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## **A Sociolinguistic Exploration of Pakistani Youth Engagement in Digitally Revitalizing the Haryanvi Language: Motivations, Challenges, and Innovations**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Muslim communities who migrated to Haryana and some of them to Pakistan in the year 1947 have traditionally spoken Haryanvi. This is the language that is accepted today as one of the most endangered languages in Pakistan. It has not been studied and recorded in much of the academic literature, so it is still not known in Pakistan despite its rich cultural background and strong heritage because it is not taught in educational curricula. Mostly Haryanvi is spoken by the older generation rather than by the younger generation, in the present age, as they feel that their fluency is deteriorating and are also being compelled by the society to use more prestigious languages such as Urdu and English in their daily lives. This paper is a discussion of the perceptions and experiences and the revitalization efforts of the Pakistani Haryanvi speakers, as well as the consideration of how identity, stigma, social media, and intergenerational gaps are interacting to determine the future and survival of this language.

The study assumes the qualitative design as it will help to examine the finer social connotations of the application of the Haryanvi language. The population size of 25 individuals who are members of Haryanvi backgrounds of Punjab and Sindh was used to conduct semi-structured interviews. The transcribing and analysis of the interviews were then done thoroughly using NVivo software. Thematic analysis was done through a thorough transcription analysis of the interviews. Some of the key themes that were identified in this analysis are cultural identity and social attachment, stigma and negative attitudes in society, disruption of language transmission between generations, the digital media as one of the instruments of revitalization, institutional neglect, and the role and responsibility of the youth in ensuring they maintain their language

**Keywords:** Haryanvi Language, Language Revitalization, Youth And Language, Digital Media, Language Shift, Linguistic Identity

### **Introduction**

Haryanvi is a Western Indo-Aryan language which originated in the Indian state of Haryana and possesses a rich but neglected traditional background, which was brought to Pakistan after the partition of 1947. Although it is commonly perceived to be a dialect of Hindi, Haryanvi has a unique phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and oral traditions that make it very distinct of Hindi and provides it with an impressive cultural and historical importance (Masica, 1991 and Hannah, 2017). Most communities in Haryanvi language that were in Haryana were transferred to Sindh and Punjab in Pakistan during the period of partition, though; as time progressed they began to adjust their cultural and social



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ways of living to the environment and traditions of these other areas.

Haryanvi has been experiencing the change in its visibility and use within Pakistan and has been experiencing a progressive decline because of various social and structural reasons. Urdu and English are the national and official languages and have a great impact on education, employment and social mobility, diminishing the significance and worth of other languages such as Haryanvi. According to Rahman (1996), several Haryanvi families changed to using Urdu at home to enhance education and economic development of their children and this ultimately caused the language to have issues in the intergenerational transmission. Other key issues that have led to its endangerment are the absence of standard orthography, non-presence in the official curricula and invisibility in the social and institutional life. The Haryanvi language is currently spoken primarily by the older generation and it is the responsibility of the older generation to ensure that the language is not lost, as the Punjab Language Authority Act states that Haryanvi is now almost entirely in the hands of the older generation.

This language has long been marginalized but now the young people have begun to take initiatives in the name of digital activism in an attempt to restore the relevance of this language and its significance in society. Young people are now playing significant roles as key players in advancing the Haryanvi language in the multilingual and post colonial society. This has recently happened in Pakistan where youths are now actively utilizing the digital tools and platforms as means of rebelling against the erosion of the Haryanvi language and also as a result of reconnecting with their linguistic identity.

The digital media is very active and vital in this entire process by means of YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, and Facebook which offers a wider space and a larger audience through which speakers can communicate with other communities in their own language. Many young speakers in Pakistan have begun producing various forms of material in the Haryanvi language which include, comedy skits, music, poetry, reels, podcasts and storytelling so that they can rediscover their cultural heritage and also make their language visible in the mainstream world. The participants also testify that despite the fact that they do not use textbooks in Haryanvi or institutional support, they still resort to these digital media platforms as the alternative in order to find new possibilities to construct their identity and learn the language. This also demonstrates that the speakers of the minor languages find digital platforms to alleviate the pressure and social stigma and feel more free to transfer and communicate their language to others.

Because of all these social pressures and the degradation of the prestige associated with Haryanvi, some parents do not want their children to use the language in their everyday life. According to descriptions given by many participants, this language is an identity and strong place of belongingness and identity of their ancestors, a place of family memories. Other participants are also concerned that the language will extinct with the old generation in case no serious measures are taken. However, despite all the difficulties encountered by this language, there are currently a number of informal means by which the youth are working towards its growth and survival in the modern society

### **Literature review**

Haryanvi, an Indo-Aryan language, is mainly spoken in Haryana, a state of India, and also by Ranghar communities in Pakistan. It is traditionally viewed as a local and non-standard form of Hindi as opposed to having its own features and identity. Previous studies have primarily considered its grammars, phonology, and the variation of the same in the western Hindi continuum (Grierson, 1916; Masica, 1991). Yet, the works give only a partial link up with sociolinguistic realities like intergenerational differences, youth



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identity, media influence and language attitudes in social real life which are also significant in comprehending the present state of the language.

Over the last few years, researchers have begun to pay increased attention to the language shift, revitalization by young people, digital practices, and institutional marginalization in such situations as Rangri in Pakistan (Khan, 2024; Singh, 2023; Malik and Ahmed, 2025). According to the recent research, schools have a highly significant role in developing negative attitudes towards language among Haryanvi and Rangri communities. The students are influenced socially and usually conditioned to think that Urdu and English are languages of intellect, success, and vertical mobility, whereas minority languages are linked to poverty, backwardness, and illiteracy (Sharma, 2023; Khan, 2024). Parents usually do not want their children to speak Haryanvi; instead, they want them to prioritize the dominant languages because of the economic gains and improved chances in the future (Malik and Ahmad, 2025). This kind of finding is a strong indicator of the language shift theory and is a clear indication that institutional pressure leads to language abandonment in the long run.

Recent studies also emphasize that the lack of standardized records of the Haryanvi language and its exclusion of the formal curricula are also crucial factors of the language decline and marginalization (Khan, 2024; Malik and Ahmed, 2025). The lack of institutional support of minority languages means that they do not participate in education, governing and development of literacy processes, as a result of which the sustainability, continuity, and prestige of these languages are endangered. According to scholars, such exclusion is not incidental and is tightly connected to other ideologies of nation-building and language hierarchies where dominant languages are privileged over minority ones (Khan, 2024; Malik and Ahmed, 2025).

Among the most significant changes in the recent research, the fact that the youth have become key participants of the language revitalization process is now central (Singh, 2023; Mehta, 2024; Ali and Rahman, 2025). Research indicates that young people are active users of digital platforms to entertain, build their identities, socialize and express their culture. YouTube, Tik Tok, and Instagram have helped youths to produce folk shows, documentaries, short films, and comic materials in Haryanvi (Mehta, 2024; Singh, 2023). Nevertheless, other researchers state that even though the use of digital might enhance the symbolic visibility and online presence of the language, it might not guarantee long-term sustainability and active spread of the language (Singh, 2024; Malik and Ahmad, 2025). At the same time, other researchers believe that youth are making an important and meaningful contribution in supporting, promoting, and reintroducing their language in new forms (Mehta, 2024; Ali & Rahman, 2025).

Research also indicates that the minority and regional languages are severely impacted by globalization and fast-growing digital communication. The prestige of a language cannot be simply quantified by the number of speakers, but it also relies on how a language is applied, represented, and appreciated in the digital and social spheres (De Costa, 2021; Androutopoulos, 2022). According to sociolinguistic studies, youths tend to engage in regional languages in a domain, situation-specific, and selective manner. Young speakers might refuse to apply their local languages in official or academic communication and still use them in everyday communication with peers, jokes, music, and social media (Cutler and Ryneland, 2023).

As the speakers relocate to urban locations, natural communication in minority languages is slowly fading out, and young people are turning to the Internet to demonstrate the need to belong to their community and cultural identity. There are however, fears that these practices might not guarantee long term existence and stability of the language.



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Institutional support, policy recognition, and systematic documentation are deemed to be required to maintain it in the long term and ensure proper transmission (Jaffe, 2021; Lee, 2023; Hinton and Marks, 2023).

The issue of language endangerment and revitalization has remained a major issue in sociolinguistics and other related disciplines. Research in Pakistan indicates that native and minority languages are under severe pressure of dominant languages like Urdu and English, leading to a decline in intergenerational transfer and a slow change in language (Ikram and Rafi, 2023). Research based on technology emphasises the implication of corpus development, digital tools and online resources of low-resource languages (Mujadia and Mishra Sharma, 2024). Numerous researches also indicate that the supporting policy frameworks, education inclusion, and community engagement are necessary and critical to the maintenance, encouragement, and sustainability of the indigenous and minority languages (Wilson, 2024).

### **Theoretical framework:**

This study is supported by three different, yet overlapping frameworks: language shift and maintenance theory, linguistic identity and language ideology, and digital sociolinguistic. Using these bodies of theory as prisms through which to look at language use among the youth, we can come to learn more about how the absence of a general societal acceptance has affected the use of the Haryanvi language. Fishman (1991) invented language shift and maintenance theory, which also suggests that intergenerational transmission, as well as language use in domains are the key to language strength. Since Haryanvi is now being pushed out of the public and formal domains in Pakistan, and hence, being pushed into more personal spheres, this theory will be used in this paper to understand how the attenuated transmission on the home front and the non-institutional support have contributed to partial language shift of the young speakers. Language ideology and linguistic identity introduces language as a social resource that is influenced by power relations, prestige and social judgment. This school of thought suggests that youth primarily employ languages that are conditioned by overarching ideologies that link Urdu and English with education, modernity and upward social mobility, and current Haryanvi with rural and low-status. According to this theory, decisions made regarding the use of language are influenced by stigma despite young speakers having an emotional attachment to the Haryanvi language. Lastly digital sociolinguistic perceives the re-configuring of language use online. This view is particularly applicable in the conceptualization of the operation of youth-led practices working with the Haryanvi language on social media platforms as alternative spaces of visibility, creativity and expression of identity of the language. Such efforts do not substitute the formal systems of support but instead attempt individually to confront the language shift by such practices in the society.

### **Research gap:**

Despite the recent studies discussing digital activism, minority languages and language shift, there is a severe research gap on Haryanvi language in Pakistan, specifically, its sociolinguistic and youth-based perspective. The existing literature gives its form as a dialect of Hindi or largely in Indian context whereas the issues that Pakistani Haryanvi-speaking community faces are not documented.

The past literature reveals structural determinants, such as stigma, language policy and education, yet it does not dwell on how Pakistani youth seek to react to these forces in their daily lives, particularly by applying the digital media. There is little empirical



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evidence that shows whether revitalization through social media can make a base of long-term language maintenance without institutional support in Pakistan.

Pakistan also does not have serious academic research discussing the issues of Haryanvi speakers and their motivations. Most of the literature concentrates on the largest indigenous languages and disregards the people such as Haryanvi speakers. Therefore, the issue of youth identity, digital activism and social pressures must be considered seriously to find out the future of Haryanvi in Pakistan.

### Research Objectives

To study the social variations and causes that shaped the present status of Haryanvi in Pakistan.

To learn about the efforts of youth in preserving Haryanvi language by the use of technology, helping communities and expression of their culture.

In a world where Haryanvi is not given prestige and technology is available widely, what problems are faced by youth in maintenance and promotion of this language.

### Research Questions

What social variations and causes have shaped the present status of Haryanvi in Pakistan?

How are Pakistani youth using technology and digital media to preserve and promote the Haryanvi language?

What problems are faced by youth in the maintenance and promotion of Haryanvi in a context where the language lacks prestige?

### Methodology:

This study applies a qualitative method to comprehend how Pakistani youth is being engaged in the Haryanvi language, particularly in the online field and other digital platforms. The primary aspects of this research are identity, stigma, and digital practices, as they have a leading influence on the language use of youth.

Purposive sampling was used to sample twenty-five participants aged between 20-35 years in Punjab and Sindh. All the participants were of Haryanvi-speaking families and had some exposure of the language in their day-to-day or previous experiences.

The data in this study was collected through semi-structured interviews in order to gather data in a detailed and flexible way. The participants described their experience regarding family language usage, internet activities, and social pressures in various situations. Besides interviews, certain online materials were also monitored on YouTube and Instagram and paid attention to, to complement and reinforce the results of this research.

### Research Design

An interpretive qualitative framework is followed in this study. It is concentrated on the use of language and the experienced life of participants in various social contexts.

This paradigm assists in clarifying that, as the digital platforms are used to assist Haryanvi, such problems as stigma and marginalization are lived through, negotiated, and even disputed by the participants in their day-to-day activities.

### Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because they were more flexible and rich in the replies. Open-ended questions were asked from the participants regarding their language background, family practices, social attitudes, and digital engagement. The respondents were free to express their personal experiences and their participation was encouraged hence this approach assisted in determining the common and recurrent



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themes among the various responses.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews in a systematic manner in this research. The data was sorted with the NVivo software to manage the codes. Topics like identity, weak transmission, use of the digital, stigma, and institutional neglect were also identified and occur through re-reading and scrutiny of the transcripts.

### **Findings:**

The findings provide the key themes that were derived during the analysis performed in this research. These results identify some important points associated with digital practices, stigma, identity, intergenerational transmission, and youth socio-economic status. The participants of this research were mostly rural in origin and majority of them were students, private employees, government employees and daily wage workers. Their social and economic position in the society is one of the significant factors which affect their linguistic practices and attitude towards the Haryanvi language.

### **Haryanvi as a cultural identity and rural affiliation.**

Haryanvi is perceived to be a powerful indicator of cultural identity as well as a significant factor indicating emotional attachment with ancestors particularly in rural villages and within villages. To most youthful speakers, Haryanvi is very much related to family background, rural existence and group memory. Although their everyday use of the language is extremely minimal, it, nevertheless, still has symbolic meaning as a symbol of roots, lineage, and community attaching. Local youths have a strong association of Haryanvi with authenticity and emotional intimacy, particularly when they engage with the older generation of the population, and those in the extended family. Nevertheless, this symbolic attachment does not always result in simple and proficient active language use in larger social and formal spheres. The results are quite evident through the difference between the emotional identification with Haryanvi and functional ability to use it in various situations. This identity-based attachment is particularly noted in the case of students and the young workers who have moved out of the villages and into urban or semi-urban regions to get an education or to get a job.

### **Stigmatization and lack of popularity of Haryanvi.**

One of the biggest discoveries of this research is the high level of social stigma related to the usage of Haryanvi language in the communal and official spheres. The discussion reveals that Haryanvi is an undesirable language because of various reasons, including rural origin, illiteracy and poor socio-economic mobility. These perceptions have a great impact on the language choices made by young speakers in various social situations. The state and non-state workers are usually observed to be very careful about using Haryanvi in official communication where the Urdu or English language is used and prevails in communication. This is not necessarily a denial of Haryanvi but rather a reaction to mainstream speech norms and demands. To a number of workers, they find it easier to switch languages basing on the context and the situation. The results are that stigma works in nuanced terms influencing linguistic behavior by monitoring instead of prohibition that is overt or explicit.

### **Intergenerational Interference In Language Acquisition**

The other significant observation is the intergenerational transmission of Haryanvi is



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disrupted. Though the older generations are quite conversant and comfortable with the language, the young speakers will tend to be less confident and less competent in speaking the language. The presence of parents can be considered as one of the most considerable factors that contributed to this disruption as parents are more likely to use Urdu instead of Haryanvi as the language of communication because of educational and economic aspects. Consequently, young speakers tend to comprehend Haryanvi but struggle to actively use it, particularly in complicated or formal contexts. It is also shown that unless there is a conscious and planned action to utilize Haryanvi in the homes, the language is likely to be further diluted as the intergenerational flow of the language is likely to deteriorate with time.

### **Digital media as an alternative linguistic space.**

The paper concludes that the digital media is a significant alternative venue to the visibility and actualization of Haryanvi, especially among young people who do not have institutional support of the language. Informal spaces created by platforms like YouTube, Tik Tok, Facebook, and Instagram allow Haryanvi to be creatively used and do not create social pressure and judgment in real-time. The material that is generated consists of short clips, jokes, folk phrases, music, and everyday commentary. Through these activities, the youth can again identify with their cultural values and language without having to be confined by the physical presence of one another. Online interaction in most instances serves as a partial substitute to the fall of the Haryanvi in the offline environment.

### **Revitalization Boundaries: Informal And Entertainment-Based**

Although digital media has a positive role, the result has proven that use of Haryanvi is mostly informal and mostly used in entertainment purposes. This makes it questionable whether it can be maintained in the long run, because this usage is not always part of formal learning, literacy or formal development of the language. As such, some form of documentation and institutional back up is required to make sure that the language can be preserved and maintained to be used over the long term and by the future generations.

### **Young People As Active But Limited Contributors To Revitalization**

The results indicate that the young people are no longer passive observers but active participants who are maneuvering through complicated social and cultural restraints. Their activities are influenced by their social standing and the degree of appreciation that they get within the society. According to the study, the youth involvement in reviving their language, and the emotional attachment that the youth have towards their language has provided a ground on which more sustainable and long-term practices can be established in the future.

### **Discussion**

This paper has demonstrated that the position of Haryanvi in the contemporary society is not only tied to the issue of language change but it is also closely intertwined with social organization and language ideologies. Urdu and English are preferred more as they are associated with education, success, and improved employment opportunities. This is why the majority of the parents persuade their children to use such dominant languages rather than Haryanvi. The youths continue to be emotionally attached to Haryanvi because of the ancestry, rural origin as well as family identity. However, they use Haryanvi on a very little basis in their day to day life. The fear of being judged prevents them to speak



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Haryanvi in social places but they know Haryanvi. The social stigma is an issue as a result of which the majority of the population does not use Haryanvi, not because they are compelled to act in this way, but because they are afraid of lowering their social status in society. This is the way in which personal preferences are affected by hierarchies of language. The Haryanvi language is a language that the youth are more comfortable with in the social media today. They communicate through humor, music, narration, and pride in their culture without being judged socially. Thus, the practices make the language more visible and enhance symbolic identity as well. The use of Haryanvi language in the digital world, however, is largely entertainment based and does not encourage literacy, standard writing and academic growth of the language. Therefore, digital media operates extensively in trying to counter adverse negative attitudes regarding the Haryanvi language but is unable to substitute formal learning or educational institutions.

### Conclusion

The results have revealed that the Haryanvi language is dying under the pressure of a society and structure rather than being rejected by the youth. Education systems and national language policies have popularized Urdu and English, and therefore Haryanvi language is not used frequently in the everyday life. It is observed that intergenerational transmission is deteriorated since older generations are competent in the Haryanvi language but the youth have partial competence. It implies that the language position is not only transformed to passive consumption but also only to symbolic knowledge. Conversely, it is observed that young people are not inactive in this game, but they are using the digital media actively to market their language using appealing and cultural content. It reveals that they possess some elements of pride, emotional attachment and need to preserve their language. Nevertheless, this research indicates that online actions will not be sufficient to the long-term survival of the Haryanvi language, yet documentation, including it in the curriculum, and acknowledging it as a policy can contribute to its revival. To revive the Haryanvi language permanently, it is important that digital practices must be in conjunction with the reforms in the educational system, community efforts, and institutional encouragement. This is a positive development that young people have begun working on it, but there is a need to have more structured support to ensure the survival of Haryanvi language in Pakistan.

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