

# A Linguistic Investigation of the Purposes, Forms and Meanings of Swearing by God in Arabic: A Case Study of Saudis Indigenous to the Province of Taif, KSA

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**Abstract**—This study surveys the opinions and attitudes of Saudis living in the province of Taif, western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as to the purposes, forms and meanings of swearing by God. A sample of randomly selected Saudis (n=100) participated in the study whose aim was to find out some of the reasons for which Saudis swear by God, how frequently they do swear by God together with the forms of swearing by God they commonly use. A questionnaire of two sections was used to collect data for the study. The opinions of the respondents shed light on how frequently Saudis swear by God, whether swearing by God is a purely religious matter and the extent to which Saudis look upon swearing by God in connection with age and gender.

**Index Terms**—Arabic, Muslim, swearing by god, syntactic structures of the forms of swearing by god.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Saudi society can be regarded as socially and linguistically distinct in a number of ways:

- 1) Arabic is the sole mother tongue of the whole community.
- 2) The community's culture is predominantly based on the Arabic language and Islam.
- 3) Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities in Islam and the cities that are considered as the birthplaces of Islam, are in Saudi Arabia (western region), hence, everything is measured and sanctioned by Islam.
- 4) Islam is the only officially recognised religion of Saudi Arabia.
- 5) All Saudis are born Muslims, therefore, they are nurtured in the fundamental teachings and practices of Islam.

All of the above-mentioned factors have combined to shape the Saudi character both religiously and sociolinguistically. As a community unified by Islam and the Arabic language which was in use even before Islam, the community, to a very large extent, is truly homogeneous. Because of all of that, it can be assumed that when it comes to investigating sociolinguistic behaviours, especially the ones governed by Islam, the findings can be valid for the entire community. The topic this study explores (i.e. swearing by God) has two dimensions: language and religion [1]. This state of affairs based on a unity of both speech-community-wise and religion-wise is what makes investigating the purposes, forms

and meanings of swearing by God, according to Saudis, of particular research interest.

## II. BACKGROUND TO THE TOPIC OF THE STUDY

To begin with, it is essential to clarify some issues with the key word 'swearing' as is used in the title of this study. A quick look at the title of the study makes it clear that the word swearing, throughout the context of the study, is strictly used in the sense of swearing by God as is recommended in Islam and as Muslims know it and practise it in their day-to-day life situations. Therefore, throughout the study, the researcher will adhere to the meaning of the word in the sense of promising to tell the truth, doing something or behaving in a certain way without lying, deceiving or misleading [2].

Etymologically, the word 'swear' means to invoke sacred names. According to Hughes, in its formal sense, the word 'swearing' is defined as: "a ritual of social compliance and obligation: in marriage, in court, for high office and as allegiance to the state" (2006: xv) [3]. This solemn undertaking to do something or oath-taking is usually by or in the name of the Supreme Being (i.e. God). Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary (2003) defines the verb 'swear', in its religious sense, as "to state or promise that you are telling the truth or that you will do something or behave in a particular way"[4]. So, in this regard, swearing by God is a speech act combining a linguistic form (i.e. a communicative functional unit) on the one hand and a solemn appeal to God on the other hand. The purpose of this solemn appeal to God is to create an effect on people as to make them believe in what one is saying or promising.

Basically, in the Arabic language, swearing by/to God is a way of emphasizing the veracity of what one is saying, doing, or writing. The Arabic language has set words, phrases, and/or expressions for swearing by/to God as is shown in the following table:re labels should be legible, approximately 8 to 12 point type.

| Arabic swearing article denoted by letters with their English translation |       |       | Arabic verbs denoting swearing by God with their English equivalents |                  |        |       | Sworn by (i.e. supreme being)          |
|---|-------|-------|--|------------------|--------|-------|--|
| ت   | ب     | و     | قسم  | أقسم             | حلفت   | أحلف  | God, Allah, Creator, God of Kabba, Him |
| [t]   | [b]   | [w]   | sworn  | swear            | swore  | swear |  |
| تالله   | بالله | والله | by Him   | by His Holy name | by God |       |  |

## III. WORDS/EXPRESSIONS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE WORD SWEARING

The following are some words and expressions that can be regarded as synonyms of the word 'swearing' as is used in this

study:

- affirmation of truth
- assure
- commit
- guarantee
- pledge
- promise
- solemn affirmation
- oath
- to take an oath
- to make a solemn vow
- undertake
- vow

(Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary) [5]

Structurally, the act of swearing by God can be said in different forms, among them are the following forms which are all in given in the first person singular pronoun ‘I’:

- I swear
- I vow to
- I swear by
- I swear that
- I swear to
- I swear to it
- To swear on the Quran

#### IV. THE REASONS FOR MUSLIMS TO SWEAR BY GOD

Generally, lying is forbidden in Islam. So, to avoid being doubted, mistrusted or questioned, Muslims resort to swearing by God. By doing so, they feel that enough guarantee is given under God’s name, authority and omnipresence to make others believe what one is saying or doing. Since it is required of all Muslims to hold the name(s) of God in reverence, praise and glorification, therefore, whenever God’s name is invoked in situations in which swearing by God is needed, doubting or disbelieving others is very much minimized.

For as much as swearing by God is sometimes required to make others believe in what one is saying, however, Islam calls on all Muslims to always have confidence in fellow Muslims. In addition, Muslims are also urged not to make it a habit of asking fellow Muslims to always swear by God to be believed for what they are saying or doing. But, if a Muslim chooses to swear by God in order to be believed, then they should not make it a habit of swearing by God for trivialities.

It begs the question that what if others took advantage of this general attitude to readily believing others? Well, in Islam, as was mentioned earlier on, lying is a cardinal sin which is strictly forbidden and for which there are consequences particularly when falsely swearing by God to cover up for what one has lied about. It goes without saying that in Islam, swearing by God is absolutely a religious matter by the very fact that only in God’s name Muslim must swear. Therefore, intentionally swearing falsely in God’s name is a grave sin in Islam. Prophet Muhammad was reported to have said that the major sins are: 1. believing in other gods besides Allah. 2. Being disobedient to one’s parents. 3. Unlawfully killing another person. 4. Making a false oath. From the above-mentioned four grave sins a Muslim must not commit,

it is clear that swearing falsely by God’s name(s) is an act that incurs the wrath of God, something believers would definitely not like to face. Moreover, the act of intentionally making a false oath, which is indeed a grave sin in Islam, cannot be expiated according to some scholars of the principles of Islam.

#### V. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to fulfil the following aims:

To find out the reasons for which Saudis swear by God when speaking to one another.

To specify the forms of swearing by God Saudis generally use.

To determine how frequently Saudis swear by God in their day-to-day conversations.

To find out whether swearing by God is a sort of linguistic mannerism to Saudis rather than a situationally-determined requirement.

#### VI. METHODOLOGY QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the purposes for which Saudis swear by God?
- 2) What are the most popular forms of swearing by God Saudis commonly use when speaking?
- 3) Is swearing by God a purely religious notion to Saudis?
- 4) How frequently do Saudis swear by God in a conversation?
- 5) To what extent is Swearing by God, according to Saudis, age-specific and/or gender-related?

#### VII. PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

A sample of randomly selected 100 Saudi citizens living in the western part of the Kingdom took part in this study which investigated the purposes, forms and meanings of swearing by God according to the fundamental principles of Islam.

TABLE I: PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

| Particip | Questionnaires given | Questionnaires returned | Rate of return |
|----------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 100      | 100                  | 100                     | 100%           |

#### VIII. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A two-section questionnaire was used as the data collection tool for this study. Section (A) of the questionnaire comprised twenty four statements to which respondents indicated their responses by ticking their choice according to Likert’s 5-point scale. In section (B) of the questionnaire respondents were asked to mention some of the forms of swearing by God they commonly use. Since all of the respondents speak Arabic as L1, these forms of swearing by God were given in Arabic and the researcher translated them into English.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher gave it to two senior colleagues who both hold PhD

in English language and translation for expert evaluation and editing. Some of their suggestions were included in the final version of the questionnaire participants responded to. The questionnaire was completed and returned during the months of September and October 2013. All of the distributed copies were collected which makes the return rate 100%.

IX. DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated by the study’s questionnaire was statistically analysed via measures of descriptive statistics and variability to calculate the relationships between respondents’ answers.

TABLE II (A): PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES TO SECTION (A) OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE (STATEMENTS 1-8)

|   | Statement   | SA % | A % | N % | D % | SD % | Mean | STDV  |
|---|---|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| 1 | Swearing by God substantiates what I’m saying.  | 43   | 40  | 9   | 5   | 3    | 37   | 26.26 |
| 2 | As a Muslim, I’m required to swear by God every time I speak.                                       | 45   | 40  | 13  | 2   | 0    | 34.4 | 31.99 |
| 3 | Swearing by God strengthens the truth-value of my message.  | 40   | 40  | 10  | 6   | 4    | 38.8 | 24.23 |
| 4 | Regardless of the value of my message, I usually swear by God as a matter of habit.                 | 35   | 45  | 8   | 10  | 2    | 39.8 | 30.33 |
| 5 | Swearing by God shows how serious I’m when speaking.  | 50   | 40  | 6   | 2   | 2    | 32.2 | 31.13 |
| 6 | Swearing by God helps me to make others sympathize with what I’m talking about.                     | 40   | 46  | 8   | 4   | 2    | 36.4 | 33.06 |
| 7 | Swearing by God enables me to convince others to accept my version of the events I’m talking about. | 48   | 40  | 8   | 3   | 1    | 33.8 | 30.56 |
| 8 | Swearing by God forces others not to question the veracity of my message.                           | 40   | 47  | 9   | 2   | 2    | 35.8 | 35.7  |

SA= strongly agree                      A= agree  
 N= neutral                                  D= disagree  
 SD= strongly disagree                STDV= standard deviation

Table II (A) shows that the vast majority of respondents either strongly agreed (43%) or just agreed (40%) that swearing by God substantiates what they say (M=37, STDV=26.26). As to whether Muslims are required to swear by God every time they speak, 45% of respondents did strongly agree to swear by God every time they speak. In addition, 40% indicated that they agree with the statement. (M= 34.4, STDV=31.99). By comparison, 13% of respondents did neither agree nor disagree that swearing by God is necessary every time they speak.

As to whether swearing by God strengthens the truth-value of the message one tries to convey, the figures in table 2a show that the vast majority of respondents (i.e. 80%) have either strongly agreed or agreed with statement three of the questionnaire. However, only 10% indicated their disagreement with the statement (M=38.8, STDV=24.23). Statement four of the questionnaire asked participants whether they consider swearing by God as a matter of linguistic habit or not. 35% and 45% have strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement (M=39.8, STDV=30.33). 8% of respondents indicated that they were not sure as to whether swearing by God is a linguistic habit or not. On the disagree side of the scale, 12% have opted to disagree that swearing by God is a linguistic habit.

Respondents’ answers to the question whether swearing by God help them to sound serious when speaking have very much kept the trend of respondents’ choice to the agreeing side of the scale. The statistics in table 2a indicate that the vast majority of participants have either strongly agreed (50%) or agreed (40%) with the statement (M=32.2, STDV=31.13).

Only 4% chose to disagree with the statement. Statement six of the questionnaire asked whether swearing by God helps one to make others sympathise with what one is talking about. According to the figures in table 2a, a slim number of the participants (6%) chose to either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (86%) opted to be on strongly agreed-agree side of the scale with statement six of the questionnaire.

In statements seven and eight of the questionnaire participants were asked whether swearing by God enables one to convince others to accept the version of events one is talking about and whether swearing by God provides no room for others to question the veracity of one’s message drew rather similar responses.88% of the respondents chose the strongly agree-agree side with the former, while the latter received 87% agreement with the question.

TABLE II (B): PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES TO SECTION (A) OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE (STATEMENTS 9-16)

|    | Statement   | SA % | A % | N % | D % | SD % | Mean | STDV  |
|----|---|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| 9  | One must swear by God only when talking to people older than oneself.                         | 2    | 3   | 15  | 45  | 35   | 81.6 | 89.16 |
| 10 | One must not swear by God when talking to people of one’s own age.                            | 8    | 10  | 50  | 15  | 17   | 64.6 | 56.84 |
| 11 | Older people swear more than younger people do.   | 22   | 20  | 40  | 12  | 6    | 52   | 39.27 |
| 12 | Generally, men always swear by God more than women do.  | 30   | 30  | 20  | 10  | 10   | 48   | 13.04 |
| 13 | Older people are not usually expected to swear by God when talking to younger people.         | 40   | 45  | 10  | 5   | 0    | 36   | 33.62 |
| 14 | Swearing has to be only in God’s name.  | 60   | 40  | 0   | 0   | 0    | 20   | 28.28 |
| 15 | Depending on the situation, one may sometimes use forms of swearing other than in God’s name. | 0    | 0   | 7   | 48  | 45   | 87.6 | 111.3 |
| 16 | To me, swearing by God is a purely religious matter.  | 50   | 48  | 2   | 0   | 0    | 29.6 | 42.83 |

Table II (B) gives the statistics regarding statements 9-16 of the questionnaire analysis. Statement nine asked whether one must swear by God only when talking to people older than oneself. 80% of the respondents chose to be on the disagree-strongly disagree side of the response scale vis-a-vis the statement. In comparison, only 5% opted to agree with the statement (M=81.6, STDV=89.16). As for statement ten of the questionnaire which inquired about whether one must not swear by God when talking to people of one’s own age, the figures in table 2b show that participants’ opinions are rather evenly distributed around the mid- point of the scale (i.e. neutral/not sure). 50% indicated that they were neutral as to agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. Only 8% chose to agree with the statement compared to 15% who disagreed with it ((M= 64.6, STDV=56.84).

Responses to the question whether older people swear by God more than younger people do elicited responses that show a rather slim majority on the strongly agree-agree side of the scale. While 40% of the participants indicated that they were not sure as to whether older people swear by God more than younger people do. However, 42% of the respondents chose the strongly agree-agree side of the answers’ scale whereas 18% opted to be on the disagree side (M=52, STDV=39.27).

The twelfth statement of the questionnaire asked respondents whether they generally think that men swear by God more than women do. According to table 2b, 60% of the participants were on the strongly agree-agree side. On the disagree side, 20% indicated that they disagree that men always swear by God more than women do. In an ultra

conservative society like the Saudi community, men and women are strictly separated even at the level of the nuclear family. That is why 20% of the sample surveyed indicated that they were not sure whether men swear by God more than women do owing to lack of familiarity with the social practices of the opposite gender.

Are older people expected to swear by God when talking to younger people? The statistics in Table II(b) revealed that the vast majority of respondents (85%) agreed that older people are not usually expected to swear by God when talking to the young. This response might be expected owing to the fact that the teachings of Islam strongly recommend reverence for the old.

Because of the fact that it is part of the teachings of Islam that Muslims are to swear only in/by God's name(s), all of the respondents (100%) agreed with statement fourteen that swearing has to be only in God's name. Conversely, participants' responses to the statement that, depending on the situation, one may sometimes use forms of swearing other than in God's name(s), none of the respondents agreed to using forms of swearing other than in God's name(s) regardless of the situation one is in. Interestingly, 7% pointed out that they were not sure as to whether sometimes, depending on the situation, forms other than in God's name(s) are used in swearing. This may be linked to the suggestion made by 2% of the participants who mentioned the form 'I swear by the prophet' (i.e. prophet Muhammad) as a swearing form they sometimes use (see Table III).

Following the two previous statements of the questionnaire regarding the principles and essence of swearing by God according to Islam, statement sixteen asked whether swearing by God is a purely religious matter. Table II(b) shows that almost all respondents (98%) did choose the strongly agree-agree sides of the questionnaire's scale as to the pure religious nature of swearing by God in Islam (M= 29.6, STDV=42.83).

In the next table (Table II(C)), participants' responses to statements 17-24 of the questionnaire are analysed:

TABLE II(C): PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO SECTION (A) OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE (STATEMENTS 17-24)

|    | Statement   | SA % | A % | N % | D % | SD % | Mean | STDV  |
|----|---|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| 17 | One has to always encourage other people to swear by God as much as they possibly can when speaking       | 25   | 30  | 40  | 3   | 2    | 45.4 | 46.27 |
| 18 | Swearing by God is a communication device by which issues of status, power and authority are overcome.    | 40   | 30  | 20  | 7   | 3    | 40.6 | 19.79 |
| 19 | Without swearing by God, I get the impression that others tend to believe what I'm saying only partially. | 35   | 40  | 15  | 6   | 4    | 40.8 | 23.99 |
| 20 | Swearing by God is determined solely by the circumstances under which one is speaking.                    | 20   | 28  | 40  | 7   | 5    | 49.8 | 41.67 |
| 21 | One must swear by God in situations in which one feels that one's interlocutors doubt what one is saying. | 50   | 44  | 5   | 1   | 0    | 31.4 | 37.27 |
| 22 | Swearing by God helps me to make others do me all sorts of favours.                                       | 40   | 47  | 8   | 4   | 1    | 35.8 | 34.95 |
| 23 | Swearing by God may help insincere people to sound somewhat sincere.                                      | 40   | 34  | 18  | 5   | 3    | 39.4 | 22.38 |
| 24 | One must not swear by God when talking to non-Muslims.  | 40   | 35  | 20  | 4   | 1    | 38.2 | 27.77 |

Are Muslims required to encourage each other to swear by God as much as they possibly can when speaking? The figures in Table II(C) show that 40% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure about that. However, 55% of the participants chose to be on the strongly agree-agree side of the scale that Muslims are to encourage each other to swear by

God as much as they possibly can (M=45.4, STDV=46.27). Respondents' opinions concerning the question whether swearing by God can be regarded as a communicative device that allows Muslims to overcome issues of status, power and authority elicited responses that show strong support for the agree side of the scale. The majority of the participants (70%) opted to agree with the statement that swearing by God is a communication device by which issues of status, power and authority are overcome (M=40.6, STDV=19.79).

Statement nineteen asked respondents whether they think that, without swearing by God, they get the impression that others tend to believe what they are saying only partially. 75% of the participants pointed out that they agree that, without swearing by God, they get the impression that others tend to believe what they are saying only partially. Only 10% of the respondents disagreed with the statement (M=40.8, STDV=23.99). Considering what was said earlier on about the consequences of lying and/or telling lies, which is a cardinal sin in Islam, may be that has influenced respondents' choice of not wanting to be only partially believed (let alone being accused of lying).

Is swearing by God determined solely by the circumstances under which one is speaking? According to the figures in Table II(C), 40% of the participants indicated that they were not sure regarding that question. However, 48% selected the strongly agree-agree points of the scale as to the statement that swearing by God is determined solely by the circumstances under which one is speaking. What do Muslims have to do in situations in which they feel that their interlocutors are doubting what they say? The answer is, they have to swear by God. The percentages in Table II(C) show that 94% of the respondents did agree with the statement that one must swear by God in situations in which one feels that one's interlocutors doubt what one is saying (M=31.4, STDV=37.27). It can be said that this is obviously one of the purposes for which Muslims are required to swear by God.

According to participants' responses to statement number twenty two of the questionnaire which asked whether swearing by God helps one to make others do one all of favours, 87% opted to select the strongly agree-agree side of the scale. On the other hand, only 5% indicated that they disagree with the statement (M= 35.8, STDV=34.95).

The penultimate statement of the questionnaire's section (A) asked participants whether they agree or disagree that swearing by God may help insincere people to sound somewhat sincere. 74% of the respondents did agree with the statement whereas 18% pointed out that they were not sure as to whether swearing by God help insincere people to sound somewhat sincere (M=39.4, STDV=22.38).

In the last statement of the questionnaire respondents were asked whether Muslims have to swear by God when talking to non-Muslims. The majority of the participants (i.e. 75%) chose the strongly agree-agree side that a Muslim must not swear by God when talking to non-Muslims (M=38.2, STDV=27.77). The figures for this statement can be related to respondents' reaction to statement sixteen to which 98% agreed to the purely religious nature of swearing by God in Islam. Hence, swearing by God is allowed only between fellow Muslims.

X. SECTION (B) OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In section (B) of the questionnaire which is used to collect data for this study, respondents (n=100) were asked to mention some of the forms of swearing by God they usually use. The forms of swearing by God participants of the study provided were originally given in Arabic (respondents' native language). The researcher translated these forms of swearing by God into English. The forms were then tabulated and ordered according to their frequency as is shown in Table III below:

TABLE III: RESPONDENTS' PREFERRED FORMS OF SWEARING BY GOD

| Form of swearing  | Frequency | %   |
|---|-----------|-----|
| 1 I swear by God  | 16        | 16% |
| 2 I swear by the great God  | 10        | 10% |
| 3 By God  | 9         | 9%  |
| 4 I swear to tell the truth   | 9         | 9%  |
| 5 I swear by Him the great One  | 8         | 8%  |
| 6 I swear by Him who has no match                                       | 8         | 8%  |
| 7 I swear by the God of the holy Kabba (i.e. the House of God in Mecca) | 8         | 8%  |
| 8 I swear by Him  | 7         | 7%  |
| 9 I swear by Him, my Creator  | 6         | 6%  |
| 10 God my witness, I vow to...  | 6         | 6%  |
| 11 I swear by God's miracles  | 3         | 3%  |
| 12 God is my witness  | 3         | 3%  |
| 13 By Him   | 2         | 2%  |
| 14 I swear by You, my God   | 2         | 2%  |
| 15 I swear by the Prophet   | 2         | 2%  |
| 16 I solemnly take it upon myself to...                                 | 1         | 1%  |

According to the figures in Table III, it can be clearly seen that the form 'I swear by God' is the most frequently used form of swearing by God respondents mentioned (16%). The second most frequently used form of swearing by God participants of the study did mention is 'I swear by the great God' (10%). This followed by the forms 'By God' and 'I swear to tell the truth' (10% for both forms). These three forms of swearing by God respondents mentioned, viz, 'I swear by Him who has no match', 'I swear by the God of the Holy Kabba (i.e. the House of God in Mecca) and 'I swear by Him the great One' each received a frequency of 8% respectively.

A look at Table III which outlines respondents' preferred forms of swearing by God shows that, in addition to the name of God (Arabic Allah) other names were mentioned as well. Among these names synonymous with God are 'Him', 'the great One' and 'Creator'.

Interestingly, the form 'I swear by the Prophet' (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) is the only form among the forms of swearing by God respondents mentioned that does not have the name 'God' or any of its equivalents. That is being said, Prophet Muhammad himself was reported to have said that he who swears must do so only in God's name.

XI. SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES OF THE FORMS OF SWEARING BY GOD

Since the focus of this study is on the purposes, forms and meanings of swearing by God according to Islam, participants of the study (n=100) were asked to suggest some of the forms of swearing by God they themselves use and they are familiar with. Because of the fact that participants' L1 is Arabic, the researcher translated them into English. Table V below gives these forms with their corresponding syntactic structures.

TABLE IV: THE SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ARABIC FORMS OF SWEARING BY GOD AS PROVIDED BY RESPONDENTS

| Form of swearing by God  | Syntactic structure                  |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 I swear by God   | Pro +V+by+N                          |
| 2 I swear by the great God   | Pro+V+by+Det+Adj+N                   |
| 3 By God   | By+N                                 |
| 4 I swear to tell the truth  | Pro+V+toifin+Det+N                   |
| 5 I swear by Him the great One   | Pro+V+by+pro+Det+Adj+pro             |
| 6 I swear by Him who has no match                                      | Pro+V+by+pro+clause                  |
| 7 I swear by the God of the holy Kabba(i.e. the house of God in Mecca) | Pro+V+by+Det+N+of +Det+Adj+N         |
| 8 I swear by Him   | Pro+V+by+pro                         |
| 9 I swear by Him, my Creator   | Pro+V+by+pro+Det+N                   |
| 10 God my witness, I vow to...   | N+Det+N+pro+V+prep                   |
| 11 I swear by God's miracles   | Pro+V+by+N's+N                       |
| 12 God is my witness   | N+Vbe+Det+N                          |
| 13 By Him  | By +pro                              |
| 14 I swear by You, my God  | Pro+V+by+pro+Det+N                   |
| 15 I swear by the Prophet  | Pro+V+by+Det+N                       |
| 16 I solemnly take it upon myself to...                                | Pro+Adv+V+Indifpro+prep+pro +prep... |

Abbreviations

1. Adj. = adjective
2. Adv. = adverb
3. Det. = determiner
4. N = noun
5. N's. = noun with apostrophe
6. Prep. = preposition
7. Pro. = pronoun
8. To infin. = to infinitive
9. V = verb
10. Vbe. = verb to be

In terms of the structural length of these forms of swearing by God in Table IV, it is obvious that some are structurally long; some others are medium in length and two or three of them are rather short. In forms number three and thirteen, there are only two words: the preposition 'by' and the noun 'God' or its equivalent pronoun 'Him'. Form number four (I swear to tell the truth) is unique since it does not directly use the name 'God' or any of its equivalents. However, when a Muslim swears to tell the truth, they certainly invoke the power of God to help them to be seen as telling the truth under His name albeit in an indirect way.

In forms number seven and nine as shown in Table IV (i.e. 'I swear by the God of the Holy Kabba' and 'I swear by Him, my Creator') God is additionally identified as the God of the Holy Kabba (i.e. the House of God in Mecca) in the former and my Creator in the latter. Furthermore, a glance at the forms of swearing by God given in Table IV shows that all of these forms, except forms number four, fifteen and sixteen explicitly use either the name of God or the pronouns 'Him' and/or 'You' which are equivalents to God.

XII. RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Based on the analysis of the data generated by the questionnaire administered to the study's participants (n=100) the researcher would like to highlight the following:

- 1) Generally, swearing by God is a means of substantiating what one is saying especially with an eye to avoid being doubted or accused of lying. That is being said; sometimes swearing by God tends to be a mere speaking habit.
- 2) Across generations and genders, the divide between the old and the young; men and women in relation to swearing by God is not clearly established. As the figures have shown that men are more likely to swear

by God compared to women. However, when it comes to old-young vis-a-vis swearing by God, it is not clear as to whether old people swear by God more than young people do nor is it clear whether one is expected to swear by God only when dealing with older people or people of one's own generation. Conversely, it is generally accepted if the old chose not to swear by God when dealing with the young.

- 3) Since it is deeply ingrained in the Islamic Faith that God is uniquely matchless, therefore, when a Muslim wants to do away with being accused of lying or misleading, they just have to appeal to God by swearing only in His name (i.e. ultimate invocation).
- 4) In Islam, swearing by God is so powerful a means of overcoming social barriers created by status, age, gender or institution. Not only that, the force of swearing by God can even set a Muslim free from accusation in a trial according to Islamic jurisprudence if they swear by God not have committed an illegal or immoral act.
- 5) In essence, swearing by God (cf. Swearing as profanity) [6] is a religiously serious matter in Islam owing to the fact that it is said only in God's name(s). In spite of that, there is always a chance that sometimes people may swear by God dishonestly or insincerely knowing that others will believe them to be true or telling the truth simply because of the power of swearing by God.

### XIII. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the purposes, forms and meanings of swearing by God as Saudis use it in their daily life conversations. The data provided by the study's participants showed that swearing by God is basically considered a

religious matter to which Muslims refer to in order to avoid being accused of lying or hiding the truth. Analysis of the data also indicated that participants generally believed that men tend to swear by God more than women do. However, when it comes to age in relation to swearing by God, there was no consensus as to whether old people swear by God more than young people do. Since older people are very much respected by the community, they are generally not expected to swear by God when they are dealing with younger people.

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