

Language Attitude of Bhaderwahi Speakers towards their Mother Tongue: A Sociolinguistic Study

Ishrat Gul¹
S Shabrooz Andrabi²

^{1,2}Research Scholars, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal,
Srinagar, J&K, India - 190006

Email: ¹ishratgul777@gmail.com, ²syedshabrooz@gmail.com

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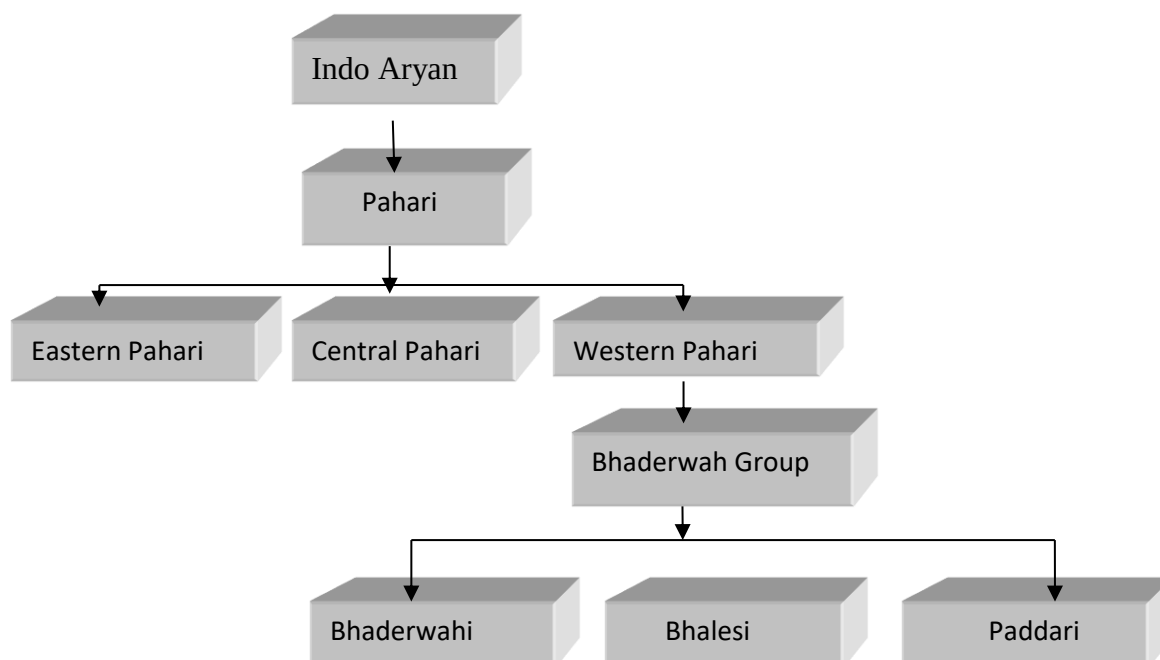
Dates	Abstract
Summation: 15/08/2026	The present paper seeks to investigate the language attitudes of Bhaderwahi speakers towards their mother tongue. Language attitude encompasses the beliefs, thoughts, loyalty and biases the speakers of the language hold towards that particular language. The study of language attitudes has been of utmost importance in the field of Sociolinguistics for many years. Therefore, this research aims to depict the opinions of Bhaderwahi speakers towards their mother tongue. Bhaderwahi is an Indo-Aryan language of the Western Pahari group spoken in the Bhaderwah region of Jammu and Kashmir. The data for the present paper was elicited through a well-designed questionnaire.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Bhaderwah, also called as mini-Kashmir is situated in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, just beyond the Himalayan range at a latitude of 32.980033°N and a longitude of 75.713706°E. The sub-division covers an area of 112.7 square kilometers and has a population of 75, 376 residents according to 2011 census of India. The Bhaderwah region comprises individuals from diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds, each contributing to its

distinctive historical and cultural fabric. Bhaderwah is often referred to as “Chota Kashmir” or the “Kerala of Jammu and Kashmir” due to its beautiful scenery and high literacy rate.

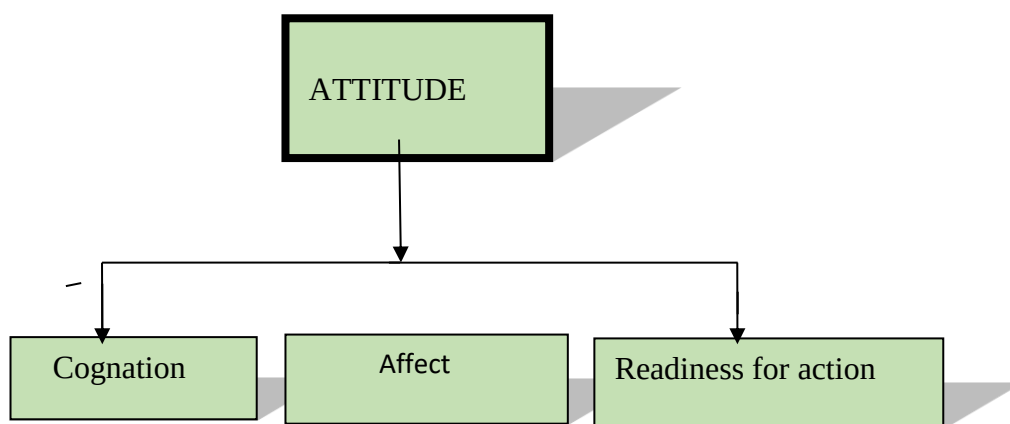
Bhaderwahi is a language belonging to the Indo Aryan group, specifically the Western Pahari branch which is spoken in the Bhaderwah region of Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Despite some initial mentions in works like Bailey’s “Language of the Northern Himalayas” from 1908 and Grierson’s publication in 1919, it has not received much focus from linguists since then. The Bhaderwahi language comprises three dialects i.e., Bhaderwahi, Bhalesvi and Paddari. It lacks its own script and relies on Devanagri and Persio- Arabic script. The standard Bhaderwahi is spoken in the Bhaderwah town of Doda district.



Language attitudes, in simple terms, refer to people’s feelings and thoughts about their own language or the languages spoken by them or others. Research on language attitudes has evolved since 1960s and is influenced by two primary theories: the mentalist view and behaviorist view. These theories differ mainly in how they perceive attitudes. The mentalist approach suggests that language attitudes reside in human mind and are not directly observable but can be inferred with appropriate motivation. In contrast, behaviorist theory sees attitudes as responses or behaviors triggered by specific situations. From theoretical perspective, the two theories differ in their approach to understanding language attitudes. The mentalist theory breaks down language attitudes into three components: cognitive, affective and the readiness for action. On the other hand, behaviorist view simplifies this to just one component, which is the affective aspect. Because

the mentalist theory allows for predicting linguistic behavior, it has become the more widely accepted perspective for addressing language attitudes.

Baker (1992) aligns with mentalist perspective and delineates attitudes into three distinct elements within the mind. Cognition, which encompasses a person's thoughts and beliefs about an attitude object. Affective component, which pertains to the emotional reactions and feelings towards attitude object and readiness for action, also known as behavioral aspect, involves the intention to act based on one's attitude and how a person behaves when encountering the attitude object. These three components unanimously form a single concept referred to as an attitude. The three-component model is best illustrated in the figure below.



Language attitudes in sociolinguistics are significantly shaped by individual's or a group's appreciation for the variety of languages they encounter. The term "language choice" refers to the range of languages that an individual encounters, and it encompasses the use of a particular language in communication. The emergence of language choice is a result of language contact, social interaction and cultural factors. Consequently, speech communities with capability to select a language or language code in specific situations may preserve their original language, transition to a new language or engage in combination of their first language and a new one.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is being carried out in the Bhaderwah town within the Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir. The study involved 48 respondents who are the native speakers of Bhaderwahi language, within the age group of 16 to 36 years. Each participant filled out the prepared questionnaire and various questions were crafted and posed to assess the language attitudes of the research respondents.

3. TYPES OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Language attitudes can be categorized into two primary groups, namely positive attitudes (favorable attitudes) and negative attitudes (unfavorable attitudes).

- a) Positive attitudes: Garvin and Mathiot (1968) emphasize that a positive language attitude entails the active and favorable use of a language in everyday interactions. It reflects a community's enthusiasm for employing the language across various aspects of life. As pointed by Holmes (2001), this positive attitude plays a vital role in facilitating language usage in diverse domains and helps individuals resist external pressures, often from the majority, urging them to switch to a different language.
- b) Negative attitudes: Negative attitude signifies a lack of support within a particular community for the use of a specific language in various domains. As stated by Garvin and Mathiot (1968), it reflects the community's unwillingness to utilize the language across different areas of life. Negative attitude can be categorized into three distinct characteristics (1) Disloyalty to the language, (2) Lack of pride in the language, and (3) Ignorance of the language's norms.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Have you given up Bhaderwahi language completely?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	4.17%
No	95.83%



Figure 1.1: Given up Bhaderwahi completely

Figure 1.1 indicates that 95.83% respondents have retained the Bhaderwahi language. The informants were asked whether Bhaderwahi language should be given up. The responses of the informants were overwhelmingly opposed for giving up of Bhaderwahi language as well as Bhaderwahi identity.

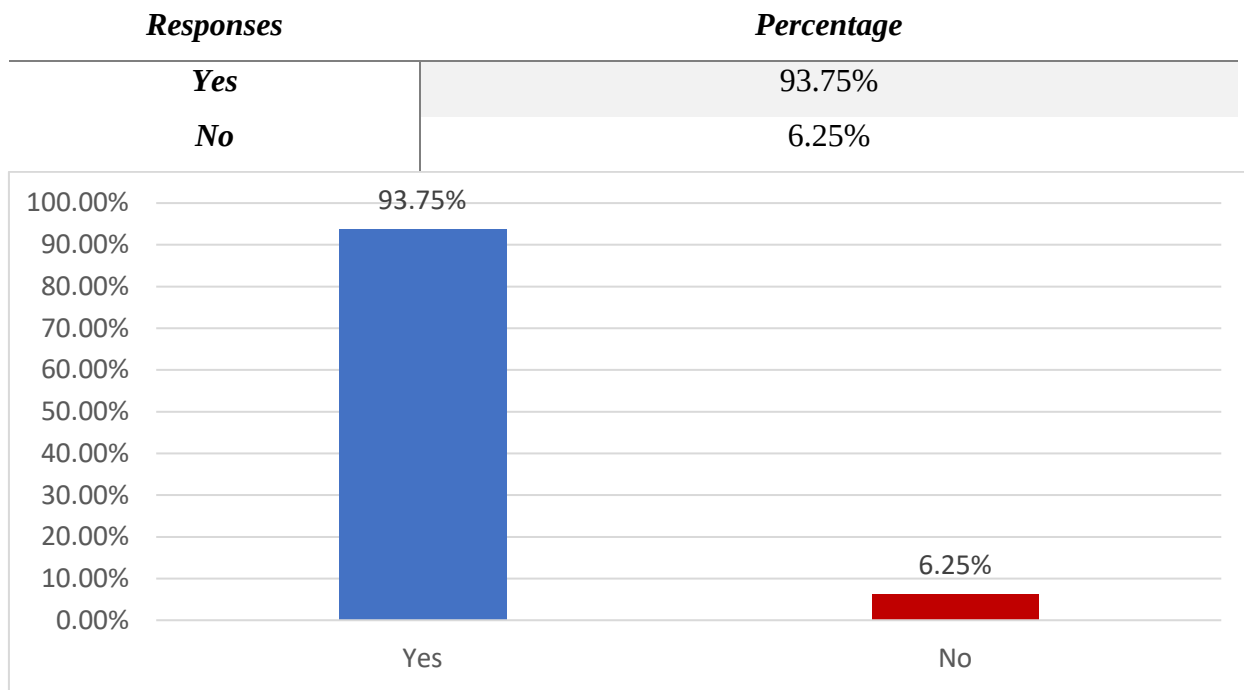
B. Do you want to preserve Bhaderwahi language?**Figure 1.2: Preservation of Bhaderwahi language**

Figure 1.2 illustrates that 93.75% respondents want to preserve Bhaderwahi language. It needs to be put on record that the representative sample enquired about the above-mentioned query depicted the positive attitude towards their native language i.e., Bhaderwahi, which in turn showed a strong support in terms of its preservation. Moreover, it was observed that the Bhaderwahi speakers have an emotional attachment with their mother tongue, thereby indicating a strong bond and inclination towards Bhaderwahi language.

C. If you are given opportunities, will you learn to write in Bhaderwahi?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	89.58%
No	10.41%

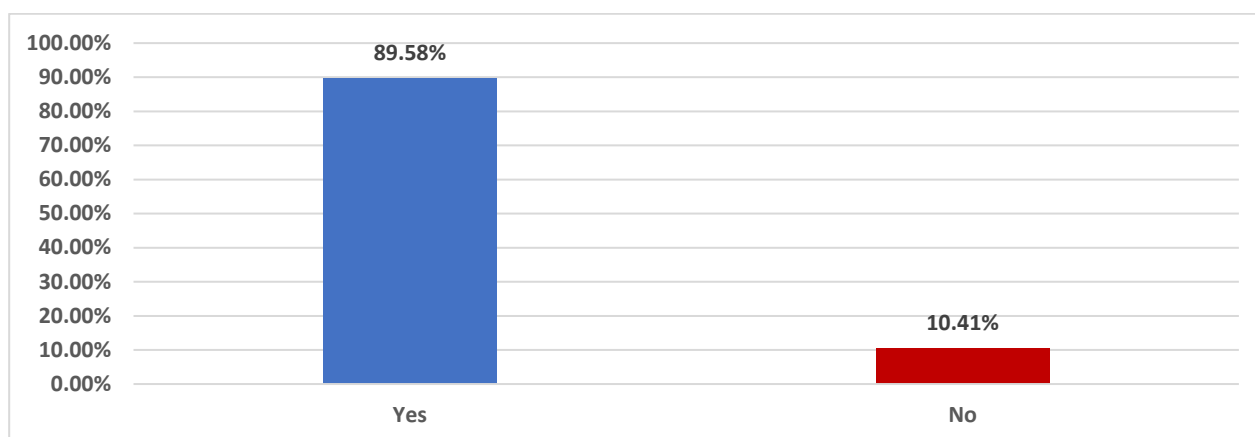


Figure 1.3: Learn to write Bhaderwahi

Figure 1.3 indicates that 89.58% respondents are willing to learn the skill of writing in Bhaderwahi. They claimed that one should never forget the importance of speaking and writing in mother tongue. This clearly shows the positive language attitude of the Bhaderwahi people towards their mother tongue.

D. Do you think Bhaderwahi is better suited for performing various activities like business, employment, schooling and other day to day activities?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Schooling</i>	<i>Day to day activities</i>
Yes	75%	37.50%	41.66%	91.66%
No	25%	62.50%	58.33%	8.34%

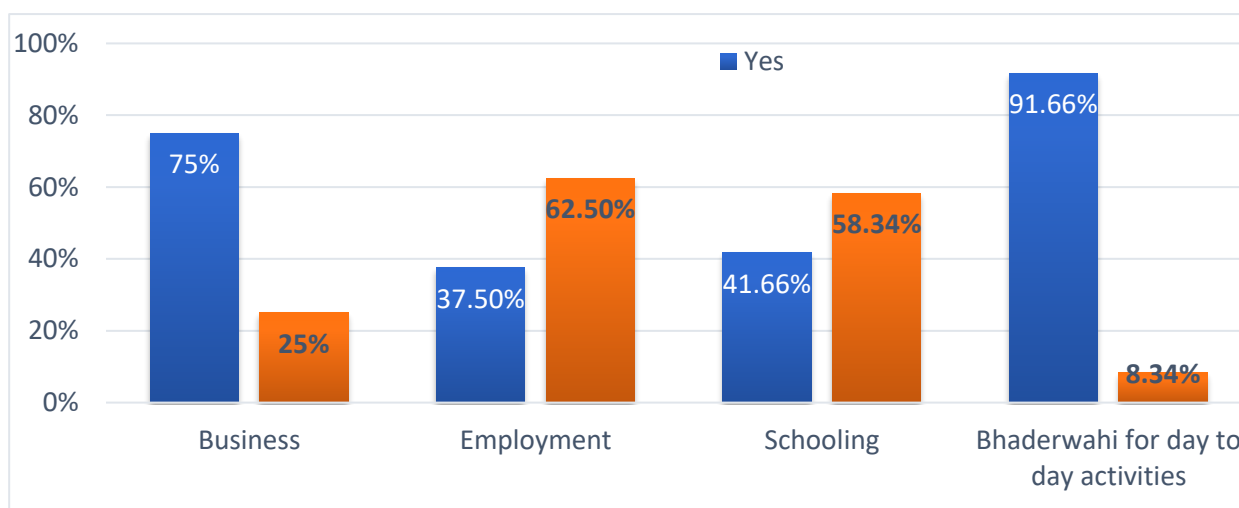


Figure 1.4: Bhaderwahi for performing various activities

Figure 1.4 shows the attitude of respondents regarding Bhaderwahi language. In case of Business activities, 75% of the respondents consider Bhaderwahi as better suited for Business purposes. The respondents claim that interacting with co-workers and customers in Bhaderwahi helps one to run

one's business more efficiently. 25% of respondents reported that Bhaderwahi is not better suited for performing business activities due to increased use of Hindi and English.

With regard to employment situation, 62.50% believed that Bhaderwahi is not better suited for employment. English is often seen as a gateway to global opportunities. Proficiency in English enhances employability in sectors that involve international business technology, and communication. Hindi is one of the most widely spoken language, fostering communication across diverse regions. Additionally, it has historical and cultural significance, serving as a unifying factor in this linguistically diverse nation. In contrast, only 37.50% of the total respondents preferred to use Bhaderwahi in this domain.

For schooling, 41.66% respondents favoured Bhaderwahi while as 58.34% of the respondents indicated they had no preference for Bhaderwahi in this domain. Most of the respondents believed that it is better to use Hindi or English in schools as these two languages are associated with greater prestige and power.

When the respondents were asked “Do you feel Bhaderwahi should be used for day-to-day activities?”, 91.66% respondents thought that it is important to use Bhaderwahi in day-to-day activities in order to preserve the cultural legacy. This reveals the positive attitude of respondents towards Bhaderwahi language.

E. Do you feel proud when speaking the native language?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	87.50%
No	12.50%

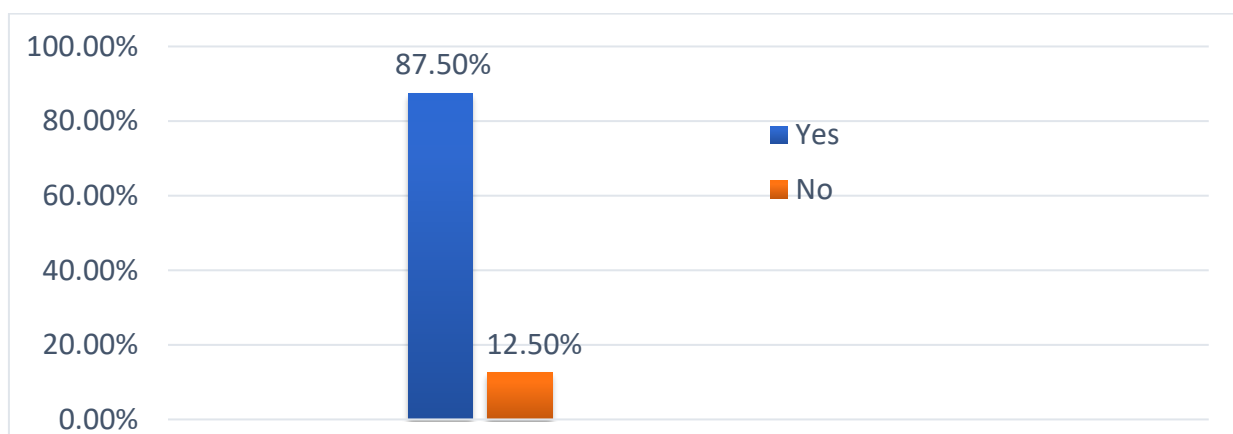


Figure 1.5: Proud when speaking Bhaderwahi

Figure 1.5 represents percentage of informants who feel proud when speaking their native language. As we can clearly see from the above figure that 87.5% of respondents are proud of speaking their native language. In contrary, only 12.5 % of respondents are not proud of speaking their native language. Feeling proud when speaking your mother tongue often stems from a connection to your cultural roots and a sense of identity. It's a celebration of heritage and a connection to your personal history.

F. Do you like Bhaderwahi to be spoken by your children?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	79.16%
No	20.84%



Figure 1.6: Important for the children to learn Bhaderwahi

Figure 1.6 represents the percentage of informants who feel that it is important for the children to learn their family's native language. As we can clearly draw out the conclusion from the above graph that 79.16% of respondents feel that it is important for their children to learn their family's native language and on the other side 20.84% of respondents feel that it is not important for the children to learn their family's native language.

G. Should Bhaderwahi be the medium of instruction in schools?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	91.66%
No	8.34%

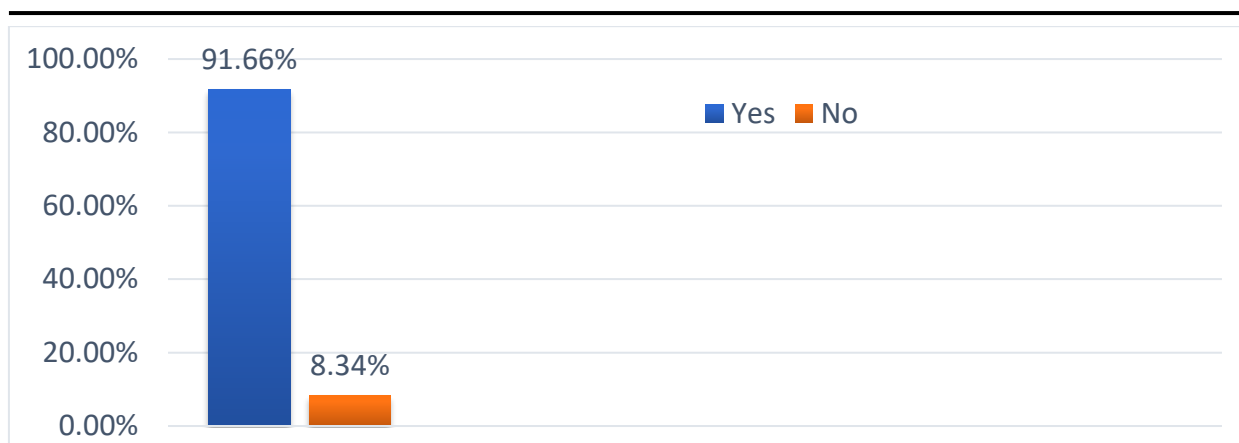


Figure 1.7: Bhaderwahi to be the medium of instruction

Figure 1.7 represents the respondents who want Bhaderwahi to be the medium of instruction in schools. Out of 48 respondents, 91.66% felt that Bhaderwahi should be the medium of instruction in the school. 8.34% respondents felt that there is no need of doing the same. The respondents claim that children can better learn in their native language. Preferring your mother tongue as the medium of instruction typically reflects a desire to embrace cultural identity and linguistic roots. It often signals the commitment for preserving and valuing one's heritage.

H. Do you feel sense of belonging and identity when you hear or speak your Bhaderwahi language?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	97.91%
No	2.08%

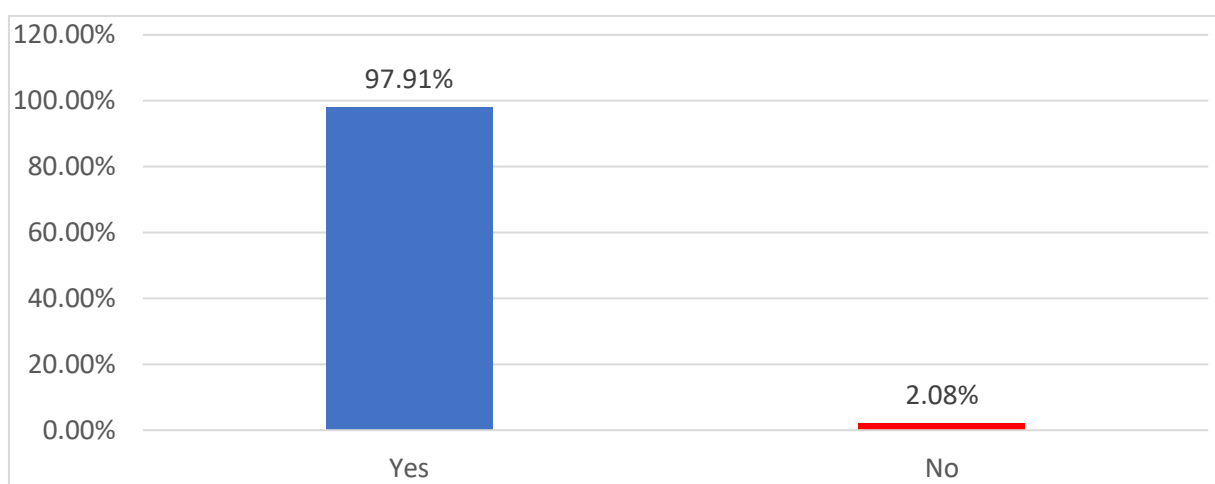


Figure 1.8: sense of belonging and identity when hearing or speaking Bhaderwahi

Figure 1.8 represents the percentage of respondents who feel the sense of belonging when they hear or speak their native language. As we can see in the above figure, 97.91% of respondents feel

the sense of belonging when they hear and speak their native language. Hearing or speaking your mother tongue often creates a deep sense of connection and identity, as it's intertwined with cultural roots, family ties, and a shared history. It's like a linguistic home that resonates with personal and collective experiences.

I. Language most comfortable with

<i>Languages</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Bhaderwahi</i>	87.50%
<i>Hindi</i>	8.33%
<i>English</i>	4.17%



Figure 1.9: Language most comfortable with

Figure 1.9 represents the “Language most comfortable with”, it is found that 87.50% respondents consider Bhaderwahi as the language they feel most comfortable with. An individual feels comfortable in a language when he has good command over that language. 12.5% respondents consider Hindi as the language they are comfortable with. Feeling comfortable while communicating in one’s mother tongue indicates a positive attitude towards native language. It often reflects sense of familiarity, cultural identity and emotional connection, contributing to a more relaxed and confident communication style.

J. Language usage in home domain with different interlocutors

<i>Languages</i>	<i>With grand parents</i>	<i>With parents</i>	<i>With siblings</i>
<i>Bhaderwahi</i>	95.83%	91.66%	83.33%
<i>Hindi</i>	4.17%	8.34%	12.51%
<i>English</i>	-	-	4.16%

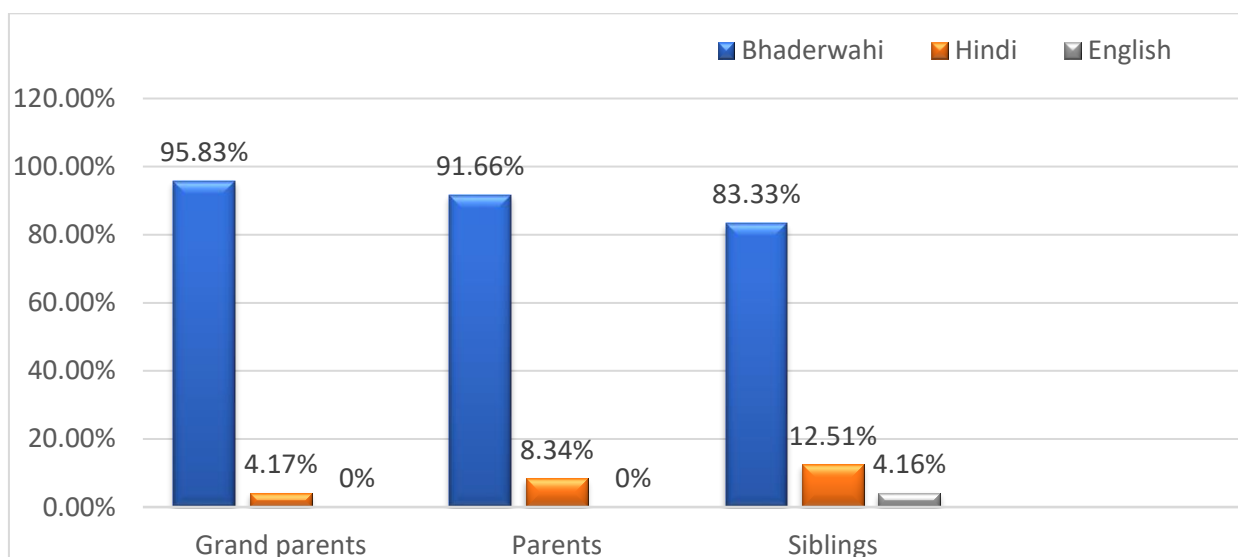


Figure 1.10: Language usage with different interlocutors

Figure 1.10 represents the respondent's language usage with grandparents, parents and siblings. As we can see clearly from the above figure that 95.83% of respondents use Bhaderwahi with their grandparents, 91.66% and 83.33% use Bhaderwahi with their parents and siblings respectively. Thus, we can clearly draw out the conclusion that Bhaderwahi is one of the dominant languages when it comes to home domain. This emphasizes that Bhaderwahi people have positive language attitude which entails the active use of Bhaderwahi language in home domain. Using your mother tongue positively in the home domain means embracing and celebrating your cultural and linguistic identity within your family environment. It fosters a sense of connection, heritage, and understanding among family members.

Ranking of Languages according to Liking

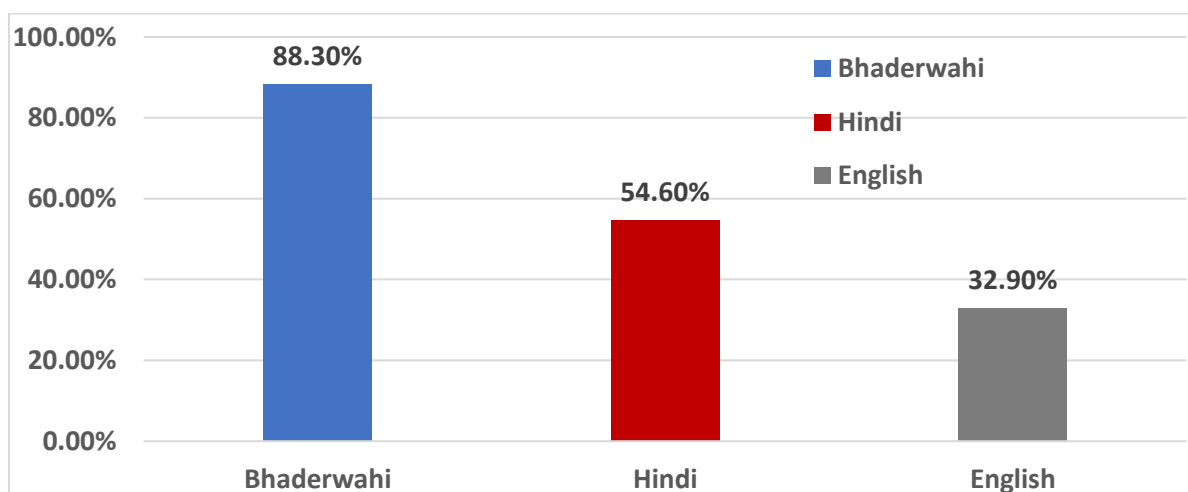


Figure 1.11: Liking of Languages

From the figure 1.11, it is evident that 88.30% ranked Bhaderwahi as the language they liked most, likely because it's their mother tongue. 54.60% ranked Hindi highest, tied to its status as the State's

official language. 32.90% ranked English highest, reflecting its role as an official and globally used language.

5. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion of language attitude of Bhaderwahi speakers, majority of speakers have positive attitude towards their language and culture. In most of the questions more than 70% of respondents gave an affirmative answer to each of the question. when respondents were asked whether Bhaderwahi should be preserved, majority of respondents expressed a strong inclination towards safeguarding and nurturing of their native tongue.

In response to research question “Rank the languages (English, Hindi, Bhaderwahi and Urdu) as per their liking”, the order of liking as per their responses is given below.

Bhaderwahi>Hindi>English

Ranking one's mother tongue higher indicates a strong emotional connection or cultural identity associated with that language. It also suggests a preference for expressing oneself in a language closely tied to personal experiences and upbringing. Having a positive attitude towards one's mother tongue typically means valuing and appreciating the language. It involves pride in cultural identity, a sense of belonging, and a willingness to preserve and promote the language.

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