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A Study on Student Failure in Dzongkha Examinations at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School in Thimphu Distri

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Abstract: ***This research aims to explore the reasons behind student failure in the Dzongkha examination for Classes IV-X at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School in the Thimphu District. Despite attempts to improve academic performance, a notable portion of students find it challenging to get passing marks in this important subject. This study adopted a mixed method approach with quantitative data analysis of sixteen Likert scale items, interviews, and three open-ended qualitative survey items with students, and teachers. The primary findings indicate that insufficient language skills, lack of interest, ineffective teaching methods, inadequate learning resources, and inconsistent learning text are the main factors contributing to students' poor performance in this subject.***

The objective of this study is to offer perspectives that can guide educational strategies and approaches to enhance student performance in Dzongkha and cultivate a more encouraging learning atmosphere at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School.

Keywords: Dzongkha, Khasadrapchu, exam, performance, failure

I. INTRODUCTION

Dzongkha is the official language of Bhutan and is one of the nineteen languages spoken in the country. The research paper emphasizes the importance of identifying the specific factors that lead to student failure in Dzongkha exams at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School. (Phuntsho, 2013; Tashi, 2003; van Driem, 1994, 2003) This study aims to investigate the academic performance of students in Dzongkha from classes IV-X at Khasadrapchu MSS, as many students struggle with this subject despite the efforts of their teachers to help them improve.

The anticipated outcomes of this study involve gaining insights into the factors that lead to student failure in Dzongkha exams at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School. The results will be used to suggest improvements in teaching methods, exam preparation techniques, and the overall learning environment. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to enhance student achievement in Dzongkha exams and contribute to the advancement of Dzongkha education at the school. As a result, this study will focus on identifying the root causes of poor performance in Dzongkha exams. Additionally, the researcher will explore potential strategies to enhance student performance in this subject. The study will analyze students from classes IV-X at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School through a thorough examination of data and a mixed-method research approach utilizing survey questionnaires.

II. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The research conducted at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School in Thimphu District focuses on investigating the reasons behind the high failure rates of students in Dzongkha examinations. The study also aims to propose effective solutions to enhance student performance in this subject. The main goals of the study are to find out the factors that lead to student failure in Dzongkha exams and to develop strategies that will promote better learning outcomes and success in Dzongkha. To meet these goals, the research adopted a mixed-method approach. Student survey questionnaires with fifteen Likert scale and three open-ended items are administered to capture their views on learning Dzongkha, while teacher surveys offer valuable insights into instructional methods and the obstacles they encounter. Furthermore, an examination of the past three years' exam papers found the prevalent areas of difficulty for students, thereby highlighting specific areas that require improvement.

The study's results highlight numerous critical concerns. There is a noticeable lack of enthusiasm and drive among students when it comes to Dzongkha, exacerbated by the limited availability of resources and teaching materials for the subject. Additionally, the insufficient learning tools in Dzongkha exacerbate the issue, underscoring the necessity for significant enhancements in these areas.

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Considering these findings, the study proposes the implementation of interactive and captivating teaching approaches to make Dzongkha more engaging for students. It is also essential to offer additional training and assistance to Dzongkha teachers to improve their teaching abilities. Moreover, introducing extracurricular activities related to Dzongkha can cultivate a deeper interest and respect for the language among students, laying the groundwork for further research and interventions to tackle the problem of student underperformance in Dzongkha examination at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The examination of student failures in Dzongkha at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School in Thimphu District is essential for gaining insights into the wider educational difficulties in Bhutan. Dzongkha, the official language of Bhutan, holds a significant position in the nation's cultural and educational landscape (Penjor, 2005). Despite its significance, there has been a concerning pattern of high failure rates in Dzongkha examinations, highlighting the need to investigate the root causes and potential remedies. This review of literature delves into current research and theories on language education, student motivation, teaching approaches, and resource availability to provide a framework for the study at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School. Language instruction plays a crucial role in a student's academic and personal growth. (J.Cummins, 2000) highlights the importance of proficiency in a student's first language for cognitive development and academic achievement. In Bhutan, Dzongkha not only acts as a medium of instruction but also as a significant cultural symbol (J.Dorji, 2005). However, studies indicate that students often face challenges in language subjects, impacting their overall academic performance (Baker, 2006). Recognizing and addressing these challenges in Dzongkha is vital for enhancing educational outcomes in Bhutan (S.Rinchen, 2013). Various factors influence a student's performance in language subjects (W.Littlewood, 1984). The socio-educational model underscores the significance of motivation and attitude in language learning. Students with high motivation and a positive attitude toward the language are more likely to excel (T.Zangmo, 2014). Conversely, research (Z.Dronyei, 2001) suggests that a lack of interest, ineffective teaching methods, and limited exposure to the language can hinder language learning. These factors are particularly pertinent in the context of Dzongkha education in Bhutan. Effective teaching methods play a vital role in language acquisition (J.Sachs, 2004). While traditional techniques like rote learning and grammar translation have faced criticism for their limited engagement, modern approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT) focus on interaction and real-life communication to improve student engagement and learning outcomes (J.Thinley &Maxwell, 2013). Investigating the effectiveness of these methodologies in teaching Dzongkha at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School is essential. The curriculum and availability of teaching resources have a significant impact on student performance in language subjects. A well-designed and engaging curriculum can create a positive learning environment, while a lack of resources like textbooks, audio-visual aids, and language labs can impede effective teaching and learning (Maxwell, 2005). Research emphasizes the importance of providing adequate resources to support language instruction. Therefore, evaluating the curriculum and resources for Dzongkha at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School is crucial for identifying any potential gaps.

It is essential for language teachers to have the necessary skills and to continuously develop professionally to effectively teach. Research has shown that well-trained teachers who engage in ongoing professional development are better able to implement innovative teaching methods and meet the needs of their students (Brown, 2007). In Bhutan, it is important to evaluate the training and development opportunities available for Dzongkha teachers and how these impact their teaching practices and student outcomes. Competence and continuous professional development are crucial for effective language instruction (J.Dorji, 2005). Studies indicate that well-prepared teachers who participate in ongoing professional development are more capable of implementing innovative teaching strategies and addressing student needs (J.Sachs, 2004). In Bhutan, it is necessary to assess the training and development opportunities for Dzongkha teachers and their influence on teaching practices and student outcomes (S.Rinchen, 2013).

Parental and community involvement play a significant role in influencing student performance in language subjects. The framework proposed by (Epstein, 2001) emphasizes the positive impact of family engagement on student learning and achievement. In Bhutan, the support of parents and the community in Dzongkha education is essential, especially in rural areas with limited resources (J.Dorji, 2005). Examining the level of parental and community involvement at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School can provide valuable insights into its effects on student outcomes. Comparative studies in language education offer valuable perspectives on the challenges and best practices in various settings. Research (W.Littlewood, 1984) on language teaching in East Asia underscores the importance of adapting teaching methods to local cultural and educational contexts.

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Similarly, studies on indigenous language education in countries like New Zealand (Maori) and the United States (Navajo) offer lessons on the preservation and promotion of native languages through education (Kinga, 2009). These comparisons can guide strategies for enhancing Dzongkha education in Bhutan.

The literature highlights various factors that play a role in student failure in language exams, such as motivation, teaching methods, resources, and parental support (Rodgers, 2001). This study focuses on analyzing these factors within the Dzongkha learning outcomes at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School to find out the challenges and suggest solutions. The findings of this research will not only enhance Dzongkha education but also support the preservation and promotion of Bhutan's national language and cultural heritage.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aimed to address the following questions:

1) What are the key factors leading to student's poor performance in Dzongkha examinations at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School?
2) In what ways do the existing teaching methodologies and curriculum for Dzongkha affect student outcomes at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School?
3) What are students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning Dzongkha, and how do these perceptions impact their performance in exams.
4) What approaches can be adopted to enhance Dzongkha teaching and boost student success in Dzongkha examinations at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School?

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

The study on students' poor performance in Dzongkha examinations at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School adopted a mixed-methods approach. It is a design that employs both quantitative and qualitative methods in gathering the data in a particular study (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative data was collected through the creation of Google Forms, which featured structured survey questionnaires. These links were disseminated within class groups. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen items with a Likert scale and three open-ended questions with each item addressing factors that affect learning in the Dzongkha subject of classes IV-X. The qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews and three open-ended questions. The data collected through this method were triangulated and analyzed.

B. *Population and Sample*

The target population of this study was classes IV-X students of the Khasadrapchu Middle School under Thimphu District. The created fifteen Likert scale items and three open-ended questionnaires in Google sheet link were shared in their telegram class group.

A sample population total of 380 was gathered from students, comprising 204 males and 176 females from classes IV to X, ensuring a balanced representation focusing on study habits, teaching methodologies, available resources, and an analysis of previous Dzongkha examination papers to identify common difficulties faced by students. The sample of the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 population and sample size

Enrollment in local colleges, 2005

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	204	46.2	46.2	60.4
Male	176	39.6	39.6	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

C. *Data Collection Tools*

The paper adopted a survey questionnaire that consisted of fifteen Likert scale items and three open-ended questions to gather more information and appropriately measure the findings of the study based on the Likert scale, compromising each item relating to the student's poor performance in the Dzongkha examination.

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Moreover, for the literature part, a wide range of materials, books, reports, journal articles, online resources, newspaper articles, and magazines were used in this study.

D. Data Analysis

The Likert scale of sixteen items was then analyzed in Excel 2016 using descriptive statistics frequency, mean, and standard deviation, to determine the factors affecting the Dzongkha examination results of the students of Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School, which the overall interpretation of the data was taken in merged within the five common themes as attitude towards Dzongkha learning, Teaching methods and classroom environment, examination and performance, personal study habits and support and three open-ended questionnaires, which is shown with the Likert scale analyzed in table 2 below.

Table 2 Overall interpretation of data

Enrollment in local colleges, 2005

		Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
N	Valid	16	16	16	16	16
Mean		171.375	28.438	93.813	71.000	15.375
Std. Deviation		30.1460	31.3347	40.2330	48.7155	11.0204

The content analysis technique was used to analyze the qualitative data obtained from interviews and responses to three open-ended questions (A Guide to Action Research: Enhancing Professional Practice of Teachers in Bhutan, 2023). Content analysis is described as a research method for subjectively interpreting text data through a systematic process of classification involving coding and identifying themes or patterns (Creswell, 2009).

VI. FINDINGS

Table 3 gives details of the responses (N) regarding attitudes toward learning Dzongkha, including the lowest and highest scores as well as the means and standard deviations for each categorized response option: Agree, Disagree, Neutral, Strongly Agree, and Strongly Disagree. An analysis carried out through descriptive statistics has indicated that the category of "Agree" has a most substantial mean score (179.75), showing that respondents who agree with survey statements generally have a positive attitude toward learning Dzongkha. On the other hand, the "Neutral" category had the highest score variability, with a standard deviation of 39.25, indicating a broad base of respondents among those who held no opinion. The mean score of the “Strongly Agree” group was 40.50, which was lower than that of the “Agree” group. This shows that their attitude towards learning Dzongkha is not directly proportional to a higher level of agreement.

The mean scores of the "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" categories are 25.25 and 12.25, respectively, the lowest. This might indicate a possible relationship between disagreement and negative attitudes toward learning Dzongkha. These findings provide a great deal of information about the relationship between different response patterns and an overall sense of where a respondent holds attitudes toward learning Dzongkha.

Table 3 Attitudes Towards Learning Dzongkha

1. I enjoy learning Dzongkha.
2. Dzongkha is an important subject for my future.
3. I feel motivated to study Dzongkha.
4. I understand the Dzongkha lessons taught in class.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agree	4	159.0	185.0	171.750	11.5289
Disagree	4	4.0	24.0	14.500	8.3467

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Neutral	4	28.0	99.0	74.500	32.0884
Strongly Agree	4	65.0	159.0	103.750	43.9498
Strongly Disagree	4	3.0	30.0	15.500	12.6623
Valid N (listwise)	4				

In Table 4, the data on teaching methods and classroom environment reveal that those participants who agreed have the highest mean score (193.5), which indicates a relatively positive perception overall. These also expressed agreeable sentiments, however, there were some differences in their perceptions, and therefore their scores averaged at 90.25 which is high. The scores within these groups are rather elevated and grouped around one point, suggesting complete agreement among participants. The lowest mean scores (14.5 and 10.75) were recorded for the "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" groups respectively indicating disappointment with teaching methods and classroom environment. The mid-range mean score of the "Neutral" group was 71.0 with a wide range of responses implying diversity of opinions among them. Overall, despite most respondents' views of this topic being affirmative, the proportion of both neutral and negative views cannot be ignored.

Table 4 Teaching Methods and Classroom Environment

The teaching methods used in Dzongkha classes are effective.
My Dzongkha teacher explains the concepts clearly.
There is a supportive learning environment in Dzongkha classes
I get enough practice and assignments to improve my Dzongkha skills.

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Agree	4	176.0	206.0	193.500	14.1774
Disagree	4	8.0	30.0	14.500	10.5040
Neutral	4	28.0	91.0	71.000	29.0172
Strongly Agree	4	53.0	164.0	90.250	50.3016
Strongly Disagree	4	3.0	30.0	10.750	12.8938
Valid N (listwise)	4				

According to Table 5, the information concerning examination and performance reveals that respondents who agreed with the statements had the highest mean score (179.75), implying that they think all types of exams are conducted correctly. The "Neutral" group had a middle mean score (122.25), which means there were mixed performance levels and a large spread of scores as shown by the high standard deviation (39.25). Surprisingly, the "Strongly Agree" group attained a lower mean score (40.50) than the "Agree" group, which may imply that strong agreement does not always match their belief about examination and performance. Conversely, these participants scored the lowest average marks in "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree," which attests to their poor performance during these tests with high standard deviations in both of these groups (14.82 & 10.24) indicating variation among those who performed poorly with some candidates scoring too low in this regard according to overall, while those participants who were neutral or agreed tended to perform better and on average those who disagreed did worse.

Table 5 Student Performance and Assessment

The Dzongkha examination papers are fair and cover the syllabus well.
I am confident about performing well in Dzongkha exams.
The difficulty level of Dzongkha examinations is appropriate.
I have access to sufficient resources and study materials for Dzongkha.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agree	4	153.0	210.0	179.750	26.7628

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Disagree	4	12.0	46.0	25.250	14.8183
Neutral	4	75.0	171.0	122.250	39.2545
Strongly Agree	4	19.0	60.0	40.500	17.0196
Strongly Disagree	4	3.0	23.0	12.250	10.2429
Valid N (listwise)	4				

Table 6. Data on personal study habits and support indicates various levels of efficacy across different response groups. Those who agreed with the statements had the highest mean score (140.5), in general, benefiting from their study habits and support. However, those who agreed present relatively high variability in these habits' effectiveness, as shown by a quite high standard deviation (38.42). The group that was "Neutral" had an intermediate mean score (107.5) regarding a wide range of responses, as signified by the standard deviation (46.49), with some finding their study habits and support to be very useful while to others it was more of a mixed experience.

In contrast, the 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' groups had lower mean scores, of., 59.5 and 23.0, respectively, indicating that their study habits and support were least effective. The standard deviation for the 'Disagree' group was the highest (51.88), which means there was considerable variability in some participants performing better than others despite overall lower effectiveness. Surprisingly, the mean score for the 'Strongly Agree' group was only 49.5 (lower than anticipated) with a standard deviation of 57.74: even among those strongly believing in their study habits and support, levels of effectualness varied widely. Data analysis has indicated that while favorable perceptions of study habits and support tend to go along with better outcomes, there is a lot of variability within each group.

Table 6 Personal study habits and support

I receive support from my family to study Dzongkha.
I participate in extra classes or tutoring for Dzongkha.
I use additional resources such as books or online materials to study Dzongkha.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agree	4	84.0	170.0	140.500	38.4231
Disagree	4	6.0	130.0	59.500	51.8813
Neutral	4	42.0	151.0	107.500	46.4937
Strongly Agree	4	17.0	136.0	49.500	57.7379
Strongly Disagree	4	15.0	32.0	23.000	7.5277
Valid N (listwise)	4				

The study at Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School identified key factors contributing to student failure in Dzongkha exams, primarily the lack of interest and motivation among students, who perceive Dzongkha as less important than other subjects. This attitude leads to lower participation and effort, resulting in poor performance. The study also highlighted a shortage of teaching resources, such as inconsistent textbooks and modern teaching tools, which hampers teachers' ability to deliver effective lessons. Additionally, the lack of professional development opportunities for Dzongkha teachers limits their ability to implement modern teaching strategies, further impacting student engagement and learning. Parents' active support for their children's learning Dzongkha has a positive impact on their performance. Additionally, there is the influence of peers where negative attitudes towards Dzongkha as a difficult language can undermine motivation and positive attitudes may instead motivate learners to be more interested in learning.

Nevertheless, it was believed that the school should create more interesting activities to engage students more fully in the Dzongkha and provide more extracurricular activities. With this, updated consistent textbooks and instructional materials should issued by the school. Therefore, improvement could also entail student participation in Dzongkha-based activities aimed at enhancing interest as well as performance levels.

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VII. CONCLUSION

In this finding, the paper brings out the very important variables of student motivation and interest in academic achievement. The lack of interest and motivation of students towards learning Dzongkha is a major problem. To address this problem, it is very important to make Dzongkha more interesting and relevant to the daily lives of students. This might include introducing more practical and activity-based methods of teaching that would lighten the desire among students as well as showcase applicability. The dearth of teaching aids revealed by the study is alarming. Consistent textbooks, supplement reading materials, as well as modern method equipment must be made available to teachers so that they can deliver quality lessons in Dzongkha that will help increase comprehension and enhance involvement with students.

It is rather important to redesign the present format of the Dzongkha examinations, the majority of which are based on grammar and literature only. Hence, the conduction of more balanced assessments which includes tests that will assess the real-life spoken language skills and general communicative competence may help in providing a more accurate measure of the overall fluency level of students in Dzongkha. This adjustment may help to remedy the problem of high failure rates because the differences in students' aptitudes are considered. Students' achievement demonstrably corresponds to the influence of socioeconomic factors. Measures that encourage beneficiaries from such backgrounds, for instance providing them with coaches, books, and timetabled after-school study sessions can go a long way in helping these students. Equity of the learner's resources is crucial to support a better performance during Dzongkha examinations.

Parents must be involved in their children's Dzongkha learning and there is a need for schools to actively involve the parents through parent training and information sharing as well as tapping on peer pressure from the students for accelerated achievement. Some parts of the curriculum like extra co-curricular activities such as literary performance and Dzongkha Club or any other club can improve the students' interest in learning Dzongkha. From this study, it could be concluded that Dzongkha's performance could be enhanced by motivating and instilling interest in students and improving activity-based learning and parental support and guidance.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Dzongkha teachers of this school need to conduct a thorough evaluation of the Dzongkha curriculum, focusing on the integration of more interactive and practical elements that resonate with students' interests and daily experiences. To enhance student motivation and engagement, the Dzongkha teachers need to promote teaching techniques such as project-based learning, collaborative activities, and multimedia resources. Additionally, investing in ongoing professional development, including workshops on contemporary teaching methods and technology integration, is essential. The acquisition of updated teaching resources, such as consistent textbooks and visiting online resources, along with establishing a dedicated resource center for Dzongkha learning, will further support both teacher's and students' learning interests.

Moreover, revising the Dzongkha examination framework is crucial for better assessing students' language proficiency through diverse evaluation methods, including oral presentations and group discussions. Promoting parental involvement in their children's Dzongkha learning through orientation sessions, newsletters, and cultural activities will strengthen the home-school connection. Extracurricular activities related to Dzongkha, such as language clubs and literary festivals, should be integrated into the school calendar to enrich students' learning experiences. Additionally, identifying students at risk of failing and providing targeted support through timetabled remedial classes and peer tutoring will help boost their confidence and performance. Regular assessment of the implemented strategies, with feedback from the school, will ensure continuous improvement in Dzongkha learning, fostering a supportive environment that empowers students academically.

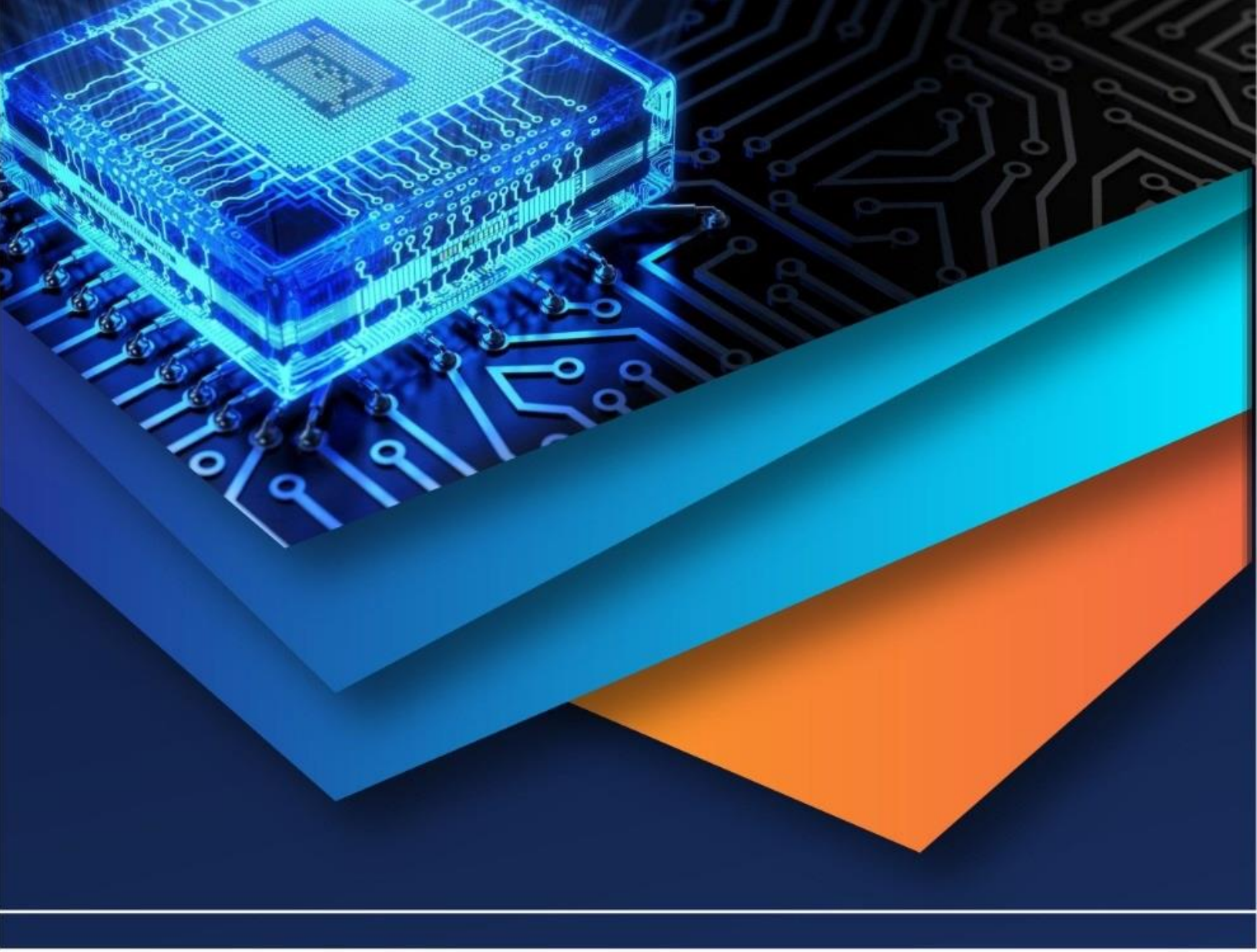
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