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Research Article

The Anywaa Belief Systems about Evil Eye and its Psychosocial Repercussion on Victims in Anywaa Zone of Gambella Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Despite the fact that evil-eye belief is historically and geographically widespread, cultural variation in epiphenomenon and psychosocial repercussions is often overlooked. The purpose of this study was to assess the Anywaa belief systems regarding the evil eye and its psychosocial repercussions on suspected and afflicted victims in the Anywaa Zone of Gambella. The research method used was ethnographic. Thirty (30) participants were carefully chosen from three districts for the focus groups and interviews that were used to collect the data. The data was thematically analyzed. According to the findings, evil-eyed belief is dangerous in Anywaa society, with babies born with one testicle and hymenal tags being considered evil. Treatment for evil eyes entails killing the evil individual, which results in drowning in rivers. Evil-eyed individuals are often scapegoats for community misfortune. Believers in the evil eye experience anxiety and fear while also causing death, stigma, and suspicion among those who are suspected. As a result of this study's focus, the Anywaa Zone Children and Women Affairs Office, together with the government and other humanitarian NGOs, is recommended to intervene and conduct an assessment of what is causing infant mortality in the entire Anywaa community.

Keywords: Belief system, Evil eye, Affliction, Psychosocial repercussion.

Introduction

The meaning of the word "evil" varies across cultures and religions, but it is generally understood to mean "something or someone who causes harm" [1]. Variations of the belief in the evil eye are known throughout much of the world, yet surprisingly little attention has been given to explaining the dynamics of this aspect of culture. Evil eye belief is one of the most diverse aspects of human concepts today, with 67 of the 186 societies worldwide, accounting for 36% of total world samples, practicing various practices to avoid or repel it [2]. "Belief is a state of mind characterized by trust and confidence in something." This state of mind is attained by humans as a result of their belief systems [1]. That belief system guides them in comprehending the abstract and enigmatic concepts associated with all aspects of their lives. The "evil eye" is one of the distinct forms of evil associated

with the belief that a single glance has the power to inflict injury, harm, and even death on those upon whom it falls. Anyone who is recognized with the intent of harming people or causing material damage by a single glance is referred to as an "evil eyed person" [3].

The evil eye is mostly associated with jealousy and envy in almost all African societies, and it can be cast consciously or unconsciously. [4] discovered that belief in the scratch of an evil eye stems from a person's shame and existential anxiety about "being seen by others." According to [5], low caste artisans in Ethiopia may pass on the evil eye power known as "Buda" in Amharic. From ancient times to the present, diseases with no clear cause, such as sudden vomiting or diarrhea in children, the drying up of milk in nursing mothers, and the withering of fruits, were thought to be the result of

the evil eye. Fear of the potentially destructive effect of "evil eyes" May exist. While the evil eye can be found in almost every culture on the planet, its functionality and purpose are not universal. According to [6], it is essential to investigate the specific cultural context in which the evil eye manifests itself. Furthermore, [7] contends that the evil eye should be studied under the premise that it is a cultural phenomenon, and thus its cultural elements should be studied. Because the misfortune symptom, which is closely associated with the evil eye, is linked to a specific social dysfunction, it cannot be studied apart from its society and/or hermeneutics.

This suggestion shapes the methodology that underpins this study, which investigates Anywaa belief systems about the evil eye and its psychosocial consequences. To that end, the research objectives are to assess a comprehensive understanding of the cultural beliefs surrounding the sign and identification of an evil eyed person, as well as the believed causes of the evil eye and its psychosocial repercussions for the victim and the treatment used in Gambella's Anywaa Zone. It also aimed to investigate existing treatments and interventions for victims' psychosocial impact. This research could provide valuable insights into developing culturally sensitive strategies for mitigating the negative consequences of the evil eye. Thus, the motivation for this research was to bridge the gap in cultural variation that makes the evil eye a cultural phenomenon that must be investigated. The following research questions were the focus of this study:

- How could evil eyed people get identified?
- Are there real causes, symptoms, and impacts of the evil eye on individuals and/or communities?
- What treatment mechanisms were employed by the community?

Methods

The qualitative ethnographic study method always takes the lead in such circumstances, as the study attempted to investigate the belief system. Because ethnography seeks to describe, analyze, and interpret the shared patterns of behavior and beliefs of a culture-sharing group [8]. The study population was drawn from the districts of Abol and Jor under the Anywaa zone in Gambella and emphasis was placed on the victims and the intervention measures taken against the evil-eyed person. Expert purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants. This is due to the fact that the sample for the study is influenced not only by the required level of precision of the study results but also by the available resources. Therefore, thirty (30) respondents were purposefully chosen as key informants in the study. More reliable and accurate data was collected to ensure the outcomes of the study using interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). In this study, semi structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with fifteen (15) key informants and involved one interviewer and one participant. Fifteen (15) participants who were interviewed were considered experts,

and the interviewer was considered a student. Focus group discussion provides different kinds of information than can be generated from individual interviews and observation [9] (Amos, 2002). Focus group discussion interviews are often used to supplement other qualitative data, but they can also be the basic data collection strategy of a qualitative study (Amos, 2002). Three groups of fifteen (15) expert key informants were formed, each consisting of five (5) participants. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data and research findings, searching for discrepant evidence and member checks for conformity were employed [10]. Searching for discrepant evidence involves examining the data for areas of participants' disagreement with respect to potential themes. Member check/Conformity: to reduce the negative effects of researcher bias, researchers may also do member checks by systematically getting feedback from the participants so as to ensure they do not misinterpret the participants. The data was thematically analyzed and verbally described. Thematic data analysis in ethnography involves distilling how things work and naming the essential features of themes in the cultural setting as part of making sense of the information. Text (or images) are segmented to form a small set of non-overlapping themes, which is consistent with the process of describing and developing themes from data. These themes, on the other hand, map shared patterns of behavior, thinking, and/or belief. As [11] points out, ethnographers must be aware of the potential negative impact their presentations and publications may have on the population they study. To secure their consent, all participants in this study were informed about the study's purpose and benefits. Their answers were kept confidential and were not linked to their identities.

Findings

The findings of the study are organized and presented according to the specific research objectives of the study. Elicited data and direct quotations are drawn from the raw data of the study to illustrate the theme.

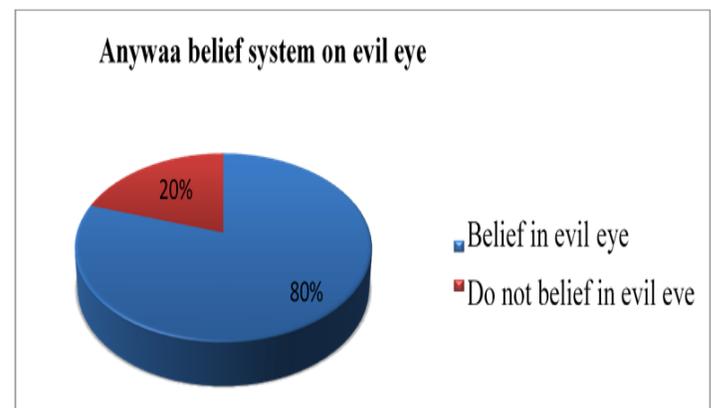


Figure 1. Anywaa Belief System on the Evil Eye

Figure 1 shows that in terms of percentage, the number of participants who do not believe that there is an evil eye is exceeded by those who believe "there is an evil eyed person." This is an indication that eighty percent (80%) of the participants believe in the evil eye. Whereas twenty (20%) did not believe.

Believed Causes and Signs of an Evil Eyed Person

Hereditary curses are thought to be the causes or origins of the evil eye. The offspring of the evil eye clans will inherit and possess the evil eye. Second, it came as a curse for publicly insulting an evil-eyed person by exposing them to other people. When that evil eyed person dies, those who insulted him or her will be cursed to become evil eyed as well. As a result, their children will experience the isolation and loneliness that come with being labelled as evil-eyed in the community. The genitals of a newborn infant can be used to distinguish an evil eyed person from a non-evil eyed person. A child's testicle will be examined to determine whether or not the child is evil-eyed. If a boy is born with one testicle in the scrotum and a girl is born with a hymenal tag and any deformity in the labia majora, the child is definitely evil-eyed.

A child with evil eyes (Ci-jwøk) cries excessively at night for no apparent reason. When they begin crawling, they will leave their mother and go in a different direction than where they were laid, and if someone or their mother wakes up, that child will be found awake somewhere in the room or outside. Also, when everyone else is sleeping, those who stay awake and move from village to village at midnight are evil-eyed; they are passing bad spirits on to people, causing them to be harmed. An evil-eyed person will not bathe naked in front of others. The iris of an evil eyed person is lined vertically, unlike the iris of a normal person, and red eyes are evil eyed.

They are aggressive and envious, and no matter what they say or do, those they stare at will be harmed. When there is sorrow and grief in the village, they will be happy, and when someone succeeds, they will be sad.

Evil Eye Effect on the Afflicted Victims and Protective Ritual for Warding Off

Evil-eyed people cause harm to others by using objects such as broken glass and bones. They use this object to inflict harm on others, inserting it into the victim's body through their eye. A beautiful child, wealth, gaining any promotion, and weeding days are examples of when evil eyes cause harm. They will take a person's spirit and place it in the mouth of a crocodile to be eaten, and they can cause heart damage, causing the person to vomit blood and die. It is known as "Adun dhaanh owiirø." Raam is what evil eyes (Ci-jwøk) use to hurt people, similar to broken glass and bone. The evil eye is any illness that causes severe pain, particularly abdominal pain, stomach ache, and eye ache (glaucoma). For example, if a child is playing well in the morning, but immediately after being praised and gazed upon, the child begins sweating, vomiting, or experiencing unbearable pain—these are manifestations of the evil eye. All diseases with no known cause are not curable in hospitals and must be treated and diagnosed by witch doctors. People have their own methods of avoiding the evil eye effect. Circassian seed (manjadikuru), locally known as Olwiinyø, will be secretly burned into fire to prevent and ward off the effect of evil eyed, and an owl feather will be placed around the corner of the house to prevent evil eyed from hurting people during the gathering. So, if there is an evil-eyed person among people, he or she will lose the ability to harm others and will remain a normal person for the time being.



Figure 2: Circassia seed and owl feather as protective for the evil eye.

Another method of warding off the evil eye is to carry cowries (Wanggaa) and a black elastic rubber band in one's hand, as well as cowries on children's and adults' hair, and to keep

them in one's pockets most of the time. If the cowry breaks, it means you've been seen, envied, and hurt by the evil eye, but it failed because of this cowry.



Figure 3: Cowrie and black elastic rubber band used as protective amulet.

Remedy taken for a person who is identified as evil-eyed

According to respondents, there is no effective way to make someone with evil eyes normal. Some people have tried various remedies, but none have been successful in ridding them of the evil eye. A small pumpkin can be fed to an evil-eyed child as a treatment during childhood to expel the evil spirit and prevent the child from hurting others when he or she grows up. If they cry at night, their mother will shower them with cold water or place them in dew, but not work. There is no cure for evil-eyed people, and the only way to get rid of them is to kill them wherever they are found, by whatever means. When a child is born with only one testicle, it is

immediately killed. It gives those who murder such children in the village great pleasure and honor. If you killed a child with just one testicle, you would be respected and honored as an innocent and genuine good person who did not want evil species to spread in the community. Those who murdered such a child are classified as people who do not want others to suffer. You cannot kill an evil eyed child directly, but they will be killed indirectly. One of the best ways to kill evil eyed children is by letting rivers drown them. The child will be covered with cloth and placed alive in a large calabash. He will then be thrown into the river, and the river will take the child. So, the child will drown and die.



Figure 4. Method of killing the evil eye (Ci-jwøk) during infant

Those who live in areas where there is no river have another option for killing such an evil child. Killing a child with evil eyes is a secret and hidden act. The child will be denied feeding in secret, and as the days pass without food, the child will grow tired and die hungry. Evil eyed (Ci-Jwøk) will also be killed by putting lots of pieces of cloth on him or her while sleeping; he will then have a shortage of breathing and will die. No one will weep or mourn the death of an evil-eyed child. If you kill the child by yourself and cry or mourn for the death of the evil-eyed child, you have a good chance of having another evil-eyed child. Crying and mourning are

thought to be expressions of love for the deceased, who was not deserving of death. As a result, another evil-eyed child will be born to replace the deceased. As a result, no one will cry or mourn for such a child, and those who do not know the reason for the child's death are advised not to cry or mourn. Evil-eyed adults who escaped death as infants will be targeted and killed while hunting and fishing. When all men go hunting in the bush, an evil-eyed person will be intentionally shot with a gun or stabbed with spears and will die. They will not usually go to the bush to hunt or fish.

Psychosocial Repercussions on Both Victims and the evil Eyed Person

Most of the time, evil-eyed people are isolated because no one wants to talk to them. They are suspicious of others' motivations, and everyone is an enemy who threatens to attack them. They are more aggressive and apathetic, and they do not trust anyone; they prefer solitude and social interaction due to their fear of criticism, and they struggle to maintain friendships. The evil eyed (Ci-jwøk) are always used as scapegoats for any misfortune, be it sickness, murder, death, a fight, or a snake bite. They are even held accountable for those who are eaten by crocodiles. They will be warned whenever and wherever they pass (evil-eyed) by saying that if anything happens, mind you, I will take action, and they will not touch or stare at anything. Nobody cares about them (evil eyed) because the more you interact with and love them, the more they hurt. They harm those who love them, but they do not harm those who despise them. As a result, no one loves them, and no one can welcome them as strangers when they arrive in the village. If someone dies in the village, people will go to his or her house and cry, implying that he or she is the one who killed the deceased. Because of their hatred, evil-eyed people migrate from their home village to other. As a result, evil-eyed people are always found dead somewhere other than their home village. Nobody will allow his or her daughter to marry someone with evil eyes. Even if the lady is interested, the parents will step in and end the relationship. All men who are aware of a female's evil eye will refuse to ask her for marriage. Even if someone is interested in marrying her, the man's father will forbid dowry for marriage in community. When a person notices that the illness is an evil eye affliction, they become concerned, according to victims. Because of the fear As a result, people are wary of strangers or anyone who lacks specific information about his or her ancestor or clan. People are filled with dread, worry, and fear of the unknown whenever a new face appears. People always avoid interaction, lie, and discuss beauty or success with strangers or unknown people.

Discussion

The major finding in this study is that being evil eyed is caused by an evil spirit rooted in hereditary curses. It's evil spirits that cause someone to be evil-eyed and heritable, which manifests itself in the upcoming offspring. Origins leading a person to be evil-eyed were founded as being caused by „evil spirits that anchored themselves in their human hosts, who passed the spirit on to their offspring, and thus their descendants acquired evil eyed (buda) through genealogical descent [12]. Also in northern Ethiopia, among townspeople in Afar, on the Zege Peninsula, Tom Boylston founded Buda to be more spirit than substance. [13]. Another major finding on the causes of evil eye is that a cursed person is evil eyed by an evil eyed person as a long term revenge and punish-

ment for insult and stigma. In line with this study, [14] noted that the existence of anger and envy in a person's psyche activates the evil eye. Elucidating Cart's point, insulting and exposing an evil eyed person to others can stir up anger, but taking revenge directly is difficult and impossible. Indirect revenge by an angry person has a long-term negative effect. [15] point out that the evil eye is strongly related to psychological and physical illnesses; its true meaning exists within the deeper level of an individual's consciousness.

For men and women, the genital area is where the primary and most telling sign of the evil eye is located. Evil-eyed people are all boys born with one testicle. Checking for any abnormalities on the labia majora can help you identify a female evil eye. A woman is unquestionably an evil eyed girl if one of the labia majora is smaller than the other or bears a hymenal tag. These symptoms are accompanied by excessive crying at midnight when a baby is young, getting up from the position in which they are being laid down to sleep when they are crawling, and moving from village to village at midnight. [16] stated that there is no sure way to recognize an evil eye; they may be thinner, have eye deformities, or have a sideways gaze. They may also have a vertically downward iris, have red eyes, and feel happy when someone suffers and sad and stressed when someone gains something good. In Germany, those with red eyes harm others' success, while in Ireland, those with squinty eyes are feared as evil eye sorcerers [17]. Those with an evil eye feel stressed when others prosper, while those with a happy outlook rejoice when others suffer [18].

The symptoms of an evil eye effect on the victims are any sudden or accidental misfortune or emergence illness that quickly worsens to the critical level with high abdominal pain, stomach pain, joint pain, and eye pain (glaucoma). The afflictions associated with the evil eye include all illnesses that have an unclear cause, are incurable in medical facilities, and can only be treated by a witch doctor. Malevolent glimpse (also known as "evil eyed afflictions") symptoms have been noted by [18] to include fruit withering and sudden vomiting or diarrhea in children, as well as milk drying up in nursing mothers. They added that illnesses that lacked obvious symptoms associated with their causes were thought to be the result of the evil eye from ancient times until today. Psychosomatic symptoms are used to describe evil eye afflictions. The most prevalent somatic symptoms associated with the evil eye include headaches, organ pain (mostly in the area of the stomach), eye pain (which impairs vision), joint pain, and fatigue. Vomiting, anorexia, tremors, asthma, and paralysis are the somatic symptoms that are less frequently reported. Anxiety, obsession, insomnia, persecutory fantasies, anger and hatred, envy, pathological doubt, depression, extreme fear, hyperactivity, and aggression have all been listed as psychological signs that the evil eye is present (Campion and [19,20].

[21] came to the conclusion that evil eye rituals are actually

connected to an illusory sense of control over the phenomenon's unidentified psychological impact. The Anywaa tribe uses amulets and rituals to safeguard themselves and their kids from the harm caused by the evil gaze. According to [22], Mesopotamians would spit on their infants repeatedly, murmuring and spitting in the presence of those who had the evil eye, while also donning phalluses, blue or red clothing, and a protective amulet or mataki in the shape of a blue eye. Burning Circassian seed, placing an owl feather in a house corner, wearing or carrying cowrie shells, and tying black elastic rubber on both children's and adults' hands were just a few of the rituals and amulets Anywaa used as a means of protection, particularly during gathering. In keeping with this, cowrie shells are said to symbolize the powerful goddess of protection in African legend, who is associated with the strength and power of the ocean [23]. According to Papa [24], they can also be seen hanging from doorways, being worn as necklaces, or being sewn onto a baby's clothing.

In the Anywaa Zone of Gambella, this study explores how those with evil eyes are treated. According to the study, people who have evil eyes cannot be cured and must wait until they pass away before receiving treatment. The village must kill these people when they are infants, drown them in a river, or forbid breastfeeding and clothing in order to eradicate them. His study (Reminick, 1974) found no evidence of killing or murdering people with evil eyes, in contrast to this study. This might have happened because there were no simple, reliable ways to recognize and identify someone with an evil eye. All symptoms and signs are interpreted as educated guesses. However, many people have drowned here as a result of the stigmatized symptom of having one testicle. In addition to this, I received a report of two children who had been killed covertly in Gog and Nyikani due to the loss of one testicle in April and May 2021, with a gap of three weeks between their killings. According to [25], on the evaluation and treatment of cryptorchidism, it states that "Out of every hundred (100) full-term baby boys, three (3) of them are born with an undescended testicle. Meanwhile, out of every hundred (100) male babies who are born prematurely (too early), thirty (30) of them are born with an undescended testicle. Five (5) out of every hundred (100) boys with undescended testicles have missing testicles that cannot be found during surgery due to an unknown reason. Assume that if one woman gives birth to one (ci-jwøk) boy each day in the Anywaa nation, this number will reach thirty (30) boys in a month. Twelve (12) months later, the Anywaa community could lose 360 boys, a huge number. An evil-eyed person who has escaped the death of infancy will also be targeted while hunting or fishing. Once identified as having evil eyes, an individual will never be accepted in the community. What remains is deciding whether to drive him or her out of the village or get killed. It is also a great honor for those who murder their children. That person will be regarded as a significant figure who cares about people and does not want them to suffer.

Evil-eyed individuals often suffer from depression, suspicion, and fear of criticism. They are aggressive, apathetic, and lack trust. Their primary anxiety demonstrates a narcissistic trait for controlling and manipulating external events, which can cause distress [26,27]. Their psychological need for control is strongly correlated with superstitious beliefs [28]. The suspicion of the victims caused them to feel great anxiety, worry, and fear of uncertainty whenever a new face appeared. As a result, everyone avoids interacting with others, presents a false image, and refrains from discussing personal accomplishments when a stranger is present. Kanwal and Ghilzai (2016) argued in favor of this idea by stating that people hide their success, the accomplishments of their family members, their future plans, etc. out of a fear of being envied. There may be psychological undertones to the fear of potential evil eye damage. Internal emptiness, distractibility, insomnia, erectile dysfunction, loss of appetite, and low energy are all signs of depression in those who suffer from the evil eye. Being under the evil eye is akin to being insane. The majority of these patients (victims of the evil eye affliction) lack the ability to function in daily life, according to mental health professionals (Nikolaos and Souvlakis, 2020). It is advised that people, including children, avoid exposing those with evil eyes in public. They are referred to as "ojwøk, sons of god," to signify honor and acceptance. The chief will discipline those who insult or call someone normal "evil-eyed."

Conclusions

It is possible to conclude from the findings that the Anywaa belief system in the evil eye is complex and harmful. Boys born without a testicle and girls with a hymenal tag and thin labia majora on either the left or right were considered to have evil eyes. A person with evil eyes should be killed, and the person who does so should be honored and praised. Because of this belief, thousands of boys have drowned over the course of the last millennia. The Anywaa belief system of the evil eye has contributed to a decline in the Anywaa population and crime against children. Till now, the Anywaa tribe has been engaged in an endless cycle of killing kids who were born without a testicle (an undescended testicle). Compared to the affected victims in Anywaa society, people with evil eyes experience more severe psychosocial difficulties. The victims of the evil eye experienced suspiciousness, severe worry, fear of uncertainty, distractibility, and insomnia. People with evil eyes struggle with psychosocial issues like grievances, poor social interactions, loneliness, death, homelessness, and hopelessness.

This study has produced a number of findings, some of which are:

- Eighty percent (80%) of the participants believed that there is evil eyed person.
- Evil eyed is caused by evil spirits in the hereditary and/or curse.

- Males and females differ on the sign and identification of the evil eye. Male evil eyed is known by having or being born with one testicle. Whereas female evil eye is known when one of the labia majora is thinner than the other or hymenal tag.
- Anywaa belief system on evil eye is same as others but sign for identifying evil eyed persons are distorted, untruthful and damaging because these symptoms are common problem called cryptorchidism with no reason to be linked with spirit.
- The only way to make the community free from evil eyed people is by killing them at infant stage as soon as they were identified. And if they escaped during infant, at adult stage they will be killed during hunting or fishing.
- Ways of killing evil eyed child is by putting child into big calabash and throw him/her into river, forbidding feeding and by putting cloths on him also other means of killing.
- This beliefs drowned thousands of Anywaa boys through centuries till now.
- Circassian seed, cowrie shell and owl feather used as protection ritual and amulet.
- Abdominal pain, stomach ache, and worry are the symptom of evil eye effect on victims.
- Evil eyed people are always the scapegoat of any misfortune; as a result, they become suspicious, put their trust in no one, and everybody is a threat and enemy. They also end up migrating from place to place.
- The traditional way to minimize stigma for evil eyed people is by not talking about or exposing them publicly, and if someone does this, he or she will be warned and punished by the chief.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Anywaa Development Association should recruit counsellors for counselling, awareness-raising, and sensitization to save children born with one testicle in Anywaa society.
- Anywaa Zone Children and Women Affairs Office must make an assessment of what is behind infant mortality in Anywaa community.
- Nongovernmental organizations like Save the Children and other humanitarian organizations that advocate for child rights must intervene to end this harmful of belief.

Limitations and Future Direction

This study assesses the Anywaa belief system on the evil eye and its psychosocial repercussion on victims in Gambella's Anywaa Zone. Because this study only assessed the evil eye belief system and did not look at other aspects of this concept, further research is needed in comparison to the

sixth senses (extrasensory perception) such as precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis. Can persons with evil eyes be those with the sixth sense?

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