

# EXPLORING THE ABSENCE OF URDU LANGUAGE IDENTITY IN PAKISTANI UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*Investigating the lack of Urdu language identity in Pakistani undergraduate education reveals a significant gap that requires attention. The exploration delves into understanding the factors contributing to this absence and seeks potential solutions to address the linguistic identity concerns at the academic level. The objective of the study is to find out the reason responsible for the missing identity of Urdu language at undergraduate level. A comparative study is made to ascertain which language is source of preference between the government and private college. This study gives an explicit idea about how English language becomes a threat to our identity. A comparative analysis of Kinnaird College and Govt. APWA College will help in finding the comfort zone of people with the languages (Urdu and English). The research design use in this paper is cross sectional study and the appropriate methodology in this research is quantitative in nature. The data was collected through question This study will explore the present scenario of educational system of Pakistan divided into government and private institutions which are in the support of either English or Urdu language.*

**Keywords.** *Missing Identity , Urdu Language, Undergraduate level, comparative study, Pakistani.*

## **Introduction**

*Pakistan grapples with a language crisis that encompasses various dimensions. The nation is home to a diverse linguistic landscape, with languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and others coexisting. However, the dominance of Urdu as*

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*the official language and medium of instruction in educational institutions has led to the marginalization of regional languages. This linguistic imbalance poses challenges in preserving and promoting cultural diversity. Additionally, there's a growing concern about the proficiency of English, often seen as a gateway to global opportunities, further intensifying the language crisis. Addressing this crisis requires a holistic approach, emphasizing linguistic inclusivity, promoting regional languages, and ensuring equitable access to educational resources in various linguistic mediums. English is an international language and is used in Pakistan as a second language. In order to keep in touch with modern sources of knowledge and latest research we need English. Urdu is our mother tongue and is a symbol of identity. Both languages are playing different roles. There was a time when Urdu language was preferred over English but now the situation is vice versa. Now the situation of Pakistan is becoming confusing as people have their own preferences; one class feels comfortable with the spread of English however other class feel that it a threat to their identity and language. The language and culture makes society and adds into the identity of people belonging to that society; hence our society is losing its purity and identity which would be explored in this research. The history of the Urdu language in Pakistan is intricately woven into the cultural fabric of the region. Urdu, with its roots in the Indo-Aryan linguistic family, evolved over centuries through the amalgamation of Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and local South Asian languages. During the Mughal era, Urdu flourished as a language of art, poetry, and administration, fostering a rich literary tradition. The partition of British India in 1947 played a pivotal role in shaping Urdu's destiny in Pakistan, where it was declared one of the country's official languages alongside English. Despite its formal status, the language landscape in Pakistan remains diverse, with various regions preserving their distinct linguistic identities. Urdu, however, continues to be a unifying force, serving as a medium of communication that bridges cultural and regional differences across the nation.*

### **Significance of the Study**

*The perceived vanishing of the Urdu language in Pakistan can be attributed to several interconnected factors. One significant influence is the dominance of English in education, employment, and governance, creating a preference for English proficiency over Urdu. Additionally, regional languages often play a crucial role in daily communication and cultural expression, contributing to a linguistic landscape where Urdu may face competition. Globalization and the rise of digital media further expose individuals to English content, influencing language preferences. Moreover, the educational system's focus on Urdu as the primary medium, without sufficient attention to regional languages, may lead to a disconnect between the language taught*

*in schools and the linguistic preferences of communities. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that values linguistic diversity, promotes multilingualism, and recognizes the importance of Urdu alongside regional languages in Pakistan's cultural tapestry. This study will be a significant endeavor in promoting Urdu language, releasing people that Urdu is losing its national status on Pakistan. Although English is a globally accepted language and no one can deny its importance but preferring and implementing it over Urdu language is not a solution. This study will reveal the confused scenario of the educational institution which is a main cause of devaluing Urdu language. The research will also be beneficial for the students and teachers because they are the main pillars of this discriminatory system and it's in their hand to promote or ignore their own national language. This paper would be proof helpful in realizing those who disrespect and devalue their language instead of admiring it. Therefore; this study will explore the suggestions to secure our language and our precious culture.*

### **Objectives of the Study**

*The present study tends to:*

- To explore the reasons for loss of identity of Urdu Language and what the main factors that contribute to this matter are.*
- To look into the facts for the confused situation of the society.*
- To probe out the interference of English Language into Urdu Language.*
- To find out with which language people are feeling comfortable in educational context.*
- To observing that private and government institutes makes any difference in the usage of Urdu and English language.*

### **Research Questions**

*Q1) Why is missing identity of Urdu Language a threat to our culture?*

*Q2) What are the reasons for the preference of English Language in private institution and Urdu language in public institution?*

*Q3) How does English language creates interference in the educational system of Pakistan?*

### **Literature Review**

*Language is a primarily human and non- instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.[1]*

*"A language is a symbol system, based on pure and arbitrary convention...infinitely extendible and modifiable according to the changing needs and conditions of the speakers." [2]*

*The influence of one language on other is an important aspect which needs to be considered. There are many languages which are affected due to other language. The language which is globally accepted is English and for people it's now more important*

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to know the usage of English in order to be considered successful.[3] Therefore; spread of English language has a great impact on the first language of the people and other languages become weakened as they are ignored and devalued. [4]

English has emerged as the language of wider intra-and inter- cultural communication. [5]

Although, English language introduced during British period in the subcontinent but it's more ingrained in Pakistan today .There are two types of class existing in Pakistan; one is elite class and other is subordinate class. Thus English is a language of elite class, however; Urdu is considered to be a language of subordinate class. [6]

The important component of cultural imperialism is in favor of promoting Urdu language and also some literate people especially from army speak Urdu at home with their children as they want their children to attach with the Urdu language which is their own identity. [7]

English is taught as a compulsory subject and from 11 to 12 classes, it is also taught. Now the problem is that after studying in government schools, students are unable to write and speak English well because their competence level in English is quite low.

Language as a medium of instruction or language which is taught is a complex matter. This type of choice is dependent upon the various factors which are language needs of a student, attitude towards language and parental and teachers attitudes. The main reason for the weakening of Urdu language is lack of research in the language planning area of Pakistan. There is not planning to save national language of Pakistan especially in education. Survey done by the famous linguistics [8], helps in knowing the present scenario of education in Pakistan but the study is limited to few institution.

Students who are from government school when get admission in private university face problem due to the language change from Urdu to English and this could become the reason of failure at the higher level.

The fast expansion of universities without paying enough attention to academic quality, high standards, modern methods of teaching and learning, as well as academic freedom or academic ethics. [9]<sup>1</sup>

In Pakistan the students of public college/university have positive attitude and feel relax in speaking Urdu language whereas the students of private college/universities love to learn English language and they consider Urdu language "the language of low class". [10]

The teachers of public institution are consider inferior to teacher of private institution

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.britannica.com/Checked/topic/329791/language>

because they are not enough proficient in English and for this less respect is given to them. Sometimes teachers and students of government institutes become complex due to this language discrimination but their preference for language to communicate is Urdu in which they can easily write n express their feelings. Therefore, the education system of Pakistan is in confused state where the government and private institution have different attitudes towards Urdu and English Language.

**Research Methodology:**

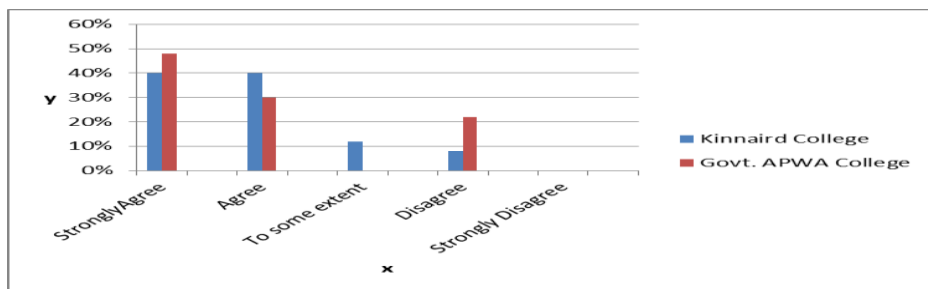
The research methodology used in this research was quantitative method. The research design is cross sectional study. The research is conducted as a comparative study conducted in Kinnaird College and Govt. APWA College. Likert scale was chosen as a scale of measurement for this research. A Likert scale is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

The sample size for this research is 100. The Sample size for Govt. APWA College is 50 and for Kinnaird College is 50. The sampling technique used in this research was convenience sampling. The target population is Female undergraduate students of private and government institution. The inclusion criteria includes a sample of undergraduate students of Kinnaird and Apwa College were included in the study. The exclusion criteria includes non- undergraduate students were not a part of this study.

Data was collected by a single investigator through a questionnaire containing information on demographic and inferential details. The limitations for this research includes adequate time period. The sample size of this research was small not more than 100 sample could not be selected for this research. Data was collected only from undergraduate students not from intermediate or post graduate students. Questionnaire was made for the students only not for teachers. The tools of research is only questionnaire, other tools were not part of this research. The procedure for data analysis was only a Microsoft Excel. The delimitations of this research are that The research was conducted in the allotted time frame. The sample size was appropriate to achieve the results of the research. The government and private institution cooperate in conducting the research easily. The objectives of the research meet successfully. The Microsoft office programme i.e. Excel helps in achieving results.

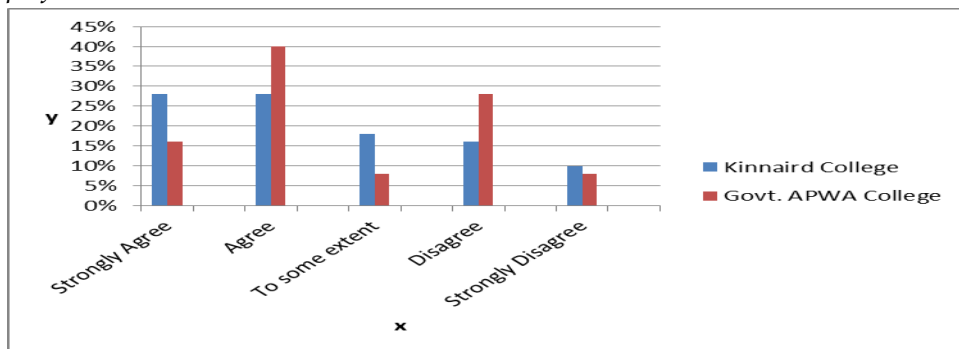
**Data Representation and Analysis:**

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### **Q1. Do you think Urdu is losing its national status in Pakistan?**

Students from Kinnaird College are 40% strongly agree, 40% agree, 12% to some extent, 8% disagree and 0% strongly disagree. Students from Govt. APWA College are 48% strongly agree, 30% agree, 0% to some extent, 22% disagree and 0% strongly disagree. The status of Urdu in Pakistan is complex. While Urdu holds the official language status and plays a crucial role in various formal settings, the linguistic landscape is diverse. There are challenges and debates surrounding language preferences, with English often gaining prominence in certain domains. Factors such as the globalization of English, educational policies, and regional linguistic identities contribute to discussions about the status of Urdu. Efforts are being made to promote Urdu, but it's essential to balance linguistic diversity and national cohesion. To sum up while Urdu's national status is not entirely lost, there are ongoing discussions and challenges that highlight the dynamic nature of language preferences in Pakistan.

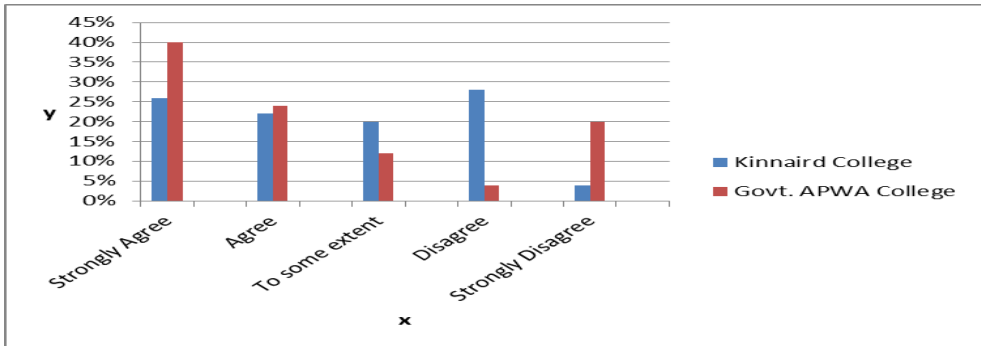


### **Q2. Is Urdu only a language of domestic use now?**

Students from Kinnaird College are 28% strongly agree, 28% agree, 18% to some extent, 16% disagree and 10% strongly disagree. Students from Govt. APWA College are 16% strongly agree, 40% agree, 8% to some extent, 28% disagree and 8% strongly disagree.

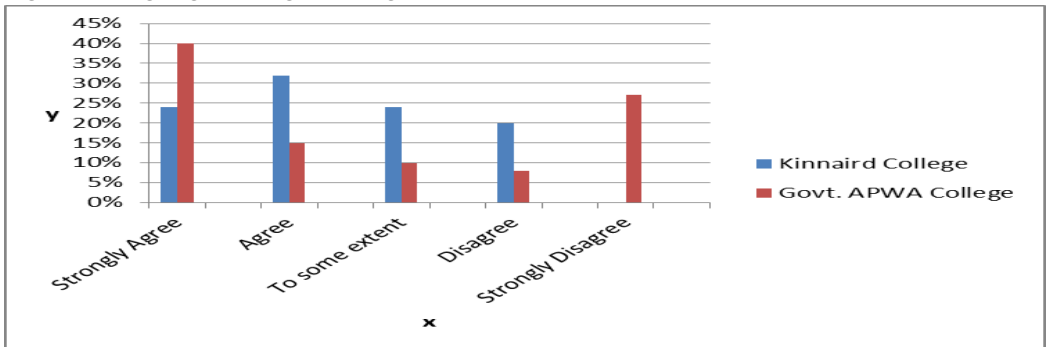
Urdu is not solely a language of domestic use; it continues to hold significance beyond household communication. In Pakistan, Urdu is an official language used in

government, education, media, and various formal settings. It serves as a means of national integration and is employed in official documents, legislation, and administrative affairs. Moreover, Urdu remains a vibrant literary language with a rich cultural heritage. It is utilized in poetry, literature, and artistic expressions, contributing to the cultural identity of the region. While English may be prevalent in certain professional and global contexts, Urdu maintains a multifaceted role in both formal and cultural spheres, extending its influence beyond domestic use.



**Q3. Do you think English is a language of educated people?**

Students from Kinnaird College are 26% strongly agree, 22% agree, 20% to some extent, 28% disagree and 4% strongly disagree. Students from Govt. APWA College are 40% strongly agree, 24% agree, 12% to some extent, 4% disagree and 20% strongly disagree. English is considered the language of the educated in Pakistan due to its colonial legacy, being the medium of instruction in prestigious institutions, its global significance for job opportunities, and its association with status and sophistication. However, this preference has sparked discussions about linguistic disparities, leading to efforts to promote multilingualism and recognize the value of regional languages alongside English.



**Q4. Is it's more important to enhance speaking and writing skills in English rather than Urdu?**

Students from Kinnaird College are 24% strongly agree, 32% agree, 24% to some extent, 20% disagree and 0% strongly disagree. Students from Govt. APWA College are 40% strongly agree, 15% agree, 10% to some extent, 8% disagree and 28% strongly disagree.

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are 40% strongly agree, 15% agree, 10% to some extent, 8% disagree and 27% strongly disagree. The importance of enhancing English or Urdu skills depends on individual goals and context. Improving English skills is valuable for global communication and certain professional fields, while enhancing Urdu skills is crucial for local communication and preserving cultural heritage. Striking a balance between proficiency in both languages can be advantageous in an interconnected world. The choice should align with individual aspirations and the linguistic context of one's environment.

### **Discussion & Analysis**

Language and culture are intricately intertwined, shaping and influencing each other in profound ways. Language serves as a vehicle for cultural expression, transmitting values, traditions, and shared experiences across generations. The nuances embedded in a language, including idioms, expressions, and linguistic subtleties, often encapsulate the unique cultural identity of a community. Conversely, culture molds language usage, determining formalities, etiquette, and social norms associated with communication. Different cultures may prioritize specific languages for various contexts, reflecting historical, social, and geopolitical influences. The relationship between language and culture becomes particularly evident in multilingual societies, where each language often carries a distinct cultural heritage. Language acts as a medium through which cultural practices, folklore, and narratives are preserved and passed down. Ultimately, language and culture coalesce to form a symbiotic connection, enriching the human experience and fostering a sense of identity and belonging within communities. Understanding this intricate relationship is crucial for appreciating the diversity and depth that both language and culture bring to societies around the world. The major objective of this research is to investigate the use of Urdu and English language in the government and private educational institution and to look at the preferences of speaking either English or Urdu language in an educational context. From this study, it is analyzed that how much a spread of English has an impact on government and private college culture. As mentioned earlier by a famous linguist [11] English has emerged as the language of wider intra- and inter- cultural communication. So it could be said that in present context English language is not only considered to be a language because it has a major influence on the educational setup of a country including culture. [12]

English is considered the language of the educated elite in Pakistan for several reasons:

1. **Colonial Legacy:** Pakistan was a part of British India until gaining independence in 1947. English, being the language of the British colonizers, became associated with



education, governance, and prestige during the colonial era.

2. **Educational System:** English is the medium of instruction in many prestigious educational institutions in Pakistan. A significant portion of academic materials, especially at higher education levels, is available in English. This links proficiency in English with educational advancement.

3. **Globalization and Job Opportunities:** English is a global language widely used in business, science, technology, and academia. Proficiency in English is often seen as a key skill for accessing international job markets and opportunities.

4. **Status Symbol:** English proficiency is sometimes viewed as a status symbol, indicating a higher level of education and sophistication. This perception further contributes to its association with the educated class

However, it's important to note that this preference for English has also been a subject of debate, as it can contribute to linguistic disparities and may undervalue indigenous languages. Efforts are being made in some quarters to promote multilingualism and recognize the importance of both English and regional languages in Pakistan's diverse linguistic landscape.

The data collected through the questionnaire helps in analyzing the confused scenario of public and private institution. There are twelve (12) questions in the questionnaire which reveals some important facts about the people's opinion about languages (English and Urdu) who studied in Kinnaird College and Govt. APWA College. The age group to which maximum undergraduate students belongs are in the 18-20 category of Kinnaird and Govt. APWA college and in the 21-23 category, almost 32% students are from Kinnaird College and 32% are from Govt. APWA College. The least number of students are in the 24-26 categories. There is a minor age difference of the Kinnaird and APWA college girls.

The question Urdu is losing its national status in Pakistan shows a variety of responses from Kinnaird and Govt. APWA College. After getting these responses, it is analyzed that maximum students at Kinnaird feel that Urdu has lost its national status to some extent however; there are some people who are disagree with this statement. The results are higher in APWA College rather than Kinnaird College as 48% of the population realized that less importance is given to Urdu language. There is also a major difference in the percentage of Kinnaird and APWA college because only 8% students of Kinnaird are disagree however; 22% of APWA disagree which means they don't accept that Urdu is losing its national status in Pakistan. These students rejected this idea because they speak Urdu frequently than English.

The second statement stated that Urdu is only a language of domestic use now. The result derived from this particular question has not so much difference in the percentages of Kinnaird and APWA College. Only the 16% of Kinnaird population

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*disagree where 28% students of APWA College don't admit that Urdu is only a language of domestic use.*

*English is a medium of instruction which you would prefer in your institution. The students of Kinnaird College are quite satisfied with the English as a medium of instruction in their institute and there only 10% who are not agree with this statement. On the other hand, the students of APWA College might have an urge to learn English and wants it to be a medium of instruction in their institution. However; 16% students are disagree and would not prefer it more than Urdu language. Therefore, it is analyzed only 10% population of Kinnaird College would not like English as a medium of instruction.*

*The second question related with the medium of instruction is would you be satisfied to have Urdu as the medium of instruction in your institute. According to the survey in Kinnaird only 10% of the population at Kinnaird are strongly agree which means their preference is not to have Urdu as a medium of instruction and the maximum 46% of the population are neutral with the presence of Urdu language as a medium of instruction or not however 20% disagree to have Urdu as a medium of instruction. The respondents from the APWA College are satisfied with the presence of Urdu language however only 12% don't want Urdu to be a medium of instruction. In APWA College the maximum students are satisfied with the Urdu.*

*When the students are asked about their comfort zone with the Urdu language, the general results derived are that students of APWA College feel more comfortable speaking Urdu with the teachers in the classroom as compared to Kinnaird students as the maximum preference of speaking Urdu language is to some extent. The students of government institution are more comfortable in speaking Urdu because it is the medium of instruction they follow whereas private institution like Kinnaird where the students of mix caliber come feel less comfortable in speaking Urdu with the teacher because the medium of instruction they follow is English.*

*When the same question is asked about the English language, the results show a high variation in the responses of the APWA College students. The percentage of APWA college students are higher than Kinnaird as there are 44% who replied agree in speaking English language comfortably from APWA College. The reason for this high percentage might be that some students want to promote English language in their institution and this is why their responses are comparatively higher than Kinnaird students. On the other hand, response of Kinnaird College shows that they are not very relaxed with the use of En When the question asked that 'English language is considered a language of educated people'. Only 4% population of Kinnaird College strongly disagree that English is not important to be considered educated however*

maximum students have admitted that it is a language of educated people and if we make a comparison with the APWA college students then 20% of APWA students do not admit that English is important to be considered educated which is relatively higher than Kinnaird students.

Now if the proficiency in Urdu is enough to be considered educated is asked then response of Kinnaird College and APWA College are quit nearer but those who are more disagree or strongly disagree about this particular statement are students of Kinnaird College. The 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' percentage of Kinnaird College is 38% whereas APWA College have 32% which is less than Kinnaird College.

English is replacing Urdu language in educational institution. There are 56% of Kinnaird and 48% of APWA college students realized that English language is more powerful than Urdu however; the students of Kinnaird who accept it are more in percentage than APWA students. In Kinnaird College English is preferred over Urdu and that is why they admitted English is replacing Urdu language. Furthermore, only 4% of the populations disagree with this statement as compared to the APWA students who are 16% strongly disagree about this fact

The next question in the questionnaire is related with the successfully communicate in English makes a person better self-respect. The maximum students of APWA College think that if they speak English in classroom, they get more respect among other peers. On the other hand, the students of Kinnaird also accepted that speaking English have a great influence on your personality. However; 12% students of APWA College strongly disagree with this statement whereas no one from Kinnaird College is strongly disagree about it which means they admit speaking English in class makes you more efficient and able person.

It is more important to enhance speaking and writing skill in English rather than Urdu. The student who wants to improve their writing and speaking skill in English are from Kinnaird College as compared to APWA students. Although some APWA students replied 40% strongly agree with this statement but the percentage goes lower to lower in the scale and finally 27% of the population strongly disagrees with the enhancement of speaking and writing skill in English.

The last question of this survey is about asking students they would like to be a proficient speaker of English language. This question reveals the major difference in the preferences of English and Urdu language made by the government and private institution. Only 22% of Kinnaird College doesn't wants to be proficient in English whereas the APWA College has 56% of the students who don't wants to prefer English over Urdu. There are only 12% students who want to learn and speak English in the APWA College. However; the students of Kinnaird College are willing

to be a proficient speaker of English.

The preference for languages other than Urdu in Pakistan can be attributed to various historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. English has been historically associated with prestige and opportunities, leading to its prioritization in education, employment, and official communication. Additionally, regional languages hold strong cultural ties, and people often find greater comfort and identity in using their native languages for daily interactions. The challenge lies in striking a balance between the promotion of Urdu as the national language and the preservation of linguistic diversity. Efforts to ensure proficiency in Urdu, while respecting and supporting regional languages, can contribute to a more inclusive linguistic landscape in Pakistan. Addressing economic and educational disparities associated with language choices is crucial for creating an environment where Urdu is valued as a unifying force without undermining the richness of other languages in the country.

### **Conclusions and Recommendation**

This focus of this research was on the comparative study of government and private institution. The results deduced from the study are that there is a major difference in the usage of languages in private and government institution. Although some responses of government and private institution were closer to each other but it doesn't mean that Kinnaird College and APWA College demonstrate same results. It was observed that private colleges promote English language however; government colleges prefer to speak Urdu language. In some questions, the responses from the APWA College were higher in percentage than Kinnaird college responses. The maximum students of APWA college were usually fall in the strongly agree, agree or disagree category. However; Kinnaird college data showed a consistency in responses as the answers were usually in the strongly agree, agree, to some extent category. APWA College data was not consistent as there were variations found in the responses again and again. For instance; when the students of APWA College asked that in classroom do you feel comfortable speaking English, 44% said yes which made the result surprisingly contradictory and when the opinion was asked that do you want to become a proficient speaker of English language then 56% are strongly disagree which find out that the respondents from the APWA College have an overall neutral response towards Urdu and English language. However from the data analysis it's found that there are some students who don't like to speak English language because they are satisfied with their own language. Consequently the educational system of Pakistan is ruining day by day because English has a greater influence on it. English is only a language, it should be learnt like a language but now a days it became a threat to our culture and educational system of Pakistan. Those

who pay fewer fees, get admission in Government College where the medium of instruction is Urdu and those who are financially stable belongs to elite class speak and learn English language. If English was not considered a status symbol then in Pakistan a confused situation would not be exist which is harmful for our national language. Moreover; the excessive and non-excessive use of English and Urdu language consecutively in the private and government college should be balanced. This research has touched upon only the English and Urdu language usage in the government and private institution. It does not talk about the psychological factors connected with the language and affecting people mentally when they want to interact in English and couldn't do that.. While multilingualism in Pakistan reflects its rich cultural diversity, it can pose challenges in various domains. The coexistence of multiple languages, such as Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and others, can lead to linguistic complexities in education, administration, and communication. The preference for certain languages over others in different regions may contribute to disparities, and it can be a challenge to establish a uniform linguistic policy. Additionally, the dominance of English in certain spheres may impact the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages. However, embracing and managing multilingualism effectively can also be an asset, fostering a culturally rich and inclusive society. It requires thoughtful policies that balance the recognition of regional languages with the need for a common language for national cohesion. Further studies should be done on the problems faced by students who studied in government institution and how they are considered to be a subordinate member of a society only because of language. These students face many problems at the time of getting a good job due to the language barrier. These areas must be researched in the future in order to resolve the issues of students. The educational system of Pakistan is a major obstacle in the valuing and devaluing of a language. Therefore; the work on the single educational system of Pakistan should be included in the future. These all areas need to be researched upon, however there are also other areas which may not be included in this paper due to time constraint.



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