

SUPERSTITIOUSNESS AND PARANORMAL BELIEFS OF THE RUSSIAN AND TATAR STUDENTS

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The sociological studies carried out during the recent decade show that the large part of the population in Russia (various demographical groups) believe in the paranormal, observe different rituals, turn to wizards, fortune-tellers, healers and psychic mediums for help. This phenomenon is also spread enough among university students. Superstitiousness and beliefs in the paranormal among young people is a point of special research interest. Besides in the multi-cultural contexts it is reasonably important to see the ethnic specifics of superstitions and beliefs. The research methodology of the study consists of the "Paranormal Belief Scale", the "Superstitiousness Inventory", the "World Assumptions Scale", and the "Ways of Coping Questionnaire". The findings show that the students from the Tatar ethnic group tend to be more subject to the traditional religious formulas (Islam) about the existence of God, Paradise and Hell, devil and others than the Russian ethnic group. Tatar students demonstrate direct correlation between traditional religious beliefs as well as beliefs in communication with spirits, magic and fortune-telling and positive reappraisal as a way of stress coping. The more the belief in magic, transmigration of souls and fortune telling is in the Tatar sample, the more convinced they are in their personal good luck. In the Russian sample the faith in justice of the world is directly related to the traditional religion (Orthodox Christianity), as well as with the beliefs in magic and fortune telling. The students from the Russian ethnic sample with the expressed faith in the paranormal phenomena show escape-avoidance coping strategy.

Key words: superstitiousness, beliefs in the paranormal, worldview, coping behavior

INTRODUCTION

The recent sociological studies in Russia show that a large part of the population, representatives of various demographical groups believe in the paranormal phenomena (magic, clairvoyance, etc), astrology and supranatural beings and turn to wizards, fortune-tellers, healers and psychic mediums for help. According to the research of the non-governmental polling and sociological research organization "Levada Center" in 2012 59% of Russian citizens believed in hoodoo and basilisk-glance (comparing to 38% in 1990). The study carried out at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ISRAS) in 2013 showed that 67% of Russian women visited wizards, fortune-tellers, healers or psychic mediums. 48% of respondents believed in witchery, 55% believed in clairvoyance (according to the "Levada Center" and The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center). In

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December 2015 36% of Russian citizens believed in the astrological prediction and 32% believed in the UFO.

It should be noted that faith in jinxing things and superstitions are spread among the students. Young people form the basis of the future society and higher education implicate development of the scientific view of the world, traditionally antagonistic to the magic worldview and superstitiousness as one of its manifestation.

Russian Federation is a multi-cultural society, where representatives of various ethnic groups leave together, grow up and are educated at the same institutions. Different cultures mutually influence each other. Alongside with this various ethnic groups still keep their cultural identity and often observe their specific traditions. Therefore the cross-cultural study of superstitiousness specifics among the ethnic groups that have been leaving at the same territory for centuries, such as Russian and Tatar people, may be interesting from the research point of view. The Tatars are the second largest ethnic group in the Russian Federation after the Russians. It is a Turkic people that traditionally practice Islam while the Russian traditionally practice Orthodox Christianity. Psychological peculiarities of Russian and Tatar groups have been studied by B.S. Alishev (2013), L.F. Bayanova (2013), B.S. Alishev & M.V. Gabdulhakova (2013). I.M. Gorodetskaya, A.B. Blokhin, M.G. Rogov (2005). B.S. Alishev points that young Russian men and women are more oriented at the social connections and relations and their Tatar peers pay more attention to the practical, pragmatic side of life (Alishev, 2013). B.S. Alishev and M.V. Gabdulhakova (2013) say that Tatar students who speak their native language (Tatar) manifest higher anxiety level than Russian students and Russian-speaking Tatar students. L.F. Bayanova (2013) points that there are no significant differences in the guideline concepts of Tatar people from the mono- and poly-ethnic communities. I.M. Gorodetskaya, M.G. Rogov and A.B. Blokhin (2005) studied the relations between husbands and wives in the mono- and poly-ethnic marriages. The empiric results proved the proposition that values of an ethnic group are manifested in the interpersonal relations with the other group, including family relations. In the hierarchy of values of the Tatar sample the concept "family" had a higher place than in the system of values of the Russian group. On the levels of interpersonal relations and emotional state it led to a higher level of satisfaction in marriage in Tatar mono-ethnic families than in Russian ones.

However there are still no cross-cultural studies of superstitiousness specifics of the Russian and Tatar students.

Superstitions and superstitiousness are researched by such authors as D.S. Grigiriev (2015), N.N. Ismodenova (2013), Y.V. Saenko (2006), M.Y. Strogalshikova (2012) and others.

D.S. Grigiriev in his article describes the validation procedure of the J. Tobacyk's Paranormal Belief Scale. J. Tobacyk outlined the following subscales

(types of beliefs): traditional religious belief, psi-related belief, witchcraft, spiritualism, superstition, extraordinary life forms, and precognition (Grigiriev, 2015).

In the given research superstitiousness and paranormal beliefs are considered as close categories.

N.N. Ismodenova (2013) points at the fact that superstitions are in itself social images or forms of collective consciousness developed in the course of cooperative leaving of people. She considers superstitions as preconceptions or faith in supernatural forces. Superstitions imply (often unconsciously) that there exists a protection against those forces and it may be possible to find an acceptable compromise. The author thinks that superstitions are revealed at the level of behavior in the reduced ritual forms: using good luck charms, tattoos, magic gestures, etc. Following signs (when definite signs are believed to precede certain events) is considered as a form of superstitiousness. N.N. Ismodenova (2013) found out that the majority of her respondents follow signs in their daily routine even though some of them do not believe signs. The study showed that the main reasons of using magic and superstitions are socio-psychological: fear, discomfort, uncertainty and desire to foresee the after-effect of one's behavior. The respondents were sure that mass media played the main role in spreading the magical world-view (Ismodenova, 2013).

Y.V. Saenko (2006) suggests three aspects of superstitions: cognitive, affective-motivational and behavioral. Cognitive component includes cognitive process aimed at identification and categorization of the unknown events and situations, at foreseeing the possible after-effects and choosing the behavioral strategy concerning those events or situations. Affective-motivational component of superstitions is represented by emotional states that a person experiences regarding the potentially dangerous or, on the contrary, desired phenomena related to the urgent needs of an individual. Behavioral component comprises rituals and symbolic acts aimed at protecting a person against the threat, achieving the desired event or avoiding the undesired thing (Saenko, 2006).

According to Y.V. Saenko (2006), superstitions are based upon various irrational fears. When a person follows signs he/she strives to protect his/her identity and emotional sphere from anxiety and fear. Behavioral aspect of superstitions means that superstitious ideas regulate the human behavior in society and in the physical world. Y.V. Saenko's (2006) empiric study showed that superstitiousness has direct correlations with anxiety and external locus of control in the student sample group. In the other words the more anxious the person is, the more prone he is to find the explanations of his failures and success in the external influences, the more superstitious he would be. Y.V. Saenko (2006) understands superstitiousness as a form anxiety alongside with neurotic disorders and religionism (Saenko, 2006).

M.Y. Stogalshikova (2012) concludes that the basilisk-glance (“evil eye”) belief is a type of failure attribution and functions as a psychological defense (maintaining self-esteem, reducing anxiety, etc.).

Basing on the existing definitions the authors came to the idea that superstitiousness is a trait of an individual world-view, his specific relation to reality. Evidently in the contemporary psychology the category of “faith” is the closest to the studied phenomenon. A.M. Dvoynin defines faith as “internal relation of a personality, mythologized attitude to reality” (Dvoynin, 2011). In this context superstitiousness may be considered as a particular case of faith because it also implies internal relation of a person towards goings-on and mythologizes (mediates) his/her attitude to reality. Unlike religious faith with its confidence in the existence of supernatural, almighty God who influences the people’s lives and all the events, superstitiousness is conviction in the existence of cause-and-effect relationship between various events or separate behavioral acts (or inactivity) of a person and possible future misfortunes, as well as strong believing in different supernatural beings (ghosts, spirits, etc.) and their capability to affect people’s lives. Therefore from the point of view of psychology superstitiousness and religious faith should not be counterposed. On the contrary they should be studied as various manifestations of faith as a psychological phenomenon.

Why did superstitions and superstitiousness as a characteristic feature of individual world-view appear in the human society? R. Wiseman (2011) describes several variants of how some superstitions could appear, basing on religious (mainly Christian) myths. For example he explains the “baker’s dozen” superstition (belief that the number “13” causes unhappiness) reminding the story about the Lord’s Supper, where 13 people were present and one of them soon betrayed Jesus Christ. The author says that the superstitious forbiddance to pass beneath a ladder leaned against a wall originates from the Blessed Trinity concept (the triangle made by the floor, the wall and the ladder is considered as its symbol): to pass under it would mean to destroy its triunity. Knocking on wood is, according to R. Wiseman, an echo of pagan times when people addressed trees as spirits (Wiseman, 2011).

V.D. Mendelevich (2011) described disharmonious character traits that prevent a person from successful adaptation and self-actualization. Non-sanity and irrationalism (both based on superstitiousness) are listed as the key traits of this type of character. In the author’s opinion, “potential neurotic” is rigid and shows prognostic incompetence. A person becomes unable to predict the consequences of his behavior and possible negative events in the future because (alongside with some other reasons) in the process of education and socialization the family members and society in general (by means of national traditions expressed in proverbs and sayings) impress and fix a psychological stereotype. This stereotype is forbiddance to expect the possible negative events (Mendelevich, 2011).

Thus it may be concluded that peculiarities of education and socialization in families where stereotyped way of coping with challenges is cultivated (not to think about bad things, to follow signs, to base on the “former generations’ experience”), as well as using proverbs, sayings and signs that suggest behavioral patterns and complete forecasts in definite situations in the educational process leads to superstitiousness as a peculiarity of an individual world-view.

The goal of the given study is to reveal culturally specific peculiarities of superstitiousness of the Russian and Tatar undergraduate students.

The empiric tasks of the study:

1. Find out the manifestation of superstitiousness and paranormal beliefs in the Russian and Tatar sample groups.
2. Reveal correlations between the superstitiousness and paranormal beliefs indicators and various world-view parameters and stress coping strategies.

Superstitiousness is considered as a particular case of faith. It includes cognitive, behavioral and affective-motivational components and is manifested as a conviction in the existence of cause-and-effect relationship between various events or separate behavioral acts (or inactivity) of a person and possible future misfortunes, as well as strong believing in different supernatural beings (ghosts, spirits, etc.) and their capability to affect people’s lives, in extrasensory (psi-related) capabilities and possibilities to foresee the future by fortunetelling, horoscopes, etc.

RESEACH METHODOLOGY

To find out superstitiousness and paranormal beliefs the following methodology was used:

1. The Paranormal Belief Scale (J. Tobacyk)
2. The Superstitiousness Inventory (I. Abitov)

The Paranormal Belief Scale consists of 26 items and 7 subscales: traditional religious belief, psi-related belief, witchcraft, spiritualism, superstition, extraordinary life forms, and precognition. It includes a seven-point ratingscale (1- «strongly disagree», 7 – «strongly agree») (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983).

To determine the superstitiousness manifestation an original questionnaire “The Superstitiousness Inventory” was worked out that consists of 30 statements to reveal if the respondents behave and act according to superstitious beliefs and if they accept the beliefs that are typical in the contemporary Russian society. To gain a more objective data the respondents were also asked to list signs and beliefs that they follow but that were not included in the inventory. A 4-points scale was used to evaluate the suggested statements: 0 – “I never do this”, “1 – I do this rarely”, “2 – I do this often”, “3 – I always do this”. One of the partial tasks of the study was to test the face validity of the developed inventory (Abitov, 2016).

The “Ways of Coping Questionnaire” (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988) was used to measure coping strategies. It consists of 50 statements that describe the frequency of tending to various ways of coping with stress. A 4-point ratingscale measures to what extent a person is used to a situation (0 – Does not apply or not used, 3 – used a great deal). The questionnaire includes 8 scales: Confrontive Coping, Escape-Avoidance, Distancing, Self-Controlling, Accepting Responsibility, Positive Reappraisal, Planful Problem Solving and Seeking Social Support (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

The peculiarities of the world-view were measured with the “World Assumptions Scale” (Janoff-Bulman). It comprises 37 statements that describe the fundamental assumptions about oneself and about the world. Respondents indicate their agreement with the following statements on a scale ranging from 1—Strongly Disagree—to 6—Strongly Agree. The inventory includes the following subscales: Benevolence of the World, Justice, Self-Worth, Luck and Controllability (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

The survey was completed via the Internet, the on-line survey with an URL link was sent for the participants by e-mails.

The population of the study consisted of 204 undergraduate students (97 Tatar and 107 Russian students). The data was collected at the Kazan (Volga-Region) Federal University, Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Chuvash State University and Yaroslavl State University. A student was referred to a Russian a Tatar ethnic group basing on his/her indicated ethnical identity.

The normality of distribution of the data was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov’s test. The data distribution was normal; therefore parametric statistics was used to analyze the correlations and differences. The following statistics was used to process the data: Pearson’s coefficient, Student’s coefficient correlation analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using the Student’s coefficient it was revealed that the Tatar sample have stronger traditional religious beliefs ($p \leq 0,05$; $t = 2,373$). Besides Tatar students showed higher rates for such coping-strategies as Self-Controlling ($p \leq 0,05$; $t = 2,206$), Accepting Responsibility ($p \leq 0,001$; $t = 3,828$) and Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $t = 2,593$).

On the next stage of the empiric data processing the structural organization of the studies parameters was analyzed. Using the Pearson’s correlation coefficient it was revealed that in the Tatar sample “traditional religious belief” directly correlates with all the other Paranormal Belief scale dimensions: psi-related belief ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,386$), witchcraft ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,601$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r = 0,547$), superstition ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,226$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,205$), and precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,374$). Traditional religious belief also has positive

statistically significant correlations with the coping strategies “Distancing” ($p \leq 0,01$; $r = 0,330$), Seeking Social Support ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,255$) and Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r = 0,305$). The psi-related belief parameter in the Tatar sample group is directly linked with witchcraft ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,523$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,618$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,289$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,548$), with superstitiousness (Superstitiousness Inventory index) ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,229$) and with the coping strategy Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,298$). The witchcraft parameter has positive significant correlations with superstition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,262$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,733$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,353$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,691$), with the superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,371$), with the Lack Assumption ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,286$) and with the coping strategies Confrontive Coping ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,216$), Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,348$) and Seeking Social Support ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,207$). The superstition parameter directly correlates with spiritualism ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,237$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,201$), ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,485$), and with the superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,678$). Spiritualism is directly correlated with extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,448$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,691$), superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,339$), Lack Assumption ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,241$) and Positive Reappraisal coping strategy ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,333$). The extraordinary life forms belief has positive correlation with precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,365$). The precognition belief directly correlates with the superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,580$), Lack Assumption ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,210$), and the coping strategies Confrontive Coping ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,205$) and Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,336$). The superstitiousness index is directly linked with the justice assumption ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,219$), and with such coping strategies as Confrontive Coping ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,264$), Distancing ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,276$), Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,200$), Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,385$), and Seeking Social Support ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,237$).

The correlation analysis of the Russian sample group using the Pearson’s coefficient revealed that Traditional religious belief has positive correlations with psi-related belief ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,459$), witchcraft ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,668$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,527$), superstition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,497$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,399$), and precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,634$), as well as with the superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,549$), justice assumption ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,364$) and with the coping strategies Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,199$) and Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,268$). The psi-related belief has direct links with witchcraft ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,635$), superstition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,413$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,676$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,429$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,559$), superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,459$) and with the coping strategies Accepting Responsibility ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,225$) and Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,245$). Witchcraft belief is directly correlated with superstition

($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,575$), spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,663$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,484$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,815$), superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,622$), justice assumption ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,207$), and with the coping strategy Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,237$). Superstition belief is directly linked with spiritualism ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,447$), extraordinary life forms ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,319$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,613$), and superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,739$). The spiritualism parameter is directly correlated with extraordinary life forms belief ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,594$), precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,623$), superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,510$), and with the coping strategies Distancing ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,222$) and Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,248$). The extraordinary life forms belief has positive correlations with precognition ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,511$), superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,420$), as well as with Confrontive Coping ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,268$), Distancing ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,254$) and Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,267$). The precognition belief is directly correlated with superstitiousness index ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,649$), justice assumption ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,232$) and with the coping strategy Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,242$). The superstitiousness index shows direct correlations with Confrontive Coping ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,200$), Escape-Avoidance ($p \leq 0,01$; $r=0,308$) and Positive Reappraisal ($p \leq 0,05$; $r=0,203$).

The research findings indicate that the students from the Tatar sample group are more subject to traditional religious beliefs (Islam) about the existence of God, Paradise and Hell and Devil, than the Russian respondents. The higher devoutness among Tatar students may be explained by the historical and social context: for several centuries Tatar ethnic group leaved in the country where Christianity was the main religion, and being the minor ethnos its strived to preserve its religious traditions.

The differences between the samples show that in stressful situations Tatar undergraduate students keep temper and do not show their emotions more often than their Russian peers, they try to minimize emotional effect on the assessment of a situation and coping strategy choice, strive to self-controlling and accepting responsibility dealing with problems. They are more self-critical and more inclined to positive reappraisal of a stressful situation and considering it as a stimulus to the personality growth (Wasserman *et al.*, 2010). These peculiarities may be caused by the specifics of the Tatar traditional culture and Islamic influences where patience, ability to overcome difficulties and to see positive aspects in life-challenges, the opportunity to opening to God and satisfaction for sins are treated as special values. E.L.Nikolaev points at the similar culturally specific coping strategies of the Volga-region Chuvash ethnic group (Both Chuvash and Tatar ethnic groups are Turkic people) In particular, E.L.Nikolaev notes such socially approved ways of dealing with life difficulties in the Chuvash community as meekness and sensing (Nikolaev, 2006).

In both Russian and Tatar samples all the parameters of the Paranormal Belief Scale are closely inter-correlated. This fact may indicate that all types of beliefs

measured with the mentioned scale have the same nature. It is interesting to note that traditional religious beliefs have significant direct correlations with the other types of beliefs: in spiritualism, witchcraft, precognition, psi-related belief, superstition, or extraordinary life forms, although those types of beliefs are condemned by traditional Christianity and Islam. This fact proves the mentioned hypothesis that religious faith and superstitiousness and beliefs in the paranormal are not counterposed phenomena. In fact they are particular cases of faith as a psychological phenomenon.

It should be also noticed that there are significant positive correlations between the superstitiousness index (I. Abitov's original Superstitiousness Inventory) and the major part of the Paranormal Belief Scale therefore the face validity of the original inventory was tested and proved.

Both sample groups have direct correlations between the superstitiousness index and such coping strategies as Confrontive Coping, Escape-Avoidance and Positive Reappraisal. The more superstitious the students from the both groups are, the more often they tend to try to solve their problems using the behavioral patterns that are not always goal-oriented. They strive to change the situation, deal with the negative emotions, avoid the stressor (denial, dreaming, etc.) or try to overcome the stressful situation by re-framing it, treating it as a motivator for the personality development. These correlations are not culturally specific and may be determined by the mechanisms of interaction between superstitiousness phenomena and the mentioned behavioral patterns. Probably superstitious ideas function as regulators of definite types of behaviors in stressful situations. In both groups traditional religious beliefs are directly correlated with positive reappraisal of a stressful situation. Evidently it is determined by the meekness as a common value in Islam and in Christianity.

Alongside with similarities there are some differences revealed in the studied sample groups. The Tatar students directly associate their personal good luck with beliefs in witchcraft, spiritualism and precognition. The stronger their conviction in witchcraft and magic, metempsychosis and fortunetelling opportunities the more lucky they seem to themselves. This correlation may be determined by consonance of the mechanisms of irrational faith in such paranormal phenomena as witchcraft, metempsychosis, fortunetelling and luck.

The Tatar sample showed direct correlation between positive reappraisal coping-strategy and beliefs in the "power of thought", witchcraft and magic, metempsychosis, precognition and superstition. This relation shows that in this group paranormal beliefs determine the behavioral pattern of accepting the problem situation and seeking for the positive aspects in it.

The Tatar undergraduate students link seeking social support coping strategy and traditional religious beliefs, witchcraft and superstitiousness index. This link may show the unity of the mentioned phenomena. Traditional religion, faith in

witchcraft and superstitiousness imply the necessity to ask help: the assistance of God, wizard, magician or other belief carriers. The coping strategy "Seeking Social Support" reflects the behavioral component of these beliefs.

The Tatar students with strong tradition religious faith and strong superstitiousness often try to diminish the significance of the problem and reduce the degree of emotional involvement to overcome the problem situation and to get rid of negative experiences. Probably traditional religion and superstitiousness determine perception of all the events as the will of Heaven or as manifestations of some unfathomable laws. Therefore their significance reduces when a person addresses to God or if he observes rituals, traditions or signs. Distancing, as a coping strategy is a set of various behavioral acts aimed at reducing involvement and diminishing the significance of the situation: distraction, scaling-up (considering the situation in the context of the whole life), or comparing with a worse case.

The stronger beliefs in witchcraft and precognition are in the Tatar sample group, the more often they show active behavior in stressful situations, the more decisive they are trying to change the situation and to react the negative feelings. It is not easy to explain this correlation. S. Folkman and R. Lazarus considered Confrontive Coping to be problem-oriented strategy alongside with Planful Problem Solving. The studied parameters (superstitiousness and paranormal beliefs) do not have any significant correlations with Planful Problem Solving, but there are direct significant correlations with Confrontive Coping in both sample groups. The Russian students relate it with extraordinary life forms. Correlations between superstitiousness parameters and Confrontive Coping in both groups may mean that paranormal beliefs and superstitiousness make the students address the supranatural, irrational forces to overcome difficulties, i.e. Confrontive Coping may be sometimes manifested by irrational behavior that helps changing the situation: any type of activity, risk and confrontation.

The Tatar sample has a direct correlation between superstitiousness index and justice assumption. Possibly superstitiousness of this group, their faith in supranatural things helps them believing that the world with its cause-and-effect relationships is just and fair.

Russian students show the correlational link between conviction in justice of the world and traditional religious faith, as well as with beliefs in witchcraft and precognition. In other words religious formulas, faith in magic powers and opportunities to foresee the future keep them believing that there exists the higher justice in the world.

Russian group also demonstrate a link between such parameters of faith as traditional religious beliefs, psi-related beliefs, believing in metempsychosis, extraordinary forms of life (UFO, Loch Ness monster, Yeti, etc) and precognition on the one hand and Escape-Avoidance coping strategy (avoiding problems, dreaming, sleeping, distraction, etc.) on the other hand. The explanation may be

that paranormal beliefs and avoiding problems are in fact various manifestations of one and the same psychological phenomenon, namely, the external locus of control. It can be presented on the cognitive level as shift of responsibility on the supernatural forces, and on the behavioral level as refusal of any activity aimed at solving the problem, substitutional activity and dreaming instead.

The stronger the Russian students believe in spiritualism and extraordinary life forms, the more inclined they are to diminish the significance of the problem and reduce the degree of emotional involvement to overcome the problem situation and to get rid of negative experiences. The correlation may be determined by the fact that paranormal beliefs (metempsychosis, levitation, telekinesis, extraordinary life forms, etc.) reflect the passive, external position of a person towards the world. Distancing as a coping strategy is a representation of this passive position on the level of behavior.

The Russian students' sample showed a direct correlation between psi-related beliefs and accepting responsibility in stressful situations. This link may seem not logic. However psi-related beliefs may make a person convinced in the unlimited psychic capabilities or in the fact that the limits are not investigated yet. Probably the correlation demonstrates that respondents who believe in the unlimited human abilities and opportunities strive to treat stressful situations with more responsibility because they think that they are able to find all the necessary resources to solve the problem.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus the theoretical analysis and the empiric study allows making the following conclusions:

1. Superstitiousness may be considered as an independent psychic phenomenon, essentially close to paranormal beliefs. Superstitiousness is a particular case of a wider psychological phenomenon of faith. It includes cognitive, behavioral and affective-motivational components and is manifested as a conviction in the existence of cause-and-effect relationship between various events or separate behavioral acts (or inactivity) of a person and possible future misfortunes, as well as strong believing in different supernatural beings (ghosts, spirits, etc.) and their capability to affect people's lives, in extrasensory (psi-related) capabilities and possibilities to foresee the future by fortunetelling, horoscopes, etc.
2. In both Russian and Tatar students' samples superstitiousness is correlated with the attempt to confront the stressful situation, to avoid solving problems and to positively reappraise what had happened.
3. The Tatar students have stronger traditional religious beliefs than the Russian sample.

4. In the Tatar sample group such paranormal beliefs as traditional religious beliefs, spiritualism, witchcraft and precognition have direct correlations with the coping strategy “Positive Reappraisal”.
5. Faith in traditional religious formulas, in witchcraft and in precognition help the Russian students to keep the faith in the higher justice of the world.
6. In the Russian students’ sample group paranormal beliefs is related to Escape-Avoidance solving problems.

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