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# A Study On Medicinal Plants and Attitude of Women's Towards Use of Unani Medicine in District Srinagar of Kashmir Valley, J&K State

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**ABSTRACT**

The Jammu and Kashmir state is covered by lofty mountains hang dense forests everywhere consists of three divisions i.e., Jammu division, Kashmir division and Ladakh division, and the state is further divided into 22 districts. Kashmir division consists of 10 districts each whereas Ladakh division consists of 2 districts. Srinagar is the summer capital of J&K state. Plants have been traditionally used for hundreds of years throughout globe as a source of medicine. Forest resources in the state of Jammu and Kashmir have played the most significant role in the economy of the state. The present study was conducted to know the attitude of women towards use of medicinal plants in Kashmir valley. In this paper, a well designed and validated questionnaire was used to collect the information from a sample of 400 women who visited unani hospitals selected randomly from Srinagar district of Kashmir valley. The results of our study showed that women show positive attitude towards the use of medicinal plants during illness. The women's under study further revealed that due to less expenditure and side effect of modern medicines they are encouraged by elders to use medicinal plants for treatment. It is concluded from our study that there is an urgent need of giving mass awareness on importance of forests and medicinal plants to the women of Kashmir valley. Finally, in this paper, we discuss the importance of medicinal plants and suggestions were given which definitely help in conservation of the fast eroding precious medicinal plants of the Kashmir valley.

**Keywords:** Medicinal plants, Srinagar, Attitude, Women, Forests, Kashmir Valley

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, modern science has validated several medical practices rooted in Unani science's ancient wisdom. Its basics, diagnosis and treatment methods are based on scientific principles and a broad approach, which takes into consideration each person in relation to his/her environment and stresses on the health of the body, soul and mind. Life and diseases go collectively, where there is a life, diseases are bound to exist. It has been noticed that in the last few decades, there is a resurgence of public interest in use of medicinal plants and their role in primary health care. Medicine using herbal mixtures is becoming more accepted as these are believed to be safer and natural. Worldwide use of traditional medicine is increasingly and becoming necessary part of the medicinal curriculum. There is a huge potential of medicinal plants in health care not only in remote areas of developing countries but also in industrialized world. According to WHO, about three quarters of the global population relies upon traditional medicines made from herbs for their health care. The state of Jammu and Kashmir consists of three divisions i.e., Jammu division having 10 districts , Kashmir division 10 districts and Ladakh division having two districts. In this paper, we select district Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir valley for the study. Plants have been traditionally used for thousands of years throughout world as a source of medicine and regarded potentially safe drugs. They have been playing a important role in alleviating human sufferings by contributing herbal medicines in the primary health care systems of rural and remote areas where more than 70% of the population depends on folklore and traditional systems of medicines. The reason for the attractiveness of medicinal plants is due to the high cost, non availability of immediate medical facilities in remote areas and side effects of allopathic medicines. The present study in view of the previous studies (e.g., Ara 1992, Nawchoo 1995, Kaual 1997, Geelani et al., 2017, Sabahat, Bilal et al., 2018) was conducted in Srinagar district with an aim to know the attitude of women towards use of medicinal plants during illness. It is said that, if a women is in good health and has family elders support then there is no need to worry. In case facilities are available she should have routine medical check up otherwise remain in touch with the experienced elders. The table below shows few plants which are used by females for the treatment of various diseases and health benefits:

**Table 1: Some locally available medicinal plants of Bandipora District Kashmir Valley**

| BOTANICAL NAME/ LOCAL NAME/ FAMILY | PLANT PART USED | AILMENTS | MODE OF ADMINISTRATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Adiantum venustum* D.Don.<br>Kakbai (Pteridaceae) | Whole Plant | Cough, jaundice, stomach ailments, headache, fever, body muscular pains and hair fall. | Black stalks are used as tooth sticks to clean teeth. Dried fronds are crushed to obtain powder.<br>Powder is added to a glass of water and kept as such overnight. The extract is given next day early<br>in the morning for the treatment of cough, jaundice and stomach ailments. The herb forms an<br>important ingredient of a combination of several different herbs such as whole plants of *Cotula*<br>*anthemoides,* leaves of *Ocimum basilicum* and leaves and flowers of *Prunella vulgaris*. This<br>combination, locally called "Lossa Ghasa" is thoroughly boiled in water to prepare hot water extract.<br>Ladies, after their deliveries, are advised to have bath with this hot water extract (after dilution with<br>more water) to cure headache, fever, body muscular pains and hair fall. |

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|---|---|---|---|
| *Brassica oleracea var. haka* Linn. Hakh (Brassicaceae) | Leaves | Corns and constipation. | Leaves are taken as vegetable. Fresh leaf is gently placed in warm mustard oil with haldi and salt till it becomes soft. It is then tightly tied with muslin cloth on painful corns of toes and fingers which helps them to ripe, burst and evacuate the pus and hence to alleviate the pain. The petiole of the leaf after peeling off the rind is placed in the rectum of the new born baby as a best home remedy to cure constipation. |
| *Calendula officinalis* Linn. Hamesh Bahar (Asteraceae) | Leaves and Flowers | Boils, burns, eyelid abscesses and pneumonia. | Leaves and flowers are crushed and paste is made by mixing with cow butter. Paste is then applied on boils, burns and abscesses of eye lids to give relief from pain. Poultice is made by crushing of fresh leaves and flowers which is slightly warmed and then spread on a cloth and tied on chest to cure pneumonia in children. |
| *Centaurea iberica* Trevir. ex Spreng. Krech (Asteraceae) | Leaves and Thorns | Burns, skin rashes, eye vision and defective lactation. | Thorns are burnt to get ash which is mixed with cow butter to make paste. Paste is applied on burns and skin rashes for their treatment. Fresh leaves after crushing are mixed with egg and then cooked to prepare omlette. Latter is given to improve the eye vision. It is also given to enhence lactation in females. |
| *Cichorium intybus* Linn. Kasni/Wari Hundh (Asteraceae) | Leaves | Body weakness, loosening of joints, body muscular pains, frequent bleeding, loss of appetite and liver problems. | Leaves are cooked and given to fresh mothers to cure body weakness, loosening of joints, body muscular pains, frequent bleeding and as appetizer and liver tonic. |
| *Cydonia oblonga* Mill. Bumchuont (Rosaceae) | Seeds, fruits and flowers. | Constipation, birth problems, jaundice, cough, cold, chronic constipation, fever, dysentery, blood purifier, asthma, chest problems, general body weakness and body muscular pains. | Seed infusion is given to pregnant women against constipation and to loosen body parts so as to facilitate the normal delivery. The seeds also form an important ingredient of a combination of different herbs such as seeds of *Cucumis sativa, Malva neglecta, Foeniculum vulgare*, fruits of *Zizyphus jujuba*, leaves and flowers of *Arnebia benthamii* and fronds of *Adiantum capillus-veneris*. This combination is locally called as “Sharbeth”. The composite decoction of “Sherbeth” is given to cure jaundice, cough, cold, chronic constipation, fever and as a good blood purifier. Fruit slices are sun dried, stored for winter season. Slice decoction is administered orally in case of dysentery. Ripe fruits after being coated externally with a thin layer of mud are roasted and then eaten as a best home remedy against asthma, cold, chest problems and general body weakness. Sundried flowers and sugar after mixing are crushed. The same is then kept in air tight jar for about 10-15 days for fermentation. This fermented mixture is locally called “Khambir Bihi”. It is given to cure cough, cold, asthma and body muscular pains. |
| *Daucus carota* Linn. Moharmunj Ghasa | Roots | Dysuria, digestive disorders and fatigue. | Roots at juvenile stage are considered highly energetic and are consumed raw by the local livestock grazers while travelling long distances by foot to give relief from painful and difficult urination. |
| *Euryale ferox* Salisb. Juwar/Kena bub (Nymphaeaceae) | Seeds | Stomach problems, whooping cough, semen deficiency and weak libido. | Dried seeds are considered highly energetic and are eaten against stomach problems, whooping cough, semen deficiency and to increase libido. Kashmiri Pandiths considered the seeds as ‘sacred’ because they used to break their fast by eating the bread prepared from its flour. |
| *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill. Bodiyaan (Apiaceae) | Whole Plant | Dyspepsia, acidity, constipation, abdominal pain, Jaundice, cough, cold, chronic constipation, | Seeds are eaten to cure dyspepsia, acidity and constipation. In case of abdominal pain and constipation of a small baby, seeds are chewed to make paste which is applied respectively on abdomen and buttocks. Dried seeds form an important ingredient of “Sharbeth”. The composite decoction of “Sherbeth” is given to cure jaundice, cough, cold, chronic constipation, fever and also acts as a good blood purifier. Seeds are also eaten to abstain from smoking. Whole plant is burnt to get ash which is mixed with oil to make paste. Paste is then applied on painful joints. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | fever, blood purifier and joint pains. | |
| *Fumaria indica* (Hausskn.) Pugsley<br>Shahtar<br>(Fumariaceae) | Whole Plant | Defective eye vision, palpitation of heart, breathing problems, skin diseases, blood purifier, asthma, defective urination with pus, skin rashes, dropsy, menstrual irregularities, male impotency and general body weakness. | Dried plant is grinded and powder is made which is administered orally with water against defective eye vision, palpitation of heart, breathing problems, skin diseases and as good blood purifier. Whole plant decoction is taken to overcomee asthma, defective urination with pus, skin rashes, dropsy, menstrual irregularities, male impotency and general body weakness. |
| *Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standl.<br>Kashir Aull<br>(Cucurbitaceae) | Fruits | Cough, cold, fever, chest pain, stomach ulcers, stomach heat up, kidney stones, urine problems and yoke gall. | Fresh fruits after peeling off the rind and removing seeds are cut into thin slices. Slices are sun dried and preserved in the form of garlands at home for winter season. In winter, decoction made from them is used in the treatment of cough, cold, fever, chest pain, stomach ulcers, stomach heatup, to dissolve kidney stones and promote urine flow. Dried fruit is burnt to get ash which is mixed with mustard oil to make paste. The paste is slightly warmed and the applied on the neck of bulls to cure yoke gall. |
| *Malus domestica* Borkh.<br>Maharaji Treil<br>(Rosaceae) | Fruits | Dyspepsia, diabetes, jaundice, urinary problems, loss of appetite, phlegm, thirst, body fats, cough and other chest ailments. | Fruits are harvested and stored at some warm place for 15-20 days so as to ripe completely. Ripe fruits are eaten to cure dyspepsia, diabetes, jaundice, urinary problems, loss of appetite and to remove phlegm from the chest, quench the thirst and dissolve the body fats. Fruit is cut into small circular slices which are sun dried and preserved in the form of garlands at home for winter. These are eaten and considered to be good for the treatment of cough and other chest ailments. |
| *Marrubium vulgare* Linn.<br>Troper<br>(Lamiaceae) | Whole plant | Arthritic pains, swelling of eyelids, abdominal pain, dysentery, chilblain and muscular pains. | Fresh leaves are soaked in hot water for two minutes and then removed and crushed into poultice. Poultice is spread on a cloth, wrapped in it, and then tied on arthritic joints to alleviate pain. The same poultice is applied on eyelids to cure their swellings. Plant is crushed and paste is made from it by mixing with cow butter. The resultant paste is given orally to children against abdominal pain and to cattle against dysentery. Hot water extract is prepared by boiling the dried herb thoroughly in salt water. Extract is then used to wash feet and legs to cure chilblains and muscular pains respectively. |
| *Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn.<br>Nadroo<br>(Nelumbonaceae) | Rhizome and seeds. | Stomach problems, dysentery, constipation, vomiting, urinary problems and semen deficiency. | Roasted rhizome is taken in case of stomach problems and dysentery. Fresh rhizome is either eaten raw or sliced, and cooked as vegetable against constipation. Fresh seeds are given in case of vomiting, urinary problems and semen deficiency. |
| *Nymphaea maxicana* Zucc.<br>Bumiposh/Gul-e-nelofar<br>(Nymphaceae) | Rhizome, stolons and flowers | Hair fall, boils, diabetes, rheumatism, fever, heart palpitation, urinary problems and liver disorders. | Rhizome powder is mixed with oil to make paste which is applied on hair to check hair fall. Paste is also applied on painful and pus filled boils of head for their treatment. Stolens are collected, dried, cooked and taken against diabetes and rheumatism. Dried stolens after boiling in salt water are tied over painful boils for 3-4 days for their complete removal. Flower decoction is given against fever, heart palpitation, urinary problems and liver disorders. |

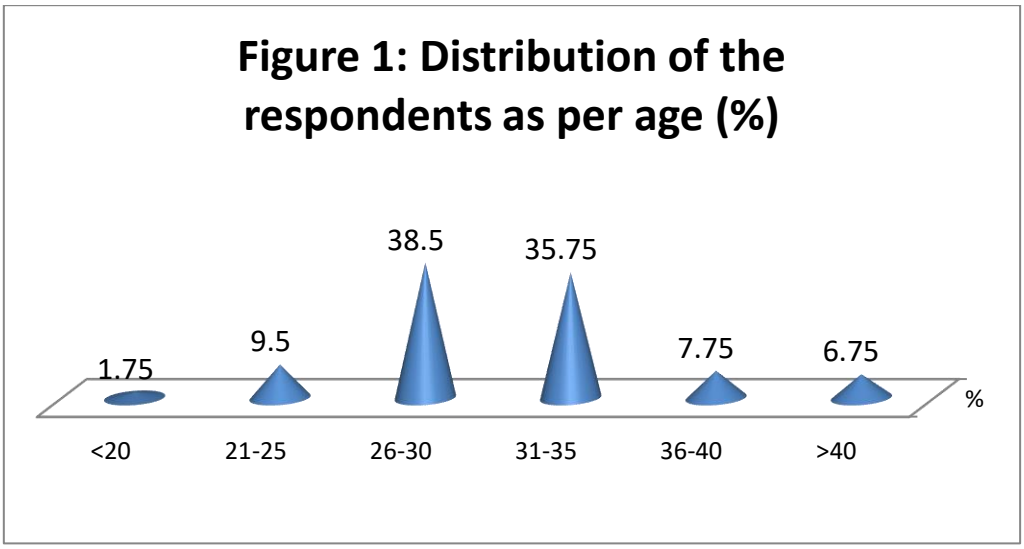
## METHODOLOGY

The present study is a survey design intended to investigate the approach of women towards the use of medicinal plants in district Srinagar of Kashmir valley. A well-designed validated questionnaire was used to collect the information from a sample of 400 women, randomly selected from district Srinagar of

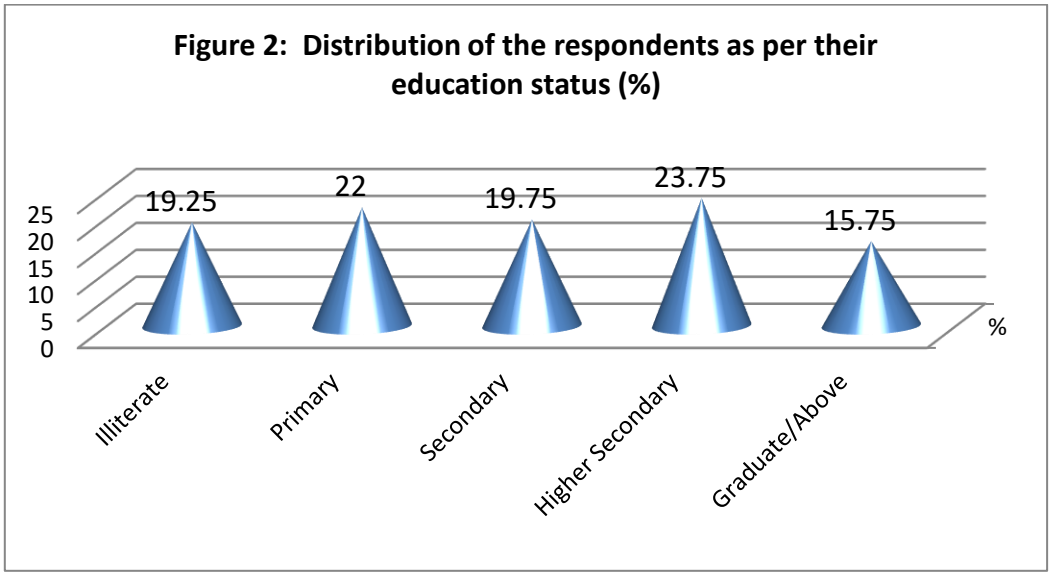
Kashmir valley who visited Unani hospital or contacted for treatment. The respondents were explained the purpose of the study to get their consent. The questionnaire was designed to assess the attitude of women towards the use of medicinal plants. Local knowledgeable persons of the district, herbal healers called "Bhoris" were also interviewed. The data collected from our study was tabulated and analyzed using standard statistical techniques.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the data collected from District Srinagar during our survey are presented as under:




The data presented in Figure 1 shows that the maximum respondents 38.5% were in 26-30 years group, followed by 35.75% in the age group 31-35 years, 9.5% in the age group 21-25 years, 7.75% in the age group 36-40 years, 6.75% in the 40 years above age group and 1.75% in the age group of below 20 years group showing the lowest percentage.




The data presented in Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents 23.75% were higher secondary by education, followed by 22% primary, followed by 19.75% secondary, 19.25% Illiterate, 15.75% were graduate/above respectively.

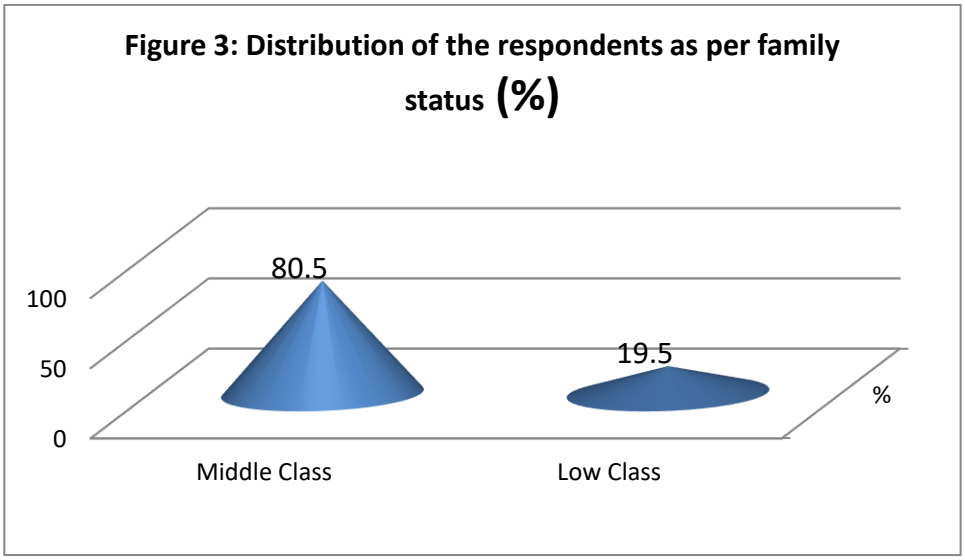



**Table 2: Association Between Age of respondents and use of Unani Medicine**

| Age | Prefer to use Unani Medicine for treatment | | | | Chisquare | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | % | No | % | | |
| <20 | 2 | 40 | 3 | 60 | | |
| 21-25 | 22 | 57.89 | 16 | 42.11 | | |
| 26-30 | 91 | 59.10 | 63 | 40.90 | | |
| 31-35 | 85 | 59.44 | 58 | 40.56 | | |
| 36-40 | 18 | 58.06 | 13 | 41.94 | | |
| >40 | 16 | 59.25 | 11 | 40.75 | 0.781 | >0.05 |

Table 2 shows that 'preference of using Unani medicine' was found high among women in the age group 31-35 years, followed by >40 years age group then by 26-30 age group, then by 36-40 years age group then by 21-25 years age group and at last by <20 years of age group. Statistically, there is not association between age and use of Unani Medicine among women's under study (p>0.05). The results of this study are in agreement with the earlier study (Dr. Sabahat, Dr. Bilal et al., 2018).

**Table 3: Association Between Education and use of Unani Medicine**

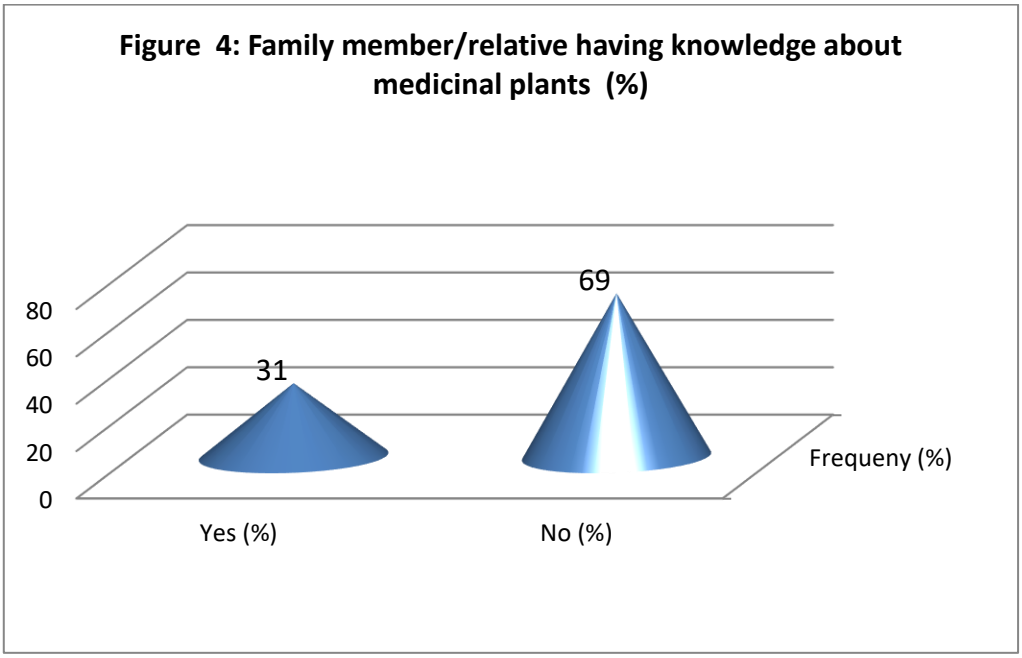
| Education Status | Prefer to use Unani medicine for treatment | | | | Chisquare | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | % | No | % | | |
| Illiterate | 71 | 76.34 | 22 | 23.66 | | |
| Primary | 67 | 84.81 | 12 | 15.19 | | |
| Secondary | 31 | 49.20 | 32 | 50.80 | | |
| Higher Secondary | 63 | 71.59 | 25 | 28.41 | | <0.01 |
| Graduate/Above | 57 | 74.02 | 20 | 25.98 | 23.819 | |

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that 'preference given to Unani medicine' was found high among respondents educated upto primary, followed by Illiterate, followed by graduate/above then by higher secondary and then by secondary level respondents. Statistically, there is a significant association between education and use of Unani Medicine ($p<0.01$). The results of this study are in agreement with the earlier study (Dr. Sabahat, Dr. Bilal et al., 2018).

**Table 4: Association Between Education and come again for health service if necessary**

| Education Status | come again for health service if necessary | | | | Chisquare | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | % | No | % | | |
| Illiterate | 43 | 55.84 | 34 | 44.16 | | <0.01 |
| Educated | 237 | 73.37 | 86 | 26.63 | 9.10 | |

The data presented in Table 4 shows that 'come again for health services if necessary' was found high among educated respondents and it was 73.37% and 55.84% respondents were illiterate. Statistically, there is a significant association between education of respondents and come again for health service if necessary ($p<0.01$). The results of this study are in agreement with the earlier study (Dr. Sabahat, Dr. Bilal et al., 2018).




The data presented in Figure 4, reveals that 31% respondents told that they are encouraged by a family member or a relative to take the medicinal plants during illness as plant medicines has very little side effects .

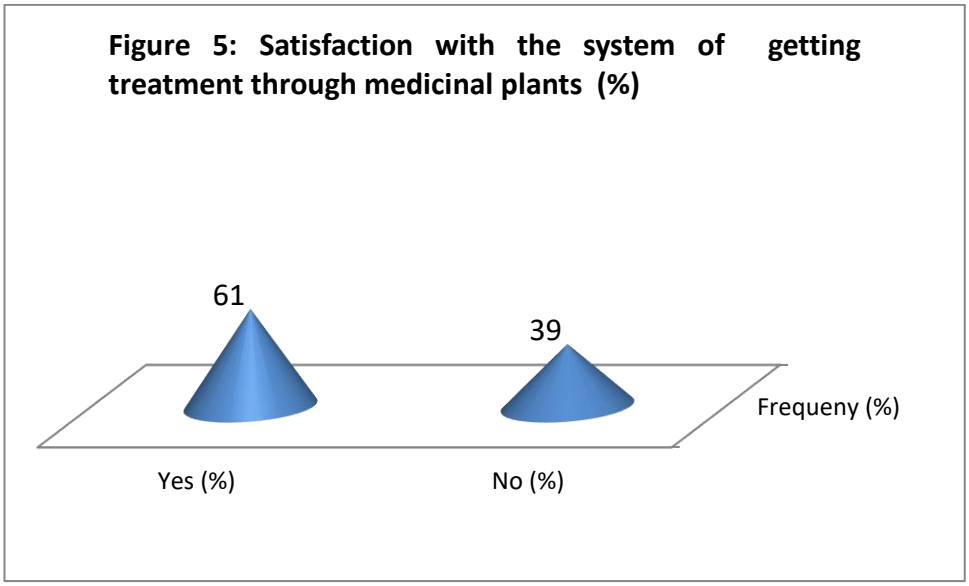



**Figure 5: Satisfaction with the system of getting treatment through medicinal plants (%)**

The data presented in Figure 5 shows that majority of the respondents i.e., 61% told that they were satisfied by taking medicinal plants during illness.

## CONCLUSION

The study conducted in district Srinagar of Kashmir valley revealed that in view of the high cost and side effects of allopathic medicine, the use of medicinal plants against different ailments plays an important role in meeting the primary health care needs. The results of our study shows that womens especially from poor families showed positive approach towards the use of herbal medicine during illness. Women in majority were aware of the taking health care. Srinagar district is comparatively rich in facilities not only in medicinal plant but also deeply rooted traditional knowledge of these medicinal plants among the people. It is important that we understand the benefits of medicinal plants for health as well as for increasing our economy of the state.

Suggestion(s)

(i)The treatment using medicinal plants and cultivation of medicinal plants should be encouraged.

(ii) Local people, religious leaders, social workers, teachers should be involved in awareness program

(iii) Traditional healers using medicinal plants should be encouraged.

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