



## REGULAR PLURAL FORMATION IN URDU: A MORPHOLOGICAL AND MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

*This study explores regular plural marking for Urdu nouns. In Urdu, plural marking is achieved with the addition of the suffix markers -ای (ay), -وں (on), -یاں (yaan), and -یں (ain). In this study regular plural marking of regular nouns and regular plural markers is assumed to be a grammatical number agreement trigger at the sentence level. The patterns of regular nouns in the three relevant factors of the language are complex (gender, phonological structure, case). Fifteen regular nouns were chosen as examples to test root maintenance, suffixing, vowel variation, and gender alternations. Data were collected from dictionaries and published texts. The results indicate that plural formation in Urdu is systematic and predictable, governed by established morphological patterns. However, the phonological environment may introduce variation: masculine nouns ending in ا form their direct plural with -ای (ay) and oblique plural with -وں (on), feminine nouns ending in ی take -یاں (yaan), and those ending in a consonant take -یں (ain). These plural markers encode number features that extend beyond the word level, triggering feature agreement on verbs and adjectives at the sentence level.*

**Keywords:** Urdu, grammatical gender, morphological marking, plural formation, suffixation, syntactic agreement.

### **Introduction**

Urdu is an inflectionally complex language in which gender, number, and case are marked through suffixation and stem alternation. At the sentence level, these morphological traits participate in morphosyntactic agreement relationships involving verbs, adjectives, and postpositions. The regular grammatical rules that regulate plural construction in Urdu are influenced by gender, case, and the phonological structure of the noun stem. Regular plural markers are prevalent in both written and spoken Urdu, but they have received little attention in systematic morphosyntactic studies.

The formation of plurals is characterized by the use of suffixes, vowel changes, and, sometimes, phonetic changes, depending on the gender and ending of nouns. Before we proceed with the explanation of the formation of plurals, it is essential to define four major words. If a noun is used as the subject of a sentence and is made up of multiple words or units, it is called a direct plural. If a noun is used to indicate case before any postposition, it is called an oblique plural. If morphological marking is used to indicate the number distinction of nouns, it is called number morphology. If morphological marking is used to indicate the case of nouns, it is called case morphology. Based on these distinctions, regular markers for pluralization consist of *ے* (ay) for masculine direct plurals, *وں* (on) for oblique plurals, *یاں* (yaan) for feminine nouns that end with *ی* (i), and *یں* (ain) for feminine nouns ending in consonants. For example, لڑکا (larka) becomes

لڑکے (*larkay*) and لڑکوں (*larkon*), while لڑکی (*larki*) changes to لڑکیاں (*larkiyan*) and کتاب (*kitaab*) is transformed into کتابیں (*kitaabain*).

Several linguists are studying Urdu morphology. A few of them deal with derivative and inflectional techniques. For instance, Niazi's (2016) study focused on the verbs and adjectives affected by plural agreement in Urdu. Ansari's (2019) work examined noun categorization, including the distinction between singular and plural, between oblique and direct, and between number suffixing. Similarly, Iqbal et al. (2021) and Maqsood et al. (2019) investigated the use of broken plurals, Arabic-derived words that exhibit vowel variation rather than suffixation. For example, the plural of the word تصویر (*tasvīr*) becomes تصاویر (*tasāvīr*) through an internal vowel change rather than by adding a plural suffix.

In contrast, the word کتاب (*kitāb*) forms its plural as کتابیں (*kitābain*) by attaching the suffix -ین (-ain). However, the emphasis seems to be on irregular plurals and computational approaches to morphological analysis, even though the books mentioned are quite comprehensive. Nevertheless, the use of regular plural suffixes remains totally neglected in systematic morphosyntactic research. The objective of the present study is to bridge the gap in existing knowledge and literature and to provide a comprehensive insight into the concept of the regular plural form of nouns in Urdu, along with the changes in the singular form that convert them into a plural form.

The research examines the regular suffixing process in 15 nouns, selected from both the masculine and feminine categories. It enables a methodical analysis of root retention, vowel changes, and the connection between case and gender markers, which are considered critical for explaining the relationship between morphological and syntactic structures in Urdu.

The present study aims to investigate the linguistic phenomenon of pluralization in the context of the theory of inflectional morphology and through linguistic analysis. The idea of changing a word to express grammatical changes in meaning, without altering its basic meaning, is the essence of inflectional morphology (Amin et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2020; Safdar, 2021). For example, inflectional morphology, which concerns the number and grammatical identity of words, has been used to pluralize words in Urdu. There are significant linguistic implications of the theory of inflectional morphological patterns (Bashir et al., 2020; Nabi et al., 2025).

The interaction of gender, phonological structure, and syntactic context further shapes the pluralization of Urdu nouns. As formally established above, these positional and gender-conditioned distinctions determine the surface form of plural nouns across syntactic contexts. At the level of syntax, plural morphology shows agreement with the verb and adjectives in the sentence. Regular plural markers in Urdu have not been systematically investigated. However, they are of considerable importance. The irregular plural markers, computational methods, and grammatical explanations have all been explored in the literature. It becomes significant since regular plural markers are widely used in both spoken and written Urdu.

The current work aims to fill a gap in the domain of singular-to-plural transformations by conducting an in-depth, systematic analysis of the process. It examines root vowel retention, suffix distribution, vowel alternation, and their interaction with gender and case marking. The effects of plural formation at the sentence level are also explored, with particular emphasis on the syntactic consequences of morphological variation. This study grounds its analysis in established theoretical frameworks and engages with existing work in Urdu morphology to expand its descriptive and analytical scope.

The phenomenon of plural formation in Urdu has been studied previously, and the focus of all such studies has been on irregular or broken plural forms, especially those of Arabic origin (Al-Athwary, 2015; Iqbal et al., 2021). Despite being very useful from the point of view of exploring irregular plural forms, the existing studies have paid less attention to the regular and productive morphosyntactic analysis of regular plural forms like *-ے (ay)*, *-وں (on)*, *-یاں (yaan)*, and *-یں (ain)*. Such research, as in Hussain (2004) and Butt & Sadler (2003), is strongly inclined towards noun classification and syntactic agreement rather than suffixation, vowel variation, gender, and other sentential agreements related to regular pluralized nouns. Moreover, research on the morphology of the Urdu language, conducted by computers, has focused either on verbs or on irregular nouns. It is a research gap, given that a significant portion of Urdu words for normal pluralized nouns has not been addressed in an integrated manner.

This research fills these gaps by focusing on regular plural markers in Urdu and by providing a structured morphosyntactic description of singular-to-plural change, vowel systems, and gender systems. Although grammatical texts address the formation of plurals in Urdu, this research provides a morphosyntactic description, with a focus on sampling and gender balance. It incorporates these systems into a unified framework to analyze their impact on sentence agreement. The importance of this study lies in its ability to improve our knowledge of the Urdu language across two areas: theoretical linguistics and practical applications. It enhances our theoretical understanding of the Urdu language. Linguists can easily determine which mechanisms of pluralization in the language are effective using the information provided in this paper. They can learn more about the interaction between morphological and syntactic structures in a language in which gender is an essential feature.

From a practical point of view, this research also has significant applications across areas such as language teaching, computational linguistics, and natural language processing. If teachers and learners are aware of regular plural markers and their usage in sentences, this will significantly impact how the grammar of the Urdu language is taught in class and enable learners to construct plural words grammatically. This study is equally useful to those working in computational linguistics, as it provides a well-organized dataset along with well-defined morphological rules that can be used in various technological applications, such as parsing texts, creating spell checkers, and creating grammar checkers for the Urdu language.

Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions: a. What are the most productive regular plural forms in Urdu? How are these forms distributed between masculine and feminine noun classes? b. What morphological and phonological changes occur in singular noun stems when regular plural suffixes are applied in Urdu? c. How does pluralization interact with grammatical gender and influence agreement patterns with verbs, adjectives, and postpositions in Urdu sentences?

### 1. Literature Review

Word structure and word formation come under the domain of morphology. Morphology plays a crucial role in the analysis of the inflectional system of the Urdu language. In Urdu, there are variations in the number and gender of nouns marked with regular plural form markers such as *-ے (ay)*, *-وں (on)*, *-یاں (yaan)*, and *-یں (ain)*. Although studies on the formation of plural form markers have been conducted, most have focused on the analysis of complex or irregular plural markers. Hence, the analysis of the morphosyntactic characteristics of the regular plural form markers in Urdu has not yet been explored in the existing literature. The existing literature on the analysis of



the plural form of Urdu can be broadly classified into three themes: rules of suffixes and phonological conditioning, syntactic agreement, and computational modeling. All these studies have provided significant insights into the analysis of the plural form of Urdu. However, none of these studies has provided a unified analysis of the morphosyntactic characteristics of Urdu.

Hussain et al. (2004) conducted a study focusing on Urdu nouns. The authors basically explained that making a word plural is a very simple process. The most important thing is the final sound of a word from which you are making a plural. To make a word plural that is originally masculine and ends in ا (a), you simply add ے (ay) to it. For example, لڑکا (larka) becomes لڑکے (larkay). Feminine nouns have a different form. If a word ends in ی (i), you add یں (yaan) to it. For example, لڑکی (larki) becomes لڑکیاں (larkiyaan). He also mentioned وں (on) as a form that is added to a word. However, this form is only used for masculine nouns. Nevertheless, it is mostly used when we are discussing oblique cases or postpositions in a sentence. For example, لڑکوں کے ساتھ کھیلنا (larkon ke saath khelna aasaan hai). The research paper emphasized that making a word plural is a very consistent process. These are not arbitrary changes. They are determined by whether a word is masculine or feminine and what function it serves in a sentence. Although Hussain (2004) provides a comprehensive list of rules for using suffixes, he does not incorporate them with the rules for verb and adjective agreement. This study builds on the above-mentioned work and investigates the effect of the same rules on agreement at the sentence level. Moreover, this study, rather than regarding the interaction between suffix agreement and agreement as a side effect, focuses on it as a main issue.

Butt and Sadler (2003) investigated the co-occurrence of syntactic agreement and number marking in Urdu. They explained how the plural suffix helps indicate agreement between the verb and adjective in a phrase. For instance, in the sentence لڑکے خوبصورت ہیں (larkay khoobsurat hain). The plural suffix ے (ay) in لڑکے (larkay) helps indicate agreement with the verb "hain." Additionally, it helps to indicate agreement between the two terms in the sentence by using the feminine plural suffix یں (ain) in کتابیں (kitabein). This study emphasizes how the regular plural suffix is equally important in sentence structure for both morphology and syntax. Although Butt and Sadler (2003) examine the syntactic effects of plural marking, their discussion does not systematically address the phonological conditions and vowel changes that govern the formation of the regular plural. This gap is significant because the morphosyntactic picture is not complete if the phonological context of each suffix is not taken into consideration. This study deals with this aspect by providing controlled morpho-phonological data on gender-balanced nouns.

Rizvi and Hussain (2005) highlighted the importance of identifying regular plural markers in computational models by using a Finite State Morphological Analyzer to handle Urdu nouns. Their study included criteria that allow the attachment of regular suffix markers to change from singular to plural, confirming that root construction, gender, and phonetic ending could be used to identify plural markers such as ے (ay), وں (on), یں (yaan), or یں (ain) correctly. The resilience of regular pluralization across native and foreign terms is demonstrated by the regular norms applied to Persian loanwords in Urdu, such as دروازہ (darwaza) to دروازے (darwazay), which follow the same pluralization rules. While computationally valuable, this work prioritizes rule automation over morphosyntactic analysis. The application of the rules is not examined linguistically, and the problem of the interaction of the suffixes in sentence structure remains outside the scope of the investigation. The present study shifts focus from computational modeling to systematic linguistic documentation of the same regular patterns and their agreement effects.

Habib (2024) has also researched Urdu Dependency Parsing, taking into account the morphological characteristics of the Urdu language, including feminine and masculine gender, number, and suffixation. It was proven that identifying plural suffixes is an important aspect in achieving agreement in predicates. For example, feminine plural suffixation in ادائیگیوں (*adaaigiyan*) in sentences is an important aspect of achieving agreement between the verb and adjective forms. Although Habib (2024) provides syntactic relevance for the morphological pattern of plural suffixes in a computational parsing model, the pattern is not addressed as a topic of study. The difference is important because treating morphological features as input variables in a parser is not equivalent to analyzing them as linguistic phenomena in their own right. This study puts the morphological pattern at the forefront.

The above research collectively demonstrates that, despite the extensive discussion of Urdu morphology, mostly irregular or computationally complex plural types have been addressed, leaving the regular, productive plural suffixes largely unexplored. Regular types like لڑکے (*larkay*), لڑکیاں (*larkiyān*), کتابیں (*kitabain*), پھولوں (*phoolon*), ادائیگیوں (*adaaigiyan*), etc., which can be easily derived and are important for sentence agreement, mostly lie beyond the scope of being addressed in detail regarding root types, suffixing, and vowel changes and syntactic effects. While there has been a significant amount of research on the pluralization of Urdu from a phonological, syntactic, and computational point of view, a majority of that research has concentrated on irregular plural forms or the automation of the rules for computational processing, leaving the morphosyntactic properties of regular productive affixes and agreement phenomena untouched in this research. This research aims to bridge this gap by sampling and analyzing gender-balanced data on regular plural affixes and syntactic agreement in Urdu sentences.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The current study draws on the classical structural theory of inflectional morphology. About morphology, it is noted that the classical structural theory (Bertyák, 2021; Sattler, 1996) provides the strongest theoretical basis for examining the creation of the regular plural in Urdu. Inflectional morphology is a fundamental branch of linguistics that focuses on how words change via fixed transformations to indicate grammatical characteristics such as number, gender, and case. The fundamental meaning of a word is completely unchanged throughout this process. The classical structural theory of inflectional morphology focuses on how roots connect to affixes and on how it regulates inflectional suffixes with respect to base forms (Taylor, 1995). It is a close match to the current work because it is noted that Urdu forms plurals exactly via fixed transformations that add suffixes to roots to indicate number and gender.

In Urdu, nouns become plural mainly by using productive suffixes. These suffixes depend on gender and sound. In the case of masculine nouns, the common suffixes used for plural nouns are -ے (*-ay*) or -وں (*-on*). In the case of feminine nouns, the common suffixes used for plural nouns are -یاں (*-yaan*) or -یں (*-ain*). These suffixes are doing more than just distinguishing singular and plural nouns. One of the major roles these suffixes play is in matching verbs and adjectives in a sentence. According to the classical structural approach, these are fixed rules that connect suffixes to roots based on gender and sound, and they can be used to explore how singular nouns become plural nouns by using suffixes, changing vowels, and using gender.

Within the framework of classical structural morphology of inflectional grammar, the distinction between productive and non-productive is not only significant but also fundamental. This distinction provides a rationale for the scope of this study. In the context of Urdu, regular plurals

can be considered a form of productive inflectional marker. Regular plurals function smoothly on all nouns, depending on gender and sound endings, without any exceptions. Broken plurals are different because they mix up vowels in a word. The study of regular plurals offers a range of significant insights into language models. These insights should naturally fall into place. Lastly, all analytical decisions in this study, including the selection of the 15 nouns, are made exclusively within the classical structural approach to inflectional morphology, focusing on morphological patterns, gender markers, and rules of grammatical agreement. This study contributes to the broader body of work on Urdu morphology while also providing empirical data on an underexplored noun set.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach, with a specific systematic grouping, to explore the standard plural markers for nouns in the Urdu language. The research can be characterized as primarily qualitative, focusing on the description, analysis, and examination of morphological features, the restriction of suffixation, and sentence-structural agreement. However, the research can also be characterized as quantitative, as it involves the systematic grouping of markers for both genders (Nugraha, 2025; Yahya et al., 2023). The qualitative component analyzes individual nouns for root morphology, vowel fixation, and sentence agreement. The quantitative component categorizes nouns by gender (masculine/feminine), root morphology (simple vs. compound), and plural suffix patterns (-ے (-ay), -وں (-on), -یاں (-yaan), and -یں (-ain)). This study examines only regular plurals formed by adding standard suffixes. It deliberately omits broken plurals. Broken plurals change vowels inside the word in ways that do not follow clear rules, like تصویر (tasveer) turning into تصاویر (tasaveer). Those patterns do not work well for a study based on set rules.

#### 3.2. Population and Sample

The sample targeted in our research includes all Urdu nouns that form regular plurals with productive suffixes. Given the large number of words in the Urdu lexicon, purposive sampling was used to obtain an appropriate sample. It was due to the belief that purposive sampling was the most appropriate non-probability sampling method, enabling the selection of a sample of valuable data on morphological and gender variation in pluralization. The sample that was utilized in our research includes 15 nouns:

1. The nouns produce regular plurals with consistent suffixes (-ے (-ay), -وں (-on), -یاں (-yaan), -یں (-ain) and no inner vowel shifts.
2. They cover common words in modern Urdu that previous research has not consistently examined.
3. The set includes both masculine and feminine nouns with gender tags for easy comparison.
4. The nouns show regular phonological patterns and processes of suffixation are ideal for morphological analysis.
5. The list includes both simple and compound words, which show differences in word structure.

The sample distribution comprises nine masculine nouns and six feminine nouns, a proportion that ensures sufficient representation of gender-conditioned plural marking patterns while simultaneously preserving a scope conducive to thorough, detailed qualitative morphological analysis.

### 3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through a systematic, multi-source approach to ensure dependability and validity. The nouns were first identified through an examination of recent Urdu dictionaries and literary texts in order to capture patterns of contemporary usage. Potential items were then screened according to the criteria established for the final sample. All selected nouns were cross-checked using several reliable lexicographic sources. In particular, *Feroz-ul-Lughat* (2016), an authoritative Urdu dictionary, was consulted to confirm gender classification and the accuracy of plural marking. In addition, examples from Urdu prose and newspaper texts were examined to verify the contextual use of the selected nouns. Specific morphological and syntactic information was recorded for each of the nouns in the sample. The morphological information was used to assess whether the root is simple or compound. The plural suffixes ے (-ay), وں (-on), یں (-yaan), ین (-ain) attached to the word for the plural form have been documented. If any vowel changes occurred during pluralization, they were documented. Although these changes are expected to be minor and limited to instances of regular plurals, no assumptions were made. Finally, for each noun in the corpus, an exemplary sentence has been created that requires agreement with the verb or adjective.

### 3.4. Technique for Analysis

In analyzing the data, two techniques were employed. These techniques are morphological analysis and contrastive analysis. These techniques are well established in descriptive linguistics and were therefore chosen. The analysis was holistic in nature. Both singular and plural nouns were analyzed in order to identify the root of singular nouns. Particular attention was paid to the morphological makeup of singular nouns. For compound nouns, the morphemes were analyzed in order to identify the base form to which the plural suffix is attached.

The productive plural suffixes were identified and classified based on various linguistic factors. The gender distribution was checked to determine differences in the use of plural suffixes between masculine and feminine forms. Additionally, the phonological condition was also checked in order to ascertain the impact of the last sound of the singular noun on the choice of the suffix. The case marking variant was also checked in order to ascertain the difference between the direct and oblique plural suffixes. To maintain the consistency of the vowel pattern within the nouns that were chosen for the purpose of creating the new plural suffixes, the chosen nouns needed to be consistent and effective in separating from the Broken Plural Pattern.

The patterns of masculine and feminine nouns were analyzed to allow for systematic comparisons. The study examines if the plural marker 'ے' (-ay) used with masculine nouns that end with 'ا' (-a) and 'یں' (yaan) used with feminine nouns that end with 'ی' (-i) affect whether the verb, adjective and postposition agree with the noun in number. An analysis of the agreement of the syntactic structure provides evidence that pluralization is done not only on the morphological level of the word, but also on the sentence level.

Cross-category comparison combined gender, type, and phonological ending results to identify rules. This cross-category comparison helped to identify the development of productive rules for Urdu plurals. This showed how rule-governed processes could be used to describe regular plurals. Some rules were used in this analysis. These include oblique masculine nouns that are marked with the suffix 'وں' (-on), and consonant-final feminine nouns that are marked with suffixes such

as 'ین' (-ain). These various ways of looking at regular plural forms helped ensure a complete understanding of how regular pluralization is achieved in Modern Urdu.

### 3.5.Data Presentation

The analyzed data are presented in Table 1, which provides a complete morphological description of the fifteen nouns included in the sample.

**Table 1**

*Morphological Patterns of Plural Formation and Gender Marking in Selected Urdu Nouns*

Singular Form	Plural Form	Gender	Morphological Structure	Plural Suffix	Plural Type	Vowel Change	Example Sentence (Case Function)
جوتا (jūtā)	جوتے (jūṭe)	Masculine	Simple	ے (-e)	Direct	No vowel change	jūṭe bohat sāf hain. Subject agreement qalamdānō
قلمدان (qalamdān)	قلمدانوں (qalamdānō)	Masculine	Compound	وں (-ō)	Oblique	No vowel change	mein sab kuch rakhā hai. Oblique with postposition
دروازہ (darvāza)	دروازے (darvāze)	Masculine	Simple	ے (-e)	Direct	No vowel change	darvāze band hain. Subject agreement bāghīchō mein
باغیچہ (bāghīcha)	باغیچوں (bāghīchō)	Masculine	Compound	وں (-ō)	Oblique	No vowel change	phool khule hain. Oblique with postposition
پتنگ (patang)	پتنگیں (patangē)	Feminine	Simple	یں (-ē)	Direct	No vowel change	patangē āsmān mein uṛ rahī hain. Subject agreement
مشق (mashq)	مشقیں (mashqē)	Feminine	Simple	یں (-ē)	Direct	No vowel change	mashqē waqt par mukammal kī jāē. Subject agreement
کہانی (kahānī)	کہانیاں (kahāniyā)	Feminine	Simple	یاں (-yā)	Direct	No vowel change	kahāniyā bachchō ko sunāī gāī. Subject agreement

Singular Form	Plural Form	Gender	Morphological Structure	Plural Suffix	Plural Type	Vowel Change	Example Sentence (Case Function)
دوکان (dukān)	دوکانیں (dukānē)	Feminine	Simple	یں (-ē)	Direct	No vowel change	dukānē subah jald khulēgī. Subject agreement
لڑائی (laṛāī)	لڑائیاں (laṛāiyā)	Feminine	Simple	یاں (-yā)	Direct	No vowel change	laṛāiyā khatam karnī hō gī. Subject agreement
محنت (mehnat)	محنتیں (mehnatē)	Feminine	Simple	یں (-ē)	Direct	No vowel change	mehnatē rang lāēgī. Subject agreement
کتاب (kitāb)	کتابیں (kitābē)	Feminine	Simple	یں (-ē)	Direct	No vowel change	kitābē mez par rakhī hain. Subject agreement
کھیل (khel)	کھیلوں (khelō)	Masculine	Simple	وں (-ō)	Oblique	No vowel change	khelō mein sab ne hissā liyā. Oblique with postposition
جانور (jānwar)	جانوروں (jānwarō)	Masculine	Simple	وں (-ō)	Oblique	No vowel change	jānwarō ko pānī pilāyā gayā. Oblique with postposition
کپڑا (kapṛā)	کپڑے (kapṛē)	Masculine	Simple	ے (-e)	Direct	No vowel change	kapṛe dho kar sukhāe gae. Subject agreement
گلدستہ (guldasta)	گلدستے (guldaste)	Masculine	Compound	ے (-e)	Direct	No vowel change	guldaste mez par rakhe gae. Subject agreement

### 3.6. Technique for Selecting Nouns

The process for selecting nouns followed a clear, step-by-step method. The goal was to ensure the sample reflected typical plural-noun patterns, not unusual ones. This approach guaranteed the data's soundness and trustworthiness. All nouns in the final sample fulfilled the following criteria:

a. Regular Plural Formation: The noun forms its plural solely by attaching productive suffixes such

as '-ے' (-ay), '-وں' (-on), '-یاں' (-yaan), '-یں' (-ain), with no alterations to vowels or consonants. It excludes broken plurals such as 'تصویر' (*tasveer*) → 'تصاویر' (*tasaveer*). b. Gender Classification Clarity: The noun must have a clear gender classification (masculine or feminine), as confirmed by several credible sources. To avoid analytical inconsistencies, nouns with disputed or dialectally variable gender assignments were removed. c. Contemporary Usage Frequency: The noun must occur frequently in modern written and spoken Urdu, as indicated by contemporary newspapers, literary works, and Internet corpora. It ensures that the research covers current usage trends rather than ancient or obsolete versions. d. Morphological Transparency: The noun's morphological structure must be clear and predictable, allowing for systematic analysis. Irregular or suppletive forms were excluded. e. Gender Balance and Suffix Distribution: A balanced representation of both masculine and feminine nouns is necessary, along with the presence of all four productive plural suffixes. ے (-ay), -وں (-on), -یاں (-yaan), -یں (-ain), to support thorough comparative analysis across gender and suffix categories.

### 3.7. Verification Process

Each noun was subjected to thorough examination to ensure accuracy and uniformity. a. Dictionary Cross-Verification; The gender and plural forms of each noun were validated against multiple authoritative sources, including Feroz-ul-Lughat (2016), Platts Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English, as well as online references such as Rekhta and Urdu Lughat. Any discrepancies were excluded from the analysis. b. Corpus Usage Validation: Modern Urdu newspapers (Dawn and Express Tribune Urdu editions), current Urdu literature, and online language corpora were analyzed to confirm contemporary usage patterns. This verification confirmed that the selected nouns are still actively used in modern Urdu, with their plural forms regularly exhibiting the predicted regular patterns in real contexts. c. Linguistic Consistency Check: The nouns were checked to ensure that they adhere to accepted linguistic standards that distinguish regular plurals from irregular ones. This review confirmed that each word consistently produces its plural with productive suffix patterns. d. Final sample composition: After completing all selection criteria and verification procedures, 15 nouns were finalized for study.

The final sample consists of fifteen nouns. In terms of gender, the dataset includes nine masculine and six feminine nouns, ensuring representation of both grammatical genders in Urdu. Regarding root structure, 13 nouns are simple, and 2 are compound, allowing the examination of plural formation across different morphological types. The distribution of plural suffixes further reflects the main productive plural patterns in Urdu. The suffix ے (-e) occurs with four nouns, وں (-ō) with five nouns, یاں (-yā) with two nouns, and یں (-ē) with four nouns. These suffixes represent the most common plural markers in Urdu and include both direct and oblique plural forms.

The sample was intentionally kept small to allow detailed morphological and grammatical analysis, particularly of plural formation and agreement in sentence contexts. At the same time, it includes both genders and the principal plural suffixes, making it suitable for examining the regular pluralization patterns of Urdu. A dataset of approximately 10–20 lexical items is also common in morphological studies of Urdu and related Indo-Aryan languages, as it enables focused qualitative analysis while still capturing key structural patterns.

### 3.8. Documentation and Transparency

All choices made during the selection process were documented to ensure the entire process is replicable. For each noun, the following information has been documented: the sources used for identifying the nouns, the dictionaries consulted, the examples found, the reason for choosing the

word, and the alternatives that were rejected. This method of choosing nouns makes the final list not only representative of the most common plural forms of modern Urdu but also of the most stringent methodological standards of linguistics.

#### 4. Analysis and Interpretation

The regular plural construction of the chosen 15 Urdu nouns is thoroughly examined in this section. This analysis discusses syntactic shifts, gender, and morphological traits. The analysis again confirms that the formation of the regular plural in Urdu is a productive process. To be specific, the masculine words ( $n = 9$ ) use the suffix -ے (ay) for direct plural forms and -وں (on) for oblique plural forms, whereas the feminine words ( $n = 6$ ) use -یاں (yaan) for -ی (i) ending words and -یں (ain) for words ending in consonants. It has been observed that the suffix -وں (on) is the most frequently used (33%), which is used for the formation of the postpositional form, whereas -ے (ay) and -یں (ain) are each used for 27%, and -یاں (yaan) is used for 13% of the words. It again affirms that Urdu regular plural formation is based on the principle of morphological economy, as a minimum number of affixes are added to carry maximum Grammatical information, including number, gender, and case.

The proportion of the different plural suffixes in the sample is an expression of the structural properties of Urdu nominal morphology. The slightly higher proportion of the oblique case -وں (on) is not coincidental but an expression of the syntactic structure of Urdu, in which nouns often appear with postpositions like میں (mein), کو (ko), سے (se), and پر (par). Hence, the oblique case is a natural option in sentences. The equal proportion of -ے (ay) and -یں (ain) at 27% each is an expression of the equal representation of masculine direct plurals and consonant-final feminine plurals in the sample. The low proportion of -یاں (yaan) at 13% is an expression of the proportion of -ی (i) ending feminine nouns in the sample, not an expression of the unproductivity of this suffix in the general vocabulary.

The most frequently occurring suffix in the sample, at 33 %, is -وں (on). It appears with four masculine nouns in oblique postpositional constructions, that is قلمدانوں (qalamdaanon), باغیچوں (baaghichon), کھیلوں (khailon), جانوروں (jaanwaron). All of these nouns are used in a postpositional construction, for example قلمدانوں میں سب کچھ رکھا ہے (Qalamdaanon mein sab kuch rakha hai.) and جانوروں کو پانی پلایا گیا (Jaanwaron ko paani pilaya gaya.) Its high frequency also mirrors the syntactic frequency of postpositional word order in Urdu, in which nouns are consistently followed by postpositions such as میں (main), کو (ko), سے (say), پر (par), and کے (kay).

The suffix -ے (ay) consists of 27% of the total data and occurs with four masculine nouns that end with the suffix aa (a) and form the direct plural form that is جوتے (jootay), کپڑے (kapray), دروازے (darwazay), and گلدستے (guldastay). These nouns are used as the grammatical subject in sentences such as جوتے بہت صاف ہیں (Jootay bohat saaf hain. The shoes are very clean.) and دروازے بند ہیں (Darwazay band hain. The doors are closed.) This suffix is used only in the direct case, meaning the suffix is used only when the noun is the subject of the sentence and is not preceded by a postposition.

The suffix -یں (ain) also represents 27% of the data and is used with five feminine nouns ending in consonants such as پتنگیں (patangain), مشقیں (mashqain), دوکانیں (dukaanain), کتابیں (kitaabain), and محنتیں (mehnatian). Some example sentences are: کتابیں میز پر رکھی ہیں (Kitaabain mez par rakhi hain. The books are placed on the table.) and پتنگیں آسمان میں اڑ رہی ہیں (Patangain aasmaan mein

*ur rahi hain, Kites are flying in the sky.*) When combined with postpositions, these feminine forms remained unchanged, in contrast to masculine oblique plurals.

The suffix -یاں (yaan) is used the least at 13%. This suffix is used in combination with only two words, which are کہانیاں (*kahaaniyan*) and لڑائیاں (*laraaiyan*). Both words are feminine and end with the suffix ی (i). The suffix -یاں (yan) is only used with words that end with the sound -ی (i). Example sentences: کہانیاں بچوں کو سنائی گئیں (*Kahaaniyan bachon ko sunaayi gayin, The stories were told to the children.*) and لڑائیاں ختم کرنی ہوں گی (*Laraaiyan khatam karni hon gi, The fights will have to be ended*). Its low frequency is not indicative of unproductivity, but rather the smaller number of -ی ending feminine nouns in the purposive sample. The uneven distribution is not coincidental and corresponds directly to the gender and phonology of the fifteen sampled nouns, reinforcing the fact that the choice of suffix in Urdu is entirely predictable given a noun's gender and phonology.

For masculine nouns that end in aa (جوتا, کپڑا, دروازہ), the plural is formed through the substitution of the vowel with ے. For oblique plural forms, -وں is uniformly attached, as in قلمدانوں, کھیلوں, showing that pluralization is affected by syntactic context. Even in complex forms, compound nouns have root stability and follow the same patterns. Thus, in the case of Urdu, masculine nouns operate in a gender-conditioned inflectional system that distinguishes between two forms of the plural: one for the direct plural, marked by -ے, and the other for the oblique plural, marked by -وں. It is observed that the use of the oblique plural marker -وں is conditioned both morphologically and syntactically since the need for a subsequent postposition governs it. Hence, -وں can be viewed as a portmanteau morpheme that represents two features simultaneously.

The first word in the sample, جوتا (*joota*), is a masculine simple noun. Its plural form is جوئے (*jootay*), achieved by changing the final aa (a) to (ay)ے, which gives us the direct plural suffix -ے (-ay). This noun appears in the direct case as the subject of a sentence. جوئے بہت صاف ہیں (*Jootay bohat saaf hain.*) The root جوت (*joot*) remains unchanged, confirming root stability. The suffix -ے triggers verb agreement, as seen in ہیں (*hain*), which is the plural copula agreeing with the plural subject.

The second noun is word قلمدان (*qalamdan*). It is a masculine compound noun composed of قلم (*qalam*) and دان (*daan*). By adding -وں (-on) to the compound root, its oblique plural قلمدانوں (*qalamdaanon*) is formed. This suffix appears here because the noun is followed by the postposition میں (*mein*) ہے (*Qalamdaanon mein sab kuch rakha hai*). The compound structure does not change internally, which verifies that even complex roots do not change under suffixation.

The third noun is دروازہ (*darwaza, door*), which is a Persian-derived simple masculine noun. Its direct plural form, like the previous two, is formed by -ے: دروازے → اے (*darwazay*). For example, in دروازے بند ہیں (*Darwazay band hain, "The doors are closed"*) the Arabic door is pluralized using the native Urdu pluralization techniques, even though دروازہ (*darwaza*) is a borrowed Persian word. This shows that the -ے → اے rule applies indiscriminately to all words, whether native or borrowed.

The fourth noun is باغیچہ (*baaghicha, small garden*). It is a masculine compound noun. Its oblique plural is باغیچوں (*baaghichon*). It takes the -وں because it is followed by the postposition میں (*mein*), so باغیچوں میں پھول کھلے ہیں (*Baaghichon mein phool khilay hain, "Flowers are blooming in the small gardens"*). Like قلمدان (*Kalamdan*), this compound noun exhibits full root stability under oblique suffixation.



The fifth noun is پتنگ (*patang, kite*), a feminine simple noun ending in a consonant. Its direct plural پتنگیں (*patangain*) is derived by adding -یں (-*ain*) to the consonant-final stem. For example: پتنگیں آسمان میں اڑ رہی ہیں (*Patangain aasmaan mein aar rahi hain, "Kites are flying in the sky"*). However, the feminine word پتنگ (*patang*) has the oblique plural -یں (*ain*) in the presentative plural, whether it is in subject form or accompanied by a postposition.

Sixth is مشق (*mashq exercise/activity*), a feminine simple Arabic noun ending in a consonant. Its plural is مشقیں (*mashqain*), adding -یں. For instance, the feminine plural of Arabic loanwords that end in a consonant takes the plural suffix -یں (*ain*), as in مشقیں وقت پر مکمل کی جائیں (*Mashqain waqt par mukammal ki jaayen, the exercises should be completed on time*).

The seventh noun is کہانی (*kahaani, story*), a feminine simple noun that ends with the suffix -ی (*i*) and has the plural کہانیاں (*kahaaniyan*), which replaces -ی (-*i*) with -یاں (-*yaan*). Example: کہانیاں بچوں کو سنائی گئیں (*Kahaaniyan bachon ko sunaayi gayin, the stories were told to the children*). The -ی (*i*) ending is replaced with -یاں (*yaan*), and the verb is inflected for feminine plural in accordance with plural agreement.

The eighth is دوکان (*dukaan, shop*), a basic, gendered noun with a feminine ending, which in the plural is دوکانیں (*dukaanain*), taking -یں (*ain*) to negate the feminine marker. For example, دوکانیں صبح جلد کھلیں گی (*Dukaanain subah jaldi khulain gi, the shops will open early in the morning*). The noun's plural causes the verb to become feminine plural.

The ninth noun is لڑائی (*laraai, fight*), a feminine simple noun ending in -ی (*i*), which takes the plural لڑائیاں (*laraaiyan*) like کہانیاں سنائی جاتی ہیں (*kahani Bachon ko kahaaniyan sunai jati hain, "Stories are told to children"*). For example, لڑائیاں ختم کرنی ہوں گی (*Laraaiyan khatam karni hon gi, the fights will have to be ended*). In this particular example, کہانیاں (*Khannian*) and لڑائیاں (*laraian*) are both -ی (*i*) ending feminine nouns, meaning two out of the 15 examples, about 13%, use the -یاں (*an*) ending.

The tenth noun is محنت (*mehnat*), a feminine simple noun ending with a consonant. The plural محنتیں (*mehnatain*) adopts the -یں (*ain*) inflection, e.g. محنتیں رنگ لائیں گی (*Mehnatain rang laayin gi, the hard work will bear fruit*). The description of the plural agreement indicates that it has a feminine plural future tense.

The eleventh noun is کتاب (*kitaab, book*), a feminine simple noun of Arabic origin ending with a consonant, with the plural suffix -یں (*ain*) (*kitaabain*). For example: کتابیں میز پر رکھی ہیں (*Kitaabain maiz par rakhi hain, Books are placed on the table*). The reverse can also be seen in that although Arabic has a broken plural of کتاب (*kitaab*), in Urdu this noun takes the regular productive plural suffix -یں (*ain*) showing that Urdu has completely assimilated the Arabic loanword into its native morphology.

The twelfth noun is کھیل (*khail, game*), a masculine simple noun with a consonant-final stem. Its oblique plural is کھیلوں (*khailon*) when a postposition follows it, it takes -وں (*on*). For example: کھیلوں میں سب نے حصہ لیا (*Khelon mai sab ne hiss aliya /Everyone participated in the games*). Note that the noun کھیل does not end with -ا but it takes the oblique case suffix -وں (*on*) This proves that all the masculine nouns in oblique case in the postpositional context take -وں (*on*) irrespective of whether the stem ends with -ا.

The oblique plural of the thirteenth masculine simple noun جانور (*jaanwar*) is جانوروں (*jaanwaron*). For example, where جانوروں کو پانی پلایا گیا (*Jaanwaron ko paani pilaaya gaya, The animals were given water*), the postposition کو (*ko*) takes the oblique form, which shows that the case is not intrinsically attached to nouns.

The fourteenth word کپڑا (*kapra*), which means a piece of cloth, is a masculine simple noun. The word کپڑے (*kapray*) is its direct plural, which is created by changing -aa → -ے. Example: کپڑے گئے دھو کر سکھائے گئے (*Kapray dho kar sukhaaye gaye. The clothes were washed and dried.*) The direct plural کپڑے functions as the subject, and the verb agrees with it in number and gender.

The fifteenth masculine compound noun is گلدستہ (*guldasta*), which means a bouquet. It is made up of two words: گل (*gul*), which means flower, and دستہ (*dasta*), which means bunch. The word گلدستے (*guldastay*) is its direct plural, which is created by changing ے- → ا. Example: گلدستے میز پر رکھے گئے (*Guldastay mez par rakhay gaye.*) "The bouquets were placed on the table". This compound noun demonstrates that the rule of changing ے- → ا applies equally to masculine nouns, regardless of their simple or complex form. Our analysis of all fifteen nouns supports our claim that Urdu regular plural formation is entirely rule-governed, with no exception based on anything other than gender and phonological stem ending.

The suffixation of feminine nouns is phonologically conditioned. Nouns that end with -ی take -یں (کتاب → کتابیں) whereas noun that ends with consonants takes -یاں (کہانی → کہانیاں, لڑائی → لڑائیاں) (محنت → محنتیں). Unlike the masculine plural forms, the feminine forms do not exhibit the case variation. It illustrates how the two forms are asymmetrical. The reason for this asymmetry is that the inflectional paradigm for the feminine form has only number, whereas the paradigm for the masculine form has both number and case. The oblique plural-suffix variation is absent in the feminine form of Hindi. It illustrates the function of the Hindi-Urdu language's morphological system.

Each of the 15 nouns varies from broken plurals such as (*Tasaveer*) تصویر → تصاویر (*Tasaveer*) because they all have complete root stability and no internal vowel or consonant changes. Plural formation for new nouns based on phonology and gender is made possible by predictable norms.

Postpositional agreements, verb and adjectives are triggered by plural suffixes. For example, جوئے (جانور → جانوروں). The morpho-syntactic integration of plural markers is demonstrated by oblique plurals, which control postpositional needs "جوئے بہت صاف ہیں", کتابیں → "کتابیں میز پر رکھی ہیں" → (جانور → جانوروں). This morphosyntactic integration is an important theoretical contribution of the present study. It is important to note that the system of plural marking in Urdu is not restricted to the word level but extends to the sentence level as well. In other words, the system of plural marking in Urdu is involved in agreement with the verb and adjective at the sentence level. For example, if جوئے is used as a subject in a sentence, the verb will take the form ہیں. Similarly, if کتابیں is used as a subject in a sentence, the predicate will be in feminine plural form.)

The analysis identifies four distinct rules:

1. Masculine – (a) ا + direct → -ے (*ae*)
2. Masculine + oblique → -وں (*on*)
3. Feminine (*ian*) -یاں → ی (*i*)
4. Feminine consonant → -یں (*ain*)

The strong relationship between morphology and syntax in Urdu is demonstrated by these four principles, which, when combined, create a gender-sensitive inflectional system in which the choice of suffixes is both syntactically permitted and morpho-phonologically conditioned. The findings demonstrate that Urdu regular plurals are gender-based, rule-governed, and morpho-syntactically integrated. Additionally, they serve as a foundation for computational modeling,

educational applications, and additional morphological research while contrasting regular and broken plurals in terms of predictability and root maintenance.

### 5. Conclusion

This study has targeted the regular plural markers of the Urdu language. Additionally, the data of the singular nouns of 15 words are explored, which is relatively less investigated in terms of their morphosyntactic characteristics. The findings reveal that the formation of the regular plural in Urdu is based on simple morphological patterns related to the noun's gender and the phonological structure of the noun stem. Root stability was maintained across all noun patterns. Therefore, the difference between the regular and the irregular plurals is not significant. The importance of the plural markers at the morphosyntactic level is demonstrated by the fact that they affect not just the number but also the verb, adjective, and postpositional agreements.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. The study contributes to the field of Urdu morphology by examining less-researched regular plural forms, aiding the construction of computational morphological analyzers, and informing instruction on plural forms. Future studies of the plural in Urdu could investigate the productivity and the occurrence of the plural form for other borrowed or semi-regular nouns. This research concludes that regular plural formation in the Urdu language is a combination of a highly constrained inflectional model with gender sensitivity, with the suffixes being morpho-phonologically conditioned and syntactically licensed in their use.

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