UNREVEALING LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INQUIRY INTO THE DECLINE OF SARAIKI

Sana Mahfooz
National University of Modern Languages
Email: sanamehfooz702@gmail.com
Dr. Aftab Akram
Lecturer, Department of English, NUML University (Faisalabad Campus)
Email: aakram@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

This study investigates the possible endangerment of the Saraiki language in Pakistan. A language with a rich literary and cultural heritage that dates back thousands of year It is a striking example of a potentially endangered language, despite its numerical strength, it is often considered the fourth largest language of Pakistan by population (Eberhard et al; 2024).Saraiki is the major language of the area which is spoken by approximately 20 million (Shackle, 2001). This study employed the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality which was first introduced by Bourhis, Glies, and Taylor in 1970 to highlight the factors that determine language maintenance and shift. There are three important factors that determines the vitality of the language, Demographic factors, and institutional support and status factors. Using the perspective of the language endangerment Saraiki is classified by UNESCO in its "Atlas of the world's languages in danger" as a "Definitely Endangered" language(Moseley,2010).This article explores the sociolinguistic, economic and cultural elements behind Saraiki's decline through a quantitative survey from three major Saraiki-speaking districts: Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. The findings reveal that Saraiki, despite being spoken by over 20 million people, is experiencing significant attrition among Genz due to the dominance of Urdu and English in education, urbanization, and socioeconomic pressures. Quantitative data (n = 300) shows the minority of participants under age 30 rarely use Saraiki in formal or educational settings, while the majority of the respondents identify Urdu as their preferred language of communication in urban contexts. The study concludes that language endangerment in Pakistan reflects broader UNESCO (2010), nearly half of the world's 7,000 languages are at risk of extinction by the end of the twenty-first century. Pakistan, one of Asia's most linguistically diverse nations, hosts over 70 languages across multiple families, including Indo-Aryan, Iranian, Dravidian, and isolated linguistic groups (Rahman, 2002). Yet this diversity is overshadowed by the dominance of Urdu the antisocial inequalities and recommends educational, policy and community based revitalization strategies to sustain linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Language endangerment, Saraiki, Pakistan, mixed methods, language Attrition, multilingualism and cultural identity.

1. Introduction Nestled in the southern Punjab and bordering regions of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan lies the Saraiki speaking heartland often referred to as the Saraiki wasaib. The language known for its soft, melodic tones and ancient literary traditions, is an Indo-Aryan language with roots tracing back to the Indus valley civilization. However beneath this vibrant cultural surface lies a stark reality; Saraiki is undergoing a rapid process of language shift. Language endangerment is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a sociocultural crisis. Each language embodies unique worldviews, oral traditions, and modes of expression. When a language vanishes, an entire worldview disappears with it (Crystal, 2000). According to UNESCO (2010),

nearly half of theworld's 7,000 languages are at risk of extinction by the end of the twenty-first century .Pakistan, one of Asia's most linguistically diverse nations, hosts over 70 languages across multiple families, including Indo-Aryan, Iranian, Dravidian, and isolated linguistic groups (Rahman, 2002). Yet this diversity is overshadowed by the dominance of Urdu the national language and English the elite and administrative language. Regional languages such as Saraiki, Balochi, Brahui, and Shina are marginalized, facing reduced intergenerational transmission and minimal institutional support (Rahman, 2010).New generations are increasingly educated in and socialized into Urdu and English leading to a decline in native proficiency. The Saraiki language, primarily spoken in southern Punjab, symbolizes both cultural richness and linguistic vulnerability. This study focuses on Saraiki to examine the broader issue of language endangerment in Pakistan. The study based on the existence of the Ethnolinguistic vitality of the Saraiki language. There are three important factors that determines the vitality of language .demographic factors, institutional support and status factors .Saraiki ethnic group based on distinct identity, demography and language can be explored in terms of ethnolinguistic vitality. The researcher has opted for a quantitative method of research, which seeks accurate measurement through survey's research, which includes questionnaires. The responses of the respondents were analyzed through statistical analysis to develop various questions related to the study. The research explores how socioeconomic factors, educational policies, and cultural attitudes contribute to Saraiki attrition. Quantitative data from 300 respondents across Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur provide a comprehensive understanding of the patterns and perceptions underlying language shift.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic and cultural losses of Saraiki language?
2. What is the impact of these losses in the endangerment of Saraiki language?
3. What specific steps could the Pakistani government and national league policy could take to Grant Saraiki its official status in its region?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To identify and describe the linguistic and cultural losses of Saraiki language.
2. To analyze the role of these losses in the endangerment of Saraiki language.
3. To describe the specific steps could the Pakistani government and national league policy Take to grant Saraiki its official status in its region.

1.3 Significance of the study this study examines the endangerment of the Saraiki language in Pakistan through quantitative method. It provides new, district-level data from Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur to show how education, urbanization, and social prestige are causing language decline. The research is important for linguistic scholarship, policy development, and cultural preservation, as it highlights how neglect of regional languages deepens inequality and erodes heritage. It also emphasizes that protecting Saraiki is not only about language but also about social justice, cultural identity, and inclusion in Pakistan's multilingual society.

1.4 Statement of the problem Previous studies have shown that there is inadequate research on education and literacy of the Saraiki language Most of the studies that exist like those by Rahman and Asif (2010) mainly focus on how people feel about Saraiki or how it shapes their identity. But there is very little research have been done .The most well-known grammar book on Saraiki is still

by Shackle (1976), which was written nearly fifty years ago. This shows how little progress has been made in updating or expanding research on the language. On top of that, there is still a serious shortage of educational materials for teaching Saraiki in schools. As Shackle (1976, 2014) and other scholars have pointed out, the government has not developed official textbooks or learning resources for primary education, even though Saraiki has a deep and beautiful literary heritage.

2.Literature Review

Language endangerment is a process by which a language loses its functional domains, speaker base, or intergenerational transmission (Fishman, 1991). Crystal (2000) describes language death as "a loss of inherited wisdom," emphasizing that linguistic decline often accompanies cultural impoverishment. UNESCO (2010) identifies key factors determining endangerment levels intergenerational transmission, number of speakers, language use in domains, and community attitudes. Language endangerment has long been recognized as a critical sociolinguistic and cultural issue, with scholars emphasizing its implications for intellectual diversity and cultural continuity. Crystal (2000) explains that when a language dies, a unique worldview, collective memory, and system of knowledge also disappear. Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational disruption (GIDS) Scale remains foundational, emphasizing the central role of intergenerational transmission as the main determinant of linguistic vitality. The UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (2010) provides global criteria such as domains of use, speaker number, and transmission rates for assessing degrees of endangerment. Similar frameworks underscore that linguistic diversity loss leads not only to cultural erosion but also to diminished cognitive and ecological knowledge (Harrison, 2007; Bialystok, 2011). These global perspectives frame Pakistan's situation within the broader paradigm of endangered languages worldwide (UNESCO, 2016).

Globally, dominant languages expand through education, media, and economic globalization, displacing indigenous tongues (Harrison, 2007). Fishman (1991) proposed the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) to measure stages of language vitality. Language revitalization, therefore, must address both linguistic competence and sociopolitical empowerment. The study of language attrition involves both cognitive and sociocultural dimensions. Neurolinguistics theories such as Paradis's (2004) Activated Threshold Hypothesis posit that language loss occurs when lexical or grammatical representations become less activated due to disuse, leading to gradual decay in accessibility. From a systems perspective, Bot, Lowie, and Versos (2007) conceptualize language competence as a dynamic system shaped by multiple, interacting factors—such as exposure, motivation, and social networks resulting in non-linear patterns of change. These theories are directly relevant to Pakistan, where regional language use fluctuates across generations and social classes. Complementary frameworks proposed by Seliger and Vago (1991) and Kopek et al. (2007) further link individual attrition to community-level language shift, arguing that societal prestige and institutional support crucially determine linguistic survival. Pakistan's multilingual landscape is shaped by colonial legacies, national identity politics, and uneven modernization (Rahman, 1996). Urdu was promoted as a unifying national language post-1947, while English retained bureaucratic and elite prestige (Mahboob, 2009). Consequently, local languages were confined to informal domains. Research. Rahman (2010) identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity, while regional languages

such as Saraiki, Punjabi, and Balochi are confined to domestic or informal settings. Consequently, parents often prioritize dominant languages for upward mobility (Riaz, Gill, & Shahbaz, 2021). These patterns reflect Fishman's (1991) intergenerational disruption model, as younger generations increasingly abandon heritage languages in favor of Urdu or English for social advancement. Indicates that this policy framework marginalized regional languages. Rahman (2010) argues that the linguistic hierarchy English at the top, Urdu in the middle, and regional languages at the bottom reproduces socioeconomic inequality. In Punjab, even Punjabi lacks official recognition in education, while Saraiki is often regarded as a dialect rather than a distinct language (Shackle, 2007).

Language policy and educational structures strongly influence language maintenance and shift. In multilingual nations like Pakistan, English and Urdu dominate institutional domains, while regional languages remain marginalized (Rahman, 1996; Rahman, 2010). This hierarchical arrangement perpetuates social inequality by equating linguistic capital with economic mobility (Mahboob, 2009). Coleman (2010) and UNESCO (2016) emphasize that children taught in their mother tongue achieve higher literacy and cognitive outcomes, whereas policies excluding indigenous languages accelerate linguistic discontinuity. Rahman (2010) identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity, while regional languages such as Saraiki, Punjabi, and Balochi are confined to domestic or informal settings. Consequently, parents often prioritize dominant languages for upward mobility (Riaz, Gill, & Shahbaz, 2021). These patterns reflect Fishman's (1991) intergenerational disruption model, as younger generations increasingly abandon heritage languages in favor of Urdu or English for social advancement.

Empirical research across South Asia documents similar dynamics of language shift driven by modernization, migration, and economic restructuring. Kandler, Unger, and Steele (2010) developed mathematical models illustrating how bilingualism under unequal prestige conditions accelerates minority language loss. In Pakistan, sociolinguistic surveys reveal declining use of Punjabi, Sindhi, and Saraiki, particularly among urban youth (Nazir, Aftab, & Saeed, 2013; Rabbani & Lohat, 2020). Rahman (1996, 2010) traces this trajectory to colonial and postcolonial language planning that institutionalized Urdu and English as the languages of governance and education. Shackle's (1977, 2007) ethnolinguistic analyses of Saraiki nationalism further demonstrate that despite Saraiki's historical and literary richness, its sociopolitical recognition remains weak. Together, these studies indicate that linguistic marginalization in Pakistan is not merely a communicative issue but a manifestation of broader socio-political power asymmetries.

Saraiki presents a particularly revealing case of partial vitality coupled with attrition pressures. Although spoken by millions across South Punjab, its institutional absence has led to erosion in younger generations' fluency and vocabulary (Riaz et al., 2021). The findings from Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan show a significant decline in Saraiki language use among educated youth, who increasingly prefer Urdu or English in education, media, and social interaction. Comparative evidence from Sindhi and Gujarati communities in Karachi supports this trend, showing that urbanization and interethnic contact accelerate code-switching and eventual shift (Abbasi & Zaki, 2019; David, Ali, & Baloch, 2017). Rahman (2010) further observes that the prestige gap between Urdu and regional tongues drives "linguistic insecurity," discouraging youth from using heritage

languages publicly. Hence, even where speaker numbers remain high, functional reduction and generational discontinuity signal clear endangerment (Fishman, 1991; Shackle, 2007).

Linguistic documentation has emerged as a vital strategy for endangered languages worldwide (Himmelmann, 2006). Successful revitalization movements such as those of Welsh, Maori, and Hebrew demonstrate that political support, education policy, and community activism can reverse decline (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991). For Pakistan, scholars propose mother-tongue-based education, regional media promotion, and institutional recognition as key interventions (Coleman, 2010; Rahman, 2010). The methodological shift toward mixed-methods and participatory frameworks aligns with these goals. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) recommend combining quantitative indicators (e.g., speaker numbers, intergenerational use) with qualitative insights (e.g., identity, attitudes, and cultural values) to capture the multifaceted nature of language endangerment. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework provides a flexible tool for interpreting interview data, enabling researchers to connect statistical trends with lived experiences of linguistic change. This methodological pluralism is particularly suited to Pakistan's heterogeneous linguistic landscape, where both quantitative and narrative evidence are needed to inform policy.

3. Research methodology

Research methodology is a systematic process of conducting research. Specific methods and techniques are used to collect and analyze data to answer research questions .Dornyei (2009) believes that a research paradigm serve as a guide and a beacon for the researchers in their pursuit of knowledge because the study aims tells the types of the data needed for the research. Basically there are three methods to conduct a research which includes quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed method which includes both qualitative and quantitative. A well designed research methodology includes a clear research design, sampling strategy data collection methods and data analysis procedures.

The researcher has opted for a quantitative method of research, which seeks accurate measurement through survey's research, which includes questionnaires. The responses of the respondents were analyzed through statistical analysis to develop various questions related to the study. Focuses on the numerical data and statistical analysis. And the study provides valuable insights. A closed ended questionnaire was employed as the data collection method .the questionnaire was assigned win such a way that the research respondents were supposed to give the answers to the questions which were asked.

3.1 Research design Quantitative research focuses on numerical data and measurable variables. It uses surveys, experiments, and statistical tools to find patterns, relationships, or percentages. For example, a researcher might use a questionnaire to calculate how many people speak Saraiki daily. In contrast, qualitative research which explores meanings, experiences, and opinions. It uses interviews, focus groups, or observations to understand people's attitudes and feelings in depth.

The study focused on three Saraiki-speaking districts: Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. These regions were selected due to their demographic diversity, urban-rural variation, and differing degrees of exposure to Urdu and English media. A total of 300 participants were surveyed: 100 from each district. Participants included males and females aged 18–60, representing both urban and rural populations.
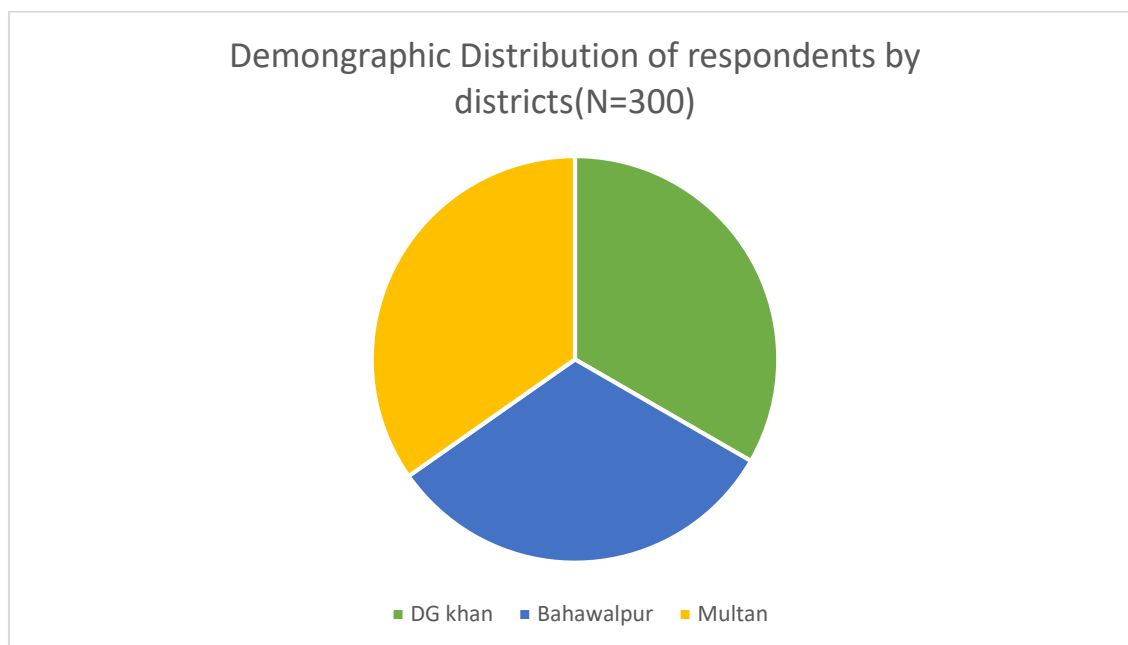
Figure 1.

4. Theoretical Frame work The concept of the Ethno Linguistic Vitality was first introduced by Bourhis, Glies, and Taylor in 1970 to highlight the factors that determine language maintenance and shift. The frame work explains the strength or vitality of a language community that is its ability to maintain and reproduce its language across generations. When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language.

There are three important factors that determines the vitality of the language, Demographic factors, and institutional support and status factors. Saraiki ethnic group based on the distinct identity demography and language can be explored in terms of ethnolinguistic vitality. The researcher analyze how factors such as, migration, low prestige or lack of institutional support (education, social media, media, administration) contributes to the weakening of Saraiki's vitality in Pakistan.

5. Data Analysis
This study employed the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality which was first introduced by Bourhis, Glies, and Taylor in 1970 to highlight the factors that determine language maintenance and shift. There are three important factors that determines the vitality of the language, Demographic factors, and institutional support and status factors. Fishman (1972) believes that the visible vitality of the language is affected by the attitudes of the speakers of that language. A **quantitative survey data** is used to analyze language endangerment among Saraiki speakers in southern Punjab specifically in Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, and Bahawalpur. Following Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) model, the quantitative phase provided descriptive and inferential insights on language use frequency, domain shift, and intergenerational transmission.

The quantitative data were collected from **300 respondents** across the three districts (100 per district), stratified by age and education level. Results were analyzed using frequency distributions and correlation tests to examine associations between language choice and demographic factors.

Frequency distribution of language use by district (N = 300)

District	Saraiki as home language	Urdu as home language	English use in education
Dera Ghazi Khan	83	15	2
Multan	65	28	7
Bahawalpur	58	35	7

Figure2.

As shown in Table 1, Saraiki remains the dominant household language in **Dera Ghazi Khan**, but there is a significant shift toward **Urdu** in **Multan** and **Bahawalpur**, particularly among younger and educated respondents. This pattern aligns with Rahman's (2010) assertion that language hierarchies in Pakistan are reinforced by educational and occupational structures prioritizing Urdu and English. The correlation between education level and decreased Saraiki use was statistically significant. A closed ended questionnaire was employed as the data collection method, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that the research respondents were supposed to give the answers to the questions which were asked .the data was collected from the respondents systematically by using SPSS the data was analyzed in a simple percentage frequency model.

5.1 Quantitative Findings

In this section, the data collected from the questionnaire is analyzed. Later, this analysis is used to derive results pertaining to the research topic.

Q1. How fluent are you in speaking Saraiki?
Pie chart (Q1.)

Percentage

- Good at listening and speaking ,not fluent.
- fluent in saraiki
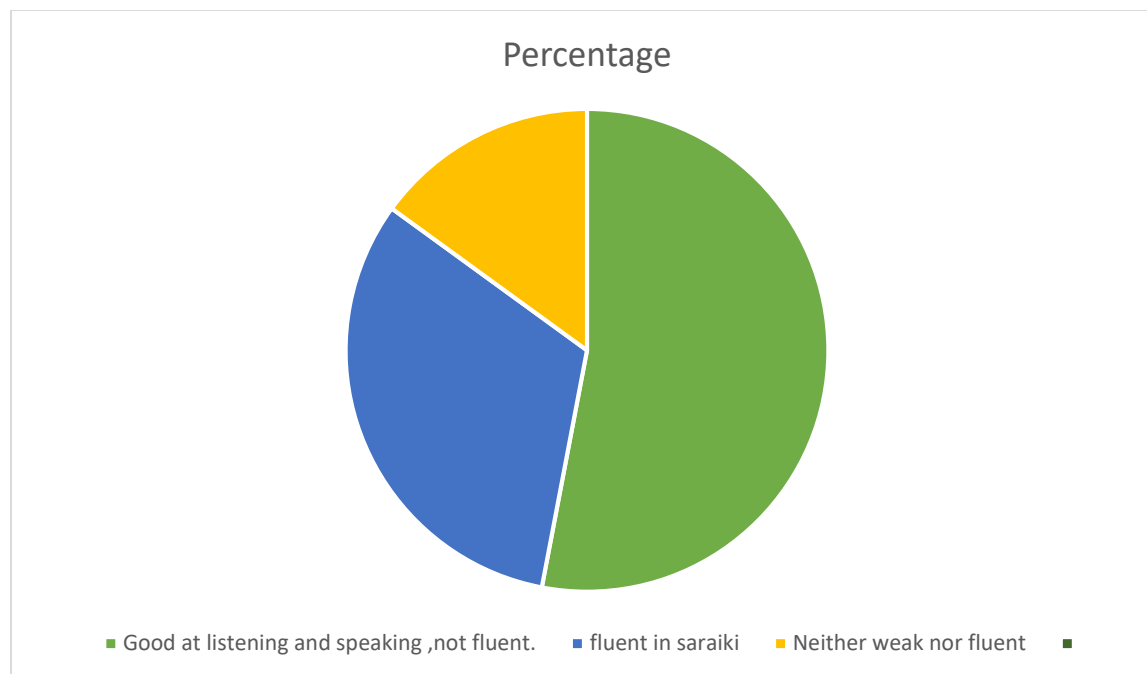- Neither weak nor fluent
-

Figure3.

Globally, dominant languages expand through education, and economic globalization, displacing indigenous tongues (Harrison, 2007). When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language. When the participants were asked in the questionnaire about their fluency in siraiki.majority declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing while the minority admitted that they were weak in speaking along with reading and writing. This may be due to the lesser availability of reading material in Saraiki as well as fewer opportunities to express themselves in Saraiki in their surroundings.

Q 2. Is Saraiki prioritized by parents for their children?
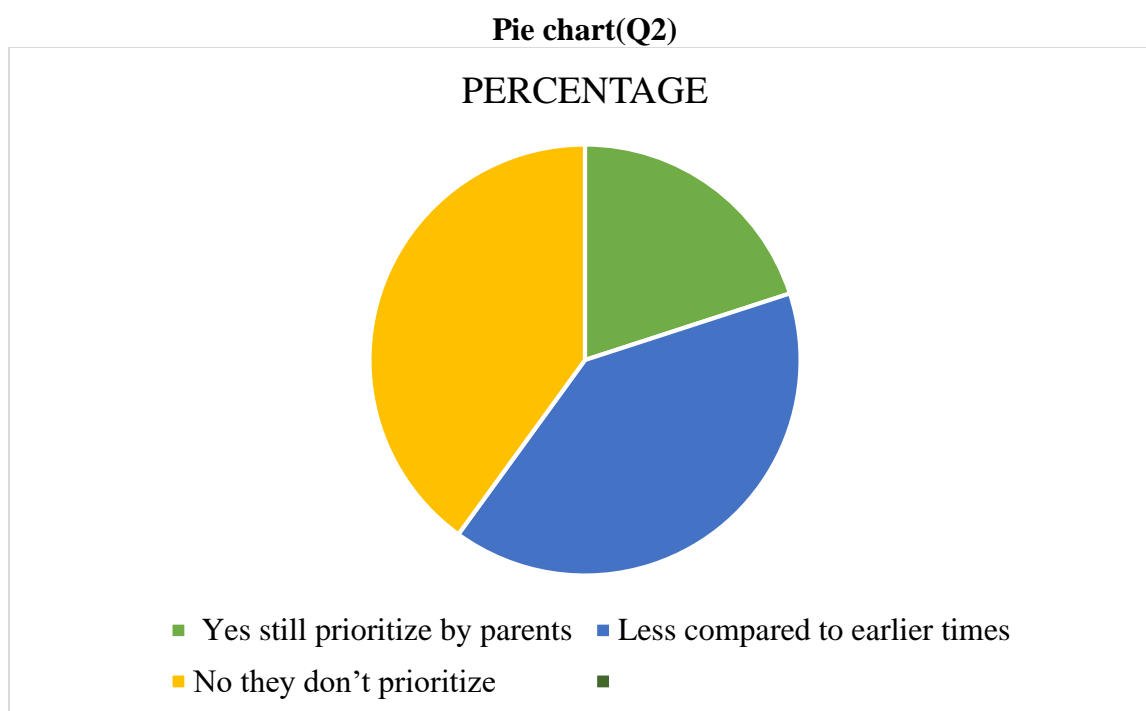
Pie chart(Q2)

Figure4.

When the participants were asked whether they think Saraiki is still prioritized by parents for their children, the majority agreed that they do not prioritize, while the minority agreed that parent's do so less compared to earlier times. As parents often prioritize dominant languages for upward mobility (Riaz, Gill, Shahbaz, 2021). On the other hand, fewer were of the view that they still transfer it to their children. These patterns reflects Fisshmen's, (1991). Intergenerational disruption model, as younger generations increasingly abandons h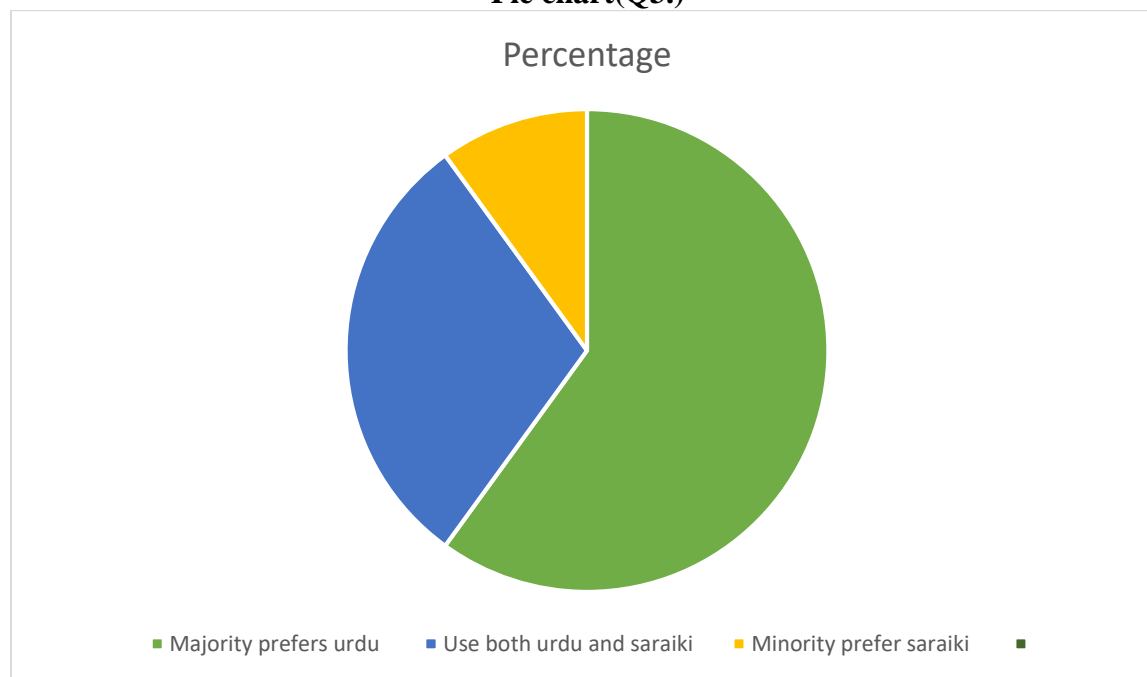eritage language in favor of Urdu and English for social advancement. When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language.

Q3.what language do you prefer in the market place with friends or on social media？
Pie chart(Q3.)

Figure5.

When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language. The participants were asked which language they mostly use at home, college, and marketplace and Figure clearly shows the decreasing use of Saraiki. Rahman (2010) identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity, while regional languages such as Saraiki, Punjabi, and Balochi are confined to domestic or informal settings. Minority of participants use Saraiki. The reason may be that Urdu is preferred in educational institutes. Similarly, when participants were asked which language they mostly prefer while using social media, while watching TV, or while reading they showed a far lesser tendency towards Saraiki as shown in Figure 5.

Q4.Do you believe Saraiki has prestige in our society?
Pie chart (Q4.)

Percentage

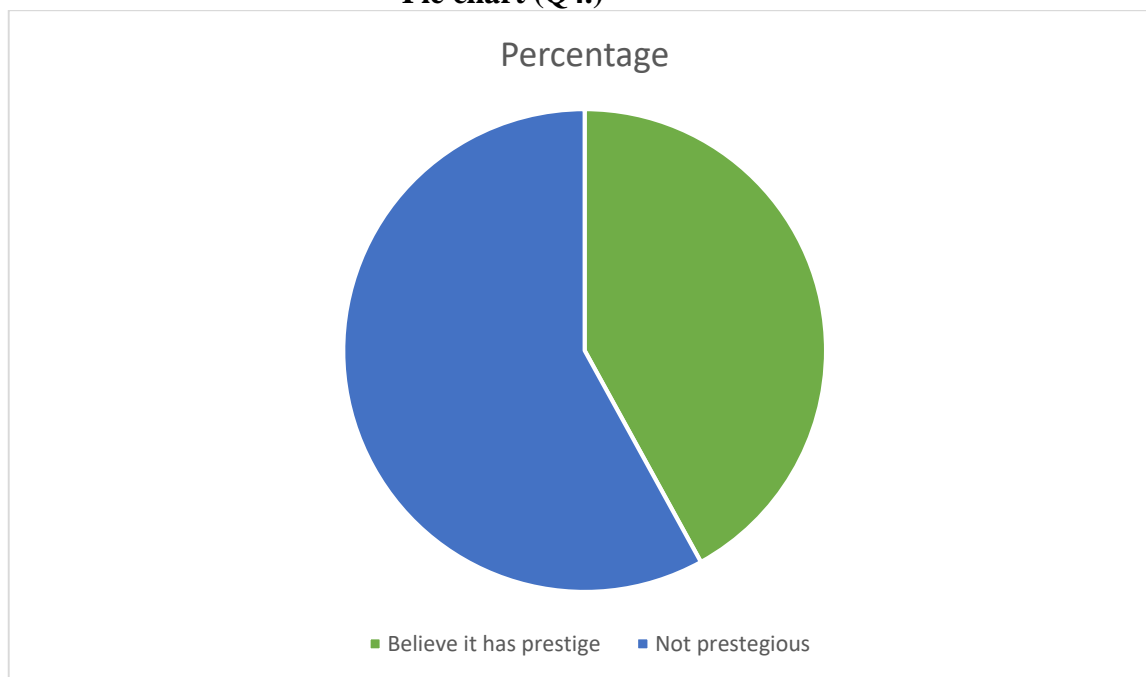■ Believe it has prestige   ■ Not prestegious

Figure6.

The responses of participants regarding the prestige and representation of the Saraiki language. When they were asked whether Saraiki is a prestigious language, the majority of them declared that it was not. Rahman (2010) further observes that the prestige gap between Urdu and regional tongues drives "linguistic insecurity," discouraging youth from using heritage languages publicly. Hence, even where speaker numbers remain high, functional reduction and generational discontinuity signal clear endangerment (Fishman, 1991; Shackle, 2007).Respondent's frequently linked Urdu and English with education, status and nobility One Multan respondent noted, "If I speak Saraiki in class, people think I am backward." Such attitudes reflects Mahboob's (2009)

Q5. Which language do you use in school/college and is Saraiki adequately represented in education and literature?

Pie chart (Q5.)

Percentage

- Usage in school or college
- Unadequately represented in education and literature
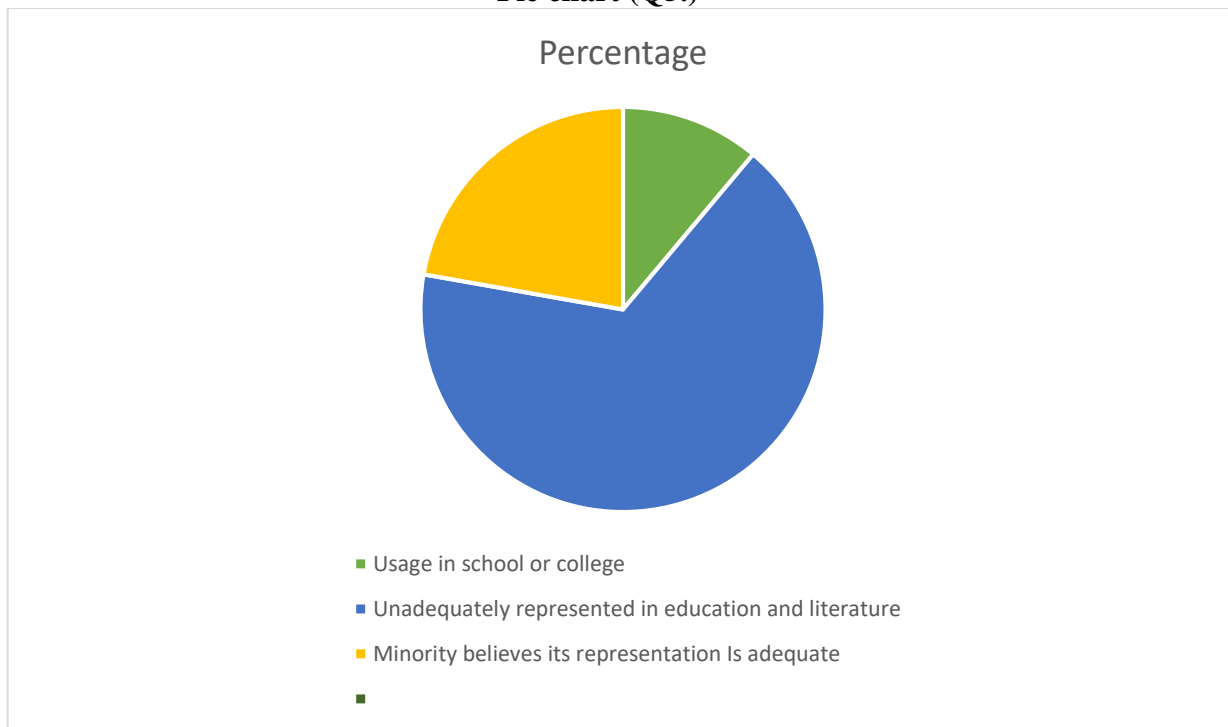- Minority believes its representation Is adequate

Figure7.

Majority of the respondent's believed in mirroring the institutional marginalization noted by Rahman (2010) Moreover, when they were asked whether Saraiki is adequately represented in education and literature, the majority observed that it was Respondents across all districts criticized the absence of Saraiki in school curricula , while fewer replied in affirmative. When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language Saraiki presents a particularly revealing case of partial vitality coupled with attrition pressures. Although spoken by millions across South Punjab, its institutional absence has led to erosion in younger generations' fluency and vocabulary (Riaz et al., 2021).

Q 6.How proficient are you in Saraiki language?
Pie chart(Q6.)

Percentage

■ Proficient in Saraiki   ■ Non proficient in Saraiki   ■ Good at speaking but weak in writing and reading
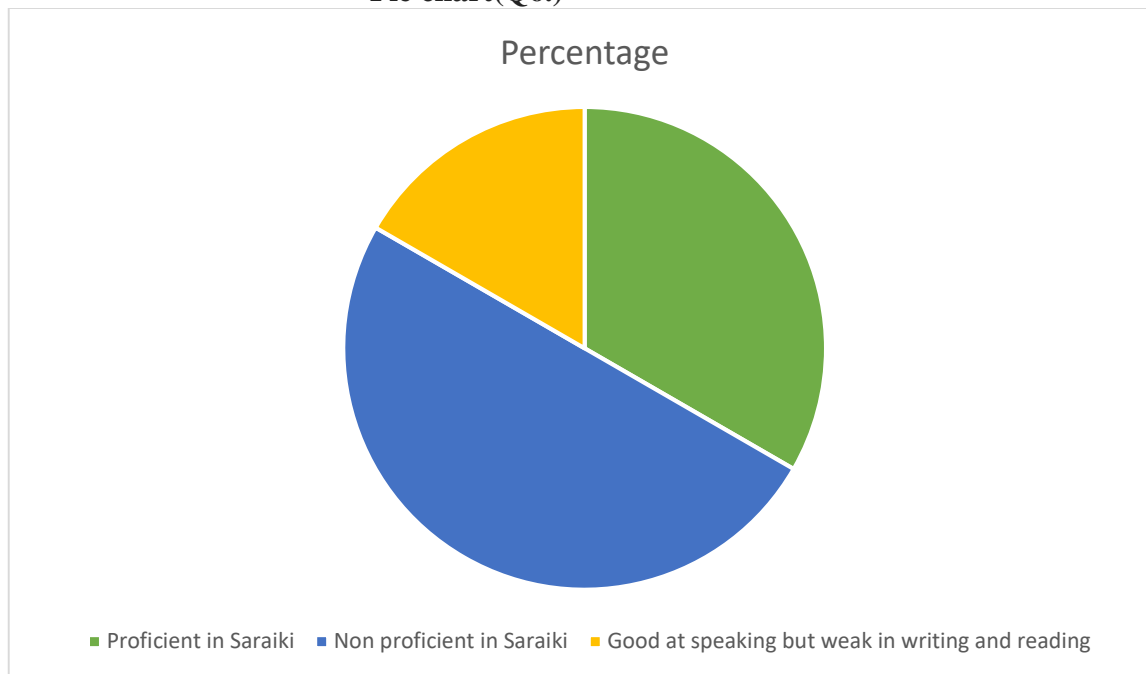
Figure8.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are equally important for the sustainability of a language, as each skill reinforces the others, contributing to the overall proficiency of the language. Rahman (2010) argues that the linguistic hierarchy English at the top, Urdu in the middle, and regional languages at the bottom reproduces socioeconomic inequality. In Punjab, even Punjabi lacks official recognition in education, while Saraiki is often regarded as a dialect rather than a distinct language (Shackle, 2007).When the participants were asked in the questionnaire about their proficiency in the Saraiki language, the majority declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing while fewer admitted that they were weak in speaking along with reading and writing. This may be due to the lesser availability of reading material in Saraiki as well as fewer opportunities to express themselves in Saraiki in the writings and speaking skills of participants. Overall, these results show that the majority of the participants are not proficient in the Saraiki language.

Q7.Do you switch to other languages like Urdu and English while communicating in the Saraiki language?
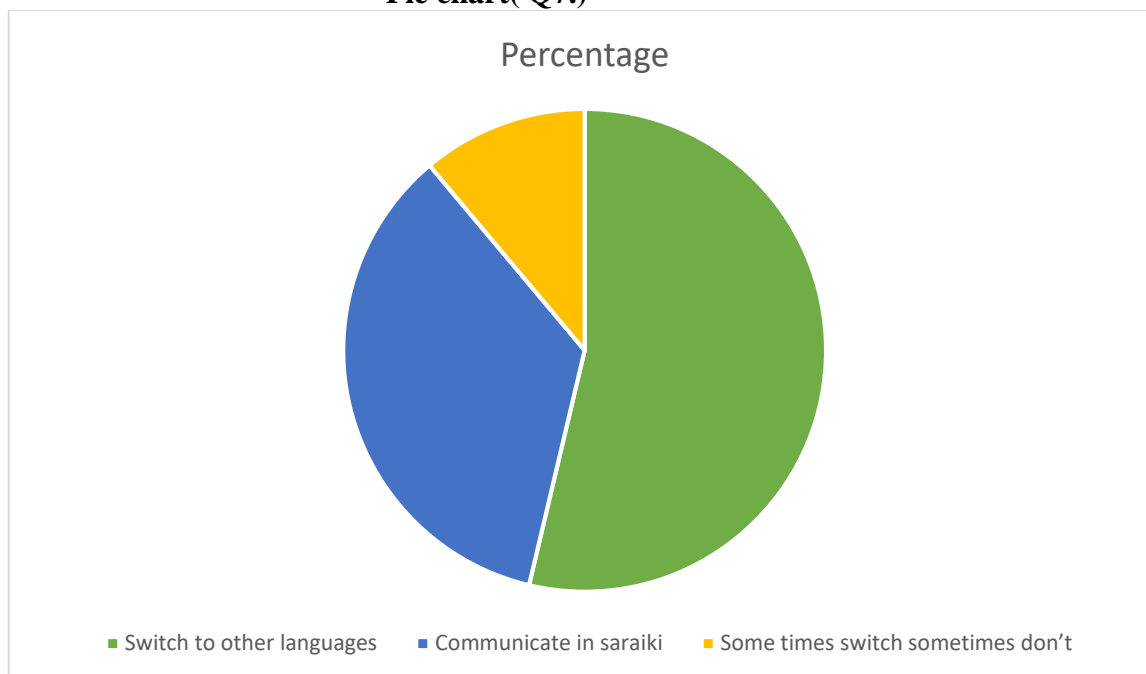
Pie chart(Q7.)

Figure9.

When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).Participants when they were asked about the switching of language the majority declared that they do so while in formal situations, depicting the requirement of educational institutions or offices to use other languages such as English or Urdu. Similarly, the minority switch to other languages in order to express themselves more effectively and creatively, perhaps due to unfamiliarity with, or absence of, a broader range of vocabulary and expression, in the Saraiki language. Pakistan's multilingual landscape is shaped by colonial legacies, national identity politics, and uneven modernization (Rahman, 1996). Urdu was promoted as a unifying national language post-1947, while English retained bureaucratic and elite prestige (Mahboob, 2009). Consequently, local languages were confined to informal domains.

Q8.what is your opinion about the socio economic value of Saraiki language nowadays?
Pie chart(Q8.)

Percentage

- Majority prefer English
- Minority believes Urdu and English
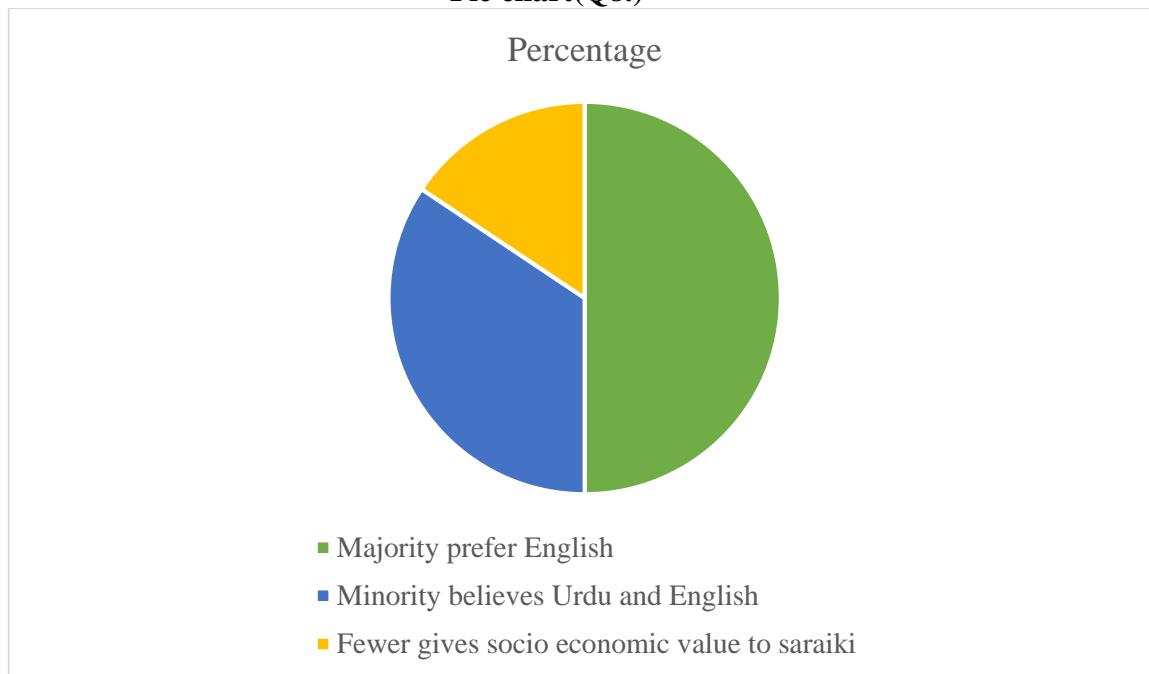- Fewer gives socio economic value to saraiki

Figure10.

When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977).A group of high vitality gets an advantage of maintaining its language Participants were asked about the socio economic value of Saraiki now a days that would help them gain social value. The results showed a notable shift, with the majority of them opting for English, Rahman,(2010).identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity .fewer choosing Urdu and the minority selecting Saraiki. Additionally they would prefer to master English. Moreover, the majority of them were of the view that English could help them land a decent job, while just fewer went for Saraiki. It might be because of the fact that test interviews conducted for a decent job demand proficiency in the English language.

Q9.What do you think Saraiki is used less than before?
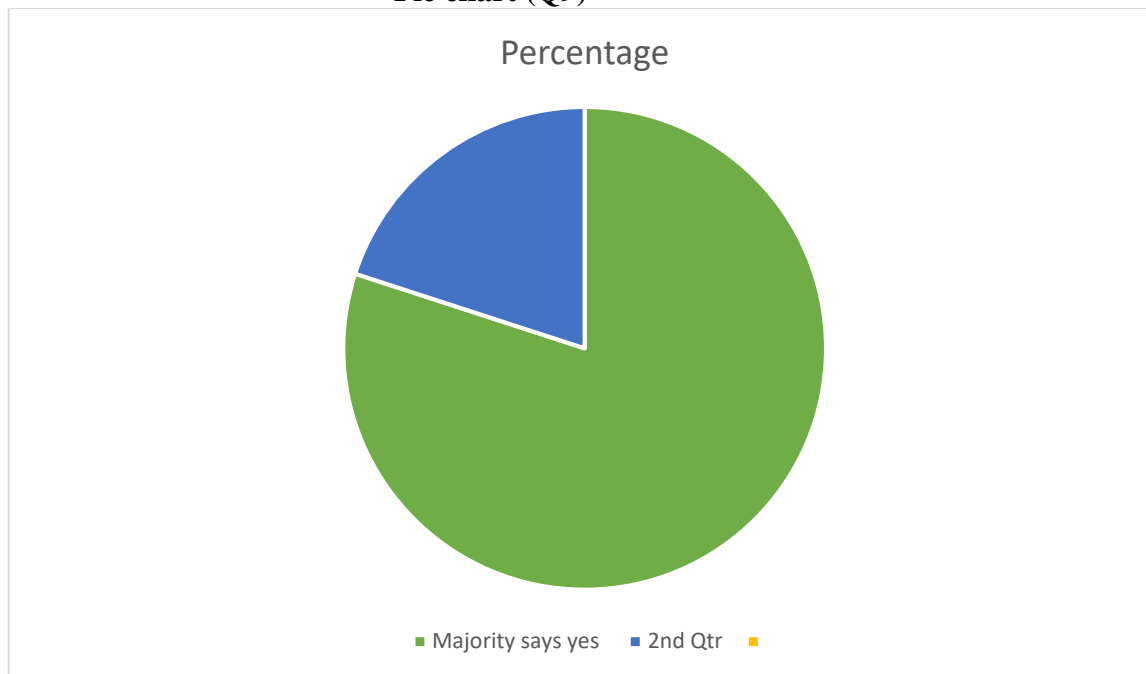**Pie chart (Q9)**

Figure11.

The majority of the participants believe that the language is facing challenges in usage, particularly among the younger generation (Gen Z) and urban populations. Migration of Saraiki speakers to urban centers and abroad, which leads to weaker intergenerational transmission of the language. Along with the factors we have discussed above .including limited institutional support and lack of formal education in Saraiki, reducing its daily use. In Pakistan, sociolinguistic surveys reveal declining use of Punjabi, Sindhi, and Saraiki, particularly among urban youth (Nazir, Aftab, & Saeed, 2013; Rabbani & Lohat, 2020). Rahman (1996, 2010) traces this trajectory to colonial and postcolonial language planning that institutionalized Urdu and English as the languages of governance and education. Shackle's (1977, 2007) ethnolinguistic analyses of Saraiki nationalism further demonstrate that despite Saraiki's historical and literary richness, its socio political recognition remains weak

Q10.Have you ever been discouraged from speaking Saraiki?
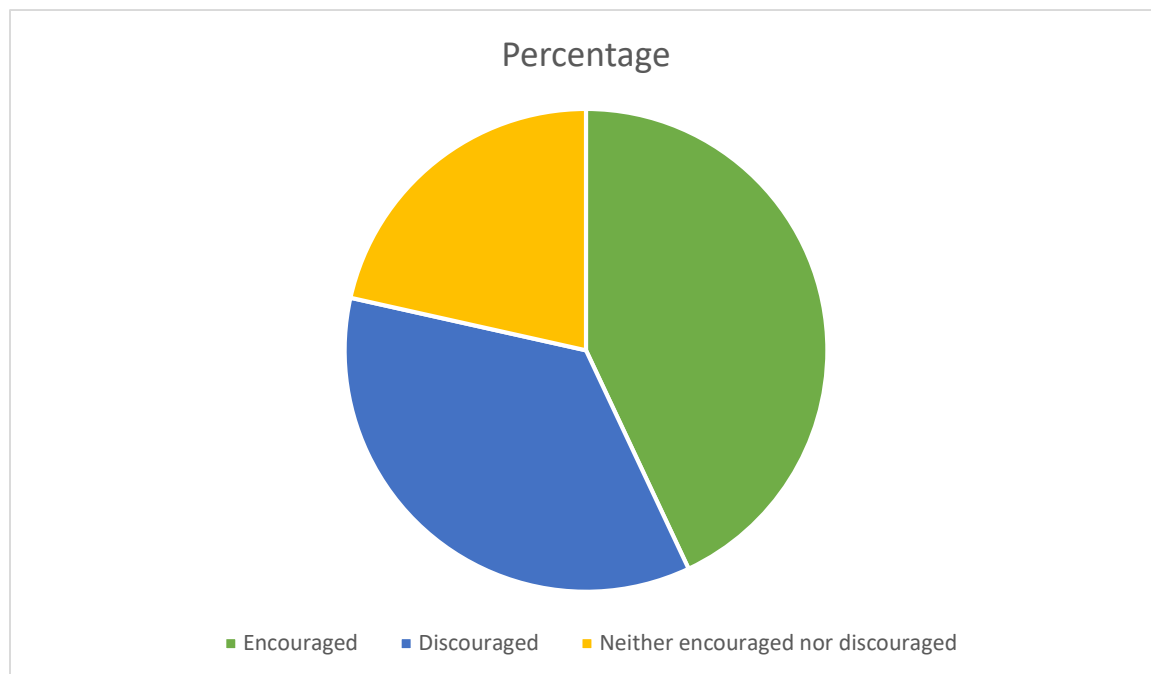**Pie chart(Q10.)**

Figure12.

The majority of the participants replied yes to this question and declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing because of the discouragement. When the Ethnolinguistic identity of a group flourishes, its members likely to use and maintain their ethnic language (Glies 1977). While a minority admitted that they were encouraged to speak Saraiki in their homes as well as in their surroundings and fewer believed they were never forced nor discouraged to speak Saraiki. . Rahman (2010) identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity, while regional languages such as Saraiki, Punjabi, and Balochi are confined to domestic or informal settings. Consequently, parents often prioritize dominant languages for upward mobility (Riaz, Gill, & Shahbaz, 2021). These patterns reflect Fishman's (1991) intergenerational disruption model, as younger generations increasingly abandon heritage languages in favor of Urdu or English for social advancement.

6. Discussion

The quantitative findings from the questionnaire provide a comprehensive overview of the current linguistic situation of Saraiki speakers, particularly regarding their language proficiency, usage, attitudes, and perceptions of the language's prestige and socioeconomic value. The data reveals a consistent trend of declining Saraiki use and proficiency, particularly among younger generations and in formal or institutional domains.

Responses to questions on fluency (Q1) and proficiency (Q6) highlight a notable imbalance between oral and written competence. Most respondents considered themselves weak in reading and writing Saraiki, while only a minority felt weak in speaking. This pattern indicates that oral

transmission of Saraiki remains active within informal settings, but literacy in the language has not developed correspondingly. The lack of reading materials and written media in Saraiki limits opportunities for literacy development and long-term language maintenance. Similar findings are noted by Rahman (2010), who emphasizes that regional languages in Pakistan often remain oral due to their marginalization in education and media.

A related pattern emerges from Q3, which explored language preference across different domains. The participants reported reduced use of Saraiki in formal, social, and digital environments. While Saraiki might still be spoken at home, Urdu and English dominate in educational institutions, workplaces, and social media. This domain shift indicates a diglossic situation, where Saraiki functions as a "low" variety used in informal contexts, while Urdu and English serve as "high" varieties associated with education, modernity, and status (Ferguson, 1959).Responses to Q2 suggest that parents are no longer prioritizing Saraiki for their children. The majority of participants agreed that parents prefer Urdu or English, reflecting changing linguistic attitudes. This finding aligns with patterns observed in other regional languages in Pakistan, where urbanization and aspirations for socioeconomic mobility have led families to abandon mother tongues in favor of national or global languages. Reduced intergenerational transmission of languages.

In Q4 and Q5, participants expressed strong views about the low prestige of Saraiki and its underrepresentation in educational and literary contexts. Most respondents linked Urdu and English with intelligence, respectability, and social mobility. One respondent's statement, "If I speak Saraiki in class, people think I am backward," encapsulates the widespread stigmatization of the language. Such attitudes have been documented by Mahboob (2009), who notes that linguistic hierarchies in Pakistan mirror broader class and power structures. Respondents also criticized the exclusion of Saraiki from school curricula, reflecting institutional neglect and confirming Rahman's (2010) assertion of linguistic inequality in Pakistan's education system. Findings from Q7 show that most participants frequently switch to Urdu or English in formal settings. This behavior reflects both linguistic adaptability and pressure to conform to dominant language norms. A smaller group reported switching to express ideas more effectively, indicating limited lexical or stylistic range in Saraiki. Frequent code-switching, while a common multilingual phenomenon, also accelerates language shift by reinforcing the dominance of national or global languages over local ones.

Responses to Q8 reveal a clear perception that English offers higher socioeconomic returns than Saraiki. The majority believed that proficiency in English was essential for obtaining good employment, whereas Saraiki held little economic value. This belief system underlies much of the language shift, as people associate English with modernity and progress, and Saraiki with tradition and locality. Similar dynamics have been observed in other multilingual contexts where globalization promotes linguistic homogenization.

The responses to Q9 and Q10 collectively reinforce the concern that Saraiki is being used less than before. Participants pointed to urban migration, limited institutional support, and lack of educational representation as major causes of this decline. Moreover, a significant number reported being discouraged from speaking Saraiki, particularly in formal or public settings. This discouragement not only undermines linguistic confidence but also deepens the generational divide

in language transmission. The cumulative impact of social stigma, lack of educational support, and diminished prestige contributes to the gradual erosion of Saraiki language vitality.

Overall, the quantitative data paints a picture of linguistic decline driven by sociocultural, educational, and economic pressures. Saraiki remains alive as an identity marker and informal means of communication but faces erosion in literacy, prestige, and functional domains. The findings underscore the need for deliberate language planning and policy interventions to promote Saraiki literacy, representation in education, and media presence. Without such measures, the intergenerational continuity of the language may remain at risk, accelerating its shift toward endangerment.

7. Conclusion

This quantitative study aims to answer these questions When the participants were asked in the questionnaire about their fluency in siraiki.majority declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing. When the participants were asked whether they think Saraiki is still prioritized by parents for their children, the majority agreed that they do not prioritize, while the minority agreed that parent's do so less compared to earlier times. As parents often prioritize dominant languages for upward mobility. when they were asked whether Saraiki is adequately represented in education and literature, the majority observed that it was Respondents across all districts criticized the absence of Saraiki in school curricula, while fewer replied in affirmative demonstrates that the Saraiki language, despite its large speaker base, is undergoing systematic endangerment in Pakistan due to educational policy, urban migration, and social prestige hierarchies Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are equally important for the sustainability of a language, as each skill reinforces the others, contributing to the overall proficiency of the language. Rahman 2010 argues that the linguistic hierarchy English at the top, Urdu in the middle, and regional languages at the bottom reproduces socioeconomic inequality. In Punjab, even Punjabi lacks official recognition in education, while Saraiki is often regarded as a dialect rather than a distinct language Shackle, 2007.When the participants were asked in the questionnaire about their proficiency in the Saraiki language, the majority declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing while fewer admitted that they were weak in speaking along with reading and writing. Participants when they were asked about the switching of language the majority declared that they do so while in formal situations, depicting the requirement of educational institutions or offices to use other languages such as English or Urdu. Similarly, the minority switch to other languages in order to express themselves more effectively and creatively, perhaps due to unfamiliarity with, or absence of, a broader range of vocabulary and expression, in the Saraiki language. Participants were asked about the socio economic value of Saraiki now a days that would help them gain social value. The results showed a notable shift, with the majority of them opting for English, Rahman,(2010).identifies English as a status symbol linked with power and opportunity .fewer choosing Urdu and the minority selecting Saraiki. The majority of the participants believe that the language is facing challenges in usage, particularly among the younger generation (Gen Z) and urban populations. Migration of Saraiki speakers to urban centers and abroad, which leads to weaker intergenerational transmission of the language. Along with the factors we have discussed above .including limited institutional support and lack of formal education in Saraiki, reducing its daily use. The majority of the participants reply to the   question that have they ever been discouraged from speaking

Saraiki declared themselves to be weak at reading and writing because of the discouragement while a minority admitted that they were encouraged to speak Saraiki in their homes as well as in their surroundings and fewer believed they were never forced nor discouraged to speak Saraiki. Quantitative results reveal declining intergenerational transmission and low functional usage in education and employment. Key conclusions include: Language endangerment in Pakistan is primarily structural, not attitudinal. Educational exclusion is the strongest predictor of linguistic decline. Urbanization and socioeconomic mobility exacerbate the shift toward Urdu and English. Cultural identity remains resilient, offering revitalization potential.

8. FINDING

The data analysis demonstrates that language endangerment is both structural and cognitive. Structural factors such as educational policy, socioeconomic mobility, and media exposure reinforce Urdu's dominance, while cognitive factors such as decreased activation and lexical retrieval contribute to individual level attrition. These intertwined dimensions affirm Fishman's (1991) and Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor's (2007) frameworks of dynamic interaction between use, exposure, and social valuation.

Ultimately, the findings call for urgent revitalization efforts grounded in local participation, media inclusion, and educational reform. Consistent with UNESCO (2016) and Coleman (2010), adopting mother-tongue-based education can stabilize intergenerational transmission and preserve linguistic diversity a vital step toward cultural equity and sustainable multilingualism in Pakistan.

9. Future recommendation's

Introduce multilingual education policies with mother-tongue instruction at primary levels (UNESCO, 2016).Support Saraiki-language media and digital platforms to normalize public use. Develop teacher training programs and local literature curricula in Saraiki. Establish community language centers for intergenerational storytelling and oral heritage preservation. Promote linguistic pride campaigns highlighting Saraiki's literary and Sufi traditions. Preserving linguistic diversity is essential to Pakistan's cultural integrity. As Rahman (2010) notes, linguistic pluralism strengthens unity by promoting inclusive participation. The Saraiki case illustrates both the challenges and the possibilities for language revitalization in a multilingual nation striving toward cultural equity.

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