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# The Role of *Shimglina* Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Rural Land Disputes in Amhara People of Ethiopia

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## Abstract:

The objective of this paper is to find out *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism in rural land dispute in Bahir Dar Zuria Woreda of Amhara people. The researcher used Qualitative research methodology with case study research design. It is found that *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism used to land dispute resolution. In addition, the Study revealed, using the various forms of *shimglina* in land dispute resolution gave benefits for the community to reconcile and heal the grievances and the negative psychological wounds of the disputants by attaching *shimglina* to the living God. The strengths of using the various forms of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism in land dispute is timeliness, accessibility, restoring the broken peaceful relationship, respect, participatory, flexibility and the complimentary service for the economically poor community. The actors of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution in land dispute are local elders, religious leaders, relatives of the disputants, and members of spiritual associations. The regional government of Amhara should work to the development of the various forms of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism for rural land disputes.

*Keywords: Rural Land, Peaceful co-existence, Rural land disputes, Shimglina, Customary Conflict resolution, Amhara People*

## INTRODUCTION

Customary mechanisms are grass root approaches to solve conflicts based on the values, norms, and rituals of the society (Zartman, 2000). Conflict resolution in traditional Africa is geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. The significance and efficacy of the processes lie in the fact that they strive to restore a balance, to settle conflict and eliminate disputes (Ahmad and Ademowo, 2017). In addition, traditional societies in Africa and elsewhere are believed to hold secrets of peacemaking locked in their ways that are formed from centuries of custom before the disruption of colonization (Zartman, 2005).

Customary conflict resolution mechanisms comprise social, economic, cultural and religious-spiritual dimension (Nwolise, 2005). Ethiopia is a country for different ethnic groups with different customary conflict resolution mechanisms (Esayas, 2015, Gonfa, 2014, and Regassa, 2008). Customary conflict resolution mechanism institutions of various ethnic groups were the main body of customary law in Ethiopia for centuries that are deeply rooted in their cultures and traditions which could contribute in settling conflicts or disputes (Jembere, 2000). As Kelemework (2011), stated that customary conflict resolution mechanisms are the normative frameworks that the people are referring to control misbehaviors in the society. In addition, Fekadu, (2007)

indicated that normative character of customary institutions based on norms, promises and moral rules that can reduce the cost of conflict and prevent it from escalating into destructive violence. The customary conflict resolution practices of Ethiopia are mostly used in rural areas where the formal legal system is unable to penetrate because of lack of resources, infrastructure and legal personnel as well as a lack of legitimacy, for the modern law is seen as unfamiliar, imposed, and ignorant of the cultural realities on the ground to settle disputes, and not considering the influence of decisions in the relationships of disputant parties (Endalew, 2014). The community is making innovative use of these institutions to resolve disputes on land and other natural resources (Haftom, 2011 and Kassa, 2020). The most acceptable rural land dispute settlement mechanisms in Ethiopia are informal dispute resolution mechanisms (Ashenafi, 2013). In Ethiopia, the customary mechanisms of disputes resolution in rural land and rural land related disputes are functional and effective in spite of the position of the formal mechanism. This glaring factual reality calls for a new legal regime on conflict or dispute resolution that recognizes the importance of local values and customary institutions (Kassa, 2020). The Amhara people used *Shimglina* customary mechanism to resolve land disputes. It is the foremost mechanism of dispute resolution in the region and about 80% of the rural community takes their land dispute cases to customary dispute resolution mechanisms through *shimageles* (village elders and religious leaders) (WB, 2012b). In Amhara people, the procedure and practices of *shimglina* (elderliness), elders work with reference to orally transmitted customary norms referred to as *Yeabat ager hig* (the law of the land of the fathers) (Yoseph, 2006). Another important institution in Amhara community is *Yezemed Dagna* (family arbitrator). The arbitrators are family members (Tefera, and Mulugeta, 2009).

In the Amhara Regional State, the Revised Amhara National Regional State Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation, deal with Rural Land Dispute Settlement Mechanism in Proclamation No.133/2006. Specifically, it is Article 29 of the Proclamation that deals with the resolution of disputes relating to rural land issue. In the Region, no civil dispute arising from the holding or use of rural land submitted to a regular court before it is submitted to customary based dispute resolution mechanism and the result of such resolution mechanism is known (Mequanent, 2016 and Shewakena, 2007). A body which is responsible and established by the government for land and land related disputes is the elders' arbitration committee (EAC), locally known as "*ye-shemaglewoch shengo*" that are supported by the rural land administration unit in the kebele and run by a land administration expert at the local level (Gashu and Amsalu, 2017) for the resolution of land and land related disputes in the kebele community.

Based the works of Solomon (1992), Yohanness (2003), and Yoseph (2006), online sources and based on researcher information; the strength of the customary law of Shimgelina is not studied. Accordingly, an in-depth investigation of the strength of shimglina customary conflict resolution mechanism in relation to land dispute is found to be important.

### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

This part indicated major findings obtained from different studies related to the practices and challenges of customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land disputes. Muigua (2019) conducted a study on effective application of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in the management of land conflicts in Kenya and he points out; traditional or customary disputes resolution mechanisms are associated with many advantages when appropriately used in management of land and other natural resource conflicts. The mechanism has many intrinsic values that make them preferable to the formal mechanisms in management of land conflicts and

disputes; and there are procedural and appropriateness challenges that should be addressed to make them legally and practically applicable.

In this regard, the challenges are the enforcement of their outcome or decision is prove difficult due to the non-binding nature of the mechanism and determination of the expertise of practitioners are also challenge to the government to use the mechanism by harmonizing in the state legal system in which it is difficult to know elders who have the knowledge and competence of traditional dispute resolution and the modern legal system altogether due to that most elders cannot read and write. He also added that, effective application of traditional disputes resolution mechanisms in the management of land conflicts and disputes is possible and effective.

Berhanu (2018), assessed rural land disputes resolution mechanisms in Oromia regional state and his work indicated that village elders played higher role in land dispute resolution than the courts but he did not examine the challenges of it. In addition to this, Musto (2018) studied on the influence of indigenous conflict resolution mechanism on land use management in pokot central sub-county, Kenya and his findings shows customary conflict resolution in land is practiced from neighbors' conciliation up to council of elders and it is effective in resolving land and land related disputes. He also identified some challenges that the customary system is faced which include: non recognition by the government and also some members of the community, Christianity, conflicts between modern and justice systems among others. These challenges hindered the performance of the indigenous mechanism.

Moreover, Hebo (2005), studied on land disputes settlement in a plural institutional setting. He stated, the customary dispute settlement institutions are vastly practiced in the resolution of land and land related disputes in the community and the peoples are more interested in it rather than taking land issues to courts and the land administration and use institutions. Also, Mequanent (2016) assessed on the application of traditional dispute resolution in land administration in Amhara region and finds out that the application of traditional community-based dispute resolution mechanisms is contributed a lot to resolve disputes at the local level.

Furthermore, the WB (2012b), survey report shows that eighty percent of the people in Amhara regions take their land and land related disputes cases to customary conflict resolution institutions and the institutions are efficient to settle the issue. Gashu and Amsalu (2017) also studied decentralised rural land administration in Ethiopia: the case of Amhara region and explained in his findings in which the elderly arbitration committee is established by the government for the resolution of land and land related disputes at the local level.

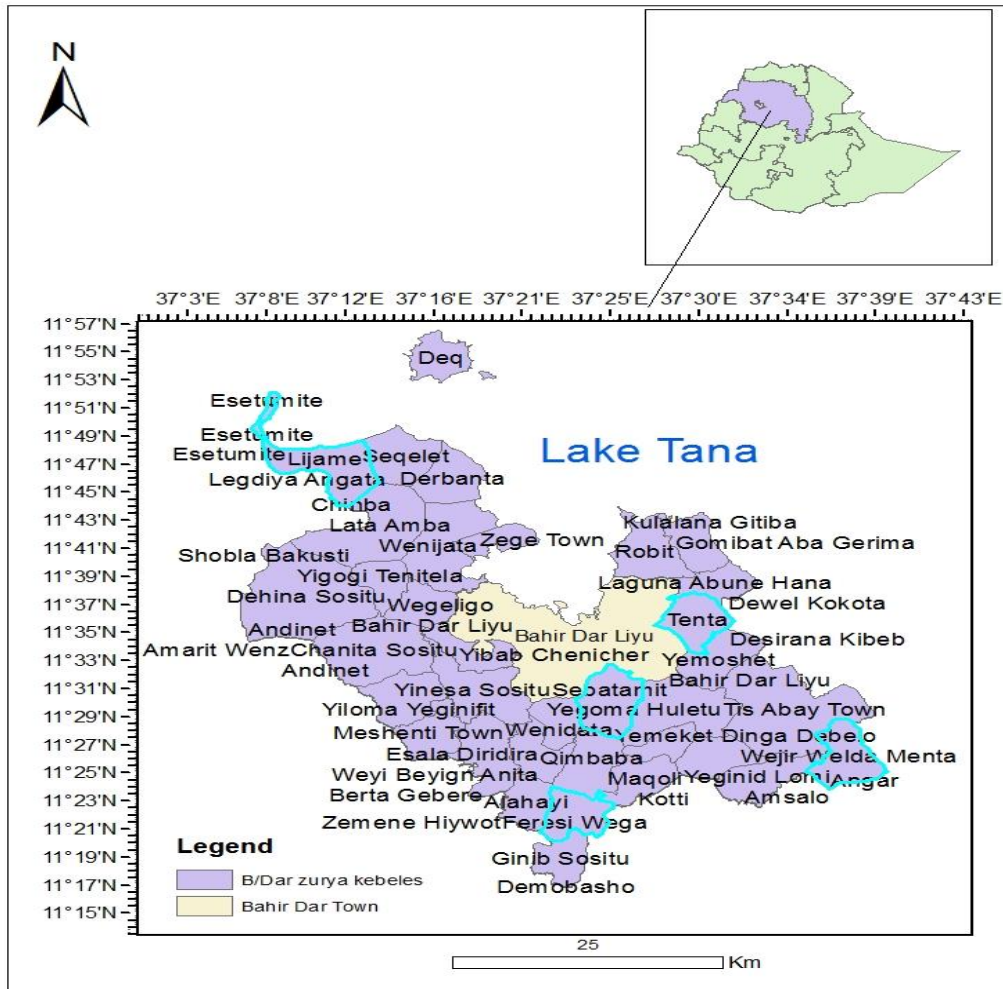
The above researchers studied the role of customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land disputes. However, they did not study and identify the strengths of *shimglina* customary mechanisms in the resolution of rural land disputes. Therefore, this study was analyzed and identified the strengths of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land disputes in Bahir Dar *Zuria Woreda*.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Bahir Dar *Zuria Woreda* is found in the previous west Gojjam Administrative Zone of Amhara National Regional State of Ethiopia and currently it is found in the new administrative zone of North Gojjam Zone. The *Woreda*, shared boundaries with Lake Tana in north, Achefir *Woreda* in the east, Dera *Woreda* in the east, and Yilmana Densa *Woreda* in the south. It has 36 rural kebeles.



The people in the study area largely practiced crop and, in some level, they practiced livestock production for their livelihood.



\*The above picture is the Map of the study area

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

This Study used qualitative research approach. According to King, Keohane and Verba (1994) the qualitative approach enables a researcher to unearth an immense amount of information for a study. The researcher also used case study research method. This study is conducted in the farming rural areas of five kebeles of Bahir dar Zuria Woreda, and based on empirical researches. Primary data were collected through in-depth interview, FGD and non-participant observation. 106 participants were purposively selected and key informants comprised elders, religious leaders, rural land administration experts, and community members. This study also used secondary sources of data such as from online sources, books, published journals, working papers and other unpublished written works. Data were analyzed qualitatively by organizing the data's in to themes and contents.

## THEORETICAL GROUNDS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY THE VARIOUS FORMS SHINGELINA CUSTOMARY MECHANISMS AS A CULTURE OF PEACE

### Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory can be defined as the shared norms, relationships, reciprocal obligations, trust, and the horizontal and vertical social networks that facilitate coordination and cooperation

for mutually beneficial collective action in the community is seen as an important asset and advantages that people use and depend on it to settle conflicts (Sanginga, et al. 2007). Theory can also explain the restorative nature of dispute resolution by elders in African societies. The elders target in restoring the broken social ties and relationships among and between the disputants (Kariuki, 2015). Moreover, the theory explains how the community and local elders resolve disputes and reestablish social ties. In addition to this, it also describes how social ties or social capital contributes and play role in the peaceful relationships and existence of the community (Ibid).

### **Social Solidarity Theory**

The social solidarity theory explains the importance of dispute resolution by customary conflict resolution mechanisms through elders even in modern societies that have adopted the western legal systems as dispute resolution mechanism as the western legal system is not good for the future relationship of the parties in a conflict (Durkheim, 1984 and Kariuki, 2015). In a society, individual members are social actors who are controlled by social facts (values, norms, and social structures) in their life (Ibid). Using this theory for dispute resolution by elders is possible in which, dispute resolution by elders is viewed as a social fact from which society gains benefit from it. Furthermore Murithi, (2006:13) stated as follows: An integral part of the process of achieving positive peace is the need to promote social solidarity. Achieving social solidarity means that members of the society once again begin to recognize each other as fellow human beings and begin to share a concern in the common welfare and well-being of each other. Social solidarity makes sense because only by ensuring the security, safety, and well-being of other people, can we hope to secure our own security, safety, and well-being. To emphasize the need to foster social solidarity is to recognize the interconnectedness of each human being.

The social solidarity theory is essential to understand and explain the strength of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution in rural land disputes by *shimageles* (elders and religious leaders), relatives, the traditional social capital like mahiber (informal association for spiritual and self-help purposes) and how individuals and the community benefited from the *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism within the resolution of their land disputes based up on their shared values and norms.

## **DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **The Strength of the Various forms *Shimglina* Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism as a Culture of Peace in Rural Land Disputes**

*Shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanism in rural land and rural land related disputes has its own strength in which the communities are benefited. According to Muiguana, (2015) the practice of customary dispute resolution in resolving disputes and access to justice in Africa is still important. In addition, Boege (2006: 11) identifies the following strength of customary conflict resolution mechanisms:

- Fit situations of state fragility and failure;
- Are not state-centric and hence credited with legitimacy;
- Take the time factor into due account and are process-oriented;
- Provide for comprehensive inclusion and participation;
- Focus on the psycho-social and spiritual dimension of conflict transformation.

These listed strengths are also found in the customary conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms of *shimglina*. The points are discussed below based on the collected data;

**Rebuilds the Broken Relationships of the Disputants:**

The informants asserted that, the natures and aim of customary conflict resolution mechanisms of *shimglina* is practiced in land disputes for the purpose of restoring broken relationships between or among the disputants by healing their issue from its sources (Interview with elder 1 at Wojer kebele, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022). In supporting this, Zehr, (1985) stated, customary or traditional restorative justice views criminal conflict as a violation of a relationship between or among victims, offenders and the community. In addition, the informants said; The practices of negotiation, mediation and reconciliation within *shimglina* institutions are mainly working to rebuild the broken peace and creating peaceful relations between or among the disputants through forgiveness, tolerance honesty, and faithfulness for settling the land and land related disputes based on forwarding a win-win solution to both parties of the disputes. Yet, the formal land disputes resolution system is adversarial to the disputant's future relationships and its approach to settle the dispute is mostly win-lose and cannot consider the effects of the decision in the future all over interaction of the parties (FGD1 with elders and religious leaders at Wojer kebele, 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2022).

**Cost Effective:**

As the focus group discussants indicated, customary disputes resolution mechanisms of *shimglina* are cost effective to the rural poor. However, the formal legal system is not equally important to the rural poor farmers to run their land and land related cases. They indicated as in the following ways: We prefer *shimglina* customary disputes resolution from the various levels of *shimglina* due to the fact that it provides free service and it is worthy to solve our problem of land disputes without high financial cost. However, the formal legal system is expensive and needs extra resource in the procedures of the cases up to its final decision (FGD5 with farmers, who settled their land disputes through *shimglina* at Sebatamet kebele, 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2022).

**Participatory:**

The informants affirmed that *shimglina* is participatory in its procedures of settling their rural land disputes. Disputant parties can discuss their disagreement in face to face with *shimageles* (elders and religious leaders) and with each other. In *shimglina*, the disputants are parts of the dispute resolution process and in the selections of local elders and religious leaders to resolve their land disputes. In addition, the final decision of *shimageles* (elders and religious leaders) needs the consent of the parties who are in disputes to accept or reject the decision (FGD2 with the elderly arbitration committee at Feresewoga kebele, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2022). In this regard, Luna, (2003) argued, restorative justice encourages the voluntary participation of the disputants based on their consensus for finding solution to their shared disputes.

However, as the informants described, in the formal land dispute resolution mechanism, decisions are made based on the evidences gained and the concerned rural land laws. Hence, their processes are not participatory and the verdict is mandatory to accept (FGD2 with the elderly arbitration committee at Feresewoga kebele, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2022). Thus, the participation of the parties in the resolution procedures helped them for mutual understanding.

**Timeliness:**

Based on the collected data, settling rural land disputes through *shimglina* customary conflict resolution is speedy in terms of time it takes to resolve. However, the formal land dispute resolution system is not fast to respond and decide. The discussants described as: *Shimglina* is speedy to resolve our land disputes but in the court system it takes more than a year to decide on

the issue. The long and tedious process of the court proceeding could contribute to the disputes are changed in to violence and creates loss of life and property distraction. Timely response to land dispute is needed to reduce the negative effect of the problem in the economic and social life of the people (FGD5 with farmers who settled their land disputes through *shimglina* at Lijome kebele, 11<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022).

Therefore, timeliness is vital in the customary conflict resolution of *shimglina* in land disputes to reduce further escalation and damage between and among disputants in particular and the disruptions of the peace of the community in general.

***Accessibility:***

According to informants, farmers choose to use *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land and rural land related disputes over the formal dispute resolution mechanism due to ease of access to their village. They explained the issue as: The formal legal system institutions for land disputes are far from the community and it needs transportation expenses and time to travel the physical distance to get the access of institutions like court and rural land administration and use institutions. This consumes our time and resource that were important to our agricultural activity. So, the question of accessibility is acceptable without doubt to us to save our resource and time (Interview with elder 4 and religious leader 1 at Tentakerkose kebele, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2022).

***Complimentary To the Poor and Complementary to the Formal Government Institutions in Rural Land Dispute Resolution Service:***

As the informants explained, customary dispute resolution mechanisms of *shimglina* in the study area are important for the economically poor and disadvantaged members of the community to settle their land disputes without expense in the procedure of dispute resolution. The poor and vulnerable groups in the community are using *shimglina* in land disputes (FGD2 with the elderly arbitration committee at Tentakerkose kebele, 11<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022). In this regard, harper, (2011) stated "customary justice systems are the cornerstone of dispute resolution for the poor and disadvantaged in developing countries". Hence, the evidences' indicated, *shimglina* largely served the economically poor members of the community to settle their land and land related dispute, as a result of people who have economic problems are in problem to use the formal legal mechanisms for dispute resolution. In addition, the FGD discussants described: *Shimglina* through *shimageles* (elders and religious leaders) are effective even during the time of the formal legal system is weakened or not to govern and resolve rural land disputes in the rural community. The community can govern their rural land issues based on the customary practices of themselves. They have been working to resolve different cause of land disputes over years for the benefit of the community to led stable and peaceful economic and social life and can reduced loss of life and property distraction (FGD1 with elders at Wojer kebele, 9<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022).

In addition to this, *shimglina* also contributes to the government as a complementary in filling the gaps in providing dispute resolution service in rural land disputes and reducing backlog of land-based court cases in the *Woreda* court and in rural land administration and use offices. It is also too important to strengthen the state-based land dispute resolution mechanisms and potential avoidance of exclusively win-lose outcomes that may escalate a dispute (Interview with the *Woreda* rural land administration and use expert 2 at Bahir Dar *zuria Woreda*, 18<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022).

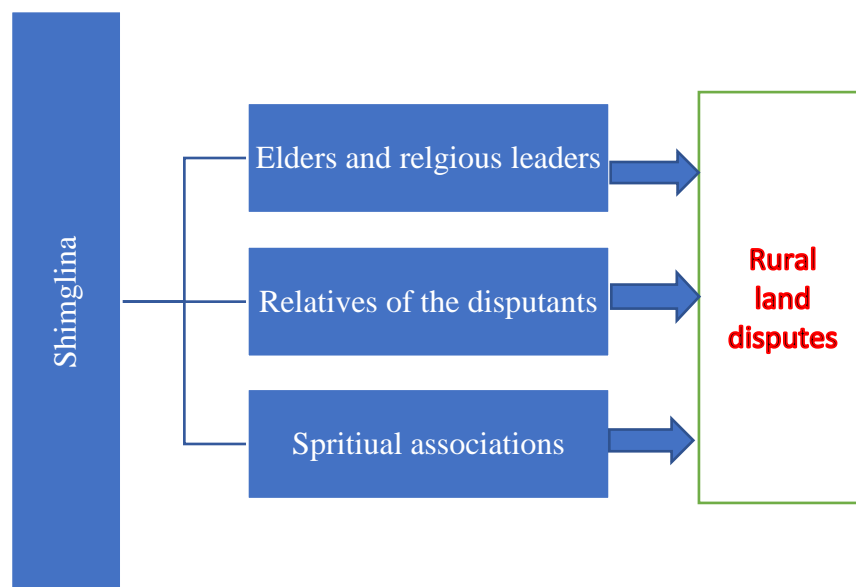
**Flexibility:**

Based on the collected data, the customary conflict resolution mechanism of *shimglina* for land and land related disputes in the community is flexible towards the conditions and time to resolve the issue. It is not rigid to a certain circumstances and rules. Elders and religious leaders are trying to reconcile disputants by suggesting various possible ways based on the circumstance of the disputes, the disputants and the values of the society through their traditional wisdom of peace making (Interview with elder 6 at Lijome, 9<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022).

Farmers who were settled his land disputes through *shimglina* said: “elders and religious leaders can easily understand our dispute situation, interest and the solution to our mutual disputes” (Interview with a farmer who settled his land dispute at Lijome, 9<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022). Hence, the flexible nature of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution has been benefited the disputant parties in resolving the problem by considering their circumstances.

**Respects:**

As one key informant from elders explained, “respects and trust towards shimageles (elders and religious elders, relatives, the member of the spiritual association and self-help groups) was cherished in the traditions of the community”. The other also added that, “*shimglina* were a socially legitimate mechanism in land disputes”. Disrespect to elders and religious leaders are taboo in the community. This value helped the community to resolve their land disputes easily through *shimglina* customary conflict resolution system as *shimglina* was highly valued and adhered to by the members of the community and the value of *shimglina* was deep rooted in the socio-economic interaction of the community (Interview with elder 1 religious leader 5 at Feresewoga kebele, 24<sup>th</sup>, February, 2022).



\*The picture shows the actors of shimglina customary conflict resolution and institutions of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution in land disputes in the study area

**Conclusion:**

This study was carried out in Bahir Dar *Zuria Woreda* to examine and identify the strength of customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land disputes. The findings indicated that the resolution of land disputes by *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms as a culture of peace are largely practiced in the community. Rural land disputes were addressed through

*shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms in Bahir Dar *Zuria Woreda* people such as disputes related to land ownership, boundary trespass, land inheritance, donation, land transfer, share cropping, plant shade, drainage direction, divorce related land disputes, livestock destroy crops, disputes on grazing land, access to pathways disputes, dispute on squatting communal lands and land grabbing disputes.

The strength of the customary conflict resolution mechanisms in rural land disputes were also other issues addressed in this study. The findings indicated that *shimglina* customary conflict resolution in rural disputes have been its own strength for the rural poor community in many ways like cost effectiveness to run their dispute case, builds the broken relationships of the disputants through forgiveness, consensus based participation in the process of dispute resolution, timely response or speedy resolution, accessible to their locality, and complementary service to the government to fill gaps were the strength of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms in settling rural land disputes in the case study area. Finally, the researcher recommended that the regional and local governments should give high attention to *shimglina* customary conflict resolution for peace as result of local land disputes can be better resolved by the customary conflict resolution practices of *shimglina* in the study area. The governments need to strengthen the practice of *shimglina* customary conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve land disputes, which are important to vulnerable members of the community who are deprived of protections in the state legal systems land disputes resolution due to economic problems to run their issue.

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# Speech Acts Dynamics in Arabic: Investigating the Acquisition of Apology and Request Among Algerian Children

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## Abstract:

During interpersonal interactions, individuals employ various speech acts, such as apologies and requests, to fulfill communicative objectives. This research focuses on investigating the acquisition of apology and request skills in Algerian children. The primary objectives are to explore the impact of age on the utilization of speech acts in children and to identify the predominant sources contributing to the acquisition of such communicative skills. The study involved 12 participants, evenly distributed across two age groups: Group A (3 to 6 years old) and Group B (7 to 10 years old). Data collection utilized an oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT) featuring six scenarios, with the researcher recording participants' responses. Quantitative and qualitative analyses, employing C. Garvey's (1974) framework for requests and R. Ely & Gleason's (2006) framework for apologies among children, were conducted. While both age groups demonstrated proficiency in using apology and request speech acts, nuanced differences emerged. Older participants (Group B) exhibited heightened linguistic awareness, employing both direct and indirect forms along with diverse strategies for apologies and requests. In contrast, younger participants (Group A) displayed more static and repetitive expressions. The study concludes that age significantly influences the acquisition and production of speech acts. Furthermore, it identifies various sources, including direct guidance from parents and teachers, as well as peer interactions, contributing to children's acquisition of apology and request speech acts.

*Keywords: Speech Act Theory, acquisition, children, Algerian Arabic, Apology, Request*

## INTRODUCTION

People interact with each other, using language, for a variety of reasons including to communicate ideas/feelings and even to perform things. Often people use what is known as 'speech acts' to perform things like promises, requests and apologies ...etc. This 'special' type of language has (speech acts) attracted the attention of various scholars namely that of J. L. Austin who brought new insights with his revolutionary Speech Act Theory. With the rise of this theory in 1962, language became to be seen as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey information and express oneself.

Years after the appearance of this theory, scholars became interested in implementing it on a larger scope. Interest grew wild on how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds approach speech acts. Such interest was reflected in the bulk of research conducted on this topic from various perspectives ranging from the strategies used to how children acquire speech acts. Before we proceed to our main interest, it is important to delve into the nature of the speech act theory.

## SPEECH ACT THEORY

The speech act theory can be traced back to the pioneering work of J. L. Austin (1962) which sparked an interest in investigating how words are used to carry out actions instead of just

presenting information. This theory was further developed by Searle (1969) who saw speech acts as "basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" and were defined as utterances which indicate actions. The structure: 'I sentence you two years in prison', when performed in its appropriate context (court) room by the appropriate person i.e., judge, who has the authority, the sentence does not report on an action, instead it refers to a performed action (Austin, 1962, p. 6).

Austin (1962) distinguished between three elements of communicative acts. First, the locutionary act which simply refers to the basic production of a meaningful utterance. This latter helps in maintaining communication since the messages being transferred must bear certain amount of sense and reference. The illocutionary act refers to an utterance which has a communicative intention. It is seen to be composed of a propositional content plus a particular illocutionary force whereby the speaker can offer, request, order ...etc. Finally, the perlocutionary act deals somewhat with external aspect of the speech act. In fact, it is interested in the consequences of the speaker's utterance on the hearer such as: persuading, convincing, scaring and so forth.

Speech acts were subject to immense investigation as researchers wanted to understand such phenomenon from different perspectives. When it comes to the linguistic perspective, researchers were interested in identifying the different forms and strategies used by people across different languages. From a cultural and sociolinguistic perspective, they were interested in the various metalinguistic factors influencing the use of speech acts such as age, identity, ethnicity, cultural diversity ...etc. Speech acts were studied across different cultures and languages to verify how much languages and cultures converge or diverge in relation to their use. Since this study is related to speech acts request and apology in the Arab context, it is important to highlight some of the main studies that were conducted.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Goffman (1971), an apology is a linguistic tool which is remedial in the sense that it is used to restore damaged relationships, mitigate loss of face, and preserve social standing. Requests are too among the types of speech acts which received significant amount of attention especially in the field Pragmatics (Fukushima, 2002).

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined requests as a face-threatening speech act since they are intended to threaten the addressee's freedom of action i.e., his negative face. A request, thus, can be simply defined as a polite demand made by the speaker i.e., requester to ask for a favor from the other person (Nelson et al, 2002). People produce requests for various reasons during their daily interactions such as: obtaining information, seeking support, or acquiring assistance from others. In the following section, we will highlight some of works that were conducted on the speech acts of apology and request in the Arab context.

#### **Studies on Apology in Arabic**

Nureddeen (2008) tried to highlight the type and extent to which apology strategies are used in Sudanese Arabic. The researcher used discourse completion task (DCT) composed of 10 items which was handed over to 110 college educated adults in the capital city of Khartoum. She found that Sudanese speakers of Arabic prefer to apologize indirectly mainly through the use of explicit/implicit strategies as well as explanations. The author concluded that the results of her study confirm with to earlier studies when it comes to the universality of some apology strategies.

A year later, Mohamed Assiri conducted a study to investigate the use of apology among Arab participants with special attention to the variable of gender. The researcher was interested in investigating whether there are differences between male and female Arabic speakers' strategies of apology or not. The sample of the study composed of 20 individuals divided equally: 10 males and 10 females.

As far as data collection tool is concerned, the researcher used a DCT which included 10 real-life situations in which an apology is required as the correct answer. Although some similarities emerged, obvious differences between the two genders were also observed in the use of apology strategies. The difference was traced back to the influence of gender on language as males and females exhibited different preferences for apology strategies. The research concluded his study by relating the findings to previous research and thus entailing the universality of the issue.

More recently, Huwari (2018) conducted a comparative study between Jordanian and Asian EFL learners at Zarqa University to investigate the influence of culture on the use of apology. The researcher used a DCT as a tool for eliciting data, it included 10 situations and distributed it among 12 participants with 6 individuals from each group. Results revealed that participants from the two groups have some similarities as well as differences in relation to the type of apology strategies used. While both groups seem to use strategies like account, and compensation quite frequently, 'gratitude' was found to be used less among Asian participants. The researcher concluded that since differences occur, there is an urgent necessity for teaching. He suggested that the teaching should combine semantics and pragmatics in order to enhance the learner's awareness.

### **Studies on Requests in Arabic**

Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010) investigated the main strategies used by monolinguals of Yemeni Arabic in making requests. Participants of the study were 336 individuals divided equally into two groups based on their gender making it 168 participants each group. The researchers used a DCT as a primary tool to collect data. Using the theoretical framework of Blum-Kulka, et al (1989), the data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Results of the study indicated that male speakers adopt direct of request in man to man to situations as a way to show solidarity. In male-female interaction, male participants were seen to shift for the indirect forms as a way to show respect. Once again, the researcher proved the influence of gender on language use.

M. Aubeled (2012) conducted a comparative study between English and Arabic languages in relation to polite requests. The researcher first highlighted five patterns of direct polite request in English and then tried to render into Arabic. By doing so, the researcher wanted to investigate the most effective methods for translating these polite requests. Since the two languages belong to different families, internal structures such as syntax and vocabulary influence the way requests are formulated. After analyzing different structures in both languages, the findings indicated that polite markers in Arabic are more than those in English.

M. Hammani (2019) conducted a comparative study between Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE) to investigate the speech act of request. Using a DCT, the researcher was interested in identifying the main request strategies and level of directness employed by natives of both languages. The researcher hypothesized that the request directness level is influenced by certain socio-pragmatic variables namely social power, social distance, and degree of imposition in MA and AE. Results revealed a significant difference as far as the directness level of the requests

are concerned. While speakers of Arabic favor direct request strategies, English speakers opted for conventionally indirect request strategies. Such preference was traced back to the strong influence of the socio-pragmatic variables on language use and mainly the directness level being applied.

As reflected in the bulk of research highlighted above, the majority of works focused on adults' speech while research on the children's use of speech acts remained dim. Recently, however, a new trend appeared as researchers started to shift their attention towards the notion of acquisition. In this sense, they wanted to investigate how children acquire speech acts as well as the main factors that may interact with such process. Since the present research falls within the scope of the acquisition of speech acts among children, the following section is dedicated to highlight the main works which have been conducted on this topic.

### **Studies on the Acquisition of Apology**

R. Ely and J. B. Gleason (2006) examined children's use of apology terms in parent-child discourse. Using a longitudinal approach, data was gathered from a total of nine children (5 males and 4 females) having an age span between 1,2 to 6,1 years old. After data analysis, the researchers noticed several developmental patterns including the influence of age on the directness level of the elicited apologies. Children were observed to switch to indirect forms of apologies as they grew older since during their first years, they use direct form only. Furthermore, age influenced their linguistic ability in the sense that as the children grew older, their apologies became more elaborate. The study revealed that children acquired the speech act apology through experience as apology terms were directed to them and, to a lesser degree, in talk about apologies.

More recently, Ansel and Doris (2012) wanted to analyze the developmental patterns of Chinese children's apology strategies. They investigated their perception of punishments and their production of apologies in terms of two contextual variables: degree of their own responsibility and the severity of their offence. A total of 120 Chinese children aged between 4 and 8 years old in an addition to a control group of 24 Chinese-speaking adults were required to participate in comprehension and production tasks. Chinese children, as young as four years old, were found to be aware of the offense committed as their responses indicated a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, the data revealed that children under seven years old used more direct apologies than indirect apologies, unlike their older counterparts who used indirect forms. Such findings were traced back to the child's poor linguistic abilities (during early years) which are developed through experience (Brown & Levinson 1987).

### **Studies on The Acquisition of Request**

The first pioneering work on requests among children is traced back to the work of C. Garvey (1975) where she investigated the ability of children to produce and respond to requests. When it comes to collecting data, the study was based on the spontaneous speech of 36 dyads of nursery school children organized according to age and ranging from 3 years old to 7 years old. Results indicated that direct forms of request were frequent and acknowledged verbally. This was traced back to the common ground found between the speaker and the addressee in relation to the interpersonal meaning factors relevant to requesting. These meaning factors were found to provide a basis for the indirect requests.

Ervin-Tripp and Gordon (1986) conducted a study on one participant: a four years old boy called (T) over a period of seven months to investigate his production of requests while interacting with

others. After analysing his production, the researchers focused on several forms of requests namely 'self-oriented requests', 'rule/norm' oriented requests' and 'activity- or external goal-oriented requests'. Results indicated that such requests were usually in the imperative form and occurred during shared activities such as imaginative game play. The researchers concluded that T's choice of request forms depended on two main reasons: the relation of request to the factors above and the degree of compliance.

Ward et. al (1987) conducted a study in which they investigated the speech act of request among children with regard to 'purchasing'. Their study aimed to explore patterns and factors influencing children's purchase requests and parental responses to those requests across three cultures (US, Britain and Japan). Results indicated that in cultures where there is extensive communication (discussion) between the child and his parents (in the USA and Britain), child is likely to produce more requests. The child's age as well as his exposure to commercials also proved to have significant influence on his request. All these studies indicated that children acquired a basic grasp for diverse syntactic forms used for conveying their requested intentions.

Schlosser et. al (2007) investigated the acquisition of request among five children with autism. The main aim of this study was to evaluate the influence of speech output on autistic children, more specifically, whether children learn to request more efficiently with speech output during instruction rather than without speech output. To evaluate the effectiveness of the two conditions, the researchers developed an alternating treatments design. Even though the study revealed that children frequent rate of requesting under both conditions, only one student showed some improvement. The researchers concluded that their findings go hand in hand with other previous research on the effects of speech output on requesting in children with autism.

L. King et. al (2014) investigated the influence of technology on the acquisition of requests among children with autistic children. The researcher was interested in how the (Proloquo2Go) application on the iPad can help three children, aged between three and five years old, learn how to request. Results proved that children with autism can acquire request skills using the application via a picture-based communication system.

In fact, vocal requesting increased significantly for the participants during the training phases in comparison to baseline probes. These two relatively recent studies focused on the notion of acquisition of speech acts among children with disorders. Even though such studies can be considered to be far from our current interest, they both fall within the general scope of acquisition of speech acts among children.

It is important to mention that the literature on the acquisition of speech acts in general is somehow limited and relatively old. Furthermore, the notion of acquisition somehow remained beyond their scope in the sense that researchers did not focus on it much. Studies related to the acquisition of apology among children, in particular, was found to be extremely limited since only two studies were found (to the researcher's knowledge). Research on request, on the other hand was more elaborated as it included much work and covered even children with disabilities and how they used speech acts.

The current research is hoped to contribute to the limited literature about this subject as it aims to investigate the acquisition of request and apology among Algerian children with special attention to the factor of age.

The present work, hence, will try to answer the following questions:

1. Does age have an influence on the child's acquisition of apologies and requests? and how?
2. What are the main sources used by the child to acquire the speech acts of apology and request?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

The sample of the study consisted of twelve (12) Algerian children attending primary schools. The sample was divided into two age groups: group A comprises of children between 3,1 to 6 years old while group B includes children between 7.1 to 10 years old.

### **Data Collection**

When it comes to the data collection tool, an oral DCT was used. It was piloted in a form of an interview administrated by fellow teacher (in Algeria). The DCT comprised of 6 scenarios equally divided between the two types of speech acts: 3 situations for apology and 3 for request. The children's Responses were recorded and later on sent to the researcher (via email) for analysis. Note that the situations used in the DCT were verified and validated by a jury of 4 PhD students in Linguistics. The different situations were designed to elicit whether or not age has an influence on the child's ability to successfully acquire the speech acts of request and apology.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting data, several expressions were extracted for analysis. The expressions were transliterated and given an English translation to facilitate understanding for non-natives of Arabic. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in analysis of data following two theoretical frameworks namely that of C. Garvey's (1974) and R. Ely & Gleason's (2006) works on requests and apologies among children, respectively. As far as the analysis is concerned, the responses of each group were analysed in a separate section and then later on discussed altogether. In each section, numerous examples were discussed to highlight how children used those speech acts.

## **RESULTS**

Numerous studies, such as the work conducted by Kochanska, DeVet, Goldman, Murray, and Putnam (1994), have underscored a pivotal developmental milestone: children typically acquire a fundamental sense of morality by the age of three. This moral compass is substantially influenced by their interactions with external influences, notably parents and teachers. By the elementary level, children demonstrate the ability to discern basic transgressions in both moral and social realms. Consequently, when a child errs, they exhibit awareness of their transgressions and undertake corrective measures, often through strategies such as apology. The subsequent section delves into an examination of how Algerian children, aged between 3 and 10 years, employ apology to rectify their misbehavior, while also exploring the potential impact of age on this process.

### **Apologies Among Algerian Children**

The initial segment of the Directed Communication Task (DCT) comprised three scenarios wherein a breach of social norms occurred. Participants were tasked with immersing themselves in these scenarios and responding accordingly. Following the framework proposed by R. Ely and Gleason (2006), the participants' reactions were scrutinized to discern a discernible pattern linked to the directness level of the apology. The frameworks employed in the present study categorize

the directness level of structures based on their construction. Given the limited linguistic capabilities of children, preventing them from articulating themselves as comprehensively as adults, responses were classified according to the presence or absence of polite terms. Structures incorporating 'polite' terms were deemed indirect, whereas those lacking such terms were considered direct. Consequently, the ensuing table delineates the way participants utilized apologies:

**Table 1: Results Indicating Apology in Children's Speech**

Type of apology	Group A	Group B
Direct	10	6
Indirect	3	5
Total	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>

As evident in Table 1, participants manifested the previously discussed notion of awareness. Despite both groups attaining relatively high scores across all situations, a notable divergence in distribution is discernible. Specifically, participants from Group A (children aged 3 to 6 years) exhibited a propensity for more direct forms of apology compared to their counterparts in Group B (children aged 7 to 10 years). This variance can be attributed to the influence of experience on a child's linguistic creativity. Younger children, having limited experiences, tend to adhere to simpler and more basic forms, lacking access to complex linguistic structures.

Having addressed the overarching pattern, a deeper exploration of how children's express apologies is warranted. Since Group A demonstrated a higher inclination towards the use of direct forms of apology, we will commence our analysis with their responses. In the first scenario, participants were required to apologize for damaging a borrowed book. The majority of participants employed direct forms of apology, notably utilizing the term 'smahli,' translated as 'forgive/excuse me.' It is noteworthy that participants in this situation predominantly offered concise, one-word responses, indicating a limitation in their pragmatic skills and an absence of elaboration in supporting their apologies. Additional factors, such as the context of utterance and the interpersonal relationship between the child and the interlocutor, further influence a child's production, as will be elucidated subsequently. Notably, only one participant in Group A utilized an additional polite marker, 'hambouk,' as in 'hambouk smahli,' which translates to 'I beg you/please excuse me,' thereby rendering her apology slightly less direct.

In the second scenario of the Directed Communication Task (DCT), participants were prompted to articulate their apologies for losing money that belonged to an elderly family member (mother or father). Young participants in this situation demonstrated a proficiency in employing both direct forms of apology, using the term 'smahli,' and indirect forms. Notably, participants exhibited a proclivity for providing more elaborate information than in the preceding scenario, as exemplified in the following excerpts directly extracted from the participants' discourse. This enhanced verbosity can be attributed to the intimate nature of the relationships shared with the family members involved.

1. /ismahili tajahtom. nʕʕtader menha /  
Exp. Excuse me, I lost the money. I apologize to her
2. /... samhili ma nʕawdf /  
Exp. Forgive, I won't do it again
3. /... ma nʕawdf ntajh drahem /  
Exp. I won't lose money ever again

In the aforementioned examples, one may discern the utilization of direct forms of apology, revealing a nuanced variation. Specifically, the terms 'samhili' and 'ismahili' carry identical meanings but differ in formality, with the former being less formal than the latter. Furthermore, the additional utterances accompanying the core apology term can be viewed as apology strategies. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) delineated various apology strategies, encompassing statements of remorse, explanations, offers of repair, and blaming the victim.

Examining the first example, a six-year-old girl explained that 'the money was lost,' providing a rationale for the occurrence, thus employing an explanatory strategy. In the second example, a participant, experiencing fear, not only sought forgiveness but also pledged 'not to do it again,' constituting an offer of repair as she promised to rectify her behavior. In the third example, a participant indirectly acknowledged fault. Although devoid of explicit polite terms, the commitment expressed in her promise implies an indirect form of apology.

The final scenario dedicated to apology further underscored the influence of the relationship between the child and the interlocutor on the production process. Participants were prompted to articulate how they would apologize if they damaged their brothers' mobile phone, a relationship denoting greater closeness compared to that between a child and their parents. Responses to this scenario varied, as illustrated in the following examples:

1. / ... *Ma nzidf nxrb fih* /  
Exp. I won't touch it again
2. / ... *Ma nʕawdhaf* /  
Exp. I won't do it again
3. / ... *Smahli dayʕtah* /  
Exp. Forgive me I ruined it
4. / ... *Smahli ma feftahf* /  
Exp. Forgive I was not on purpose
5. / ... *smahli labghit rabi* /  
Exp. Please forgive me

In the examples, participants demonstrated diverse approaches to the scenario, notably indicating a substantial increase in the level of indirectness in their apologies. For example, in Example 4, a child conveyed indirect remorse by pledging not to touch his brother's phone again. A similar strategy was employed by another participant who assured that he would not repeat the action (Example 5). Notably, both instances lacked explicit polite phrases such as 'forgive me' or 'I am sorry,' a characteristic attributed to the intimacy of the relationships involved. Conversely, there were participants who opted for a more direct form of apology, as illustrated in Examples 6 and 7. In addition to utilizing the polite term 'smahli,' these participants incorporated additional information. Their strategies for expressing remorse differed, with one choosing confession as a means to articulate remorse, while the other emphasized the unintentional nature of the action.

Regarding the second group, they exhibited a relatively higher propensity for employing indirect forms of apology, as evident in the following examples. This tendency was traced back to the influence of age and experience on language production, given that participants in Group B were older:

1. / ... *Smhili w ma nzidf nʕawd* /  
Exp. Am sorry and I won't do it again.
2. / ... *Mama samhili ma tayhthomf ʕan kasd* /



- Exp. Mom, forgive me it was on purpose.
3. / ... *taholi labghiti samhili!* /  
Exp. I lost the money can you forgive me!
  4. / ... *smhili* /  
Exp. Forgive me

The examples shed light on the participants' responses to the second scenario (apologizing for losing money). What stands out is the distinctiveness in the expression of direct apology between the two groups, particularly in the amount of accompanying information provided alongside the polite term. Some participants adhered to the basic direct form, straightforwardly saying "smahli" (I am sorry) or "forgive me" with no additional information, as exemplified in Example 12. However, the majority surpassed this basic expression and employed various strategies to articulate their apologies.

In Example 11, a seven-year-old participant first admitted to committing an offense (losing his mom's money) and then requested forgiveness. The directness of the apology was mediated using the polite term "labghiti," which translates to "if you want." Children exhibited the utilization of diverse apology strategies in accordance with the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), as evident in Example 9, where a participant pledged not to repeat the offense after directly seeking forgiveness. Example 10 showcased a higher level of information compared to previous excerpts. The participant employed two polite terms—an address term (honorific) "mama" and the apology term "samhili" (excuse me). Subsequently, she provided an explanation for the transgression, emphasizing that it was unintentional. Notably, the use of standard Arabic to justify herself indicated the influence of formal education on the acquisition of polite forms, a point that will be further explored in the subsequent discussion.

The variation in the level of directness persisted in the second situation, pertaining to apologizing for a damaged book. The following sentences illustrate how children approached this scenario:

1. / ... *nfrilik wahdaxor* /  
Exp. I will get you a new one
2. / ... *Nta gtaʕthom w mfi ana* /  
Exp. You teared the papers off and not me
3. / ... *kan mgataʕ wahdah* /  
Exp. I found it this way

In the above examples (13-15), the absence of explicit polite terms does not necessarily render the utterances impolite, as they represent instances of indirect apology. Taking Example 13, the child offers to buy a new book as a means of rectifying the offense, constituting an indirect form of apology known as 'offering repair' according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Another strategy observed is 'blaming the victim,' exemplified in Example 14, where the child accuses a friend of being responsible for the book's damage, asserting that it was not her fault. This theme persists in Example 15, where the child denies any knowledge of the incident, assuming a neutral stance.

While Examples 14 and 15 may initially seem not to directly convey an apology, contextual factors such as tone and delivery suggest otherwise. Considering the context, one can infer that these utterances indeed function as apologies. It is noteworthy that certain participants indicated their intention to involve a teacher to resolve the issue; however, such responses were excluded as they did not involve a direct apology.

Transitioning to the final scenario involving the brother's broken mobile phone, participants from the second group employed both direct and indirect forms of apology, as follows:

1. / ... *Ma setfhomch aja taho* /  
Exp. I did not pay attention and it fell down
2. / ... *Smhili bezaf w ma nzif nɣawd* /  
Exp. I am so sorry and I won't do it again

In the sentences, the indirect form of apology is evident in Example 16, where the child provides an explanation asserting that the phone falling was not his fault. This indirect apology can be attributed to the close relationship between the brothers. In Example 17, a direct apology is expressed, incorporating the polite term 'sorry' along with the intensifier 'bezaf,' meaning 'a lot.' Additionally, a promise is made not to repeat the action. It is noteworthy that, given the context of dealing with children, repetition of certain expressions, especially the polite term 'smahli,' is inevitable.

Having scrutinized the data related to how children employ apology in their daily communication, the analysis transitions to the second type of speech acts, namely requests. The examination of children's speech in this regard will unfold in two steps. Initially, requests made by each group will be categorized according to the directness level of the utterance. Subsequently, the production will be analyzed in terms of the request strategy adopted by each child, using examples extracted from the recordings. These examples will be scrutinized to comprehend why a particular type of request was employed instead of another, considering factors such as context and the relationship between the child and the interlocutor.

### Requests Among Algerian Children

When it comes to the second part of the DCT, our participants exhibited diverging approaches regarding the type of request used. Each group showed the preference for certain form over another. This preference was first classified in terms direct vs. indirect request following the framework of C. Garvey (1975). Each request found in the children's discourse was later on deeply analysed in terms of context and the strategy used. Each group's preference can be clearly seen in the following table:

**Table 2: Results Indicating Request in Children's Speech**

Type of Request	Group A	Group B
Direct	4	5
Indirect	5	4
Total	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

Upon reviewing the results, it's evident that responses are similar, especially in children's requests, regardless of apology. Both groups generated nine instances of requests in direct and indirect forms. Group A demonstrated a balanced use of both forms when responding to the three distinct DCT situations, where formality wasn't a factor due to the close relationship between speakers. Two situations involved 'borrowing something,' and the third focused on seeking 'help.' In the first situation about borrowing a book, Group A participants supplied the following utterances:

1. / ... *selfouli* /  
Exp. Give me (the book)
2. / ... *hambouk selfli kteb* /

- Exp. Please! Lend me your book
3. / ... *hambouk slefli kteb baj nkra bih* /  
Exp. Please! Lend me your book to study with it
4. / ... *min fadlik selfili kteb* /  
Exp. Can you lend me a book
5. / ... *aʕtini* /  
Exp. Give me

Most children predominantly chose the indirect form of request, incorporating polite terms like 'hambouk' and 'min fadlek,' akin to 'please' in English. Notably, 'hambouk' is less formal than 'min fadlek.' These children added details such as specifying the object (book) and the purpose (studying). In contrast, direct requests were abrupt, lacking introductions, politeness, or additional information. Examples 18 and 22 illustrate this, with the latter being more authoritative. Despite potential impoliteness, considering children's limited pragmatic skills, it was deemed normal. The second situation wasn't adequately discussed, addressed in the limitations section. For the last scenario, requesting help with an assignment, children employed both request forms, each with distinct preferences.

Their utterances were as follows:

1. / ... *hambouk fahmini* /  
Exp. Please! Explain to me (the assignment)
2. / ... *hambouk ʕawnini* /  
Exp. Please! Help me
3. / ... *fahmini* /  
Exp. Explain to me
4. / ... *ʕalmini* /  
Exp. Teach me

The provided examples underscore the diverse approaches children take when seeking help. Examples 23 and 24 utilize an indirect approach, incorporating the polite term 'hambouk' (please). Conversely, examples 25 and 26 are brief, single-word utterances lacking politeness or additional information. It's crucial to note that the context of indirect requests differs, with participants in 23 and 24 seeking help from their teacher, justifying the indirect form. Participants in 25 and 26, addressing their peers, opted for the indirect form.

Transitioning to group B, as shown in Table 2, their responses varied from direct to indirect requests. In the first scenario, their answers were as follows:

1. / ... *aʕtini kteb* /  
Exp. Give me a book
2. / ... *aʕtini wahed w zawdj kra fih* /  
Exp. Give me one and use the other one
3. / ... *selfouli* /  
Exp. Borrow me (a book)
4. / *La ʕandek kteb ... mʕʕlich tsfli* /  
Exp. Would you please lend me (a book) if you have one
5. / ... *nsit ktebi tselfouli wahed* /  
Exp. I forgot my book would you lend me one.

In the first situation, direct requests were predominantly employed, particularly by male participants. Examples 26 and 27 feature the imperative 'aʕtini' (give me), while example 28 uses 'sifouli' (lend me) without additional polite terms. Following Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework, these direct requests fall under the category of 'obligation statement.' Indirect forms typically began with an introduction. In example 30, a nine-year-old girl starts by asking if her colleague has an extra book, then softens her request with 'mʕʕlich' (if you don't mind). This aligns with 'suggestory formulae,' suggesting before making a direct demand. Example 31 follows a similar structure, with the participant admitting to forgetting her book. Notably, these older participants demonstrate greater pragmatic awareness than the first group due to their age and linguistic experience.

Transitioning to the last situation, demanding help, participants' responses were as follows:

1. /... *fahmoni* /  
Exp. Explain to me
2. /... *maʕlich tfahmini dars* /  
Exp. Can you explain the lesson for me
3. /... *min fadlek ʕawdili edars* /  
Exp. Could you please re-explain the lesson for me

In this situation, there's a noticeable shift in the preferred way of making requests. Example 32 uses a direct form, featuring a straightforward imperative verb. Conversely, examples 33 and 34 employ an indirect approach with polite terms 'maʕlich' and 'min fadlk' (please and could you). This shift is once again tied to the interlocutor's status, akin to group A. In example 32, the participant addresses a friend, while in examples 33 and 34, the girls request their teacher to re-explain the lesson. These instances underscore that, despite their young age, the context and the interlocutor's status impact the directness level of the speech act.

## DISCUSSION

Upon detailed analysis of participant data using R. Ely & B. Gleason's (2006) and C. Garvey's (1974) frameworks, the results were categorized in Table 3 below. The table presents the total occurrences of both direct and indirect forms for both speech acts—apologies and requests—in children's discourse:

**Table 3: Overall Use of Apology and Request**

Type of Speech Act		Group A	Group B	Total
Apology	Direct	10	6	24
	Indirect	3	5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	
Request	Direct	4	5	18
	Indirect	5	4	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	

Table 3 above exhibits how children between 3 and 10 years have the ability to express the speech acts of apology and request. However, a difference can be noticed regarding the way such utterances are expressed namely in relation to the level of directness. As far as apology is concerned, we can say that younger children i.e., between 3 and 6 years old tend to be more direct. This preference is reflected in their production of single-word utterances namely '*smahli*'

(excuse me) with no additional information. On the other hand, the addition of the polite term '*hambouk*' (please) rendered the apology less direct.

Older children between 7 and 10 years old used direct apology too, but scored higher when it came to indirect forms of apology. One important difference which can be noticed is the manner in expressing the indirect apology. While participants from group A settled for the integration of polite terms, group B elaborated on their utterances and used other techniques. Based on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) theoretical framework, children were found to use several apology strategies including: providing explanation, statement of remorse, offering repair and even blaming the victim.

The various forms of apology reflected in the children's discourse revealed a similar pattern between the two age groups. In the case of direct apology, children from both groups used single-word utterance '*smahli*' (excuse me) with an occasional integration of the polite term '*hambouk*' (please). Such static pattern can be traced back to the difficulty in acquiring apology, since this type of speech acts seem to appear infrequently in daily conversations. During his early years, the child learns from his environment by using the input around him to build his linguistic abilities. The fact that apology is rarely used during daily encounters makes the child less exposed which in return negatively influences his abilities and forces him to stick to static patterns (Becker, 1990; Snow, Perlmann, Gleason & Hooshyar, 1990; Ninio & Snow, 1996).

As far as requests are concerned, the same number of instances was recorded in the two groups with 9 instances in each one. What is interesting is that the younger group used significantly more indirect requests than the older group. This difference was noticed namely in the last situation (requesting assistance) and was traced back to the status of the interlocutor. We can notice that all the children who used indirect forms of requests were addressing their teacher i.e., she has a higher status and thus the indirect (more polite) form seemed more suitable. Older participants, on the other hand, pictured themselves in a conversation with their peers i.e., having equal status as the interlocutor and thus opted for the direct (less polite) form.

Furthermore, children exhibited a sense of creativity in terms of the strategies used to perform the speech act of request. As highlighted in the results section, Algerian children were able to provide rich amount of information and used multiple request strategies. Such behavior can be traced back to their experience with this type of speech act. Unlike apology, requests are much more common to children since they are exposed to such speech acts ever since their early years act through parent-child interaction (Gleason, Perlmann & Greif, 1984). Such interactions create a significantly large amount of input which is stored in the child's brain. As the child starts growing up, the stored input makes him more aware to this type of speech acts and later on help in the production process i.e., precise and creative.

To sum up, children from the two groups successfully used the speech acts of apology and request. As far as apology is concerned, our findings go hand in hand with what (Kochanska, DeVet, Goldman, Murray & Putnam, 1994) found which is that children by the age of three develop a basic sense of morality. This later allows the child to differentiate between what is right and wrong and engage in the process of repair (via apology) when he feels that there is a kind of transgression.

One important difference was recorded, besides the directness level, in relation to the strategies used and amount of information. Older children (7-10) years old exhibited the use of information-rich utterances, unlike their younger counter parts, which indicates that age plays a crucial role in the acquisition process. The way age influenced the acquisition is reflected in the variation of the speech act's formality (formal vs. informal).

In the case of apology, we noticed how young children (3-6 years old) used informal terms to apologize '*maʕlich*' and '*hambouk*'. These terms were acquired during the child's early years (2 to 4 years old) i.e., before attending school namely in his home environment and through interaction with peers. On the other hand, older children (7-10 years old) exhibited the use of terms in standard Arabic such as '*min fadlk*' (please), '*ismahili*' (excuse me) and '*ʕan kasd*' (intentionally). Such behavior can be traced back-to-back to the influence of formal instruction children are exposed to in schools. Thus, we can say that age does indeed influence the acquisition of speech acts. This leads us to the second question another which is related to the sources of acquisition.

Based on the above analysis and discussion, we can deduce that there are certain factors influencing the acquisition of speech acts. The initial step for the child to learn speech acts is the family, starting from the direct instructions of family members for the child such as: say '*please*' and '*sorry*'. Another way is the imitation process (indirect exposure) where the child observes how the people around him react to each other (apology, request ...etc.) and then starts imitating them. When the child steps outside his home, he moves to the second stage of acquisition i.e., the environment. As the child engages in the process of widening his circle of knowledge at the age of 3-5, he starts interacting with his peers and outsiders. These interactions push the child to employ the basic knowledge he learnt from the house which makes him gain more experience as reflected in (Arendt, 2019). At a later stage, comes the formal education as the child starts attending school. In this phase, direct instruction begins as the child starts learning the standard form of the language (words and useful expressions). The child moves to integrating this form of language (from time to time) in his interaction with peers and family members.

Another important source of the acquisition of speech acts is that of media reflected in the use of technological devices (mobile, tablets and T.V). Nowadays, technology dominates our everyday life including children who are learning to use devices such as mobile phones and tables from an early age. Via playing video games and watching cartoons, they learn and acquire certain expressions including speech acts. As time passes, the children start to integrate the learnt expressions during their interactions with others. One clear example of such form of acquisition can be found in the Algerian community as children often use certain polite terms in a foreign language (French) including '*merci*' (thank you) and '*bon jour*' (good morning). This can be traced back to their extensive exposure to this language via watching different content in French.

## CONCLUSION

Speech acts are a common phenomenon in our everyday life. This type of utterance was extensively studied across different languages and cultures to understand the main strategies and factors influencing its use. A new trend appeared going beyond studying speech acts' use among adults, as scholars became interested in the notion of acquisition i.e., how children come to learn and later on use speech acts. This study aimed to cover that point with regard to the Arab context particularly the influence of age on the acquisition of apology and request among Algerian children. The study revealed that age indeed plays a crucial role with regard to the acquisition and use of apology and request among children.

As far as apology is concerned, the study revealed that children as young as three years old have a sense of morals and can detect violations as soon as they take place. When a transgression occurs, children appeared to successfully use politeness strategies (apology) to right the wrong. This entails that at the age of three, a child has already acquired the basic notion of speech acts. When it comes to the use of such utterances, children exhibited divergence as far as structures and strategies are concerned. Age played an important role in such divergence as unlike young children, older ones were found to use, relatively, more complex and longer structures. Such complexity crystalizes in the use of indirect forms and various strategies of apology (statement of remorse, explanation ...).

Similar to apology, younger children again showed preference for simpler constructions to perform requests. The findings showed how experience accumulated throughout the years influence the success rate of speech act production. This means that as children grow older, they become more linguistically aware and produce elaborated utterances. Several sources were identified as crucial to the acquisition process of speech acts namely: direct instructions received at home and schools, interaction with peers and the use of technology were found to be primary sources.

While conducting this study, the researcher faced certain limitations starting with the number of participants involved. The sample was originally set at fifteen (15) participants (children) who were supposed to be equally distributed into three age groups (5 in each group). Only twelve (12) participants were recorded as schools all over the world got shut down to limit the rapid outbreak of the Corona virus. Since this precaution hindered the researcher from recording the remaining three (3) participants, only two age groups comprising of six (6) children were used.

The second limitation was in relation to the participants themselves. While analysing the data, two participants caught the attention of the researcher. There was a three years old boy who did not understand the task very well which affected his production rate. Instead of answering all six situations, the child provided only two answers. Another seven years old boy who was extremely shy could not properly answer the questions directed to him. These two instance somehow affected data as we could not collect more valuable information. Hence, it is advisable for researchers investigating such topic to have a larger sample in order to have as much data as possible and to compensate in case problems appeared.

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## Appendix

### The Original Version of the DCT (Algerian Arabic)

- 1) كى بخيت ترد كتاب ناع صاحبك لقيتها مقطوع شا تقوله ؟
- 2) ماماك عطائك دراهم تشري بصرح في الطريق طيحتهم شا تقولها؟
- 3) خوك قالك ديرلي تلفون يتسارجا و في الطريق طيخته شا تقوله
- 4) نسيت كتابك في الدار و بخيت تسلف على صاحبك شا تقوله؟
- 5) كنت غايب الحصه اللي فاتت و ما كتبتش الدرس شا تقول لصاحبك؟
- 6) عطارك درس تحضروه بصرح ما فهمتس شا تقول لصاحبك؟

### The English version of the DCT

- 1) When returning a borrowed book to your colleague, you discovered that there are some missing pages. What would you say to him?
- 2) Your mom asked you to buy some stuff for the house and while returning home, you lost the money. What will you say to her?
- 3) You brother asked you to take his phone and put it in the charger but on the way you slipped and broke the phone. What will you say to him?
- 4) You have forgotten your book at home and you want to borrow it from a fellow colleague. What would you say to him?
- 5) You didn't come to class yesterday and you ask a fellow student for his/her notes. What would you say to her?
- 6) You were given a homework and you had hard times understanding it, you wanted you friend to help you solve it. What would you say to him/her?



## Head Teacher's Support Role on the Quality of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools in Iganga District

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### Abstract:

The study investigated the Head Teacher's support Role in the Quality of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools in the Iganga District. It examined the head teacher's mandates in the realization of quality inclusive education in selected secondary schools. Explicitly, the study determined the influence of the head teacher's support role on the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, drawing on quantitative and qualitative research approaches with a sample size of 83 respondents. Interview guides and questionnaires were used for data collection. SPSS software version 23 was used with a focus on descriptive statistics. The verbatim method was used for qualitative data. The study revealed that there was a moderate positive or constructive significant correlation between the head teacher's support role and achievement of quality inclusive education in selected secondary Schools ( $r=.514^{**}$   $p < 0.05$ ). The study established that putting in place continuous professional development workshops, welfare, giving support supervision and provision of teaching aids, while other factors or issues remain constant, is most likely to better the process of inclusive education quality in secondary school. Conclusively the study revealed that the Head teacher's planning, support and motivation cannot work in isolation in the attainment of quality inclusive education. Monetary and non-monetary ways greatly influence the quality of inclusive education. Also, the study recommends head teachers make relevant plans and increase support and motivation to uplift secondary schools' quality of inclusive education.

*Keywords: Support Roles, Quality Education, Inclusive Education, Education in Uganda.*

### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is a philosophy that focuses on the process of changing families and society so that all individuals regardless of their differences can have the chance to learn, interact, experiment, work, and the feeling of belonging and develop their potential (Ngugi and Kimanth, 2017). It is also the most critical ingredient in the country's development process and it allows many development goals to be achieved (Carter et al., 2022). In addition, inclusive education is the main equalizer in closing the gaps of socioeconomic inequalities in modern life (Mosoti, 2015). Inclusive education includes a range of changes, and modifications in approaches, content, strategies and structures (UNESCO, 2005). Peter and Nderitu (2014) state that inclusion aims to ensure that all learners have access to relevant, appropriate, affordable and effective education within their society. Inclusive education refers to a school environment where children become part of the school community regardless of their strengths and weaknesses (ASCD and EI, 2025). All normal children and those with learning difficulties like special needs participate and learn together in the same class. The components of inclusive education involve classroom practices, support from principals, teachers' attitudes, parents' support and collaboration; making schools

more inclusive requires inclusive policies and cultures (Nansubuga, O. K., Muweesi, C., Zhao, L., & Mutebi, A., 2019) & (Bari et al, 2014). It also involves classroom practices that provide learners with a sense of belonging, encouragement of learners' participation in class, promotion of active listening, promotion of psychologically safe environment and monitor learners' motivation (Anthony, W. 2022) (EU, 2015). Successful inclusive education is based on the following principles; supporting diversity and learners' differences, understanding the needs and strengths of learners, removing all barriers in the learning environment, building teachers' capacity and creating a culture of high expectation for all learners (Lilianie, 2022).

The sustainable development goal 4, "Quality Education for all" is to attain inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning. This makes learners become productive and active members of the community (UN, 2021). Quality education involves the provision of appropriate skills, gender parity, and provision of good infrastructure in school, availability of relevant equipment, materials and resources, easing access to education and quality education processes (UN, 2022). If the quality of education standards improves, then there is no doubt that the product will be good; this affects the industry and economic growth to a greater extent (UNESCO, 2016). All education stakeholders including government, funding agencies, political leaders' parents, school management committees and head teachers are key in ensuring quality education in schools (Rose, N., et al, 2022). Strong school management is one of the key contributing factors that make a school to attain its education goals. The head teacher, directors and principals need integrative quality education managing capacities and vitality of pupils, parents and teachers towards achieving the same educational goals (Shakeela, 2020).

### **Inclusive Education**

According to SDG4 and UNESCO (2012), quality education is inclusive when it does not discriminate against anyone on grounds of ethnicity, gender, class, disability, language, gender or any other barrier that stops a child from participating, engaging and accessing education and the benefits thereof. Meanwhile, Antil (2014) defines inclusive education as a way of building the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. It includes restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in the concerned region. Whereas inclusive education means that all children in a school, regardless of their weaknesses and strengths in any area become part of the school community (UN, 2015). In addition, this happens when learners with or without disabilities learn and participate together in the same class (MOES, 2017). UNESCO (2012) defines 'inclusive education' as education that does not discriminate against anyone based on grounds of disability, language, gender, class, ethnicity or any other barrier that prevents a child from accessing, participating and engaging in education and the benefits thereof. Inclusion of learners with disabilities, however, goes far beyond the normal classroom management for example pre-school child upbringing and community effort. Positive psycho-social consequences have been evident, resulting from any such effort to enhance effective inclusion (Jenna, 2017). Generally, inclusive education does not discriminate against anyone's disability, gender, ethnicity or language. It also involves strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach all learners, restructuring cultural practices so that they can respond to the diversity of students in the concerned region, learning and participating together in the same class and going beyond the formal classroom setting, for example, pre-school rearing and positive social affairs (Antil, 2014).

Quality inclusion in education is supported by seven pillars which include; attitude, support policy leadership, school class processes, curriculum and pedagogy, community, meaningful reflection,

training and resources (Loreman, 2007). Attitudes; Positive attitudes allow and encourage practices that guarantee the success of inclusion (Loreman, 2007) Teachers involve all learners by devising activities that support inclusion (Loreman, 2007). Supporting policy and leadership such as Salamanca's statement has produced noticeable outcomes in the move towards inclusive schools (UNESCO, 2013) a key element of creating inclusive schools is the support and system leaders (Martha, N., et al 2023) (Loreman, 2007).

### **Quality Inclusive Education**

Quality according to Cheng (1997) refers to perfection or exactness, suitability for purpose, exceptional, money worth or transformation. Quality as viewed in management and administration refers to agreement to specifications, defect avoidance, requirements, and meeting customer expectations. Quality education focuses on all aspects of the whole child for example social, emotional, mental, physical and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or geographical location. It prepares a child for life not just for testing (ASCD, 2015). Quality education is guided by three pillars; thus, there must be access to quality teachers, use of quality learning tools and professional development, and provision of a clear and supportive quality learning environment (Nandagire, P., et al 2023) & MOES (2018) identifies the traditional indicators of quality education as input factors like enrolment rate, pupil-teacher ratio and teacher qualifications, and educational outcomes such as test scores. According to MOES (2021), the success of an educational institution is measured against performance by the indicators stated in the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards. Quality inclusive education is defined by a combination of elements that must act simultaneously. These elements belong to two spheres: the school's policies and practices on the one hand and the human and physical resources available to them on the other (EU, 2015). Quality in education is a multidimensional concept, that includes all the related functions and activities that form part of the academic life in a school system. Therefore, any framework for the assessment of quality should take into account the quality of students, teachers, infrastructure, student support services, curricula, assessment and learning resources. Thus, quality of education is indicated by; the quality of educational inputs, academics and outputs (HEC, 2021).

Inputs include financial measures, physical measures, and manpower measures associated with the resources that are provided for students at each educational level. According to Robert, T., et al 2021, Financial measures are generally summarized by educational expenditures per student. Physical measures include the age, condition, and comprehensiveness of such facilities as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries and the provision and use of international materials and equipment. Manpower or human resource measures include the number of personnel of different types, often expressed as ratios about student numbers at each level. They also include background information about these personnel such as educational qualifications, experience, and perhaps knowledge competencies and attitudes (Murnane, 1987). Educational outputs refer to the consequences of the educational process as reflected in measures such as the levels of knowledge, skills, numeracy, values acquired by students and social benefits while educational processes refer to all processes from curriculum development to final assessment including admission, teaching, assessment, feedback, incentives, learning and class size.

### **School Head Teacher's Support Roles**

Support provided, such as administrative, training, monetary, and promotional, is very important for administrators to effectively implement school programs. School leaders should be in the

know that student support needs to be provided differently than teacher support (Nansubuga, O. K., Muweesi, C., Zhao, L., & Mutebi, A., 2019). Learners need to be supported in academic counselling, library services, training, financial aid, testing and access to instructional resources (Yi, 2010)

### **Statement of the Problem**

Approximately 50% of children with disabilities in low and middle-income countries are out of school and those who are in school are less likely to stay in school (Lilliane, 2022 & World Bank Report, 2015). Inclusive secondary schools have been negatively affected by inadequate physical capacity, infrastructure, learning materials, teacher capacity and stigma and this situation has been worsened by the increased enrolment of learners with special needs (MOES, 2017). The number of registered SNE candidates for Uganda Certificate of Education 2022 had increased by 38.95% and the performance of most special needs candidates in inclusive schools declined compared to the previous year 2020 in the Busoga region, only two SNE candidates in inclusive schools attained second-grade while several others got division three, division four and the rest were ungraded (UNEB, 2023). The academic performance of schools in Iganga district has continued to decline compared to other districts in Busoga (Iganga District Education Officer, 2023). The above facts and statistics depict a decline in the quality of inclusive education in the region.

Though previous reports by World Bank Report (2015), UNESCO (2016) and Norwich (2015) have identified the above challenges, very little is known about the school head teacher's role in improving the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools. It is on this background that the study intends to examine the role of head teachers in the attainment of quality inclusive education in the Iganga district.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study was to investigate the head teacher's mandates in the realization of quality inclusive education in selected secondary schools in the Iganga district.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of the head teacher's support role on the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools in the Iganga District.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Adopted as the systems theory was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanity, and George Bateson in the 1940s (GTS, 2015). It says that institutions consist of multiple elements that must work together for the larger system to operate effectively. For the institutions to succeed, therefore there must be interdependence and interrelations between subsystems. According to this theory, teachers are focal people in running the school, and departments, workgroups and business units are all additional crucial elements for success. The four basic elements of the systems model are input, process, output and feedback (Kyalo, 2014). Inputs are the basic materials or resources that will be transformed into outputs. In the education context, the basic inputs are the learners enrolled in school. Process represents the operations that occur to transform the inputs to the desired outputs and this includes the teaching and learning processes. Outputs are the final product of the processes. These outputs are the learners who have attained the knowledge, skills and desired attitude. Feedback is the element of control. If the desired output is not achieved, the processes or inputs must be adjusted. In education, the results from assessments show the

feedback (Kyalo, 2014). According to this theory, leaders should evaluate patterns and events within the schools to determine the best management strategy. There is a need to collaborate and work together on programs to ensure success (Hernandez et al., 2020). The major advantage of the theory is that it leads to efficient or optimum utilization of the available resources like materials, equipment, money and employees. The theory also leads to increased wages, reduced work disputes and high-quality products (Hernandez et al., 2020).

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Tackling the Support Role and Quality of Inclusive Education**

Nations with resource restrictions and efforts to increase access to elementary education often have resulted in diminishing education quality (Leu and Price-Rom 2015). Teachers and scholastic materials are emphasized as the drivers of quality while identifying and establishing teacher quality as a chief focus (Leu and Price-Rom, 2015).

After identifying the challenges faced by disabled students in inclusive schools, the UN (2016) during the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 recommended that; 1) Children with disabilities must be able to access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live. 2) There must be a reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements and provision of the support required to facilitate their effective education. 3) (UNESCO, 2016) Governments must facilitate the learning of Braille and other relevant communication formats; orientation and mobility skills; and peer support and mentoring; 4) Governments must ensure that education for children who are blind, deaf or blind is delivered in the most appropriate languages and means of communication for the individual and in environments which maximize academic and social development. 5) Governments must employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and train education professionals in disability awareness and the use of relevant communication formats, educational techniques and materials to support people with disabilities (Nsubuga, 2014).

UNESCO (2014) asserts that because quality education is teachers credited, five important points of consideration to teacher quality exist, about their mandate as stakeholders in quality education. Such intercessions include (i) teacher earnings; (ii) continuing professional support; (iii) preliminary teacher education; (iv) discovering the right recruits; and (v) teacher placement and service conditions.

OECD (2019) pointed out that producing quality consciousness within teachers facilitates their contribution to education quality. Quality consciousness as well as self-evaluation is the capacity to look at teaching, critically scrutinize the methodologies adopted and find alternative teaching ways. As such teachers are assisted to develop their approaches and methods of teaching. Inputs in an institution play a very important part in building education quality, particularly regarding outcomes or production. A distinctive way of viewing quality worthwhile in both the program execution reports and research literature according to Leu and Price-Rom (2015) as noted by Fuller (1986) and Muskin (1999) involves the connection that exists among diverse inputs as well as a measure of performance of learner. In sanctioning inputs, teaching and learning success is expected to be largely affected by the availability of resources to assist the course as well as the straight approaches in which such resources are controlled. The outcomes of education at completion of formal learning ought to be, therefore, should be evaluated in line with agreed-established objectives (Nandagire, P., et al 2023). They are most simply communicated in the

form of achievement and regardless of the instance, the results affected by inputs ought to be objectively quality outcomes (World Bank, 2016).

According to UNICEF (2018) tangible facilities for learning or spaces where formal learning occurs range from moderately well-equipped and modern buildings to gathering places in the open air. The paper states that school facility quality appears to hold an incidental outcome on learning, which effect is not easy to measure. Further still, some researchers confirm the existence of inconclusive integrative experiential evidence on the likelihood of buildings of schools being interconnected to greater achievement of students with consideration of the background of students. On the contrary, research carried out in India considering 59 schools established that only 49 of them had structures of buildings including 20 with electricity, 25 with a toilet, and 4 with a television, while only 10 were seen with a school library (Carron and Chau, 2016). They further stated that the learning facilities' quality greatly corresponded to the achievement of pupils in Math and Hindi. In the same vein, several experimental researches conducted in countries of developing nature about facilities in schools specifically in Latin America that comprised grades 3 and 4 with 50,000 students established that those children in schools that did not have classroom materials and had an insufficient library registered very low scores in tests and higher-grade reiteration compared to where schools had sufficient equipment (Williams, 2014). There exists increasing evidence that proves a high correlation between a suitable conducive learning environment and education quality. UNESCO (2019) states that good education quality means an environment that looks out for learners actively and helps in learning and inviting them as well as assisting such learners in adapting to requirements of learning. Policies in schools and how they are executed should promote and encourage both mental and physical health (Rose, N., et al, 2022). Also, there should exist sufficient sanitation and hygiene facilities which are available to all and if possible, services for nutrition and health must be available in the area.

The above literature shows that there was less support given to teachers in schools by their head teachers in inclusive education settings. This shows that there is a need to study how head teacher's support to teachers helps to improve the quality of inclusive education in schools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Mixed-study paradigm both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design to enable the researcher to collect data from various samples of teachers at the same point in time. The target population involved 5 head teachers, 5 deputy head teachers and 90 teachers from the five selected secondary schools. The head teachers were vital in providing resources towards implementing the curriculum while as deputies were relevant because they were focal people in implementing inclusive education via supervising the teaching and learning in schools on the other hand the teacher provided the most accurate information since they are so closed to the beneficiaries who were the learners in terms of assessing and providing the feedback right from the head teachers and learners.

Questionnaires and interviews were adopted to gather data for the study as established by Sideman (1991) as observed in Nsubuga (2019) who asserts that the methods and instruments are selected based on their ability to what the study wants them to address as well as the paused research questions. Interviews were subjected to head teachers and deputy head teachers of the selected schools in Iganga District to supplement the information that was obtained from the

questionnaires which were subjected to teachers. After the data was collected from the selected schools, it was edited, coded and tabulated (frequencies, percentages and means) using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to determine the existing influence of head teachers' planning role, head teachers support role, and head teacher's motivation role on the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools in Iganga District. Qualitative data analysis involves simultaneous activities of gathering, analyzing and inscribing results (Amin, 2005). Words were used to describe the patterns, and trends that existed in the data collected.

**Table 1: Target population and sample size**

Category	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique	Instrument
Head Teacher	5	5	Census Inquiry	Interview Guide
Deputy Head Teachers	5	5	Census Inquiry	Interview Guide
Teachers	90	73	Simple Random Sampling	Questionnaire
Total	100	83		

Source: Krejeie and Morgan (1970) Sample size deferred table

This sample helped to provide relevant and adequate data for the study. The formula for selecting the sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table. Headteachers and deputy head teachers were selected by Census inquiry because they have the information needed for the study and according to Amin (2005), this enables the researcher to acquire an in-depth understanding of the problem. The teachers were selected by Simple Random Sampling so that each respondent had equal opportunity to participate in the study while considering fair distribution according to gender and numbers in each school.

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### Response Rate

In this section, the details presented in Table 2 highlight the statistics summary for the study's response rates. Details are expressed as seen in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of study response rates of head teachers, deputies and teachers**

	Head Teachers	Deputies	Teachers	Total
Sample size	5	5	73	83
Response	4	5	65	74
Response rate	80%	100%	89%	89.2%

Source: Primary data 2023

The response rate of head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers from the five selected secondary schools. Out of the five head teachers, only four were interviewed and one was absent and could not accept phone interviews and the response rate was 80%. Out of 5 deputy head teachers the researcher interviewed 5 respondents making a 100% response rate, and out of 73 questionnaires distributed to teachers in the five Inclusive Secondary Schools (ISS) in Iganga District only 65 questionnaires were returned thus making 89.2% response rate. Therefore, the above indicates that out of 83 sampled sizes, only 74 participants responded making an 89.2% (a positive) response rate. This high response was adequate to analyze the findings of the study.



## Findings on the Influence of Head Teacher's Support Role on the Attainment of Quality Inclusive Education

**Table 3: Teachers' responses on the influence of the head teacher's support role on the attainment of quality inclusive education**

Particulars of the Head teacher's support role	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Do you agree that the head teacher's support improves teaching and learning? Do you agree that the head teacher's support improves teaching and learning?	2 (3.1%)	2 (3.1%)	34 (52.3%)	27 (41.5%)	3.16	1.269
Do you agree that head teacher's support increases access to education of learners in inclusive schools?	5 (7.7%)	8 (12.3%)	29 (44.6%)	23 (35.4%)	3.16	1.141
Do you agree that head teacher's support increases learner participation in inclusive schools?	8 (12.3%)	10 (15.4%)	35 (53.8%)	12 (18.5%)	3.24	1.144
Do you agree that head teacher's support increases the availability of quality education facilities in inclusive schools?	5 (7.7%)	12 (18.5%)	28 (43.1%)	20 (30.8%)	3.65	1.247
Do you agree that head teacher's support increases learner achievement in school?	11 (16.9%)	8 (12.3%)	27 (41.5%)	19 (29.2%)	3.96	1.193
The head teacher's support removes barriers to girls' education	17 (26.2)	14 (21.5%)	22 (33.8%)	12 (18.5%)	3.82	0.925
The head teacher's support increases the enrolment rate of learners	24 (36.9%)	14 (21.5%)	19 (29.2%)	8 (12.3%)	3.12	1.131
The low learner completion rate is attributed to a lack of support from the headteacher	13 (20%)	11 (16.9%)	21 (32.3%)	20 (30.8%)	2.68	1.162

Source: Primary data 2023

The study found that only 61(93.8%) of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support improves teaching and learning whereas 4(6,2%) disagreed. The Mean was measured at 3.16 and a standard deviation of 1.269 was recorded suggesting that the majority agreed with the statement that the head teacher's support improves teaching and learning. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support improves teaching and learning. Findings in Table 3 indicate that most of the teachers i.e., 52(80%) agreed that head teacher's support increases access to education of learners in inclusive schools while 13(20%) disagreed. The mean was 3.16 and the standard deviation was 1.141 implying that most respondents agreed with the statement that head teacher's support increases access to education of learners in inclusive schools. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that head teacher's support increases access to education of learners in inclusive schools. This implies that the head teacher's support increases access to education of learners in inclusive schools.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that most respondents 47(72.3%) agreed that head teacher's support increases learner participation in inclusive schools, while 18(27.7%) disagreed. The mean was 3.24 and the standard deviation was 1.144 implying that most respondents agreed with the statement that head teacher's support increases learner participation in inclusive schools. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that head teacher's support increases learner participation in inclusive schools.

The study found that only 48(73.8%) of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support increases the availability of quality education facilities in inclusive schools and yet only 26% i.e., 17 disagreed. A mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 1.247 were recorded, inferring that the majority agreed with the statement that head teacher's support increases the availability of quality education facilities in inclusive schools. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that head teacher's support increases the availability of quality education facilities in inclusive schools. Findings show that most respondents 46(70.7%) agreed that head teacher's support increases learners' achievement in school while 19(29.3%) were in disagreement. A mean of 3.96 and a Standard deviation of 1.193 were captured indicating that the majority of the respondents agreed with the assumption that head teacher's support increases learner achievement in school. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support increases learner achievement in school. Results in Table 3 found that 34(52.3%) of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support removes barriers to girls' education whereas 31(47.7%) disagreed. A mean of 3.82 and a standard deviation of 0.925 were captured inferring that most respondents agreed with the assumption that the head teacher's support removes barriers from girls' education. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support removes barriers to girls' education. The findings indicate that a minority 27(41.5%) of the respondents agreed that the head teacher's support increases the enrolment rate of learners, while the majority 38(58.5%) disagreed. The mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 1.131 were captured implying that the majority of respondents were in disagreement with the assumption that the head teacher's support increases the enrolment rate of learners. Therefore, it means that most of the respondents disagreed that the head teacher's support increases the enrolment rate of learners. The answer indicates that a majority of 41(63.1%) of the respondents agreed that the low learner completion rate is attributed to a lack of support from the head teacher, while 24(36.9%) disagreed. A mean of 2.68 and a standard deviation of 1.162 were captured suggesting that the majority of respondents were in agreement with the assumption that the low learner completion rate is attributed to lack of support from the head teacher. Therefore, it means that most respondents agreed that the low learner completion rate is attributed to a lack of support from the head teacher.

### **Correlation Between Head Teachers' Support Role on the Attainment of Quality Inclusive Education in the District of Iganga**

Finding out the relationship between head teachers' support role in the attainment of quality inclusive education in the District of Iganga was necessary.

**Table 4: Correlation Results for head Teachers support role and secondary school students' performance in O- O-level Physics**

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Headteachers support role	Attainment of quality inclusive education
Headteachers support role	Pearson Correlation	1	.514**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	65	65
Attainment of quality inclusive education	Pearson Correlation	.514**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	65	65

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Primary data

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient method was used and the results are presented as shown in table 4.

Table 4 displays a strong positive significant correlation between head teachers' support role on the attainment of quality inclusive education in Iganga District ( $r=.514^{**}$   $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, this means that head teachers' support role in the attainment of quality inclusive education in Iganga District moves in the same direction. Therefore, maintaining other factors constant, putting in place the continuous professional development workshops, welfare, giving support supervision and provision of teaching aids is most likely to significantly improve on attainment of quality inclusive education in Iganga District.

**Table 5: Model Summary of head teacher’s support role in the quality of inclusive education**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.534 <sup>a</sup>	.285	.276	.47928

a. Predictors: (Constant), head teacher’s support role

Source: Primary Data

0.276 or 27.6% of the difference in the quality of inclusive education in chosen secondary schools in the district of Iganga was due to variations in head teachers' support role as seen in Table 5 The R square expresses how a group of independent variables clarifies disparities of a dependent variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). This suggests therefore that 27.6% of the variation in the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools in the district of Iganga can be clarified by the head teacher support role. In confirmation that head teachers' support role influences the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools, a standardized coefficients table was adopted and results are highlighted in Table 5

**Table 6: Showing head teacher’s Coefficients of planning role**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.975	.395		4.994	.000
	Head teacher's support role	.531	.094	.534	5.648	.001

Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 6 highlight that the influence of a dependent variable (quality of inclusive education in secondary schools) is computed by a standardized regression coefficient (Beta). The findings indicate that head teachers' support role standardized regression coefficient (Beta) stood at 0.534. The more the Beta value, the higher the effect of the forecaster variable on the basis, criterion or standard (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). This suggests that the power of the connection or relationship that exists between the independent variable; head teachers' support role as well as the dependent variable quality of inclusive education in secondary schools was 0.534. The unstandardized coefficients (B) are the regression coefficients.

In the regression equation  $y = a + bx$ ; where  $y$  is equivalent to inclusive education quality in secondary schools;  $a$  is equivalent to intercept,  $b$  equals the slope and  $x$  is equivalent to head teacher support role, quality of inclusive education in secondary schools =  $1.975 + .531x$  which suggests that a unit of change in head teachers' support role brings about a .531 variation in

inclusive education quality in secondary schools in the district of Iganga. Consequently, it can be deduced that the head teacher support role has a moderate positive influence on the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools in the district of Iganga. According to Cohen (1988), a variable is considered statistically significant weak below 0.2, moderate between 0.3 and 0.7, and strong when it's 0.7 and above. As such, if there exists any difference in the head teacher support role, then a corresponding influence on inclusive education quality in secondary schools in the district of Iganga will exist. This particular finding does confirm that the head teacher support role has a positive influence on the quality of inclusive education in secondary schools in, the Iganga District.

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research study scrutinized the influence of the Head teacher's role in the realization of inclusive education quality in selected secondary schools in the district of Iganga. According to Carter et al. (2022), effective school heads are expected to work relentlessly to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction with emphasis on not only the hands-on but also the creative thinking ability of the student.

The study revealed that there was a moderate positive or constructive significant correlation between the head teacher's support role and achievement of quality inclusive education in selected secondary Schools in Iganga District ( $r=.514^{**}$   $p < 0.05$ ). The study established that putting in place continuous professional development workshops, welfare, giving support supervision and provision of teaching aids, while other factors or issues remain constant, is most likely to better the process of inclusive education quality in secondary schools in the district of Iganga. The study found that the head teacher's support role significantly influences inclusive education quality in secondary schools. These study findings are in agreement with Leu and Price-Rom (2015) in their study of the factors that encourage quality education and that scholastic materials provided to teachers and learners in school are an engine of quality.

The study findings were also similar to Nsubuga's (2018) findings which showed that the government and school management must give braille, hearing aids, and eyeglasses to learners with special needs to increase participation and achievement of all learners. The quality of success of education is strongly affected by the resources made available to the school to assist in the educational process (UNICEF, 2018 UNESCO, 2019). Similarly, Shakeela (2020) & (Nansubuga, O. K., Muweesi, C., Zhao, L., & Mutebi, A., 2019) revealed that head teachers guide and reinforce desired teaching techniques such as; up-to-date delivery of content, diversified teaching, continuous evaluation and timely feedback, positive recognition and reinforcement of performing teachers and learners, high standards of discipline and creating conducive school environment for all learners. Relatedly, nations with resource restrictions and efforts to increase access to elementary education often have resulted in diminishing education quality (Leu and Price-Rom 2015). Teachers and scholastic materials are emphasized as the drivers of quality while identifying and establishing teacher quality as a chief focus (Leu and Price-Rom, 2015). Similarly, a distinctive way of viewing quality worthwhile in both the program execution reports and research literature according to Leu and Price-Rom (2015) as noted by Fuller (1986) and Muskin (1999) involves the connection that exists among diverse inputs as well as a measure of performance of learner.

The study also found that the head teacher support role influences the quality of inclusive education since teachers who are adequately supported with training, supervision, guidance,

tools, instructional materials and facilities will create a conducive learning environment that will eventually increase learner participation, accessibility, academic achievement, enrolment and completion rate. The education stakeholders should work with the head teachers to make relevant plans and increase support and motivation to uplift secondary schools' quality of inclusive education. The head teachers' roles in the realization of inclusive education quality in secondary schools do not necessarily improve education in such schools. Some factors identified during the data collection are likely to hamper the quality of inclusive education and therefore there is a need to investigate the following; With low government support and finance, most schools especially government-aided had poor learning facilities like few classrooms, few desks, few textbooks, no sports facilities, no sick, and brail lies among others. In addition, some schools could not hire teachers for special needs, or sports (Physical Education) teachers. Poorly implemented government policies; some areas or sub-counties in Iganga District are large and did not have USE schools and this denied access to inclusive learning to those potential learners from far areas to reach school, for example, some learners travelled more than 5km to reach school. Culture and religion: In some areas where schools are affiliated with a partisan religion, this affected inclusiveness where some learners were not allowed to practice their faith. This is a factor of the community surrounding or a foundation body. In addition, learners from diverse cultural backgrounds especially the non-Bantu tribes are denied the chance to speak openly or practice cultural dances and activities due to the dominancy of Busoga culture.

### **AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

From the study findings, it is important to extend the same study topic or research to primary schools in the area so that the results can be generalized. The head teachers and their deputies should be taken to develop their capacities to handle inclusiveness in schools since some of them have little knowledge about inclusive education. A similar study should be investigated with the learners as participants to seek their opinions and compare the findings to the current study. A study is to be conducted to examine the extent to which the new lower secondary curriculum has affected the quality of inclusive education in Uganda secondary schools.

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## Book Review 'Malaysia Diet Guide Pocket Notebook 2020' (Malay Version)

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### INTRODUCTION

Malaysia Diet Guide 2020 is a food intake recommendation healthy that needs to be practiced to ensure that each individual reaches the level optimal health. Along with that, it is also hoped to help prevent diseases-non-communicable diseases that are getting worse in the society community. The publication of this pocket notebook is expected to help educational sessions nutrition by health professionals and all providers of nutrition education directly or indirectly to society. This Pocket Notebook is a summary of Malaysia Diet Guide 2020. It is an ingredient a reference that is easy to understand and practical as possible used by all walks of life. It is quick, simple and easy access to information can be used as a guide on practice healthy eating during nutrition education sessions to society.

The Malaysian Food Pyramid (PMM) is a visual tool used to provide guidance on healthy daily food intake based on recommendations Malaysian Diet Guide. Information related to this pyramid is included in the main message which is to eat a variety type of food according to the serving recommendations in the Malaysian Diet Guide 2020. The Malaysian Food Pyramid 2020 provides information on the types and quantities of food needed eaten every day in a combination that can provide food in a balanced way. The Malaysian Food Pyramid 2020 consists of 4 levels which are divided into 5 main food groups. Group 1 is vegetables. Group 2 are fruits. Group 3 is rice, other cereals, food products based on whole grains and yam tubers. Group 4 is fish/chicken/eggs/meat and legumes. Group 5 is milk and dairy products. Foods at the top of the pyramid are not considered main food groups. It is just a flavor enhancer and flavor enhancer added in food or cooking. It is only needed in very small and necessary quantities intake is limited. Malaysia Diet Guide 2020 is a recommendation of a healthy diet comprehensive. It is a reference at the national level for long term use. The Malaysian Diet Guide will be revised and packaged now every 10 years. This 2020 Malaysian Diet Guide target age group are 18-59 years old. However, the Pyramids Malaysian Food (2020) which has been modified can used for 7 years above. For the adult population and seniors, intake range calories are as much as 1600 - 2000 kcal, while for children and teenagers (7 - < 18 years old) are 1500 - 2300 kcal. There are 14 Key Messages in the Malaysian Diet Guide 2020. It includes 52 Key Recommendations and 249 How to Achieve Main Message and The Key Recommendations. List of 14 Key Messages of the Malaysian Diet Guide 2020 is to eat a variety of foods according to meal recommendations, achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, be physically active every day, cook nutritious food more often at home and choose healthy food when eating out, eating lots of vegetables and fruits every day, eating enough rice, other grains, food products based on whole grains and tubers yams, eat fish, meat, chicken, eggs and legumes in moderate amounts, take enough milk and dairy products, reduce the intake of high food fat and limit saturated fat intake, choose and prepare foods with less salt, sauces and flavor enhancers, limit the intake of sugar in food and drinks, drink plenty of water every day, take safe food and drinks and clean, use the nutritional information on the label accordingly effective.

If overweight or obese, aim to lose weight gradually safe and regular. The way to achieve is to set a realistic goal and monitor the weight loss which is 0.5 up to 1 kg per week, reduce calorie intake from 500 calories to 1000 calories a day by reducing the number of servings, use small plates and eat slowly, limit the intake of ultra-processed foods (ultra-processed foods) in your daily diet, avoid "fad diets" that promote weight loss suddenly in a short period of time, increase physical exercise gradually until reaching 60 minutes a day (example: brisk walking, swimming and cycling) with using the physical activity pyramid as a guide, seek the advice of a health professional if you have chronic disease. If underweight, aim for gradual weight gain in steps. The way to achieve this is to eat three main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) including healthy snacks between main meals each day, eating nutrient-dense foods that contain high calories and limit the intake of ultra-processed foods (ultra-processed foods), do physical exercise for 30 minutes a day (example: fast walking, swimming and running slowly) by using a pyramid physical activity as a guide. Do muscle strength exercises to increase muscle mass, set realistic goals and monitor weight gain of 0.5 up to 1 kg per week. Latest technology such as fitness tracker watches or counters steps can be used as a tool to encourage physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior. Fitness phone app or exercise can also be used to track physical activity and step counter.

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# The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Perceived Brand Equity of Fashion Brands in Jaffna District Sri Lanka

Thillainayagam Dushyenthan

## Abstract:

Contemporary business environment has been drastically changed due to the market proliferation and media proliferation of online shopping by giving a vital advantage of many more good choices rather than traditional shopping method. In recent years, the rapid growth of digital platforms has raised the question of whether this growth has reduced the marketer's control of its brand management techniques and brands. Creating and maintaining Brand equity is crucial and complex one in the marketing environment, and identifying social media marketing's specifically influence on fashion brands in Jaffna district is essential. However, studies on brand equity calculation in Jaffna district are limited, questioning its relevance. The study has examined how social media marketing has affected Jaffna district fashion brands' total brand equity. A quantitative research approach had been adopted in this research and data collection taken place by the way of issued questionnaire as a research tool. Convenient sampling method had been used to analyze the data. It employed SSPS analyze the collected data. Based on the results obtained from the analysis. Regression analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses whilst main assumptions were reported in advance. The result suggests that all independent variable has a significant impact on the dependent variables. In addition to that researcher has given valuable recommendations based on the key findings. Research limitations/implications: This research focuses on banking services in one particular district of the country. Therefore, further research in other sectors may be necessary before generalization can be made on.

*Keywords: Brand Association, Brand Awareness, Brand Equity, Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality, Social Media Marketing*

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Present market and business environment had been drastically changed due the technological revolution witnessing the proliferation of online activities by giving a vital advantage of many more good choices rather than traditional one. According to past studies, as in the 90s to 2022, there was a rapid growth in online shopping, and they estimated that it would increase till 2022 (IBM, 2020). Due to the emergence of COVID-19, the majority of people prefer to work under a virtual involvement than a physical connection for the sake of their health during that pandemic crisis situation.

If we take statistics 60.49% of the global population use social media. Social media users in Sri Lanka were equivalent to 36.8% of the total population in January 2022. In January 2023, social media users were 39.5% of the total population.

In recent years marketer's control of its brand and brand management techniques has been reduced due to the heavy usage of online shopping platforms and onboarding. (De Silva & Herath, 2019).

Brand equity plays a major role in any marketplace, either physical or virtual, in this embryonic marketing environment. According to the Stephen King WPP Group, London, had defined the brand equity as not like products which are produced in a factory, the brand is something that brought by the consumer which is unique and cannot be copied (Aaker, 2009). Since social media gives consumers the ability to speak to hundreds or even thousands of other customers and distributors across the globe or even within a given geographical region, businesses must ensure that they build and sustain fair brand value to preserve the current sales base (Ajanthan, 2015).

The social media marketing platform is a vital role to create brand awareness and enhancing value creation via social network marketing techniques. The main advantage of social Media Marketing is that marketers can quickly identify the buying patterns of their customers while increasing the return on investment (ROI) (Henderson, 2020). Godes and Mayzlin (2004) announce in this sense that online portals are a cost-effective and easy alternative to create brand equity, reclaim and capture consumer-to-consumer experiences. Digital virtual corporations exist through a boundary-less market community that has been networked and partnered to provide their clients with a perfect response to growing technology while creating 'Brand equity.

Modern businesses continue to have a presence in the virtual world to market their brands while retaining high virtual brand value in their virtual operation, owing to the desirability and capacity of the online virtual ecosystem to endorse products and services.

Moreover, in the retail industry, where most young adolescents now tend to shop for clothes online rather than visit the store physically, the above pattern has arisen (Tokatli, 2016).

In order to create value for any product, including apparel, a brand occupies a fundamental position in both virtual and actual economic circumstances. Brand equity is a vital marketing concept, where marketers experienced over the decades (María Cristina Otero Gómez, 2018).

However, there is a shortage of studies on how brand equity has been calculated in Sri Lanka context specifically in Jaffna. Many studies in western countries have been carried out in this region, but their relevance to developing countries such as Sri Lanka is questionable. The study has examined how social media marketing has affected Jaffna district's fashion brands' total brand equity.

This research's main objectives are to identify the impact of social media marketing on the overall brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka and to determine the impact of social media marketing on the brand equity dimensions such as perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand association of fashion brands.

### **Research Problem**

The principle of brand equity, where someone's ability to pay to buy a specific brand, has become a significant intangible asset of a business to establish it is a wise investment. There have been abundant variables that assess the brand value of knowledge disparities in the last 20 years. Some researchers argue for a conceptualization of brand equity based on five factors: social image, value, performance, trustworthiness, and attachment (Lassar et al., 1995).

Others represent it in four different concepts: brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations, and perceived quality (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). According to Keller (2003) and his model,

brand equity emerges from brand awareness and brand image. Nonetheless, the online retail service brand equity model is based on five sources: emotional connection, online experience, responsive service nature, trust, and fulfillment (Rios and Riquelme, 2008). It does not include awareness among the sources of brand equity. Due to the various demands of fashion consumers in Jaffna Sri Lanka, there is enormous competition among fashion retailers and the fashion industry (Santos, 2015). As per the rapid growth of social media usage and the significant growth in the fashion sector, marketers must define and focus on brand management techniques to address their customer intentions while creating brand equity.

Clothing theorists have concentrated on understanding the motivations behind online clothing shoppers and manipulating four main dimensions: brand recognition, perceived efficiency, brand loyalty, and brand association (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Brand partnerships create digital clothing shoppers' Brand Equity (Rios and Riquelme, 2008). However, there is a shortage of studies on how brand equity has been calculated in Jaffna Sri Lanka.

Many studies in western countries have been carried out in this region, but their relevance to developing countries such as Sri Lanka is questionable (Hamilton, 2016). Today's most active social media audiences are sensitive and question everything, so businesses must tread cautiously when it comes to the causes they support, corporate operations, and the messages they share with the public.

This is a result of both the time and effort necessary for social media and the reach that the organization achieves. Because social media never sleeps and is continuously active, accounts must be safeguarded (since hacking may be terrible, leading customers to lose faith) and monitored around the clock. Especially in Jaffna Sri Lanka, there are no proper laws and regulations for the protection of cybercrimes. These crimes include cyber-crimes against individuals such as credit card fraud, revenge porn, crimes against property, crimes against hacking and intellectual property theft, and cyber-crimes (economy next, 2022).

Laws and regulations around the world sometimes insufficient for the security of the social media platform. Globally, it is a huge challenge for regulatory bodies, media, private bodies, policy makers, states, and mainly civil society using this platform frequently and regulating hate speech and disinformation on social media. In the Sri Lankan context, current prevailing legal provisions within the formal regulatory framework cover social media but, over the past few years, there have been many ethnic and religious violence incidents in the country that involved or were due to the spread of hate speech and disinformation on social media platforms (Democracy reporting International, 2021).

Different categories of individuals use social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others. Furthermore, a company's social media marketing activities cannot simultaneously target all kinds of individuals. As a result, it makes sense to do thorough research and develop solid social media tactics to target consumers based on their brand. There are several channels for social media marketing, and each platform necessitates a unique strategy. This entails a significant amount of time and effort wasted. Social media marketing is restricted to the use of social media. On the other hand, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) are the most influential business growth tactics since these platforms allow businesses to expand.

One of the most significant downsides of social media marketing is the lack of security and privacy policies. Ads are everywhere, and some people become annoyed when they encounter them on their main page. Moreover, though many more social media forms were used in the prevailing organizations, they did not have sufficient knowledge to develop effective social media to create brand equity in increasing the organizational value as well as brand value (data report al, 2021).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Sri Lankan Fashion Industry and Global Fashion Brands**

Generally, the fashion industry is made up of four levels, which includes the production of raw materials, principally fibers, and textiles but also leather and the production of fashion goods by designers, manufacturers, contractors, and others; retail sales; and various forms of advertising and promotion to gain customer to the brands. These levels incorporate many different but interdependent sectors, all of which are devoted to satisfying consumer demand for apparel under conditions that enable the industry to operate at a profit (Major, 2020).

All through a long time, Sri Lankan attire manufacturers & providers have picked up solid notoriety around the world for the moral fabricating of high-quality apparel trusted by famous worldwide fashion brands. Sri Lanka's apparel and material fabricating industry are the foremost noteworthy and energetic, significant contributors to Sri Lanka's economic development, where, entirely secretly operated and owned. Sri Lankan textile and apparel producers have successfully utilized the chances within the worldwide market to evolve past conventional trades and tailoring to supply modern and creative arrangements through fashion BPO services, investigate development, and innovation centers.

The main achievement in the fashion industry is that Sri Lankan top three apparel companies are already amongst the world's 50 most essential suppliers, and also in the year of 2018 fashion industry calculated export revenue is to US\$4960 million and a high watermark of US\$6million. (EDB, 2022).

Further, Several Indian retail brands count on Sri Lankan factories' sourcing to attract global brands to invest in Sri Lanka as an Indian Sub-Continent Hub. A large UK retailer' also set up their regional supply chain logistics hub in Sri Lanka to watches their cost and lead time savings. However, Environmental, social and economic sustainability are highlights of the industry. (Export Development Board Sri Lanka, 2021).

### **Social Media Networks**

There are many ways that users engage in social media, such as using the computer, mobile phones, tablets, etc. Social media was derived as a way to associate with people worldwide, but later, businesses wanted to gain benefit from a popular new communication method to reach out to their customers.

Social media is a computer-based technology platform that facilitates the sharing of information, thoughts, and ideas through virtual networks and communities. Social media is an Internet-based platform that provides users with quick electronic communication of content, including personal information, documents, videos, and photos (Syed, 2016).

Through social media, markers can collect information regarding customer perceptions, which helps to focus on marketing efforts and market research. Promoting products and services enables

the distribution of targeted, timely, and exclusive sales and coupons to would-be customers is a significant advantage. Moreover, social media aid in building and maintain customer relationship loyalty programs linked to social media. (Dollarhide, 2021). It permits interaction with the existing and potential customers, capturing with them and fortifying a sense of community around the business organization's products and services. (Syed, 2016).

### **Social Media Marketing**

A proper standard marketing on social media platforms will bring the business into a stable and unbreakable way and create devoted brand advocates, driving leads and sales. Social media marketing will also be known as SMM, a form of internet marketing that creates and shares content through social media to achieve organizational goals.

Social media has become the method of statement in the 21't century, enabling us to express our beliefs, ideas, and manner in a new way. These technological advances and the use of social media have primarily led to significant changes in corporations, where the companies recognized that without a proper plan and social media strategy, they would not survive in the industry. On the other hand, companies cannot stand out in the prevailing digital world and rapidly changing digital freedom without adapting to the new trends (Saravanakumar, 2012). In order to overcome this situation by ensuring that they successfully attend on social media, they must need to consider distinct marketing theories that will help them boost their brands in different aspects. Social Media Marketing involves posting sales ads on social media, publishing text, and uploading videos or images (DigitalMarketing, 2021). Before using social media marketing, every company should have organizational goals and a clear image of what they would achieve by using social media marketing. They must have to be more concerned about their target groups (wordstream, 2020). Social media marketing is a unique concept that has always been essential for businesses at the professional level to grow their business extensively to reach prospects and customers (Lakshmi, 2012).

Using social media marketing strategies, companies can create a brand identity, increase positive brand association, and enable the business to project the brand image through various social media platforms (Dobrilova, 2021).

### **Online Business and Brand Building**

The technological advances have twisted new and modern opportunities for consumers and prospective customers to purchase online without barriers to when and where the customers can intermingle online with an organization (Rose, 2011). Online shopping platforms are a form of business steeped in the online environment, while the internet access a combined platform that connects buyers and sellers virtually (Ratten, 2013). As a result, the sole aim of each online business network is to produce revenue from virtual transactions (Tokatli, 2016). Online shopping behavior must not inevitably follow the traditional consumer behavior, which can be seen in the bricks-or-mortar retails.

Meanwhile, according to Davydenko and Peetz, in 2020, the business conducted through e-commerce platforms is definite two-way transactions conducted and concluded online. Consequently, each online business platform's sole intention is to make money through virtual transactions (Kumar, 2021). Additionally, Mayer (2002) argues that these are the virtual stages where customers and sellers meet and engage in social and economic activities to create a valid transaction, while computer devices, internet connections are used as mediators. Thus, sellers who

operate virtually are guided to explore the determinants of customer online purchasing intention among web shoppers and how the brands are developed through internet.

### **Brand Equity**

According to the Stephen King WPP Group, London had defined the brand equity as not like products that are produced in a factory, and the brand is something that brought by the consumer which is unique and cannot be copied (Aaker, 2009) Brand equity plays a vital role in any marketplace, either physical or virtual, in this embryonic marketing environment. Indeed, brand and brand equity has become the primary marketing priority for most businesses at present. Since social media gives consumers the ability to speak to hundreds or even thousands of other customers and distributors across the globe or even within a given geographical region, businesses must ensure that they build and sustain fair brand value to preserve the current sales base (Ajanthan, 2015).

Brand equity as a tangible worth of a brand to a business from a financial standpoint. Furthermore, it should be remembered that brand equity has been conceptualized, suggesting that it is a dynamic phenomenon with multiple aspects. Brand recognition, perceived consistency, brand associations, and brand loyalty are examples of these properties. Existing studies and academics in the field conclude that brand equity comprises four primary constructs: brand recognition, perceived consistency, brand interactions, and brand loyalty, both of which have been generally recognized and used by various researchers (Morgan- Thomas & Veloutsou, 2016).

### **Dimensions of Brand Equity**

This research focuses on the causal relationships between all four brand equity dimensions and brand equity from online platforms with determining the impact of social media marketing. The existence of a hierarchical relationship among brand equity dimensions has been the subject of many studies (Lehmann, 2006) (Mackay, 2001). In addition, the interrelation of brand equity dimensions has been empirically examined by a small number of researchers, as the documents indicate that most studies have only indicated the associative relationships between brand equity dimensions (Yoo, 2000) In addition, several researchers have advocated that the standard paradigm of results hierarchy should be used as a fundamental structure for revising the causal mandate between brand equity dimensions (Lehmann, 2006) The above systematic mechanism consisting of perceptual, affective, and conative phases has been successfully integrated into the new market-related pyramid suggested by Keller, including the brand equity pyramid (2003).

Brand awareness can be defined as how people identify, recall, acceptance the brand in any circumstances (Bilgin, 2018) Brand awareness is a critical feature that is often looked at, and it is an essential dimension to identify brand equity. According to Aaker, 1991, brand awareness is "the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category." (Sanaz Farjam, 2017). In order to create interaction with a company, customers initially know about the brand's presence in the market (Suki, 2015)

Perceived quality brings credibility to a brand as good product quality provides customers with a compelling justification to buy from the respective brand and helps the brand to differentiate itself from its near and distant rivals, to charge a higher price, and to provide a clear brand extension source.



Brand association is the characteristics associated with the brand knowledge in the customer's mind, either positive or negative, linked to the conscious and unconscious memory. Simply placed, it is a set of connections usually arranged coherently in the context of a brand logo.

Brand loyalty can be defined as an upshot of customer behavior that affects a consumer's preferences, as per the previous scholar. Furthermore, brand loyalty is characterized as a consumer's repeated purchases from their favorite brand, regardless of price differences between competitors.

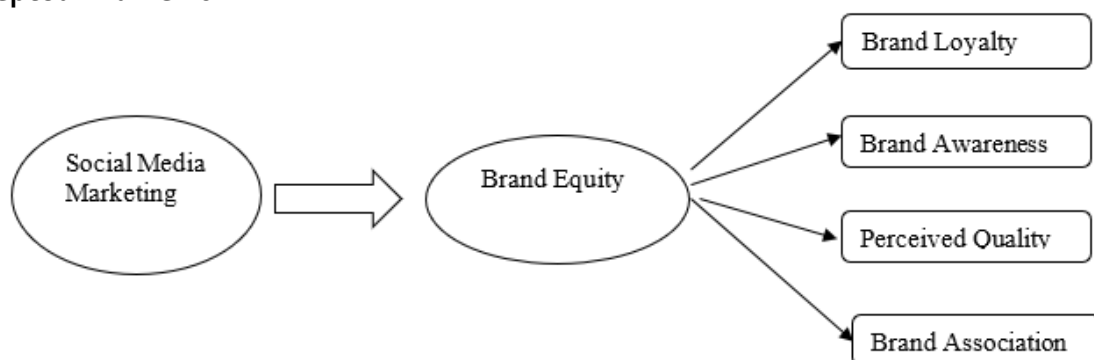
## METHODOLOGY

Study's objectives are nested within the find out the effect of social media marketing on the brand equity of fashion brands in Sri Lanka particularly in Jaffna district. Positivism is the most practical philosophy in which research findings are usually observable and measurable (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, positivism promotes quantifiable observations that lead to statistical analyses. Hence this research follows the positivism philosophy to reveal the impact of social media marketing on the overall brand equity of fashion brands. Further primary and secondary data were used for this study. Primary data collected via questionnaire and secondary data collected through texts, journals and magazines.

A survey instrument in the form of close-ended questionnaire was developed for the purpose of collecting the main data for the study. This study was conducted in banking service providers in Jaffna peninsula. Factors such as precision, confidence, time and cost constraints were taken into consideration in selecting sample size.

Since the study focuses on disclosing the relationship or influence of social media marketing on the brand equity of fashion brands in Sri Lanka, it is concerned with "developing hypotheses based on existing theory and then designing a research strategy to test the hypotheses. Hence the deductive research approach was preferred for the study to illuminate causal relationships between concepts and variables, measure concepts quantitatively, identify negative and positive relationships among the variables, and ultimately generalize research findings to a certain extent.

### Conceptual Framework



### Hypotheses Development

The following hypotheses had been formulated to test by the researcher to achieve the aim of the research supported by the literature review presented.

- H<sub>1</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on the overall brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna district Sri Lanka.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on brand loyalty of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on brand awareness of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on perceived quality of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.
- H<sub>5</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on brand association of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.

### Measurement of the Study

This research study aimed to analyze the factors associated with brand equity with the influence of social media marketing. According to the previous in relation to brand loyalty social media advertisement on Fashion brands makes customers buy that product again and after seeing social media advertisements, customers grow fond of it.

Moreover, Customers buy more of the Fashion brands which saw through social media than any other similar brands and it can be recommended the Fashion brands which can be seen on social media to others. Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000), Ajanthan (2015),

When considering to the brand awareness, previous studies identified that Because of social media marketing, customers can visualize those brands when purchasing Fashion brands and Customers can identify certain brands amid competing brands thanks to social media advertisements. When a customer needs to make a buying decision, those brands are the first to come to mind. Usually, customers recall the Fashion brands that seen on social media advertisements. Sanaz Farjam (2017), Suki (2015) and Dew & Kwon (2017). With regards to the perceived quality, described as the sources where Social Media advertisements on Fashion Brands are trustworthy because the product's actual colors are similar to the original product and Social Media advertisements on Fashion Brands are believable because the ordered product is similar to the actual product. Further, Social Media advertisements on Fashion brands are credible because the material's quality is as of the description and There is no difficulty in finding the information that it needs from the particular advertisement of the product, Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou (2016), Severi & Ling (2016), Prasanna (2021),

However, Seock & Norton (2007), Tractinsky & Lowengart's (2007), Kwon & Lennon (2007), Kim & Lennon (2008) identified that Social media advertisements make customers believe that the company and people who stand behind that product are very trustworthy, which leads to the **brand association**. Considering what customers pay for the brands on social media, he/she gets much more than my money's worth and those brands customers see on social media are well regarded by friends too.

According to Ajanthan (2015), Syahrivar & Ichlas (2019), with regard to overall brand equity, even if another brand has the same features as the brands, customers mostly see on social media, customers would prefer to buy them. If another brand is not different from the brands customers see mostly on social media, it seems smarter to buy. Fashion brands customers see on social media are more than a product to me. In order to measure the variables and calculate the responses format the researcher used 5 Point Likert Scale.

## DATA ANALYSIS

A data analysis scheme is crucial because it will direct the researchers to choose the proper data analysis instruments to ensure proper treatment of the evidence (Creswell, 2014) and to draw good analytical conclusions and convince them while discarding alternative interpretations (Weinreich, 2009).

### Research Strategy

Since this research develop to test the hypothesis and evaluate the outcomes with quantities between social media marketing and brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka, a questionnaire survey was used as data collection methods of quantitative data. Hence the questionnaire survey was conducted among 300 respondents through the online platform. Questioned are made to evaluate the hypothesis, ultimately achieving the objectives of the study. The statistical tools from the SPSS platform have been selected as data processing instruments among numerous methods, such as Excel Spreadsheet, Microsoft Access, and SPSS. Since this research finds the relationship and impact of the variables between social media marketing and brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka, the statistical test carried out according to the Cross-Sectional time horizon. It was designed to gather data once only for a short period before its analysis and interpretation.

Since this research is in positivist research philosophy and to generalize research findings to a certain extent, focus categories of respondents described are women and men from the Jaffna District, who are buyers and prospective customers of online clothing stores in Sri Lanka between 18 and 50 years of age. As the researcher assumes that respondents between 18-50 years would have sufficient computer literacy and buying power, the age group was chosen. According to the data from the Department of Census and Statistics in 2022, there were Five hundred and ninety thousand population (590 000) in the Jaffna district. The sampling method which was introduced by Krejcie and Morgan is one of the most often utilized to determine the sample size. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) developed a table that uses a sample size formula for a finite population to ease the process of finding a sample size for a finite population. According to the results obtained from the table, the required sample size for this study is 220. Hence the online questionnaire survey was distributed to more than 380 respondents and only 300 responses were collected due to time constraints. The relationship between the variables was determined with correlation analysis and the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable; Brand Equity was determined by using multiple regression analysis.

### Demographic Backgrounds of the Respondents

#### *Profile of the Sample:*

Concerning this research study, primary data was collected from 300 respondents who are you using social media. The researcher collected required data from online and offline questionnaires. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the demographic data in both graphical and tabulation methods.

#### *Age Distribution:*

According to the data 50% majority of the respondents all the social media users are from the age group between 21 to 34 years. The second highest respondent age group is between 35 to 50 years which has contributed to 26% of the total respondents. Respectively both below 20 and above 50 years respondents have accounted for 12.6% and 11.4%.

**Income Distribution:**

According to the collected data 37.5% the majority of the respondents are from Rs.50,000 to Rs.99,000 income level group. Respectively respondents with income levels Rs.100,000 two Rs.249,000 and less than Rs.50,000 contributed as 27.6% and 22.1%. The lowest income level group of customers is represented by rupees Rs.250,000 or above group which is explained by 12.8%.

**Descriptive Analysis of the Variables:**

In this section a measure of central tendency is used to assess a summary of the responses collected for various variables. Thus, the following table have summarized

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Quality	1	5	3.74	.714
Brand Loyalty	1	5	3.86	.757
Brand Awareness	2	5	3.93	.669
Brand Association	1	5	3.79	.705
Overall Brand Equity	1	5	3.75	.760
Social Media Marketing	1	5	3.42	.742

**Dimensions of Brand Equity and Overall Brand Equity:**

The responses to the dimensions of brand trust have been summarized in the table above. The mean values of the variables Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, and Brand Association are all in the range of  $3.40 \leq X \leq 4.20$  respectively, 3.74, 3.86, 3.93 and 3.79. In other words, the majority of respondents feel that social media marketing helps to promote the quality of fashion products while also increasing brand loyalty, awareness, and association. Furthermore, with a standard deviation of less than 0.7, the smaller deviation of the responses has been demonstrated. Furthermore, total brand equity for fashion products is at a good level, with the mean value of 3.75 of the responses falling within the "agreed" interval of  $3.40 \leq X \leq 4.20$  and a lower standard deviation of 0.760.

**Reliability and Validity of Data**

Testing the internal accuracy of the data set is the most essential part of the process of data analysis. Hence, the reliability and validity tests were done via SPSS to determine the internal accuracy of the collected set of data.

In this study, five dimensions, such as perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and Brand Equity were tested to determine the impact of social media marketing toward brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.

Accordingly, the reliability and validity tests were conducted on all the questions which were developed with a Likert scale to test each variable of this study. The most accepted approach to measuring the reliability of the measurement scale with multi selective items is Cronbach coefficient alpha. Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the data set. If all scale components have no covariance or are independent of each other, the result is zero, and if there is any correlation, the result is 1. if Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) < 0.5 – unacceptable,  $\alpha$  > 0.5 – poor,  $\alpha$  > 0.6 – questionable,  $\alpha$  > 0.7 – acceptable,  $\alpha$  > 0.8 – good,  $\alpha$  > 0.9 - excellent. In addition, the significance level should be  $P < 0.005$ .

	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items	Sig.
Perceived Quality	.857	4	.000
Brand Loyalty	.850	4	.000
Brand Awareness	.844	4	.000
Brand Association	.858	4	.000
Overall Brand Equity	.856	3	.000
Social Media Marketing	.849	4	.000

As shown in the table above, all of the variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than .8, indicating that their internal consistency is "good." Furthermore, all of the above variables have a significant value of 0.000, indicating that the findings are significant at 0.5 percent ( $P < 0.005$ ).

### Correlation Analysis

#### **Correlation Between Social Media Marketing and Dimensions of Brand Equity:**

The validity of the data set was measured by calculating the square root of the average variance for each construct of the data set using SPSS. Correlations of the identified dimensions of brand equity; perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association with social media marketing is shown in Table The tested variables by using the Likert scale ranked from 1 to 5 were taken into consideration in this correlation analysis.

		Overall Brand Equity	Perceived Quality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Awareness	Brand Association
Social Media Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.388**	.758**	.693**	.694**	.801**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Between social media marketing and overall brand equity, there is a positive significant correlation with a person correlation value of 0.388 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that there is a positive significant relationship. Perceived Quality and social media marketing have a strong correlation, according to the above table, Correlation between Social Media Marketing and Factors Affecting Brand Equity. At the 0.01 level, the relationship between perceived quality and social media marketing was statistically significant. The Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is +0.758, and the p-value (Significance) of 0.000 indicates that these two variables have a very significant relationship.

There is a high positive relationship between brand loyalty and social media marketing, as the Pearson relationship between the two variables is +0.693, which is statistically significant at 0.01 with  $P = 0.000$ . With a Pearson correlation value of +0.694, the correlation coefficient between brand awareness and social media marketing was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. As a result, brand recognition and social media marketing have a positive correlation. The significant value,  $p = 0.000$ , demonstrates the significant relationship between these two variables. There is a substantial positive correlation between brand association and social media marketing, as demonstrated in table 4.9. Therefore, increasing brand connection with fashion brands through social media marketing will boost customer brand equity.

According to the correlation values of the variables, all the variable has a positive relationship between all dependent and independent variable with higher significance level. Hence, the multiple

regression analysis can be carried out to determine the exact impact of each variable on the dependent variable, Brand equity of fashion brands.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Since the correlation of the social media marketing was identified, the impact of the dimensions of brand equity to be identified to determine the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity.

### Impact of the Dimensions of Brand Equity in the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity

	B Coefficients	Std. Error	Beta	T- Value	P. Value	95CI Lower Bound	95CI Upper Bound
(Constant)	.194	.137		1.417	.008	-.076	.463
Perceived Quality	.157	.058	.148	2.704	.007	.043	.272
Brand Loyalty	.133	.056	.132	2.356	.009	-.044	.122
Brand Awareness	.061	.055	.054	1.100	.002	-.048	.170
Brand Association	.198	.070	.183	2.824	.005	.060	.336
Overall Brand equity	.398	.057	.388	6.963	.000	.285	.510

Unstandardized Coefficients values were utilized to demonstrate the influence of social media marketing on the dimensions of brand equity, as shown in the above table. The constant B value (.194) denotes that the brand equity while there is no social media marketing or if it remains constant. Accordingly, the  $\beta$  coefficient indicates that if that considering variable increased by one unit while others remain constant, the overall brand equity will be impacted by  $\beta$  value.

- **H1: Social media marketing has a significant impact on the overall brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.**

As shown in the above table the unstandardized Coefficient between social media marketing and overall brand equity is 0.398. the P-value or the significance value of the relationship is .000 (significant at 0.05). This indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between social media marketing and overall brand equity. Hence the H1 is supported by the regression results of the observation.

- **H2: Social media marketing has a significant impact on the perceived quality of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.**

The unstandardized Coefficient value of .157 between social media marketing and the perceived quality of fashion brands implies that social media marketing has a favourable but weak impact on perceived quality. The statistical significance of the association between the two variables is indicated by the significant value  $P=0.007$  which is significant at 0.05. As a result, the H1a is supported, indicating that the variables have a positive significant relationship.

- **H3: Social media marketing has a significant impact on the brand loyalty of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.**

The influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty is positive, with a B value of .133 and a significant value of .009. In other words, if social media marketing on a fashion brand increases by one unit, the loyalty toward fashion brand increases by 0.133 units. As a result, H1b is supported by the regression, which shows that the two variables have a positive significant connection.

- **H4: Social media marketing has a significant impact on the brand awareness of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.**

The unstandardized Coefficient and significant values, according to the observation, are .061 and 0.007, respectively. As a result, social media marketing has a positive and statistically significant impact on brand awareness. However, due to the low coefficient value between the variables, the direct impact appears to be quite weak. However, The H1c is supported by the positive association between the variables, since the P-value is statistically significant at 0.05.

- **H5: Social media marketing has a significant impact on the brand association of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka.**

Similarly, with  $B = 0.198$  and  $P = 0.005$ , the unstandardized Coefficient between brand association and social media marketing is positive and statistically significant. As a result, the study's H1d hypothesis was supported, proving that social media marketing has a positive but limited direct impact on fashion brand association.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social media marketing on the brand equity of Sri Lankan fashion brands. To meet the research's major objectives, the survey was conducted among 300 respondents.

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study to improve the brand equity of fashion brands in Sri Lanka through social media marketing. In social media advertising, it is important to target the dimensions of brand equity. Because social media advertising has a direct impact on all four aspects of brand equity, it is critical to advertising with a focus on those four variables. As a result, it is suggested that fashion businesses strengthen their social media marketing to emphasize the quality of their products to enhance their brand equity. Furthermore, boosting user reviews, competition programs, and campaigns on social media will help to create a favorable image of the business and raise awareness in order to retain strong customer relationships. Additionally, concentrating on two-way communication is critical for increasing brand loyalty, awareness, and association. Hence, responding to comments and messages, offering suggestions, alternative solutions, providing accurate up-to-date information, and sharing content can improve brand equity through social media advertising.

In considering the findings of this study, it is recommended to tell the brand story of own brand to enhance brand equity. Because, this process assists to enhance perceived quality, brand loyalty towards fashion brands and brand associations of those brands. A brand must use a brand story to explain its values to customers once it has determined what it stands for. On their websites, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and other social media platforms, brands can really convey their stories, but they can also incorporate parts of those stories into other brand assets, like social media postings or email outreach. Further, it is recommended to monitor where the brand equity is coming from. To identify, brands must conduct periodic audits of their marketing efforts and social media

marketing campaigns. A brand audit should comprise a history of the company's most recent marketing initiatives as well as data on how customers responded to those initiatives. Surveys, focus groups, and other consumer research can be used to gather the latter. Checking if the brand's perception of itself and its reach matches consumers' insights is the aim. Through this periodic audit, it can be identified not only where the brand equity is coming from, but also the impacts of social media marketing for fashion brands and its components like brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations.

In addition to that, organizations can invest in the customer experience to enhance the brand equity. Social media marketing campaigns are the major part of this process. That's why it can directly influence the brand equity of fashion brands. Investments in the customer experience may be gainful since it is the base of brand equity. Sometimes it's as easy as performing the research to identify the industry's customer pain points and developing a brand experience that pilots clear of them. It also requires using the time-tested "surprise and delight" social media marketing strategy. While there will certainly be variations in brand experience depending on factors like the industry and customer needs, brands would be sensible to consider how they can generate a unique customer experience that sets them apart from rivals as an additional strategy for attracting customers and enhancing brand equity.

### **CONCLUSION**

The outcomes of this study revealed that social media marketing has a direct and indirect impact on the brand equity of Sri Lankan fashion brands. In other words, social media marketing programs of fashion businesses have a direct influence on brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and overall brand equity. Thus, this observation concludes that the impact of social media marketing helps to improve the brand equity of fashion brands in Sri Lanka.

The outcomes of this study revealed that social media marketing has a direct and indirect impact on the brand equity of Sri Lankan fashion brands. The majority of the customers use social media and made purchases and transactions online. Due to the busyness of life styles, advancement in information and technology, high consumption of electronic equipment (computer, mobile phones, tablets), online purchasing has become a major trend among Jaffna Sri Lankan customers. As a result of this, social media marketing platforms which are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, are used to influence on customers' buying behavior. Therefore, social media marketing has vastly used to influence on their purchasing behavior and brand equity on Sri Lankan fashion brands. In other words, social media marketing programs of fashion businesses have a direct influence on perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, E-brand love and overall brand equity. According to this study, firstly there is a direct positive impact on overall brand equity of Sri Lankan fashion brands from social media marketing activities. Secondly, perceived quality and social media marketing campaign has positive association since perceived quality creates the credibility to a brand as a quality product on customers' mind set, differentiating the particular brand from other rivals and enhancing brand equity. In building a strong credibility among customers, social media marketing campaigns play a major role. Thirdly, there is a positive impact on brand loyalty from social media marketing. Brand loyalty could be increased through strategic social media campaign, making repeated customers for a particular brand with positive feelings on it. Ultimately this directly and positively impacts on the brand equity. Further, between brand awareness and social media marketing have a positive relationship which directly impact on brand equity. Brand awareness on fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lankan fashion industry can be increased using social media campaign since social media platforms have become



the modern tool for attract customers and build awareness. In addition to that, social media marketing which can improve the brand's association and brand equity, has positive influence on associations of fashion brands. Finally, this observation concludes that the social media marketing helps to improve the brand equity of fashion brands in Jaffna Sri Lanka, influencing on perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association.

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