



HINDKO LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION AND PRESERVATION: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Hindko language is spoken in many parts of Pakistan, particularly in Hazara Division. In spite of its rich linguistic and cultural heritage, Hindko faces challenges due to rapid urbanization, language shift, limited institutional support, and the dominance of major languages. This study focuses on the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language, highlighting the key factors that threaten its sustainability. The paper examines challenges such as insufficient written resources, decreasing intergenerational transmission, and minimal presence in formal education. It further explores potential strategies for effective language documentation, including audio-visual recording of native speakers, development of written sources, community participation and the use of digital technologies. Stress is placed on the role of educational institutions, researchers, and local communities in promotions of Hindko for future generations. The study argues that systematic documentation combined with community-driven preservation efforts can meaningfully contribute to maintaining the linguistic diversity. The findings aim to provide a foundation for future research and policy initiatives related to the preservation of Hindko and other regional languages.

Keywords: *Hindko, Language, Community, Documentation, Respondents*

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1. Introduction

The Hindko is regional language spoken mainly in Hazara Division and other parts of the country. Ethnologue explains that Hindko has two main dialects: Northern and Southern. The Northern dialect is mostly spoken in Muzaffarabad and the Hazara region, including Mansehra, Abbottabad, and the Indus and Kaghan valleys. The Southern dialect is spoken and understood in the areas south of Hazara, such as Kohat, Peshawar, and Attock (Ali et al., 2021; Parekh, 2023). Hindko serves as a sign of cultural identity and social unity for its speakers and has a rich oral and literary tradition (Rahman, 1996). Hindko contains of several dialects and reflects historical contact with other languages such as Punjabi and Urdu. Despite its wide use in informal settings, Hindko remains marginalized in education, governance, and mainstream media, which has limited its development as a standardized language (Shackle, 2003). In recent years, Hindko has faced serious challenges due to language shift and sociopolitical pressures. Globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of Urdu and English have contributed to a decline in intergenerational transmission, especially among younger speakers (Crystal, 2000). Moreover, the lack of systematic documentation and institutional support has resulted in insufficient written and digital resources. These factors place Hindko at risk of gradual erosion, threatening the loss of valuable linguistic knowledge, oral history, and cultural practices embedded within the language (Rahman, 2002). Language documentation and preservation are therefore essential for safeguarding Hindko for future generations. Documentation involves the systematic recording and analysis of linguistic data, while preservation focuses on maintaining and revitalizing language use within communities (Himmelmann, 1998). Effective strategies include the creation of audio-visual archives, development of written documents, community-based initiatives, and the integration of digital technologies. This study aims to explore the key issues affecting Hindko language documentation and to propose practical strategies that can contribute to its preservation and revitalization in contemporary sociolinguistic contexts. In this study following objectives will be addressed.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the linguistic and sociocultural significance of the Hindko language within its speech communities.
2. To identify the major challenges affecting the documentation, preservation, and intergenerational transmission of Hindko.
3. To examine the role of educational institutions, researchers, and local communities in current Hindko documentation and preservation efforts.
4. To propose practical, community-based, and technology-driven strategies for the effective documentation and preservation of the Hindko language.

2. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed-method approach by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the current status of the Hindko language and the challenges related to its preservation. The quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Questions have been designed according to the research objectives and existing literature. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed among selected employees of Hazara University, faculty members of Government Postgraduate College for Women Mandian, Abbottabad, and Government Postgraduate College Boys, Abbottabad and some others peoples of the District Abbottabad. Maximum questionnaires were distributed among Hindko speakers. The qualitative data were gathered through 200 semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences, opinions, and perceptions. Interviews and formal discussion were conducted in various rural and urban localities of District Abbottabad to record how Hindko is spoken in daily life and cultural activities. The qualitative data were analyzed to identify common themes, language use patterns, and attitudes toward Hindko. Audio and video recordings of native Hindko speakers from different areas and age groups helped to document natural language use and generational differences. By integrating quantitative results with qualitative insights, the study improved the reliability and validity of the findings. Based on the results, the study recommends practical, community-based, and technology-supported strategies involving local communities, teachers, and cultural organizations to promote the sustainable preservation of the Hindko language.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is drawn on the theories of language endangerment, language documentation, and sociolinguistic maintenance, which collectively provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language. Central to this framework is the concept of language endangerment, which explains how social, political, and economic pressures contribute to language shift and decline (Crystal, 2000). According to this perspective, regional languages such as Hindko are vulnerable when they lack institutional support, formal education, and intergenerational transmission. This theory helps to explain the challenges faced by Hindko within a multilingual context dominated by Urdu and English. The framework also draws on language documentation theory, particularly the work of Himmelmann (1998), which emphasizes the systematic recording, analysis, and archiving of linguistic data as a means of safeguarding endangered languages. Documentation is viewed not only as a linguistic activity but also as a cultural practice that preserves oral traditions, traditional stories, and indigenous knowledge. In the context of Hindko, this approach highlights the importance of creating comprehensive audio-visual masses, written texts, and digital archives to ensure long-term accessibility and scholarly use. In addition, the study is

informed by sociolinguistic theories of language maintenance and shift, which focus on patterns of language use within communities (Fishman, 1991). Fishman's emphasis on intergenerational transmission and community involvement provides a valuable lens for understanding the sociocultural dynamics influencing Hindko's vitality. This theoretical perspective underscores the role of families, educational institutions, and community organizations in sustaining language use. By integrating these theoretical approaches, the framework makes a general analysis of the issues affecting Hindko documentation and supports the development of practical, community-based, and modern technology-based strategies for its preservation.

4. Literature Review

There is plenty of literature available on the study of languages but relevant to this topic is discussed here. The Hindko language is a significant regional language of Pakistan. Hindko has attracted scholarly attention due to its rich linguistic features and sociocultural importance. Research into the structure of Hindko, including its indexical and pragmatic features, highlights not only its linguistic uniqueness but also its under-documented status within academic studies (Javed et al., 2023). Studies focusing on linguistic aspects, such as deixis in Hindko, emphasize the necessity of detailed documentation to enrich understanding and teaching practices, particularly in multilingual educational contexts where Hindko speakers navigate between local and dominant languages (Javed et al., 2023). This linguistic scholarship highlights the broader academic need for systematic documentation that captures the distinctions of the language before further erosion occurs. Hindko, has its linguistic roots, and its evolution over time, along with its geographical spread in regions such as Hazara division, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and other parts of Punjab and Kashmir. The basic linguistic characteristics of Hindko, its dialects, and its relationship with other regional languages, emphasizing its role as an important means of communication and cultural expression (Munglori, 2010). Beyond linguistic structure, sociolinguistic studies reveal significant challenges facing Hindko in terms of language maintenance. Research on language shift demonstrates that younger generations in urban and multilingual settings increasingly shift toward Urdu and English due to socio-economic pressures, often at the expense of Hindko's intergenerational transmission (Abbasi & David, 2024). These findings indicate that, while Hindko remains actively spoken in some domains, but it is under risk due to formal education and media devastatingly favor dominant languages. Research studies further show that negative perceptions by teachers and preference for major languages among students can intensify the vulnerability of Hindko and other local languages (Kosar & Khan, 2024). Such sociolinguistic problems highlight the need for strategic language preservation efforts that go beyond mere documentation. Community and institutional responses to these linguistic challenges illustrate emerging efforts toward preservation and revitalization. The Hazara

Hindko Academy have historically attempted to promote Hindko through literary and educational efforts, though they face ongoing resource constraints (Hazara Hindko Academy, 2016). Parallel research on digital tools for minority language documentation suggests that integrating modern technology, such as multimedia archives and language learning applications, can significantly enhance community engagement and long-term sustainability of endangered languages, including Hindko (Mehmood et al., 2025). These examples point toward a multifaceted strategy that combines traditional documentation with community participation and digital innovation, offering a strong foundation for future preservation initiatives. Based on theoretical frame work objectives of this study are explained below.

4.1. Linguistic and Sociocultural Significance of Hindko

The prime objective of this research study is to review and explain the linguistic and sociocultural significance of Hindko language. It is fact that language plays an important role for cultural identification in any society. The Hindko language has unique phonological, morphological and syntactic features that distinguish it from other languages such as Punjabi and Pashto (Shackle, 2003). Hindko also demonstrates considerable dialectal variation, reflecting historical contact with multiple linguistic groups (Javed et al., 2023). This linguistic richness makes Hindko an important subject for descriptive and comparative linguistic research, contributing to the broader understanding of languages. In addition, Hindko's oral traditions, traditional stories, and poetic forms preserve idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and narrative structures that are crucial for understanding the cultural and cognitive frameworks of its speakers (Rahman, 1996). From a sociocultural point of view, Hindko is a key sign of identity and helps to bring the community together. It plays a vital role in daily communication, local administration, and cultural practices within Hindko-speaking regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and northern Punjab (Abbasi & David, 2024). The language carries social significance, as it conveys not only interpersonal relationships but also historical memory, collective identity, and indigenous knowledge systems (Kosar & Khan, 2024). Despite pressures from dominant languages such as Urdu and English, Hindko maintains a strong presence in informal domains, community events, and intergenerational communication, serving as a symbol of cultural identity. The sociolinguistic functions of Hindko underscore its importance in preserving regional identity and fostering a sense of belonging among its speakers (Crystal, 2000). Grounded in sociolinguistic maintenance theory, this objective (Linguistic and social cultural significance of Hindko) seeks to examine Hindko not only as a linguistic system but also as a sign of cultural identity and social heritage. From Fishman's (1991) perspective, language vitality is closely linked to community functions such as family interaction, cultural practices, and social networks. Analyzing Hindko's linguistic features alongside its sociocultural roles helps to highlight its importance in expressing

local traditions, values, and collective memory. This aligns with language endangerment theory by demonstrating why the loss of Hindko would entail not only linguistic erosion but also significant cultural and social consequences for its speakers. The study of the linguistic and sociocultural importance of Hindko is based on language endangerment theory, which explains that a language's survival depends not only on how many people speak it, but also on how important it is in the daily, cultural, and social lives of its speakers (UNESCO, 2003). Hindko plays an important role in expressing community identity, oral traditions, and local knowledge, which makes it central to understanding the language's current condition. In addition, language documentation theory explains that a language cannot be studied separately from the culture in which it is used (Himmelmann, 2006). Therefore, analyzing Hindko's sounds, vocabulary, and patterns of communication together with its social and cultural uses helps to know how the language is actually used and valued within its speech communities. Hindko's preservation and documentation are crucial for safeguarding the cultural heritage and social identity of its speech communities in various part of the country particularly in Hazara Division. Understanding these dimensions is essential for designing effective strategies for language maintenance, intergenerational transmission, and community-led revival initiatives. To understand the linguistic and socio-cultural importance of the Hindko language, formal discussion and interviews were conducted in different areas of district Abbottabad. Questionnaire has also been distributed among various faculty members of different government colleges of Abbottabad, employees of Hazara University and other people of District Abbottabad to collect their opinions and experiences related to Hindko. The questionnaire first asked about the mother tongue of the respondents. The results showed that 90.90% of the people said Hindko is their mother language, while 9.10% said that Urdu is their mother language (Fig.1). This shows that Hindko is the main native language of most respondents. When asked where they learned Hindko, 90.90% of the respondents said they learned it at home, while 9.10% said they learned it from the local community (Fig. 2). This indicates that Hindko is mostly passed down within families. Regarding speaking ability, 92.30% of the respondents said they speak Hindko fluently, whereas 8% said they speak it very little (Fig. 3). This shows that most people have a strong command of the language. The respondents were also asked where they mostly use Hindko. The results showed that 82% use Hindko at home, 15% use it with friends, and 3% use it during cultural events (Fig. 4). This suggests that Hindko is mainly used in daily family life. In response to questions about using Hindko with the younger generation, 62% said they often speak Hindko with young people. However, 15% said they never speak it, another 15% said they rarely do, and 8% said they always speak Hindko with the younger generation (Fig. 5). This shows that language transmission to children varies among families. When asked whether children in their families understand and speak Hindko, 62% said yes, children both understand and

speak it while 31% said children partially understand or speak Hindko, while 7% said no, children do not understand or speak it (Fig. 6). Finally, the respondents were asked about the importance of Hindko to their cultural identity. The results showed that 62% consider Hindko very important, 23% consider it important, and 15% feel neutral (Fig. 7). This highlights that Hindko plays a significant role in the cultural identity of most respondents. The interviews and formal discussions also conducted with people from various urban and rural localities of District Abbottabad, respondents were asked about the importance of the Hindko language. Most participants strongly expressed that Hindko is an essential part of who they are. They explained that it connects them to their families, traditions, and local history of the region. Respondents from rural areas emphasized that Hindko is the main language through which cultural knowledge is passed from elders to younger generations. According to the participants, if Hindko is not preserved, many cultural elements like traditional songs, folk poetry and oral narratives may slowly disappear.

Responses

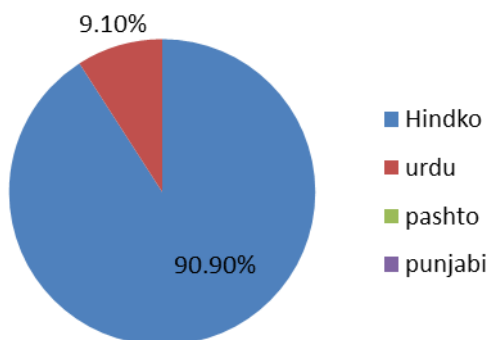


Fig. 1

Responses

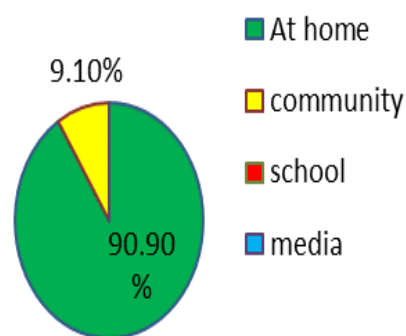


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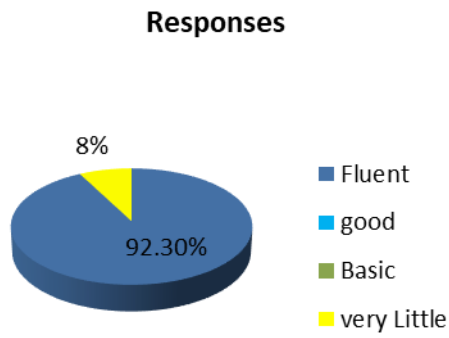


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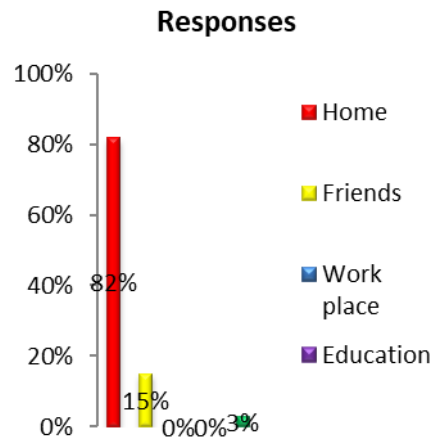


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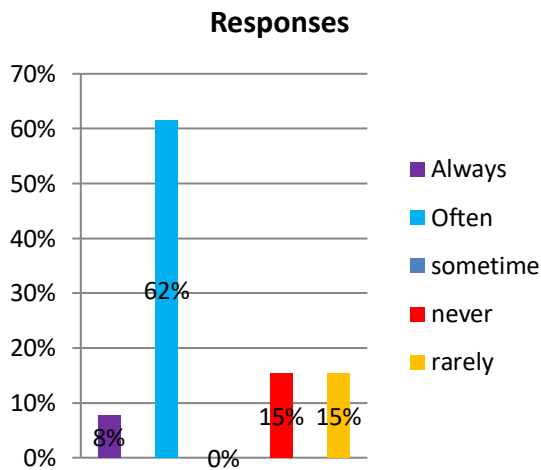


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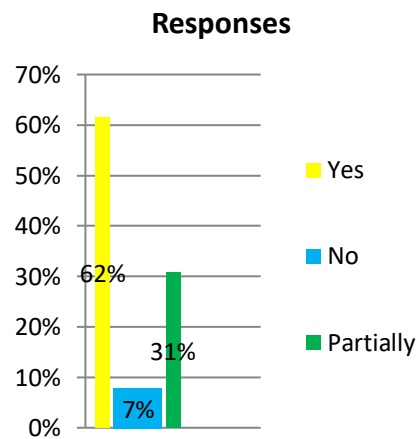


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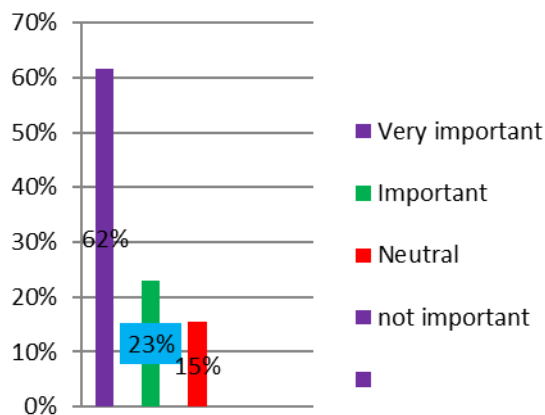


Fig. 7

4.2. Challenges in the Documentation, Preservation, and Transmission of Hindko

The second objective of this study is to highlight the various challenges in the documentation and transmission of Hindko. Hindko, despite its cultural and linguistic significance, faces multiple challenges that threaten its sustainability. One of the primary issues is language shift, particularly among younger generations, who increasingly adopt Urdu and English due to their dominance in education, media, and employment (Abbasi & David, 2024). This shift reduces the frequency of Hindko use in households and public spaces, weakening intergenerational transmission. When children are not exposed to language survival consistently at home or in schools, the language's ability to survive naturally declines (Fishman, 1991). Similarly, the survival of Hindko is lessening because it is not being constantly transmitted to children at home or strengthened through formal education in schools. When a language is not used in key spheres such as the family and educational institutions, its intergenerational transmission declines, which eventually impends its strength.

During the interview and formal discussion with the people from various localities of District Abbottabad, it was found that most Hindko respondents can speak their language well. This shows that the language is still being preserved. However, some people from the younger generation feel shy or think it is impolite to speak Hindko. Many respondents also said that they cannot read Hindko or have very weak reading skills. This problem mainly exists because other languages are given more importance in education and media. Hindko is not taught in schools or colleges, and very little reading material is available in the language. Maximum Hindko speaking respondents from various localities of District Abbottabad reported that they have no ability to write in the Hindko language. Only a small number of people said they have reasonable writing skills of Hindko, and none reported having good or very good writing proficiency. This shows that native languages are completely neglected in the education system. Teacher's attitude and belief also impact the student towards language choice (Karsli, 2007). Undesirable attitudes of teachers toward local languages and the strong focus on dominant languages in schools play an important role in language loss. Education and teacher play important role for shaping students' language attitude (Hattie, 2009). It is evident that when native languages are ignored, schools contribute to language endangerment and the loss of cultural uniqueness. In these modern times students are discouraged from speaking and writing in their native languages, which leads to a decline in language skills and reduced use of native languages in daily life. Another fact which was explored during the interview from different localities of Abbottabad that large number of Hindko-speaking respondents reported that they rarely use Hindko during formal interactions, such as parent-teacher meetings in schools. Most respondents said that teachers prefer using Urdu and English in

the classroom. No one preferred using, Hindko, during class. This shows that there is little interest in using native languages in school and highlights a strong interruption from the community's linguistic tradition. Another significant challenge is the lack of systematic documentation. Hindko suffers from limited written resources, inconsistent orthography, and few comprehensive linguistic studies (Javed et al., 2023; Shackle, 2003). The absence of standardized grammatical descriptions, dictionaries makes both academic research and educational efforts difficult. Oral traditions which are central to Hindko's cultural heritage are at risk of being lost if they are not systematically recorded and archived. Limited digital resources exacerbate the problem, leaving much of the language undocumented in modern media and technology platforms (Mehmood et al., 2025). Institutional and sociocultural factors further complicate Hindko preservation. Educational institutions often prioritize Urdu or English, marginalizing regional languages (Kosar & Khan, 2024). Moreover, societal attitudes sometimes undervalue local languages, considering them less prestigious, which discourage younger speakers from using Hindko. There are resource constraints as well as insufficient funding for community programs, research, and technology-based initiatives for documentation and revitalization of Hindko. Collectively, these challenges contribute to the gradual erosion of Hindko. There is urgent need for comprehensive strategies for Hindko documentation through community involvement and educational institutions. This objective (challenges in the documentation, preservation, and transmission of Hindko) is informed primarily by language endangerment theory (Crystal, 2000), which explains how dominant languages, globalization, urbanization, and limited institutional support contribute to language shift. By applying this framework, the study identifies factors such as reduced use of Hindko in education, media, formal domains, and weakening intergenerational transmission. From a sociolinguistic perspective, these challenges are examined in relation to family language practices and community norms, revealing how social pressures disrupt the natural transmission of Hindko to younger generations. From the perspective of language documentation theory, additional challenges include limited funding, lack of trained linguists, inadequate archival infrastructure, and insufficient community involvement (Austin & Grenoble, 2007). Identifying these constraints helps to explain why Hindko remains under-documented despite having a significant number of speakers. To understand the challenges related to the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language, the interview and formal discussion was conducted with the people from various localities of District Abbottabad. The questionnaires were also distributed among the different faculty members of various government colleges of Abbottabad, employees of Hazara University and other peoples of various localities of Abbottabad. The questionnaire included questions about the possible decline of Hindko and the reasons behind it. When respondents were asked whether Hindko is at risk of declining, 46% said yes, they believe Hindko is in danger while 30%

said no, they do not think Hindko is declining, while 23% said they were not sure (Fig. 8). This shows that many people are concerned about the future of the Hindko language, although some are unsure. The respondents were also asked about the main reasons for the decline of Hindko. According to the results, 46% of the respondents believe that Hindko is declining because people prefer to use Urdu or English instead. This indicates that dominant languages are replacing Hindko in daily communication. Additionally, 39% of the respondents said that the decline is due to a lack of education in Hindko, meaning that Hindko is not properly taught in schools or educational institutions, while 8% of the respondents believed that social stigma plays a role, as some people may feel embarrassed or discouraged from using Hindko. Finally, 7.7% mentioned other reasons, which may include limited written material or lack of official support (Fig. 9). General, the findings show that language preference, lack of formal education, and social attitudes are major challenges to the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language. During the interviews, from several localities of District Abbottabad some people also said that a few parents were strongly motivated by the hope of improving their children's social status. Because of this, they preferred their children to learn Urdu and English instead of passing on their native language. As a result, the use of Hindko has gradually declined. During the interviews when respondents from both urban and rural areas of Abbottabad were asked whether the use of Hindko is decreasing, the majority agreed that its usage is declining. Participants from urban localities observed that younger generations prefer to speak Urdu and English, especially in educational institutions and professional settings. In contrast, respondents from rural areas stated during the interviews that Hindko is still broadly spoken in daily life; however, they also noted that the influence of Urdu and other dominant languages is increasing due to media exposure, education, and migration to cities. During the discussion the respondents explained that some challenges faced by researchers, in documenting Hindko across different localities of District Abbottabad due to limited funding, difficulty in accessing elderly native speakers in far-flung villages, and the absence of a constant writing system for Hindko. Few elderly participants shared their experiences from past times and explained that Hindko language and culture were once energetically preserved through traditional audio practices. They reminded that in the past, people commonly used cassette tapes to listen to Hindko *Mahiya* and other folk songs at home and during social gatherings. These tapes played an important role in spreading the language, especially among children and young people, who learned vocabulary, pronunciation, and cultural expressions naturally through listening. According to the elderly respondents, this practice helped keep Hindko alive in everyday life and strengthened emotional attachment to the language. However, the participants noted that in the present time this practice has largely disappeared, which they believe is one of the reasons for the decline of the Hindko language. As a result, younger generations are less

exposed to Hindko folk music and oral traditions. The elderly respondents emphasized that the loss of such traditional listening practices has reduced regular contact with the language, contributing to its gradual decline and weakening its transmission from one generation to the next.

During the interviews' very interesting fact was noted that a few elderly participants from rural localities of Abbottabad shared memories of past traditional wedding practices and clarified how the Hindko language was deeply embedded in these cultural events. They recalled that in earlier times, when the dulha was seated on the Sayj or Sej a special Hindko song, "*Sayja Hoja Chardiya, Tudan Allah Di Dowayian,*" was always sung by family members and women of the household. This song was an important part of the wedding ceremony and carried cultural values, prayers, and emotions expressed in the Hindko language. According to the elderly respondents, such songs played a vital role in keeping the language alive within family and community gatherings. The participants further explained that these traditional Hindko wedding songs helped younger generations learn the language naturally. However, the elderly respondents told that in present times this practice has declined. They explained that traditional Hindko songs are now often replaced by Urdu songs such as "*Dulay Ka Sehra Suhana lagta hi,*" which are usually played during wedding ceremonies. As a result, Hindko is used less in such cultural events, particularly in urban areas. The participants believed that the replacement of traditional Hindko songs with Urdu ones has reduced the presence of Hindko in social ceremonies.

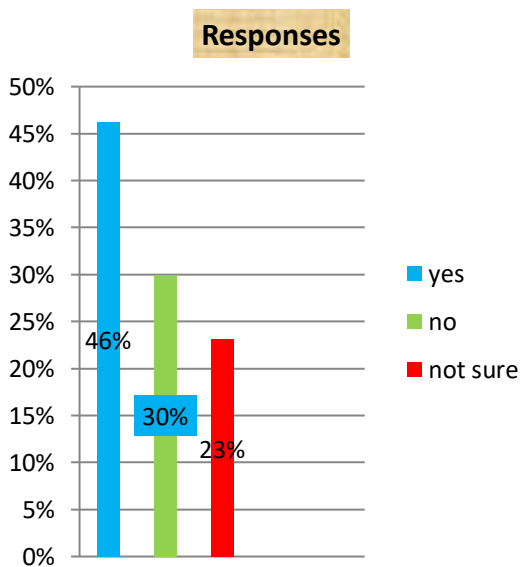


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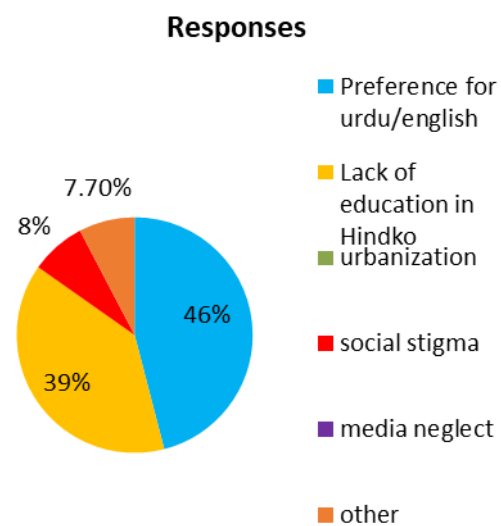


Fig. 9

4.3. Role of Educational Institutions, Researchers, and Local Communities in Hindko Documentation and Preservation

The third objective of this research study is to evaluate the role of educational institutions, researchers and local communities in Hindko documentation. Educational institutions and formal academic bodies can play a crucial role in sustaining and promoting Hindko by creating structured platforms for its study and dissemination. For instance, the Gandhara Hindko Academy in Peshawar, a collaborative initiative between the Higher Education Department, Peshawar and the Gandhara Hindko Board has been instrumental in advancing Hindko research and literature (The News; 2023). These efforts reflect how institutional recognition and academic programs can help integrate Hindko into formal education, thereby encouraging linguistic pride and scholarly interest. The family members can also play an important role in maintaining a native language and passing it on to the next generation. However, it was observed that the home, which is frequently a strong place for indigenous languages, is now being replaced by Urdu and English. It was noted during the interview and formal discussion with the people of various localities of Abbottabad that grandparents and parents still use Hindko language, but children and grandchildren are using Urdu as their main language of communication. Parents who consistently speak their native language at home provide children with natural experience, enabling them to acquire the language as a mother tongue. Research shows that language represents cultural values and traditions. When people use their native language at home, they transmit cultural norms, oral traditions, and collective memories to younger generations (Kramsch, 1998). This practice strengthens a sense of belonging and national identity. Holmes (2013) explains that institutions and local communities play an important role in promoting a language. Schools, government policies, and cultural organizations can help protect a language by using it in education, books, and public communication. Language promotion is successful only when community members actively use and teach their language to others. Without this support, stronger and more dominant languages slowly replace minority languages (Holmes, 2013). In late 2010, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government approved a plan to teach local languages in schools. The decision was made by the provincial cabinet committee on mother tongue education. According to this plan, Pashto, Hindko, Seraiki, Khohar, and Kohistani would be compulsory subjects in both public and private schools. Each language would be taught in areas where most people speak that language (Capstick, 2012, p. 49). Some researchers, both within Pakistan and globally, have also contributed to documenting and analyzing Hindko's linguistic features, and sociolinguistic dynamics. Scholarly work on Hindko's pragmatic constructs and language choice within multilingual communities demonstrates the value of empirical studies in highlighting the linguistic complexity and contextual usage of the language (Javed et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2025). Local communities are foundational to Hindko

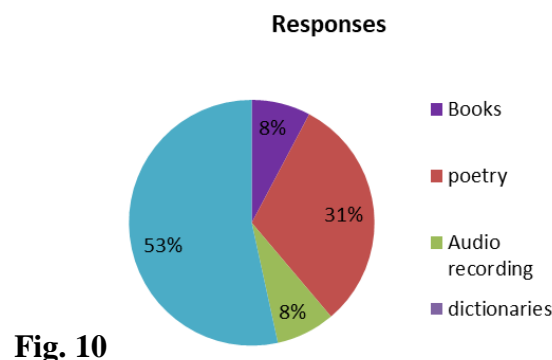
preservation through cultural advocacy and resource mobilization. The Gandhara Hindko Academy has published the various issue of its Hindko literary and cultural journal. These efforts engage the community members in documenting dialects, publishing storybooks and dictionaries, recording audio-visual materials, and planning literacy programs based on the mother tongue. These efforts reflect a bottom-up strategy where indigenous speakers serve as custodians of their own language, promoting intergenerational use and community participation in preservation activities.

It is worth mentioning that significant efforts to promote the Hindko language were made through the *Kaghan Magazine*, which is being published annually by the Government Post Graduate College No-1 (G.P.G.C.) Abbottabad. This magazine served as an important platform for Hindko literary expression and cultural preservation. Renowned academicians and scholars contributed regularly to its pages, writing in Hindko and enriching its literary landscape. By providing a dedicated space for Hindko writings, it helped raise awareness about the language's cultural importance and encouraged intellectual engagement with its literary traditions. The publication became a source of pride for the Hindko-speaking community, fostering a sense of identity and continuity. Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. Financial constraints, such as reduced funding for institutions like the Gandhara Hindko Academy, limit sustained long-term preservation initiatives and organizational growth (Business Recorder, 2025). However, the combined efforts of educational institutions, researchers, and community-driven organizations can make the way to document and preserve the Hindko. This collaborative framework helps ensure that the language continues to thrive within both academic and sociocultural domains. A few poets from Abbottabad founded the Pakistan Hindko Academy in 1978. The main aim of this academy was to promote and develop the Hindko language. The academy provided a stand where scholars, writers, and poets of the Hazara region could come together and work for the growth of Hindko. It played an important role in inspiring research, literary activities, and publications in the language (Munglari, 2010). Hindko Adbi Jirga Abbottabad was established in 1980. This literary society worked for the promotion of Hindko language and literature. The jirga not only organized literary gatherings but also published several books to support Hindko writers and poets (Munglari, 2010). Hindko Adbi Sangat was established under the supervision of Asif Saqib. Its determination was to serve and promote the Hindko language. The body published several Hindko books, including *Dukh Sanjyihaly*, *Sanj Sanweel*, and *Ohlay Khawab Khialyan* (Munglari, 2010). The Gandhara Hindko Board is a major literary and cultural organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the Hindko language and culture; it supports publications, organizes literary events, and operates the Gandhara Hindko Academy. The Gandhara Hindko Academy was established through collaboration between the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Gandhara

Hindko Board to further the promotion of Hindko language, literature, and culture (*The Express Tribune*, 2016). Additionally, Bazm-e-Ilm-o-Fun Abbottabad is a cultural society that contributes to Hindko language. Several distinguished writers like Asif Saqib, Professor Sufi Abdur Rasheed, Professor Muhammad Farid, Professor Yahya Khalid, Haider Zaman Haider, and Nazir Kasalvi have made significant contributions to the promotion and development of the Hindko language. Among them, Sultan Sakoon holds a particularly prominent place. An active and dedicated writer, he has authored numerous works, including books on Hindko proverbs and riddles, further enriching the language's literary heritage. Another positive step in this regard is the Dedhee program, which is being shown on Kay2 TV in the Hindko language, plays an important role in promoting and protecting the culture, traditions, and language of the Hazara Division. The program is not just for entertainment but present the beauty of the Hindko language. By involving local people, sharing their stories, folk songs, traditional talks, and social issues, the program helps keep the Hindko language alive and active. A major strength of the Dedhee program is that it is recorded in different areas of the Hazara Division, such as Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur. Giving local people a chance to speak in their own language and showing their happiness and problems on TV builds pride and love for the Hindko language. Drawing on language documentation theory (Himmelman, 1998) and sociolinguistic maintenance theory, this objective (role of institution, researchers and local communities) evaluates how different stakeholders contribute to safeguarding Hindko. Community involvement is analyzed using Fishman's emphasis on grassroots participation, highlighting how community-led initiatives, oral traditions, and local knowledge play a crucial role in sustaining language use. This objective connects theory to practice by assessing whether current efforts align with effective models of documentation and maintenance. According to sociolinguistic maintenance theory, which says that a language can survive only if it gets support from both institutions and the community of speakers (Fishman, 1991). Schools and other educational institutions can help by including minority languages in the curriculum, offering literacy programs, and training teachers. This increases the language's value and status in society. From the language endangerment perspective, the community itself is the main force behind a language's survival. UNESCO (2003) points out that language preservation works best when speakers are empowered to use and pass on their language.

To understand the role of educational institutions and researchers in the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language, a formal discussion and interviews were conducted in District Abbottabad. The questionnaire has also been distributed among the people to get their opinion. The questionnaire focused on people's awareness of Hindko materials, documentation efforts, and the role of institutions and individuals. When respondents were asked about their awareness of written or recorded

materials in Hindko, 53% said they know about Hindko books whereas 31% mentioned poetry, while 8% said they are aware of audio recordings, and another 8% mentioned dictionaries. (Fig. 10). This shows that although some Hindko materials exist, awareness of them is still limited, especially for recordings and reference materials. In response to the question about whether Hindko is properly documented, including grammar, dictionaries, and written texts, 50% of the respondents said no, indicating that documentation is not sufficient while 19% said yes, Hindko is adequately documented, while another 18% said it is partially documented, 13% of the respondents said they were not sure. (Fig. 11). These results suggest that many people feel more work is needed in documenting the Hindko language. The questionnaire also asked whether respondents are personally willing to help preserve Hindko. The results showed that 88.10% said yes, they are willing to contribute, while 11.10% said no (Fig. 12). This indicates strong community interest in preserving the language. When asked who should be responsible for documenting Hindko, 38% of the respondents said local communities should take responsibility, 30% believed the government should play this role, and 23% said linguists and researchers should be responsible while 6% people responded that media should also be responsible and 3% respondents said that Universities should also play their role in this regard (Fig. 13). This highlights the shared responsibility among communities, institutions, and experts. The respondents were asked whether Hindko should be taught in schools and colleges, 62% said yes, it should be taught as a subject while 19% felt it should be optional, whereas 19% said no (Fig. 14). This shows that a majority of respondents support the inclusion of Hindko in educational institutions to help preserve and promote the language. During interview in response to questions regarding the reasons behind the decline of Hindko, respondents identified several unified factors. One major cause highlighted by both urban and rural participants was the absence of Hindko as a subject in schools, colleges, and universities. This lack of formal education decreases the value of the language. Moreover, respondents stated dominant languages such as Urdu and English make limited presence of Hindko in television, radio, print media, and digital platforms which was also seen as an important factor contributing to its condensed use.



Responses

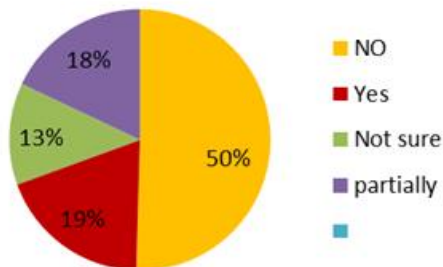


Fig. 11

Responses

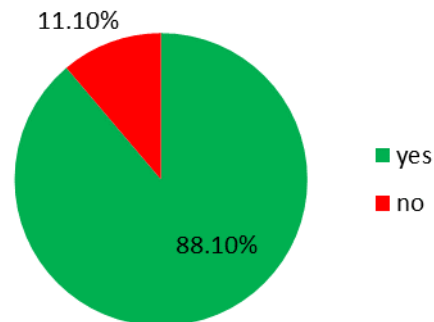


Fig. 12

Responses

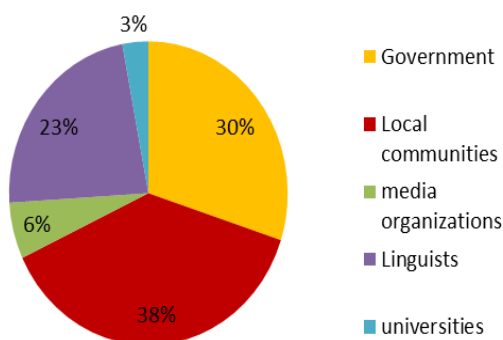


Fig. 13

Responses

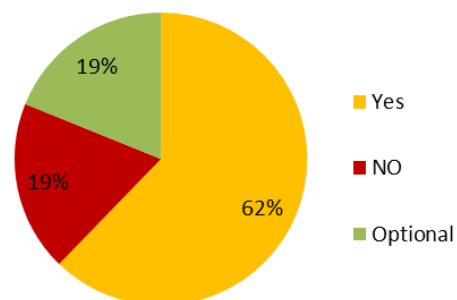


Fig. 14

4.4. Strategies for Effective Documentation and Preservation of Hindko

Effective preservation of Hindko requires various approaches that integrate community engagement, institutional support and modern technology. Community-based strategies are critical, as native speakers are the primary custodians of their language. Initiatives such as organizing language festivals, storytelling sessions, and oral history projects can help maintain active language use and intergenerational transmission. Local communities can also contribute by creating and sharing digital recordings of folk songs, proverbs, and narratives, ensuring that oral traditions are systematically documented. Collaborations between local organizations and schools can introduce Hindko language clubs or extracurricular programs that encourage youth participation and cultural pride (Abbasi & David, 2024). Based on the research objectives the following strategies can be proposed for effective documentations in Hindko.

4.4.1. Institutional Strategies

There should be institutional strategies for effective documentation and preservation of Hindko. This involves educational and research institutions taking an active role in standardizing, teaching, and promoting Hindko. Establishing formal academic programs, such as BS degrees in Hindko, and integrating the language into school curricula can provide structured learning environments and formal recognition (The News, 2023). Universities and language boards can also support the development of dictionaries, grammar guides, and textbooks in Hindko, while promoting research that documents dialectal variations and sociolinguistic patterns. Moreover, providing grants and scholarships for students and researchers specializing in Hindko can strengthen the academic community dedicated to the language. Yagmur (2011) says that institutional support is very important for keeping a group's language and culture alive. Institutional support means how much help a group receives, both formally and informally, from different institutions such as schools, mass media, government services, industry, culture, religion, and politics.

4.4.2. Technology-Driven Strategies

These strategies can play an important role for the promotion of Hindko language. Developing mobile applications, online courses, and digital dictionaries can make Hindko learning resources available to both local and diaspora communities (Mehmood et al., 2025). Multimedia archives, including audio and video recordings, can preserve spoken varieties and oral literature, while websites and social media platforms can promote language awareness and usage. Additionally, collaborative digital projects allow communities, researchers, and institutions to share resources and maintain up-to-date linguistic repositories, creating a sustainable ecosystem for Hindko preservation (Javed et al., 2023). By combining community participation, institutional support, and technological innovation, these strategies offer a comprehensive framework for safeguarding Hindko for future generations. This objective synthesizes all three theoretical perspectives to move from analysis to application. Language documentation theory supports the use of digital tools, audio-visual recording, and online archives to create durable linguistic resources. Sociolinguistic maintenance theory emphasizes community ownership, intergenerational transmission, and the integration of Hindko into everyday domains such as homes, schools, and cultural events. Language endangerment theory provides the rationale for urgent intervention by identifying risk factors and areas requiring support. From a language endangerment perspective, combining community participation with modern technology addresses both sociocultural and practical challenges, increasing the sustainability of preservation efforts (Austin & Grenoble, 2007). This objective therefore seeks to bridge theory and practice by proposing strategies that are technologically adaptable. Together, these theories inform the development of realistic, culturally focused and sustainable

strategies that combine community participation with modern technology to ensure the long-term preservation of Hindko.

Interviews and formal discussion have also been conducted in the different area of Hazara Division particularly District Abbottabad to understand the strategies for effective documentation and preservation of the Hindko language. The questionnaire was distributed among various participants for collection of data. The questionnaire included questions about community support and different methods to protect and promote the language. When respondents were asked whether they support community-based Hindko programs, 92% said yes, showing very strong support from the community, 6% said no, while 2% said may be (Fig. 15). This result shows that most people believe community programs are important for preserving Hindko. The respondents were also asked about strategies that can help preserve Hindko. According to the responses, 51% of the respondents said that teaching Hindko to children is the most effective strategy. This highlights the importance of passing the language to the next generation so it can survive in the future. In addition, 15% of the respondents believed that publishing books and literature in Hindko would help strengthen the language by improving its documentation and written resources. Another 14% said that organizing cultural festivals can help preserve Hindko by encouraging people to use the language in cultural and social activities, while 11% said that Radio /TV program can play important role to strengthen the language and 8% said social media can play important role in this regard (Fig. 16). Overall, the findings show that community involvement, education of children, development of written materials, and cultural activities are key strategies for the effective documentation and preservation of the Hindko language. During the interview and formal discussion when participants were asked about the role of documentation in preserving Hindko, they agreed that documentation is crucial for safeguarding the language. Respondents explained that systematic documentation can record Hindko vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and oral traditions in a permanent form. Participants from rural localities stressed the importance of recording elderly native speakers, as they have rich linguistic and cultural information. Audio and video recordings were considered valued resources for future generations, researchers, and language learners. During the discussions about current preservation efforts in District Abbottabad, respondents admitted that some local writers, poets, and cultural organizations are actively working to promote Hindko through poetry, literature, and cultural events. These efforts were more noticeable in urban areas, where literary gatherings sometimes take place. However, respondents from both urban and rural localities pointed out that these initiatives are limited in scope due to the lack of reliable support from government institutions. Respondents from rural areas stressed that without government support local efforts remain weak and disorganized. During the interviews when asked about the role of

educational institutions, respondents strongly believed that schools, colleges, and universities working in Hazara Division can play a vital role in preserving the Hindko language. They suggested introducing Hindko as an optional or compulsory subject at different educational levels. Participants also recommended encouraging academic research, thesis work, and seminars on Hindko language and literature. According to them, organizing cultural and literary events in educational institutions would help give Hindko recognition and validity in academic places. In response to questions about promoting Hindko among the younger generation, respondents from urban areas emphasized the importance of modern and creative methods. They suggested using music, dramas and social media platforms in Hindko to attract young audiences. Rural respondents added that combining traditional cultural practices with modern technology could help link the gap between generations and make Hindko more attractive to youth.

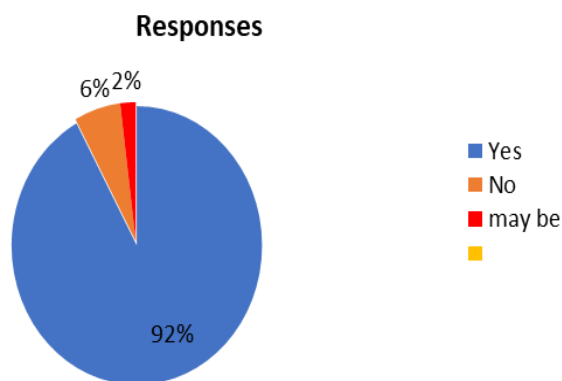


Fig. 15

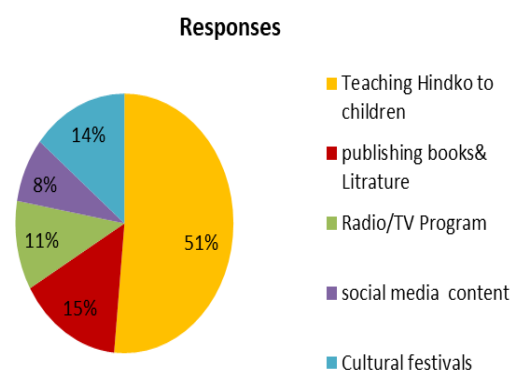


Fig. 16

4.5. Recommendations

Based on the data collected through structured questionnaires, formal discussions, and in-depth interviews and several key findings the following recommendations are proposed to enhance overall efficiency regarding Hindko language documentation and preservation and to address identified gaps.

1. **Hindko Language Transmission:** It is proposed that Hindko language protection efforts should prioritize the intergenerational transmission within families and communities. Parents and elders should be encouraged to use Hindko consistently in-home settings, cultural gatherings, and community events. There should be Hindko storytelling sessions and traditional poetry which can reinforce positive language attitudes among younger Hindko speakers. During the formal discussions and interviews conducted in rural areas of District Abbottabad, several respondents shared that in earlier times; elders would gather with family members around the fire during winter nights and narrate stories in Hindko. These friendly storytelling sessions not

only supported family bonds but also played a vital role in preserving and transmitting the Hindko language to younger generations. Participants emphasized that such traditional practices were influential in keeping Hindko vibrant and extensively spoken within the community. They suggested that reviving these cultural gatherings could meaningfully contribute to promoting and sustaining the Hindko language in the future.

2. **Integration of Hindko into Education:** Educational institutions should play a more active role by incorporating Hindko into primary schooling, and adult literacy programs. Teacher training programs should include specific modules on Hindko to support effective instruction. There should direly need of holding seminars in Hindko language on different topics in Colleges and Universities of Hazara Division.
3. **Organized Documentation:** Comprehensive linguistic documentation projects should be initiated to record Hindko phonology, grammar, vocabulary, oral literature, and discourse practices. Audio and video recordings of native Hindko speakers across different age groups and regions should be prioritized. These materials should be archived in both national and international digital repositories to ensure long-term accessibility of Hindko resources.
4. **Digital and Technical Platforms:** Technology-driven strategies can significantly enhance Hindko language preservation. Mobile applications, online Hindko dictionaries, digital storybooks, and social media content in Hindko can increase language visibility and youth engagement. Creating open-access digital plans and YouTube channels featuring Hindko content can bridge the gap between traditional language use and modern communication practices.
5. **Institutional Support for Hindko:** School, colleges and Universities, linguistic researchers, and cultural organizations working in Hazara Division should collaborate with local Hindko-speaking communities to design ethical and inclusive documentation projects. Government and academic institutions should provide funding, policy support, and research grants specifically aimed at Hindko and other regional language preservation. Institutional recognition can help legitimize Hindko in formal domains.
6. **Awareness Towards Hindko:** Parents should guide their children about the importance of their mother tongue. Public awareness campaigns highlighting Hindko's cultural, historical, and literary significance can counter negative perceptions and language shift. Seminars, workshops, cultural festivals, and media programs conducted in Hindko can foster pride and encourage active language use. Positive attitudes toward Hindko are crucial for its long-term maintenance.
7. **Workable Documentation Practices:** There should be workable plan for documenting practices for Hindko. Hindko documentation projects should follow

ethical guidelines by ensuring informed consent, community ownership of data, and fair representation of speakers. Training Hindko community members in basic documentation skills can ensure sustainability and empower speakers as active participants.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the documentation and preservation of the Hindko language are deeply connected to cultural identity, sociolinguistic realities and community practices. The theoretical framework, drawing on language endangerment, documentation, and maintenance theories, provides a comprehensive understanding of the pressures faced by Hindko in a multilingual context dominated by Urdu and English. These theories highlight that Hindko's vulnerability is not due to a lack of speakers alone, but to social, educational, and institutional factors that influence language use and transmission. As such, preservation must be viewed as a culturally significant responsibility rather than a purely academic task. The findings of the study reveal that Hindko remains a strong mother tongue for most respondents from district Abbottabad and is primarily transmitted within the family domain, with high levels of fluency among speakers. However, its use is mainly confined to home settings, and intergenerational transmission shows signs of inconsistency. While many respondents recognize Hindko as an important sign of cultural identity, concerns about its future are evident. Preference for dominant languages, lack of formal education in Hindko, limited documentation, and social attitudes were identified as key challenges contributing to the potential decline of the language. The study highlights both the challenges and opportunities for the preservation of Hindko. The strong willingness of community members to contribute, widespread support for community-based programs, and advocacy for teaching Hindko in educational institutions suggest a promising foundation for revitalization efforts. Effective preservation strategies for Hindko language must be pledged through community engagement, educational incorporation, systematic documentation and cultural promotion. Coordinated efforts among families, local communities, researchers, and policymakers are essential to certify that Hindko is not only preserved as a linguistic resource but sustained as a living language for future generations.

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