

## Qom University of Medical Sciences Students' Opinions Regarding Istikharah, Fate, Destiny, scripting-Amulet, and Jinns

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Belief health and possession of proper religious beliefs are among hygienic priorities for effective and active strata of the society. False religious beliefs and adherence thereto lead human beings astray. The present study intends to get insight into awareness of Qom University of Medical Sciences students from wrong religious beliefs.

**Methods:** The present research was a descriptive-analytical one. Statistical population of this research included 309 students studying at all majors in the Qom University of Medical Sciences.

**Results:** A number of 167 students (56.4%) announced that Jinns have frightened them. In addition, it was made clear that 12 students (3.9%) did not believe in Istikharah, and the rest 297 ones (96.1%) admitted injection of Istikharah in most affairs of their lives. Sixty-three students (21.4%) believed that the main reason behind referring to amulet scribes is resolution of problems only in this way.

**Conclusion:** According to the results, this is concluded that rock-solid steps are to be taken in order to rectify students' religious beliefs and raise their awareness tiers.

**Keywords:** Istikharah, Jinn, Religion, Students, Superstitions.

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## Introduction

Islam is, undeniably, the presenter of the route to final felicity and salvation of humankind. If Islamic plans are effectuated according to prescriptions made by the Holy Quran and religious leaders, humankind's genuine prosperity shall be guaranteed.

According to Islam, the sole, ultimate way of humankind's happiness and misery is dependent upon his/her good and bad deeds (Holy Qoran, Ash-Shams: 9,10) (1), which the Almighty God has informed humankind thereof through revelation and prophecy. Identification of divine verdicts and prescriptions is a prerequisite of committing to them. Quranic beliefs and false religious beliefs, which are devoid of a proper

identification of religion and divine teachings, would bring about a derailment of the route to guidance.

Religious teachings and prominent personalities such as divine leaders might provoke distortion and misunderstanding should they are not accurately understood. Jesus Christ, for instance, was a moralist and virtuous divine prophet, whose deeds and demeanors were illustrative of His segregation from materialistic concerns and His attention to spiritual purification. Jesus Christ was blessed (The Holy Quran, 19:31), a healer of the blind and the leper as well as a giver of life to the dead (The Holy Quran, 3:49), a messenger of the Almighty God (The Holy Quran, 61:6), a sign from the Almighty God (The Holy Quran:

3:49), and was in the ranks of the righteous (The Holy Quran, 6:85). Gradually, however, Jesus' teachings exposed to deformations: Jesus Christ, who regarded himself to be a servant of God (The Holy Quran, 19:30), distortedly grew, himself and his mother Mary, to be God and mother of God! (Holy Quran: 5:116). Steadily, afterwards, God is materialized and appears in various countenances in order for Jesus Christ to be exaggeratedly magnified. As indicated, a prominent figure, who could be an agent of mankind's guidance, is transformed into a cause of peoples' errancy due to misunderstandings, distortions, and false beliefs. This exhibits importance of proper publication of religious beliefs, and the fact that how deleterious could be dissemination of religious superstitions.

In the present-day world, college students constitute a broad share of the youth, who are building blocks of the future. Students' desirable effectiveness plays a distinguished part in advancement of the country. Consequently, disorders in mental health of college students might leave irreparable impacts on both their personal and social performances and their future community. True religious beliefs, unquestionably, offer a safe and sound roadmap for reaching at the single path of ultimate guidance. This shall be achieved exclusively through proper identification of true beliefs. Religious distortions could tarnish Islamic practical and ethical teachings, defacing them as counterproductive affairs. Incomplete information and inaccurate conceptions about religion would unknowingly lead human beings into false beliefs. In this research, a group of dominant, unreal misconceptions among Qom University of Medical Sciences students is addressed in order to appraise their awareness of Istikharah, professional amulet-scripting, Jinns, destiny, and fate.

## Methods

This study is a descriptive, cross-sectional research, whose statistical population all students studying at all disciplines in the Qom University of Medical Sciences in 2014. In this

study, multi-stage sampling method was applied for selection of samples. Firstly, the colleges under study were specified, and then disciplines at each college were determined. From each discipline, samples were systematically and randomly selected with regard to the people under investigation. Using sample size formula, number of samples for descriptive studies in limited populations of 309 subjects was 0.50 as regards first-type error probability, SD equal to 0.67, and study precision equal to 0.01. In this study, only Iranian students who were not in their last semester (for each access to them) were selected.

An author-constructed questionnaire was utilized in order to collect data. This is done for absence of a prior standard questionnaire. To do so, a separate phase was allocated to designation and investigation of face and content validity as well as reliability of the questionnaire. To do so, a specialist panel including 7 academic board members was asked to affirm internal consistency of questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient being 0.76. This questionnaire included 17 personal and educational questions, 12 questions on awareness about Jinns, 15 questions on awareness about Istikharah, 20 questions on awareness about fate and destiny, and 15 questions on awareness about professional amulet-scripting.

In order to observe ethical considerations, subjects were invited to take part in this study in a volunteer manner. They were, in addition, fully satisfied about their participation. Their personal information and replies given to our questions would remain confidential. Data was finally analyzed using SPSS, ver. 16, by frequency distribution and central statistics indices.

## Result

93 students (30.1%) were male and 216 ones (69.9%) female. 234 students (57.7%) were single and the rest (75 ones, 24.3%) married. 56 students (18.1%) were studying in medical college, 92 ones (29.8%) in hygiene college, 48 ones (15.6%) in midwifery college, 99 ones in

Table 1: Distribution frequency of some items cited respecting awareness about false beliefs in Jinns

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)
Do you believe in some creatures in the universe known as Jinns?	260 (84.1)	14 (4.5)	35 (11.4)
Do you know that Jinns and Satan are different from each other?	231 (74.8)	26 (8.4)	52 (16.8)
Can Jinns do harm on human beings?	163 (52.7)	35 (11.4)	111 (35.9)
Can Jinns be observed?	116 (37.5)	75 (24.3)	118 (38.2)
Does existence of Jinns in the universe frighten you?	167 (56)	142 (46)	0
Has belief in Jinns ever impacted on your life?	15 (4.9)	171 (55.3)	123 (39.8)

paramedical college (32%), and 14 ones (4.5%) in college of dentistry. Field of study of these students was general health (29 ones, 9.4%), professional hygiene (18 ones, 5.8%), environmental health (45 ones, 14.6%), medicine (56 ones, 18.1%), dentistry (14 ones, 4.5%), laboratory sciences (36 ones, 11.7%), operating room (22 ones, 7.1%), anesthesiology (27 ones, 8.7%), medical emergency (14 ones, 4.5%), nursing (31 ones, 10%), and midwifery (17 ones, 5.5%). 246 students (79.6%) were only students and non-employed. 63 students (20.4%), moreover, were busy both studying and working. Finally, 105 students (34%) were residents of dormitory and 204 ones (66%) living elsewhere. Average and SD of their age were  $21.83 \pm 5.22$ .

A number of 88 students (28.8%) believed that Jinns leave negative impacts on human life, and 24 ones (7.8%) opined that Jinns have positive effects. 93 students (30.1%) confessed that they feel fear of Jinns in their loneliness, 39 ones (12.6%) in bathroom, and 35 ones (11.3%) at midnights. A number of 42 students (13.6%) announced that they have a Jinn-related memory in their life. In this study, 225 students (72.8%) indicated that they have obtained their information from others' sayings, and 57 ones (18.4%) from books. Some items respecting awareness about false beliefs in Jinns are referred to in the Table 1.

Results indicated that 185 ones (59.5%) were strong believers in Istikharah, 112 ones (36.2%) were weak believers in Istikharah, and 12 ones (3.9%) had no belief in Istikharah. 194 students (62.8%) indicated that they take omens in their important affairs. 22 ones (7.1%) expressed that they apply Istikharah in their minor, indispensable issues. 93 persons (30.1%) applied Istikharah only in cases where the deed's accomplishment and non-accomplishment were equal. 105 students (34%) maintained that there have experienced cases in their lives in which they have acted in contrast to what Istikharah has articulated. A number of 205 (66.3%) and 104 persons (33.7%), finally, were contented and discontented about their previous Istikharahs, respectively. Following table 2 is an illustration of the items referring to false beliefs in Istikharah.

Respecting fate and destiny, 107 persons (34.6%) announced that fate of each person is generally assigned to himself/herself. 185 ones (59.9%) indicated that destiny of each person is relatively assigned to himself/herself. 270 ones (87.4%) expressed that consultation with others is effective in designation of human beings' destiny. 11 persons (3.6%) believed that such consultations are ineffective in human life. 257 students (83.2%) believed that one's attempts are factors to change his/her destiny. 11 persons (3.6%) held that nothing can change

Table 2: Distribution frequency of some items respecting false belief in Istikharah

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)
Do you consider commitment to Istikharah as canonically indispensable?	73 (23.6)	178 (57.6)	58 (18.8)
Is Istikharah with the Holy Quran a consultation with the Almighty God, indeed?	144 (46.6)	41 (13.3)	124 (40.1)
Does a bad Istikharah cause the deed to become canonically forbidden?	23 (7.4)	210 (68)	76 (24.6)
Would doing against a conducted Istikharah have negative impacts in our life?	94 (30.4)	93 (30.1)	122 (39.5)
Is the essence of Istikharah different from that of praying?	196 (63.4)	33 (10.7)	80 (25.9)
Is there any difference between Istikharah with the Holy Quran and with rosary?	121 (39.1)	33 (10.7)	155 (50.2)
Is Istikharah able to repeal such important life decisions as marriage?	196 (63.4)	33 (10.7)	80 (25.9)
Is essence of Istikharah different from that of trust?	84 (27.2)	135 (43.7)	90 (29.1)

Table 3: Distribution frequency of some items respecting false beliefs in fate and destiny

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)
Do you think that human beings are not empowered to choose their life partner and are doomed to live with whoever fate proposes for him/her?	260 (86.6)	20 (6.7)	20 (6.7)
Do you think that human attempts are fruitless and fate determines our ultimate choice?	10 (3.3)	272 (91)	17 (5.7)
Has our failure in life been our unmovable destiny?	26 (8.8)	204 (68.7)	67 (22.5)
Can peoples' destinies be changed by themselves?	256 (87.4)	11 (4.8)	26 (8.9)
Are good or bad methods we adopt in our lives part of our fate and destiny?	11 (4.7)	256 (87.1)	27 (9.2)
Can drug addiction be attributable to the addict?	268 (86.7)	25 (8.1)	16 (5.2)
Is hearing about fate and destiny frightening for you?	40 (12.9)	186 (60.3)	83 (26.8)

one's destiny. 26 students (8.4%) considered only material agents as effective in changing one's destiny. 230 persons (74.4%) held spiritual factors as effective in changing one's destiny. Table 3 exhibits some items respecting false beliefs in fate and destiny.

In this study, only 32 persons (10.4%) expressed their satisfaction from amulet-scripting. 104 ones (33.7%) indicated their general dissatisfaction in this respect. 158 persons (51.1%) believed that most applicants of amulet-scripting are poorly educated people. Also, a number of 229 ones (74.1%) suggested that women more than men believe in amulet-scripting and thus they constitute a large part of amulet scribes' customers. In this study, a number of 63 ones (21.4%) believed that the main reason behind referring to amulet scribes is resolution of problems only in this way. Finally, 114 students (38.6%) held that amulet-scripting is a quick resolution for all problems. Table 4 exhibits some items respecting awareness about false beliefs in amulet-scripting.

## Discussion

The present study appraised the opinions made by the students at Qom University of Medical Sciences regarding wrong religious beliefs. Results indicated that there was a relatively high frequency of wrong religious beliefs held by students. In the study by Aziz

Khani on a number of 10,592 students at Islamic Azad University, Ardabil Branch, the score of students' orientation to superstitions was calculated to be 81 out of 174, the score which is indicative of an average level of students' tendency to superstitions. In this study, 30% of students believed that spells and magic are effective and 85% said that pouring water behind a passenger brings fortune for him/her (2). Another study performed on a number of 375 students studying in Mazandaran and Babol universities indicated that their religious superstition score is 2.3 out of 5. Moreover, the score gained by students at technical and engineering disciplines was lower than those studying in other fields. In this study, 42% of students believed that sneezing is a message by God (3). In his study in Nigeria, Ike showed that students are more superstitious than graduated students, and highest and lowest scores are gained by students at educational sciences disciplines and art fields, respectively (4). Another research carried out in Karachi, India, demonstrated that 73% of people believe in superstitions in hygiene respects (5).

This study showed that 4.5% of students do not believe in Jinns and 46% of students feared from existence of Jinns in the universe. In their study, Hosseini et al. indicated that 11% of the total 112 patients with epilepsy believed that their illness is caused by Jinns (6). Twelve

Table 4: Distribution frequency of some items respecting false beliefs in amulet-scripting

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know
	Number (%)	Number (%)	Number (%)
Have you ever referred to an amulet scribe for your problems?	65 (21)	2.5 (66.4)	39 (12.6)
Have you ever observed a religious scholar who recommends you to refer to an amulet scribe?	24 (7.8)	233 (75.4)	52 (16.8)
Have you ever investigated about correctness and legality of amulet scribes' activities?	115 (37.2)	134 (43.4)	60 (19.4)
Is piety of an amulet scribe important for you?	121 (39.2)	20 (6.4)	168 (54.4)
Do amulet scribes perform their jobs in public?	75 (24.3)	110 (35.6)	124 (40.1)
Do you believe in amulet scribes and their promises?	19 (6.1)	188 (60.9)	102 (33)

percent of the students at the Islamic Azad University, Ardabil Branch, held belief in the impression that problems are solved by Jinns (2). In another study, 15% of students expressed their belief in the impression that attaching pins to shirts could prevent demonic possessions (3). Literally, Jinn means ‘a covered thing’ as they cannot be recognized by human eye. Thus, this is wrong that Jinns are imaginary creatures: they really exist in this world, but they cannot be observed. Many religious scholars, including Allameh Majlesi, have indicated that all testimonies—beside those made by prophets—claiming that Jinns have been witnessed are subject to mendacity (7). The first verse of the Jinn surah indicates that even the Holy Prophet (pbuh) has not witnessed Jinns; rather, He has become informed of their existence through revelation (8). Nevertheless, many people describe Jinns in different observable forms as annoying and frightening creatures—the viewpoints which even though is unacceptable, but several students were found to have belief therein. That is while, as the Holy Quran maintains, these creatures are subsisting in their own positions and normally do not cause any harm to human life. Hence, fearing from Jinns is not rationally justifiable.

In this study, 39% of students believed that amulet-scripting brings about immediate resolution of problems. In a study conducted on Ardabil University students, 16% of students held belief in opening girls’ fortune by amulets and 15% in treatment of diseases by amulet-scripting. In this study, there was a significant relationship among higher-education students’ belief in superstitions (2). In the research by Shahsavari on those referring to non-medical professionals, it was revealed that most applicants sought for pregnancy services. And, 16% of them highly believed in great role of magic and spell, and 18% maintained that their disease is caused by a reason which is obviably only by non-medical professionals (9). Another study on 14 amulet scribes in Tehran showed that busiest of them have 300 applicants per week, and more than 70% of them receive money in return for the services they provide (10).

Another study conducted on 170 subjects concluded that 39% of patients referred to amulet scribes due to their disappointment from treatment, 28% of them because of their relatives’ recommendations, and 27% of them on account of their reliance on the Almighty God (11). Just as divine fate and destiny are formed through the passageway of regulations and traditions dominant on the universe, prayers are also among spiritual factors that prevail upon worldly interplays and are capable of leaving radical impacts on the universe according to divine providence. Praying is an instrument of association with the Almighty God rather than a mechanism for achievement of money by some amulet scribes, who get a high amount of money from people.

## **Conclusion**

Just in the way that they can be a factor of guidance and prosperity, Holy Quran and Islam might lead to wretchedness in case they are distortedly introduced. Such beliefs might provide a basis for making decision by some people at times the decisions which would imperil their mental and spiritual health. Such damages caused by false beliefs have been proved to be incurable.

## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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