

## Extra Sensory Perception; Reality or Myth

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### **Abstract**

*Extra sensory perception (ESP) is a debatable and controversial topic in psychology and neuroscience. ESP is claimed paranormal and psychic abilities. It includes telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, recognition and psychometric. Many people have feelings that certain things happen by mere coincidences. ESP is also referred as the sixth sense which receive information that is perceived by the mind rather than obtained through the known physical sensation. Ancient societies used to rely on the talents of the healers who possessed supposedly abnormal abilities. Usually their powers were related to the presence of deity. It was not until 20<sup>th</sup> century that ESP phenomenon began to be investigated in the world of science. John Rhine is considered to be leading figure in rise of parapsychology. He conducted numerous experiments on extra-sensory perception. Many scientific researchers do not view ESP as empirical and knowledge based phenomenon. Much of scientific community reject ESP due to absence of solid evidence base and lack of clear theory that can explain ESP. In addition, there is lack of experimental techniques that can support the presence of ESP with reliable results. On the other hand, many people believe in extra sensory perception. This includes ability to communicate with thoughts as well as the ability predict the future. Today ESP research appears alongside orthodox psychology research in high profile peer reviewed journals. Many of these studies appear to provide evidence for existence of ESP. The purpose of this study is to investigate the existence of ESP and psychic experiences through literature review. In this article, the researcher took both sides of the arguments to find out whether extra-sensory perception is a reality or myth. Literature reviewed in this article shows a strong evidence for extra sensory perception and ability to sense future events.*

**KeyWords:** *Extra-sensory perception (ESP), Telepathy, Parapsychology, Clairvoyance, Precognition*

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## INTRODUCTION

Extra sensory perception (ESP) refers to perception and processing information not obtained through the five senses. It is popularly known as sixth sense. It is the knowledge and awareness of the world through some mechanism other than the known senses. It involves apprehension of information about events and experiences external to the self and not obtained through the senses and not deducible from previous experiences and episodes. Extra sensory perception is the belief and optimism that one can have perceptual experience without any sensory input (Stevenson, 2015). ESP was introduced by Duke University psychologist J.B Rhine in 1930. Rhine intention was to bring respectability to the phenomena. At that time there was no explanation of extra sensory perception to the western science. China for instance had recognized parapsychology since the ancient time. ESP label offered academic respectability to the notion that any that is not physical is extra. A considerable number of cases of paranormal experiences have been carefully investigated and found authentic by independent investigators and published in peer reviewed journals (Stevenson, 2015; Greyson, 2001). The subject of extra sensory perception is considered as one of the branches of meta-psychology and it has been of special interest to many psychologist, theologians as well as physicians. The following persons are viewed by some researchers as individuals who possessed extra sensory perception; Nostradamus in Europe, Joseph Bank in America and Mugo wa Kibiru in Africa.

### MICHEL DE NOSTRADAMUS 1503-1556

He was a French astrologer, apothecary, physician and a seer. Some view Michel with skepticism, however his ideas had strong staying power and reality. Logic may suggest that his claim could apply to almost any event. His prophecy or speculative prowess on the following events cannot be taken lightly; death of French King Henry two in 1559, Great fire of London in 1666, French revolution of 1789, Hitler's terror in Europe in 20<sup>th</sup> century, atomic bomb during second world, John Kennedy assassination in 1963 and two bombing in US in September 2001 (Goldsmith & Wu, 2006).

### JOSEPH BANKS RHINE (1895-1980)

He was an American botanist who founded parapsychology as a branch of psychology.

Rhine with his pioneering work in parapsychology gained national popularity for himself and Duke University where he worked. He published a book in 1943 on extra sensory perception that later gained wide acceptance in the world. Nevertheless, he had numerous skeptics and his work in parapsychology failed to gained remarkable acceptance in scientific field. He is however credited as pioneer of parapsychology. His predecessor was able to advance in the field of parapsychology (Roe & Smith, 2010)

### MUGO WA KIBIRU (18-19th century)

He was a Kenyan –Africa from Kikuyu ethnic group. He lived in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century. His exact dates of his birth and death are not known. Mugo was a healer as well as a medicine man. He rose to fame as a result of his accurate prophecies regarding his precise predictions regarding the advent of the coming of a white man in Kenya, long before the advent of missionaries and colonialist in Kenya. Kibiru predicted about the coming of foreign race of people whose skin complexion would resemble a small pale coloured frog that lives in water. He added that the race would have clothes that resembled butterflies. He said that the foreign race would have a magic stick that would produce fire. Chege noted that it will be foolish for African warriors to confront strangers with spears. Furthermore, Chege foretold about cultural erosion of Kikuyu tradition at the expense of European culture (Muriuki, 1974).

## TELEPATHY

The term telepathy is derived from Greek word “Tele” which means perception. It’s the direct transference of thought from sender to receiver without sensory channel of communication, hence extra sensory perception. It refers to information that is perceived outside the five senses. They are different types of telepathy experiences including telepathic communication which is the capability to transfer information between two or more people mentally in the absence of physical communication.

Telepathic perception involves ability to sense or perceive thoughts or emotions from another person without being told or seeing the person physical activities. Telepathy generally occurs in real world which is commonly reported with numerous people maintaining to have experienced it at lowest once in their life time (Brown, D.J., & Sheldrake, R. 2001). Telepathy has never been accepted fully in the field of psychology. It is viewed as parapsychology or pseudoscience. There is no theory that could account for telepathy. The existence of telepathy is not just a myth or fiction; it is proved by science to some extent.

The term telepathy was first used in 1882 by psychologist Meyers who assisted to start the society of psychical research (Roe & Smith, 2010). Meyer’s psychical ideas and theory of subliminal self-did not impress contemporary psychologists. Some researchers have suggested that Meyer’s was strongly biased to believe in parapsychology and extra sensory perception. He believed that a theory of consciousness must be part of the unified model of mind which derives from full range of human experience. He added that the theory expounds include not only normal psychological phenomena but also wide variety of abnormal and supernatural phenomena. Myer argued about the existence of sub-consciousness mind which he termed as subliminal self which he believed account for paranormal events.

Telepathic communication usually occurs between persons who share emotional connections as opposed to physical, biological or genetic background. For instance, such experiences have been reported between close friends, twins and siblings. There are also some interesting cases reporting that physical pain have experienced by telepathic communications

Feign, et al (2013) noted that psychologist Carl Guster Jung reported experiencing severe headache when his patient “shot” himself on the head. Studies shows that emotional link rather than a physiological, biological, or genetic play an important role in communication of telepathic experiences between emotional linked persons (Feign, et al 2013). Studies generally shows that right hemisphere region of the brain plays an important role during the processes of both empathic and telepathic experiences ( Venkatasubramanian, 2008)

## PRE-COGNITION

Pre-cognition is derived from two Latin words “Prae” before and “Cognition” acquiring knowledge. Pre-cognition is the ability to obtain information about future events or occurrences. It refers to supposed ability of psychics, fortune teller, astrologers, medium and tarot card recorder (Radaelli, 2012). Pre-cognition is widely viewed as Pseudoscience. Karlmall, (2006) argued that pre-cognition violates the principle of causality in science. It is viewed as an example of pre-science or fore-knowledge. It is different from premonition which is seen as feelings of some impending disaster ((Galak et al, 2012). From time in memorial, it has been believed that certain individuals have pre-cognitive powers. Despite lack of clear scientific evidence, many people still believe in existence of precognitive abilities (Frankline etal, 2014). Pre-cognition assertion has been meet with strong opposition and skeptics. This is because pre-cognition conflicts with fundamental of science. Researchers have done a lot of studies in precognition. Large data base conducted under controlled condition now exists (Bem, 2011; MossBridge et al, 2014).

Pew carried out a study in 2017 and found out that 41% of US citizens believe in psychics and 29% believe in astrology (Gecewicz, 2018). Beliefs in precognitions are presumably universal, the extent to which such beliefs are embraced are likely to vary across culture. A study carried out by Squires in 2017 showed that Italy has six to eight-billion-dollar year industry devoted to psychic abilities with some Italians subscribing to fortune tellers via online, in person and telephone contacts (Squires, 2017). Concept of luck and pre-cognitions are the two examples of magical beliefs. Pre-cognitions can obviously influence the kinds of investments we make, our choice of partners and the type of business we engage in as well as the home we may want to purchase.

The philosophy of pre-cognition implies that the future can be predicted. In addition, pre-cognition assumes that outcomes are to some extent, outside of an individual’s control and determined by external forces. Individualistic culture such as the west may be less likely to recognize precognition since it contradicts the belief in self-determination.

## CLAIRVOYANCE

Clairvoyance is derived from French word which means “clear seeing” (Britannica, 2022). It means knowledge of information not necessarily known to any other person, not obtained by ordinary channels of perceiving or reasoning thus a form of extra sensory perception. Spiritualist also use the term to refer to seeing or hearing the spirit of the dead that are said to surround the living (Britannica, 2022)

Abraham Lincoln is described as clairvoyant by some people. He predicted his own death. whether his predictions were true or just a mere coincidence is debatable. Just few days before he was shot dead, he had narrated to his wife a dream that he had. He said he was woken up by a sound of crying and proceeded to the Eastern room of the white house where his casket was laid open. There was a throng of mourners as well as several people guarding the casket. In the said dream one of the soldiers clearly told him it was the president who have been assassinated. Three days later after narrating the story to his wife, he was shoot dead by John Both ((Gecewicz, 2018). Apart from famous people who were said to be clairvoyance. The following are some of the situation which can be referred as clairvoyance; when one has a dream about the numbers that will come out of lottery, when one predicts the exact outcome of sporting activities, when you have a feeling that a friend whom you haven’t seen in long time is going to show up. All above situation can be seen as clairvoyant.

## PSYCHIC

The term Psychic is derived from Greek word psychokos which means the mind or the soul. French astronomer is credited as having first used the word psychic, while it was later introduced to the English language by William Cox in 1870 ( Gebric & susan ,2018). Psychic is a person who claims to use extra-sensory perception to identify information hidden from the normal sense particularly involving precognition, telepathy and clairvoyance (Gerbric, 2018). Scientist generally describe psychic powers as pseudoscience. They argue that they are no existence of such powers. In addition, they attribute psychic powers to intentional trickery or self-delusion. Psychic are sometimes featured in science as fiction and fantasy (Gerbic, 2018). In 2005, Gallip organizations conducted a survey in USA on psychic. The study found that 41% of those polled believe in extra sensory perception .31% of those surveyed indicated that they have confidence in telepathy, while 26% accept the existence of clairvoyance (David, 2005). Some school of thought hold the view that psychic abilities can easily be activated through the study and practice of meditation and divination. Some people maintain that anyone can have psychic abilities through hereditary with psychic parents or grandparents passing their abilities on to their children (Shafer & Jadwischczok, 2010)

## TELEPORTATION

Teleportation is hypothetical transfer of materials, matter or energy from one point to another without traversing the physical space between them. Teleportation is a common phenomenon featured in extra sensory perception, parapsychology and spiritualism (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012). American writer Charles Fort is credited for initiating the term teleportation. He joined two Greek prefix Tele – (remote) and Portare (to carry). Teleportation is a common subject in the field of television shows and fiction literature. The use of the term teleportation to describe hypothetical movement of material objects between one place to another without physically traversing the distance between them has been documented as early as 1878 (Galak et al, 2012). Human transportation (para teleportation) is a hypothetical phenomenon where human beings suddenly disappear from location in a space and almost instantaneously reappears in another location in space. This happens in a way that is not under the control of teleported individual (Penycook, 2012). Cases of parateleportation are found in the bible for instance Philip was “teleported” by the spirits of the Lord when he was in Gaza only to suddenly find himself in Azotus about 50 kilometers away (King James Bible, 2017).

## RELIGION AND EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION

Christianity has a phenomenon which is similar to extra sensory perception, but does not attribute it to parapsychology. Christian holy book (bible) hold the view that supernatural happenings are either the word of God or Satan. The bible clearly records that God spoke supernaturally through his appointed prophets. Through God’s divine power and revelation, they could foresee and foretell the future events that had not happened. God empowered the prophets to predict the future. He strongly condemned fortune tellers, diviners, magicians, astrologers, and witchcraft (King James Bible, 2017). Extra-sensory perception has been an immense significance in Islam. Mystical experience was the means through which God communicated with humankind. According to Islamic faith, human beings do not receive revelations through angels but through Allah (The Qur'an M.A.S Abdel Haleem, Trans, 2004) Buddhism believe that Buddha encountered extra-sensory perception by reaching the transcendental state of nirvana and acquiring heavenly eye which enabled him to fore see the entire world (Mitchell, 2002).

## CONCLUSION

Recently scientists and researchers have begun giving wholehearted attention to ESP what was once thought as pseudoscience. The existence of ESP appears more plausible. Most people and many scientists assume that consciousness and sensuous experiences are the only realities in the world. They are some human experiences which are not necessarily connected with ordinary five senses, some of them are called extrasensory perception, telepathy, supernatural phenomena or religious experiences. Not all claims of extra sensory experiences are valid, however mind may



have certain powers of getting knowledge other than through the usual nerve reaction. It is true that ordinary perceptions are gathered through the nervous system but may be achieved without direct contact of these sense organs and nervous system. There is a strong bias of scientific and academic communities against the study of extra sensory perception. There is need to shed more light on this subject through empirical data. It is important to expand our limited ways of looking at life and the world and do more studies on intuition which can be regarded as extra sensory perception. Instead of describing psychic powers as parapsychology, it's better to use the term supernatural because it refers to metaphysical or transcendental phenomenon beyond human understanding. Extra sensory perception is neither scientific nor unscientific but non-scientific. Extra sensory perception can be conceptualized as a way of direct knowing without conscious reasoning. Direct knowing means that knowledge is not achieved by step by step logic and reasoning which typically characterize scientific knowledge. ESP is not necessarily covered by science; hence it cannot be rejected or accepted based on scientific evidence.

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