct relationship between traditional religious beliefs and neuroticism may be suggestive of a strategy of reducing anxiety by depending more on traditional beliefs. Also, a direct correlation between psi and spiritualism strengthens the belief of emergence of the concept of parapsychology out of spirituality (Moore, 1977). A direct relationship between extraordinary life forms and precognitions also indicates higher level of suggestibility in the people who experience Psi phenomenon. This relationship is also endorsed by previous studies (Warner-Angel, 2017; Hergovich, 2003).

These findings partially approve the last hypothesis suggesting correspondence between paranormal beliefs and personality traits among Psi experients. These findings are supported by previous studies. However, some studies do not support the findings (Alvarado, 2000). Especially in a study conducted by Irwin (1985) specifically points towards no significant connects of paranormal beliefs with extraversion and neuroticism but later studies presented contrasting results (Peltzer 2001). This was in

accordance with previous studies (Thalbourne, 1981, Thalbourne, 1985). Also the connections of paranormal beliefs could be found with some other personality features such intuition and feeling (Robertson and Gow, 1999; Gow, Lurie, Choppin, Popper, Powell & Basterfield, 2001).

Conclusion

It is concluded that people with capabilities of experiencing psi energies are high on traditional religious beliefs, spiritualism and precognitions irrespective of their gender. However, they have lower level of superstitions. Their traditional religious beliefs are more likely to correspond with neuroticism and spiritualism and their precognitions with extra ordinary life forms.

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