EXAMINING LEXICAL VARIATION IN SARAIKI DIALECTS OF DIFFERENT REGIONS IN PAKISTAN: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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Abstract

*This research paper aims to study different dialects of Saraki language. Saraiki belt is really vast, and is spread throughout Pakistan. To conduct this research fifteen participants from five different regions were selected. The participants belonged to DG Khan, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahimyar Khan and Muzaffargarh respectively. A questionnaire was distributed among selected participants based on lexical choices made by them in their specific region. For example, participants from Multan used the word **"thall"** for desert, while those from Bahawalpur preferred **"raet"**. A mixed method study based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis was done. The results of the study were analyzed using Wiliam Labov's theoretical framework of variationist sociolinguistics. The findings of the study showed significant lexical differences that corelates with regional boundaries. This study also highlights that the social factors play a vital role in linguistic variation.*

Keywords: Saraiki Dialects, Lexical Choices, Variationist Sociolinguistics, Regional Linguistic Differences, Sociolinguistic Factors, Mixed Method Research.

Introduction:

Language is not used only for the sake of communication but it is a symbol of social belonging, cultural identity and community heritage. Language is an innate ability of a human mind. It is what he learns from his environment. The first language that a human learns is his mother tongue, that is spoken by the people who lives around him. The other languages that a human learn are the needs of the time, of his wellbeing and his academic requirements. Saraiki, spoken by more than 28 million people essentially in southern Punjab, is among those languages boasting rich cultural background and history. Saraiki is a rich repository of oral verse, poetry, and folklore but is less worked in scholarly linguist literature (**Sarwat et al., 2020**). Language is a form of social behavior, if a child is raised in isolation, he won't be able to use any language, language is used by humans for communication, for conveying their feelings, ideas, needs and emotions to one another. (**Labov, 1971**). Sociolinguistics is there to study social aspects of human language. It basically studies the relationship between language and society. Languages that are used by people as a means of communication has many varieties. These varieties are usually in the form of register or the dialect so the dialect refer to the variety of a language spoken by particular group of speakers that is beckoned by systematic markers like phonological, grammatical and syntactical markers. Usually, the dialects found in speech community are of two types referring to regional dialects or the social dialects. (**Budiarsa, 2015**).

Background of the study:

Saraiki is that particular language where intra-variation occurs within. It is not even one language but a collection of many dialects, slightly or considerably different in sounds, forms, and especially vocabularies. These dialects—found in areas like Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, and Rahim Yar Khan—develop from a linguistic environment that is lexical in character and full of variety. Lexical variation, or vocabulary variation, is the effect of areas,

change over time, and socialization within specific groups of people (**Jamshaid, 2016**). For instance, a common word in Multani may not be familiar to a Riasti speaker, even though both are Saraiki speakers.

But despite having as much large-speaking population and as much dialectal richness as any other language, Saraiki is still undeservedly overlooked by researchers, especially compared to even more extensively spread languages like Urdu or Punjabi. Above all, especially lexical richness among its dialects has never been studied to any significant degree in an organized manner. Not only does the absence of such research accord the missing link to Pakistani linguistics, but most importantly, it is against efforts towards maintaining the linguistic diversity of Saraiki language at large (**Awais et al, 2023**). Unless documented, numerous exclusive local lexemes, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms are on immediate danger of long-term decline, particularly in the context of growing language contact and socio-economic mobility.

Rationale of the Study

The aim of this research is to fill this academic gap by a study of lexical variation between five distinct Saraiki dialects within the paradigm of William Labov's variationist sociolinguistics. (**Labov, 1966**) was one of the very first to propose that linguistic variation is not random but patterned and organized along social categories like age, gender, area, and class. The study applies Labov's theoretical framework to analyze in what manner and why words vary among regional groups of speakers and with what it has to do about identity, change, and communication in Saraiki speech.

Some works on Saraiki already provides background material for the latter part of this study. For instance, (**Sarwat et al, 2020**) contrasted Riasti and Multani dialects' lexical items and observed enormous disparities in informal lexicon due to cultural as well as geographical grounds. (**Jamshaid 2016**) conducted his research on dialects in Punjabi, i.e., Saraiki, and discovered lexical items to be equally good indicators of geographical origins and even social status. Although informative, such studies tend to be either of local scale or are mainly centered on the big-scale dialect groups and not on the intra-regional lexical variation range based on an integrated sociolinguistic theory.

Technically, (**Awais et al, 2023**) have tried to construct a Saraiki verb lexical resource on corpus analysis. Although the book is innovative effort towards Saraiki vocabulary computerization and formalization, it is not variation at points or between social groups. Thus, this research attempts to contribute such an effort by suggesting a sociolinguistic factor—a one that perceives people from different places utter different words to convey the same because of environment surrounding them, group practice, and local pride.

Research Objectives:

The basic objectives to conduct this research are as follows:

1. To know about different lexical items of Saraiki used in different regions of Spalthern Punjab.
2. To understand how regional and social factors influence the lexical variation in these dialects.

Research Questions:

The research questions that this study is going to answer are as follows.

1. What lexical differences exists among the Saraiki dialects, spoken in different regions of the Southern Punjab?

2. To what extent Wiliam Labov's variationist sociolinguistics is helpful in explaining the observed differences in lexical choices across regional dialects of Saraiki?

Statement of the Problem: Despite being an important language of the Southern Punjab it has been observed that not much work has been done on Saraiki language and its different dialects. Most of the linguistic research studies conducted in Pakistan are mostly related to other major languages like English, Urdu and Punjabi, leaving behind Saraiki and its different regional dialects unexplored and unexamined. As a result, we see that less documentation is done for Saraiki dialects. Leaving behind the question that how does the Saraiki vocabulary differs among regions such as Multan, Bahawalpur, Muzaffargarh, Dg Khan and Rahim Yar khan. Without an answer to this question the efforts for language preservation, curriculum advancement and sociolinguistic understanding remains inadequate. Thus, this study bridges this gap by bringing together the study of lexical variation in Saraiki dialects through the lens of Labov's variationist sociolinguistics. The purpose of this research is to unveil the way words are decided on the basis of geographical and social factors, thereby contributing more positively towards Pakistani regional linguistic diversity.

Significance of the Study:

The study is significant in several ways. At a scholarly level, it is one of very few existing studies conducted on Pakistani provincial languages but especially Saraiki. In documenting vocabulary associated with specific dialects, the research makes lexical preservation feasible and can carry over to implications for subsequent research in dialectology, sociolinguistics, and lexicography. Put into practical application, the study can assist language planners, instructors, and curriculum developers to make better comprehension of indigenous linguistic realities possible. Additionally, the research findings can be used in the creation of local pedagogical materials and empowering inclusive learning environments. On a broader level, the study highlights the importance of enjoying and maintaining the linguistic diversity embedded in the multiculturalism of Pakistan.

Literature Review:

Lexical density of Saraiki as a language has drawn increasing interest from researchers since it is indicative of rich linguistic texture and socio-cultural determinants of its evolution. It is one such significant area of research to investigate how Persian loans are integrated into Saraiki. Syed (**2015**) employs Optimality Theory to model phonological processes such as insertion, deletion, and substitution which occur in integrating Persian loans. It is found in the research that while Saraiki has been influenced by Persian, loanword borrowing is two-way, demonstrating a two-way interactional linguistic contact between the languages.

In corpus linguistics, Zamir et al. (**2023**) tested an in-depth analysis of the lexico-semantic relations between Saraiki nouns in the newspaper "Jhoke." Through the creation of a 2-million-word corpus, they identified ten frequent semantic relations with singular/plural being the most frequent. This is the basis for the building of a Saraiki WordNet such that NLP software can be extended to the language.

Aiming at this, Nazeer et al. (**2024**) established a 3-million-word corpus from various genres like newspapers, scholarly text, and literature. They focused on identifying lexico-semantic categories of Saraiki nouns and designing hierarchical relationships between them. Designing 173 synsets out of 39 frequent nouns identifies the utility of formal lexical databases capable of being used as linguistic research materials and as well as NLP tools.

Socio-political movements also impact Saraiki language growth. Perveen et al. (**2024**) analyze the role of the Progressive Movement in Saraiki poetry and literature. Based on them, the movement

induced a change of thematic turn and vocabulary, shaping the larger cultural transformations and rendering the language energetic.

Gul et al. (**2021**) follow a computational approach by mapping Urdu WordNet senses to Saraiki from literary and non-literary sources. They use an expansion-mapping approach in their methodology to offer a core framework for a Saraiki WordNet. The contribution of this research is its relevance in future bilingual dictionary building and other NLP tasks.

Sociolinguistic rules also play a significant part in language variation. Yasir and Ghani (**2020**) offer the interface of socio-economic factors and language change in Dera Ghazi Khan. According to them, socio-economic desires of economic growth and education are impacting young generations to embrace Urdu over Saraiki, which is causing the decline of the use of the latter.

Use of verbs in Saraiki has been researched by Zamir et al. (**2021**), who conducted research on a 1-million-word corpus of the "Jhoke" newspaper. They discovered semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, entailment, and troponymy among 160 verbs. The findings are significant for the creation of a complete Saraiki WordNet and the enhancement of NLP tools.

Finally, Sherazi et al. (**2024**) focus on adjectives and analyze a 1-million-word Saraiki book corpus. The quantitative analysis provides them various lexico-semantic relationships like antonyms, synonyms, and collocations. The research contributes to the understanding of the lexical organization of Saraiki, both to linguistic theory and practical application.

Lexical variation in Saraiki has been analyzed extensively to determine regional dialects, language contact phenomena, and lexical resource formation. Sarwat et al. (**2020**) compared the Multani and Riasti dialects by taking four lexical items—two function words and two content words—and analyzing them. Their study showed extensive lexical variation between the two dialects and illustrated how the variations were markers of regional identity as well as linguistic boundaries in Southern Punjab.

Arshad et al. (**2022**) conducted a survey of the influence of English on Saraiki vocabulary through literary work analysis, e.g., articles, short stories, and plays. The authors identified approximately 80 English loan words borrowed into Saraiki, which are primarily from areas like education, health, and computers. The study concluded that even though 75% of the loan words have other Saraiki equivalents, their adoption is an unequivocal indicator of the workings of how language evolution occurs and of the effects of globalization on indigenous languages.

Awais et al. (**2023**) also assisted in the compilation of lexical resources of Saraiki verbs through a corpus-based approach. From a three-million-word corpus, they prepared synsets of Saraiki verbs to facilitate the construction of a Saraiki WordNet. The work contributes to the progress of the area of computational linguistics for the Saraiki language so that advanced language processing machinery and software become accessible.

Bashir et al. (**2019**) offered a phonetic description of Central Saraiki with its defining phonological features like implosives and patterns of tones. The study contributes to offering an insight into the phonetic makeup of Saraiki, which is essential for appropriate linguistic analysis and language resource construction.

Theoretical Framework: The research is based on the foundations of William Labov's Sociolinguistic Theory of Language Variation, where the variation of language within and among social groups and geography is considered. As one of the pioneering sociolinguists, Labov reiterated that language is never monolithic nor static. Instead, it exists in a continuous state of variation depending on who uses it, where they are from, and the context. His work accounts for

typical language choices made by people and the kinds of words that they employ to describe everyday things something that this study is looking at specifically in Saraiki dialects.

Understanding Labov's Theory: Labov proposed the hypothesis that there are certain features of language whether pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary that come in more than one version and people choose them according to their context of society. They are known as linguistic variables. His observations revealed that they do represent a lot about the speaker's identity like his location, education, age, or gender.

One of his most famous works was to explore how speakers in New York, from different classes of society, produce the "r" sound. He found that people's speech differed depending on the society they were in and whether they were in a formal or informal setting. This was an enormous step to confirm that small variations in speech reflect much larger social phenomena.

Some of the key ideas in Labov's theory are directly implemented in this research:

Linguistic Variables: These are the different words that individuals within various Saraiki-speaking regions utilize to describe everyday activities and things such as "to come" or "to go." These differences are contrasted throughout regions.

Social Stratification: Labov explained how people from different social backgrounds talk differently. Here we learn how people from Multan, Bahawalpur, Jalalpur Pirwala, Muzaffargarh, and Rahim Yar Khan talk differently depending on where they live and how educated they are.

Overt and Covert Prestige: Some words are "more proper" (overt prestige), but others can be informal but locally prestigious (covert prestige). For instance, a word which occurs only in Muzaffargarh; it may not occur everywhere, but the locals will speak it because it means that they belong to the group.

Style-Shifting: People change the style of speech according to situations. They talk formally in school but use locality words at home. This study is concerned with such changes of words between Saraiki speakers.

Why This Theory Fits This Study

This study examines how individuals in various regions of Southern Punjab employ various Saraiki names for the same items. These variations are not arbitrary. They depend on an individual's place of origin, educational background, and level of identification with regional culture. Labov's hypothesis provides us with an easy explanation for why the variations occur and how they relate to broader social and cultural trends. Instead of merely collecting words, this study uses Labov's theory to analyze what these words say—why one individual from Bahawalpur says something and a different person from Rahim Yar Khan says something else. It permits us to see how language is used not just as a tool of communication, but as an identity marker.

William Labov's theory is the basis for this study since it brings to light how society is portrayed in language. If we apply his ideas to the Saraiki languages, we know better not only what the word changes are about, but something of what this implies about people using them. His theory encourages us beyond their individual words to distinguish the supporting tales that they convey to us concerning regional identification, tradition, and social transition.

Methodology: The methodology that has been chosen for this research is a mixed-method design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods based on thematic analysis of the lexical variety in Saraiki dialects collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher consisting of 25 questions, all open-ended. In order to fully achieve the objectives of the study the answers gained from the selected participants were analyzed using the theoretical framework of Wiliam Labov's theory of variationist sociolinguistics. The selected research design

provides a descriptive and richer understanding of how lexical choices differ based on geographical location. The theory of variationist sociolinguistics presented by the father of sociolinguistics argues that the linguistic variation occurs based on the social factors like class, region and gender. The targeted group for this research consists of native speakers of Saraiki language belonging to five significant regions of Southern Punjab that are Multan, Bahawalpur (BWP), Jalalpur Pirwala (JPW), Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan (RYK). Fifteen participants have been chosen through purposive sampling, 3 participants for each region. Education, gender, and age diversity have been maintained while choosing the participants to examine the effect of social variables on word use. Questionnaire data were coded and quantified using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency and percentage) to witness regional lexical trends in order to carry out quantitative analysis. All the candidates willingly filled the questionnaire as it was brought to their knowledge that this study only serves the purpose of academic research. There are no potential risks or benefits that this research will give them. And the confidentiality was guaranteed. The results are included in research in form of pie chart percentage and interpretation. The findings are concluded and added in research. The findings were interpreted in terms of William Labov's sociolinguistic theory with an emphasis on the theory of linguistic variation, social stratification, and covert prestige

Data Analysis:

1-What do you commonly call "wife" in Saraiki?

| Region	Term Used	Percentage
Multan	Ran	30
DG Khan	Sook	20
Raheem Yar Khan	Bivi	15
Jalalpur	Ran	20
Muzaffargarh	Ran/Bivi Mix	15
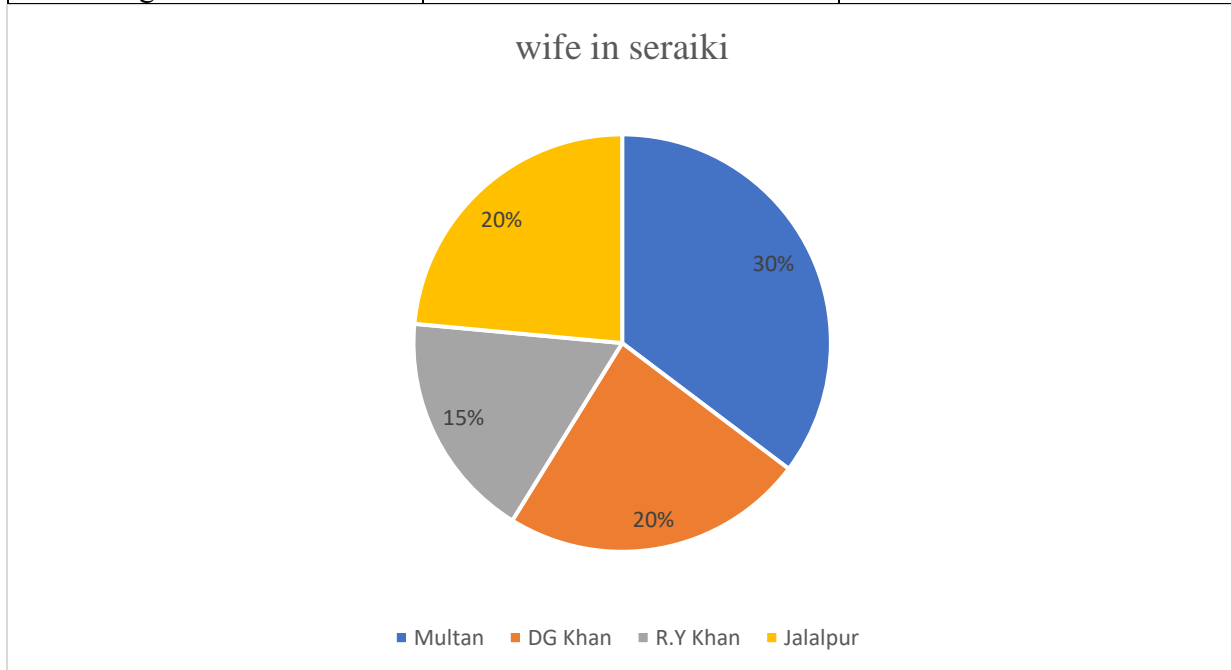
The graph presents regional lexical variations in the Saraiki language for the term commonly used to refer to a "wife." Data was collected from five different regions: Multan, DG Khan, Rahim Yar

Khan, Jalalpur, and Muzaffargarh. The term **"Ran"** is predominantly used in **Multan (30%)**, **Jalalpur (20%)**, and partially in **Muzaffargarh (15%)** alongside **"Bivi"**. In **DG Khan**, the term **"Sook"** is commonly used (20%), while **Rahim Yar Khan** shows a preference for the more Urdu-influenced term **"Bivi"** (15%). The variation highlights the influence of regional and possibly social or cultural factors on lexical choices within the Saraiki dialect continuum.

2-What do you call a "child" in Saraiki? Is it gender based?

Region	Term Used	Percentage
Multan	Baal/Bacha	30
DG Khan	Muna/ Nika	20
Jalalpur	Potar	10
R.Y Khan	Baal/kak	25
Muzaffargarh	Bachra	15

Child in seraiki

■ Multan ■ DG Khan ■ R.Y Khan ■ Muzafrgargh ■ Jalalpur
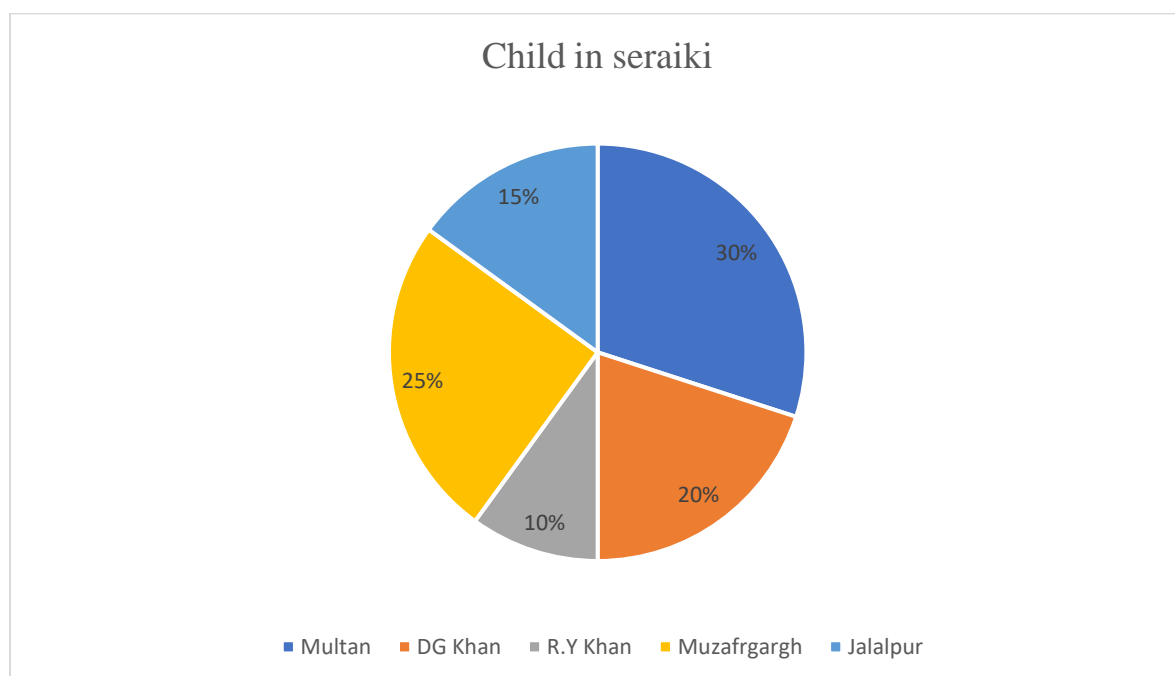
This graph illustrates the lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the word "child" across different regions. The data indicates that the term is not entirely gender-neutral and may vary based on local usage or context. In Multan (30%), the terms "Baal" and "Bacha" are commonly used, which are generally gender-neutral. In DG Khan (20%), "Muna" and "Nika" are used, which may carry slight gendered or affectionate connotations, typically for boys. Jalalpur (10%) uses "Potar", a term that often refers to a grandson or male child. Rahim Yar Khan (25%) shows a blend with "Baal" and "Kaka", the latter possibly being a regional term for a small child. In Muzaffargarh (15%), the term "Bachra" is used, which may lean slightly toward referring to a younger male child.

This variation reflects both regional influence and social perceptions of gender in the Saraiki lexicon for children.

3-How do you call your "mother" and "father"?

Region	Word for Mother	Word for Father	Percentage
Multan	Amma	Abba	30

DG Khan	Mai	Piyo	20
Jalalpur	Ami	Abbu	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Amma/ Mai	Abba/piyo	20
Muzaffargarh	Mai	Piyo Abba	20

Mother and father

- Multan
- DG Khan
- Raheem Yar Khan
- Jalalpur
- Muzafargarh
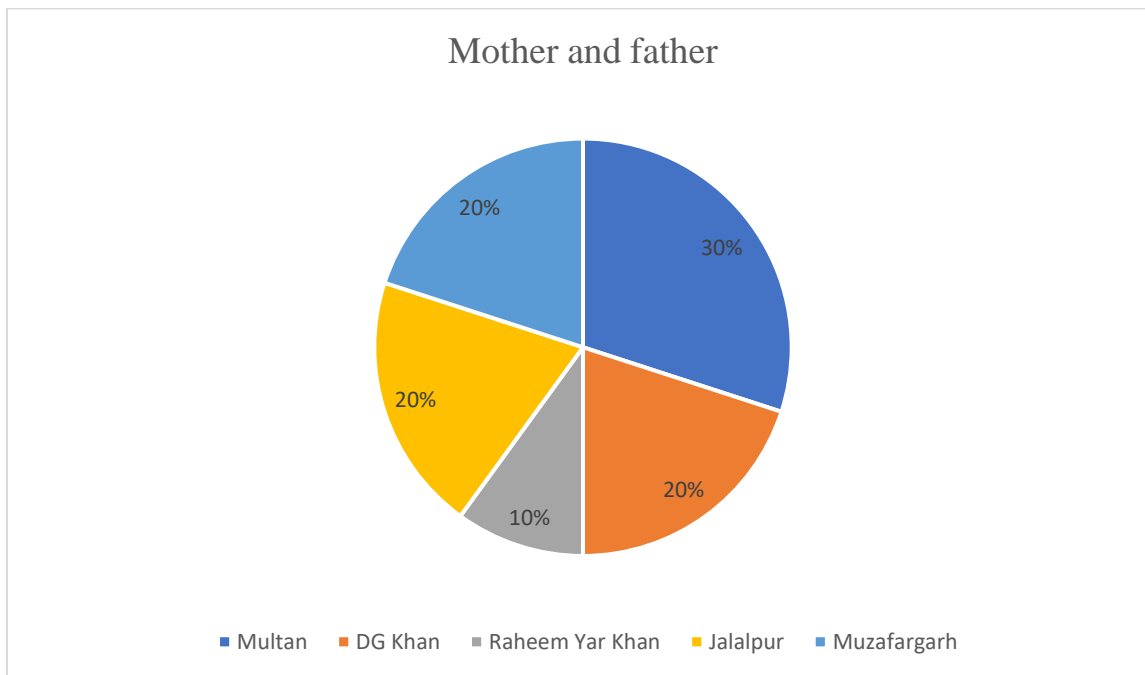
The graph represents regional lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the terms used to refer to "mother" and "father." In regions like **Multan** and **Rahim Yar Khan**, both traditional and Urdu-influenced terms such as **"Amma/Abba"** are common. In contrast, **DG Khan** and **Muzaffargarh** prefer native Saraiki terms like **"Mai"** for mother and **"Piyo"** or **"Abba"** for father, reflecting both linguistic and cultural diversity.

4-What word do you use for "food" or "meal"?

| Region	Term Used	Percentage
Multan	Khana	30
DG Khan	Khana	20
Jalalpur	Roti / khana	15
Raheem Yar Khan	Khurak/khana	20
Muzaffargarh	Roti	15
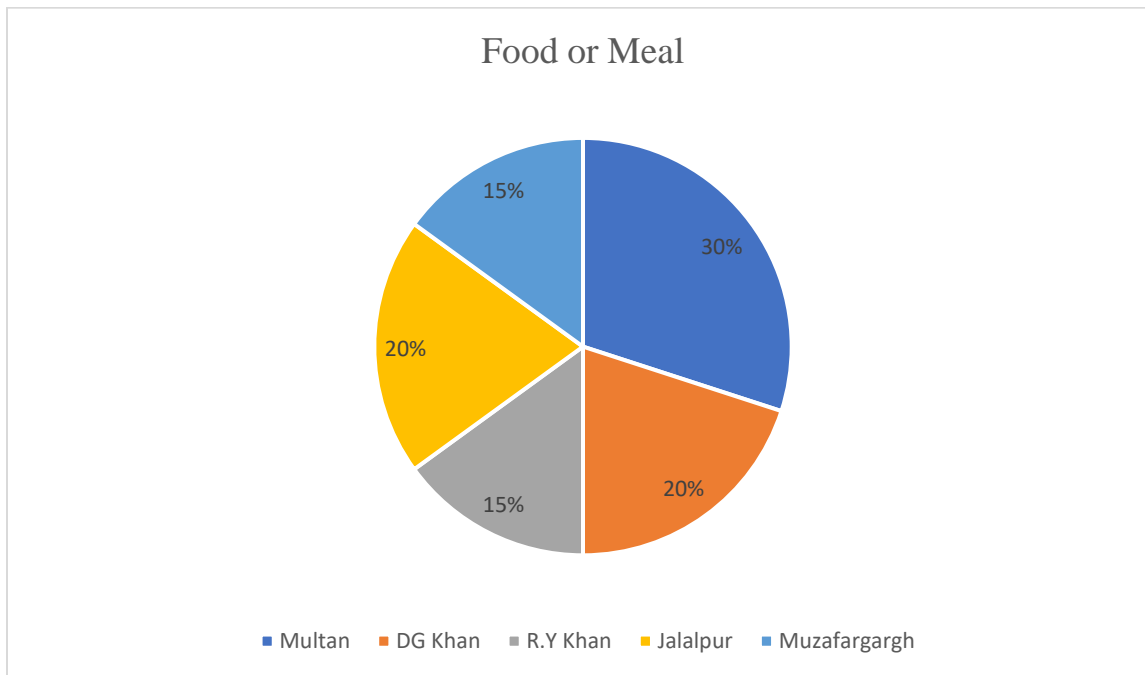
The graph presents regional variations in the Saraiki terms used for "food" or "meal." **"Khana"** is commonly used in **Multan (30%)**, while **"Khana"** appears frequently in **DG Khan** and **Jalalpur**. **"Roti"** and **"Khurak"** are also used in **Rahim Yar Khan** and **Muzaffargarh**, highlighting both traditional and localized expressions for food across the Saraiki-speaking regions.

**5-What do you call a "friend"? Do you use separate words for close friends or acquaintances?**

Region	Term Used	Percentage
Multan	Yar/Dost	30
DG Khan	Sathi/Yar	20
Jalalpur	Sanghat /sangi	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Yar	25
Muzaffargarh	Sangi	15
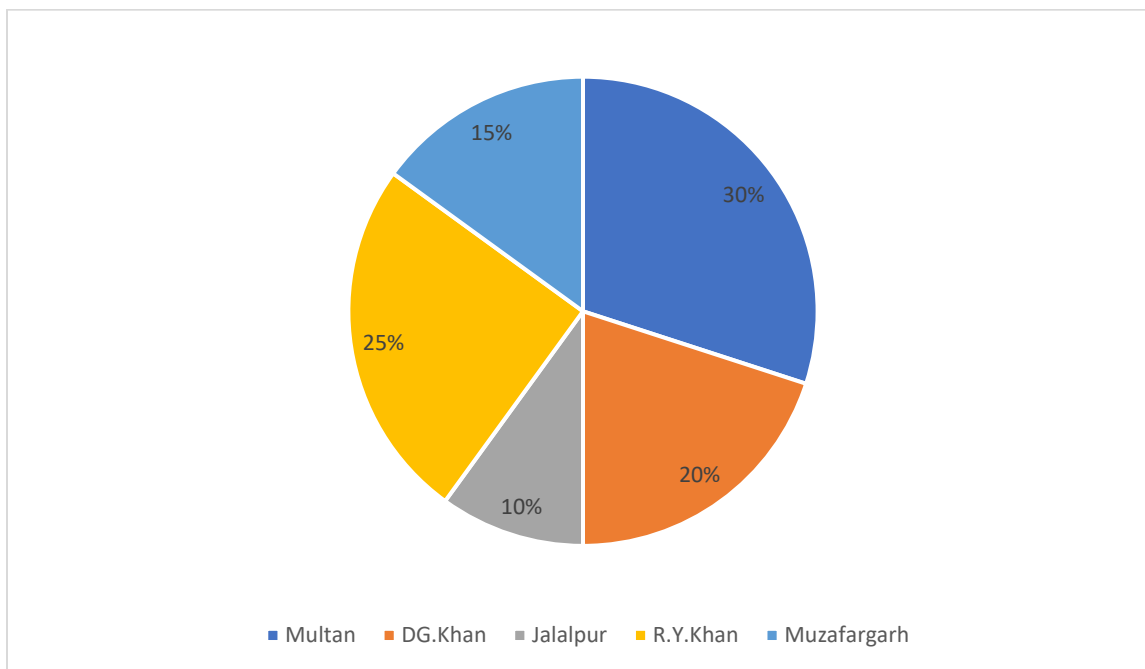
The graph highlights the lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the word "friend," showing distinctions based on closeness and regional usage. "Yar" and "Dost" are common in Multan and Rahim Yar Khan, typically used for close friends. In DG Khan, "Sathi" and "Yar" are used, with "Sathi" often referring to a companion or acquaintance. "Sanghat" and "Sangi", found in Jalalpur and Muzaffargarh, carry deeper cultural meaning and usually denote close companionship, reflecting the emotional bond in friendships.

**6-What words do you use in Saraiki for "to go" and "leave"?**

Region	Term Used for Go	Term used for Leave	Percentage
Multan	vaanj	Chadna	25
DG Khan	Waggan	Wenda	20
Jalalpur	Jawanda	Chorna	15
Raheem Yar Khan	Veen	Chadna	20
Muzaffargarh	venda	chadna	20

Go and Leave
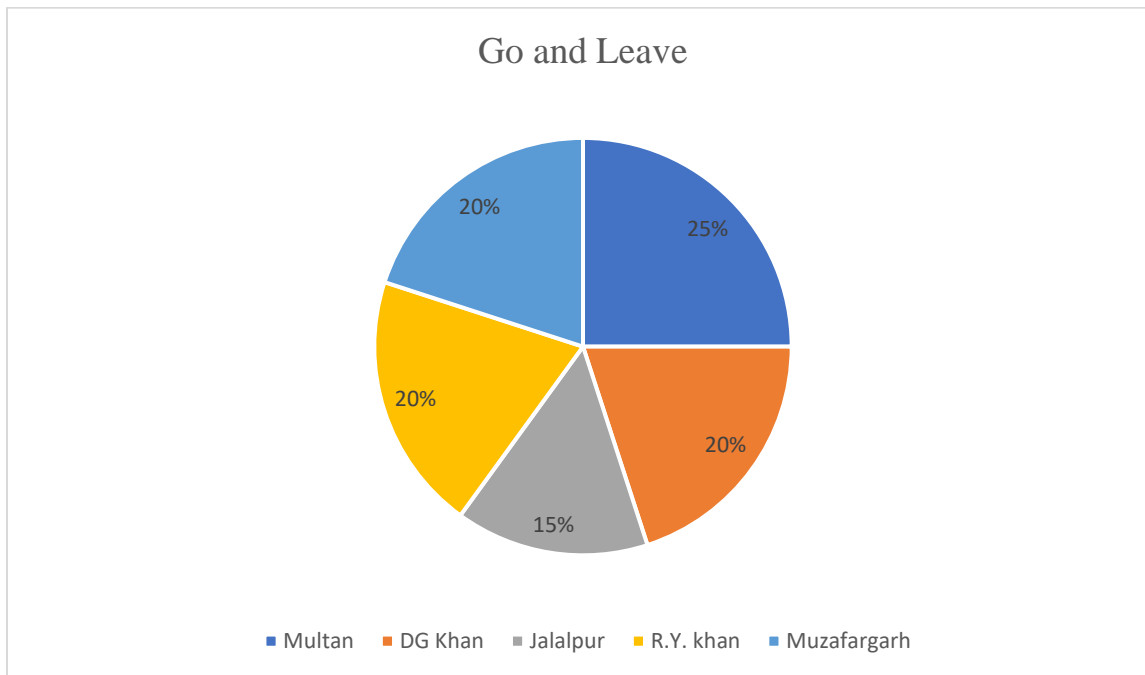
The graph shows regional lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the verbs "to go" and "to leave." Terms like **"vaanj," "veen,"** and **"venda"** are commonly used across regions like **Multan**, **Rahim Yar Khan**, and **Muzaffargarh** to express "go," while **"chadna"** is frequently used for "leave" in most regions. In **DG Khan** and **Jalalpur**, unique forms like **"waggan," "wenda,"** and **"chorna"** reflect deeper dialectal distinctions, highlighting how verb usage varies across the Saraiki-speaking belt.

7-What do you use for "to sleep" in your dialect?

Region	Term Used for Sleep	Percentage
Multan	Sumnta	30
DG Khan	Sutta	20
Jalalpur	Sona	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Sumna	20
Muzaffargarh	Sona	20
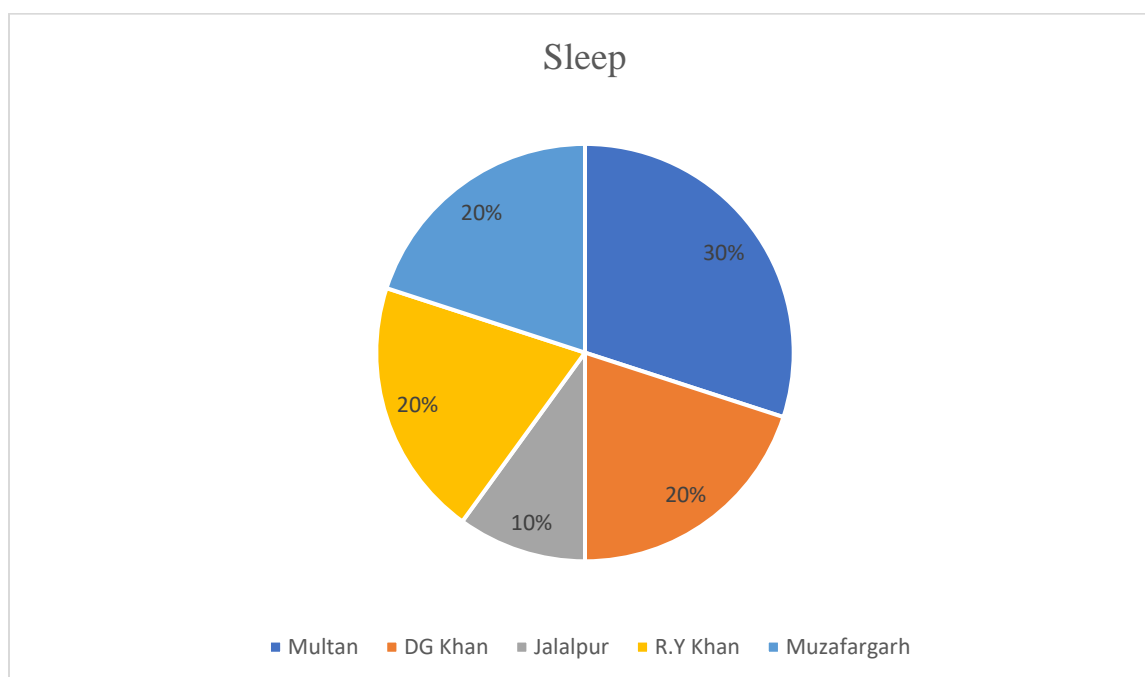
The table presents the regional lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the verb "to sleep." **"Sumnta"** or **"Sumna"** is the dominant term in **Multan** and **Rahim Yar Khan**, reflecting a more traditional Saraiki usage. **DG Khan** commonly uses **"Sutta,"** while **"Sona"** appears in **Jalalpur** and **Muzaffargarh**, showing influence from Urdu or neighboring dialects. These variations highlight how even basic daily actions are expressed differently across the Saraiki-speaking regions.

8-What is a common word you use for "beautiful" that is used by everyone in your dialect?

Region	Term used for Beautiful	Percentage
Multan	Sohnra	30
DG Khan	Wadiya	20
Jalalpur	Sohna	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Sohnra	20
Muzaffargarh	Wadiya	20

Beautiful

- Multan
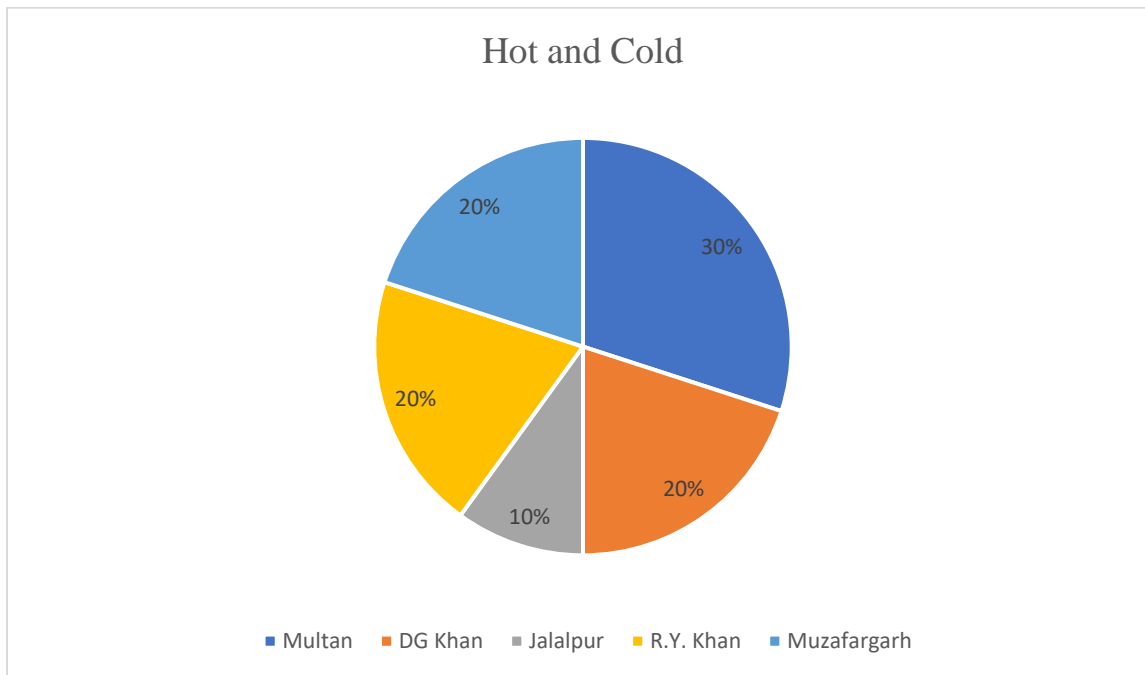- DG Khan
- Jalalpur
- R.Y Khan
- Muzafargarh
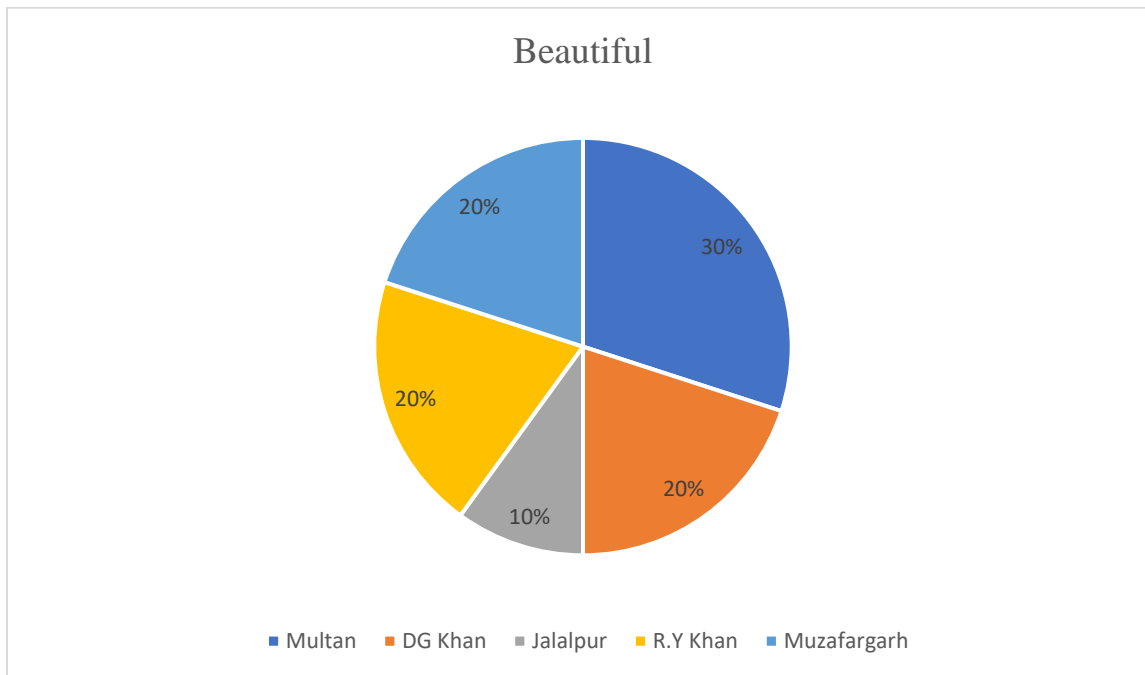
The table shows the regional lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the word "beautiful." **"Sohnra"** is the most commonly used term in **Multan** and **Rahim Yar Khan**, while **"Sohna"** appears in **Jalalpur**, possibly reflecting a simpler or more affectionate form. **"Wadiya,"** used in **DG Khan** and **Muzaffargarh**, carries a broader meaning like "good" or "nice" but is often used to compliment beauty. The variation demonstrates both shared and region-specific expressions of admiration across the Saraiki belt.

9-What is the word for "hot" and "cold"?

| Regions	Term Used for Hot	Term used for Cold	Percentage
Multan	Tat-ta	Thada	30
DG Khan	Kosa	Thada	20
Jalalpur	Garam	Sard	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Tatta	Sard	20
Muzaffargarh	Garam	Thada	20

This graph highlights regional lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the terms "hot" and "cold." In **Multan** and **Rahim Yar Khan**, **"Tatta"** is commonly used for "hot," while **"Thada"** and **"Sard"** are used interchangeably for "cold." **DG Khan** uses **"Kosa"** for "hot" and **"Thada"** for "cold," showing distinct local usage. In **Jalalpur** and **Muzaffargarh**, the terms **"Garam"** and **"Sard"** or **"Thada"** reflect Urdu influence, indicating a mix of native and borrowed vocabulary across regions.

10-Do you use different words for "house" and "home"? If yes, what are they?

Region	Term Used for House	Term used for Home	Percentage
Multan	Ghar	Vasaib	25
DG Khan	Makan	Watan	20
Jalalpur	Ghar	Vasaib	10
Raheem Yar Khan	Makan	Vasaib	20
Muzaffargarh	Ghar	watan	25

House and Home

- Multan ■ DG Khan ■ Jalalpur ■ R.y Khan ■ Muzafargarh
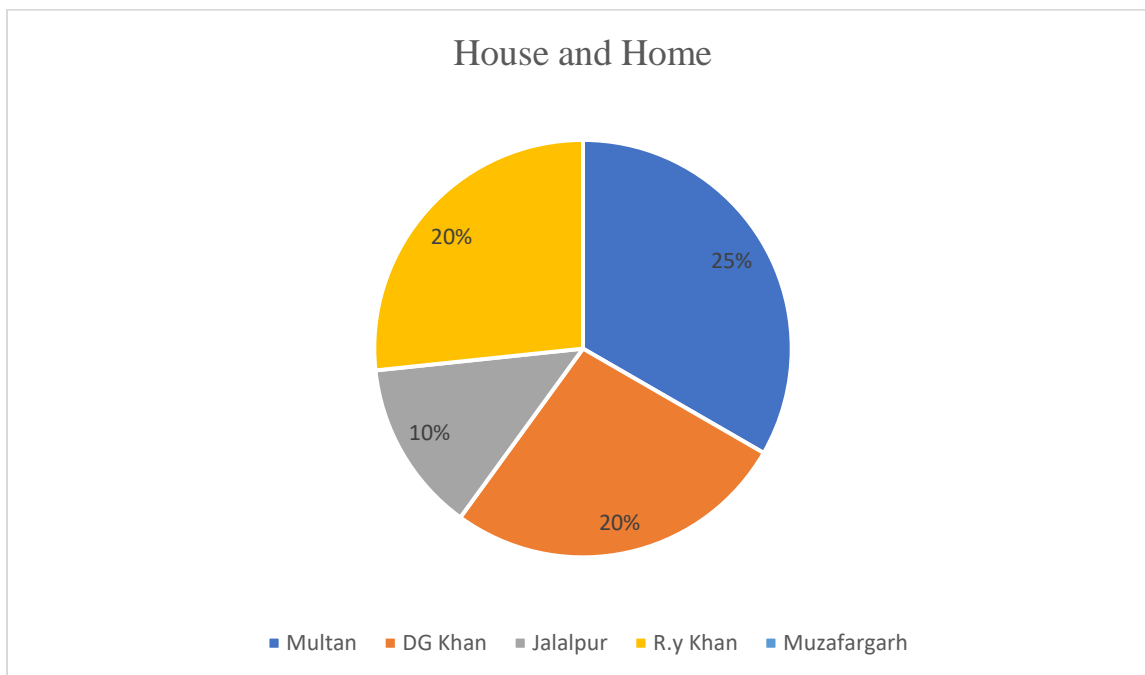
The graph presents the lexical variation in the Saraiki language for the terms "house" and "home" across different regions. While **"Ghar"** and **"Makan"** are both used to refer to a physical **house**, the word for **"home"** varies more significantly. **"Vasaib"** is commonly used in **Multan**, **Jalalpur**, and **Rahim Yar Khan**, reflecting a deeper emotional or cultural attachment to one's place of living. On the other hand, **"Watan"**, used in **DG Khan** and **Muzaffargarh**, conveys a broader sense of homeland or native place. This distinction highlights how Saraiki dialects differentiate between a physical structure and a place of belonging.

11-Do you think your dialect has words that are not understood by Saraiki people from other regions?
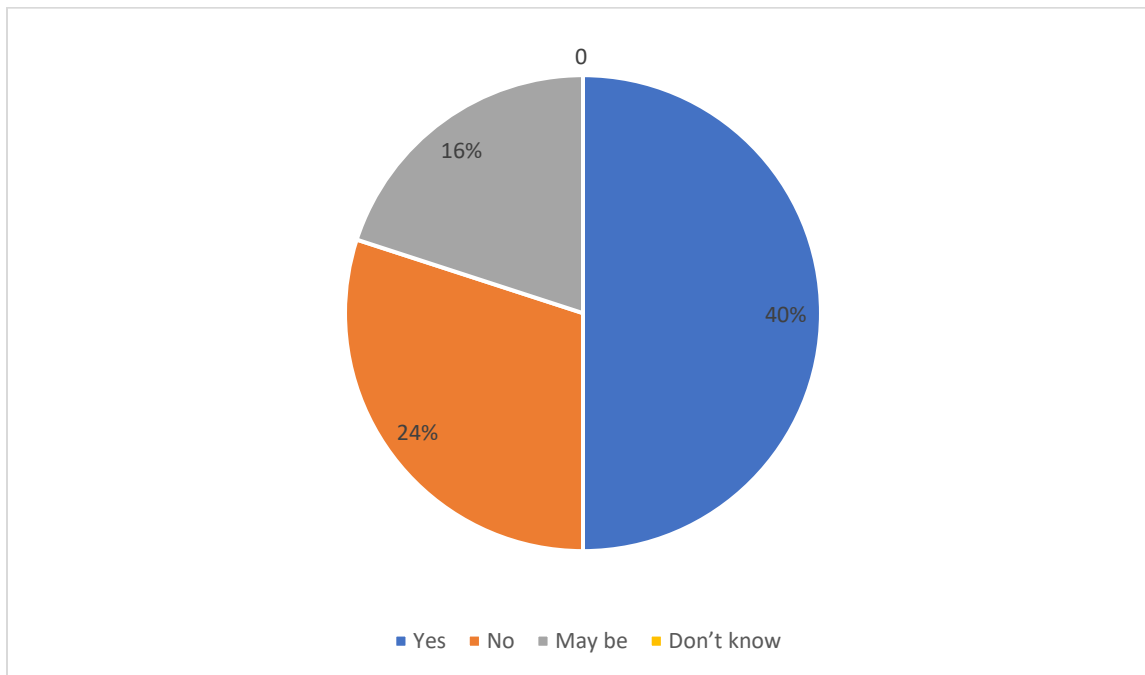
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	30	60
No	20	40

651

■ Yes ■ No ■ ■
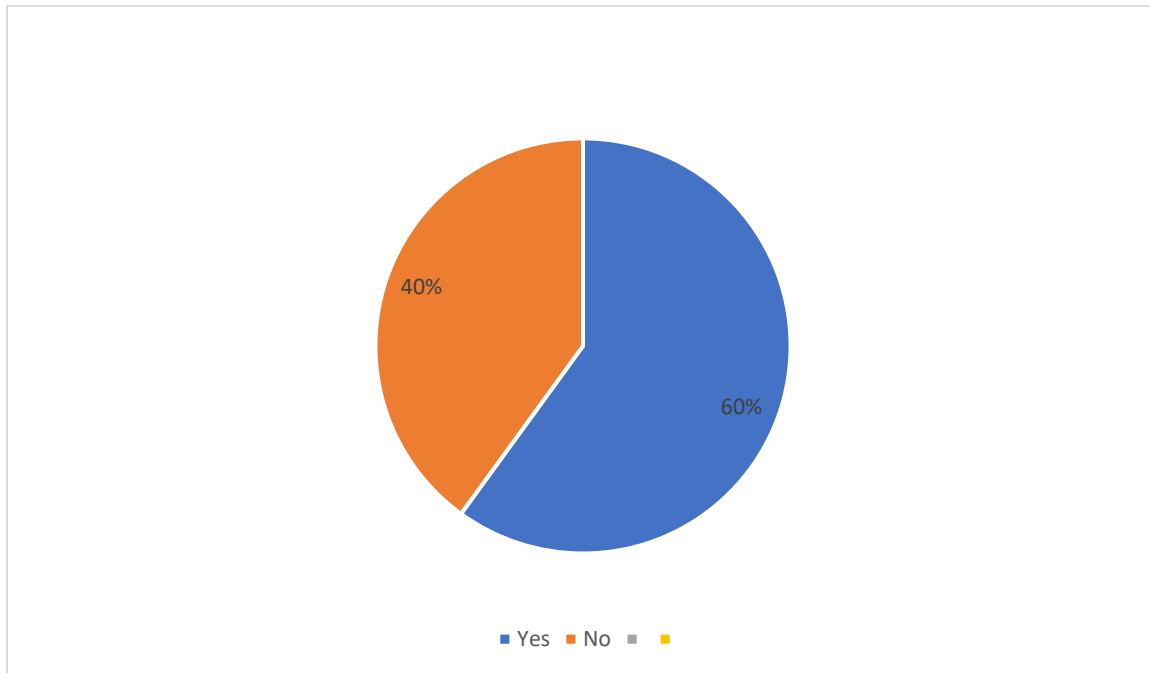
The responses to whether speakers believe their Saraiki dialect contains words not understood by Saraiki speakers from other regions. A majority of respondents (**60%**) answered **"Yes,"** indicating that regional lexical differences can lead to misunderstandings or lack of comprehension among Saraiki speakers. Meanwhile, **40%** responded **"No,"** suggesting that despite dialectal variation, there remains a significant level of mutual intelligibility. This data highlights the linguistic diversity within the Saraiki language and the impact of regional boundaries on vocabulary.

12-Do you think any initiatives are being taken to Preserve Saraiki Language and its different dialects?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ May be   ☐ Don't Know

| Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	25	40
No	15	24
May be	10	16
Don't know	12	20

The table reflects participants' perceptions regarding initiatives to preserve the Saraiki language and its various dialects. **40%** of respondents believe that **initiatives are being taken**, showing some awareness of preservation efforts. However, **24%** said **"No,"** and **16%** selected **"May be,"** indicating uncertainty or skepticism. Additionally, **20%** responded **"Don't know,"** highlighting a lack of information or engagement with language preservation activities. Overall, the responses reveal mixed awareness and concern about efforts to safeguard the Saraiki language and its dialectal richness.

13-Which Language do you think can help you gain prestige in society?

☐ English   ☐ Urdu   ☐ Saraiki   ☐ Other

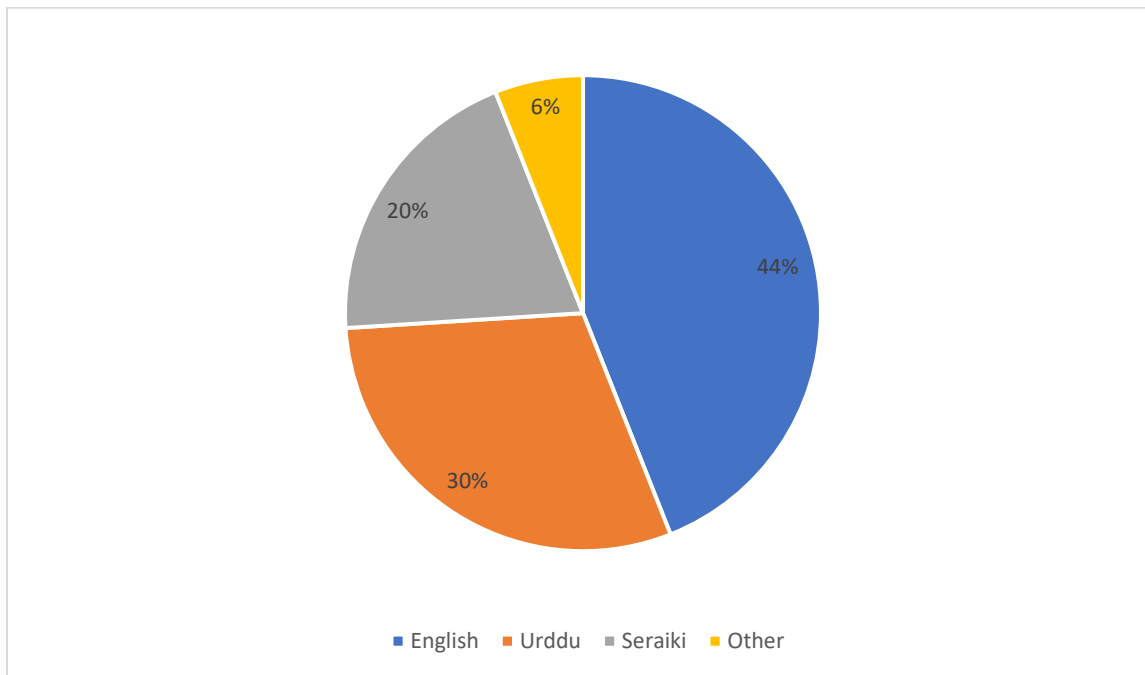| Language	Count	Percentage
English	30	50
Urdu	15	25
Seraiki	10	17
other	5	8

■ English ■ Urdu ■ Seraiki ■ Other
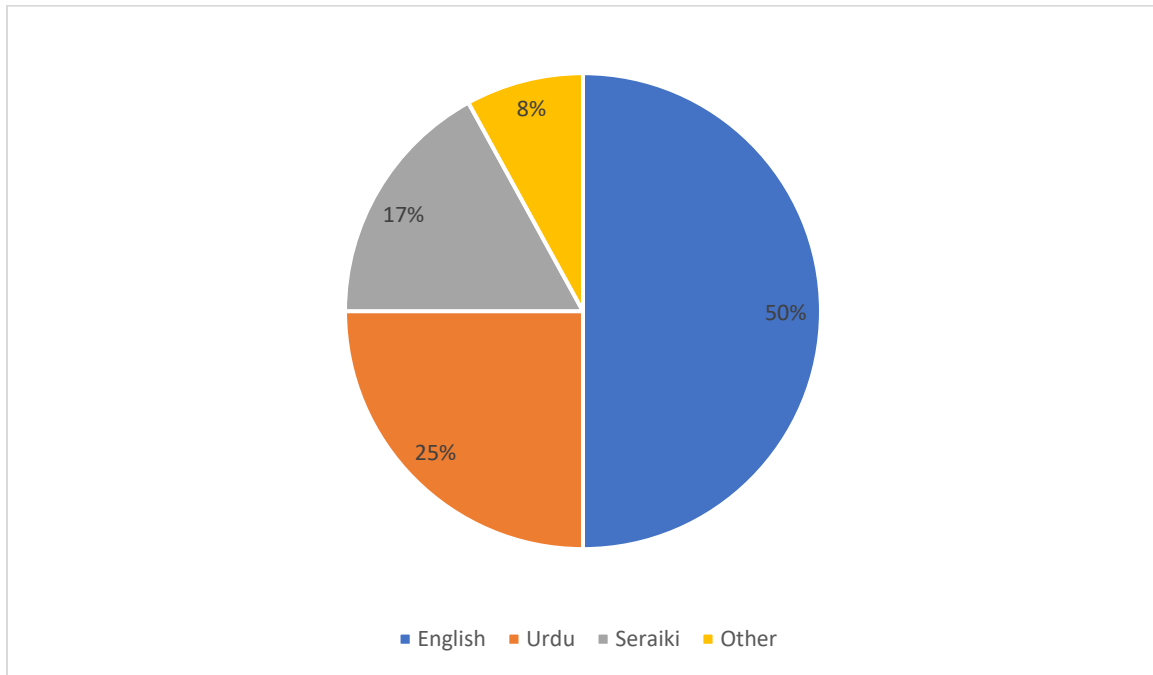
The table shows participants' views on which language they believe brings **prestige** in society. **English** was the most selected option, with **50%** of respondents considering it a symbol of social status and advancement. **Urdu** followed with **25%**, reflecting its role as the national language and medium of formal communication. Only **17%** chose **Saraiki**, indicating that while it holds cultural value, it is not widely associated with social prestige. A small percentage (**8%**) chose **other languages**, suggesting limited influence of regional or foreign alternatives in this context.

14-Which Language do you commonly use at your workplace?

☐ Urdu   ☐ English   ☐ Saraiki   ☐ Other

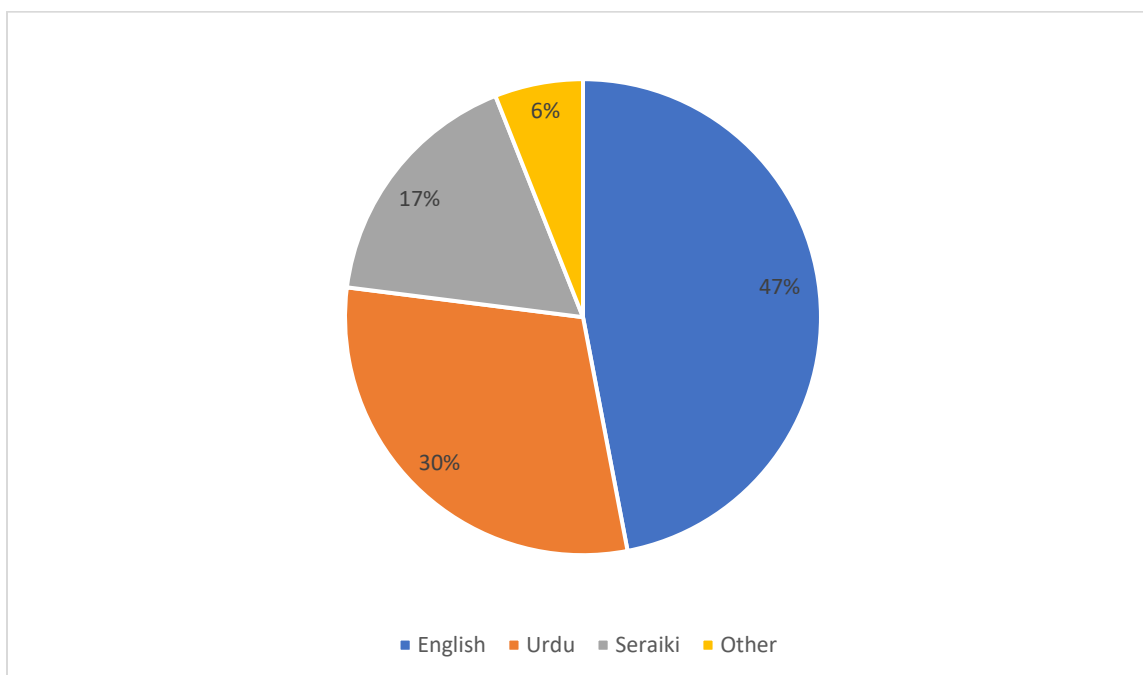| Language	Count	Percentage
English	22	44
Urdu	15	30
Seraiki	10	20
other	3	6

- English   - Urddu   - Seraiki   - Other

The graph displays the languages commonly used by participants in their workplace settings. **English** is the most frequently used language, with **44%** of respondents indicating its dominance in professional environments. **Urdu** follows with **30%**, reflecting its widespread use as a national and commonly understood language. **Saraiki** is used by **20%**, mostly likely in informal interactions among native speakers. A small portion (**6%**) reported using **other languages**, showing limited diversity beyond the main three. This data suggests that English holds significant functional value in the workplace, while Saraiki remains more regionally and informally used.

15-While using social media which language do you mostly prefer?

☐ English   ☐ Urdu   ☐ Saraiki   ☐ Other

Language	Count	Percentage
English	28	47
Urdu	18	30
Seraiki	10	17
other	4	6

This graph illustrates participants' language preferences while using social media platforms. **English** is the most preferred language, selected by **47%** of respondents, likely due to its global reach and digital dominance. **Urdu** is used by **30%**, reflecting its status as the national language and its widespread comprehension. **Saraiki** is chosen by **17%**, indicating a modest use of the regional language in digital communication. **6%** use **other languages**, showing minor linguistic diversity online. The data suggests that while regional identity exists, users prioritize languages with broader accessibility and social influence on digital platforms.

16-Have you ever noticed that people from other regions use different words for the same things used in your dialect? Can you give examples?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	35	70
No	15	30

The table reflects participants' awareness of lexical differences within the Saraiki language across regions. A significant majority (**70%**) responded **"Yes,"** indicating that they have noticed people from other areas using different words for the same things, highlighting strong regional variation. Only **30%** said **"No,"** suggesting limited awareness or exposure to other dialects. This response supports the idea that intra-language diversity is common in Saraiki and is recognized by most speakers. Examples collected in the study, such as **"Ran" vs. "Sook"** for "wife" or **"Sumnta" vs. "Sona"** for "sleep," further validate this observation.

Common lexical differences as examples

| words	Multani	DG Khan	R.Y Khan
Child	Bachra/Baal	Muna	kaka
Friend	Yar	Sathi	Beli
To sleep	Samnra	Sutna	nendar
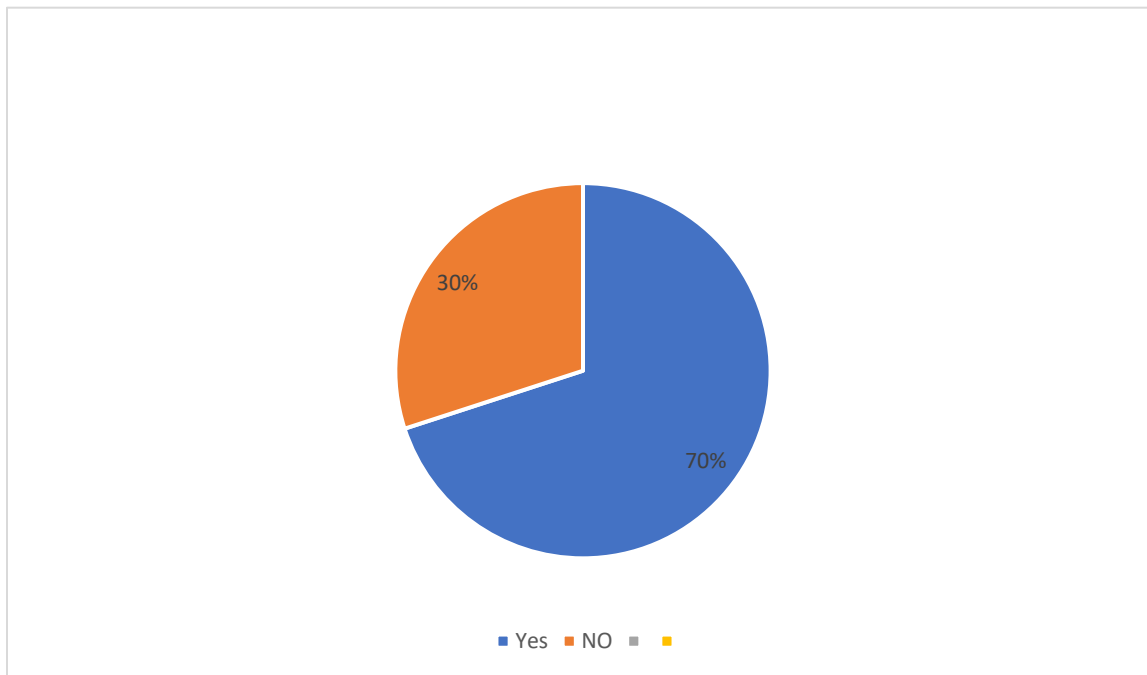
The table presents examples of common **lexical differences** in the Saraiki language across three regions: **Multan**, **DG Khan**, and **Rahim Yar Khan**. For the word **"child,"** speakers in Multan use **"Bachra/Baal,"** while **"Muna"** is common in DG Khan, and **"Kaka"** in Rahim Yar Khan. The word **"friend"** also varies, with **"Yar"** in Multan, **"Sathi"** in DG Khan, and **"Beli"** in Rahim Yar Khan. Similarly, for **"to sleep,"** Multan uses **"Samnra,"** DG Khan says **"Sutna,"** and Rahim Yar Khan uses **"Nendar."** These differences highlight the rich dialectal diversity within the Saraiki language and demonstrate how the same concept is expressed differently based on regional speech patterns.

17. **Are there any words in your dialect that come from other languages (e.g., Urdu, Balochi, Punjabi)? List a few.**

| Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	38	76%
No	12	24%

Borrowed from	Example words	Meaning
Urdu	Bivi, khana ,piyar	Wife, food, love
Punjabi	Putar ,sohna, sathi	Son, Beautiful, Friend
Balochi	Waggan ,kaka	To go, Child
English	School, Doctor	School , Doctor
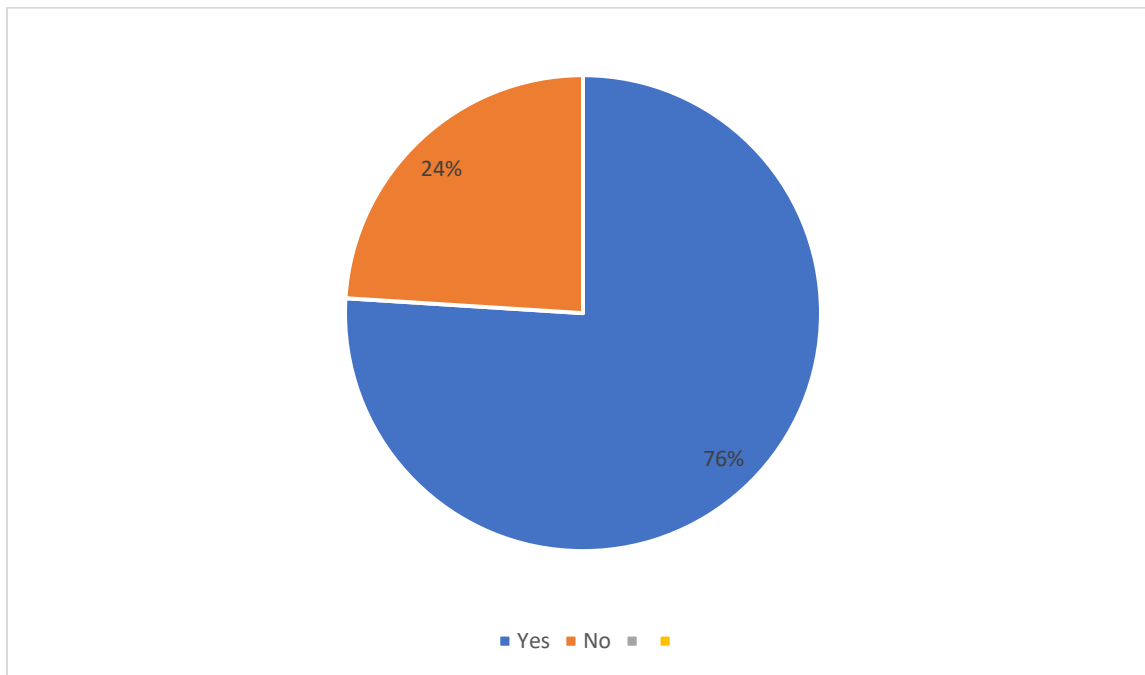
This graph shows participants' responses regarding the presence of borrowed words in their Saraiki dialect. A large majority (**76%**) acknowledged that their dialect includes words from other languages such as **Urdu, Punjabi, Balochi,** and **English**, while **24%** did not recognize such influence. The examples provided demonstrate this borrowing clearly: from **Urdu** (**bivi, khana, piyar**), from **Punjabi** (**putar, sohna, sathi**), from **Balochi** (**waggan, kaka**), and from **English** (**school, doctor**). These borrowings highlight the dynamic and contact-rich nature of the Saraiki language, shaped by interaction with neighboring linguistic communities and modern influences.

18. **Do you see your dialect as more "pure," "mixed," or "modern"? Kindly support your answer?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Mixed	22	44
Pure	15	30
Modern	13	26
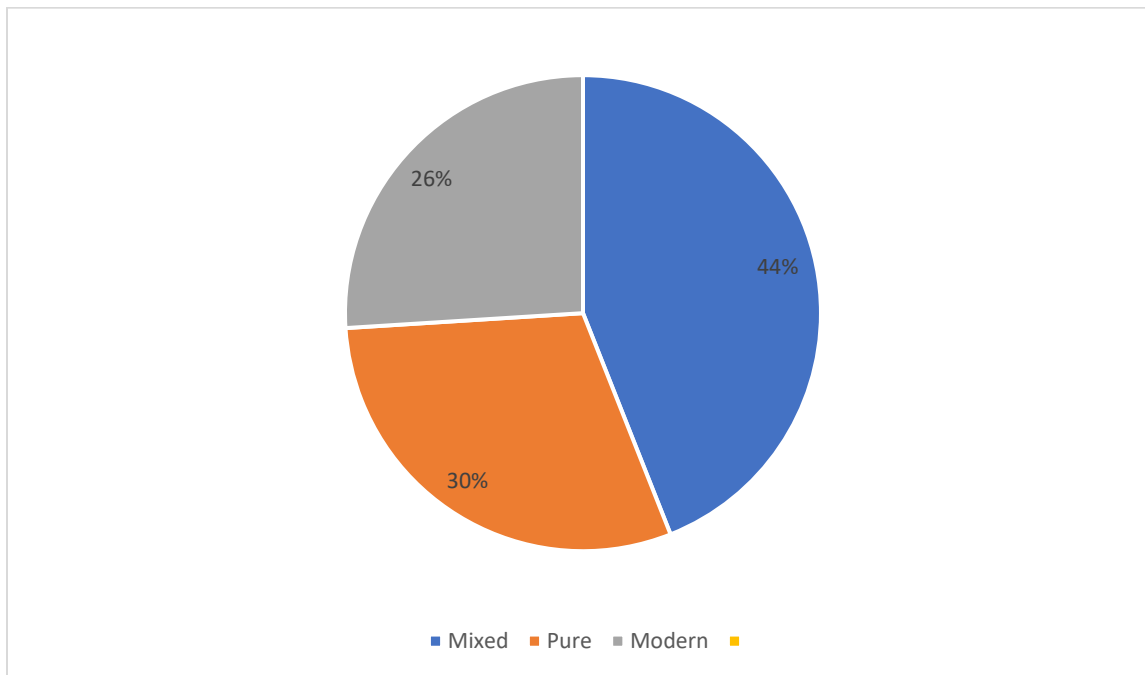
The above graph reflects participants' perceptions of their Saraiki dialect's nature. The majority (**44%**) view their dialect as **"mixed,"** indicating a blend of native Saraiki with influences from languages like Urdu, Punjabi, and Balochi. **30%** consider their dialect **"pure,"** suggesting minimal outside influence and a strong connection to traditional vocabulary. Meanwhile, **26%** see it as **"modern,"** reflecting the inclusion of contemporary terms, possibly from English or urban culture. These responses highlight the evolving identity of the Saraiki language shaped by both preservation and adaptation.

Common Supporting Comments

Mixed

We used Urdu and Punjabi words often in daily speech.

Pure

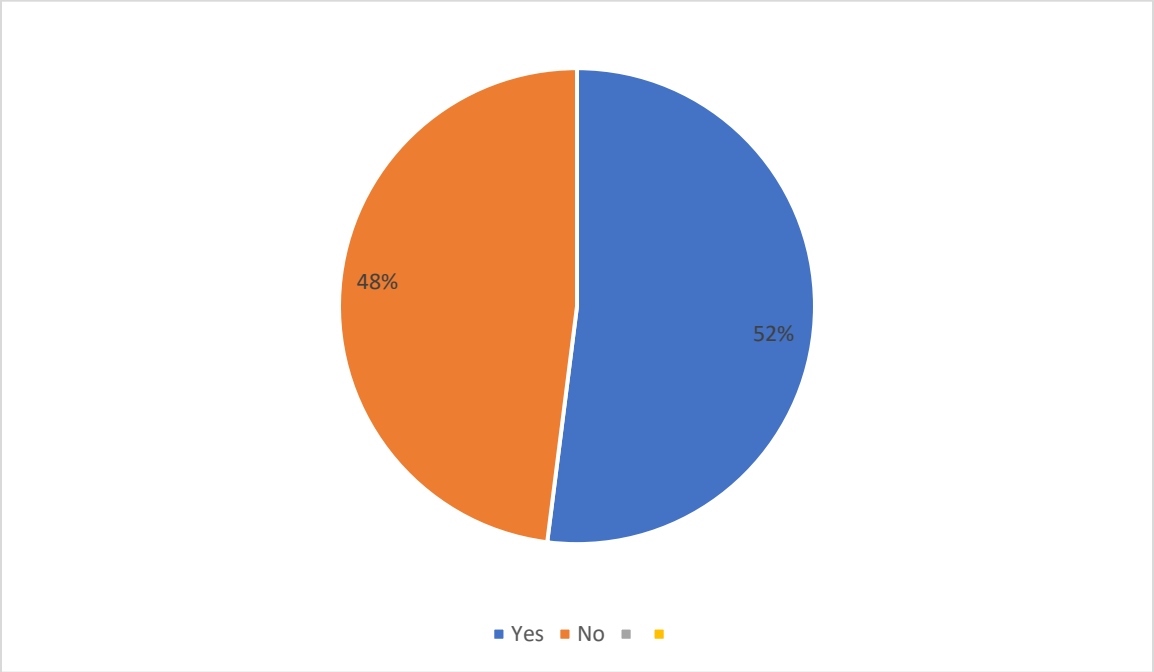Our dialect is spoken in rural areas without outside influence.

Modern

We blend Seraiki with English on social media and in education.

19. **Do you feel that people from other regions understand your vocabulary easily? Why or why not?**

| Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	26	52
No	24	48

Legend: Yes, No

This graph shows participants' views on whether their vocabulary is easily understood by people from other Saraiki-speaking regions. Responses are nearly evenly split, with **52%** saying **"Yes,"** suggesting a degree of mutual intelligibility despite regional differences. However, **48%** responded **"No,"** indicating that many speakers face challenges in being understood due to unique regional words or expressions. This close divide highlights the presence of significant dialectal variation within the Saraiki language, where shared roots exist but local vocabulary can still create communication barriers.

20. **In your opinion, should Saraiki be standardized for education and media use, or should regional variation be preserved?**
☐ Standardize it ☐ Preserve regional dialects ☐ Not sure
Why? _____

Response	Count	Percentage
Preserve dialects	24	48
Standardize it	18	36
Not sure	8	16
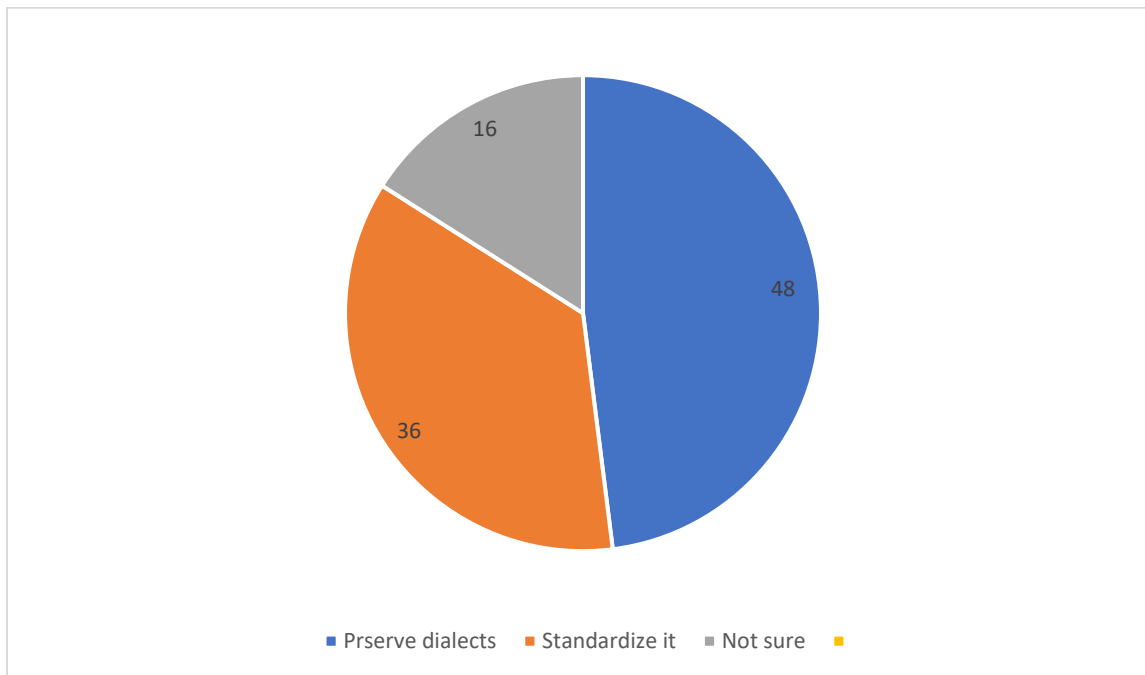
The pie graph presents participants' opinions on whether the Saraiki language should be **standardized** for education and media or whether its **regional dialects** should be preserved. A plurality (**48%**) prefers to **preserve regional dialects**, valuing the cultural richness and identity tied to local speech forms. **36%** support **standardization**, likely aiming for broader communication, literacy, and media representation. Meanwhile, **16%** are **unsure**, reflecting uncertainty about the implications of either choice. These responses highlight a common tension in language planning between maintaining linguistic diversity and promoting unity through standard forms.

Common justification

Preserve Dialects

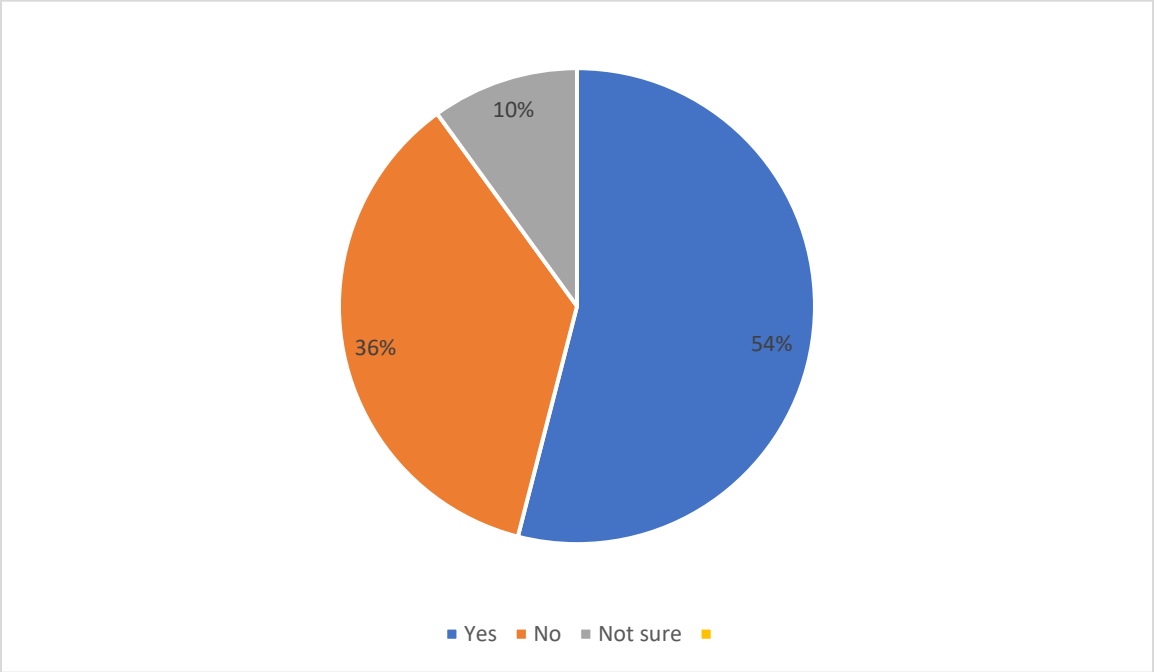Our dialects are the part of our identity.

Standardize it

It will promote Seraiki as a national language.

Not sure

I haven't thought about it much.

**21-Do you think that people still prioritize Saraiki for their children?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	27	54
No	18	36
Not sure	5	10

The graph reflects participants' views on whether **Saraiki is still prioritized** for the younger generation. A majority (**54%**) believe that **people do prioritize Saraiki** for their children, indicating a strong sense of cultural and linguistic identity. However, **36%** responded **"No,"** suggesting that some parents may prefer other languages like Urdu or English for socioeconomic or educational reasons. **10%** are **unsure**, highlighting a level of uncertainty or inconsistency in language transmission. The data reveals a mixed but hopeful outlook on the intergenerational preservation of the Saraiki language.

Estimated Seraiki Dialect Distribution By Region

Region	Percentage
Multan	30
DG Khan	20
Jalalpur	20
Raheem Yar Khan	15
Muzaffargarh	15

Seraiki Dialect Region Wise
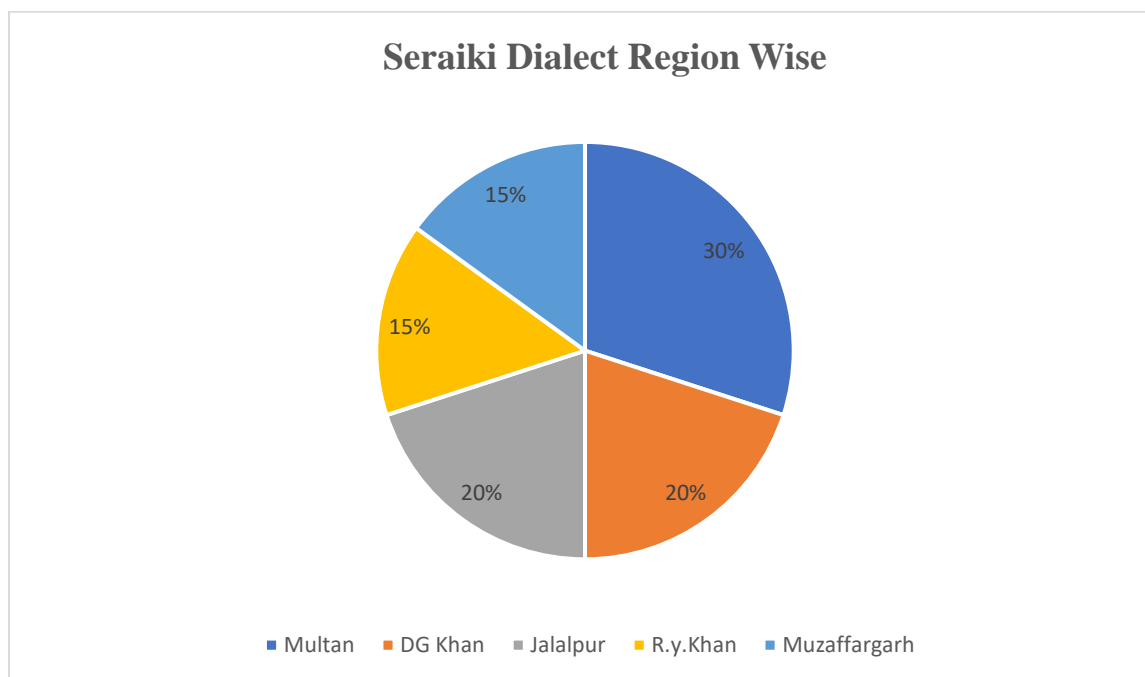
Results/ Findings:
The results of this study showed clear lexical variation among five different regions of Southern Punjab where Saraiki is spoken as their first native language. The findings of this research regarding the estimated distribution of Saraiki dialects across different parts of southern Punjab are in consistent accordance with William Labov's Variationist Sociolinguistics Theory. Labov highlighted that language variation was not random but rather systematic and tied to social and geographic aspects such as geography, community arrangement, and social identity. This current study determines that regions such as Multan, DG Khan, Jalalpur Pirwala, Rahim Yar Khan, and Muzaffargarh exhibit distinctive dialectal features and different measures of dialect usage, confirming Labov's revelation that linguistic use is conditioned by external social worlds.

Multan, for example, becomes the center and most salient area with a 30% contribution in total usage of the Saraiki dialect. This high degree of representation combined with cultural dominance is such that Multani is to be counted as a candidate for a prestige variety, that very central notion of Labov's model where some forms of grammar are of higher social prestige and employed as group membership markers. Conversely, regions such as Jalalpur and DG Khan have their own unique dialectical characteristics with respect to the Derawali language group and in localized phonetic patterns, testifying to geographical boundaries' influence on certain regional varieties, as Labov found in his research on dialectical variation in New York City and Martha's Vineyard.

Also, transition areas in Muzaffargarh and Rahim Yar Khan are where Saraiki gets intermixed with corresponding local languages like Punjabi and Urdu. These transition areas are a testament to Labov's hypothesis of language change through social intercourse and contact resulting in gradual change in dialects. Trait mixing in these domains is an outcome of the influence of multilingual settings and substantiating Labov's hypothesis that language is contact-sensitive to other language systems and social networks.

Further, use of percent-based regional data in the research also serves to characterize Labov's methodology whereby linguistic variation on social factors is quantitatively tested. Just as Labov

correlated frequency of occurrence of given phonological variants with social background or regional membership, the research correlates occurrence and nature of Saraiki dialects with certain geography and therefore lends justification to use of a variationist approach.

Globally, therefore, the expansion of the Saraiki dialect and the regionality-associated features represent the very heartbeat of the major postulates of Variationist Sociolinguistics. The dialect difference of Saraiki is proved to be merely than a problem of language discrepancy but is of itself deeply ensnared with social identity, regional contact, and cultural effect each playing its central position within Labov's theoretical framework. In doing so, this study not only traces the geographical spread of Saraiki language but also confirms the efficacy of Labov's theory as an explanation of the manner in which language and society intersect in intricate formalized patterns.

Conclusion:

The study puts in perspective the wide lexical variation of the Saraiki language, which is shaped by geographical, social, and cultural forces. Using Labov's variationist sociolinguistic model, the study identifies the ways in which words differ across different dialects and the social forces that shape such differences. The research highlights how factors such as region, exposure to other languages, educational background, and media influence contribute to lexical diversity among Saraiki speakers. It also reveals how certain words are deeply rooted in local identity and tradition, while others reflect external linguistic influence from Urdu, Punjabi, Balochi, and even English.

The findings underscore the richness and complexity of the Saraiki language, showcasing its dynamic nature and adaptability. While mutual intelligibility exists to a degree, the study also indicates that some vocabulary used in one region may be unfamiliar or differently interpreted in another. This variation not only preserves cultural uniqueness but also poses challenges for standardization in education and media.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of documenting and understanding intra-language variation as a means of preserving linguistic heritage. It also opens avenues for further research into how such variation impacts communication, identity, and language policy within multilingual societies like Pakistan.

Summary of Findings

• **Regional Variation:** There are great differences in the Saraiki dialects in question, each having a distinctive vocabulary for known concepts.

• **Social Influences:** Lexical variation is influenced by education, gender, and urban-rural residence, with higher-educated and female speakers using more prestigious variants.

• **Lexical Borrowing:** The existence of Urdu and English loanwords in Saraiki bears witness to current language contact and the lexical influence of dominant languages in specific areas.

• **Identity and Language:** Lexical variation is an indicator of local identity, with speakers preserving certain words to indicate cultural membership.

Implications:

The results have various implications:

• **Linguistic Documentation:** Documentation of Saraiki dialects intensively is required to promote linguistic diversity and language planning.

• **Educational Materials:** Lexical variation awareness can help create regionally responsive educational materials to reflect linguistic differences.

• **Sociolinguistic Research:** The research adds to the general body of sociolinguistics by showing the interaction of language, society, and identity in a multilingual context.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further studies might generalize the sample to larger areas and social classes to get a clearer picture of Saraiki lexical variation. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can examine lexical options developing over time, particularly against the context of higher language contact and technology. Expanding the participant pool across urban and rural divisions, as well as including varying age groups and education levels, would enhance the reliability and representativeness of findings. Incorporating tools such as digital corpora, social media language tracking, and spoken discourse analysis could provide deeper insights into how lexical choices evolve in real-time. Such studies would not only enrich sociolinguistic theory but also contribute valuable data for language planning, policy-making, and the preservation of regional identities in the face of modernization and globalization.

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