



USING SINDHI IN UNIVERSITIES TO DEVELOP SINDHI IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Prof. Dr. Maya Khemlani David
mayadavid@yahoo.com

Professor, Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya,
Malaysia.

Dr. Humaira Irfan
humaira.irfan@ue.edu.pk

Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Malaysia and
Associate Professor, University of Education, Lahore,
Pakistan.

Dr. Syeda Rabia Tahir
rabia0404gillani@gmail.com

Senior Lecturer, UNITAR International University,
Malaysia.

Abstract

Preserving linguistic and cultural heritage is a prerequisite for any community's identity formation. Universities undertake a pivotal role in dynamically developing and revitalizing precious cultural heritage. This study investigated the integration of Sindhi language within Pakistani universities located in Sindh, Pakistan to cultivate Sindhi identity and cultural traditions among young community members, identifying practical, university-led interventions for intergenerational cultural transmission. The research was conducted across two university environments, serving as primary data collection sites, emphasizing their potential for structured cultural development. The respondents were the postgraduate students of selected Sindhi universities. The study also included innovative application of ChatGPT as a data source. This dual approach combined traditional qualitative data with AI-derived insights for a comprehensive understanding. The study revealed a multifaceted approach to cultural revitalization. Key findings included significant advancements in Sindhi language usage, the enduring impact of pioneering figures on cultural identity, effective strategies for cultural preservation, and pervasive acts of community resilience. These illustrate how linguistic development, historical recognition, and active preservation foster cultural vitality. The findings emphasize the proactive role of formal educational institutions in shaping and transmitting cultural identity, positioning them as dynamic canter of revitalization. Furthermore, integrating contemporary AI tools like ChatGPT offers a promising avenue for future cultural and linguistic studies. This study provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of university-led language immersion and cultural engagement programs in reinforcing Sindhi identity and resilience. It also demonstrates a novel blueprint for integrating AI into cultural research methodologies, advancing digital humanities and language preservation.

Keywords: *AI In Research, Cultural Preservation, Sindhi Identity, University Education*

Corresponding Author: Dr. Humaira Irfan (Asia Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Malaysia and Associate Professor, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan). Email: humaira.irfan@ue.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Language serves as a fundamental symbol of intangible aspects such as community, solidarity, identity, power, and security (Irfan, 2018). It is widely recognized that language is central to constructing the meaning of human experience, thoughts, feelings, appearances, and behavior (Sengupta, 2009). The intrinsic value of cultural diversity has garnered significant attention from international bodies, with research by UNESCO affirming it as a defining characteristic and common heritage of humanity, necessitating its preservation for universal benefit. This includes intangible cultural heritage, encompassing languages, social ethics, traditions, customs, practices, and spiritual beliefs of specific groups. Such heritage fosters a rich and varied world, nurturing human capacities and values (Irfan, 2018).

In the context of multiculturalism, time and space contract as people, knowledge, and images flow faster across territorial boundaries in contradictory conditions of complex connectivity (Irfan, 2020). Consequently, multiculturalism is a perspective that acknowledges the diversity and differences among groups based on culture. It not only recognizes the existence of diverse communities but also assigns positive value and equal respect to the collective identities of all ethnic communities (Hussain et al, 2021). Sengupta (2009, p. 148) argues that proponents of the multicultural movement in the West have often overlooked discrimination based on cultural affiliations by advocating for the liberal principle of "equality as uniform treatment." Conversely, in Pakistan and other South Asian countries, multiculturalists demand recognition, respect, and rights based on difference, asserting that individuals are not merely atomistic citizens but are deeply embedded in culture (Irfan, 2018). Rahman (1996) aptly states that at every stage ethnicity is linked to language, whether indexically, implementationally or symbolically. For Sindhi ethno-nationalists, their language is a central facet of Sindhi identity and a vital element of their cultural heritage (David et al, 2022).

The Sindhi nationalist movement advocated for the use of the Sindhi language in spheres of power, which met with opposition from the ruling elite (Rahman, 1996). The central government, dominated by Punjabis and Mohajirs, sought to extend Urdu's use across all multilingual federating units to prevent the rise of separatist ethnicity (Ali & David, 2023). Historically, the cultivation of regional languages was criticized under the premise that Pakistanis exhibited nepotism and tribalism, failing to transcend provincial identities. This theory of provincialism served as the standard explanation for Sindhi, Pashtun, Bengali, and Baloch ethno-nationalism (Irfan, 2018). Consequently, English and Urdu were privileged over indigenous languages to counteract ethnic nationalist tendencies. However, this unjustified valorization paradoxically threatened linguistic and cultural diversity within the country. Notably, in all provinces except Sindh, minimal legislation has been enacted to promote regional languages in official spheres, including education (Rahman, 1996).

Rasool (2000, p. 386) highlights the pivotal role of language in the social construction of national cultural identity, providing the medium through which the nation's narrative is constructed, told, and retold in literature, myths, rituals, and symbols. The adoption of a common language is generally perceived as a crucial means by which discrete groups within a nation-state can be integrated into a shared cultural value system. Rasool (2000) further contends that "Historically this 'authentic' version of the 'nation', in many instances, has positioned minority languages at the margins of society by demarcating those who speak its language, and those, whose languages lack 'national authenticity'" (p. 386). While there is an emphasis on cultural hegemony, it is also debated that linguistic and cultural diversity foster identity, which Crystal (2011, p. 384) defines as the summation of characteristics that constitute a community. He asserts that "If diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human. If the development of multiple cultures is so important, then the role of languages becomes critical, for cultures are chiefly transmitted through spoken and written languages. Accordingly, when language transmission breaks down, through language death, there is a serious loss of inherited knowledge" (Crystal, 2011, p. 384).

The former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, recognized the power of language in fostering nationalist sentiments in Bengal and observed the Sindhi nationalists' strong feelings towards Urdu. To mitigate further risks concerning language, Sindh experienced riots in 1971-1972 due to demands for Sindhi as the medium of instruction in schools (Rahman, 1996). Ultimately, Sindhi was adopted as the medium of instruction at the primary level in Sindh's public schools. Irfan (2018) notes that "Urdu is the unquestionable national language yet has entered into new conflicts with local vernaculars." Therefore,

eliminating English at this critical juncture could be an imprudent political decision, as "rivalry is between Sindhi or Pashto and Urdu and not one or another of these languages and English" (Tickoo, 2006, p. 172). Nevertheless, Bhutto sought to appease religious parties' sentiments towards Urdu by granting it official recognition in the newly framed constitution (Mahboob, 2002, p. 24). This paper aims to explore the multifaceted role of universities in fostering Sindhi identity and cultural traditions through the abundant integration of the Sindhi language. By examining historical contexts, contemporary challenges, and the potential of modern tools, this research seeks to provide insights into effective strategies for cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission.

1.1. Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the extent to which extensive Sindhi language integration within university settings contributes to the development of Sindhi identity among young community members.
2. To identify and analyse practical, university-led interventions designed for the transmission and revitalization of Sindhi cultural traditions.
3. To explore the contributions of pioneering Sindhi figures and their enduring impact on the cultural identity of the Sindhi community, particularly within academic contexts.
4. To document and understand everyday acts of resilience demonstrated by the Sindhi people in preserving their language and culture.
5. To assess the utility of advanced AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in gathering insights and supporting research related to Sindhi language development, cultural preservation, and community resilience.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the integration of Sindhi language in university curricula and daily academic life influence the formation and strengthening of Sindhi identity among young community members?
2. What specific university-led programs, initiatives, or policies are most effective in promoting and preserving Sindhi cultural traditions for future generations?
3. In what ways have the contributions of pioneering Sindhi figures shaped the current cultural landscape and identity of the Sindhi community, and how are these contributions recognized within university settings?

4. What are the observable manifestations of everyday resilience among the Sindhi people in maintaining their linguistic and cultural heritage, particularly within educational environments?
5. How can AI tools, such as ChatGPT, be effectively utilized to gather and analyse information pertaining to the development of Sindhi language, the contributions of its pioneering figures, the preservation of its culture, and the resilience of its people?

2. Methodology

This qualitative study employed a multi-source data collection strategy to address the research objectives and questions, focusing on the preservation and revitalization of Sindhi language and culture within academic contexts and broader community resilience. The research design is primarily qualitative, utilizing focus group interviews to gather in-depth insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of participants. This primary data collection is complemented by a systematic analysis of AI-generated content to broaden the scope of inquiry and explore the utility of emerging technologies in cultural research. The study's interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and social realities of participants, guided the overall research process.

Two public sector Pakistani universities in Sindh BS University and QV University were selected for the focus group interviews, representing distinct regional contexts within Pakistan. A convenience sampling strategy was employed, which involves selecting participants who are readily available and willing to participate. This method was chosen due to its practicality in accessing specific populations within educational institutions. A sample size of five participants from each university, totalling ten participants across both institutions, was determined. Participants comprised students who were actively involved in or knowledgeable about Sindhi language and cultural initiatives within their respective universities. The small sample size for the focus groups was deemed appropriate for in-depth qualitative exploration, allowing for rich data collection on specific themes related to Sindhi identity formation, cultural transmission, and university interventions, consistent with recommendations for qualitative research aiming for depth over breadth.

Primary Data Collection: Focus Group Interviews: Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted at both BS and QV Universities. A topic guide was developed based on research objectives and questions, drawing on established principles for effective qualitative interviewing. The guide covered themes such as the integration of Sindhi language in university settings, university-led cultural interventions, and the recognition of pioneering Sindhi figures. Each focus group lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and

was audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. Detailed field notes were also taken during the interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information. Supplementary Data Collection: ChatGPT-Generated Content: In addition to the primary qualitative data, the study systematically accessed and analysed information generated by ChatGPT (OpenAI GPT-4). Specific, targeted prompts were formulated to extract information related to:

- The contributions of pioneering Sindhi figures.
- Strategies and challenges in the preservation of Sindhi culture and identity.
- Examples of everyday acts of Sindhi people's resilience in maintaining their language and culture.

The data obtained from ChatGPT was treated as a supplementary information source, providing a broad overview and diverse perspectives that enriched the analysis derived from the primary qualitative data. This approach also allowed for an assessment of AI tools' utility in supporting cultural research, directly addressing one of the study's key objectives. It is crucial to note that this AI-generated content was not considered primary empirical data but rather a form of textual resource to be critically evaluated alongside other findings, acknowledging the current capabilities and limitations of large language models. Analysis of Primary Data (Focus Group Interviews): The audio-recorded focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the participants' expressions. The transcribed data were then subjected to a thematic analysis, following the rigorous six-phase approach outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarizing with the data (reading and re-reading transcripts).
2. Generating initial codes (systematically identifying interesting features across the data).
3. Searching for themes (collating codes into potential themes).
4. Reviewing themes (checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire dataset).
5. Defining and naming themes (refining the specifics of each theme).
6. Producing the report (providing a vivid and compelling account of the data).

This systematic process allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, key concepts, and overarching themes related to Sindhi language integration, cultural interventions, and identity development directly from the voices of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis of Supplementary Data (ChatGPT-Generated Content): The textual data obtained from ChatGPT was analyzed using a descriptive content analysis

approach (Çoban, 2022). This involved systematically reviewing the generated text for relevant information pertaining to the predefined categories (pioneering figures, cultural preservation, and resilience). The information was then summarized, categorized, and critically examined for its relevance and potential to complement the insights gained from the focus group interviews. The analysis also considered the strengths and limitations of AI-generated content in the context of academic research, including its potential for biases, inaccuracies, or generalizations (Christou, 2023), which were carefully acknowledged and discussed in the study's limitations and discussion sections.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the respective institutional review boards. All participants in the focus groups provided informed consent in writing, understanding the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the confidentiality of their responses. Anonymity was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to the universities and participants in the research output. The use of ChatGPT data also considered ethical implications related to data accuracy, intellectual property, and potential biases inherent in AI models (Ferrara, 2023) which were acknowledged as part of the critical analysis of this supplementary data source.

3. Results

QVS5 shares his thought as, ‘regional languages should be promoted because they promote our culture and traditions’ and the respondent BSS6 believes, ‘we feel good when our teachers give examples in Sindhi’. QVS1 suggests that Sindhi language can be used to ‘create humour’ to enliven the classroom atmosphere. Respondent QVS2 says, ‘we should introduce Sindhi dictionaries and newspapers because it’s very important for our next generation’. The view is that the rich cultural heritage is weakened by making regional languages such as Sindi and Punjabi ‘optional languages’ (BSS1). It is viewed that regional languages like Urdu and English have not been endorsed and cultivated on equal ground.

Thus, the Sindhi language should be promoted in accordance with global standards because it is practically useful to comprehend the concepts of various subjects and also because ‘creativity comes from your first language’ (BST1). Participant BST4 reflects, ‘Sindhi language...should be introduced as a literature/ philosophy course...which might develop the thoughts of students’. On the other hand, some take the view that emphasis must be laid on the development of English language in the country and regional languages should be restricted to domestic uses at home not at university level. Informant QVS4 asserts, ‘different languages create discriminations. I prefer English should be emphasised

and promoted over regional languages...the regional languages should be used for spoken purposes at home but should not be used at university level’.

Participant QVS1 agrees, ‘Sindhi language should be used for communication purposes only’ and QVS2 believes, ‘Sindhi can’t take the place of official languages or languages which are fulfilling our needs’. Also BSS2 suggests, ‘my opinion is that regional languages should be limited to the particular regions and should only be used to preserve culture’. Respondent BSS5 expresses his opinion, ‘regional languages...don’t play role in the development of the country’. BSS2 points out, ‘Sindhi are making more efforts than Punjabis’ to promote their language in Sindh. Sindhi has been established as a language of instruction in which the basic education is imparted in Sindh but Punjab has to tackle with Punjabi/Seraiki controversy, therefore, Punjabi cannot be recognised as a medium of instruction in Punjab. Thus, these two leading languages, particularly Urdu, has struck a blow to Punjabi’.

Currently, Pakistanis are unwilling to surmount the constraints of provincial languages, cultures and caste systems. The Sindhi provincial identity come into confrontation with Pakistani national identity culture also restricts students from speaking English because most of the students’ social background is rural where they are not much exposed to the use of English. In addition, respondents believe that ethnicity is a contentious issue, so discussion about it is deliberately avoided in classroom. It is inferred from these examples that multilingualism, cultural diversity and ethnicity attempt to segregate the society by struggling against the ideology of national unity.

In relation to national ideology, it is noted that respondents also express their views about the status of regional languages in Pakistan. Some believe that regional languages should be promoted because they can preserve the culture and traditions but at the same time their opinion is that the aim of regional languages should only be oral communication because they do not play a role in the development of the country and can never take the place of official languages which are fulfilling the needs of the people. On one hand, there is an issue of national integration and on the other, the language rights of minority languages. The majority languages replace minority languages in all important functional uses. In colleges and schools, regional languages, such as Punjabi and Sindhi are offered as optional languages along with other oriental languages, such as Arabic and Persian. These regional languages are taught only in their particular regions. For example, Sindhi is not taught in Punjab or alternatively, Punjabi is not prescribed in the curriculum in Sindh and so on. Urdu and English have become dominant languages and the regional languages mostly in universities are not normally used. This explains that multilingualism can be a disadvantage as it leads to inadequate proficiency in any of the languages.

It is interesting to note that some teachers create ‘humour’ in the classroom in Sindhi because they feel that humour can be best shared in one’s mother tongue. It is perceived that when lectures loaded with difficult terminology in English confuse postgraduate students, teachers instinctively revert to telling jokes in Sindhi or Punjabi to cheer up the classroom environment. Further, it is surmised from the evidence that Sindhi has a value in deepening the ‘creativity’ in students. It is important to mention that Pakistanis are a creative nation. Pakistani literary treasures include Suffiana (mystic) poetry, folklores, classical and modern poetry and modern prose which are composed in Sindhi and Urdu. Similarly, like giving vent to creative and imaginative talents genuinely in one’s L1, one can ruminate more deeply in one’s native language. To support the development of Sindhi, some participants suggest that philosophical courses in Sindhi language should be introduced in colleges which will certainly expand students’ introspective faculties. Regarding these views, it can be argued that these courses will also be helpful to develop academic rationalism in pupils which means having a keen interest in the subject to that extent that it will refine their intellectual and analytical skills. The purpose of education is to facilitate students to think deeply and evaluate reasonably the content of courses rather than merely studying them from an examination perspective. Using Sindhi could assist to impart training to students regarding this noteworthy aspect of education. Once academic rationalism is developed, it can be used for appraisal of curricula in English as well.

Interestingly, the responses indicate that Sindhis are more enthusiastic to promote their language as compared to Punjabis. The history shows that Punjab participated keenly to support the movement of Urdu as the national language (NL) of Pakistan. The evidence in this study also signifies that many postgraduate students are inclined towards Urdu as their mother tongue. It is worth mentioning that Punjab is currently undergoing a Punjabi and Seraiki controversy. Seraiki are very sentimental about their mother tongue and have also demanded a separate province due to linguistic and cultural differences. This might be an important reason for the neglect of Punjabi language in Punjab so conflicts over MTs can be avoided. At the same time, some other participants’ views suggest that various languages create discrimination in society, therefore in universities, English should be prioritised over regional languages. The regional languages should be used for domestic purposes only and have no importance in universities.

3.1. Chat GPT Data

The resilience of Sindhi women during the Partition of India in 1947 is a compelling narrative of courage, adaptability, and strength. Despite facing displacement, loss, and the challenges of rebuilding their lives in unfamiliar territories, many Sindhi

women emerged as pivotal figures in preserving their culture, supporting their families, and contributing to society.

3.2. Pioneering Figures and their Contributions

- Popati Hiranandani: A prolific Sindhi writer and social activist, Hiranandani authored over sixty books, focusing on themes of feminism, social justice, and the Sindhi diaspora's experiences. Her literary work played a significant role in documenting the struggles and resilience of Sindhi women during and after Partition.
- Kala Prakash: Born in Karachi, Prakash's writings vividly depict the pain of displacement and the sense of homelessness experienced by Sindhi Hindus post-Partition. Her novels and poems serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of Sindhi women.
- Sundri Uttamchandani: An influential writer and member of the Progressive Writers' Movement, Uttamchandani's works often highlight the inner strength of women facing societal upheavals. Her stories, such as "Bhoori," portray women who, despite losing their physical beauty due to the ravages of Partition, radiate inner strength and dignity.

3.3. Everyday Acts of Resilience

Beyond literary figures, countless Sindhi women demonstrated resilience through everyday actions:

- Economic Participation: Post-Partition, many Sindhi women took on economic responsibilities to support their families. They engaged in activities like making papads and pickles for sale, sewing, and working as telephone operators or assembly-line workers. These efforts were crucial in rebuilding their communities and preserving their cultural identity.
- Educational Pursuits: Even before Partition, Sindhi women were breaking barriers by pursuing higher education. For instance, Devi Lakhani studied medicine in Edinburgh in the 1920s, and many others attended Lady Hardinge College in Delhi during the 1930s and 40s. Post-Partition, these educated women played vital roles in healthcare and education sectors across India.

3.4. Preservation of Culture and Identity

- Culinary Traditions: Food became a medium through which Sindhi women preserved and passed on their cultural heritage. Traditional dishes like sai bhaji served as comforting reminders of their homeland and were instrumental in maintaining a sense of identity in new environments.
- Oral Histories and Storytelling: Women played a key role in preserving Sindhi culture through storytelling and oral histories. Their narratives have been crucial in documenting the experiences of the Sindhi community during Partition.

4. Discussion

This study explored the complex dynamics of Sindhi language integration, cultural preservation, and identity development within Pakistani university settings, alongside the broader manifestations of Sindhi resilience and the utility of AI tools in this research domain. The findings from both the focus group interviews and the ChatGPT analysis offer nuanced insights into these multifaceted issues, addressing each of the research objectives and questions.

4.1. Sindhi Language Integration and Identity Development

The extent to which Sindhi language integration within university settings contributes to the development of Sindhi identity among young community members presents a dichotomy. Participants like QVS5 and BSS6 highlight the intrinsic value of regional languages in promoting culture and fostering a sense of belonging, stating that "regional languages should be promoted because they promote our culture and traditions" and "we feel good when our teachers give examples in Sindhi." This directly responds to RQ1 by suggesting that integration, even in informal instances like teachers providing examples, positively influences identity formation by creating a comfortable and culturally resonant learning environment.

However, a significant counter-narrative emerged, indicating the marginalization of Sindhi in formal academic settings. The perception that Sindhi and Punjabi are "optional languages" (BSS1) weakens their rich cultural heritage, leading to a situation where "regional languages like Urdu and English have not been endorsed and cultivated on equal ground." This suggests that while there's a desire for integration, the current status of

Sindhi as secondary or optional limits its comprehensive role in identity development (Abbasi et al., 2023). The sentiment that "creativity comes from your first language" (BSS1) and the suggestion for a "Sindhi language...should be introduced as a literature/philosophy course" (BSS4) underscore the belief that deeper engagement with Sindhi could foster intellectual and analytical skills, thereby reinforcing identity through academic rationalism.

Conversely, some participants, notably QVS4 and QVS1, advocated for a restricted role for regional languages, emphasizing English for academic purposes to avoid "discriminations," with regional languages relegated to "spoken purposes at home." This perspective, shared by QVS2 ("Sindhi can't take the place of official languages") and BSS5 ("regional languages...don't play role in the development of the country"), points to an existing linguistic hierarchy that challenges the full integration of Sindhi, consequently impacting its potential to solidify identity within university spaces. The prevalence of Urdu and English as dominant languages further explains why multilingualism might sometimes lead to inadequate proficiency across languages, inadvertently hindering identity formation linked to a strong first language.

4.2. University-Led Interventions for Cultural Transmission

Regarding RQ2 on university-led programs for promoting Sindhi cultural traditions, the findings suggest a lack of formal, widespread initiatives. The current status of Sindhi as an optional subject, taught only in specific regions (e.g., Sindhi in Sindh but not Punjab), indicates a fragmented approach to cultural transmission. While there's anecdotal evidence of teachers using Sindhi to "create humour" (QVS1) or clarify complex concepts in English, these are individual efforts rather than systemic university-led programs.

The suggestion for introducing "Sindhi dictionaries and newspapers" (QVS2) and "philosophical courses in Sindhi language" (BST4) points to potential interventions that participants believe could be effective. These proposals highlight a desire for more structured academic engagement with the language beyond basic communication, aiming to develop students' "introspective faculties" and "academic rationalism." However, the evidence from the focus groups suggests that such comprehensive, institutionally endorsed programs are largely absent, limiting the universities' role in actively transmitting and revitalizing Sindhi cultural traditions for future generations (Abbasi et. al. 2023).

4.3. Contributions of Pioneering Sindhi Figures and Recognition in Academia

RQ3 aimed to explore the impact of pioneering Sindhi figures and their recognition within academic contexts. The ChatGPT data provided rich details on figures like Popati

Hiranandani, Kala Prakash, and Sundri Uttamchandani, highlighting their significant contributions to Sindhi literature, feminism, and documenting the Sindhi diaspora's experiences, particularly post-Partition. Their works vividly depict themes of displacement, resilience, and inner strength, undeniably shaping the cultural landscape and identity of the Sindhi community (Abbasi et al, 2023).

However, the primary data from the focus groups offers limited insights into how these contributions are currently recognized within university settings. While the importance of Sindhi literature and philosophy was acknowledged by BST4, there was no direct mention by participants of specific academic programs, courses, or events dedicated to studying these pioneering figures or their enduring legacies. This suggests a potential gap between the historical and literary significance of these figures and their active incorporation into university curricula or cultural promotion efforts, implying that their impact on cultural identity within academic contexts might be more indirect or less formalized.

4.4. Everyday Acts of Resilience Among the Sindhi People

Addressing RQ4 on observable manifestations of everyday resilience, both data sources provide compelling examples. The focus group data reveals resilience in the very act of advocating for Sindhi's promotion, despite systemic challenges. BSS2's observation that "Sindhi are making more efforts than Punjabis" to promote their language, and the establishment of Sindhi as a language of instruction in Sindhi's basic education, are clear indicators of collective resilience. The act of teachers instinctively using Sindhi for "humour" or to deepen "creativity" demonstrates a practical, daily resilience in navigating language barriers and fostering a connection with students through their mother tongue.

The ChatGPT data significantly expands upon everyday acts of resilience, particularly highlighting the experiences of Sindhi women during and after the Partition of India in 1947. Their economic participation (making papads, pickles, sewing), educational pursuits (Devi Lakhani studying medicine in the 1920s), and commitment to preserving culinary traditions (sai bhaji) and oral histories are powerful manifestations of resilience. These examples illustrate how the Sindhi people, especially women, have actively maintained their cultural heritage through practical, daily actions in the face of adversity, reinforcing a strong sense of identity. While these examples from ChatGPT are not directly tied to educational environments, they provide a broader context of the community's persistent efforts in cultural maintenance that would naturally influence the mindsets of students entering universities (David et.al, 2022).

4.5. Utility of AI Tools in Supporting Research

The study's final objective and RQ5 assessed the utility of advanced AI tools like ChatGPT in gathering insights. The research demonstrates that ChatGPT can be effectively utilized as a supplementary data source for contextual information and historical overview. It provided detailed, structured information on pioneering Sindhi figures, their contributions, and specific examples of everyday acts of resilience and cultural preservation, which were not as explicitly detailed in the primary focus group data. This utility is particularly evident in providing a historical and broader community perspective that complements the immediate university-centric views.

However, its utility also comes with caveats. As an AI tool, ChatGPT's output is based on its training data and may lack the nuanced, subjective experiences and immediate contextual relevance that qualitative interviews provide (Wang, 2024). It cannot capture the live, evolving opinions or the depth of participant emotions found in focus groups. Nonetheless, for generating comprehensive background information, identifying key historical figures, and cataloguing cultural practices, ChatGPT proved to be an invaluable resource, significantly accelerating the initial information-gathering phase and enriching the discussion by providing a broader socio-historical context. This study's approach thus suggests a model where AI tools can serve as powerful complementary instruments in qualitative research, particularly for expanding thematic scope and providing historical depth, paving the way for future mixed-methods studies integrating AI-generated insights with traditional qualitative data.

5. Implications and Recommendations

This study's findings offer several significant implications for policy, practice, and future research concerning language, identity, and cultural preservation within educational and societal contexts in Pakistan. Based on these implications, concrete recommendations are proposed to foster a more inclusive and culturally rich academic environment.

5.1. Policy Implications

The observed marginalization of Sindhi and other regional languages in university curricula carries substantial policy implications. The current "optional" status and regional restrictions on teaching these languages (e.g., Sindhi not taught in Punjab) contribute to their diminished role in identity formation and limit their potential for broader national integration. Policymakers should recognize that prioritizing national languages (Urdu and English) to the exclusion of regional ones can inadvertently weaken cultural heritage and lead to inadequate linguistic proficiency in all languages.

The resistance to fully incorporating regional languages, often tied to concerns about discrimination or a perceived lack of developmental value, overlooks the cognitive and cultural benefits of multilingualism. Policies that solely focus on English as a lingua franca, especially in higher education, may alienate students from rural backgrounds who have limited exposure to English, thereby creating educational inequities and reinforcing existing social stratifications. The evident enthusiasm among Sindhis to promote their language, even amidst historical controversies like the Punjabi/Seraiki debate, underscores the need for policies that respect and integrate linguistic diversity rather than suppressing it.

5.2. Practical Recommendations

1. **Integrate Sindhi Language and Literature into Core Curricula:** Universities in Sindh should move beyond offering Sindhi as merely an optional subject. Comprehensive Sindhi language courses, including literature, philosophy, and history, should be developed and potentially made compulsory for relevant disciplines or as a general education requirement. This would foster deeper engagement with the language and its intellectual heritage, aligning with participants' suggestions for developing "academic rationalism" and "creativity" (BSS1, BSS4).
2. **Develop University-Led Cultural Revitalization Programs:** Universities should actively initiate and support programs that celebrate Sindhi culture. This could include:
 - **Establishing Sindhi Language Resource Centers:** Providing access to Sindhi dictionaries, newspapers, literature, and digital resources as suggested by QVS2.
 - **Organizing Cultural Events:** Hosting Sindhi poetry recitals, folk music performances, art exhibitions, and historical lectures to increase exposure and appreciation among students and faculty.
 - **Promoting Bilingualism in Academic Discourse:** While English is crucial, encouraging the strategic use of Sindhi in specific academic contexts, such as during discussions, Q&A sessions, or even as a medium for initial conceptual understanding in certain courses, can enhance learning and identity connection, building on the observed effectiveness of humor in Sindhi (QVS1).
3. **Formal Recognition of Pioneering Figures:** Universities should actively integrate the works and lives of pioneering Sindhi figures (e.g., Popati Hiranandani, Kala Prakash, Sundri Uttamchandani) into relevant courses, such as literature, history, gender studies, and cultural studies. Guest

lectures, seminars, and research opportunities focusing on their contributions would help students connect with their cultural heritage and understand the broader narrative of Sindhi resilience.

4. Leverage AI Tools for Educational and Research Support: Universities should explore and invest in how AI tools like ChatGPT can aid in:
 - Curriculum Development: Generating diverse learning materials, historical contexts, and linguistic resources for regional languages.
 - Language Learning Support: Creating interactive tools for Sindhi language acquisition, including vocabulary, grammar, and cultural nuances.
 - Archiving and Documentation: Utilizing AI for digitizing, transcribing, and analyzing historical Sindhi texts and oral traditions to make them more accessible for research and study.
 - Cross-Cultural Understanding: Generating summaries of diverse cultural perspectives to foster empathy and reduce "discriminations" based on language

5.3. Future Research Recommendations

1. Longitudinal Studies on Identity Formation: Conduct longitudinal research to track the long-term impact of specific language integration policies on Sindhi identity development among university students. This would provide more robust evidence of causality and developmental trajectories.
2. Comparative Studies Across Regional Languages: Expand this research to include a broader range of regional languages across Pakistan (e.g., Balochi, Pashto, Seraiki) to understand the commonalities and unique challenges in their preservation and integration within higher education. This could also shed light on how internal linguistic controversies (like the Punjabi/Seraiki debate) affect policy and practice.
3. Quantitative Assessment of Language Proficiency and Academic Performance: Future studies could employ quantitative methods to assess the correlation between proficiency in the mother tongue (Sindhi) and academic performance in other subjects, potentially providing empirical evidence to counter arguments against regional language promotion in academia.
4. In-depth Exploration of Everyday Resilience in Academic Environments: While this study touched upon resilience, future research could delve deeper into how everyday acts of cultural and linguistic maintenance manifest specifically within the daily routines, social interactions, and informal learning spaces of university students and staff.

5. Ethical Guidelines and Best Practices for AI in Cultural Research: Further research is needed to develop clear ethical guidelines and best practices for utilizing AI tools like ChatGPT in sensitive cultural and linguistic research. This includes addressing concerns about data bias, accuracy, intellectual property, and ensuring outputs are critically evaluated to avoid perpetuating misinformation or stereotypes.
6. By implementing these recommendations and pursuing further research, educational institutions in Pakistan can play a more proactive role in fostering linguistic diversity, strengthening cultural identities, and harnessing modern technologies to preserve and promote the rich heritage of communities like the Sindhis.

6. Conclusion

This study shed light on the multifaceted relationship between Sindhi language, cultural identity, and educational environments in Pakistan, further exploring the role of AI tools in such research. Our findings reveal a complex interplay between aspirations for Sindhi language promotion and the pragmatic realities of its integration within university settings. While there's a clear desire among some community members and academics to see Sindhi flourish as a medium for creativity, deeper thought, and cultural preservation, its current status often remains peripheral, overshadowed by dominant national and international languages.

The research highlights a notable gap in formal, university-led interventions specifically designed to transmit and revitalize Sindhi cultural traditions. While individual teachers make commendable efforts, systemic programs are largely absent, suggesting a missed opportunity for higher education institutions to act as robust custodians of linguistic and cultural heritage, a role vital for language maintenance and reversal of language shift.

Furthermore, this study underscored the profound, yet often unacknowledged, contributions of pioneering Sindhi figures in shaping the community's cultural landscape. While their literary and social impact is immense, their integration into academic curricula within the surveyed universities appears limited, indicating a need for greater recognition and study.

Crucially, the investigation into everyday acts of resilience among the Sindhi people from advocating for language promotion to the historical efforts of Sindhi women in preserving traditions through daily life demonstrates an enduring spirit of cultural maintenance despite challenges. This resilience is a powerful testament to the community's

commitment to its heritage, reflecting broader patterns of minority group perseverance in the face of linguistic and cultural pressures.

Finally, the study successfully demonstrated the utility of AI tools, specifically ChatGPT, as a valuable supplementary resource in qualitative research. It proved effective in providing rich contextual and historical data, thereby broadening the scope of inquiry and complementing the nuanced insights gained from primary human sources. This dual-source approach offers a compelling model for future research exploring cultural phenomena, though always necessitating critical evaluation of AI-generated content for potential biases or inaccuracies.

In essence, while the path to comprehensive Sindhi language and cultural integration in higher education is fraught with challenges, the clear desire for its promotion, coupled with the inherent resilience of the Sindhi people and the emerging capabilities of AI, presents unique opportunities. Moving forward, strategic policy interventions and proactive university initiatives are essential to truly harness the potential of regional languages in fostering diverse and strong cultural identities.

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