

Enhanced well-being and psychological adjustment: The psychological benefits of paranormal endorsement

ABSTRACT:

Background

Currently, there exists limited research examining relationships between paranormal belief & positive wellbeing. Moreover, since extant studies typically employ qualitative analysis, use small samples and focus on specific types of belief they have restricted generality. Noting these factors, this project explored associations (direct and indirect) between paranormal belief & measures allied to positive wellbeing.

Aims

To identify differences in believers by creating profile that combine paranormal belief & schizotypy. Then develop & test models examining how the emergent profiles relate to positive wellbeing over a sustained period (6 months).

Method

This project comprised four published studies, which used cross sectional & longitudinal methods. These surveyed participants via online self-report measures. Alongside the Revised Paranormal Belief and Paranormal Involvement scales, participants completed measures of schizotypy & positive wellbeing (e.g., Life Satisfaction, Self-Esteem, Meaning in Life, Creativity, Social Identity, & Optimism). To differentiate paranormal from other forms of scientifically unsubstantiated beliefs the researchers also included a brief measure of conspiracy theory endorsement.

Results

The researchers used a range of statistical procedures: Latent profile analysis, sequential mediation (indirect effects), network analysis, and multiple points to examine relationships and assess model stability over time. Findings indicated that paranormal belief was positively associated with factors related to positive wellbeing (e.g. Optimism, Active Coping, Presence of Meaning in Life, Creativity, Self-Esteem, Life Satisfaction, & Social Identity) and that effects were consistent across multiple points. Additionally, positive outcomes balanced relationships with outcomes affiliated with reduced wellbeing (i.e., Search for Meaning in Life, Avoidant Coping, Pessimism, & Conspiracy Endorsement). Illustratively, paranormal belief related to both Presence and Search for Meaning in Life. This suggested that paranormal belief concurrently represents a reaction to and a mechanism for resolving existential insecurities.

Conclusions

Paranormal belief that facilitates positive cognitions and perceptions such as validating life meaning and increasing self-esteem facilitates positive wellbeing.

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Keywords

Paranormal belief, Well-being, Psychological adjustment, Scientifically unsubstantiated beliefs, Multiple time point

Published Work:

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K. G., Denovan, A., & Gascón, A. E. (2024). Variations in positive well-being as a function of the interaction between paranormal belief and schizotypy. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1396485. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1396485

Dagnall, N., Denovan, A., Drinkwater, K. G., & Escolà-Gascón, A. (2025). Paranormal belief and conspiracy theory endorsement: Variations in adaptive function and positive wellbeing. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16*, 1519223. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1519223

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K. G., Denovan, A., & Escolá Gascón, A. (2025). Paranormal belief, conspiracy endorsement, and positive wellbeing: A network analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16*, 1448067. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1448067

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