RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY IN A SPECIFIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SYSTEM

Dalila LALAOUNA[1], Ammar SIDIDRIS[2]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Tlemcen (UABT), Algeria
E-mail: dalila.lalaouna@univ-tlemcen.dz
[2] Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University, Algeria
E-mail: amar.sididris@univ-annaba.dz / https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5173-4402

Abstract

Kinship is considered a fundamental gateway to understanding patterns of social, cultural, and organizational interaction. The kinship term also represents a crucial structure within the prevalent kinship system in society. It reveals classifications related to relatives, defining their statuses and relationships with each other. Relationships among relatives, such as marriage, role distribution, positions, orphan care, inheritance distribution, and others, take into account the type of kinship and the nature of the specific kin identified by the kinship term. As a result, one can question the patterns of use and deployment of the kinship term in the social and cultural system.

Keywords: *Kinship, Kinship terminology, Social interaction, Cultural systems, Relative relationships, Kinship structures, Sociocultural patterns*

Introduction

Within diverse standards that regulate and define an individual's social behavior, kinship serves as a social and anthropological determinant that guides the various relationships between the individual and the other members of the group to which they belong. Researchers from different generations and epochs have delved into the topic of kinship and its complexities in the social field. Ibn Khaldun, for instance, described kinship in the societies he traveled to and attempted to detail tribal types and their kinship ties. He also gave great importance to the kinship factor in shaping kingship and maintaining rule within the "Mamluks", where he spent a considerable amount of time.

The necessity led Ibn Khaldun to explain the intricacies of kinship and affinity between kings and their tribal allies and its impact on the distribution of tasks, positions, roles, and statuses. Similarly, Lewis Morgan and Margaret Mead attempted to explain the complexities of kinship in primitive and savage societies, aiming to make it a key entry point in understanding many of the relationships it generates, such as marriage and inheritance. In this regard, Evans-Pritchard pointed to the divisive tendency and fragmentation in societies, followed by their reunification and the role of marriage between cousins as a factor in social cohesion and division (Ibn Salim et al, 2007: p18). They also aimed to distinguish between types of kinship and their systems, and how virtual kinship arises among the components of a single society or among multiple communities by exploiting totemic clans.

Additionally, Arabic scholars studied what the Arab clans specifically designated as names that only members of the tribe were allowed to use, along with the functions and roles of individuals within the clan under various circumstances, whether in times of peace, war, solidarity, cooperation, or mutual support. This was reflected in the accounts of the Arabs, their living conditions, customs, and pre-Islamic kinship organization (Al-Mallah, S.D: p362), as well as the role of the tribe in social organization before the advent of Islam (Sa'id, 2006 : p. 173).

In the lineage-based clan, individuals who share a blood relationship and trace their origins back to one ancestor are considered equal in terms of rights and duties. The clan provides kinship with protection, regulation, and confers kinship terms associated with the clan. It organizes the affairs of life (Al-Fawwal, 1974: p200). Claude Lévi-Strauss believed that kinship laws and systems should be considered a form of discourse, a set of specialized operations designed to ensure a specific type of communication between individuals and groups (Sperber, 2008: p64).

When studying kinship terminology, we cannot limit ourselves to a standalone approach, as the subject is part of a specific kinship structure. Analyzing this structure cannot be divorced from its functions. Our understanding should extend beyond being a method for analyzing human behavior, leading to an understanding of the causes and factors that lead to social phenomena, as per Max Weber (Ben Jannat, 2013: p275). The phenomenon of kinship terminology goes deeper into linguistic structure and is closely tied to customs, traditions, and norms. It requires psychological and behavioral analysis. We cannot separate ourselves from social, religious, cultural belonging, isolate ourselves, and distance ourselves from reality to understand kinship structures and the functions associated with kinship terminology. The anthropological approach remains the bridge that combines these perspectives and possibilities in studying the subject.

I.   Kinship and Its Impact on Social Behavior:

In our societies, kinship plays multiple roles in organizing relationships, roles, and positions. In our era, it has embedded itself in the establishment of political alliances, determining loyalty, and benefiting from care and services. Sihan Chen et al (2024) , found that social complexity positively correlates with the complexity of kinship terms.

Kinship cannot be excluded from any form of social interaction, and it plays a crucial role in distinguishing between social actors in an event or issue. Kinship affects social relationships in terms of:

1.   Religious Values and Practices: Kinship elevates the status of relatives, and they receive special care within the framework of family bonds. The term "Silat al-Arham," which translates to maintaining family ties, holds high importance, and neglecting it is seen as a breach of one's connection to God. The degree granted to family ties is significant, and violating them results in grave consequences.

2.   Constitutions and Laws: Various constitutions and legal frameworks are established to protect relatives and safeguard their property, status, and interests. These regulations also govern the relationships among relatives regarding inheritance, custody, sponsorship, disputes, and wills, among others.

3.   Social Customs: Societies have customs and established norms that dictate the classification of degrees, statuses, and positions of relatives. These customs define the rights and duties of individuals towards each other. The role of age, gender, and the type of kinship in occupying positions, or acquiring powers and roles, is changeable.

4.   Social Practices: Cultural practices in some societies dictate preferential treatment for relatives in benefits and rewards, while excluding them from blame and punishment. Even if religions and laws do not call for preferential treatment of relatives over others, some cultures exhibit a human tendency towards favoritism, both in benefits and rewards, and in avoiding blame and punishment.

Therefore, kinship is deeply intertwined with the fabric of societies, affecting religious beliefs, legal systems, social norms, and practices.

- Customs and Traditions: Customs and traditions often assign relatives a unique status and rank that may not apply to other members of society. The proximity or distance of kinship defines the type of relationships, interactions, and attitudes towards those involved. Forms and methods of interaction with relatives vary in different cultures based on factors such as gender, paternal/maternal lineage, and the type of blood relationship (consanguinity), affinity (through marriage), or tribal affiliation. Kinship classifications also differ from one culture to another, resulting in varying relationships and interactions with relatives based on these classifications.

- Kinship as a Social Behavior Determinant:

Interaction with relatives and the behaviors directed towards them are not the same as interactions with strangers or dealing with them. For example, in Arab culture, there is a clear bias towards relatives, favoritism towards them, and a strong desire to please them, as well as jealousy over their treatment. These cultural norms dictate patterns of interactive behavior with relatives, with behaviors adjusted to consider the nature, age, and gender of the relative with whom one interacts.

Requests made to older generations are made in a dignified and respectful manner to satisfy them and convey a sense of responsibility. Meanwhile, similar requests directed to younger generations may vary depending on the type of relative and the degree of kinship, as well as the age and gender of the interacting parties.

These interactions and behaviors encompass all types of relationships between relatives across various domains and facets.

- Social Behavior in Essence:

Social behavior, in essence, is behavior exhibited by an individual, taking into consideration numerous variables related to their readiness to enact behavior towards another party with the aim of interacting on a particular matter. The interactive context of the individual and the party towards whom the behavior is directed are considered. Kinship is used as a criterion and classifying determinant for the type of behavior that is exhibited.

The words spoken, actions taken, or stances adopted in behavior are shaped based on the kinship ties, their type, and degree. Relationships among relatives are organized, and they can become disrupted when the rules of these relationships and kinship are violated. Standard behaviors that are expected to prevail among relatives may be disturbed or changed when kinship norms are violated.

- Naming and Addressing with Kinship Terminology:

Kinship terminology serves as a way to express the nature of kinship relationships among members of society, such as:

- Real Name: Mohammed
- Kinship Term: Cousin
- Real Name: Omar
- Kinship Term: Cousin
- Real Name: Othman
- Kinship Term: Cousin
- Real Name: Abu Bakr
- Kinship Term: Uncle

So, Muhammad has a cousin relationship with Omar, and Uthman has a cousin relationship with Abu Bakr.

The terms "cousin" and "uncle" can, for example, be part of the kinship terminology used for classification, while names like Muhammad, Omar, Uthman, and Abu Bakr are used for addressing and indicate the identity and gender of the addressee in a specific culture.

The terms "cousin" and "uncle" indicate the hierarchical kinship between two individuals or a group of people. It's worth noting that an individual can occupy multiple kinship roles and acquire multiple kinship terms simultaneously. These roles may change when the qualifying factors are no longer present. For instance, one might lose the designation of "son" after losing both parents, or "uncle" or "aunt" after the absence of nephews or nieces. Kinship terminology used in societies can vary or be similar, depending on cultural and social factors. Herbert Spencer attributed the similarities in kinship terminology in Arab societies to shared cultural and social factors. Similarly, the French anthropologist Emile Durkheim justified this similarity by the fact that some societies derive their unity from non-organic factors, such as customs, traditions, norms, language, and religion. In Arab societies, this has led to significant similarity in kinship systems, terminology, and structure.

There are determinants in Arab societies that influence kinship classification, including:

Generational Differences: Differences in age can result in different forms of kinship relationships, whether through blood ties, milk kinship (through breastfeeding), or by descent (father-son). There can also be differences in the gender of the relative (male/female) and the type of the relationship (uncle/aunt, cousin). For instance, in Arab culture, "uncle" is a term used for a male relative on the father's side, while "aunt" is used for a female relative on the mother's side. This distinction is reflected in the terminology.

In contrast, in Western societies, a single term like "uncle" (Wasfi, n.d: p120-122) can refer to both the father's and mother's side, and the differentiation is made within the terminology. The use of kinship terms can also vary between individuals and their relatives, such as "cousin," "brother," "sister," and "father," and sometimes these terms can be similar, like "cousin-cousin."

Additionally, some societies use specific terms for addressing older siblings or in-laws. For example, in Egypt, terms like "Abi" and "Abla" are used for addressing older brothers and sisters, respectively. There can also be compound terms that indicate specific relationships, such as "mother-in-law," "father-in-law," "brother-in-law," and "sister-in-law" (Al-Jawhari & Shukri, 2007: p56) in Western societies. The language, culture, customs, and traditions all play a role in establishing the hierarchical terminology of kinship.

Moreover, the use of kinship terminology can change depending on whether the relationship is through blood or milk kinship. For example, individuals connected by milk kinship may address each other using the term "brother" based on this classification. This terminology extends to the relatives of the person with whom the milk kinship relationship is established. Thus, siblings might be called "brothers," and a mother may be referred to as "mother," and an uncle on the milk side may be called "uncle." This can have implications for marriage as well, as some cultures might prohibit marriage between individuals connected by milk kinship, while inheritance relationships are usually not established through milk kinship.

II.   Occupying Multiple Kinship Terms or Changing Terminology:

Individuals in society may hold multiple kinship terms or acquire them after a certain age or due to changes in their social status. This can occur through various means, such as marriage, adoption, or breastfeeding. For example, a son may simultaneously hold the titles of brother, father, uncle, nephew, cousin, and even husband and grandson. These kinship terms qualify the individual to be connected to various family members, defining a

network of relationships and reducing them to these terms. In this process of perception, the transmission of meaning, thoughts and knowledge across languages via texts (Vlăduțescu, 2022: p173) is essential for understanding. This is an anthropological aspect of our study on the term "kinship". When addressing someone as a "cousin" or "uncle," for instance, it may imply both a marriage relationship and a blood relationship with different individuals. These terminologies define the relationships and the behaviors expected within them.

In some cases, the eldest brother may take on a role and status within the family following the death of the father. He may acquire a kinship term for addressing him that doesn't necessarily reflect reality but symbolizes the responsibilities and roles he assumes in terms of family management, representation, and caregiving.

The type of behavior (Mahjoub, 2005: p35) expected from an individual in relation to their father or mother is regulated by specific patterns. Deviating from these patterns can be seen as rebellion and disrespect, which may be condemned in certain religions, customs, laws, and cultures. The relationship between core family members requires adherence to socially, religiously, and culturally recognized behavioral norms, and deviating from these norms can lead to consequences regarding the behavior of relatives classified by these kinship terms.

Kinship patterns based on blood relations may be distinct from those based on breastfeeding or milk kinship. These distinctions are often reflected in terminology. However, these patterns are what define relationships and behaviors among community members within the larger kinship system. These patterns vary depending on the type of kinship and the closeness or distance of the relationship within the kin group.

The kinship terminology seem complex, In order to explore the lexical units and gaps, Khalilia et al (2023), via seven experiments were conducted focusing on a different dialect for each experiment, they conclude that there are six sheets in the spreadsheet, with each one representing a specific kinship subdomain.

III. Distinguishing Blood Kinship Patterns from Affinal Kinship Patterns:

Blood kinship patterns may be distinguished from affinal (related by marriage) kinship patterns, for example, through terminology. However, this distinction helps explain the relationships and behaviors existing among members of a community within the framework or the system of kinship as a whole. These patterns vary and differ according to the kinship model on one hand and the degree of kinship ties and the intensity of these ties among the members of the kinship group on the other.

IV. Kinship Terminology in the Quran:

The Quran, has addressed the topic of kinship and the importance of kinship considerations in addressing, classifying, distinguishing, and issuing behavior in various contexts. It mentions these concepts in many verses. For example, in the story of the prophet Hud, it is mentioned: "And to 'Aad [We sent] their brother Hud. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. You are not but inventors [of falsehood] '" (Quran, Surah Hud, 11:50)

Similarly, in the story of the prophet Saleh, it is mentioned: "And to Thamud [We sent] their brother Saleh. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive.'" (Quran, Surah Hud, 11:61)

These verses illustrate the role of kinship in calling for faith, addressing relatives with the truth, and using kinship ties to spread faith and righteousness. Just as affiliations with tribes, cities, ethnicities, and sects are used to send prophets and messengers in their own languages and cultures so that people have no excuses before God, kinship terminology and ties are employed to convey the message effectively.

Furthermore, kinship terminology is mentioned in the Quran in various contexts. For example, it mentions the importance of kindness and respect towards parents: "And [He has made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant. And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive." (Quran, Surah Maryam, 19:32-33)

Additionally, it quotes the prophet Abraham addressing his father: "And mention in the Book [the story of] Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet. [Mention] when he said to his father, 'O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all?'" (Quran, Surah Maryam, 19:41-42)

These verses demonstrate the use of kinship terms in the Quran, emphasizing the importance of kinship in communication and ethical conduct.

V. In the Interactions of Siblings and their Inclusion among the Believers:

Siblings may be distinguished in their interactions with believers and included among the righteous who enter paradise. "We will remove whatever bitterness they had in their hearts.1 In a friendly manner, they will be on

thrones, facing one another." (Quran, Surah Al-Hijr, 15:47) This verse highlights the removal of resentment between siblings in paradise, emphasizing their close bond.

Similarly, the Quran classifies relationships and dealings with male relatives and spouses. For instance, when describing the characteristics and qualities of disbelievers, it states, " They ˹also˺ say, "The offspring of this cattle is reserved for our males and forbidden to our females; but if it is stillborn, they may all share it." He will repay them for their falsehood. Surely He is All-Wise, All-Knowing." (Quran, Surah Al-An'am, 6:139) This verse demonstrates how kinship ties impact the division of resources and the rules that govern such divisions.

Changes in kinship ties are also evident in the Quran, such as the alteration in the terminology used to address a wife after divorce. In this case, she becomes a "divorced woman." Additionally, the Quran clarifies the status of men compared to women in various divorce scenarios: " Divorced women must wait three monthly cycles ˹before they can re-marry˺. It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs,1 if they ˹truly˺ believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands reserve the right to take them back within that period if they desire reconciliation. Women have rights similar to those of men equitably, although men have a degree ˹of responsibility˺ above them. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:228) This verse addresses the rights and responsibilities of divorced individuals and outlines the differences in their roles based on their genders and kinship ties.

Moreover, the Quran discusses the rights between fathers and their children according to the specified order of kinship terminology. It also addresses issues related to breastfeeding and its consequences: "mothers will breastfeed their offspring for two whole years, for those who wish to complete the nursing ˹of their child˺. The child's father will provide reasonable maintenance and clothing for the mother ˹during that period˺. No one will be charged with more than they can bear. No mother or father should be made to suffer for their child. The ˹father's˺ heirs are under the same obligation. But if both sides decide—after mutual consultation and consent— to wean a child, then there is no blame on them. If you decide to have your children nursed by a wet-nurse, it is permissible as long as you pay fairly. Be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.." (Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:233) This verse outlines the rights and responsibilities related to breastfeeding and the financial aspects of raising children.

Lastly, the Quran prohibits marriage between certain close relatives: "Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brothers' daughters, your sisters' daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your stepdaughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your [own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful." (Quran, Surah An-Nisa, 4:23-24) This verse lays out the prohibited degrees of marriage within close kinship ties.

In summary, behavior is expected to conform to specific patterns according to an individual's status and kinship ties within their family. These patterns are represented by the kinship terminology they use. Additionally, relationships among relatives, extended family, and clans are influenced by kinship ties, and this influence is mentioned in the Quran in various contexts.

VI.   The Role of Kinship and Kinship Terminology

Variation in Kinship Relations: Kinship relations differ based on various factors, including the generation, age, gender, nature of the relative, and the specific kinship term used. These factors influence the nature of the relationship and the kinship terminology employed. Additionally, changes can occur after a person's death when someone else assumes a specific kinship term or status. For example, when a grandfather passes away, his grandchildren may no longer refer to themselves as "son of the grandson" but only in terms of addressing.

Regulation of Kinship Behavior - Towards Relatives and in Society: Kinship terminology plays a crucial role in regulating behavior, both within the family and in broader society. It helps define appropriate conduct, rights, and responsibilities concerning various relatives.

Classification of Relatives: Kinship terminology aids in classifying relatives based on their relationships and roles within the family structure.

Identifying Lineage Through Kinship Terminology: The use of kinship terms allows individuals to identify their lineage (Sa'id, 2006: p57). In this context, the work of the scholar "Al-Qalqashandi" is mentioned, which discusses the use of kinship terminology among ancient Arabs to trace genealogy.

Determining Status, Roles, and Hierarchies: Kinship terminology helps determine the status, roles, and hierarchies of individuals within a family or clan.

Defining Gradations of Permissible Kinship Relations and Kinship Order: Kinship terms are used to establish permissible degrees of kinship relations and to define the order of relationships among relatives.

It's worth noting that, according to Murdock, various factors influence the development of kinship terminology, including evolutionary, historical, social, psychological, linguistic, and marital factors. The kinship system, or the type of kinship system adopted, also impacts the terminology used. For example, in Arab societies, kinship terminology can vary when dealing with polygamous marriages. The English anthropologist William Smith recognized these considerations when analyzing marriage types among Arabs, distinguishing between internal and external marriages, monogamous and polygamous unions, and their representation in ancient Arab documents (Wasfi, n.d: p123). Furthermore, kinship terminology may differ when addressing relatives from the same mother versus those from the same father, or between relatives from different cultures when it comes to distinguishing their roles, status, and behaviors, such as paternal and maternal uncles or aunts.

In conclusion, the role of kinship terminology in social interactions and the issuance of behavior cannot be exhaustively captured in the above discussions. Instead, it requires an examination of the complexities of using and applying such terminology in social relationships. This involves considering the multifaceted factors related to religion, customs, traditions, laws, and the economic and livelihood conditions of societies.

Consequently, strong connections emerge between the use of these terms and the relationships between their users, affecting the patterns of behavior exhibited by individuals (Mahjoub, 2006: p42) towards their relatives.

Conclusion

It can be stated that relatives are classified not only based on the kinship terminology that represents their surface-level designation but also that behind these terms lie hidden relationships, emotions, representations, feelings, thoughts, and a set of behaviors specific to interacting with the particular relative qualified to hold the described kinship term linguistically, be it a phrase or a word. However, this linguistic kinship term gives rise to various forms of interaction and relationships that distinguish it from other relatives in different categories.

For Fadwa El Guindi " *There are two kinds of kinship: procreative and non-procreative. The procreative necessarily consists in both birth and marital union and the non-procreative manifests itself cross-culturally in diverse culturally recognized ways. »* (El Guindi, 2024, p22).

The kinship system, through its terminology, reflects the fabric and cohesion among the members of the kinship group. It signifies the regularity of relationships between them, based on the meanings and determinants of interaction indicated by the kinship term. This terminology becomes a fundamental determinant in their daily interactions, during events, or when resolving disputes and distributing resources when the need arises.

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