Cognitive and personality differences of supernatural belief

ABSTRACT:

Background
This project examined if we believe in certain things because we think in a certain way or have certain personality. This required the development of the scale to enable the study of cognition and personality with relation to belief.

Aim
Examine cognition and personality of people who hold different types of supernatural belief.

Method
Four studies were conducted at the University of Derby and via social media. Studies one and two created and validated a new scale. Studies three and four used various measures of cognition and personality to create a new model.

Results
Studies one and two created and validated the Belief in the Supernatural Scale, a 44 item scale with five factors: ‘mental and psychic phenomena’, ‘religious belief’, ‘psychokinesis’, ‘supernatural entities’, and ‘common paranormal perceptions’. Study three revealed two profiles relating to cognition: ‘reflective thinkers’ and ‘intuitive implicit believers’. The final study revealed ‘sensitive and abstract thinkers’ and ‘reflective metacognitive dogmatists’ profiles. Structural Equation Modelling was then used to test different models finding that personality predicted belief, and belief predicted cognition.

Conclusion
This project indicated a clear separation of religious and paranormal belief within the new scale, and that spiritual belief overlaps between the two. Also found that ‘sceptics’ and ‘religious believers’ have remarkably similar profiles. The ‘paranormal believers’ did not think critically or analytically. Schizotypy was the main predictor of belief and the relationship between belief and cognition being dependent on the type of belief.

Keywords
Supernatural, Belief, Cognition, Personality, Paranormal, Religious

Published Work:
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