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## A Case Study of Pahari Migrant Speakers on Their Language and Cultural Identity in Abbottabad City

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to explore the impact of internal migration on the linguistic practices and cultural identity of Pahari-speaking migrants from the Galyat region now residing in Abbottabad City. The research focused on understanding the patterns of language shift, cultural transformation, and the preservation of minority language within an urban context. A quantitative research methodology was employed, using a structured questionnaire distributed among 55 respondents from migrant Pahari-speaking families. The data collected was analyzed to assess language usage across generations, social settings, and educational domains, as well as attitudes toward cultural traditions and identity retention. The findings reveal a noticeable decline in the use of the Pahari language among younger generations, particularly in formal and educational contexts, with a preference for Urdu and English in urban social environments. The study identified significant shifts in cultural identity, including reduced engagement with traditional practices, oral folklore, and inter-generational transmission of language. Results also highlighted how sociocultural and economic pressures in urban settings contribute to the marginalization of the Pahari language and a growing disconnection from ancestral roots. This research underscores the urgent need for targeted preservation efforts and inclusive policies that support linguistic and cultural diversity. It contributes valuable insight to the field of sociolinguistics by documenting the localized effects of rural-to-urban migration on minority language communities in Pakistan. The study is significant for policymakers, educators, and cultural preservationists working toward the sustainable safeguarding of endangered languages and identities.*

**Keywords:** *Pahari Migrant Speakers, Language Identity, Cultural Identity, Abbottabad City, Language Shift, Cultural Transformation.*

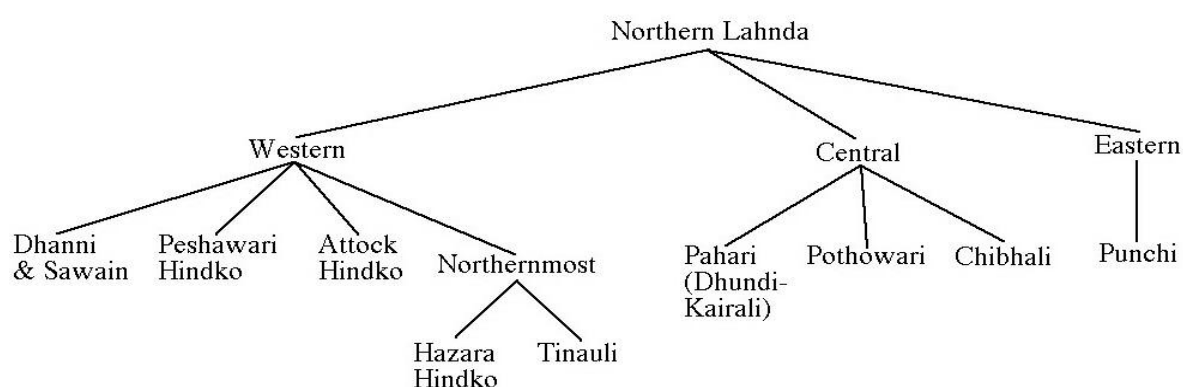
### Introduction

Language plays a vital role in shaping social connections and identity, constantly evolving under the influence of cultural, political, and economic circumstances. As cultures shift over time, so do the languages tied to them, reflecting broader societal transformations. In today's globalized

world, language choice is often dictated by personal needs, convenience, and social context, making it not only a tool for communication but also a marker of identity, belonging, and adaptation (Hall, 1997). Language use in multilingual settings can reveal power dynamics, community cohesion, and patterns of inclusion or exclusion. However, the rise of mass media, digital communication, and transnational mobility has placed many minority languages under pressure from dominant global tongues, leading to language endangerment—a decline often triggered by social, political, or economic pressures that reduce intergenerational transmission and may result in extinction (Crystal, 2000). This is particularly common among minority communities undergoing rapid social change, where their native language loses prestige and practical utility.

Migration is a key driver of such linguistic and social change. Defined as the temporary or permanent relocation of people due to work, education, conflict, or environmental factors, migration—whether internal or international—facilitates cultural exchange but also leads to adaptation and loss (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). Historically, migration has encouraged linguistic hybridization and the emergence of new dialects, yet it has also contributed to the displacement of linguistic minorities and erosion of indigenous languages. A significant outcome is language shift, wherein speakers gradually abandon their ancestral language in favor of the dominant language of their new community (Fishman, 1991). This process often occurs over generations, with children adopting the dominant language more frequently, influenced by urbanization, education, and media exposure (Mufwene, 2020). Beyond practical communication, migration affects how language functions as a symbol of identity. Migrants often navigate complex sociolinguistic landscapes, downplaying their native language in public to avoid discrimination or enhance social integration, thereby confining it to private domains. Such selective use diminishes the language's vitality over time and carries emotional and psychological implications, as language is deeply tied to self-perception and cultural identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). For minority communities, language erosion can weaken cultural identity, causing a disconnection from oral traditions, folklore, and shared heritage, often resulting in identity crises among migrants balancing ancestral roots with new social environments.

**Figure-1 Lothers and Lothers classification of Indo-Aryan languages**



In the context of the Pahari language spoken in the Galyat region of northern Pakistan, migration has significantly influenced both linguistic vitality and cultural identity. The Galyat area, spanning the border between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, is home to diverse linguistic and cultural traditions, with Pahari being one of the oldest languages in South Asia—dating back to the

Harappan period and promoted during King Ashoka's reign (Masoodi, 1985). Classified within the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family, Pahari is often grouped under Northern Lahnda languages, though its dialects—such as Dhundi-Kairali in Abbottabad—exhibit regional variations and interactions with neighboring languages like Hindko and Punjabi (Lothers & Lothers, 2010). Recent decades have seen increased migration of Pahari speakers from rural Galyat to urban centers like Abbottabad, threatening the language's survival. Urban environments prioritize Urdu and English for education, employment, and social mobility, marginalizing minority languages like Pahari and limiting its use to informal or familial settings (Khan, 2012). This linguistic power imbalance, reinforced by institutional neglect, reduces intergenerational transmission. Many children of migrants show declining fluency, and some parents actively discourage Pahari use in favor of more socially acceptable languages. This trend not only endangers the language but also disrupts cultural continuity, disconnecting younger generations from traditional customs, oral histories, and values. Without deliberate efforts to document, teach, and revitalize Pahari, this rich linguistic heritage risks falling into disuse, taking with it an irreplaceable cultural legacy.

### **Purpose of The Study**

In the light of these dynamics, this study addresses a critical gap in sociolinguistic research by examining the regional, internal migration of Pahari speakers from the Galyat region to Abbottabad city—an underexplored context in language shift literature. Unlike broader studies on international migration, this research highlights the subtle yet significant linguistic and cultural consequences of rural-to-urban migration within Pakistan. In doing so, it offers a localized case study that captures the real-time impact of internal migration on a minority language and its cultural significance. By investigating the evolving language practices, identity negotiations, and cultural adjustments of Pahari-speaking migrants, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the mechanisms of language attrition, intergenerational transmission, and cultural assimilation. It seeks to provide empirical evidence on how urbanization and societal pressures challenge the preservation of minority languages and cultures. Ultimately, this research aims not only to document the impact of migration on the Pahari language and identity but also to inform future policy-making, educational strategies, and cultural preservation efforts aimed at sustaining Pakistan's linguistic diversity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Migration plays a significant role in shaping linguistic and cultural dynamics, particularly among minority language communities. The Pahari-speaking population in Abbottabad faces challenges in preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage due to migration. This phenomenon has led to a gradual decline in the use of the Pahari language, contributing to language shift and potential language loss. This study examines the impact of migration on the Pahari language and culture, with a focus on understanding the patterns of language shift, the preservation of cultural identity, and the transformations experienced by Pahari-speaking migrants in Abbottabad.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways has migration led to the decline of the Pahari language among migrants from the Galyat region?
2. What are the language choices and patterns of language shift among Pahari speaking migrants?
3. What cultural transformation do Pahari speakers experience due to migration?

**Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the ways by which migration has led to the decline of the Pahari language among migrants from the Galyat region?
2. To explore the language choices and patterns of language shift among Pahari speaking migrants.
3. To analyze cultural transformations experienced by Pahari speakers as a result of migration.

**Significance of the Study**

The study is significant as it aims to address the critical issue of language and cultural preservation among Pahari-speaking communities of Galyat, affected by migration. The research also highlights the challenges faced by minority language speakers in maintaining their heritage amidst social and environmental changes. The current study strives to understand the factors contributing to the decline of Pahari language use and the adaptation of migrants to new linguistic and cultural environments. Moreover, the study is pertinent for policymakers, linguists, cultural preservationists and research scholars, as it emphasizes the need for strategies to protect endangered languages and cultural identities. Additionally, it aims to contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics by examining the interplay between migration, language, and cultural transformation. The findings of this research serve as a foundation for future efforts to promote the sustainable preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity in Pakistan and beyond.

**Delimitation of the Study**

This study is confined to Pahari-speaking migrants from the Galyat region who have relocated to Abbottabad, excluding other Pahari-speaking communities in Pakistan. It employs a quantitative approach with a small sample size of 55 participants. The research focuses on internal migration and does not explore international migration or in-depth linguistic features like code-switching. Additionally, it provides a cross-sectional rather than longitudinal analysis of language shift trends.

**Research Gap**

Despite extensive research on language shift and identity in multilingual contexts, there remains a significant lack of scholarly attention on the localized effects of internal migration within Pakistan, particularly with respect to minority languages like Pahari. Most existing studies in sociolinguistics focus on international migration, dominant language dynamics, or well-established language pairs such as Urdu-English or Punjabi-Urdu. As a result, the linguistic and cultural transformations experienced by smaller, under-documented language communities such as the Pahari-speaking population of the Galyat region are largely overlooked. While some regional surveys and ethnolinguistic mappings mention the Pahari dialects, there is still a dearth of in-depth, empirical research on the sociolinguistic status of Pahari language of Galyat in the context of migration. The Pahari language of the Galyat region remains significantly understudied, especially in terms of language shift, maintenance, and identity transformation among its migrant speakers. This study fills the gap by exploring how migration affects the Pahari language and identity of Galyat speakers in Abbottabad, offering localized insight into language shift due to migration.

**Literature Review**

Migration is widely recognized as a key driver of language change, disrupting traditional language ecologies and often leading to linguistic accommodation, borrowing, or complete shift

(Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Trudgill, 1986). In multilingual societies, migration facilitates both cultural exchange and the erosion of linguistic diversity. Sociolinguistic studies consistently highlight how socio-economic pressures, urbanization, media exposure, and the breakdown of intergenerational transmission accelerate language shift (Dixon, 1997; Fishman, 1991). These forces promote the dominance of high-prestige languages in urban environments, marginalizing minority tongues. Theoretical models further illuminate this process. Mufwene (2020) conceptualizes shift as a decline in opportunities or motivations to use a heritage language, while Crystal (2000) outlines a three-stage process from social pressure to bilingualism and finally to monolingualism in the dominant language. This generational intensification is well-documented; first-generation migrants often maintain their native language, but subsequent generations, influenced by education and peers, adopt the dominant one (Hunt & Davis, 2019). Kandler and Unger's (2023) diffusion-reaction model emphasizes that language loss can occur rapidly under sociocultural pressures, a framework highly relevant for understanding the plight of minority languages like Pahari in Pakistan. Ultimately, migration acts as a powerful external catalyst for language change, leading to structural simplification, code-switching, and the emergence of hybrid forms that displace traditional varieties (Farrar & Jones, 2002).

The sociolinguistic marginalization of minority languages in urban contexts is starkly evident in the case of Pahari. Khan (2012) specifically links the decline of Pahari to rural-to-urban migration, noting how migrants adopt Urdu as a pragmatic tool for communication, education, and employment, thereby confining Pahari to informal, in-group domains. This institutional marginalization, as noted in Sharma's (2018) work in Jammu & Kashmir, is compounded by a lack of representation in education, media, and governance. Empirical studies, such as that by Kashmiri and Rashid (2023) in the Poonch region, confirm a steady decline in Pahari use among the youth, who favor Urdu and English for their socio-economic utility. This trend aligns with Mughal's (2023) assessment that Pahari in Azad Kashmir is endangered, with critically weakened intergenerational transmission. The role of domains, prestige, and attitudes is central to this endangerment. Holmes (2013) stresses that restriction to private domains rapidly diminishes a language's vitality, while Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor's (1977) ethnolinguistic vitality theory identifies status, demographics, and institutional support as key to survival. Without such support, minority languages lose both functionality and prestige (Pauwels, 2004). As Fishman (1991) argues, speakers often abandon low-prestige languages not due to linguistic inferiority, but due to socio-political hierarchies that devalue them, a dynamic clearly at play for Pahari migrants in Abbottabad.

Patterns of minority language decline and identity transformation in Pakistan provide a crucial comparative context. Studies on Punjabi in Sargodha (Nazir et al., 2013), Sindhi in Karachi (Abbasi, David, & Ali, 2023), and Hindko in Peshawar (Ali, Ibrar, & Khan, 2021) all reveal a similar generational divide: older speakers maintain the heritage language domestically, while the youth gravitate toward Urdu and English for perceived socio-economic advancement. This shift, driven by educational policies and urban language ideologies, is also observed among Dhatki, Marwari (Jhatial & Khan, 2021), Burushaski (Ali, 2017), and Potohari speakers (Ibrahim & Awan, 2020). Abbasi et al. (2020) concluded that urbanization poses an existential threat to the Pahari language and culture in Murree, a finding that directly informs the present study. Underpinning these shifts are speaker attitudes, which Weinreich (2010) identifies as a decisive factor; even well-preserved languages can decline rapidly if communities begin to view them as impractical.

The cultural implications of this linguistic erosion are profound. Migration can lead to cultural alienation (Bhugra, 2004) but also to the construction of hybrid, multifaceted identities (Nayar & Wright St. Clair, 2020; Croucher & Kramer, 2017). As Parajuli (2021) argues, language learning in a new context does not necessarily replace one's cultural identity but can enable the formation of a fluid, multicultural self, a process highly relevant to second-generation Pahari migrants. Language is fundamentally a medium of cultural identity, representing the shared meanings of a culture and enabling individuals to make sense of their world (Hall, 1997). Identity is not fixed but emerges through linguistic interaction, a performative process where people articulate who they are through the languages they speak (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The transmission of a mother tongue across generations is thus essential for passing down cultural traditions, values, and worldviews (Gelman & Roberts, 2017; Kinzler et al., 2011). Vygotsky (1980) emphasizes that language allows children to internalize their community's social and cultural thoughts, meaning early linguistic experiences are foundational to identity formation. Migration disrupts this process, displacing individuals from familiar sociolinguistic structures into urban environments where their native language holds little functional or symbolic capital (Kreswill, 1994). The host-migrant interaction is a complex negotiation, where the sustained use of a native language can influence the cultural dynamics of the host region (Kobzeva et al., 2021). The existential impact of language loss is severe, leading to what Boteva-Richter (2024) terms "speechlessness"—a condition where migrants cannot fully express their identities, resulting in isolation and hampering intercultural dialogue. Despite the breadth of research on migration and language, a significant gap remains regarding Pahari-speaking communities from the Galyat region in urban centers like Abbottabad. Existing literature focuses on dominant Pakistani languages, overlooking the micro-level internal migration and sociolinguistic dynamics of smaller groups. This research addresses that gap by exploring the lived experiences of Pahari migrants, their language use across domains, their sense of cultural identity, and intergenerational attitudes toward maintenance.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to investigate the impact of internal migration on the language use and cultural identity of Pahari-speaking migrants in Abbottabad. According to Allan (2020), such a design is effective for explaining and presenting observed patterns in data, offering a clear understanding of social behaviors and attitudes. A structured questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms, served as the primary instrument for gathering numerical data on demographic details, language use across various domains, and attitudes toward cultural identity. This approach aligns with descriptive studies that utilize surveys to collect data for identifying trends (Gay & Airasian, 2000), thereby enhancing the credibility and systematic rigor of the research (Smith & Jones, 2018).

The research population consisted of Pahari-speaking individuals who had relocated from the Galyat region to Abbottabad City. A non-random convenience sample of 55 participants was selected based on availability and willingness to respond, encompassing a diverse range of ages, genders, and educational backgrounds to allow for generational comparison. Ethical approval was obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary involvement. Data collection was conducted entirely online, with responses automatically recorded and organized. The analysis involved manual computation of frequencies and percentages, with results

presented in pie charts and tables to interpret the influence of migration on linguistic preferences and cultural identity.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Since this research is concerned with how migration affects the linguistic practices and cultural identity of Pahari-speaking individuals, it focuses on a specific migrant group that relocated from the Galyat region to the urban setting of Abbottabad. The study aims to understand how migration influences the use of the native Pahari language and alters cultural behaviors and perceptions. Due to the scope and time limitations, the study utilizes a structured questionnaire as the main data collection tool to assess language usage and attitudes toward cultural identity. The questionnaire was carefully designed using a Likert-scale format and categorical question that was comprised of 41 items. It was divided into three sections based on the key variables of the study. The first section gathered demographic and background information, including age, gender, education, and duration of stay in Abbottabad. The second section focused on Language Use, asking participants about their preferences and practices in different social contexts such as family, friends, education, and official settings. The third section addressed Cultural Identity and Attitudes, aiming to measure the respondents' sense of attachment to Pahari traditions, perceptions about language decline, and their efforts to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The ultimate goal of the research is to identify patterns of language shift, understand the community's evolving cultural identity, and examine the impact of urban migration on a regional language like Pahari. By analyzing the data, the study seeks to correlate migration-related changes with shifts in language use and cultural belonging among this minority group.

This section presents the analysis of data collected from 55 participants through a structured questionnaire designed in Google Forms. The responses have been visually represented using pie charts. Each pie chart corresponds to a specific item in the questionnaire, showing the distribution of responses in percentage form. Each pie chart is followed by a brief explanation and interpretation to link the findings with the study's research objectives and questions.

### Analysis of basic information

This section outlines the general demographic background of participants, providing context for their linguistic and cultural responses. The data includes information on gender, age, education, occupation, and duration of residence in Abbottabad, offering a foundational understanding for the analysis that follows.

**Table 1. Demographic Information**

Category	Subcategory	Percentage	Numbers
GENDER	FEMALE	60.0%	33
	MALE	40.0%	22
AGE	UNDER 18	3.6%	2
	18-25	65.5%	36
	26-35	20.0%	11
	36-50	7.3%	4
	ABOVE 50	3.6%	2
EDUCATION LEVEL	POSTGRADUATE	30.9%	17
	GRADUATE	38.2%	21

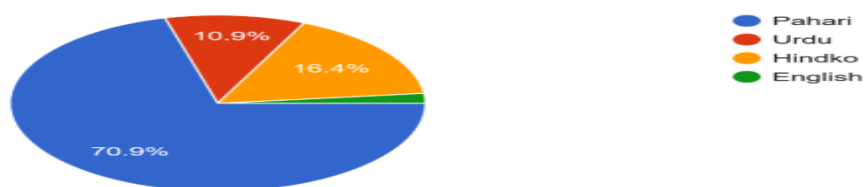
	SECONDARY	29.1%	16
	NO FORMAL EDUCATION	1.8%	1
OCCUPATION	STUDENT	63.0%	34
	EMPLOYED	24.1%	13
	HOMEMAKER	7.4%	4
	UNEMPLOYED	1.9%	1
	RETIRED	3.7%	2
DURATION OF STAY	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	3.6%	2
	1-3 YEAR	1.8%	1
	4-10 YEARS	20.0%	11
	MORE THAN 10 YEARS	74.5%	41

These demographic insights provide essential context for understanding participants' language practices and cultural attitudes, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of the impact of migration on their linguistic and cultural identity.

### Analysis of Language Use

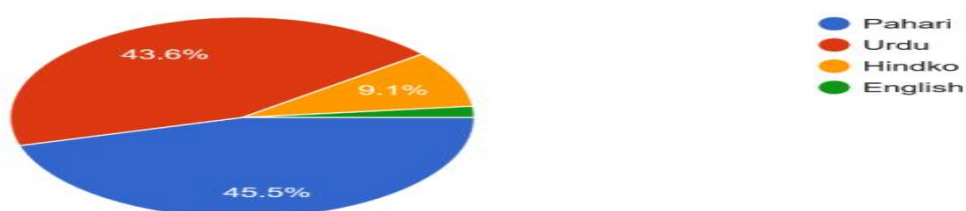
The following part of the analysis presents a detailed examination of language Use. This section investigates the patterns of language spoken by the participants in various social, familial, and educational settings, aiming to understand how migration has influenced their linguistic preferences and practices. The final part of the data analysis includes the examination of participants' responses to an optional open-ended question, where they were invited to share additional thoughts, suggestions, or concerns.

**Figure 2. Language spoken within household**



Within the domain of home, 70.9% of respondent still use Pahari as their primary language, indicating that the language is still widely maintained at home. This is largely because parents prefer to speak Pahari with their children, helping preserve the language in private settings. However, the use of Hindko (16.4%), Urdu (10.9%), and English (1.8%) suggests a gradual shift influenced by urban life, education, and social integration. While Pahari remains strong at home, these trends point to a potential decline in future generations.

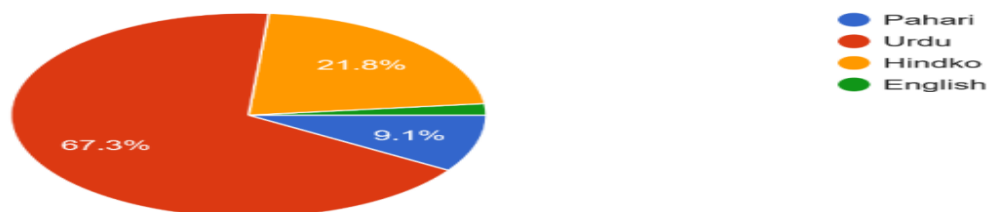
**Figure 3: Language spoken with siblings**





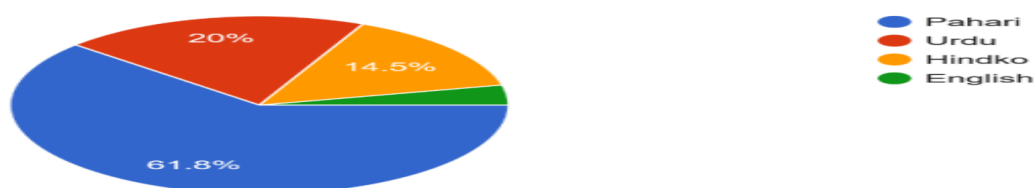
The data reveals that while Pahari (45.5%) is still commonly spoken between siblings, the combined use of Urdu (43.6%) and Hindko (9.1%) totals 52.7%, showing a slight dominance of other languages over Pahari in sibling interactions. This indicates a gradual shift toward more socially dominant languages, especially Urdu, which is widely used in education and media. The preference for Urdu and Hindko among siblings reflects urban influence and peer adaptation, suggesting that younger generations are less likely to use Pahari in informal communication, which may affect its long-term vitality.

**Figure 4: Preferred language used among friends in social gathering**



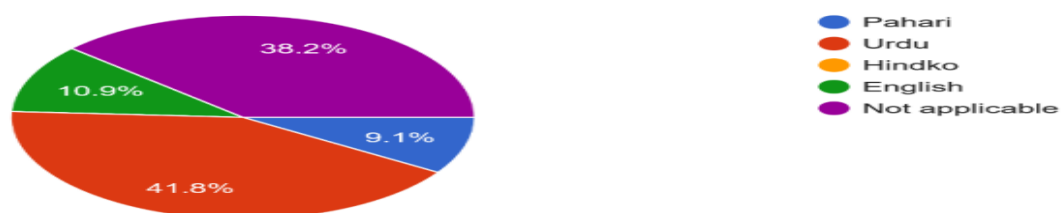
In social gatherings and conversations with friends, the data shows that Urdu is the most commonly used language (67.3%), followed by Hindko (21.8%), while Pahari is used by only 9.1% of respondents. This shows that Pahari speakers often switch to more widely accepted languages for better communication and social acceptance. The low use of Pahari in public highlights its declining role and growing marginalization in urban social settings.

**Figure 5: Language used in communication with parents**



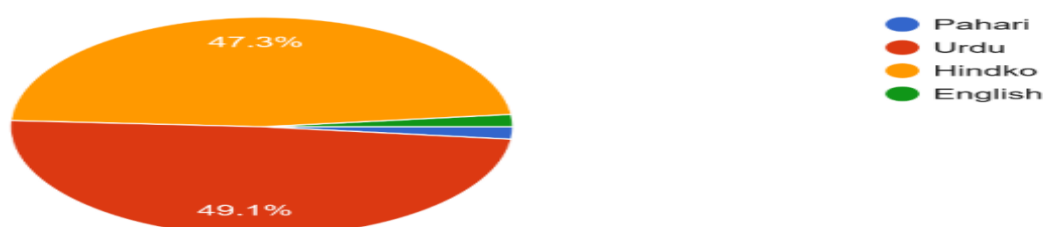
Communication with parents remains largely in Pahari, as stated by 61.8% of respondents, indicating that the home remains a crucial domain for the transmission of the mother tongue. The use of Urdu (20%) and Hindko (14.5%) reflects some degree of language shift among younger generations, likely influenced by schooling, media, and social interaction. However, the dominance of Pahari in parent-child communication points to a generational divide, where parents act as custodians of linguistic identity, reinforcing the language in the domestic sphere despite broader societal shifts. This pattern aligns with findings in language maintenance studies, where older generations often serve as anchors of minority language use within migrant families.

**Figure 6: Children's preferred spoken language**



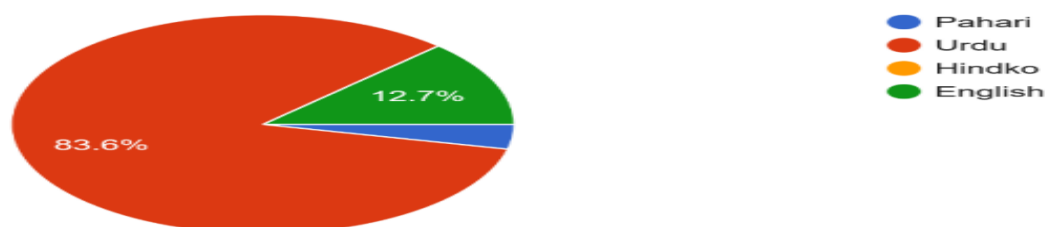
Children's language preference show a marked shift, with 41.8% favoring Urdu and just 9.1% opting for Pahari. English (10.9%) is also used, reflecting urban and educational influences. The low percentage for Pahari suggests a generational language shift, where younger speakers are moving away from their ancestral language, likely due to the greater social and educational utility of Urdu and English. This trend highlights the declining intergenerational transmission of Pahari, posing a serious risk to its long-term vitality.

**Figure 7: Language used in local marketplaces**



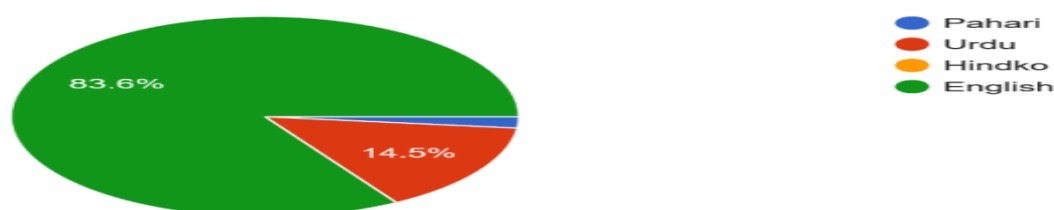
City marketplace interactions are predominantly conducted in Urdu (49.1%) and Hindko (47.3%), while Pahari is used by only 1.8% of respondents. This reflects a clear shift toward more widely spoken regional and national languages in public domains. The minimal use of Pahari highlights its limited functional role in urban commercial settings, suggesting that speakers adopt Urdu or Hindko for broader communication and social integration. This shift illustrates how marketplaces reinforce linguistic adaptation, contributing to the gradual marginalization of minority languages like Pahari in urban environments.

**Figure 8: Medium of instruction during schooling**



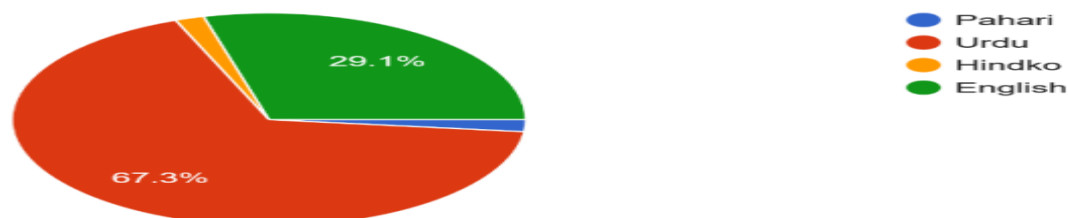
Urdu (83.6%) dominated the educational setting followed by English (12.7%), while Pahari was used by only 3.6%. This highlights the dominance of official and institutional languages in education and the absence of Pahari in formal learning environments. Such lack of representation contributes to the low prestige and declining transmission of Pahari among younger generations, reinforcing the shift toward Urdu and English as tools for academic and social mobility.

**Figure 9: Language used in formal or official writing**



English (83.6%) is the dominant language used for writing formal or official letters, followed by Urdu (15.5%), with Pahari is used by only 1.8%. This reflects the institutional and professional preference for English, positioning it as the key language for formal communication. The negligible use of Pahari indicates its limited functional utility in official domains, further contributing to its marginalization in educated and administrative contexts.

**Figure 10: Language used in official conversation**



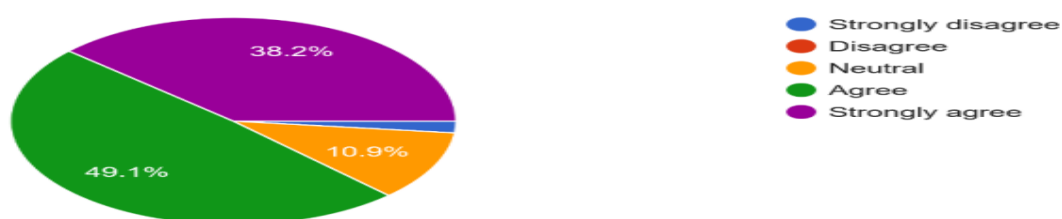
For educational or professional purpose, Urdu (67.3%) is the most frequently used language, followed by English (29.1%), while Hindko and Pahari are each used by only 1.8%. This shows a clear dominance of Urdu and English in formal environments, reflecting their higher prestige and practical value in education and employment. The minimal use of Pahari underscores its limited relevance in professional domains, contributing to its gradual decline among younger, urbanized speakers.

Thus, the data across various domains reveals a clear pattern of language shift among Pahari migrants in Abbottabad. While Pahari remains relatively strong within the home, especially in communication with parents, its use significantly declines in public, educational, and professional settings. The growing preference for Urdu and English—driven by social, educational, and urban influences—indicates a gradual erosion of Pahari, particularly among younger generations. This trend reflects the challenges faced by minority languages in maintaining intergenerational transmission and functional relevance in urbanized environments.

#### **Impact of Migration on Pahari Language and Cultural Identity**

This section presents analysis of the data collected in relation to how migration has influenced the use and preservation of the Pahari language and cultural identity among migrants in Abbottabad. The questions in this section aim to explore participants' attitudes, experiences, and observations regarding language shift, generational language use, cultural practices, and efforts for preservation. Each item has been analyzed based on the participants' responses, represented through visual charts, and interpreted in light of the study's objectives.

**Figure 11: Importance of native language to personal identity**



A significant majority of respondents value their native language, with 49.1% agreeing and 38.2% strongly agreeing that knowing and using it is important. Only 10.9% remained neutral, and 1.8% strongly disagreed. This suggests a strong emotional and cultural attachment to the native

language, despite its declining functional use in public and formal domains. The high level of agreement highlights a desire among speakers to preserve their linguistic heritage, even if practical circumstances limit its daily usage.

**Figure 12: Encouraging children to speak Pahari**



A considerable portion of parents (34% agree and 22.6% strongly agree) encourage their children to speak Pahari, showing that many parents want their children to learn and use the language within the household. However, the presence of neutral responses (24.5%) and those indicating disagreement (13.2% disagree, 5.7% strongly disagree) reflects a divide: some parents may prioritize more dominant languages like Urdu or English for practical reasons. This suggests a tension between cultural preservation and social mobility in an urban environment.

**Figure 13: Children's preferred language**

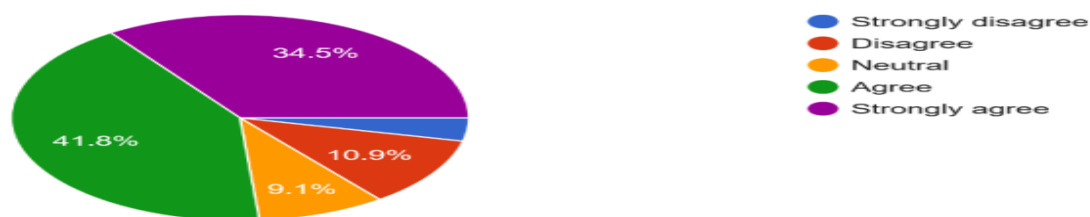


An evident pattern highlights that 63.5% of respondents agreed that children prefer to speak languages other than Pahari. This suggests that younger generations are gradually shifting away from their ancestral language, likely due to the dominance of Urdu and English in education, media, and social interactions. Such preferences may reflect the influence of their urban environment, where Pahari has limited functional use.

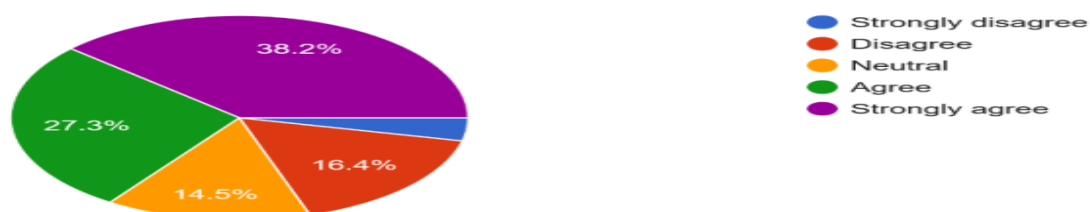
**Figure 14: Pahari fluency among the younger generation**



The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents—61.8% in total (47.3% disagree and 14.5% strongly disagree)—believed that the younger generation in their community is not fluent in Pahari. This suggests a noticeable decline in language transmission, indicating that many young people are not acquiring or using Pahari fluently. The results reflect concerns over language shift and the weakening of intergenerational continuity in maintaining the mother tongue.

**Figure 15: Pahari as a maker of personal identity**

A notable majority of respondents (76.3%) viewed Pahari as an important part of their personal identity, highlighting a strong cultural and emotional connection to the language despite migration pressures. Meanwhile, 14.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting some individuals feel less connected to Pahari, possibly due to assimilation or language shift. The 9.1% neutral responses reflect varied levels of attachment within the community.

**Figure 16: Sense of pride in speaking Pahari**

A considerable portion (65.5%) of respondents felt a sense of pride in speaking Pahari, reflecting a strong emotional and cultural attachment to their language. Only 20% (16.4% disagree, 3.6% strongly disagree) do not share this sentiment, while 14.5% remained neutral. This overall positive response highlights the symbolic value of Pahari as a marker of identity and cultural pride, even in a migrant setting. Although the data reflects a decline in Pahari usage and the influence of urban migration on cultural practices, a significant number of respondents (65.5%) still expressed pride in speaking the language. This contrast illustrates that while behavioral shifts have occurred, affective and identity-based connections to Pahari culture remain resilient. Such duality indicates a complex process of cultural negotiation rather than outright loss.

**Figure 17: Hesitation in speaking Pahari in public**

A combined 60% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that a majority of individuals still feel comfortable using Pahari in public settings. However, the remaining 40%—comprising those who agreed, strongly agreed, or remained neutral—reflect a significant portion of the community experiencing hesitation or ambivalence. This division highlights a nuanced tension between maintaining linguistic heritage and adapting to urban linguistic norms. The presence of hesitation among a substantial minority supports the study's

broader concern about the declining prestige and social acceptance of Pahari in urban environments. It indicates that while the language is still actively used by many, sociolinguistics pressures—likely driven by urbanization, social mobility, and dominant language ideologies—are influencing individual choices and shaping public language behavior. These patterns are consistent with the phenomenon of language shift, where emotional, practical, and social factors converge to reduce the visible use of a minority language like Pahari in city life.

**Figure 18: Public reaction to Pahari language speakers**



A notable portion—50.9% (30.9% disagree and 20% strongly disagree)—do not perceive a change in treatment based on their language use, indicating that for many, speaking Pahari in public does not lead to noticeable social discrimination. However, the remaining 49.1%—comprising 21.8% neutral, 21.8% agree, and 5.5% strongly agree—suggest that nearly half of the respondents do experience or are uncertain about differential treatment. This data reflects the complex and often subtle social dynamics involved in language use: while overt discrimination may not be widespread, a considerable number of individuals sense or suspect a change in how they are perceived when using their native language. These findings reinforce the idea that urban settings can foster a linguistic hierarchy where dominant languages such as Urdu or English are favored, and minority languages like Pahari may be stigmatized or undervalued. This contributes to internalized pressure among speakers, potentially accelerating language shift and weakening the public presence of Pahari.

**Figure 19: Perceived social acceptance through Hindko and Urdu**



In perceiving acceptance in language choices, a combined 61.8% (49.1% agree and 12.7% strongly agree) of respondents feel more socially accepted when they use dominant regional languages like Urdu or Hindko instead of Pahari. This majority reflects a clear preference or pressure to adopt more prestigious or widely understood languages in public and social interactions. In contrast, only 21.8% (14.5% disagree and 7.3% strongly disagree) rejected this idea, while 16.4% remained neutral, possibly reflecting internal conflict or ambivalence. These findings underline a key theme in the study: the role of language in shaping social belonging and identity. The fact that Pahari speakers feel more accepted when using other languages highlights the ongoing marginalization of their native tongue in urban settings.

**Figure 20: Influence of migration on cultural practice**

In case of migration impact on cultural practices, a combined 50.9% (41.8% agree and 9.1% strongly agree) acknowledged that migration has impacted their cultural practices, suggesting that the shift from rural to urban life has led to changes in customs, traditions, or daily routines. Meanwhile, 34.5% (30.9% disagree and 3.6% strongly disagree) did not perceive such an influence, and 14.5% remained neutral—indicating either uncertainty or a mixed experience. These findings highlight the complex nature of cultural identity in migration contexts. While many individuals experience cultural adaptation or loss as part of urban integration, others maintain traditional practices despite the new setting. The results support the study's argument that internal migration not only affects language use but also reshapes cultural identity, often prompting selective retention, adaptation, or even abandonment of heritage customs in response to new social norms and environments.

**Figure 21: Influence of migration on traditional custom**

A combined 52.8% (45.5% agree and 7.3% strongly agree) acknowledged a change in their traditional customs, indicating that urban life has influenced their cultural practices, possibly through exposure to new lifestyles, values, or social expectations. On the other hand, 38.2% (30.9% disagree and 7.3% strongly disagree) believed that their customs have remained largely unchanged, while 9.1% were neutral. This distribution reflects a common pattern in rural-to-urban migration studies—where a significant portion of migrants experience cultural adaptation or assimilation, while others actively resist change to preserve their heritage. These results align with the study's central concern: migration affects not just where people live or what language they speak, but also how they live, influencing identity, tradition, and social practices across generations.

**Figure 22: Desire for children to maintain Pahari traditions**



Regarding children language choices among Pahari migrants living in Abbottabad, data reveals a strong commitment to cultural preservation. A significant majority—71.7% (49.1% agree and 22.6% strongly agree)—expressed a clear desire to maintain a connection about their heritage by encouraging their children to engage with Pahari traditions. This sentiment reflects an awareness among migrant families of the cultural erosion that can result from urban living and linguistic assimilation. The 17% neutral and 11.3% disagreeing responses may represent individuals who are either uncertain the role of tradition in an urban context or who prioritize assimilation over cultural continuity. Overall, the data highlights the tension between integration into urban society and the preservation of minority cultural practices among internal migrants.

**Figure 23: Urban influence on the preservation of Pahari culture**



Overall response pattern demonstrate a strong consensus among participants regarding the negative cultural impact of urbanization. A substantial majority—81.9% (56.4% agree and 25.5% strongly agree)—acknowledged that the shift to urban living has contributed to the erosion of Pahari cultural values and practices. The minority views—9.1% disagreed, 3.6% strongly disagreed, and 5.5% neutral—may indicate either disagreement with the perceived extent of cultural loss or an adaptive stance toward urban influences. This reinforces the idea that urbanization is a driving force behind cultural and linguistic shift among Pahari-speaking communities.

**Figure 24: Role of language in preservation of cultural heritage**



Survey outcomes point toward a strong consensus among participants, with 96.3% (52.7% agree and 43.6% strongly agree) affirming that language plays a crucial role in cultural preservation. This overwhelming agreement highlights a shared awareness among respondents that language is not merely a tool for communication, but a vital carrier of traditions, values, and identity. The minimal neutral response (3.6%) further underscores the strength of this belief. Within the context of this study, the data supports the argument that preserving the Pahari language is essential to maintain the cultural heritage of its speakers amid urbanization and migration.

**Figure 25: Need for preservation of Pahari**





A clear trend emerges, indicating strong inclination toward active preservation efforts, with a combined 89.1% (47.3% agree and 41.8% strongly agree) of participants supporting institutional and cultural measures to safeguard the language. Only a small fraction—10.8% collectively—expressed neutrality or disagreement (3.6% neutral, 3.6% disagree, 3.6% strongly disagree). This suggests a widespread recognition of the need for structured interventions, such as incorporating Pahari into curricula and promoting it through cultural events, to ensure its survival. The findings reinforce the study's core theme that organized, community-supported efforts are vital in countering the declining use of Pahari in urban settings.

**Figure 26: Decline in Pahari usage since migration**



A significant 61.8% (38.2% agree and 23.6% strongly agree) of participants acknowledged a reduction in their use of the language after migration. Meanwhile, 32.7% (23.6% disagree and 9.1% strongly disagree) did not share this experience, and only 5.5% remained neutral. This indicates that a majority perceive urban migration as a factor contributing to decreased use of Pahari, aligning with the broader theme of language shift due to urbanization.

**Figure 27: Efforts to pass on Pahari language usage**



A high percentage (74.5%) of participants (50.9% agree and 23.6% strongly agree) expressed concern regarding the future of Pahari. This widespread concern likely stems from firsthand experience of shifting language practices following migration from rural Galyat to urban Abbottabad. Only a small portion, 10.9%, disagreed, and 14.5% remained neutral. These findings indicate that most respondents are not only aware of the declining use of Pahari in urban settings but also emotionally invested in its preservation—highlighting the cultural impact of internal migration.

**Figure 28: Decline of Pahari in the community**



The findings indicate that 70.9% of respondents (52.7% agree and 18.2% strongly agree) acknowledged a decline in the use of Pahari within their community. This supports the core concern of the research, suggesting a noticeable language shift linked to urban migration and

changing social dynamics in Abbottabad. In contrast, 18.2% (16.4% disagree and 1.8% strongly disagree) do not perceive such a decline, while 10.9% remained neutral. The dominant agreement highlights a collective awareness of diminishing language use, reinforcing the need for preservation efforts amid urban influence.

**Figure 29: Impact of migration on migrants**



Decline in use of Pahari language because of migration is noticed by significant majority of 81.8% (60% agree and 21.8% strongly agree). This strongly supports the central argument of the study—that rural-to-urban migration, particularly to Abbottabad, is accelerating language shift. Only 12.7% (10.9% disagree and 1.8% strongly disagree) hold a different view, while 5.5% remained neutral. These findings highlight migration as a key factor in diminishing language practices and reinforce the urgency of preservation initiatives.

**Figure 30: Efforts for preservation of Pahari language**



In transmitting the Pahari language to the next generation the 45.4% (30.9% agree and 14.5% strongly agree) indicated a proactive stance, while a notable 27.3% remained neutral—possibly reflecting uncertainty or a lack of initiative. On the other hand, 27.3% (18.2% disagree and 9.1% strongly disagree) openly expressed a lack of involvement in language transmission. This suggests that although there is awareness, consistent effort to preserve the language through generational transfer is still limited and needs encouragement.

**Figure 31: Beliefs about the future transmission of Pahari Language**



The responses indicate a moderate level of optimism regarding the continuity of the Pahari language among migrant communities. A combined 52.7% (43.6% agree and 9.1% strongly agree) expressed confidence in its preservation. However, 32.8% (25.5% disagree and 7.3% strongly disagree) remained doubtful, while 14.5% were neutral. This division reflects a cautious

hopefulness, tempered by real concerns about language shift and declining usage in future generations.

**Figure 32: Change in cultural identity**



A dominant share of participants (40%) disagreed with the idea that migration has significantly altered their cultural identity, suggesting a strong sense of cultural continuity despite relocation. However, 36.4% (27.3% agree and 9.1% strongly agree) acknowledged some degree of transformation in their identity post-migration. Meanwhile, 18.2% remained neutral, and 5.5% strongly disagreed, indicating that while cultural identity has been resilient for many, a notable minority has experienced shifts due to the migration experience.

**Figure 33: Adaptation of new culture**



The data shows that 43.6% of respondents (34.5% agree and 9.1% strongly agree) acknowledged adopting new cultural practices after migration, suggesting a noticeable influence of the urban environment on their way of life. On the other hand, 40% (30.9% disagree and 9.1% strongly disagree) denied such changes, indicating a continued attachment to traditional practices. Meanwhile, 16.4% remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty or mixed experiences. Overall, the findings suggest a balanced division between cultural adaptation and preservation among the migrant community.

**Figure 34: Connection with old phari traditions**



A significant 49.1% of respondents (45.5% agree, 3.6% strongly agree) showed that migration has weakened their connection to traditional Pahari culture, indicating a clear impact of relocation on cultural continuity. In contrast, 32.7% disagreed and 3.6% strongly disagreed, showing that over a third of participants still maintain strong ties to their cultural roots. Meanwhile, 14.5% remained neutral, suggesting either ambivalence or varied experiences.

Overall, the data points to a notable cultural shift influenced by migration, with many respondents feeling a dilution of traditional values.

**Figure 35: Impact of migration on traditional festival and customs**



A strong 60% of respondents (47.3% agree, 12.7% strongly agree) affirmed that their community still celebrates traditional Pahari festivals and customs, indicating a continued connection with cultural practices despite migration. On the other hand, 25.4% (21.8% disagree, 3.6% strongly disagree) expressed the opposite, suggesting a decline in such celebrations in some segments. The 14.5% who were neutral may reflect communities in transition or with mixed practices. Overall, the data shows a positive but not uniform trend of cultural preservation within migrant communities.

This section reveals that while most respondents strongly associate the Pahari language with their personal and cultural identity—expressing pride and emotional attachment—there is a clear generational shift away from its active use. Many parents still encourage their children to speak Pahari, but younger generations prefer Urdu or English, reflecting reduced fluency and use. Although public use of Pahari is not widely stigmatized, some respondents feel hesitant or notice different treatment. Overall, the data suggests a strong desire to preserve Pahari identity amid ongoing language shift influenced by urban migration and modernization.

#### **Analysis of Open-Ended Responses**

Participants' responses to the open-ended question regarding suggestions or comments reveal a strong collective concern among participants regarding the decline of Pahari language and culture, especially after migration to urban areas like Abbottabad. Many emphasized the importance of preserving Pahari as a crucial marker of cultural identity and heritage. A majority of responses suggested proactive measures, such as incorporating Pahari in educational programs, organizing cultural events, and using media tools to promote awareness.

Participants repeatedly highlighted that migration and exposure to urban environments have led to a visible reduction in the use and transmission of Pahari, especially among younger generations. As one respondent observed, *"I have noticed a decline of Pahari language in children. I think they should adapt Pahari language and culture."* This sentiment directly reflects the weakening of intergenerational language continuity—a key concern of this study.

Several respondents expressed that Pahari speakers in Abbottabad feel hesitant or even embarrassed to use their native language. One pointedly remarked, *"Now a days children as well as parents hesitate to speak Pahari in Abbottabad area,"* while another added, *"They feel shy to speak Pahari in local vehicles also."* These quotes underscore the social pressure and linguistic insecurity felt in urban settings, supporting the argument that migration influences language attitudes and identity.

Participants also voiced alarm over the potential loss of their linguistic heritage, with one stating, *"Pahari is our identity and if we will not speak Pahari then one day Pahari will be finished and no*

*one will know about this.*” This reflects a deep concern for the long-term sustainability of the language and aligns closely with the research objective of assessing language shift and identity transformation.

Interestingly, one respondent acknowledged that the perception of the Pahari accent can hinder its use, sharing that “when we speak Pahari...people think that we are fighting,” although “we are just speaking.” This highlights how linguistic prejudice might contribute to its decline.

On the positive side, many respondents suggested practical steps for revitalization, including educational integration, community-driven festivals, digital content creation, and encouraging youth involvement. One detailed suggestion involved incorporating Pahari into school curricula and organizing storytelling or poetry sessions, while another emphasized that “Pahari language and culture should be promoted to sustain its importance,” reflecting the broader call for community involvement in cultural preservation.

Participants also highlighted the role of media and documentation, urging the use of digital platforms like YouTube or Facebook to share content in Pahari. The need to document oral histories and develop learning materials such as “mobile apps or audio lessons” was proposed to maintain linguistic continuity.

The importance of identity was another recurring idea. Statement like, “Mother language must be given preference in order to promote our norms and values” underline the link between language and cultural survival.

Overall, the responses reflect a dual reality: while the cultural and emotional value of Pahari remains strong among many community members, its active use is declining under urban influence. Participants are aware of the risks and are eager for structural and community-based solutions to ensure the preservation and inter-generational transmission of both language and culture.

### **Discussion and Findings**

The primary focus of this study was to explore how migration has influenced the use of the Pahari language and shaped the cultural identity of its speakers. The collected data from Pahari-speaking migrants in Abbottabad presents a nuanced picture of language use, identity, and cultural adaptation within an urban setting. Consistent with sociolinguistic theories on language shift and migration, the findings reveal a complex interplay between preservation and erosion of the Pahari language and culture.

Firstly, while Pahari remains actively spoken within many households—especially in communication with parents and among older generations—its usage diminishes noticeably in public and social domains. Migrants frequently shift towards Urdu and Hindko, dominant regional languages, particularly in marketplaces, educational settings, and formal communication. Among siblings and children, a preference for Urdu has emerged, suggesting that peer interactions and schooling exert considerable influence on language choice. This pattern underscores a clear language shift driven by socio-economic necessities, educational demands, and the perceived prestige of dominant languages in urban life.

Cultural identity among the participants reflects a similarly complex picture. Most respondents strongly associate Pahari with personal and cultural identity, expressing emotional attachment, pride, and a sense of belonging rooted in language and tradition. Despite this, many admit that migration has affected their cultural practices, leading to changes in daily routines, celebrations, and customs. The urban setting presents both opportunities for enrichment and risks of

assimilation, resulting in a process of selective retention—where certain cultural elements are maintained, while others are adapted or gradually lost. Interestingly, while some respondents perceived no significant shift in their identity post-migration, others acknowledged a subtle transformation shaped by new social norms and interactions.

Moreover, the data highlights that, social perception also plays a critical role in shaping language use. Although outright stigma may not be widespread, many respondents reported feeling more socially accepted when using Urdu or Hindko in public spaces. This subtle linguistic hierarchy fosters hesitation in using Pahari openly, especially among youth, and contributes to a sense of marginalization. Some participants shared personal anecdotes about embarrassment or misinterpretation associated with speaking Pahari, indicating that social pressures—whether real or perceived—further inhibit its usage in public.

The intergenerational transmission of Pahari emerges as a critical concern. Although most respondents value the language's importance and express a strong desire to pass it on, there is evidence of declining fluency in native language and preference for other languages among younger family members. This decline aligns with migration's impact on cultural practices, where traditional customs and linguistic habits are weakened by urbanization and exposure to diverse linguistic environments.

Collectively, these findings confirm that migration from the Galyat region to Abbottabad city emerges as a transformative force, reshaping not just the linguistic practices but also the cultural worldview of Pahari-speaking communities. The data reinforce the thesis argument that urban migration induces both linguistic attrition and identity negotiation, underscoring the urgency of revitalization efforts. Without institutional support, educational inclusion, and community-driven cultural programs, Pahari risks marginalization and possible extinction in urban settings. This study thus calls for targeted policy interventions to promote Pahari language use across domains, encourage positive attitudes towards the language, and facilitate intergenerational transmission. By doing so, the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Pahari community can be preserved, ensuring that migration does not equate to cultural loss but rather contributes to a dynamic, resilient identity.

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

This study investigated the impact of migration on the Pahari language and cultural identity of speakers from the Galyat region who have settled in Abbottabad city. The research was motivated by concerns over the declining use of Pahari in urban contexts, where dominant languages such as Urdu, Hindko, and English increasingly influence linguistic practices and cultural expression. Drawing upon sociolinguistic theories of language shift and identity, the study sought to examine how rural-to-urban migration reshapes linguistic choices, patterns of intergenerational transmission, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

A quantitative research design was employed, using structured questionnaire distributed to Pahari-speaking migrants in Abbottabad. The data collected from participants provided measurable insights into language use across domains such as family, peer interaction, and public spaces, as well as participants' perceptions of cultural change and identity. The overall trends point toward a gradual reconfiguration of linguistic and cultural practices within the migrant community. Rather than functioning as the primary medium of interaction across all domains, Pahari has become more symbolically tied to heritage and familial intimacy, while socially

dominant languages are increasingly used for mobility and integration in the city. This shift in communicative preferences, accompanied by subtle changes in cultural orientation, reflects the pressures of urban assimilation and the complexities of negotiating identity in multilingual settings.

Beyond its immediate focus on the Pahari community, the thesis contributes to a wider understanding of how urbanization and migration affect linguistic and cultural diversity. It highlights the importance of documenting minority languages and emphasizes the role of research in informing both academic debates and practical measures for cultural preservation. In doing so, the study positions itself as a reference point for future investigations into the dynamics of migration, language vitality, and identity in Pakistan and comparable multilingual contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to explore the impact of internal migration on the Pahari language and cultural identity of speakers who have relocated from the Galyat region to Abbottabad city. Using a descriptive quantitative design and structured questionnaire, the research collected data from 55 Pahari-speaking migrants of varied ages, educational backgrounds, and occupations.

The findings reveal a significant shift in linguistic practices across different social domains. While Pahari continues to be used within homes—especially in communication with parents—it is steadily losing ground to Urdu, Hindko, and English in public, educational, and professional settings. The generational decline in the use of Pahari is especially concerning, with younger participants showing a marked preference for Urdu and English, indicating reduced intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue.

Cultural identity, although still strongly tied to Pahari language and traditions, shows signs of adaptation and change. Migration to an urban environment has led many participants to alter or abandon certain cultural customs, even as they retain a sense of belonging and pride in their ethnic identity. The social perception of Pahari as a less prestigious language further discourages its open use, contributing to its marginalization in city life.

These findings support the thesis that migration is a transformative force, reshaping both language use and cultural identity. The study underscores the need for targeted efforts—both policy-driven and community-based—to preserve the Pahari language and cultural heritage in urban settings. Without such measures, the language faces a risk of continued decline and eventual loss.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the understanding of language shift in internal migration contexts, highlighting how urbanization and social pressures can undermine linguistic diversity. It calls for urgent revitalization strategies to protect minority languages like Pahari, ensuring they remain a living part of Pakistan's multicultural fabric.

### **Recommendations**

1. Introduce the Pahari language as an optional subject or part of extracurricular activities in schools located in Pahari-speaking areas of Abbottabad to promote early exposure and linguistic pride among children.
2. Encourage the creation of Pahari-language content on social media, YouTube, and local radio to keep the language visible and relevant, especially for younger audiences.
3. Mandate the inclusion of regional languages like Pahari at the primary level, especially in linguistically diverse areas, to promote early language development and cultural identity.



4. Launch a nationwide initiative under the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Culture to document, promote, and protect endangered local languages, including through funding and teacher training.
5. Encourage families to actively use Pahari at home and in social gatherings, promoting natural intergenerational transmission and reducing dependency on dominant languages in intimate domains.
6. Advocate for the recognition of Pahari as a regional language by the government to ensure its inclusion in linguistic surveys, educational planning, and cultural funding.
7. Undertake qualitative research, including interviews and ethnographic studies, to explore personal experiences of language loss, identity negotiation, and cultural adaptation among migrant communities.
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing multilingual education policies in Pakistan and identify practical entry points for integrating minority languages like Pahari into public education systems.

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