ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

REGULAR PLURAL FORMATION IN URDU: A MORPHOLOGICAL AND MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

Noor ul Sabah
MPhil Scholar Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages and Literature, University of Central Punjab, Lahore
Aisha Saleem (Corresponding author)
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Languages and Literature, University of Central Punjab, Lahore
Sahar Javaid
MPhil Scholar Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Languages and Literature, University of Central Punjab, Lahore

Abstract
This study explores regular plural marking for Urdu nouns. In Urdu, plural marking is achieved with the addition of the suffix markers -e, -õ, -yə̃, and -ẽ. In this study, the regular plural marking of regular nouns and the regular plural markers are assumed to be grammatical number-agreement triggers at the sentence level. The patterns of regular nouns in the three relevant factors of the language are complex (gender, phonological structure, and 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 -a form their direct plural with -e and oblique plural with -õ, feminine nouns ending in -i take -yə̃, and those ending in a consonant take -ẽ. 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 plural markers are -e for masculine direct plurals,

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

-õ for oblique plurals, -yã̃ for feminine nouns ending in -i, and -ẽ for feminine nouns ending in consonants. For example, laṛk-ā becomes laṛk-e and laṛk-õ, while laṛk-ī changes to laṛk-iyã̃, and kitāb is transformed into kitāb-ẽ.

Several linguists are studying Urdu morphology. A few of them deal with derivational 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 SG and PL, between OBL and DIR, 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 tasvīr becomes tasāvīr through an internal vowel change rather than by adding a plural suffix -ẽ. In contrast, the word kitāb forms its plural as kitāb-ẽ by attaching the suffix -ẽ.

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 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.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 for exploring irregular plural forms, existing studies have paid less attention to the regular and productive morphosyntactic analysis of regular plural forms such as -e, -õ, -yã̃, and -ẽ. 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 -e, -õ, -yã̃, and -ẽ. 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,

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 -ā, by simply adding -e to it. For example, laṛk-ā becomes laṛk-e. Feminine nouns have a different form. If a word ends in -ī F.SG, add -yẽ to it. For example, laṛk-ī becomes laṛk-iyẽ. He also mentioned -õ.

OBL is 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, OBL, or postpositions, POST, in a sentence. For example, laṛk-õ ke sāth kheln-ā āsān hai (Playing with the boys is easy). 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 M or F 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 laṛk-e khūbṣūrat haiṉ (The boys are beautiful), the plural suffix -e in laṛk-e helps indicate agreement with the verb haiṉ.

Additionally, it helps to indicate agreement between the two terms in the sentence by using the feminine plural suffix -ẽ in kitāb-ẽ. 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 for attaching regular suffixes to change SG to PL, confirming that root construction, gender, and phonetic ending could be used to identify plural markers such as -e, -õ, -yẽ, or -ẽ 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 darwāz-ā, which becomes darwāz-e, which follows 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.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Habib (2024) has also researched Urdu Dependency Parsing, taking into account the morphological characteristics of the Urdu language, including F and M 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 -yɑ̃ in adāigī-yɑ̃ 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 laṛk-e, laṛk-iyɑ̃, kitāb-ẽ, phūl-õ, adāigī-yɑ̃, 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 -e, -õ, -yɑ̃, and -ẽ, and agreement phenomena are 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 M, the common suffixes used for plural nouns are -e or -õ. In the case of feminine nouns F, the common suffixes used for plural nouns are -yɑ̃ or -ẽ. 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

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 Urdu. 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 M and F, root morphology simple vs. compound, and plural suffix patterns -e, -õ, -yã̃, and -ẽ. 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 tasvīr turning into tasāvīr through internal vowel change rather than suffixation. 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 form regular plurals with the consistent suffix -e, -õ, -yã̃, -ẽ, 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.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 -e, -õ, -yã̃, -ẽ attached to the word for the plural form have been documented. If any vowel changes occurred during pluralization, they were 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 whether the plural marker -e used with masculine nouns ending in -ā and -yã̃ used with feminine nouns ending in -ī 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. It 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 -õ, and consonant-final feminine nouns that are marked with the suffix -ẽ.These

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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)
jūṭ-a	jūṭ-e	Masculine	Simple	-e	Direct	No vowel change	jūṭ-e bohat sāf hain. Subject agreement
qalamdān	qalamdān-õ	Masculine	Compound	-õ	Oblique	No vowel change	qalamdān-õ mein sab kuch rakhā hai. Oblique with postposition
darvāz-a	darvāz-e	Masculine	Simple	-e	Direct	No vowel change	darvāz-e band hain. Subject agreement
bāghīch-ā	bāghīch-õ	Masculine	Compound	-õ	Oblique	No vowel change	bāghīch-õ mein phool khulẽ hain. Oblique with postposition
patang	patang-ẽ	Feminine	Simple	-ẽ	Direct	No vowel change	patang-ẽ āsmān mein uṛ rahī hain. Subject agreement
mashq	mashq-ẽ	Feminine	Simple	-ẽ	Direct	No vowel change	mashq-ẽ waqt par mukammal kī jāẽ. Subject agreement
kahānī	kahāniyẽ̃	Feminine	Simple	-yẽ̃	Direct	No vowel change	kahāniyẽ̃ bachch-õ ko sunāī gaĩ. Subject agreement
Dukān	dukān-ẽ	Feminine	Simple	-ẽ	Direct	No vowel change	dukān-ẽ subah jald khulẽgī. Subject agreement

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Singular Form	Plural Form	Gender	Morphological Structure	Plural Suffix	Plural Type	Vowel Change	Example Sentence (Case Function)
laṛāī	laṛāiyā̃	Feminine	Simple	-yā̃	Direct	No vowel change	laṛāiyā̃ khatam karnī hõ gī. Subject agreement
mehnat	mehnat-ẽ	Feminine	Simple	-ẽ	Direct	No vowel change	mehnat-ẽ rang lāẽgī. Subject agreement
kitāb	kitāb-ẽ	Feminine	Simple	-ẽ	Direct	No vowel change	kitāb-ẽ mez par rakhī hain. Subject agreement
khel	khel-õ	Masculine	Simple	-õ	Oblique	No vowel change	khel-õ mein sab ne hissā liyā. Oblique with postposition
jānwar	jānwar-õ	Masculine	Simple	-õ	Oblique	No vowel change	jānwar-õ ko pānī pilāyā gayā. Oblique with postposition
kapṛ-a	kapṛ-e	Masculine	Simple	-e	Direct	No vowel change	kapṛ-e dho kar sukhāe gae. Subject agreement
guldast-a	Guldast-e	Masculine	Compound	-e	Direct	No vowel change	guldast-e 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 -e, -õ, -yā̃, -ẽ, with no alterations to vowels or consonants. It excludes broken plurals such as tasveer → 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.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 -e, -õ, -yə̃, -ẽ, 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. b. Corpus Usage Validation: Modern Urdu newspapers, current Urdu literature, and online language corpora were analyzed to confirm contemporary usage patterns. c. Linguistic Consistency Check: The nouns were checked to ensure that they adhere to accepted linguistic standards that distinguish regular plurals from irregular ones. 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 -e occurs with four nouns: -õ with five nouns, -yə̃ with two nouns, and -ẽ 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,

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

the masculine words (n = 9) use the suffix -e for direct plural forms and -õ for oblique plural forms, whereas the feminine words (n = 6) use -yə̃ for -i ending words and -ẽ for words ending in consonants. It has been observed that the suffix -õ is the most frequently used (33%), which is used for the formation of the postpositional form, whereas -e and -ẽ are each used for 27%, and -yə̃ is used for 13% of the words. It again affirms that Urdu regular plural formation is based on the principle of morphological economy, as the minimum number of affixes is added to convey the 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 -õ PL.OBL is not coincidental but an expression of the syntactic structure of Urdu, in which nouns often appear with postpositions like mein, ko, se, and par. Hence, the oblique case is a natural option in sentences—the equal proportion of -e and -ẽ 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 -yə̃ at 13% is an expression of the proportion of -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 is -õ, at 33%.OBL. It appears that four masculine nouns in oblique postpositional constructions are qalamdan-õ, baaghich-õ, khail-õ, and jaanwar-õ. All of these nouns are used in a postpositional construction, for example, qalamdan-õ mein sab everything kuch thing rakha kept hai be.PRS (Everything was kept in the pen case) and jaanwar-õ ko DAT paani water pilaaya gave gaya be. PST (Water was given to the animals). Its high frequency also mirrors the syntactic frequency of postpositional word order in Urdu, in which nouns are consistently followed by postpositions such as mein LOC, ko ACC, se INS, par LOC, and kay GEN.

The suffix -e accounts for 27% of the total data and occurs with four masculine nouns that end in the suffix -a and form the direct plural joot-e, kapr-e, darwāz-e, and guldast-e. These nouns are used as the grammatical subject in sentences such as joot-e bohat saaf hain , shoes-PL very clean be.PRS-PL (The shoes are very clean) and darwāz-e band hain door-PL closed be.PRS-PL (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 -ẽ also represents 27% of the data and is used with five feminine nouns ending in consonants such as patang-ẽ, mashq-ẽ, dukaan-ẽ, kitaab-ẽ, and mehnat-ẽ. Some example sentences are: kitaab-ẽ mez par rakhi hain book-PL table LOC kept be.PRS-PL (The books are placed on the table) and patang-ẽ aasmaan mein you are rah-ĩ hain kite-PL sky LOC fly PROG-F be.PRS-PL (Kites are flying in the sky). When combined with postpositions, these feminine forms remained unchanged, in contrast to masculine oblique plurals.

The suffix -yə̃ is used the least, at 13%. This suffix is used in combination with only two words, which are kahaani-yə̃ and laraai-yə̃. Both words are feminine and end with the suffix -i. The suffix -yə̃ is only used with words that end with the sound -i. Example sentences: kahaani-yə̃ bachon

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

ko sunāi gayĩ story-PL child-PL DAT told be. PST-PL (The stories were told to the children) and laraai-yã̃ khatam karni hon gi fight-PL end do-INF be.FUT (The fights will have to be ended). Its low frequency is not indicative of unproductivity, but rather the smaller number of -i 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 -a (joot-a, kapr-a, darwaz-a), the plural is formed through the substitution of the vowel with -e. For oblique plural forms, -õ is uniformly attached, as in qalamdan-õ, khail-õ, 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 -e, and the other for the oblique plural, marked by -õ. It is observed that the use of the oblique plural marker -õ is conditioned both morphologically and syntactically since the need for a subsequent postposition governs it. Hence, -õ can be viewed as a portmanteau morpheme that represents two features simultaneously.

The first word in the sample, joot-a, is a masculine simple noun. Its plural form is joot-e, achieved by changing the final -a to -e, which gives us the direct plural suffix -e PL.DIR. This noun appears in the direct case as the subject of a sentence. joot-e bohat saaf hain , shoes-PL very clean be.PRS-PL (The shoes are very clean). The root joot remains unchanged, confirming root stability. The suffix -e triggers verb agreement, as seen in hain, which is the plural copula agreeing with the plural subject.

The second noun is the word qalamdan. It is a masculine compound noun composed of qalam and daan. By adding -õ PL.OBL to the compound root, its oblique plural qalamdan-õ is formed. This suffix appears here because the postposition mein LOC follows the noun. qalamdan-õ mein sab kuch rakha hai pencase-PL LOC everything everything kept be.PRS (Everything was kept in the pen case). The compound structure does not change internally, which verifies that even complex roots do not change under suffixation.

The third noun is darwaz-a, door, which is a Persian-derived simple masculine noun. Its direct plural form, like the previous two, is formed by -a → -e: darwāz-e PL.DIR. For example, in darwāz-e band hain door-PL closed be. In PRS-PL (The doors are closed), the Persian-derived door is pluralized using native Urdu pluralization rules, even though darwaz-a is a borrowed word. It shows that the -a → -e rule applies indiscriminately to all words, whether native or borrowed.

The fourth noun is baaghich-a, meaning 'small garden'. It is a masculine compound noun. Its oblique plural is baaghich-õ PL.OBL. It takes the -õ because the postposition mein LOC follows it, so baaghich-õ mein phool khil-ay hain garden-PL LOC flower bloom-PL be.PRS-PL (Flowers are blooming in the small gardens). Like qalamdan, this compound noun exhibits full root stability under oblique suffixation.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

The fifth noun is patang, kite, a feminine simple noun ending in a consonant. Its direct plural is patang-ẽ PL.F, derived by adding -ẽ to the consonant-final stem. For example: patang-ẽ aasmaan mein ur rah-ĩ hain kite-PL sky LOC fly PROG-F be. PRS-PL (Kites are flying in the sky). However, the feminine word patang has the oblique plural -ẽ PL.F in the presentative plural, whether in subject form or accompanied by a postposition.

The sixth noun is mashq, exercise/activity, a feminine simple Arabic noun ending in a consonant. Its plural is mashq-ẽ PL.F, formed by adding -ẽ. For instance, the feminine plural of Arabic loanwords that end in a consonant takes the plural suffix -ẽ PL.F, as in mashq-ẽ waqt par mukammal ki jaayen exercise-PL time on complete do-INF (The exercises should be completed on time).

The seventh noun is kahaani, story, a feminine simple noun that ends with the suffix -i and has the plural kahaani-yẽ̃ PL.F, which replaces -i with -yẽ̃. Example: kahaani-yẽ̃ bachon ko sunāi gayĩ story-PL child-PL DAT told be. PST-PL (The stories were told to the children). The -i ending is replaced with -yẽ̃, and the verb is inflected for feminine plural in accordance with plural agreement.

The eighth is dukaan, shop, a basic, gendered noun with a feminine ending, which in the plural is dukaan-ẽ PL.F, taking -ẽ (ain) to negate the feminine marker. For example, dukaan-ẽ subah jaldi khulẽ gi shop-PL morning early open be.FUT (The shops will open early in the morning). The noun's plural makes the verb feminine plural.

The ninth noun is laṛaai, fight, a feminine simple noun ending in -i, which takes the plural -yẽ̃ PL.F, laṛaai-yẽ̃ (laraaiyan) like bachon ko kahaani-yẽ̃ sunāi jāti hain child-PL DAT story-PL told be.PRS (“Stories are told to children”). For example, laṛaai-yẽ̃ khatam karni hon gi fight-PL end do-INF be.FUT (The fights will have to be ended). In this particular example, kahaani-yẽ̃ and laṛaai-yẽ̃ are both -i-ending feminine nouns, meaning that two out of the fifteen examples, about 13%, use the -yẽ̃ ending.

The tenth noun is mehnat, a feminine simple noun ending with a consonant. The plural mehnat-ẽ (mehnatain) adopts the -ẽ PL.F inflection, e.g., mehnat-ẽ rang laayin gi hardwork-PL color bring be.FUT (The hard work will bear fruit). The description of the plural agreement indicates that it is in the feminine plural future tense.

The eleventh noun is kitaab, a feminine simple noun of Arabic origin ending with a consonant, with the plural suffix -ẽ PL.F (kitaab-ẽ). For example: kitaab-ẽ mez par rakhi hain book-PL table LOC kept be.PRS-PL (Books are placed on the table). The reverse can also be seen: although Arabic has a broken plural of kitaab, in Urdu this noun takes the regular productive plural suffix -ẽ, showing that Urdu has completely assimilated the Arabic loanword into its native morphology.

The twelfth noun is khail (game), a masculine simple noun with a consonant-final stem. Its oblique plural is khail-õ (khailon). When a postposition follows it, it takes -õ PL.OBL. For example:

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

khail-õ mein sab ne hissā liyā game-PL LOC all ERG part took (Everyone participated in the games). Note that the noun khail does not end with -a, but it takes the oblique case suffix -õ PL.OBL This proves that all the masculine nouns in the oblique case in the postpositional context take -õ PL.OBL irrespective of whether the stem ends with a.

The oblique plural of the thirteenth masculine simple noun jaanwar (jaanwar) is jaanwar-õ (jaanwaron). For example, where jaanwar-õ ko paani pilaaya gaya animal-PL DAT water gave be.PST (The animals were given water), the postposition ko DAT takes the oblique form, which shows that the case is not intrinsically attached to nouns.

The fourteenth word, kapr-a (kapra), which means a piece of cloth, is a masculine simple noun. The word kapr-e (kapray) is its direct plural, which is created by changing -a → -e PL.DIR. Example: kapr-e dho kar sukhaaye gaye cloth-PL wash do dry be.PST (The clothes were washed and dried.) The direct plural kapr-e functions as the subject, and the verb agrees with it in number and gender.

The fifteenth masculine compound noun is guldast-a (guldasta), which means a bouquet. It is made up of two words: gul, which means flower, and dast-a, which means bunch. The word guldast-e (guldasstay) is its direct plural, which is created by changing -a → -e PL.DIR. Example: guldast-e mez par rakhay gaye bouquet-PL table LOC placed be.PST (The bouquets were placed on the table). This compound noun demonstrates that the rule of changing -a → -e 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 -i take -yẽ PL.F (kahaani → kahaani-yẽ, laṛaai → laṛaai-yẽ), whereas nouns that end with consonants take -ẽ PL.F (kitaab → kitaab-ẽ, mehnat → mehnat-ẽ). 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 tasveer → 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.

Plural suffixes trigger postpositional agreements, verbs, and adjectives. For example, joot-e → joot-e bohat saaf hain shoe-PL very clean be.PRS-PL, kitaab-ẽ → kitaab-ẽ mez par rakhi hain book-PL table LOC kept be.PRS-PL. The morphosyntactic integration of plural markers is demonstrated by oblique plurals, which control postpositional needs (jaanwar → jaanwar-õ PL.OBL). This morphosyntactic integration is an important theoretical contribution of the present study. It is important to note that the system of plural

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

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 joot-e is used as a subject in a sentence, the verb will take the form hain. Similarly, if kitaab-ẽ 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) + direct → -e
2. Masculine + oblique → -õ
3. Feminine (-i) → -yã̃
4. Feminine consonant → -ẽ

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.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

References

Al-Athwary, A. A. (2015). On grammatical borrowing: the case of Arabic plurals in the Urdu language. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *5*(8), 1642–1651.

Amin, A., Javed, H., & Haroon, S. (2023). Functional Morphology: Patterns, Rules, and Sets for Morphological Parsing of Urdu Regular Verbs. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, *7*(2), 207–216.

Ansari, N. A., & Mangrio, R. (2019). Morphology of Urdu Verbs: A word and paradigm approach. *Pakistan Journal of Language Studies*, *3*(1), 31–42.

Bashir, R., Asif, S., & Saleem, A. (2020). Revisiting Lexeme-Based Theory's Word Formation Rules: Counter Evidence From Urdu. *International Journal of Management*, *11*(9).

Bertyák, Á. (2021). Urban morphology: the classical and modern research methodologies. *Periodica Polytechnica Architecture*, *52*(2), 135-145.

Bickel, B., & Nichols, J. (2007). Inflectional morphology. *Language typology and syntactic description*, *3*(2), 169-240., J. (2007). Inflectional morphology. *Language typology and syntactic description*, *3*(2), 169–240.

Habib, N. (2024). *Urdu dependency parsing and treebank development: A syntactic and morphological perspective*.

Hussain, S. (2004). *Finite-state morphological analyzer for Urdu* [CRULP report]. Centre for Research in Urdu Language Processing.

Iqbal, M., & Mangrio, D. R. A. (2025). The pluralization of the plurals in Urdu: An OT analysis. *Balochistan Journal of Linguistics, 13.*

Iqbal, M., & Mangrio, R. A. (2025). The Pluralization of the Plurals in Urdu: An OT Analysis. *Balochistan Journal of Linguistics*, *13*, 14–14.

Kelly, D. H. (1966). The new linguistics and the teacher of Classics. *Classical Journal*, 247–251.

Khan, T. A. (2014). Automatic acquisition of Urdu nouns (along with gender and irregular plurals). In *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'14)*. ACL Anthology.

Maqsood, B., Saleem, T., Aziz, A., & Azam, S. (2019). Grammatical constraints on the borrowing of nouns and verbs in Urdu and English. *Sage Open*, *9*(2), 2158244019853469.

Nabi, F. G., Sultan Ali Khan, B., & Saleem, T. (2025). The structure of inflected Urdu nominals: insights from Distributed Morphology. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *12*(1), 2464383.

Niazi, A. (2016, April). Morphological Analysis of Urdu Verbs. In *International Conference on Intelligent Text Processing and Computational Linguistics* (pp. 284–293). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Nugraha, D. S. (2025). A Quantitative Analysis of Research Trends and Thematic Development in Derivational Morphology. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, *13*(4), 1787-1801.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Qureshi, A. H., Hassan, M. U., & Akhter, S. (2020). Towards description of derivation in Urdu: morphological perspective. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, *3*(2), 83–87.

Rizvi, S. M. J., & Hussain, M. (2005). *Analysis, design, and implementation of an Urdu morphological analyzer*. Student Conference on Engineering Sciences and Technology (SCONEST)**,** 1–7. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:7501973

Safdar, M. (2021). Derivational Morphology in Urdu: A Lexical Morphology Approach. *Linguistics and Literature Review*.

Sattler, R. (1996). Classical morphology and continuum morphology: opposition and continuum. *Annals of Botany*, *78*(5), 577–581.

Sereno, J. A., & Jongman, A. (1997). Processing of English inflectional morphology. *Memory & cognition*, *25*(4), 425–437.

Slabakova, R. (2018). Inflectional morphology. *The Handbook of advanced proficiency in second language acquisition*, 381–400.

Taylor, D. J. (1995). Classical linguistics: An overview. *Concise History of the Language Sciences*, 83–90.

Yahya, U., Arif, M., & Awan, S. (2023). A conceptual review of qualitative research inquiry in applied linguistics. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, *7*(2), 620–633.