

Research Article

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Analyzing the Pragmatic Functions of the Religious Expression /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ (May God grant you health) in Spoken Jordanian Arabic

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Abstract: This study advances the methodological analysis of religious expression in Arabic by introducing a mixed methods framework for investigating the pragmatic functions of the phrase /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ (“may God grant you good health”) in Jordanian Spoken Arabic. By integrating both parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses, the research identifies and ranks the pragmatic functions of this religious marker across the sample and compares the accuracy of these analytical approaches, offering new statistical validations for the field. A central contribution of this work lies in its detailed examination of demographic and contextual factors in shaping the acceptability (ranking) of pragmatic functions. The findings demonstrate that while age influences acceptability, gender does not, and that contextual variables (physical setting, relationship dynamics, and formality levels) are pivotal in determining how religious expressions are perceived and used in everyday interactions. The study advances the methodological landscape of pragmatics and introduces statistical validations that would benefit future research. Limitations include the need for natural linguistic corpora and larger, more diverse samples.

Keywords: pragmatic functions, Spoken Jordanian Arabic, mixed methods approach, acceptability judgment task, contextual factors, religious markers

1 Introduction

Religious expressions shape linguistic and cultural identities, carrying sociocultural and spiritual meanings (Vestrucci, 2022). In Arabic, religious expressions are deeply woven into the fabric of daily communication, functioning as essential communicative tools and cultural and spiritual identity markers. Their pervasive use in spoken Arabic highlights the unique integration of sacred language into ordinary conversation, reflecting the profound relationship between linguistic practice and religious tradition (Nofal, 2023).

The interest in understanding the integration of Quranic Arabic expressions into everyday interactions among speakers of Arabic can be traced to Piamenta's (1979) monumental work, *Islam in Everyday Arabic Speech*, which examines how Islamic beliefs, values, and references are seamlessly integrated into daily Arabic language. The work documents a wide range of religious expressions and phrases used in ordinary

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conversation, demonstrating that these elements are not confined to formal or ritual contexts but are central to greetings, farewells, expressions of gratitude, oaths, and everyday remarks. One recurring expression is the multifaceted use of the name of the deity “Allah” in everyday contemporary Arabic dialects.

Subsequent research reinforces that many religious expressions emerge from complex emotional contexts, revealing the intricate ties between faith, culture, and language in Arabic-speaking communities. For example, Castleton (2006) investigated the frequency and function of religiously based expressions in Arabic, focusing on how such language shapes conceptions of God and religious identity. The study provides quantitative data on the prevalence of expressions invoking “Allah” and other religious references in everyday speech and qualitatively analyzes their pragmatic roles in conversation. Al-Nahdi *et al.* (2022) examine how the name of God (Allah) is woven into the fabric of Yemeni Arabic, focusing on its manifestation in daily communication. The study highlights that religious language is not confined to formal or ritual contexts but is actively used in greetings, expressions of gratitude, and everyday interactions. The authors find that these expressions serve communicative and social functions, reinforcing religious identity and cultural cohesion within the community. In the context of Jordanian Arabic, Jaradat (2014) explores the various linguistic forms of Allah-based expressions, documenting their phonological, morphological, and pragmatic variants. The study demonstrates that these expressions are highly adaptable, appearing in various social contexts and serving multiple communicative functions, such as expressing gratitude, seeking blessings, or marking politeness.

These studies prove that religious expressions are frequent, multifunctional, and contextually flexible across Arabic dialects. In this context, discourse markers, specifically religious-based discourse markers, present a particularly interesting linguistic form to investigate because they are uniquely suited for pragmatic analysis due to their inherent contextual dependence and multifunctionality. Unlike purely referential expressions, these markers require speakers to assess situational appropriateness and interpret nuanced social cues in real time. For example, /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ (may God grant you good health) can function as an expression of gratitude in a public service encounter, a gesture of empathy within a family conversation, or a marker of appreciation in a professional setting. In each context, the marker’s meaning and pragmatic function shift, reflecting the dynamic interplay between language, context, and social identity.

Traditional analyses of discourse markers in Arabic have primarily focused on identifying their functions beyond the literal meaning, emphasizing their role as performative elements that facilitate social interaction and manage conversational flow (Ali, 2023; Fraser, 1999). These approaches often categorize discourse markers based on their syntactic and semantic properties, aiming to outline how they contribute to coherence and cohesion in spoken discourse. However, such methods may overlook the nuanced sociocultural and contextual dimensions that shape the use of these markers.

Azi (2018) reconceptualizes discourse markers as pragmatic markers, advocating for an approach that captures their multifaceted roles within specific sociolinguistic contexts, considering linguistic, contextual, and cultural factors. Recent research exemplifies this shift in focus. For instance, Jarrah and Alghazo (2023) analyze the pragmatic functions of the religious expression /la: ʔila: ha ʔilla ʔalla:h/ which translates to (There is no God but Allah) in Jordanian Arabic, using a corpus of naturally occurring conversations. Their findings reveal that such expressions are pragmatically versatile, managing social relationships, expressing alignment or emphasis, and addressing various communicative purposes.

While much of the existing literature has focused on major Arabic dialects, a notable gap exists in the pragmatic analysis of religious markers in Jordanian Arabic. This study addresses this gap by providing a detailed analysis of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ which translates as (May Allah grant you health) in spoken Jordanian Arabic. This expression, widely used across Arabic dialects and particularly prevalent in Jordan, operates as a conventional salutation and a culturally significant ritual greeting. It invokes divine blessing while facilitating social interaction in diverse contexts, from family gatherings to workplace exchanges (Twigt, 2013). Despite its ubiquity and cultural resonance, the expression’s pragmatic and interpretative dimensions remain underexplored in the literature.

2 Literature Review

Recent research on the pragmatic functions of linguistic expression in Arabic has adopted diverse methodologies, including corpus analysis, acceptability judgments, surveys, and interviews. Nevertheless, the investigations of the pragmatic functionalities of religious expression in Arabic remain predominantly qualitative. For example, several investigations have utilized participant observation and critical lexicographic analyses to explore markers such as “wallahi” (I swear) and “Inshallah” (God willing) in dialects of Arabic (Al-Khawaldeh, 2018; Clift & Helani, 2010). Relatedly, other researchers adopted critical discourse frameworks to analyze the use of the “Allah” lexicon in response to cultural and ideological shifts (Al-Saeedi, 2019; Farghal, 2008).

More recent scholarly endeavors experimented with corpus-based quantitative investigations of pragmatic functionalities of religious expression, but the statistical techniques employed are still confined to descriptive statistics of frequency (Jarrah & Alghazo, 2023). To capture religious markers’ quantitative distribution and qualitative nuances in dialects of Arabic, scholars are increasingly using triangulation methods (Ali, 2023; Al-Jarf, 2024; Altaweel & Al-Shaikhli, 2024; Ennasser & Hijazin, 2021; Hamdan & Hammouri, 2022; Hamdan et al., 2023). Moreover, there remains little consensus on the most effective approach for capturing the complexity of such context-dependent functionalities, and significant gaps persist in such analyses across Arabic dialects.

Many studies have concentrated on descriptive frequency counts and qualitative commentaries without using appropriate inferential statistics to validate their findings. In instances where mixed-methods approaches have been applied, such as in investigations of the discourse marker /ʕanʒad/ i.e., “really” (Altaweel & Al-Shaikhli, 2024), the analyses often stop at basic parametric testing, lacking key data standardization techniques (e.g., z-scores) to ensure reliable cross-context comparisons, and overlooking some statistical assumptions that underlie the use of parametric measures to begin with.

In linguistic analysis, statistical measures are essential for uncovering patterns and testing hypotheses about language use. These measures can be broadly categorized into parametric and non-parametric statistics. Parametric statistical tests assume that the data follow a specific distribution, typically the normal distribution, and that certain parameters (like mean and variance) adequately describe the data (the assumption of normality). Another critical assumption is the homogeneity of variance across groups. For example, differing sample sizes and uneven demographic distribution across samples may result in unstable variance estimates. Standard parametric tests could yield misleading outcomes if the variance is not consistent across groups (Kim & Cribbie, 2018). Parametric measures can be used to compare means or assess relationships between variables in linguistic datasets, such as analyzing differences in word frequency or response times across groups. On the other hand, non-parametric statistical tests do not require the data to follow a particular distribution. They are especially useful when dealing with ordinal data, small sample sizes, or data that violate the assumptions of parametric tests. In linguistics, non-parametric methods are often applied to analyze categorical data, rank orders, or when the distribution of linguistic features is skewed or unknown.

Parametric analysis assumptions are inherently unmet by linguistic data, especially regarding pragmatic functions, which are influenced by contextual and demographic factors. This necessitates informed statistical decisions between parametric and nonparametric measures. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to develop and implement a comprehensive mixed-methods approach that integrates both sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives to investigate the functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ in contemporary Jordanian Arabic. This involves analyzing the expression’s use across various social and situational contexts, such as family gatherings, workplace interactions, and public exchanges, while examining how individual speakers employ and interpret it in real-life communication.

In addition to exploring usage patterns, the study systematically evaluates how contextual and demographic factors influence the acceptability of the pragmatic functions associated with this religious marker. By examining variables such as physical setting, relationship dynamics, formality level, age, and gender, the research uncovers the extent to which these factors shape speakers’ perceptions and judgments regarding the use of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/. This dual focus highlights the expression’s versatility and embeddedness in social interaction, while also providing insight into how acceptability and function are negotiated across different segments of the community. This article will answer the following questions:

1. What are the pragmatic functions associated with the religious term /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ in spoken Jordanian Arabic?
2. What are the acceptability ratings of the identified pragmatic functions of the religious term /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ across the study's sample?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in the acceptability of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/'s pragmatic functions when analyzed using parametric versus non-parametric statistical measures?
4. Do demographic factors, specifically age and gender, affect the acceptability of certain pragmatic functions over others?
5. Do contextual factors, specifically physical setting, relationship dynamics, and formality level, affect the acceptability of certain pragmatic functions over others?

3 Methodology

In linguistic research that does not use naturalistic corpora, careful sampling is vital for validity and reliability. Unlike corpus-based studies, our experimental approach requires controlled sampling, which brings assumptions about sample representativeness, observation independence, and variance homogeneity. Linguistic data, especially regarding pragmatic functions, are influenced by contextual and demographic factors, potentially violating these assumptions. This necessitates informed statistical decisions between parametric and nonparametric measures. While parametric methods are commonly used, deviations in data distribution suggest nonparametric techniques may be advantageous. Research on pragmatic functions typically employs tools like piloting, mini-questionnaires, and acceptability-judgment tasks. Piloting refines research instruments to ensure tasks are comprehensible and culturally appropriate.

This study employed a mini questionnaire to gather insights on demographic views of pragmatic functions, followed by acceptability-judgment tasks where participants rated linguistic expressions on a five-point Likert scale. While these methods provide perspectives on social and demographic influences on language use, they pose challenges regarding data distribution and analysis. The normality assumption complicates Likert-scale response analysis, as these responses are discrete and often skewed, with uneven intervals. This can distort the measurement of nuanced linguistic judgments. Additionally, social desirability bias may skew results (Konstabel, 2019).

Another critical assumption is the homogeneity of variance across groups. In our study, the differing sample sizes among gender groups and various age categories may result in unstable variance estimates. Standard parametric tests could yield misleading outcomes if variance is not consistent across groups (Kim & Cribbie, 2018). Moreover, the assumption of independence among observations can be contested in linguistic research, as responses may exhibit interdependence. Cultural backgrounds or shared linguistic experiences can lead to clustered data, complicating the analysis further (Winter & Grice, 2021).

Neglecting to make informed statistical decisions can have significant implications, particularly concerning Type I and Type II errors. A Type I error (false positive) occurs when a true null hypothesis is incorrectly rejected, leading to erroneous conclusions. Multiple comparison corrections can be implemented to mitigate this risk. Conversely, a Type II error (false negative) arises when a false null hypothesis is not rejected, potentially obscuring real effects. In this research, the null hypothesis posits that demographic and contextual variables do not influence the acceptability of certain pragmatic functions. By challenging this hypothesis, the study aims to demonstrate that these factors significantly shape the perception of pragmatic functions. This underscores the necessity of making informed statistical choices to enhance our understanding of the intricate, culturally embedded nature of language use.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the pragmatic functions of the religious marker /ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fje/ in Jordanian-spoken Arabic. The research design consists of preliminary data collection, extended quantitative investigation via an acceptability judgment survey, and iterative expert validation. This research framework has been acceptable in similar endeavors in Arabic dialects (Majali & Thenibat, 2024). Data were processed using Python (Python, 2025) and its associated libraries for data

manipulation, statistical computation, and visualization to ensure robust statistical analysis. The study's methodological rigor is further reinforced through iterative refinement of survey instruments and multiple phases of validation.

3.1 Sample

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants from various academic disciplines at Jordanian universities, explicitly excluding students majoring in English or other language-related fields to minimize potential bias related to formal linguistic training. The final sample comprised 67 students representing a range of academic specializations. The study design involved a two-phase data collection process: the initial phase included a pilot mini-survey with eight participants aimed at instrument validation and procedural refinement, while the subsequent phase involved 59 participants who completed an extensive questionnaire.

Respondents from the main phase subsequently participated in an acceptability judgment task, yielding a comprehensive dataset of 531 individual ratings across nine pragmatic functions (59 respondents $\times$ 9 functions). All participants consented to participate in the study after receiving full information about the research objectives and procedures, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines.¹ The sample represents a convenience population of university students with a relatively homogeneous age profile. This design allows for a controlled examination of the acceptability of religious expressions in varied social contexts, providing a solid foundation for subsequent statistical analysis.

3.2 Preliminary Data Collection

The initial phase employed a strategically designed mini-survey administered to participants selected through purposive sampling. The participants were native speakers of Jordanian Arabic with no knowledge of linguistics or language theories to avoid theoretical bias. The investigation began by establishing participants' familiarity with and frequency of usage of the discourse marker /ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fje/. Respondents were asked to rate their usage on a scale ranging from "rarely" to "all the time (on a daily basis)," with intermediate options of "sometimes" and "frequently." The results validated the marker's suitability for linguistic investigation, with 57.1 percent of respondents reporting usage more than once daily and the remaining participants indicating very frequent usage of at least once per day.

After the baseline assessment, participants listened to two carefully selected audio recordings featuring the discourse marker in natural conversational settings, each example explicitly linked to specific pragmatic functions. These audio samples were used to illustrate the task and to model the range of responses expected from participants, providing clear, context-rich demonstrations of how the marker functions in everyday speech. Following this, respondents were prompted to recall and describe as many pragmatic functions as possible from their daily interactions involving /ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fje/. This approach was designed to elicit authentic native speaker intuitions, encouraging participants to draw on real-life scenarios and articulate the pragmatic roles they believed the marker fulfilled in those contexts. Below are the two scenarios provided in Jordanian Arabic, complete with phonetic transcription and English translations.

¹ This study was conducted with a strong commitment to ethical standards. All participants provided informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about the research objectives and procedures, ensuring their understanding of their rights and that their participation was entirely voluntary. We also considered the cultural and social sensitivities associated with studying religious discourse, ensuring that participants' responses were treated with confidentiality and respect.

Pragmatic function 1: Expressing gratitude

[Context]: A husband comes back from work after a long day of hard work, looking exhausted and carrying some shopping bags. His wife is sitting in the living room watching the news.

الزوج: مساء الخير

Husband: Masa: ʔelxair

Good evening

The wife replies, with a smile, also offering to help with the bags:

مساء الورد، الله يعطيك العافية شكلك تعبان كثير اليوم

Wife: masa:ʔ lward, ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fje, ʕaklak taʕba:n

Wife: Good evening, my dear. May Allah grant you health, you look tired.

Pragmatic function 2: Expressing Anger

[Context] A mother asked her daughter to keep an eye on the food while it cooks.

اتنهي عليه لغاية ما أصلي

Mother: ʔintibhi: ʕalaih laya:jet ma ʔasʕalli:

Mother: Please keep an eye on the food while I pray.

Daughter: حاضر

ħa;dʕer

OK

After 10 minutes

الابنة: ماما أنا آسفة، الرز انحرق

Mama. ʔirroz ʔinharaʔ

Daughter: Mom, I'm sorry, I burnt the food.

الأم: الله يعطيك العافية، ما قلت لك اتنهي عليه؟

ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fje. Ma ʔoltellik tentibhi: ʕaleih

Mother: may Allah grant you health, Have I not specifically asked you to pay attention?

3.3 Acceptability Judgment Task

A follow-up pilot study involving SJA-native linguistic experts validated the initially identified pragmatic functions, establishing nine distinct functions for the discourse marker /ʔallah jaʕti:k ilʕa:fjea/. These functions served as the foundation for the acceptability judgment survey, which was refined through feedback from native speakers and linguistic specialists. Acceptability judgment tasks, widely used in linguistics (Sprouse, 2013), were chosen for their ability to test validity and assess context sensitivity. The tasks verify whether native speakers consider specific linguistic constructions acceptable, establishing the ecological validity of identified pragmatic functions. Likert scales provide a nuanced measurement of acceptability levels, offering more detailed insights than binary judgments.

The context-sensitive nature of acceptability judgment tasks makes them suitable for investigating discourse markers, which are inherently context-dependent. This approach allows researchers to test the same marker across different contextual scenarios, facilitating the identification of pragmatic constraints and preferences in usage patterns. The questionnaire was presented in SJA and was structured into two main sections. The first section gathered general demographic information from the respondents. The second section implemented an acceptability judgment task designed to probe participants' perceptions of the pragmatic functions associated with the discourse marker. In this task, respondents were presented with various social contexts in which the marker is typically used, alongside a suggested pragmatic function for each context. Participants were then asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the proposed function using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing nuanced measurement of agreement levels.

Table 1: Suggested pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʔti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ with social contexts and illustrative scenarios

Number	Social context	Scenario	Pragmatic function
1	Sports Facility Setting Physical Setting: Sports center/gym Relationship Dynamic: Professional (trainer-trainee) Level of Formality: Semi-formal	Ahmad at the sports center, training with his personal trainer: Trainer: Come on Ahmad, what's wrong with you? We want to win the championship this year Ahmad: That's it, I can't continue training more than this, I'm tired, I've been training since morning! Trainer: Okay, may Allah give you strength (Allah ya'teek al-afiya), let's take a 10-min break and then continue	Understanding and support
2	Educational/Social Setting Physical Setting: Study space Relationship Dynamic: Friends/Peers (student-student) Level of Formality: Informal	Leila asked her friend Huda to explain the lesson on integral calculus. After Huda finished, Huda asked: "Is everything clear now?" Leila replied: "Yes, everything is clear. I understand it well and your explanation is clear, "Allah ya'teek al-afiya." You truly fulfilled your duty."	Appreciation and gratitude
3	Government Office Setting Physical Setting: Civil Status Department Relationship Dynamic: Citizen-employee interaction Level of Formality: Formal	Ali entered the Civil Status Department to renew his passport, not knowing where to start. He finds the reception employee: Ali: "Ya'teek al-afiya (May Allah give you strength), I want to renew my passport, but I don't know where to start" Employee: "No worries, take a number from here, and when it's your turn, the responsible employee will call your number	Initiating a conversation and getting attention
4	Public Space Setting Physical Setting: Traffic light/street Relationship Dynamic: Stranger-to-stranger (customer-vendor) Level of Formality: Semi-formal	At the traffic light, a newspaper vendor walks wearily among the cars to sell copies of the newspaper. The weather is hot, the sun is blazing, and the temperature reaches up to 30°C. Aliya, who is standing by her car waiting for the signal to turn green, notices him. She opens her bag, takes out some money, and calls out to the vendor while extending her hand with the sum: Aliya: Good morning, sir. Allah ya'teek al-afiya Vendor: Thank you, dear. May God reward you with goodness	Feeling of sympathy
5	Home/Family Setting (Achievement) Physical Setting: Home Relationship Dynamic: Parent-child (mother-son) Level of Formality: Informal	Osama returns from school, and his mother receives him. He has his science exam paper with him: Osama: Mom, I got a full mark! I studied well for it Mother: Bravo, my champion! Allah ya'teek al-afiya (May Allah give you strength). I'll make you the most delicious chocolate cake	Motivation and encouragement
6	Home/Family Setting (Complaint) Physical Setting: Home Relationship Dynamic: Parent-child (mother-son) Level of Formality: Informal	Also, Osama, coming home from school while waving the golden medal hanging around his neck, is greeted by his mother who notices that his once-white clothes are no longer white and his hair is dusty. He says to her: Osama: "Mama! We won the championship today, and I didn't let a single goal come against us, I was like Yassin Bouno." The mother (while recalling the pile of laundry waiting for her): "Bouno?! Allah ya'teek al-afiya."	Resentment
7	Educational Setting Physical Setting: School/University Relationship Dynamic: Peer-to-peer (classmates)	After taking the exam: Muath: "How did you do?" Mohammad: "Don't even ask! I really messed up. I was confused during the exam even though it was	Sarcasm and mockery

(Continued)

Table 1: *Continued*

Number	Social context	Scenario	Pragmatic function
8	Level of Formality: Informal	very easy. What can I do? I only studied for it yesterday evening.”	Accomplishment
	Academic Setting	Muath: “Allah ya’tEEK al-afiya” (May Allah give you strength)	
	Physical Setting: University/classroom Relationship Dynamic: Professor-students	The professor speaks to his students after the end of the semester: Professor: “And with that, we have completed the course and wrapped up a challenging semester. I want to thank you for the tremendous effort you put into this subject, and I wish you success in your final exams.”	
9	Level of Formality: Semi-formal Home/Family Setting (Discipline)	Students: “Allah ya’tEEK al-afiya, Doctor.” Today is Friday, and the family has gathered for the meal prepared by the mother. Rashid offered to flip the maqluba, but instead of landing it on the serving tray, he flipped it onto the floor. The father rushed over at the sound and saw the food on the floor	Anger and reprimand
	Physical Setting: Home during family meal	Rashid: “I swear, it wasn’t my fault. Khalid moved the tray because he wanted to flip the maqluba, and I didn’t let him.”	
	Relationship Dynamic: Parent-children	Khalid: “No, Dad, Rashid is lying; I didn’t do that.”	
	Level of Formality: Informal	Father: “Allah ya’tEEK al-afiya – you both! And on top of that, you lie! Shame on you from your mother.”	

3.4 Coding Contextual Factors

The study analyzed data from 59 participants who rated nine distinct pragmatic functions of religious expression. A three-dimensional coding scheme was developed through qualitative analysis of the scenarios to capture the multifaceted nature of the social context. The three dimensions included the following:

1. Physical Setting: Categorizing the environment of the religious expression, ranging from private to public spaces.
2. Relationship Dynamics: Coding the interpersonal context, from intimate relationships to interactions among strangers.
3. Formality Level: Distinguishing between informal and semi-formal contexts.

Each pragmatic function was categorized within specific dimensions. For example, “expressions of appreciation and gratitude” were often found in private home settings, close relationships, and informal situations. In contrast, “expressions of understanding and support” were more common in places like sports centers or gyms, within professional relationships, and in semi-formal contexts. This approach led to 531 unique entries, allowing for a deeper exploration of the social contexts tied to each rated scenario while maintaining the original 1 to 5 rating scale. The physical setting dimension identified seven distinct categories, with private settings (both home and controlled) being the most frequent, totaling 118 entries each. Relationship dynamics were classified into six categories, with close relationships being the most prevalent (236 entries). The formality dimension clearly differentiated between informal contexts (354 entries) and semi-formal ones (177 entries). Table 1 presents the social contexts, illustrative scenarios, and pragmatic functions of the discourse marker.

4 Results and Discussion

The study analyzed data collected from 59 participants who evaluated the pragmatic functions of the religious expression /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ in Jordanian Arabic. The sample comprised predominantly female participants (76.27%) compared to male participants (23.73%). Regarding age distribution, most respondents belonged to younger university-student age cohorts (59.32%), ranging between 18 and 22 years old. While older respondents, mainly grad students, constituted 40.68% of the sample. Each participant provided ratings for nine distinct pragmatic functions across various social contexts, resulting in a comprehensive dataset of 531 individual ratings.

The traditional counting approach to measuring the acceptability of the pragmatic functions for the expression /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ in Jordanian Arabic typically relied on counting responses and rated points on the Likert scale, converting them to percentages to determine acceptability levels. This method produced a straightforward three-tier categorization of functions: highly accepted functions garnering over 75% acceptance (including gratitude at 86.2%, encouragement/motivation at 84.5%, and conversation initiation at 75.9%); moderately accepted functions ranging from 60 to 75% (encompassing sympathy and anger at 74.1%, accomplishment at 62.7%, and mocking behavior at 60.4%); and less accepted functions below 50% (such as not feeling well at 48.3% and understanding at 44.8%).

4.1 The Acceptability of Pragmatic Functions

4.1.1 Parametric Measures

The religious expression under investigation shows varying degrees of acceptability across different pragmatic functions in Jordanian Arabic. To assess the acceptability of these functions, this study employed a 5-point Likert scale, where (1) represents complete unacceptability and (5) indicates full acceptance. The scale's midpoint (3) serves as a crucial reference point (neutral point) against which the acceptability of each pragmatic function was statistically evaluated. This neutral point represents a threshold between acceptance and rejection, indicating that respondents are expressing ambivalence or uncertainty about the appropriateness of using religious expressions for that specific pragmatic purpose. Table 2 presents the statistical analysis of acceptability ratings for nine pragmatic functions of religious expressions, including mean ratings, standard deviations (SD), standardized scores (Z-scores), *t*-statistics, *p*-values, and effect sizes (Cohen's *d*).

The data indicate that five pragmatic functions of the religious term /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ showed highly significant differences ($p < 0.001$) from the neutral point. Notably, “appreciation and gratitude”, and “motivation and encouragement” had large effect sizes ($d = 0.918$ and $d = 0.853$, respectively), indicating that

Table 2: Acceptability of the pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ in SJA using parametric measures

Pragmatic function	Mean rating	SD	Z-Score	<i>t</i> -Statistic	<i>p</i> -Value	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Significance
Appreciation, and gratitude	4.288	1.403	0.381	7.054	0.0	0.918	***
Motivation and encouragement	4.136	1.332	0.274	6.548	0.0	0.853	***
Initiating a conversation and getting attention	4.017	1.468	0.19	5.321	0.0	0.693	***
Anger and reprimand	3.949	1.345	0.143	5.422	0.0	0.706	***
Feeling of sympathy	3.847	1.472	0.071	4.423	0.0	0.576	***
Sarcasm and mockery	3.559	1.43	−0.131	3.005	0.004	0.391	**
Accomplishment	3.542	1.343	−0.143	3.102	0.003	0.404	**
Understanding and support	3.203	1.31	−0.381	1.192	0.238	0.155	ns
Resentment	3.169	1.354	−0.404	0.962	0.34	0.125	ns

The significance levels (*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, ns = not significant) indicate the reliability of differences from the neutral point (3.0) on the 5-point scale.

speakers strongly favor these functions for religious expressions. Similarly, “starting a conversation,” “getting attention,” and “expressing anger and disapproval” demonstrated medium-large effect sizes ($d = 0.693$ and $d = 0.706$, respectively). And the pragmatic function relating to “feeling of sympathy” showed a moderate effect ($d = 0.576$). These findings suggest that when religious expressions are used to convey positive emotional states or facilitate social interactions, they are perceived as distinctly acceptable.

In contrast, pragmatic functions of “sarcasm and mockery” ($d = 0.391$) and “feeling of accomplishment” ($d = 0.404$) displayed moderate significance ($p < 0.01$), with smaller effect sizes. This indicates a less pronounced but still notable deviation from the neutral point, meaning that while the acceptability of these functions is above average, it is less emphatic than for the higher-rated functions. Finally, the functions associated with “understanding and support” ($d = 0.155$) and “resentment” ($d = 0.125$) did not significantly differ from the neutral point ($p > 0.05$). This lack of statistical significance implies that, on average, speakers do not show a clear preference or aversion for using religious expressions in these contexts. Such neutrality could indicate that these uses are either culturally ambivalent or still evolving within the community, and it might invite further investigation to explore how individual differences, or specific contextual factors contribute to this balanced perception. Figure 1 illustrates the main patterns of acceptance for the pragmatic functions of the religious marker.

It is important to note that parametric measures tend to correlate positively. This means that functions with a higher mean rating also typically exhibit stronger effects (indicated by larger Cohen’s d) and more significant test statistics (such as Z-scores and t -statistics). For instance, the pragmatic function of “appreciation and gratitude” not only has the highest mean rating but also demonstrates the largest effect size (Cohen’s $d = 0.918$) and statistically significant test results. This reinforces the conclusion that respondents perceive it as highly acceptable.

A point to mention here is how the analysis of pragmatic functions has evolved from a traditional counting approach to a more sophisticated statistical framework, each revealing different aspects of linguistic acceptability. While this traditional approach provided a clear initial classification, the implementation of standardized statistical measures has unveiled more nuanced patterns in the data. This refined methodology

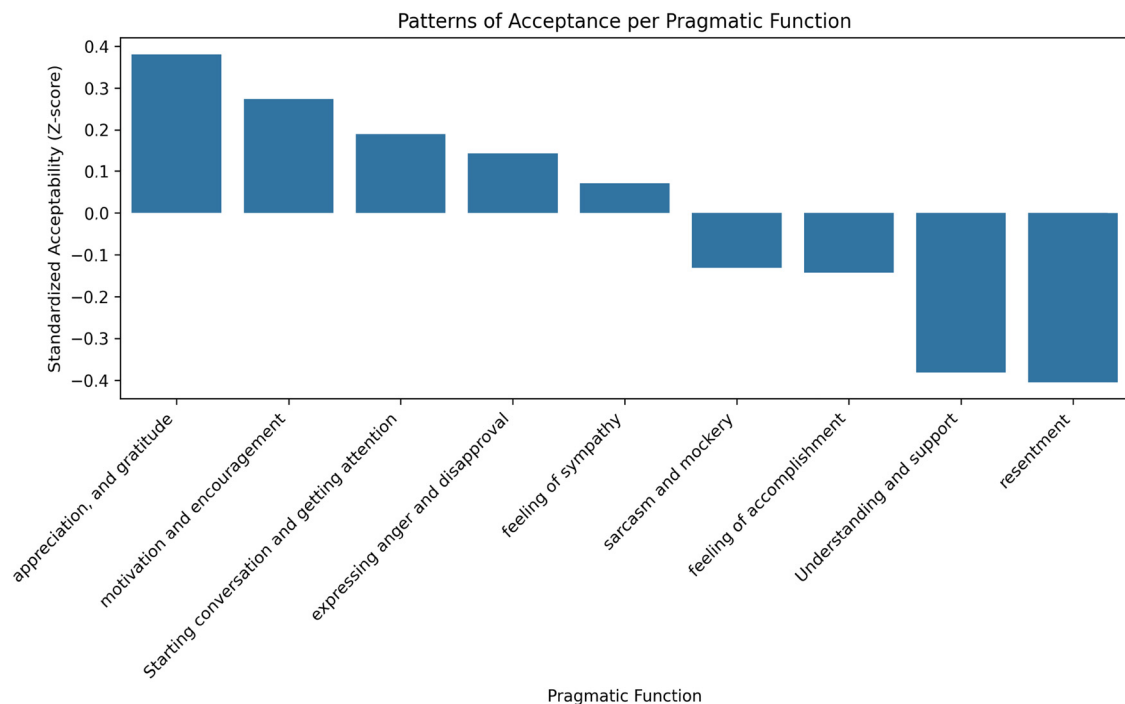


Figure 1: Visualization of standardized acceptance patterns across the pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ using parametric measures.

considers the entire spectrum of responses on the 5-point Likert scale, rather than just the high ratings. By incorporating *t*-tests, effect sizes (Cohen's *d*), and *z*-scores, the analysis determines not only whether ratings significantly differ from the neutral point but also the magnitude and reliability of these differences. While *p*-values indicate whether differences are statistically significant, effect sizes reveal how substantial those differences are. A large Cohen's *d* (e.g., >0.8) suggests that the difference in acceptability between a pragmatic function and the neutral point is not only statistically significant but also meaningful in practical terms. For instance, while both approaches identify gratitude as the most accepted function, the statistical analysis quantifies this acceptance more precisely ($d = 0.918$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating both the strength and statistical reliability of this finding.

Importantly, this statistical approach has significantly improved our understanding of functions that are often considered "less accepted." For example, when looking at the function of "understanding and support," traditional percentage-based analysis may categorize it as having low acceptance. However, statistical testing shows that its ratings do not differ significantly from neutral ($p > 0.05$). This finding indicates that the situation is more complex than simply labeling it as low acceptance; instead, it suggests there may be variability or ambivalence in how speakers perceive it. This highlights the individualistic aspect inherent to pragmatic functions.

4.1.2 Non-Parametric Measures

This section introduces an alternative analysis of the acceptability of the nine pragmatic functions discussed earlier, using a non-parametric method (suited for ordinal data). The analysis involved a Kruskal–Wallis test to evaluate whether the median acceptability ratings differ significantly among the pragmatic functions. The test statistic was found to be 3.611 with a *p*-value around 0.057. Although this *p*-value is marginally above the 0.05 level, it indicates a trend toward differences in how respondents perceive these functions, albeit less decisively than indicated by the parametric analysis. Additionally, an examination of the median-based rankings revealed a slightly altered order compared to the mean-based rankings. For instance, pragmatic functions such as "starting a conversation" and "getting attention" and "appreciation, and gratitude" appear among the highest in acceptability based on their medians. Conversely, functions like "understanding and support" and "resentment" consistently indicate lower acceptability. Despite these differences, the overall ordering remains similar, reinforcing the idea that respondent perceptions are robust even as the analytic approach shifts from parametric to non-parametric metrics.

While the non-parametric analysis via medians and the Kruskal–Wallis test suggests a trend of differences in the acceptability of the pragmatic functions, the statistical significance is marginal ($p \approx 0.057$). This contrasts with the more decisive significance observed in the parametric analysis. However, the overall ranking of functions is largely consistent across both methodologies, confirming that respondents do perceive certain functions as more acceptable than others. The non-parametric approach uses the median to gauge central tendency and may yield different function rankings, especially when there are outliers or skewed distributions. This can result in a situation where the order based on medians diverges from the ranking based on effect size measures like Cohen's *d*. With non-parametric measures, the absence of assumptions about the distribution means that the central tendency (median) and dispersion (as reflected by a computed effect size) might not change in tandem, leading to subtle discrepancies in ranking.

In other words, the median accurately represents the central tendency when dealing with ordinal data like Likert scales. It also directly reflects what most respondents perceive as acceptable, which is especially valuable when the underlying data are not normally distributed. While Cohen's *d* (or any strength-of-effect measure) is crucial for understanding the magnitude of differences between groups, it provides supplementary interpretative context. This value illustrates how strong the differences are, but it isn't inherently a central tendency measure. As such, it might not always coincide with the median's ordering, especially in cases where the distributions vary in spread or skewness. For instance, Cohen's *d* above 0.8 indicates a large effect, meaning the difference in acceptability is not only statistically significant but also pronounced in practical, perceptual terms. This suggests that the use of a particular pragmatic function might have a very noticeable effect on how respondents perceive it (Table 3).

Table 3: Acceptability of the pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʃti:k ʔilʃa:fje/ in SJA using Non-parametric measures parametric measures

Pragmatic function	Mean	Median	Std	<i>p</i> -Value	Cohen_ <i>d</i>	Cohen_ <i>d</i> _rank	Median_rank	Significance
Initiating a conversation and getting attention	4.016949	5	1.467951	0.033957	0.442154	8	2	*
Appreciation, and gratitude	4.288136	5	1.402594	0.02745	0.737656	2	2	*
Motivation and encouragement	4.135593	5	1.332066	0.009248	0.70267	4	2	**
Anger and reprimand	3.949153	4	1.344513	0.036874	0.558511	6	5.5	*
Accomplishment	3.542373	4	1.343208	0.010521	0.733057	3	5.5	*
Feeling of sympathy	3.847458	4	1.471729	0.03247	0.480792	7	5.5	*
Sarcasm and mockery	3.559322	4	1.429627	0.003207	0.755654	1	5.5	**
Understanding and support	3.20339	3	1.310168	0.031864	0.409339	9	8.5	*
Resentment	3.169492	3	1.353827	0.010941	0.698692	5	8.5	*

****p*-Value <0.001 (highly significant), ***p*-value between 0.001 and 0.01 (very significant), **p*-value between 0.01 and 0.05 (significant), ns: *p*-value ≥0.05 (not statistically significant).

4.2 Demographic Factors' Effects on the Acceptability of Pragmatic Functions

This analysis aimed to assess how demographic factors, specifically age and gender, impact the acceptability ratings of the pragmatic functions associated with the phrase /allah jaʃti:k ilʃafje/. The data collection process revealed that the respondents comprise a young college-age cohort of 18–22 years, with older graduate students. Regarding gender, participants self-reported their gender identity, recognizing it as a socially constructed concept influenced by cultural and historical contexts. An uneven distribution of respondents across age cohorts and gender-motivated normalizing and standardizing these demographic variables to ensure a fair comparison.

4.2.1 Age and Gender

An examination of the overall mean ratings revealed that younger respondents (18–22) tend to assign higher acceptability ratings compared to their older counterparts. For instance, the overall mean rating for the younger cohort was approximately 3.88, while that for older respondents was around 3.56. These preliminary findings hint at a systematic effect of age, where older individuals appear more critical in their evaluation of pragmatic functions. To evaluate these primary findings, a further analysis combining the use of non-parametric tests and regression modeling was conducted. First, we compared differences in ratings across age groups, also conducting gender comparisons. Although the *p*-value for age was marginally non-significant ($p \approx 0.0615$), it indicated a trend toward lower acceptability ratings among older respondents. Similarly, no significant differences were observed across genders ($p \approx 0.188$). Then, another statistical measure was carried out, a regression using standardized variables for age and gender. The results confirmed the aforementioned age effect on the acceptability of pragmatic functions. Age illustrated a statistically significant negative influence on acceptability ratings ($p = 0.014$). This implies that an increase in a respondent's age is associated with lower ratings even after adjusting for potential biases from uneven subgroup sizes. Furthermore, the interaction effect between age and gender was not significant, suggesting a consistent age effect across genders.

Data from the sample show that younger respondents rated the “Starting conversation” and “getting attention” functions at an average of 4.17, while older respondents rated it lower, at about 3.79. Similarly, for “Understanding and support,” the younger group rated acceptability at approximately 3.46, compared to 2.83 for the older cohort. These findings highlight the significant impact of age on perceptions of acceptability. The negative correlation between age and ratings may indicate generational or cultural shifts in the interpretation and value placed on these pragmatic functions. The lack of a gender effect likely reflects the culturally bound nature of the phrase /ʔalla:h yaʃti:k ʔilʃa:fje/ and its associated pragmatic functions. In

this context, both males and females interpret and use the phrase similarly, as it conveys widely accepted connotations in the community of speakers of SJA. Additionally, the substantial variability in ratings within each gender group dilutes potential gender-based differences, as individual differences overshadow systematic variations that could otherwise be attributed to gender alone.

The weak effect of demographic factors on the acceptability of the pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ may be considered through the lens of context-dependent stances. Based on Austin's seminal work (Austin, 1962) on speech acts, the acceptability of certain pragmatic functions may be due to our sample's interpretation of the communicative stances. The performative aspect of language explains how expressions like /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ are context-dependent and therefore contextual factors may be more prominent than demographic ones when interpreting certain preferences of some pragmatic factors over others. The importance of contextual nuances in pragmatic function research motivates one final analysis of how variables such as formality, relationship dynamics, and situational context may influence the acceptability of pragmatic function for /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/.

4.2.2 Social Context's Effect on the Acceptability of Pragmatic Functions

This final section explores how three key contextual factors influence the acceptability of the pragmatic functions associated with /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/. The analysis grouped responses by pragmatic function along with distinct specifications for each factor and calculated the mean acceptability ratings within each group. These acceptability rates were then visually represented using heat maps to clearly illustrate the differences across the various settings. Figure 2 illustrates the effects of each contextual factor on the overall rating of pragmatic functions for the religious marker /allah jaʕti:k ilʕafje/.

First, we tested the influence of physical setting on the acceptability of pragmatic functions for /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/. The analysis involved grouping responses by pragmatic function and different physical environments (such as private/home, public/social, sports center/gym). The results indicated that contexts like private/home and public/social consistently received higher acceptability ratings, whereas settings such as sports center/gym or private/intimate were associated with lower ratings. This suggests that the physical environment is an essential factor in determining whether the expression is perceived as culturally and pragmatically appropriate, since some settings may be more conducive to the intended function of the expression than others. Secondly, we investigated the impact of relationship dynamics on acceptability ratings.

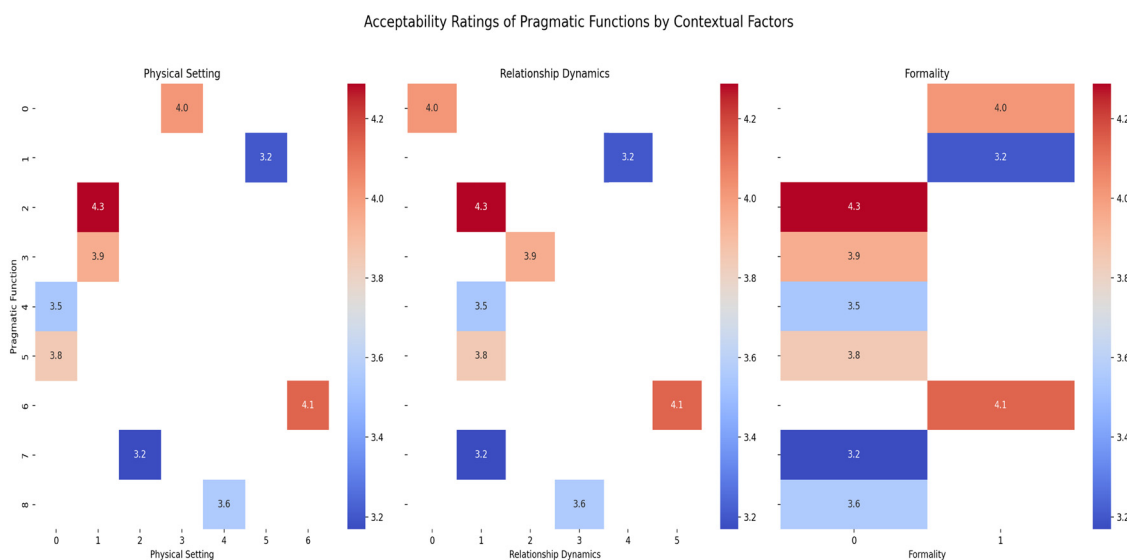


Figure 2: The effects of contextual factors on the acceptability ratings of the pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/.

The analysis grouped data by the type of relationship context (for example, close relationships, professional interactions, or encounters with acquaintances/strangers).

The findings revealed that the expression tends to be more acceptable in contexts involving close or intimate/family relationships, while its acceptability diminishes when used in more formal or distant relationships. Hence, relationship dynamics play a critical role in shaping the pragmatic function of the expression, underscoring the influence of interpersonal closeness on cultural appropriateness. The last section focused on the role of formality in shaping acceptability ratings. The study differentiated between semi-formal and informal contexts by grouping the data accordingly and computing average ratings for each pragmatic function. The results imply that an appropriate level of formality enhances the perception of linguistic expressions and strengthens the cultural resonance of the pragmatic function. Below are observations regarding the effects of the contextual factors on the acceptability rating for the nine established pragmatic functions of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/. These observations highlight how the acceptability of each pragmatic function varies across physical settings, relationship dynamics, and formality levels.

1. Understanding and Support

- Physical Setting: Higher acceptability in private/home and public/social settings, reflecting this function's personal and empathetic nature. Lower ratings in sports centers/gyms and private/intimate settings.
- Relationship Dynamics: Strongly acceptable in close relationships and intimate/family contexts, with lower ratings in professional or acquaintance/stranger contexts.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts yield higher ratings, suggesting that a moderate level of formality enhances the perception of understanding and support.

2. Appreciation and Gratitude

- Physical Setting: High acceptability in private/home and public/social settings, as these are common environments for expressing gratitude. Lower ratings in sports center/gym.
- Relationship Dynamics: Strongly acceptable in close relationships and professional/mentoring contexts, reflecting its universal appropriateness.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts show higher ratings, while informal settings are slightly less favorable.

3. Initiating a Conversation and Getting Attention

- Physical Setting: High ratings in public/social settings, where initiating conversations is common. Lower ratings in private/intimate settings.
- Relationship Dynamics: More acceptable in acquaintance/stranger and peers/friends contexts, as these often involve initiating interactions.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts are preferred, while informal settings show slightly lower ratings.

4. Feeling of Sympathy

- Physical Setting: High acceptability in private/home and private/controlled settings, reflecting the personal nature of sympathy. Lower ratings in sports center/gym.
- Relationship Dynamics: Strongly acceptable in close relationships and intimate/family contexts, with lower ratings in professional contexts.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts yield higher ratings, while informal settings are slightly less favorable.

5. Motivation and Encouragement

- Physical Setting: High ratings in private/home and public/social settings, where encouragement is often expressed. Lower ratings in sports center/gym.
- Relationship Dynamics: Strongly acceptable in close relationships and professional/mentoring contexts, reflecting its motivational nature.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts show higher ratings, while informal settings are slightly less favorable.

6. Resentment

- Physical Setting: Lower ratings across all settings, with slightly higher acceptability in private/intimate settings.
- Relationship Dynamics: More acceptable in close relationships, reflecting the personal nature of expressing resentment. Lower ratings in professional contexts.
- Formality: Informal settings show slightly higher ratings, as resentment is less likely to be expressed in formal contexts.

7. Sarcasm and Mockery

- Physical Setting: Lower ratings across all settings, with slightly higher acceptability in private/intimate settings.
- Relationship Dynamics: More acceptable in close relationships and peers/friends contexts, where sarcasm is more likely to be understood. Lower ratings in professional contexts.
- Formality: Informal settings show slightly higher ratings, as sarcasm is less appropriate in formal contexts.

8. Accomplishment

- Physical Setting: High ratings in private/home and public/social settings, where accomplishments are often shared. Lower ratings in sports center/gym.
- Relationship Dynamics: Strongly acceptable in close relationships and professional/mentoring contexts, reflecting its celebratory nature.
- Formality: Semi-formal contexts yield higher ratings, while informal settings are slightly less favorable.

9. Anger and reprimand

- Physical Setting: Lower ratings across all settings, with slightly higher acceptability in private/intimate settings.
- Relationship Dynamics: More acceptable in close relationships, reflecting the personal nature of expressing anger. Lower ratings in professional contexts.
- Formality: Informal settings show slightly higher ratings, as anger is less likely to be expressed in formal contexts.

5 Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

The current study makes a contribution to theory and practice in studies of pragmatic functions of religious terms by elucidating the complex interplay between language, age, and contextual factors in the use of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/. This work lays a foundation for future investigations to further explore and elaborate upon the dynamic relationships shaping linguistic behavior in diverse cultural settings. This approach enabled a thorough evaluation of practical functions by blending structured surveys with detailed contextual analyses, setting a new benchmark for future research in the field. The study adds to theoretical discussions by showing that religious markers are deeply rooted in cultural, interpretative, and interactional frameworks, thereby broadening our understanding of pragmatics beyond traditional limits.

The investigation highlighted the significant influence of age but not gender on the perception and acceptability of /ʔalla:h yaʕti:k ʔilʕa:fje/ for our sample. Although we used various statistical measures to account for the uneven distribution of the sample's demographic factors, gender persisted as non-statistically significant. On the other hand, contextual influences emerged as a key in determining the acceptability of the pragmatic functions under investigation. The study's detailed examination of various physical settings, relationship dynamics, and levels of formality revealed that the cultural and situational environment significantly affects how the expression is utilized and received. These findings affirm that contextual variables are integral to pragmatic function realization and highlight the necessity for future research to adopt a multifaceted perspective when exploring language in its social context.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce subjective biases, and the sample size and demographic characteristics could constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider employing natural linguistic corpora and larger, more diverse samples to validate these results further. Additionally, incorporating ethnographic methods and real-time interactional analyses could provide a more nuanced understanding of how context mediates the use of religious markers in everyday discourse.

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