GENDER, PLACE OF ORIGIN, AND SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS OF THAIS

Dr. Chaiyaset Promsri[a]

E mail: Chaiyaset.p@rmutp.ac.th

[a] Faculty of Business Administration Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Bangkok,

Thailand

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine associations between gender, place of origin and superstitious beliefs. Twenty-five graduate students in one public university in Bangkok were gathered for data collection through a self-administrated questionnaire. Superstitious beliefs were confined to car color and number superstitions. To test research hypothesis, Pearson's Chi-Square test was used. Results indicated that there was no statistically significant association between gender and superstitious beliefs. Additionally, no statistically significant relationship between place of origin and superstitious beliefs was found. Sample size expansion was recommended for a further study.

Keywords: Gender, Place of origin, Superstitious beliefs, Thais

1. Introduction

Superstition has deeply rooted in human history, and still existed in every culture (Ofori, Tod, & Lavallee, 2017). Individuals establish superstitious beliefs based on mysterious and irrational fear of unknown. People who tend to make decisions without using scientific rationale were heavily relied on superstitions (Dayal & Kaur, 2015).Although superstitions can be discovered everywhere, superstitious beliefs are varied based on the cultural differences (Kramer & Block, 2008).Thailand is one of superstitious countries in which many people seriously carry out superstition in their daily life. People tend to perform different rituals and symbolic activities so as to avoid getting bad lucks and increase chances in receiving good lucks (Manasvi & Anuradha, 2015). Superstitions can be found in many types including curse, soul, omen, astrology, and prejudice (Sumaranjitha & Sreedhar, 1992). Superstitious beliefs in colors and numbers relating to astrology have been commonly accepted in every society, specifically Asian cultures. Thailand has no exception as can be seen from daily life activities of Thais in which color and number play a vital role in individuals' decisions.

Superstition relating to car color has long been embraced by motorists for a long time. For the old superstition, the color green was considered being unlucky, but in recent years, many of most popular cars in the sport worn a green wrap (King, 2016). In Thai culture, many people believe that car color has an effect on their destiny and fate. Various people believe that colors have the meaning and connect directly to their astrological year of birth. Some colors are considered as a lucky color, but some are not depending on an individual's birth day and zodiac. However, many people desire to use the favorite color that is not suitable to their horoscope particularly car owners. In this case, based on Thai superstitions, preference on the use of unlucky color can be resolved very easily by attaching a sticker that notes "the color of this car is . . . ." In this statement, an empty space needs to be filled out with the lucky color that matches a car owner's horoscope. This superstition has been witnessed widely in a daily traffic journey everywhere in Thailand, which undoubtedly reflects the blind belief in superstition of Thais.

Superstitions in number have also been embedded in people varying by cultures. For example, Chinese considers numerical digit 4 as an unlucky number since it is connected to death while digit 8 is viewed as a lucky number since it is associated to prosperity (Simmons & Schindler, 2003). Past research reported the economic value of car plate number "8" in many societies especially Chinese (Lim, Wong, & Abdullah, 2017). On the contrary, Thai people tend to bid the car plate with lucky numbers of "9" or "5" because they believe that this number will bring them a good luck and prevent them from getting an accident. In Thai culture, number 9 is pronounced very similar to the word for "progress" (Chinchanachokchai, Pusaksrikit, & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2016). In addition, individuals in Asian cultures who believe in the magic number not only desire to get a lucky number for their car plate, but also the mobile telephone number (Li, 2007). They believe that these numbers have an influence on their fortune.

As car color and number superstitions play a big part in Thai people's decisions, this study aimed to explore whether gender difference and place of origin were connected to these superstitions. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine associations between gender, place of origin, and superstitious beliefs in terms of car color and number superstitions among Thais.

2. Literature Reviews

Although superstitious beliefs can lead to illogical decisions, many people still carry out superstitions as they help provide a sense of control and reduce stress when facing uncertainty or un-controllable situations. Superstitions can be seen in various components such as carrying charms, wearing certain outfits, visiting places associated with good fortune, preferring certain colors and using specific numbers (Dagnall & Drinkwater, 2018).

Que (2017) described colors and Chinese superstition. Colors were found to be a key part in Chinese culture, which includes countries that have many Chinese such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia. Red color was considered

as a lucky color as it represents good luck, happiness, and success. One the other hand, white was viewed as an unlucky color in Chinese as it represents mourning and grief. In Thai culture, a different color was assigned to each day of the week: yellow for Monday, pink for Tuesday, green for Wednesday, orange for Thursday, blue for Friday, purple for Saturday and red for Sunday. Many people tend to wear the matching color of their horoscope on the specific day of the week. However, Thais perceive black color as a mourning color, which should be worn at funerals as it is associated with death and grieving. However, wearing black clothes has been acceptable among younger Thais nowadays (Joanne, 2008).

De Paola, Gioia, and Scoppa (2014) gathered data from over 700 Italian students to examine whether overconfidence was influenced by superstitious beliefs and gender had a different perception on this effect. In their experiment, they used lucky and unlucky numbers as the key of superstitious belief to measure the overconfidence of students at the end of examination. Students were randomly assigned to sit in the numbered seats with lucky and unlucky numbers in their examination. After the completion of exam, they were asked to report what grade they expected to get. Students who were assigned to sit in lucky number seats tended to be overconfident about their performance and exam. In addition, this study also found that male and female students had a difference reaction as males were more overconfident when assigned to sit in a lucky number seat while females' overconfidence were more likely to be negatively influenced when assigned to unlucky numbers.

3. Methodology

This study was a descriptive study. A self-administered questionnaire was used as the instrument to describe the participants' personal background and superstitious beliefs. Data were collected from twenty-five graduate students in a public university in Bangkok, Thailand through Line Application. Respondents were sent and asked to complete the electronic questionnaire via

Line Application. Personal data consisted of gender, age, income, employment, and place of origin. For superstitious beliefs, respondents were asked to answer two questions relating to superstition. The first question related to "car color superstition" as noted: "do you believe in the statement "the color of this car is. . . " in which the color in text is opposite to the true color of the car? In doing so, the car owners will avoid getting chances into an accident caused by unlucky color of their horoscope or zodiac sign." The second question linked to "number superstition" as described: "do you believe that the license plate number or mobile phone number can have an influence on your life both positively and negatively?" To test associations between gender and place of origin and superstitious beliefs, non-parametric analysis using the Pearson's Chi-Square test was performed since two assumptions of using a Chi-Square test were met. The first assumption was two variables were measured at a nominal level (categorical variables). The second assumption was two variables consist of two or more categorical independent groups. Gender and place of origin met this criterion as gender consisted of male and female while place of origin comprised of Bangkok and upcountry (Laerd, 2018; Statistics Solutions, 2018). This led to establish the hypothesis of this study as follows:

H_{0a}: There was no statistically significant association between gender and car color superstition.

H_{1a}: There was a statistically significant association between gender and car color superstition.

H_{0b}: There was no statistically significant association between gender and number superstition.

H_{1b}: There was a statistically significant association between gender and number superstition.

H_{0c}: There was no statistically significant association between place of origin and car color superstition.

H_{1c}: There was a statistically significant association between place of origin and car color superstition.

H_{0d}: There was no statistically significant association between place of origin and number superstition.

H_{1d}: There was a statistically significant association between place of origin and number superstition.

4. Results

Analysis of demographic variables revealed that respondents' ages ranged from 20-50 years with 64% identified as female, 48% reported being a government officer, 44% of them had an average income between 15,001-25,000 baht, and 56% of participants were originally from Bangkok when being asked about their place of origin. Results of this present study showed that more than a half of respondents (56%) reported that they neither believed nor disbelieved in the use of car color in text, which is not the same as the true color of your car, to avoid chances of getting into an accident. Thirty-two percent of these participants reported that they disbelieved in this superstition while only 12% of them believed in this superstition (See Figure 1).
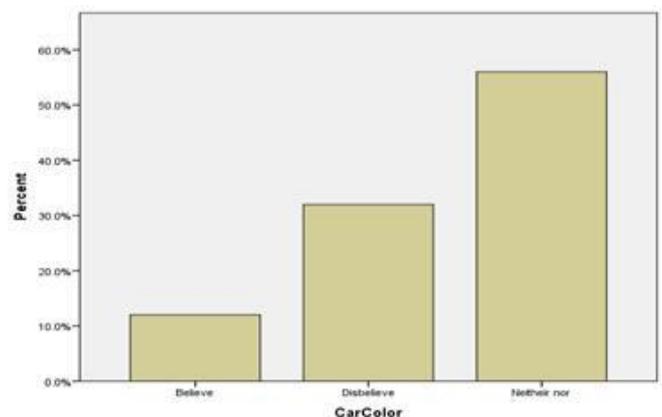

Figure 1: Percentage of Superstitious belief in Car Color Superstition

In addition, 64% of respondents reported that they neither believed nor disbelieved that the license plate numbers or mobile phone numbers could have an influence on their life both positively and negatively while 36% of them believe it had an effect on their destiny (see Figure 2).

To test the association between gender and car color superstition, the Chi-Square test were conducted. Results demonstrated that the "Asymptotic Significance" for the Chi-Square statistic was
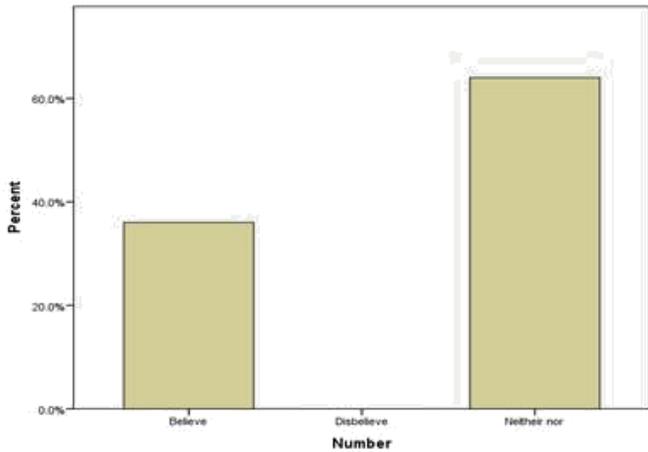
Figure 2: Percentage of Superstitious belief in Number Superstition

.699, indicating no statistically significant relation-ship between these variables (Table 1). This revealed that males and females had an equal superstitious belief in car color superstition.

Furthermore, results also showed no statistically significant association between gender and superstitious belief toward number superstition as the Chi-Square statistic was .835 (Table 2). This indicated that males and females had an equal superstitious belief toward number superstition.

Findings of this present study also revealed no statistically significant relationship between place of origin and superstitious belief toward car color-superstition as "Asymptotic Significance" for the Chi-Square statistic was .367, which was greater than significance level of .05 (Table 3). This can be described that participants who are originally from Bangkok and those who are from upcountry had an equal superstitious belief toward car color superstition.

Additionally, this study reported no statistically significant correlation between place of origin and superstitious belief toward number superstition as the Chi-Square statistic was .383 (Table 4). This can be explained that participants who are originally from Bangkok and those who are from upcountry had an equal superstitious belief toward number superstition.

5. Conclusion, Discussions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the association between gender and place of origin and superstitious beliefs. Results showed no significant relationship between gender and two variables of superstitious beliefs. In addition, no statistically significant association between place of origin and superstitious beliefs was found in this study. Findings of this study supported the null hypothesis of the Chi-Square test as no association exists on the categorical variables. People with different genders had an equal attitude on superstition in terms of car color superstition. Furthermore, people with distinctive place of origins also had an equal attitude on superstition relating to number superstition. Results of this study were inconsistent with findings of De Paola, Gioia, and Scoppa (2014) in which gender difference in lucky and unlucky numbers was found. Other findings in this study were novel, which helped increase a body of knowledge in this area.

For the study's limitations, a sample size of this study was too small as only twenty-five graduate students in one public university were involved in data collection, which decreases the power of study. Hence, this study recommends for sample size expansion in a further study. Additionally, demographic variables used in this study were limited to gender and place of origin, other variables such as age, income, and employment should be studied in a future research. Furthermore, superstitious beliefs were confined to car color and number superstitions solely; the other superstitious beliefs should be added to measure attitudes toward superstition in the next study.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test for Relationship between Gender and Car Color Superstition

		Car Color Superstition				
		Believe	Disbelieve	Neither nor	Total	Asymp. Sig.
Gender	Male	1	2	6	9	
	Female	2	6	8	15	.699
	Total	3	8	14	25	

Table 2: Chi-Square Test for Relationship between Gender and Number Superstition

		Number Superstition			
		Believe	Neither nor	Total	Asymp. Sig.
Gender	Male	3	6	9	
	Female	6	10	16	.835
	Total	9	16	25	

Table 3: Chi-Square Test for Relationship between Place of Origin and Car Color Superstition

		Car Color Superstition				
		Believe	Disbelieve	Neither nor	Total	Asymp. Sig.
Origin	Bangkok	1	6	7	14	
	Up Country	2	2	7	11	.367
	Total	3	8	14	25	

Table 4: Chi-Square Test for Relationship between Place of Origin and Number Superstition

		Number Superstition			
		Believe	Neither nor	Total	Asymp. Sig.
Origin	Bangkok	4	10	14	
	Up Country	5	6	11	.383
	Total	9	16	25	

6. Acknowledgement

7. References

Chinchanachokchai, S., Pusaksrikit, T., & Pongsakornrungsilp, S. (2016). Exploring different types of superstitious beliefs in risk-taking behaviors: What we can learn from Thai consumers. *Social Marketing Quarterly, 23*(1), 47-63.

Dagnall, N. & Drinkwater, K. (2018). *The science of superstition – and why people believe in the unbelievable.* Retrieved from http://theconversation.com/the-science-of-superstition-and-why-people-believe-in-the-unbelievable-97043

Dayal, J . K. & Kaur, M. (2015). Impact of superstitious belief on mental health of women teachers. *Paripex- Indian Journal of Research, 4*(7): 79-81.

De Paola, M., Gioia, F., & Scoppa, V. (2014). Overconfidence, omens and gender heterogeneity: Results from a field experiment. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 45*(C): 237-252.

Joanne. (2008). *Thai superstitions about color.* Retrieved from https://iluvthailand.wordpress.com/2008/06/28/thai-superstitions-about-color/

King, A. (2016). *How the color green became a deadly bad-luck superstition in racing.* Retrieved from https://jalopnik.com/how-the-color-green-became-a-deadly-bad-luck-superstiti-1763

Kramer, T. & Block, L. (2008). Conscious and nonconscious components of superstitious beliefs in judgement and decision making. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*, 783-793.

Laerd. (2018). *Chi-Square Test for association using SPSS Statistics.* Retrieved from https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/chi-square-test-for-association-using-spass-statistics.ph

Li, L. (2007). Superstition or modernity?: On the invented tradition of lucky mobile phone numbers in China. *M/C Journal, 10(1).* Retrieved from http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0909/07-li.php

Lim, H. E., Wong, W. C., & Abdullah, N. A. H. (2017). The economics of luckiness: How crazy are Malaysian Chinese towards car plate number "8"? *Malaysian Management Journal, 21*: 49-60.

Manasvi, S., & Anuradha, K. (2015). Psycho-social factors contributing to superstitious behavior: literature review. *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah, 3*(5): 42-47.

Ofori, P. K., Tod, D., & Lavallee, D. (2017). Predictors of superstitious beliefs. *Journal ofPsychology in Africa, 27*(1). Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abd/10.1080/14330237.2016.1185909

Que, B. (2017). *Colours and Chinese superstitions.* Retrieved from https://www.hanhailanguage.com.sg/blog/colours-and-chinese-superstitions

Simmons, L. C. & Schindler, R. M. (2003). Cultural superstitions and the price endings used in Chinese advertising. *Journal of International Marketing, 11*(2):101-111.

Statistics Solutions. (2018). *Using Chi-Square Statistic in research.* Retrieved from https://www.statisticssolutions.com/using-chi-square-statistic-in-research/

Sumaranjitha, L. & Sreedhar, K. P. (1992). Unsubstantiated beliefs in adolescent girls. *The Creative Psychologist, 4*, 35-40.