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## ARTICLE

# Supernatural or Social Mind? –Four Case Studies from Southeast Turkey

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## Abstract

Originated in early phase of Palaeolithic period, the structure of social mind marks the strongest effect on an individual from a distinct human group. The beliefs on supernatural beings, along with other norms, rites and rituals, are actually considered to be the products of the social mind that has been formed and reformed following environmental and socio-technological changes of humanity through time. Southeast Turkey is a region where all people groups have been believed on different types of supernatural forces and this is commonly found in archaeological remains since prehistoric period. Moreover, at present day, the beliefs on supernatural beings as well as their socio-psychological effects are more visible in the region comparing to other parts of Turkey. Therefore, out of 53 case studies obtained in ethnographic fieldworks, thorough examination of 4 individual case studies have been performed in this study to illustrate the power and functions of social mind in producing the beliefs on supernatural beings. Further, as the consequence of these beliefs, the generation sufferings in the region have also been examined in this study.

**Keywords:** Supernatural beings, genie, psychiatric disorder, generation suffering, Turkey.

## Doğaüstü mü Yoksa "Sosyal Zihin" mi? Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nden Elde Edilen 4 Vaka Çalışması

### Özet

Kökeni Paleolitik dönemin erken evresine giden sosyal zihin'in yapısı, insan toplumunun içerisindeki bireyin hayatı ve düşünceleri üzerinde güçlü etkiye işaret etmektedir. Toplumdaki diğer sosyal kurallar ve ritüeller ile birlikte, zamanla çevresel ve sosyo-teknolojik değişimlerinin sonucunda biçimlendirilen doğaüstü varlıklar hakkındaki inançlar da, sosyal zihin'in ürünleri olarak düşünülür. Türkiye'de Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi, tarih öncesi dönemden beri farklı insan gruplardan çeşitli doğaüstü güçlere inanıldığı ve bu inançlara ait arkeolojik kalıntılarda yaygın olarak bulunduğu bir bölgedir. Günümüzde de, doğaüstü varlıklar üzerinde inançların yanı sıra sosyo-psikolojik etkileri, Türkiye'nin diğer bölgeleri ile karşılaştırıldığında bu bölgede daha fazla görünmektedir. Bu nedenle, etnografik alan çalışmalardan elde edilen 53 vakanın arasında en dikkat çeken 4 vakanın incelendiği bu araştırmada, doğaüstü inanç üretiminde sosyal zihin'in güç ve fonksiyonlarını gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırmada ayrıca, doğaüstü inançların sonucu olarak bölgedeki farklı nesillerin üzerinde devam eden sorunlar da incelenmiştir.

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## INTRODUCTION

The beliefs on supernatural beings refer to the faiths on the existences and effects of paranormal forces including, but are not limited to, deities, genies, spirits, witches, ghosts, devils, demons, miracles as well as someone's ability to read minds, manipulating supernatural powers, and communication with the dead. Since Palaeolithic period, humans have been remarkably susceptible to supernatural beliefs, in particular, to the beliefs in invisible agents and various natural powers–believing that on the basis of their beliefs and desires, these supernatural forces act like us; however, they are not usually visible to us in our normal eye. Eventually, all human cultures across the globe have believed that illness and calamity are caused and brought by a variety of invisible person-like entities, such as spirits, ghosts, saints, evils, demons, cherubim, devils and gods.

Inevitably, because of the cultural variations across the geographical region, there have been so many variations as well as contradicts among the beliefs on beliefs. There are also wide differences among the beliefs about the characteristics of these divine and supernatural beings, regarding their powers and effects. Besides of the disagreements and differences between cultures, with the advance of knowledge and technological developments, it has now been a fact that these beliefs are the products of various socio-cultural agents (Siddiq, 2018: 11-12). Scientific discoveries have also established that many of these beliefs are fallacious; for instance, diseases are produced not by demonic beings but entirely by natural causes. Yet, may cultures still respects various types supernatural beings such as ghosts, fairies, angels, gods, goddesses, genies, witches as well as perform countless rites and rituals related to their miraculous activities upon the human societies.

For instance, belief in witchcraft is still a common social problem in all over India, albeit having strong laws and acts regarding the witch-hunt (see: Mehra & Agrawal, 2016). Especially there are widespread beliefs among the tribal groups and rural societies that, mainly witches and demons are responsible for the famine, flood, deadly storms, earthquakes or drought like natural disasters as well as epidemics, diseases or sudden losses in the community (Siddiq, 2018: 11). Native American witchcraft have primarily been documented as part of a traditional worldview of shamans and magic (Games, 2010: 21-25). In Native American societies, witches and other supernatural beings are believed to take the forms of animals in order to travel in secret and do harm the innocent. On the other hand, while there is no practice of gendered association with witchcraft among Native American groups, most witches are women in European and South Asian tradition as well as there are many violent acts related to the beliefs on witches and black magic in both European and South Asian cultures (Siddiq, 2018). However, witchcraft is a respected practice in Africa. There are no such violent acts, destructions or enemy oriented witchcraft practices in African cultures. Witchcraft in Africa plays rather a very different socio-cultural role than the European and Asian cultures. In African tradition, it is believed that witchcraft helps rising up and protecting the clan and the community as a whole. Moreover, the skill and authority of practicing witchcraft can transmit from one generation to another within the family along certain channels (Middleton & Winter, 2004). It is also believed that the ancestors were equipped with the protective witchcraft of their own clan. With the help of witchcraft, the ancestors were even able to gather the power of animals into their hands (Siddiq, 2018: 11).In West Asian cultures, on the other hand, witchcraft and beliefs on supernatural beings are related to spiritual beings such as angels, devils, demons, witches, and monsters. It is also widely believed that these supernatural forces can take form of any kinds of animal, plant, non-living objects; can be possessed into human, any kinds of animal and plants; as well as they have the capacity to both help and harm human individual or a community as a whole (Al-Habeeb, 2003; Alosaimi et al., 2014; Siddiq, 2018).

Therefore, no matter what forms are these beliefs taken, there are always socio-cultural roles to continue and nourishing the beliefs on supernatural (Siddiq, 2018). A belief on supernatural being is not the part of supernatural agents themselves; because for those who hold this belief, the power is usually impersonal, unseen, and potentially everywhere. The belief on supernatural beings is neither good nor evil, but it can be powerful and extremely dangerous if misused. There are also long-term socio-cultural effects as well as socio-psychological punishments, sufferings and traumas throughout generations as for the consequences of these beliefs (Mehra & Agrawal, 2016; Siddiq, 2018). Observing the factors of socio-cultural norms and agents from selective case studies, this paper attempts to explore the enduring forces and effects of *social mind* in producing the beliefs on supernatural being and demonic possessions among the cultures in Southeast Turkey.

## THE SUPERNATURAL: SOCIAL OR INDIVIDUAL?

Humans are very social animals and all the norms, rites and rituals they practice are actually the outcome of a mutual social agreement reinforced by the social mind of the respective human group. Archaeological evidence suggests that our social behaviour evolved in the very early phase of Palaeolithic period when human started hunting in group. According to the geographical regions, climatic variations and environmental conditions, different people groups across the world have developed distinct 'social skills' and have been deepened on certain socio-cultural norms and beliefs that have been very vital for their survival. Consequently, variations and differences in rites, rituals and beliefs (even though on a same subject) have been inevitable across cultures.

It is not fully understood that why and when people started to believe and depended on supernatural. However, several scientific researches in contemporary period proposed some perspectives on why people hold supernatural beliefs. One of those perspectives argues

that, supernatural beliefs are actually a product of learning (van Elk *et al*., 2016). In an attempt to understand their environment, or the mystery of the universe in a broad sense, prehistoric people have created the beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Prehistoric people would attribute occurrences they did not understand to supernatural agents. For instance, a storm may have been believed to be an angry deity or a crisis in wildlife supply may have been thought to be the lack of blessings of totemic ancestors. Contemporary research (e.g. Gervais *et al*., 2011) also supports the social learning approach. It is found that individuals are more likely to accept beliefs held by those close to them in their family and community. Indeed, parents tend to encourage their children to hold the same beliefs as themselves (Braswell *et al*., 2011). On the other hand, the influence of culture becomes apparent while examining the beliefs people do not hold. For example, Christians in India do not typically believe in Shiva, the supreme god of Hindu people. Instead, they adopt the beliefs from their surrounding cultures (Gervais *et al*., 2011). In this way, albeit does not provide a complete understanding of the general human tendency to believe in the supernatural, the 'social learning perspective' provides clues as to why individuals hold certain beliefs.

Another perspective about the supernatural beliefs focuses on social cognitive processes, particularly the 'hyperactive agency detection device' (HADD). Agency detection theory argues that prehistoric people inherently detect patterns and agents (e.g. animals or other necessary objects) in the environment (Barrett & Lanman, 2008). Particularly in prehistoric period, this detection system could prevent human groups from encountering the dangerous predator. For instance, assuming the certain signs, marks or movement indicates dangerous carnivorous animals in the grasslands; prehistoric people could potentially save their life by changing their route. Therefore, it has been suggested that a heightened bias towards detecting patterns and supernatural agents in the environment actually evolved from our prehistoric ancestors (van Elk *et al.*, 2016). A distinct people group was more likely to attribute unknown agents, or the imagined supernatural beings, to their own beliefs. Therefore in many cultures, an object that fell off a shelf is not due to gravity but instead, it has become a ghost (Barrett & Lanman, 2008). Moreover, it is observed that the people groups with the beliefs on supernatural beings are more likely to pattern different natural agents. Research (e.g. Riekki *et al*., 2013) has found that higher belief in the paranormal, results illusory perception in human individuals. It is also found that the believer people see or find more agents in the environment than the non-believer people do (Riekki *et al*., 2013). Moreover, neurological research (e.g. Riekki *et al*., 2014) demonstrates that believer people have stronger brain activation in areas related to agency detection. It is also observed that superstitious individuals, who are highly biased by social learning, are more likely to describe

non-living items as having desires and intentions (Lindeman & Aarnio, 2007). Therefore, because of the hyperactivity of pattern and agency detection, it appears that supernatural beliefs can be explained by social cognitive biases.

The theory of mind (ToM) is another research perspective to understand social cognitive explanation of supernatural beliefs. It is a fact that people differ in their ability to imagine about the thoughts, feelings and goals of others individual in their surroundings (Premack & Woodruff, 1978). This dimension of theory of mind (ToM) is referred to as 'mentalizing'. According to the theory of mind, the 'mentalizing' is a cognitive trait that becomes responsible for thinking about supernatural agents (Willard & Norenzayan, 2013). Therefore, a certain amount of 'mentalizing' (e.g., imagining a loving, harmful or helpful paranormal force) is needed for believing in any supernatural agents and forces. Moreover, 'mentalizing' produces higher religiosity and supernatural beliefs in human brain (Willard & Norenzayan, 2013). It is also observed that the areas of human brain which associated with the theory of mind (ToM) are activated when seeking help from a supernatural agent or praying to God (Schjoedt *et al*., 2009) or thinking about the blessing, love and emotion of god (Kapogiannis *et al*., 2009). It is further observed that, the higher 'mentalizing' is not only associated with greater religiosity, but people who possess high 'mentalizing' condition gain the greatest psychological benefits from being religious or find secure shelter under faiths and beliefs (Routledge *et al*., 2016). Therefore, considering the factors and neurological states mentioned above, it is strongly arguable that the 'mentalizing' plays a vital role in the belief on supernatural beings. On the other hand, there is a surprising fact that women possess higher tendency to 'mentalizing' than men do (Lawson *et al*., 2004). Perhaps this is the reason why women tend to score higher on religiosity and spirituality (Norenzayan *et al*., 2012).

It is also arguable that the beliefs on supernatural beings are connected to personality or willingness of a social group as a whole, because agreeableness and conscientiousness are completely associated while mentioning about the spirituality, paranormal agents and religiosity (Kosek, 1999; Taylor & MacDonald, 1999; Saroglou & Munoz-Garcia, 2008). A further examination of spirituality and personality revealed that the dimensions of spirituality, such as phenomenological dimensions, cognitive-affective orientation to spirituality, paranormal and occult beliefs, religiousness, existential well-being etc. are associated with various personality traits. Specifically, cognitive orientation towards spirituality is found to be related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness; spiritual religiousness is associated with agreeableness and conscientiousness; phenomenological dimension and paranormal beliefs are related to openness; and existential well-being is negatively related to neuroticism (MacDonald, 2000).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Socio-Cultural Background

The case studies of this study are observed in different parts of Mardin province of Southeast Turkey (Figure 1). The province is located at the northern part ancient Mesopotamia. The ancient Silk Road, which was the prominent trade route between Asia, Africa and Europe – as well as for the exchange of beliefs and thoughts from Bronze Age to Ottoman Period, is also passed through the foothills on where the present Mardin city located.
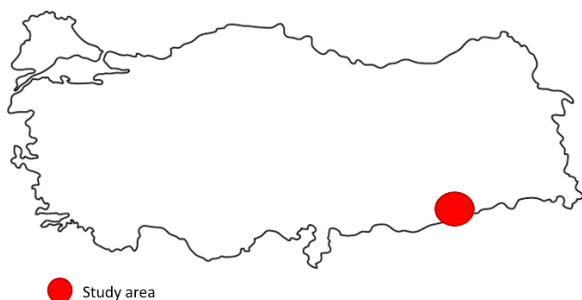


*Figure 1*. Location of the study area

Archaeological evidences of symbolic and ritualistic practices are very profound in Mardin region, including sculptures, figurines, ritual objects of Neolithic societies as well as various cultures and settlements of Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Mitanni, Assyrian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arabian, Seljuk, Artuqid and Ottoman reigns. Alike of other parts of Turkey, the majority of the population in study area is Muslim (Sanlı & Siddiq, 2018). However, people have a very strong tendency to practice rituals as well as exorcism which is not very frequent in other parts of Turkey. Almost every family in the study area believe on different types of supernatural forces and wear amulets to protect themselves as well as their households (Siddiq, 2018). There are also some minority groups in the region following different religious traditions mainly of Assyrian Christians and Yazidis, who also have strong believe on different supernatural and evil forces and perform rituals, wear amulets for the protection from these evil spirits.

Religious tolerance as well as harmonious cultural practices of Assyrians, Yazidis and Muslims, combining with Arab, Turkish and Kurdish people groups, have made a cultural mosaic where they have been living in peace for millennia (Siddiq, 2017). There are hundreds of tombs and sacred places in the region, where all types of people group seek medical treatments, ask help to gain wealth, children or remedy for family problems, mental illnesses etc.

### Research methods

Case study research method (Yin, 2014) has been followed in this study. The research method presents an up-close, in-depth, and detailed observation of subject of study (i.e. the case). This research method also examines the contextual conditions and responsible factors that ultimately reinforce the characteristics the subject studied. The case study research method is a very suitable approach in different prominent fields of social science including anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science as well as education, public administration, social work etc (Yin, 2014: 34).

The main objective of this research was to measure various factors related to the causes and effects of the beliefs on supernatural beings, mainly by in-depth study of selective cases. Aiming this, research questionnaire and ethnographic in-depth interview, mainly of prolonged case study interviews (Yin, 2014: 164), shorter case study interviews (Yin, 2014: 165), and direct observations (Yin, 2014: 167) research methods have been applied. Prolonged case study interviews have been taken from 14 subjects, including adult males and females. Shorter case study interviews have taken from 37 subjects, including adult and teen male as well as adult and teen female individuals. An average prolonged case study interview required between 150 and 210 minutes while an average shorter case study interview required between 40 and 70 minutes. On the other hand, direct observation method has been followed for only two cases. The purpose of the direct observation was to observe the exorcist practice, amulet making process as well as reactions and conditions of the patient under exorcism. Out of total 53 case studies, four (n=4) case have been selected and examined in-depth to understand the role of social mind in producing the beliefs on supernatural beings as well as observing 'generation/s suffering'. On the other hand, albeit it was permitted by the research subjects to mention their full name in research result, the abbreviation is used while describing their name (e.g. M.K. = Mustafa Kaya) following the anthropological ethic codes.

### Data collection, processing and analysis

Prior to data collection, we obtained ethical permission from the family heads as well as the subjects themselves. Research questionnaire of 21 questions set (e.g., "*How old were you when the supernatural force possessed you?*", "*Did you have any health problem before being possessed?*", "*How was the economic condition of your family in that time?*", "*Do your family members practice rituals or religious activities or wear amulets that are related to supernatural forces?*", "*Do you remember what happened after you were possessed by genie?*", "*What kinds of treatments did you take to recover from it?*", If the patient has got well, "*How do you feel now about your physical and mental health condition?*") was produced in order to focus on the four stages of a subject: 1) the condition before getting possessed, 2) the symptoms and condition during possessed by supernatural forces, 3) the condition under treatment or curing process, and 4) the condition of post ailment period if the subject is cured from the possession. Traditional dialogue base interview methods have been used in the process of data collection. Questions were not explained to subjects; instead, they were asked necessary questions following a suitable situation during a face-to-face conversation with them.

Other family members, including the spouses, children, parents as well as siblings of the subjects, were also sometimes present during the interviews.

For data analysis, researchers and assistants worked individual interviews on the information of distinct subjects and later whole information in a descriptive format was gathered together. And finally the information was evaluated according to social norms as well as psycho-medical symptoms. Following this process, first we have cycled and compared the case studies until the four core cases have been identified. Then, we have compared the data systematically through the four cases and sorted out core data which fitted the category to explore social mind related factors and generation suffering. Finally, the in-depth analysis started with complete documentation of the crucial changes occurred throughout different stages of pre-ailment, ailment and post-ailment period.

## RESULTS

### Case Study 1

OY is a 28 year old young man. He comes from a religious family but he himself is not very regular for religious practices. He is newly married and believed to be possessed by supernatural forces, mainly of genies shortly before his marriage. It is claimed that OY's wife had control on genies, and with their help, she made him to fall in love with her and eventually made him to marry her. Therefore, OY's parents and siblings strongly claim that he is spelled by his wife and because of this recently he is too much in love with his wife. Although OY now has started to believe that he might have been possessed by genies because of his wife, he believes that he still does not need to take any treatment or rituals to be cured from this spell/genie possession. However, his family members strongly believe that there must be some magic and spell the very harmfully influenced him and they always intend to take him to the local faith healers. The traditional healers and faith healers also told his family that he is spelled by black magic as well as possessed by evil sprites and harmful genies. They also prepared some amulets for him. Being convinced that OY is now infected by spells and black magic of his wife, OY parents and siblings attempted several time to divorce him from his wife.

On the other hand, OY recently claims that the amulets that he is currently wearing have provided him very good results and now he is cured. He further claims that he gradually realizing that his wife might has some connections with different types of paranormal forces. For example, he states, "*One day I was sleeping with my wife as a usual night. At midnight, suddenly I woke up and did not see my wife in the bed; however, I heard the waffles and started looking for my wife all the rooms in our house. I did not find her in any of the rooms. I was scared. Finally, I looked in a closet and there was my wife! She was inside of the closet and was standing as if looking at someone who was standing in front of her, at the opposite side of the closet. They were talking about*

*something; however, I did not understand very well what they actually were talking about. I started to become more scared and more alert from that night. Following that night, I started to discover that this kind of conversation continues to happen very often.*"

With pale and scared face, OY further states that he attempted to understand the conversations between his wife and that unseen paranormal being in the closet, and failed every time. However, he claims that he only understood some words from their conversation; as if, once his wife was saying to that unseen being, "*I love him very much! You must not take him from my life!*"

### Case Study 2

SI is a 46-year-old woman. She comes from a family with regular religious practices. She is married and has two children. She did not have any health problem before. However, it is believed that at the age of 27, she was possessed by genies. After she was possessed, people thought that it was her mother-in-law and sister-in-law who spelled and used black magic on her. Without any clue, once in a normal day after seeing the amulet in her room, SI started to be very aggressive to other people and damage household things in her surroundings. Following that day, the situation became even more serious and worse as time went by. SI even stabbed a knife to her own son and injured him, and she claims that she did it unconsciously, as if someone made her to do it. Moreover, SI's mental condition went worse when her husband or other family members tried to protect her or to prevent her attacks on her surrounding people.

It is claimed that her condition became too worse that her children were not brought to her or even were not shown to her for nearly two years. She claims that sometimes she was taken and sometimes she herself went to the local faith healers, but no treatments gave any positive result. Being a truck driver, her husband also had to stay away of home for month-long trip and could not able to see or take care of her regularly. She then wanted to stay with her parents. However, after they took her to her parents' house, unfortunately her father locked her in a small room being afraid that she might damage things in the house or attack and harm people. During the whole period of she was jailed in the small room, nothing but food and water was brought into her room in a certain time of the day.

However, her husband took her to their own house and attempted to start a normal life again after some months. Together they started to regularly visit some local faith healers. However, nothing was changed or there was not any positive result, albeit her husband took her to many sacred places and local faith healers. She always continued claiming that she was possessed by genies and behaving strangely. Sometimes, she was even attacking and harming her husband. She further had gone too far that, once she attempted to choke her daughter to death by pressing her throat. Despite all the treatments and cares her family members provided, unfortunately the

strange and aggressive behaviour of SI remained the same.

One day when her daughter came to her, she told her daughter, "*I have a feeling that your father is going to die soon.*" Coincidentally, two days later of her words to her daughter, the news of her husband's death had arrived. SI claims that the genies told her these words, "*We will leave you alone after two days, because the black magic and the spell upon you will be broken after two days.*" SI believes that the words of the genies came true and it exactly happened with the death of her husband. She claims that her mental and physical health condition started to get better within a month of her husband's death. She further claims that, at present day, she does not have that much severe bad effect in her mind as like it used to be.

No traditional treatment of faith healers and medical treatments from hospital did not provide her any positive outcome. She has taken a lot of medicine as well as there are a lot of amulets she has worn in her body. She also placed many amulets in different parts of home and outside of the house. However, everything was in vain. Because she, as well as the people in her community, believes that it was the black magic, the spell and the possession of genies that made her abnormal and brought too much pain in her life. She was free from it only when the spell was broken following the death of her husband.

SI left her husband's house and now is living alone in her parents' home. Her husband's siblings and relatives do not have any contact with her anymore. Her son and daughter also left her and now they are living in a distant city. They also have strong fear of SI, and do not dare to keep any contact with her, because they believe that, from evil spirits, it might bring harm upon.

## Case Study 3

CE is a 45-year-old woman. She comes from a religious family. She was possessed by supernatural forces, mainly of genies when she was about 25 years old and become free of spell at her 35. She was in good health before her possession. However, before some months of her marriage, she was unfortunately possessed by genies. Consequently, she became very bored at living especially with her mother-in-law at her early days of married life, and eventually started to argue a lot with her mother-in-law. CE and her relatives believe that this was because of the genies that made her arguing with her mother-in-law.

During the early stage of her gene possession, her body was constantly shaking and shivering while lying down on the bed or sleeping at night. The effect was so strong that once she wanted to save herself from this extreme pain and exhaustion, and eventually attempted to jump off her balcony of four storey building. However, fortunately her family members saved her from that suicide attempt.

These kinds of abnormalities began to continue for some months, and then one day something happened. She was surrounded by pillows while sleeping at the night;

however, when she woke up in the morning, instead of pillows, there were walls around her. Neither she, nor her family members could explain this incident. Everybody started to believe that it was the genies who did this to her. The very similar incident started to repeat for many days. However, she claims that in following months, the genies started to pile her pillows around her as like a strong wall when she was slept at night; and in the morning, she or no one in her family could separate the pillows from her bed or break the pillow wall unless the genies were willing to.

She saw many faith healers from different places and sought for treatment as well as wore amulets and made genie spell casts. She also went to almost every faith healers and especially religious priests in her neighbouring regions as well as psychiatrists of provincial hospital, and unfortunately nothing brought her any positive outcomes. However, she believes that the treatment of an exorcist in Viranşehir, which is about 130 km away of her town, brought positive results for her condition. The amulets that she brought from that faith healer, wore on her body, kept in different parts of her rooms, as well as hid all corners of the house.

The faith healer of Viranşehir has performed exorcism twice on her. Although it was not very effective at the first time; however, in second time, she was not able to remember or feel anything because she probably became senseless or under delusion because of the effects ritualistic process. The last thing in that second exorcism she can remember is the prayer and the cane that was being hit the ground again and again.

At present day, CE does not possess any mysterious behaviour. There is also no abnormality in her physical health. She is also getting well with other family members of her family. Only sometimes psychologically she just does not feel very well.

## Case Study 4

ŞY is an 18 year old young boy. He comes from a family with no religious faith. However, ŞY believes that when he was 16 year-old, he was possessed by a genie. At that time, albeit there was no problem with his physical health, his mental health was not going very well. He was suffering from different psychological problems, mainly of sleeping disorders and over temperament.

It was the evening of a normal day. He was walking at the road in the late evening and it was getting dark. Suddenly, from nowhere, he saw a person like paranormal thing 10-15 meters in front of him. However, the shadowed person/thing suddenly disappeared within a few seconds, and strangely reappeared after few minutes. From then on, the appearing and disappearing of that paranormal thing continued to happen to his sight frequently. The person like thing started to come in front of him about 10 to 15 times a day. ŞY claims that the mysterious and sometimes invisible person like thing still comes in front of him regularly.

When he first saw it, ŞY actually was startled and shocked. He explains that, after a while he thought it was a mistake or he might saw hallucination because of his sleeping disorder or psychological problem. However, he saw that person like thing again after two days of that first evening. From that day on, he started to realize that it was not a mistake. He was very scared in the beginning, but did not give importance because, he thought, he was psychologically uncomfortable and it could normally happen to anyone with his mental health condition. Gradually he was being used to with this mysterious thing and eventually it began to be a normal company for him and he was not afraid anymore after some days. He claims that he now rather sees this paranormal being as his mysterious friend. ŞY further claims that he and the paranormal being even make schedule for their time to meet and talk to each other.

ŞY sought for different treatments to cure this unusual problem. Claiming to be a rational person, he even went to the psychologists regularly. However, no treatment helped him out of this problem. The paranormal being continued to appear in front of him. The psychologists gave him two types of medicine; one for the nerve control and the other was the sleeping pill. Neither of them worked in this condition. He claims that he actually got angrier after taking the nerve control pills. On the other hand, the sleeping pills had no effect on the actual problem but making him constantly sleepy. After all the medical treatment failed, however, he started to find his own way to solve this problem. He started to set up his mind to accept this condition and think the mysterious paranormal being as his friend. He attempted to start communicate him as a friend and in this way, he got used to living with it.

He did not go to any faith healers because he believes that it would not work at all. But he is also suspicious about it because he has been treated differently and has not got any cure. Now he wants to believe that everything can happen in our mysterious world. He says, *"There are many things that we can never be sure in the world."* And therefore, he certainly believes that the paranormal being he sees is very real. Not being religious, on the other hand, he does not believe that there are genies or evil spirits in our world. He thinks that he inherited this anti-religious thought from his family. Therefore, at first, he thought this kind of vision as a hallucination. However, according to his statement, when the paranormal being eventually started to appear to him in a physical form and he even could touch its body, he had no option but believing in it. He has been seeing the paranormal being so many times that he literally started to live with it. He also sometimes dreams the mysterious being in his dream.

Gradually he wants a lot more than the vision, and the paranormal being does so. For example, he claims, the supernatural being can help him to understand what people think in their mind. The paranormal being even sometimes advices to him to do something for the results he desires and he gets exactly the same results. ŞY believes that he currently is being alive because of this paranormal being in his life. Therefore, he does not care whatever or whoever it is, or from where the paranormal being came from. Instead he just likes to live with this supernatural being. Whenever it appears, he just gets stuck and cannot think or focus anything but the paranormal being. ŞY claims that it is kind of a mysterious feeling, as if he is detached from the earth and flying in the space.

ŞY remembers the moment he first spoke to it. He asked it, *"What are you?"*, and just smiled at him. First, it was a very dark shadow; however, he could clearly see it smiling at him. At that time, he was little scared and then the shadow disappeared in a few seconds. In a few days of this first conversation, ŞY started to talk regularly to the paranormal being. According to ŞY's description, the voice of this being is hoarse and choked, but he claims, it seems louder than the sound of whispering. ŞY further claims that the voice can be very fearful to a normal person.

On the other hand, he finds the attitudes and ideas of this paranormal being to somebody he knows. The person is not from his family, but from a different one of his acquaintance. However, ŞY never missed or felt respect or emotion for that person. Therefore, he does not understand why the behaviour and attitude of the paranormal being is very similar to that person in his acquaintance.

ŞY claims, the paranormal being told him that it is going to rearrange his life back, and he believes so, because everything it said to him before, become true. It may be a dark shadow, but ŞY believes that it showed him how to live like a happy man. ŞY thinks that peoples' thoughts are darker than the shadow of the paranormal being. He thinks that what people do not see or understand, they think it as a bad thing; however, they do not even realize that with their darker thoughts, they are even worse beings than that the dark shadow appears in his sight.

## DISCUSSION

*"Generation suffering"* is strongly apparent as the consequences of the beliefs on supernatural beings in Southeast Turkey. One generation suffering is less frequent in the region while two generation suffering seems more frequent among the believers. On the other hand, albeit not very frequent, there are three four generation suffering results from the beliefs on supernatural beings. For example, SI in case study 2, her parents and her children have been experienced and still going through social isolation and eventually suffering from psychological trauma created by effects of beliefs and responses of the social group where they are living within. As a part of this on-going research, it was seen previously that all people groups in Southeast Turkey possess the beliefs on and fear from different types of paranormal agents which have very strong regional and historical roots (see: Siddiq, 2018). Therefore, it is apparent that there must be different levels of social punishment, pain and generation sufferings produced by

the effects of the social mind as well as socio-cultural attitudes towards the paranormal agents and the individuals who are thought to be possessed and suffered from them.

Albeit reviled by the scientific experiments (e.g. Lawson *et al*., 2004; Norenzayan *et al*., 2012), it is still arguable whether women have a stronger tendency to be affected by the beliefs on supernatural agents than the men. In our on-going research project, we still have not succeeded to produce authentic statistical and reasonable data; however, among the four case studies in this research, two women appear to be affected and suffered more comparing to the men. Therefore, our previous (i.e. Siddiq, 2018) and present findings at least partially justify this theory that women have stronger tendency to believe on paranormal agents and are at more risk to be affected from the negative impacts of supernatural beliefs than the men do.

On the other hand, it is observed that people who are high in mentalizing are associated with greater religiosity as well as gain the greatest psychological benefits from being religious (Routledge *et al*., 2016). However, ŞY in the case study 4 does not show any psychological benefits from religious beliefs which is thought to be caused by mentalizing in our brain. Instead, ŞY depends on his own rational therapy to cope with the psychological disorders he has been going through. In one hand, his rational mind does not allow the existence of the paranormal vision he has been experiencing; while on the other hand, his psychological problems encourage him to produce an explanation to his illusion in his favourable condition. Moreover, for the foundation of his explanation, he takes help from some universal thoughts (i.e. there are many things beyond our capacity of experience, or humans are too week to understand all about the mystery of universe etc.) which are commonly recited and practiced in his society. On the other hand, to explain about their psychological conditions, SI and CE of case studies 2 and 3 actually have been experienced and still sometimes being experienced social punishment, isolation and severe torture by believing that these were caused by black magic and paranormal beings.

On the other hand, the 'hyperactive agency detection device (HADD) often can be responsible for the human tendency to believe in the presence of agents (see. Barrett & Lanman, 2008; van Elk *et al*., 2016) even it is a fact that none of them can actually be observed empirically or rationally. In the early stage of cultural evolution, especially in the prehistoric world of our ancestors, agency detection tendency was not particularly costly in terms of survival and reproduction; however, a failure to detect a harmful agent in the environment could bring very dangerous consequences. Therefore, it is not surprising that we have inherited from our ancestors and still bearing such agency detection instinct. In Southeast Turkey, the practice of hyperactive agency detection if commonly found to be associated with the beliefs on different supernatural beings (Siddiq, 2018) as well as various types of sacred places. This tendency is also strongly appears in all of

the four case studies of this research. However, social learning and the outcomes from the social mind, that have been passing throughout generations with the local cultural features for millennia (Siddiq, 2018), are also found to be the helpful agents to produce hyperactive agency detection.

Some researches argue that supernatural beliefs may be connected to personality (Kosek, 1999; Taylor & MacDonald, 1999; MacDonald, 2000; Saroglou & Munoz-Garcia, 2008). One possible explanation for the relationship between personality and religious belief/spirituality is that these traits orient people to certain thoughts and behaviours that help fulfil personality-driven preferences. For instance, those high in conscientiousness may be drawn to beliefs on supernatural forces because it fulfils their proclivity toward order and conformity (McCullough *et al*., 2003). OY of case study 1 is seems that, albeit his family members provoked him as well as attempted to present reasonable evidences to make him believing that his wife spelled him, he did not affected and did not believe about genies because of his personality-driven preference. Perhaps his love for his newly married wife helped him to make this preference. However, his social learning as well as cultural behaviours in the region gradually inflamed the thought of the supernatural in his subconscious mind and eventually made him experiencing nightmares and imaginary thinking that later created the foundation of his thought about the supernatural power of his wife and her conversation with the paranormal being at night. On the other hand, because of strong personality-driven preference, ŞY in case study 4 was not believing on and did not construct any concept of paranormal being to explain his neurological / psychological disorder until he failed to get a cure from all kind of medical treatments. Further, his personality-driven preference appears again when he had to find a logical explanation to his neurological disorder according to his rational thoughts that he inherited from his parents. In fact, ŞY's personality-driven preference had driven him to the belief in paranormal agents that was totally opposite to the believing and thinking traditional of his family.

On the other hand, neuroticism is considered to be one of the Big Five higher-order of personality traits in the study of psychology (Farias *et al*., 2005). People who score high on neuroticism are more likely than average individuals to be moody and to experience such feelings as anxiety, worry, fear, anger, frustration, envy, jealousy, guilt, depressed mood, and loneliness. There is also a strong relationship between neuroticism and beliefs on paranormal agents and magical ideation (Farias *et al*., 2005). Also the 'schizotypal personality traits' are associated with the tendency to hold paranormal and magical beliefs (Boden *et al*., 2012). Schizotypal personality traits further negatively correlate with extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness; but positively correlated with neuroticism and openness to experience of paranormal beliefs (Ashouri *et al*., 2016). It clearly visible that both neuroticism and schizotypal personality traits are

strongly present in the personality of all four cases in our study. These traits became appear when they were teen or going through some crucial change in personal life, such as marriage, having a baby, or had to have an irregular/abnormal life.

## CONCLUSION

Our case studies demonstrate that most of the individuals, who are believed to be possessed by genies or supernatural beings, are experiencing different types of psychological disorders and psychosis caused by different psychological traits such as neuroticism and schizotypal personality traits, the hyperactive agency detection which is mostly apparent to be an important product of cultural continuation among people groups in the region, as well as both automatic and controlled, internal and external, cognitive and affective dimensions mentalizing. On the other, it is observed that psychological disorders and psychosis are sometimes be caused by effects of psychical change and psychical disorder which is often common in study area. However, feeding by the social mind, it appears that there is very strong socio-cultural tendency towards the beliefs on supernatural beings for the explanation of simple or complex psychological abnormalities, sleeping disorders, anxiety, sleep walk, sleep talk as well as any kind of small or big change in psychological behaviour of an individual in almost every socio-religious groups of Southeast Turkey. Consequently, lifetime suffering or indirect but very strong social punishments become inevitable because of being well accepted in cultural practices for millennia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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