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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Attitudes toward the Extended use of Kinship Terms

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the extended use of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic, focusing on their pragmatic role in fostering social cohesion, respect, and solidarity across generational and geographical boundaries. Employing unstructured interviews with participants from various age groups and backgrounds, the study investigates how terms like father, mother, uncle, aunt, son and daughter are applied beyond familial contexts, addressing acquaintances, friends, and even strangers. Findings reveal that the extended use of kinship terms is particularly prominent in rural contexts and among older individuals, reflecting a strong adherence to traditional social values. In urban areas, however, this practice appears more controlled, typically reserved for close or trusted connections. The study also highlights gender-neutral perceptions of this practice, with both male and female respondents noting the positive impact of extended kinship terms in reinforcing cultural values of respect and care. This investigation highlights how language reflects and maintains Jordanian social interactions, shaping relationships and expectations across various contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

As outlined above, this study explores the broader use of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic, examining how these terms function as linguistic tools that emphasize social cohesion, respect, and solidarity beyond the limits of direct family relationships. The use of kinship terms as address forms has received significant attention in sociolinguistics, with research exploring their role in expressing social hierarchy, politeness, and relational closeness across various cultures. However, studies examining the specific application and extension of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic are scarce, making this study a valuable contribution to the field. By highlighting an under-researched area within Jordanian Arabic, this study advances our understanding of the pragmatic functions of kinship terms, shedding light on their role in shaping interpersonal relationships and reinforcing community values in Jordanian society. Exploring how Jordanians employ terms like "father" (يا والدي), "mother" (يا والدتي), "uncle" (عموه/خالوه), "aunt" (عمه/خاله), "son" (يا بني), and "daughter" (يا بنيتي) to address non-relatives, this research provides insights into how language reflects and maintains social harmony within Jordanian society.

The structure of the paper is organized to support a comprehensive analysis of the topic. Following this introduction, the Literature Review outlines previous research on address forms and kinship terms across cultures, establishing the theoretical foundation for examining Jordanian Arabic. Special attention is given to how kinship terms serve as politeness strategies, reinforcing social harmony and respect. The Methodology Section describes the qualitative approach taken in this study, including unstructured interviews with Jordanian participants, aimed at capturing natural perspectives on the extended use of kinship terms in diverse contexts. In the Discussion Section, findings are analyzed through key themes such as social cohesion, politeness markers, and contextual variations (urban vs. rural), offering a better understanding of how kinship terms operate in Jordanian culture. Finally, the Conclusion Section summarize these insights, affirming the socio-cultural significance of extended

kinship terms and suggesting directions for future research to explore kinship-based address forms in other Arab contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will review the use of address forms, highlighting kinship terms and investigating their unique and often extended usage beyond traditional family relationships. This analysis will shed light on how kinship terms function both within familial frameworks and as broader markers of social relationships and identity.

2.1. Address forms

Address forms have been a significant focus in pragmatic and sociolinguistic research, as they play a vital role in shaping social interactions and establishing relationships. Scholars have extensively studied these forms to understand how they express respect, hierarchy, intimacy, and social distance across various cultures and languages. Research has also examined how address forms vary based on factors such as age, gender, social status, and context, demonstrating their adaptability and importance in communication. This body of research highpoints the ways in which address forms not only facilitate interpersonal exchanges but also reflect underlying cultural norms and values. In addition to classical works in the field (Brown and Gilman, 1960; Brown and Ford 1961; Scheffiler 1985), a number of researchers have tackled address forms from different points of view. Murphy (2008, 20), for instance, notes that contemporary family theory often suggests that adults in developed societies tend to focus their kinship interactions on immediate family members. This prioritization emphasizes bonds with close primary kin, like parents, children, and siblings. Read (2015, 61) contends that kinship terms are generally categorized into two analytical types: consanguineal terms, which are based on the idea that primary kinship ties stem from biological procreation (thus referred to as blood relations), and affinal terms, which define kinship connections established through marriage. Similarly, Stone (1997, 5) argues that kinship refers to recognizing a relationship between individuals based on descent or marriage. If two individuals view their relationship as rooted in descent, they are deemed "consanguine" or blood relatives. Conversely, if the connection arises through marriage, it is identified as affinal. In his study on kinship terms in Likpakpaln, a language primarily spoken in northern Ghana, Bisilki (2017, 56) identifies three main categories: agnatic kinship addresses, matrilateral kinship addresses, and affinal kinship addresses. This classification reflects the specific kinship ties established within the Bikpakpaam social structure. Beyond the idea that address choices in communication are mainly influenced by status and intimacy (Brown, 1965), Bisilki (2017, 56) reveals that communicative intentions can also play a significant role in shaping these choices. In agreement with the ethnography of communication framework (Hymes, 1964), Bisilki (2017, 56) suggests that address forms can be adjusted to fulfill various communicative functions depending on the context, highlighting how identical linguistic forms can serve multiple purposes across different interactions.

Examining Kinship Terms in Thai, Vietnamese and Indonesian Language, Pawestri (2018) finds out that Thai and Vietnamese societies appear to be more hierarchical than Indonesian society. In Thai and Vietnamese cultures, address forms are stratified based on complex social factors such as age, gender, and social standing. Pawestri's research emphasizes that Thai address terms vary when addressing paternal versus maternal relatives, with distinct terms indicating seniority or relative age within the same generational level (Pawestri 2018, 213). Thai culture's focus on hierarchy is mirrored linguistically, as younger individuals are expected to use terms of respect when addressing older family members. This seems to be in contrast with English, where such distinctions are often absent. In English, the term "uncle" does not distinguish between younger and older paternal or maternal uncles, reflecting a more egalitarian view. Thai and Vietnamese terms, much like Likpakpaln, place social importance on rank and family positioning, highlighting societal values of respect and deference towards age and lineage. In a study on the usage and significance of kinship terms among the Acehnese people in Indonesia, Idaryani and Fidyati (2023, 159) argue that Acehnese kinship terms can be categorized according to consanguineal (blood) and affinal (in-law) relationships, social status, and birth order. Some terms are gender-specific, while others are gender-neutral. Additionally, certain kinship terms are accompanied by specific adjectives, and terms like *parui* and *tumuda* are distinct, with no overlap in usage. These terms are not determined by birth order or gender. The use of kinship terms is generally bilateral, applying to both consanguineal and

affinal relationships, with some exceptions; certain kinship terms are reserved exclusively for nuclear family members within consanguineal relationships. Chinese address forms also demonstrate considerable complexity, particularly in family interactions. Unlike English, where levels of formality are often inferred from context or additional titles, Chinese employs unique terms to denote specific family relationships, underlining a respect for family hierarchy. For instance, Chinese has distinct terms for older and younger siblings, whereas English uses "brother" or "sister" without differentiating age. This linguistic structure in Chinese not only conveys respect but also highlights specific family roles, reinforcing the cultural importance of acknowledging and respecting family hierarchy in everyday interactions (Miao 2019, 215)

In the context of Arabic language, Al-Sahlany and Alhussaini (2010, 724-25) point out that the Arab kinship system is entirely descriptive, assigning a unique term to each specific relative. whereas Western societies use "cousin" as a general classificatory term, Arabic considers "cousin" descriptive, with distinct terms for male and female cousins, as well as for those from the paternal or maternal side. Al-Sahlany and Alhussaini (2010, 724) note that in Arabic culture, kinship terms can also be used metaphorically, such as addressing a parent's friend as *Am* (عم) or *Khaal* (خال) for males and *Ammah* (عمة) or *Khaalah* (خالة) for females, translating to "uncle" or "aunt." This figurative use of kin terms conveys respect and esteem for the individuals. Al-Sahlany and & Alhussaini's (2010) insights on the metaphorical use of kin terms in Arabic culture are particularly relevant to this study, which investigates Jordanian perspectives on this extended usage. By examining how Jordanians understand and employ kin terms beyond their close family, this research aims to reveal the cultural values and social interactions embedded in these linguistic conventions. As the expanded use of kinship terms can be viewed as a form of politeness, exploring the relationship between politeness and forms of address is essential, and this is the focus of the next section.

2.2. Address forms and politeness

Politeness has been a central focus in linguistic research, with significant contributions from scholars such as Goffman (1971), Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Leech (1983, 2014). Goffman introduced the notion of "face" as part of social rituals, suggesting that participants in social interactions are guided by moral rules that help manage the flow of events. Lakoff's (1973) early work framed politeness as a tool for managing social interactions, proposing rules for polite language to reduce potential conflict. Brown and Levinson expanded on this concept with their influential "Politeness Theory," focusing on the idea of face – our social self-image – and the strategies people use to reduce the impact of face-threatening acts in communication. Leech advanced this research with his "Politeness Principle," first introduced in 1983 and revisited in 2014, presenting politeness as a balance between cooperative and competitive conversational intentions. Together, these foundational studies have deepened our understanding of politeness as a vital element of effective and respectful communication across diverse cultures and contexts.

Brown and Levinson (1987, 61) distinguish between two key aspects of face that reflect a person's desires in social interactions: 'negative face' and 'positive face.' Negative face involves an individual's desire for freedom from imposition and the wish to act without interference. Positive face, conversely, represents the desire to be liked and valued by others, seeking approval of one's self-image. Brown and Levinson emphasize the role of both positive and negative politeness strategies. Positive politeness aims to convey appreciation and solidarity, making the addressee feel part of an in-group. Negative politeness, in contrast, is aimed at respecting the addressee's desire to avoid being imposed upon by others. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness can be shown through expressions of care, use of in-group markers, and demonstrations of sympathy. Negative politeness, by contrast, often includes displays of respect and deference, adherence to etiquette, and indirect language to minimize imposition. Scollon and Scollon (1981, 1983) refer to the positive politeness system as "solidarity politeness" due to its focus on shared common ground between participants, and they label the negative politeness system as "deference politeness" because it emphasizes respect and formality.

The connection between politeness and kinship terms reflects an acknowledgment of social hierarchies, as kinship terms frequently extend beyond their literal meanings to convey respect, familiarity, or social distance across cultures. Cultural norms often emphasize that children should show respect and obedience to their parents, and younger individuals should honor elders such as

grandparents, aunts, and uncles. When used metaphorically, kinship terms allow speakers to recognize social distinctions and relationships, fostering group cohesion and maintaining social harmony. In many cultures, using kinship terms like *"father," "mother," "uncle," "aunt," "brother,"* or *"son"* to address non-relatives conveys a sense of respect and warmth that aligns with established politeness norms. This use of kinship terms not only supports positive face by valuing the addressee but also aligns with negative politeness by showing deference and respect of social boundaries. In this way, kinship terms are powerful tools for expressing politeness and reinforcing social solidarity or respect across different groups. Scollon and Scollon (2012) outline three politeness systems: deference, solidarity, and hierarchy politeness systems. These systems are primarily differentiated by the presence or absence of power dynamics and social distance between participants. In the solidarity politeness system, there is no perceived power difference or social distance between speakers, as is typical among friends. In contrast, the hierarchy politeness system, often found in workplaces, government, and educational settings, employs a more formalized approach: individuals in higher positions use involvement politeness strategies, while those in subordinate roles typically adopt independence politeness strategies. Scollon and Scollon (2012, 61) suggest that kinship involves two key aspects essential to intercultural communication: hierarchy and collectivistic relationships. Kinship connections stress that individuals are linked by having descended from common ancestors. This framework highlights that older generations are considered prior and often superior to younger generations. The focus, therefore, is not on lateral relationships – such as those between siblings – but rather on hierarchical ones, like the relationships between fathers and sons or mothers and daughters. Scollon and Scollon (2012, 61) further suggest that in societies where traditional kinship relationships are emphasized, individuals are highly aware of their obligations and responsibilities to both previous and future generations. From birth, one is reminded of the debt owed to one's parents, typically expressed through duty and obedience. Similarly, individuals are often made deeply aware of their responsibilities toward their children and descendants, fulfilling this debt through care, responsibility, and benevolence.

In their analysis of politeness strategies and kinship relationships among Wawonii speakers compared to Americans in everyday conversations, Sarwin and Sukmawaty (2023, 532) find out that American politeness systems are not influenced by age or educational background. In contrast, in Wawonii, particularly in Northeast Wawonii, both age and educational background play a significant role in shaping politeness systems, including the use of kinship terms. Gusnawaty et al. (2022, 10) examine how native Bugis speakers use kinship terms to foster social harmony and express Bugis identity. Their findings reveal an expanded meaning and form of kinship terms among the Bugis. To sustain harmonious social interactions, the Bugis community strategically selects and uses kinship terms in varying contexts, with choices influenced by the power dynamics and solidarity between speakers. Examining terms of address and fictive kinship politeness in Lori, Mousavi (2020, 245) notes that social factors such as gender, age, social roles, and possibly education significantly influence the choice of address terms. For example, younger passengers often address younger taxi drivers as "brother," while they call older drivers "uncle." He, however, finds out that the expression of fictive kinship politeness, particularly concepts centered around "father" and especially "mother," often outweighs these social factors. Mousavi (2020, 238) further observes that close friends sometimes use terms of address that might otherwise be considered impolite as a way to express affection and intimacy. In this context, the words lose their impolite connotation and instead reflect the strength of their friendship, a form of deference appropriate mainly among close friends, particularly among younger people. This seems to be in line with Al-Adaileh's (2023, 1143) findings, which show that, aside from its primary use as a swear word and an abusive term threatening the addressee's negative face, *akhs* in Karaki Arabic is also employed to foster relational work and politeness among friends and family. In this context, it serves to reinforce social solidarity, express closeness, and maintain social bonds among associates and relatives.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed unstructured interviews, conducted within the context of informal social gatherings rather than formal, structured settings. During these gatherings, I posed open-ended questions to my respondents, exploring their perceptions of the extended use of kinship terms, such as *"Oh, my father" (يا والدي), " Oh, my mother" (يا والدتي), "uncle" (عموه/خالوه), "aunt" (عمه/خاله), " Oh, my son" (يا بني),* and *" Oh, my daughter"* (يا بنيتي) when addressing individuals outside of blood relationships.

The choice of unstructured interviews was driven by the need to create a relaxed and stress-free environment, allowing respondents to express themselves naturally and freely. This approach was intended to reduce any social pressure that might arise in a formal interview setting, thereby facilitating genuine responses and enhancing the validity of the study's data and findings. The study's participants consisted of 18 individuals – nine males and nine females – who were either relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years, a range intentionally chosen to include both younger and older adults, allowing for an examination of possible age-related differences in perceptions of the extended use of kinship terms. This choice was driven by the need to capture whether age-based perspectives influence attitudes toward kinship terms used outside of blood relationships. Elderly respondents were mature, experienced and capable of providing thoughtful insights and logical reasons for the extended use of kinship terms. They have greater exposure to traditional and modern social norms, making them well-suited to offer well-considered explanations for the extended usage of kinship term. Data collection took place over the course of one year, during which I recorded respondents' opinions and perspectives mentally and documented them in written form immediately after each interaction to maintain accuracy. This approach allowed for better understanding of the social phenomenon under study, capturing not only their verbal responses but also the informal social interactions that mirrored their attitudes on this topic. The collected data was systematically coded across several key dimensions, including the use of extended kinship terms motivated by solidarity and politeness, age-related factors and geographical context (rural versus urban areas). This multi-dimensional approach allowed for a in-depth evaluation of how kinship terms are used to foster social cohesion and express respect, while also highlighting how this extended use of these terms may vary based on the respondent's age group and regional background.

4. DISCUSSION

This section examines the findings through key dimensions identified in the data analysis: the use of extended kinship terms as expressions of solidarity and politeness, age-based variations, and the influence of geographical context (rural versus urban). Each of these dimensions provides distinct insights into how kinship terms operate beyond traditional family boundaries.

4.1. Extended kinship terms as solidarity and politeness markers

There is no doubt that address forms used by interlocutors in dyadic exchanges can be used to define the level of distance between the speaker and the hearer. Moving beyond this assumption, Gu (1990, 249) contends that address forms are themselves expressions of linguistic politeness, because if not used appropriately and strategically, terms of address could be viewed as markers of impoliteness since they fail to correctly demarcate the social boundaries between interaction participants. Though terms of address are conventionalised forms and their pragmatic meaning is almost fixed, they can be strategically manipulated in Jordanian culture in all speech acts in general. The rationale behind this manipulation is to fulfil a more polite and stronger pragmatic act. It is assumed that people should use terms of address in accordance with their recognition of the distinction between a symmetrical and asymmetrical relationship. However, they could be used without a consideration of such a distinction, yet with the aim of rendering the speech acts more polite, as we will see in the Jordanian culture.

Jordanian kinship terms are characterised by their extended usage. Specifically, it is not unusual to find people using kinship terms to address far more people than just relatives. It is very common to use kinship terms when addressing people of older generations, neighbours or even strangers, as a way to claim closeness in relationship and convey friendly feelings to an addressee. Jordanian people are also prone to employ kinship terms when addressing parents' friends and workmates. Thus, they can be called *fathers*, *mothers*, *uncles* and *aunts*. Some respondents noted that when "*uncle*" or "*aunt*" is followed by a first name, it conveys additional politeness, as pairing kinship terms with a first name serves to emphasize closeness and intimacy.

In Jordanian culture, when an asymmetrical relationship involves two participants, both superior and inferior behave in a way that shows respect and warmth to the other. This is quite evident in the relationships between, for example, employer and employee, or doctor and patient. While those of a lower status use occupational and respect titles when addressing higher status officials, superiors are likely to address inferiors with titles that emphasise in-group identity or with kinship terms if the

inferior is of the older generation. Doctors in hospitals and medical clinics, for example, often use kinship terms like *Oh, my father (يا والدي)* or *Oh, my mother" (يا والدتي)*, when addressing patients of the older generation. They also use respect terms like *Hajj* (male) and *Hajjih* (female) which both refer to any person who has performed the religious obligation of pilgrimage (*Al-Hajj*). Because of their effectiveness in establishing harmony between interlocutors, *Hajj* and *Hajjih* could be used to address the elderly who have not performed pilgrimage. *Hajj* and *Hajjih* become more effective if used alone and are not followed by the first name. These examples indicate that age in Jordanian culture is privileged over status. Moreover, the fact that the young tend to address the elderly with kinship terms, informal terms, or in-group markers could be taken as an attempt by the young or officials in higher rank to shorten the distance between interlocutors. Though it is not strictly related to the ongoing discussion, it is worth noting that people of higher status sometimes deliberately address those in lower rank in their own dialects (if different from the speaker's) in order to affirm solidarity and in-group identity.

Extended kinship terms tend to be unidirectional, typically flowing either from younger individuals toward elders or from elders toward the younger members of the society. Extended diminutive kinship terms like *ya bnai (يا بني " O my little son ")* and *ya bnaiti (يا بنيتي " O my little daughter ")* are often used by older speakers to address younger individuals, serving as a way to establish closeness and reinforce social solidarity. In Jordanian culture, these extended terms, said some respondents, are more than affectionate expressions; they reflect strongly embedded social networks where kinship extends beyond the nuclear family to encompass community members. One of the interviewees shared an example of an elderly shopkeeper addressing a customer's child with *ya bnai, taʕaal ʕindi* (يا بني، تعال عندي, "Come here, my son") while offering the child a banana. This gesture is likely to create a warm and friendly atmosphere, making interactions easier and more enjoyable. Similarly, a neighbor may say, *kaif halik ya bnaiti?* (كيف حالك يا بنيتي؟ ", how are you, my daughter?") to a young girl passing by, which serves to express concern and care in a socially appropriate way. These terms could create a sense of belonging by treating the younger person as part of the speaker's extended family, maintaining the strongly tied relationships. Moreover, this usage implicitly reinforces respect for the elderly, as it conveys a form of warmness that younger individuals are expected to reciprocate. Such expressions are often viewed as endearing, and the younger person is likely to respond with politeness, recognizing the elder's respect and authority. In this sense, terms like *ya bnai (يا بني " O my little son ")* and *ya bnaiti (يا بنيتي " O my little daughter ")* become effective means of preserving social harmony, overcoming generational gaps, and meeting cultural demands for friendliness and unity within the society.

Extended kinship terms, said an interviewee, can also be strategically used to, however, convey irritation or to lightly reprimand someone for an unintended offense. For instance, saying *ya ʕammooh! entabih (Uncle! Be more attentive "يا عموه انتبه!")* to someone who has bumped into another person serves as a polite yet an unambiguous signal of the speaker's annoyance. Here, the term "*uncle*," typically a marker of respect, fulfills a significant role, allowing the speaker to express frustration without resorting to overt rudeness. By using a familiar kinship term in this context, the speaker delicately conveys a reminder of social expectations, prompting the addressee to act more considerately. This dual usage of kinship terms – both as a form of respect and a gentle reproach – demonstrates their flexibility in everyday interactions. It reflects how cultural norms allow for flexible expressions where politeness and criticism coexist, enabling speakers to address minor social slips while maintaining a respectful tone.

Forms of address can thus be used as a device to shorten or expand distance between interlocutors. Terms of address used in Jordanian culture enhance in-group identity. The expansion of kinship terms to be used with people who are not relatives is likely to strengthen solidarity and emphasize in-groupness and thus could be taken as markers of positive politeness through which the addresser expresses herself in terms of familiarity with the addressee (Brown & Levinson 1978, 112). The strategic manipulation of conventionalised forms of address in Jordanian culture indicates that their pragmatic meaning is calculable rather than fixed or "ritualised". Our findings in this regard are in strong conformity to that of Pizziconi (2003, 1471)) and Kádár (2007, 146), in that the former argues that Japanese honorifics are strategic; and the latter contends, furthermore, that the use of honorifics in historical Chinese apologies are not non-strategic.

The use of respect titles like *Hajj* and *Hajjih* and kinship titles by superiors when addressing subordinates in asymmetrical relationships comes to ratify the point that the convenient use of terms of address constitutes an integral part of the "pragmatically relevant declarative knowledge" (Faerch and Kasper 1984, 215) which enables the communicative partners to choose the appropriate title in the appropriate context. Faerch and Kasper (1984, 215-216) point out that "pragmatically relevant declarative knowledge" embodies linguistic, socio-cultural, and context knowledge. The appropriate use of titles seems to be the result of the above mentioned components, because to use an appropriate title one needs to know the appropriate structure to perform the speech act, the social norms that qualify the use of some titles and disqualify others, and when, how, and where such titles should be used. Moreover, the use of kinship and intimate titles in asymmetrical relations to address, for example, people of the older generation and those who are socially distant is indicative of the speaker's awareness of linguistic choices to fulfill appropriate behaviour. This marked expansion of kinship terms is in line with Watts' (2005, 68-69) hypothesis in which politeness (seen as marked behaviour) is viewed as a special case of politic (unmarked) behaviour:

The definition of linguistic politeness offered in this chapter sees it as a marked extension or enhancement of politic verbal behaviour, as a conscious choice of linguistic forms which, in accordance with the dictates of the time and fashion, are conventionally understood to be an attempt on the part of *ego* to enhance her/his standing with respect to *alter*- for whatever reason. It is thus not deviant behaviour; it is not in other words non-politic. However, it is certainly marked, and its functions may easily be non-altruistic and clearly egocentric. (Watts 2005, 69)

Yet while I agree with Watts that politeness is not "deviant" behaviour in that it aims to establish and/or maintain interpersonal relationship, I find that the main motivation of this marked behaviour in Jordanian culture is not "egocentric" and is not designed only to make other people have a better opinion of self. Rather, the conscious choice of respect titles and the expansion of kinship terms are intended to express respect and deference towards other people, especially the elderly. This also has to do with social expectations which lead elderly patients – viewed as subordinates – to expect to be treated well by, for example, clinic doctors – viewed as superiors. The clinic doctors' compliance with these social expectations is indicative of the emphasis placed on having strongly tied relationships which are seen, in turn, to be the result of the individual's dependence on others. Our argument here is in line with that of Locher and Watts (2005), in which relational work is viewed as "[…] the "work" individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others". They note that "human beings rely crucially on others to be able to realize their life goals and aspirations, and as social beings they will naturally orient themselves towards others in pursuing these goals" (of Locher and Watts 2005, 10).

4.2. Extended kinship terms and gender

Both male and female Jordanians recognize the significance of kinship terms to express respect for others, even when there is no direct familial relationship. The use of these terms is seen as a way of acknowledging the importance of social bonds and promoting a sense of unity within society. For female respondents, the use of kinship terms with non-relatives is also seen a way to express inclusivity and social harmony. Female interviewees expressed that they feel particularly pleased and reassured when elderly individuals address them using extended kinship terms such as *يا بنيتي (O my little daughter)*. This form of address, which is often used by older members of the community, carries with it a sense of protection, evoking a feeling of being cared for in a familial way. One female interviewee reported that when she is called يا بنيتي by elders, she feels a deep sense of emotional security. In relation to this, she said that "*When an older person calls me يا بنيتي (O my little daughter), I feel safe and valued, almost like I'm under their care, even though we're not related.*" The use of terms such as *عموه (uncle) or خالتو (aunt)* to address elderly individuals who are not blood relatives is, for some female interviewees, a way of showing respect and acknowledging the wisdom and life experience of older community members, even if they are not part of the family. It appears, then, that no gender differences were observed regarding the extended use of kinship terms. Both male and female interviewees unanimously agree that using these terms with people who are not blood relatives helps strengthen social relationships and foster solidarity.

4.3. Extended Kinship Terms: Rural and Urban Differences

The use of extended kinship terms in Jordan is influenced not only by individual relationships but also by the geographical and cultural context in which people live, with notable differences between

urban and rural settings. In rural areas, where communities are typically smaller and more interconnected, the use of extended kinship terms such as *عموه/خالوه (uncle), خالتو/عمتي (aunt), يا بني (O my little son) and يا بنيتي (O my little daughter)* is more prevalent and often used freely, even with people who are not blood relatives. In these areas, kinship terms are deeply embedded in everyday social interactions and are used to express familiarity, respect, and solidarity. Rural communities in Jordan tend to have stronger interpersonal ties, and people often view each other as part of an extended family network. As a result, addressing someone with a term like *عموه/خالوه (uncle), خالتو/عمتي (aunt), يا بني (O my little son) or يا بنيتي (O my little daughter)*, even if they are not a direct relative, serves to reinforce social harmony and in-groupness. These terms are markers of solidarity and respect, contributing to a shared sense of belonging within the community. It's common for neighbors, friends, and acquaintances in rural areas to use these terms to indicate a sense of collective responsibility and mutual care, reinforcing the value placed on communal bonds.

In contrast, in urban areas, where social interactions are more complex and the population is more diverse, the use of extended kinship terms is generally more reserved, said some interviewees. Urban communities in Jordan tend to be more diverse, with people from different regions, backgrounds, and family networks interacting with each other in more formalized settings. While extended kinship terms are still used in urban areas, they are often used with close friends, trusted colleagues, or individuals with whom one shares a more personal connection. The formality of urban life, with its larger social networks, often leads people to be more cautious about using such terms outside the nuclear family. For instance, addressing someone as عموه or خالتو in the city might be seen as an expression of affection or respect, but it is less common to use these terms with individuals who are merely acquaintances or people encountered in professional settings. In cities, the growing use of formal titles and the diversity of social groups might have made extended kinship terms seem more personal, with these terms typically used with individuals with whom one shares an established relationship of trust or mutual respect.

Furthermore, the generational gap between older and younger people also plays a role in how extended kinship terms are used in urban and rural areas. In rural areas, where traditional values and social customs are often more strongly observed, older and younger generations continue to use extended kinship terms regularly. In urban areas, however, younger generations, particularly those influenced by global cultures or higher levels of formal education, may be less inclined to use extended kinship terms as casually. They may see them as somewhat old-fashioned or too informal in certain contexts, and as a result, prefer using formal titles or addressing people by their names, especially in professional or public settings. Overall, the use of extended kinship terms in Jordan seems to be shaped by the social context in which individuals live. In rural communities, these terms seem to be integral to daily life, reinforcing the sense of unity and mutual care that characterizes rural society. In urban areas, people might use extended kinship terms more carefully, usually for close relationships, to show a stronger personal bond. Despite these differences, the underlying cultural value of respect, solidarity, and inclusion remains central, with kinship terms serving as powerful tools for maintaining social ties, whether in rural or urban environments.

5. CONCLUSION

The extended use of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic emerges as a powerful linguistic strategy that exceeds simple familial relations, playing a critical role in shaping and reflecting Jordanian social networks. By addressing non-relatives with terms traditionally used with family members, Jordanians actively express respect, warmth, and solidarity in different social contexts. This linguistic usage is particularly common in rural areas, where socially tied communities and traditional social values encourage an environment in which kinship terms naturally extend to neighbors, acquaintances, and even strangers. Such use mirrors common ground and a shared sense of identity and mutual responsibility within these communities, emphasizing solidarity and in-groupness. Urban settings, by contrast, show a more careful use of this linguistic habit, where formal titles or names are often preferred, particularly in professional or unfamiliar social interactions. Nonetheless, urban interviewees recognize the unique warmth and connection that kinship terms create, using them with individuals with whom they share a closer bond.

The study finds no gender difference in attitudes toward the use of extended kinship terms, suggesting that both male and female interviewees view these terms as ways to bring people together and, therefore, strengthen community relationships. For some, kinship terms create an emotional security, particularly when younger people are addressed by elders with terms *يا بني (O my little son) and يا بنيتي (O my little daughter).* These terms are seen as kind and caring, helping the elderly connect with younger generations and show respect for all ages. In this way, kinship terms help keep harmony between generations, which is an important part of Jordanian culture. The findings also reveal the pragmatic flexibility of kinship terms, which can be used to express irritation or provide delicate, socially acceptable reproaches without overt confrontation. For instance, addressing a younger person as *uncle* in moments of frustration transforms what could be a negative interaction into one that preserves social harmony. This socio-pragmatic approach conforms to politeness theories, particularly positive politeness strategies, which affirm social connections even when correcting others.

Overall, the extension of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic operates as a marker of positive politeness, reinforcing social bonds and maintaining in-groupness. This usage mirrors people's observation of social values that prioritize respect, community cohesion, and cultural continuity. By examining these terms, this study highlights the role of language in reflecting the cultural norms operative in the Jordanian society. Extended kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic reveal the culturally embedded strategies Jordanians employ to strengthen relationships and maintain social solidarity. Future research could explore the use of kinship terms across different Arab societies to determine whether similar patterns exist beyond Jordan, offering insights into broader cultural variations in politeness and social cohesion. Additionally, examining how younger generations – especially in urban settings – perceive and use these terms in digital communication could shed light on potential shifts in linguistic norms. Investigating the role of kinship terms within professional and digital communication might also reveal how traditional politeness strategies are retained or adapted in more formal or virtual interactions.

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