

An Insight into the Patterns and Influences Which Shape the Beliefs and Beliefs of the General Population

Dear Editor

Beliefs play a significant role in defining personality and the sense of self. They dictate one's behaviour and feelings towards others. They are our compass in life.¹ Belief is acceptance of something as true without proof which Influences one's values and morals, such as God is all-knowing and creator of heaven and earth.¹ Beliefs about ourselves and others are at the heart of many economic and social decisions, with large consequences for welfare.² This becomes more important at the time of pandemic when conspiracy theory has been widely accepted in our part of the world.

We designed a survey to examine what common people believe and how these beliefs may constitute a belief system. Thirty percent of our participants responded yes to the question that they would believe something told by another person, 37% responded they might, while 33% refused to believe anything until they had confirmed proof. Eighty-nine percent responded yes to the question, "Do you believe anything?" Ninety-seven percent responded yes to the question, "Would you believe something told to you by the person you trust?" Eighty-eight percent thought that beliefs shaped their lives. Ninety-two percent responded that religion plays an important role in shaping their belief system. Fifty-nine percent responded that they have to fight to protect their beliefs. Eighty-six percent responded that they believe what people in their social circle believe. 88 percent responded said they do not believe what President Trump says. Seventy percent believed that news provided by media might not be true. 95 percent believed what their parents told them, while 82% believed what their friends said. Ninety-seven percent believed in God, and an afterlife and 96% believed in science. Sixty-five percent responded that a person could not live a life without any belief.

Our beliefs have a very powerful influence on our behaviour, which also impacts our attitudes during this COVID-19 era.² Many of our beliefs were instilled in us as children by parents, teachers, social upbringing, and the media before we were aware of their impact or able to have a choice about them, and that was very much evident in our survey responses also.³

Beliefs may also be influenced by other factors, such as overconfidence, misestimating of probabilities, and self-image concerns, it may be difficult to identify stereotypes. Therefore, an empirical strategy must separate alternative belief mechanisms.⁴ Generally, many factors play significant roles in altering our beliefs and values, such as culture as a combination of beliefs, customs, practices and social behaviours of a particular group of people.³⁻⁵ Results of our survey showed similar patterns as societal norms, religion and science were believed by most of our respondents. Our survey showed that most people think a belief system and belief to be important pillars in sustaining life and are ready to fight to protect them. Usually, parents and trustworthy people are believed more than universally accepted powerful people. More research is required to examine the origin and evolution of beliefs and belief systems in human beings. Once we can trace the psychological and biochemical aspects of the normal belief system, we can then study abnormal beliefs and delusions.

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