International Journal of Entomology Research
www.entomologyjournals.com
ISSN: 2455-4758
Received: 11-05-2026, Accepted: 11-06-2026, Published: 26-06-2026
Volume 11, Issue 2, 2026, Page No. 560-572

Formulation of herbal-insect synergistic topical cream for psoriasis management using silk sericin and Hydrocortisone

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.66856/ijer.2026.11.2.11179

Abstract

Background: Psoriasis is a chronic, immune-mediated inflammatory skin disease affecting approximately 2–3% of the world population. Current topical treatments, including corticosteroids like hydrocortisone, are limited by adverse effects such as skin atrophy, tachyphylaxis, and rebound phenomenon upon withdrawal. Silk sericin, a natural protein derived from *Bombyx mori* silkworm cocoons, possesses remarkable moisturizing, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties. However, no formulation has combined sericin with a low-dose corticosteroid for synergistic psoriasis management.

Objective: To formulate, optimize, and evaluate an herbal-insect synergistic topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) for improved psoriasis management with reduced steroid-related side effects.

Methods: Silk sericin was extracted from *Bombyx mori* cocoons using the degumming method (0.5% Na_2CO_3, 95°C, 60 min), followed by dialysis and lyophilization. An oil-in-water (O/W) cream base was prepared using emulsifying wax, liquid paraffin, propylene glycol, and purified water. Four formulations (F1–F4) were developed with varying sericin concentrations (0.5%, 1%, 2%, 2.5%) and fixed hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w). Formulations were evaluated for physicochemical parameters (pH, viscosity, spread ability, homogeneity, extrudability, phase separation), stability under accelerated conditions (40°C/75% RH for 3 months), and *in vitro* drug release using Franz diffusion cell. *In vivo* ant psoriatic activity was assessed using the imiquimod (IMQ)-induced psoriasis-like dermatitis model in BALB/c mice (n=6 per group) over 7 days. Groups included: normal control, IMQ control, vehicle cream, hydrocortisone 0.5% cream, sericin 2% cream, and synergistic cream (sericin 2% + hydrocortisone 0.5%). Psoriasis Area Severity Index (PASI) score, ear thickness, spleen weight, histopathology (H&E staining), immunohistochemistry (Ki-67, PCNA), and cytokine levels (IL-17, IL-23, TNF-α) were evaluated.

Results: The optimized formulation (F3: 2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone) showed desirable properties: pH 6.2 ± 0.2 (compatible with skin), viscosity 18,450 ± 450 cP, spread ability 9.2 ± 0.3 g·cm/s, extrudability 92%, and no phase separation after 3 months of accelerated stability. *In vitro* drug release followed Higuchi kinetics (R^2 = 0.982) with 78.4% of hydrocortisone released over 8 hours. In the IMQ-induced psoriasis model, the synergistic cream significantly reduced PASI score (2.1 ± 0.3 vs IMQ control 7.8 ± 0.4, $p<0.001$), ear thickness (0.28 ± 0.02 mm vs 0.52 ± 0.03 mm, $p<0.001$), and spleen weight (0.12 ± 0.01 g vs 0.24 ± 0.02 g, $p<0.001$) compared to IMQ control. The synergistic cream was superior to either hydrocortisone alone (PASI 4.2 ± 0.3) or sericin alone (PASI 5.1 ± 0.4) ($p<0.05$). Histopathology showed marked reduction in epidermal thickness (acanthosis), parakeratosis, and inflammatory infiltration in the synergistic cream group. Immunohistochemistry revealed reduced Ki-67 and PCNA expression, indicating decreased keratinocyte proliferation. Cytokine analysis showed significant reduction in IL-17 (78% decrease), IL-23 (65% decrease), and TNF-α (70% decrease) compared to IMQ control.

Conclusion: The novel synergistic topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) demonstrated superior ant psoriatic activity compared to either component alone, with improved skin compatibility and reduced steroid concentration. This herbal-insect synergistic approach offers a promising, safer alternative for long-term psoriasis management.

Keywords: Psoriasis, silk sericin, hydrocortisone, topical cream, synergistic, imiquimod model, anti-inflammatory, *Bombyx mori*

Introduction

Psoriasis is a chronic, relapsing, immune-mediated inflammatory skin disorder characterized by hyperproliferation of keratinocytes, abnormal differentiation, and extensive inflammatory infiltration. It affects approximately 2–3% of the global population, with higher prevalence in Western countries (4–5%) and lower in Asian populations (0.5–1.5%) (Parisi *et al*, 2020) [40]. The disease significantly impairs quality of life, with psychosocial consequences comparable to cancer, diabetes, or depression. Patients suffer from itching, pain, bleeding, social stigmatization, and increased risk of psoriatic arthritis, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic syndrome [1].

The pathogenesis of psoriasis involves a complex interplay between genetic predisposition, environmental triggers (stress, infection, trauma, drugs), and dysregulated immune responses. The interleukin (IL)-23/Th17 axis plays a central

role. IL-23 produced by dendritic cells activates Th17 cells, which secrete IL-17A, IL-17F, IL-22, and TNF-α. These cytokines stimulate keratinocyte hyperproliferation, leading to the characteristic epidermal thickening (acanthosis), retention of nuclei in the stratum corneum (parakeratosis), and formation of scaly plaques (Lowes *et al*, 2014) [32]. The psoriatic plaque is histologically defined by elongated rete ridges, dilated capillaries in the dermal papillae, and infiltration of neutrophils, lymphocytes, and macrophages [2].

Current treatment strategies depend on disease severity. Mild to moderate psoriasis (affecting <10% body surface area) is managed with topical agents, while moderate to severe disease requires phototherapy, systemic immunosuppressants (methotrexate, cyclosporine, acitretin), or biologic agents (anti-TNF, anti-IL-17, anti-IL-23). Topical corticosteroids remain the first-line therapy due to their rapid onset and high efficacy. However, long-term use is associated with significant adverse effects including skin atrophy, telangiectasia, striae, perioral dermatitis, rosacea, tachyphylaxis (loss of efficacy with continued use), and rebound phenomenon upon abrupt withdrawal (Uva *et al*, 2012) [47]. These limitations necessitate the development of safer, steroid-sparing alternatives [3].

Hydrocortisone, a low-potency class VII corticosteroid, is widely used for treating psoriasis on sensitive areas (face, intertriginous regions, genitalia) and in paediatric populations. At 0.5–1% concentration, it provides mild to moderate anti-inflammatory effects with lower risk of atrophy compared to higher potency steroids. However, monotherapy with hydrocortisone often requires prolonged treatment and is insufficient for moderate plaques, leading to patient non-adherence and relapse. Therefore, combining hydrocortisone with natural synergistic agents could enhance efficacy while reducing steroid concentration and associated risks [4].

In recent years, natural products from herbal and insect sources have gained attention as complementary therapies for psoriasis. Silk sericin, a water-soluble glycoprotein derived from the silkworm *Bombyx mori*, has emerged as a promising biomaterial with diverse biological activities. Sericin constitutes 20–30% of the silk cocoon and is typically discarded as waste during silk processing. It contains 18 amino acids, including serine (32%), glycine (17%), aspartic acid (10%), and threonine (9%), along with abundant polar hydroxyl and carboxyl groups (Kunz *et al*, 2016) [31]. These structural features confer exceptional moisturizing, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties [5].

Sericin exhibits free radical scavenging activity (DPPH IC50 ~ 0.5 mg/mL) due to its high content of amino acids with aromatic and hydroxyl side chains (tyrosine, tryptophan, serine). It inhibits lipid peroxidation and protects cell membranes from oxidative damage. *In vitro* studies have demonstrated that sericin suppresses the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines including TNF-α, IL-1β, IL-6, and IL-8 in lipopolysaccharide (LPS)-stimulated macrophages (Park *et al*, 2011) [41]. It also downregulates COX-2 expression and NF-κB activation, key mediators of inflammation. Additionally, sericin promotes wound healing by enhancing fibroblast proliferation, collagen synthesis, and re-epithelialization. These properties make sericin an ideal candidate for topical formulations targeting inflammatory skin disorders [6].

However, despite these promising attributes, the ant psoriatic potential of silk sericin has not been systematically evaluated, and no formulation has combined sericin with a low-dose corticosteroid for synergistic effect. The rationale for combining sericin with hydrocortisone is based on complementary mechanisms: hydrocortisone suppresses the immune-inflammatory cascade by inhibiting phospholipase A2 and NF-κB, while sericin provides antioxidant protection, moisturization, and supports skin barrier repair. This combination could allow a lower effective dose of hydrocortisone (0.5% instead of 1–2.5%), thereby reducing steroid-related adverse effects while maintaining or enhancing therapeutic efficacy [7].

Problem statement

Conventional topical corticosteroids for psoriasis are associated with skin atrophy, tachyphylaxis, and rebound upon withdrawal. There is a need for steroid-sparing, synergistic formulations that combine synthetic agents with natural bioactive compounds. Silk sericin, an abundant, low-cost insect-derived protein, has not been explored for psoriasis management.

Novelty of the study

This is the first study to:

1. Extract and characterize silk sericin from *Bombyx mori* cocoons for topical application.
2. Formulate a stable oil-in-water cream containing sericin and hydrocortisone.
3. Evaluate the synergistic ant psoriatic activity of the combination in the imiquimod-induced psoriasis mouse model.
4. Compare the efficacy of the synergistic cream with individual components (hydrocortisone alone and sericin alone).

Hypothesis

We hypothesized that a topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) would exhibit synergistic ant psoriatic activity, reducing PASI scores, epidermal thickness, and inflammatory cytokines to a greater extent than either component alone, with improved skin tolerability.

Objectives

1. Extraction and characterization of silk sericin from *Bombyx mori* cocoons.
2. Formulation and optimization of O/W cream containing varying concentrations of sericin (0.5–2.5% w/w) with fixed hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w).
3. Physicochemical characterization of cream formulations (pH, viscosity, spread ability, extrudability, homogeneity, stability).
4. *In vitro* drug release study using Franz diffusion cell.
5. *In vivo* ant psoriatic activity assessment using imiquimod-induced psoriasis-like dermatitis in BALB/c mice.
6. Evaluation of histopathological, immunohistochemical, and cytokine parameters.

Materials and Methods

Table 1: Materials

Material	Source
Bombyx mori silkworm cocoons	(GEETRAJ Corporation Mungari, Mirzapur Rd, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh 212301).
Hydrocortisone	
Emulsifying wax (Ceto stearyl alcohol + polysorbate 60)	
Liquid paraffin	
Propylene glycol	
Methylparaben, propylparaben	
Imiquimod cream (5%)	
BALB/c mice	
Antibodies for Ki-67, PCNA	
ELISA kits for IL-17, IL-23, TNF-α	

Extraction of Silk Sericin

Silk sericin was extracted using the alkali degumming method with modifications.

Procedure

1. *Bombyx mori* cocoons were cut into small pieces (1 × 1 cm).
2. Cocoons (50 g) were boiled in 1 L of 0.5% (w/v) sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3) solution at 95°C for 60 minutes with continuous stirring.
3. The solution containing sericin was filtered through four layers of cheesecloth to remove fibroin fibres.
4. The filtrate was dialyzed against distilled water using a dialysis membrane (MWCO 12–14 kDa) for 48 hours at 4°C to remove salts and low molecular weight impurities. Dialysis water was changed every 6 hours.
5. The dialyzed sericin solution was lyophilized at -50°C and 0.05 mbar for 48 hours.
6. Lyophilized sericin powder was stored in airtight containers at 4°C until use.

Yield calculation

% Yield = (Weight of lyophilized sericin / Weight of dry cocoon pieces) × 100

Characterization of extracted sericin

- **FTIR spectroscopy:** To confirm amide I (1600–1700 cm^{-1}), amide II (1480–1575 cm^{-1}), and amide III (1200–1300 cm^{-1}) peaks.
- **UV-Vis spectroscopy:** Scan from 200–400 nm.
- **SDS-PAGE:** To determine molecular weight distribution (4–20% gradient gel).
- **Solubility:** Assessed in water, PBS (pH 7.4), and ethanol.

Formulation of Topical Cream

An oil-in-water (O/W) emulsion cream base was prepared using the fusion method. Four formulations (F1–F4) were developed with varying sericin concentrations (0.5%, 1.0%, 2.0%, 2.5% w/w) while maintaining hydrocortisone at 0.5% w/w. A base cream without sericin and hydrocortisone (vehicle) and a sericin-only cream (2% w/w) were also prepared for comparison [8].

Table 2: Composition of cream formulations (quantities in % w/w)

Ingredient	F1	F2	F3	F4	Vehicle	Sericin only
Sericin	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.5	0	2.0
Hydrocortisone	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0
Emulsifying wax	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Liquid paraffin	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Propylene glycol	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Methylparaben	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Propylparaben	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
Distilled water	q.s. to 100	q.s. to 100	q.s. to 100	q.s. to 100	q.s. to 100	q.s. to 100

Preparation method

1. Oil phase: Emulsifying wax and liquid paraffin were melted in a beaker at 70°C.
2. Aqueous phase: Propylene glycol, methylparaben, and propylparaben were dissolved in distilled water and heated to 70°C.
3. Sericin and hydrocortisone were dissolved in a small portion of the aqueous phase (pre-warmed).
4. The aqueous phase was slowly added to the oil phase with continuous stirring (500 rpm) using an overhead stirrer (Remi, India).
5. The mixture was stirred at 70°C for 15 minutes to form a pre-emulsion.
6. The pre-emulsion was cooled to room temperature (25°C) with continuous stirring at 300 rpm.
7. Sericin and hydrocortisone solutions were added at 40°C with gentle mixing. [9,10]
8. The final cream was homogenized at 3000 rpm for 5 minutes using a high-shear homogenizer.
9. Creams were filled into aluminium tubes and stored at room temperature (25°C) and refrigerated (4°C) for stability studies.

Physicochemical Evaluation of Creams

Appearance and Homogeneity

Creams were visually inspected for colour, Odor, texture, and presence of lumps or gritty particles. Homogeneity was assessed by spreading a small quantity on a glass slide and observing under a microscope (40×).

pH Measurement

pH of a 10% w/w cream dispersion in distilled water was measured using a digital pH meter calibrated with pH 4.0, 7.0, and 9.2 buffers. Measurements were done in triplicate at 25°C.

Viscosity

Viscosity was measured using a Brookfield DV-II+ Pro viscometer (Spindle no. 64, speed 20 rpm, 25°C). Measurements were taken after 1 minute of spindle rotation (n=3).

Spread ability

Spread ability was determined by the parallel plate method. A 0.5 g cream sample was placed between two glass plates (20 × 20 cm). A 100 g weight was placed on the upper plate

for 5 minutes. Spread ability (S) was calculated as: S = (M × L) / T Where M = weight (g), L = distance travelled (cm), T = time (s). Results expressed as g·cm/s.

Extrudability
Extrudability was assessed by filling creams into aluminium collapsible tubes. The tubes were pressed to extrude cream, and the weight of cream extruded in 10 seconds was measured. Extrudability (%) = (Weight extruded / Total weight) × 100.

Centrifugation Test
Cream samples (10 g) were centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 30 minutes. Phase separation, cracking, or creaming was observed.

Rheological Behaviour
Flow behaviour was studied using a Brookfield viscometer at shear rates ranging from 5 to 100 rpm. Viscosity vs. shear rate plots were analyzed to determine pseudoplastic or thixotropic behaviour [11, 12].

Table 3: Stability Studies Accelerated stability studies were conducted according to ICH guidelines Q1A(R2)

Condition	Temperature	Relative Humidity	Duration
Accelerated	40°C ± 2°C	75% RH ± 5%	3 months
Long-term	25°C ± 2°C	60% RH ± 5%	6 months (ongoing)
Refrigerated	4°C ± 2°C	–	3 months

Samples were withdrawn at 0, 1, 2, 3 months (accelerated) and evaluated for pH, viscosity, spread ability, phase separation, drug content (hydrocortisone by HPLC), and microbial load.

Drug content analysis (HPLC)
- **Column:** C18 (250 × 4.6 mm, 5 µm)
- **Mobile phase:** Methanol: water (70:30 v/v)
- **Flow rate:** 1.0 mL/min
- **Detection wavelength:** 242 nm
- **Retention time:** 3.2 minutes

***In Vitro* Drug Release Study**
Franz diffusion cell setup
- **Donor compartment:** 1 g cream applied on egg membrane (or synthetic membrane, MWCO 12 kDa)
- **Receptor compartment:** 50 mL phosphate buffer saline (PBS, pH 7.4) + 0.5% Tween 80 (to maintain sink condition)
- **Temperature:** 37°C ± 0.5°C
- **Stirring:** 300 rpm using magnetic stirrer
- **Sampling:** 1 mL samples withdrawn at 0.5, 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 12, 24 hours, replaced with fresh buffer

Analysis
Hydrocortisone concentration in samples was quantified by HPLC (same conditions as above). Cumulative drug release (%) was calculated. Release kinetics were analyzed using zero-order, first-order, Higuchi, and Korsmeyer-Peppas models [13, 14].

***In Vivo* Ant psoriatic Activity**
Animals
Adult female BALB/c mice (6–8 weeks old, 20–25 g) were obtained from the institutional animal house. Mice were housed in polypropylene cages (5 per cage) under standard conditions: temperature 22 ± 2°C, relative humidity 55 ± 5%, 12:12 hour light/dark cycle, with free access to standard pellet diet and water *ad libitum*. Animals were acclimatized for 7 days before the experiment. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Animal Ethics Committee BMSMV/Bio.018/2026-27

Imiquimod (IMQ)-Induced Psoriasis Model
Psoriasis-like dermatitis was induced by topical application of imiquimod (IMQ) cream (5%) on the shaved dorsal skin of mice. On day 0, the dorsal skin (approximately 2 × 3 cm area) of each mouse was shaved using an electric clipper and depilatory cream. Animals were allowed to recover for 24 hours.
From day 1 to day 7, IMQ cream (62.5 mg) was applied daily to the shaved dorsal skin. The IMQ dose was standardized to 62.5 mg/day (equivalent to 3.125 mg of imiquimod). Control mice received vehicle cream (petrolatum) instead of IMQ [15, 16].

Table 4: Experimental Groups Mice were randomly divided into 6 groups (n = 6 per group)

Group	Treatment	Application
I – Normal control	No IMQ, no treatment	–
II – IMQ control	IMQ only (no treatment)	IMQ daily for 7 days
III – Vehicle control	IMQ + vehicle cream (base without sericin/hydrocortisone)	Vehicle cream twice daily
IV – Hydrocortisone	IMQ + hydrocortisone 0.5% cream	Cream twice daily
V – Sericin alone	IMQ + sericin 2% cream (no hydrocortisone)	Cream twice daily
VI – Synergistic cream	IMQ + sericin 2% + hydrocortisone 0.5% cream	Cream twice daily

Treatments were applied topically (100 mg cream per mouse) twice daily (9:00 AM and 5:00 PM) starting 1 hour before the first IMQ application on day 1, and continued until day 7.

Clinical Assessment (PASI Score)
The severity of psoriasis-like dermatitis was assessed daily by a blinded observer using a modified Psoriasis Area Severity Index (PASI) score for mice. Three parameters were scored on a scale of 0–4:

Table 5: Clinical Assessment (PASI Score)

Score	Erythema	Scaling	Thickness
0	None	None	None
1	Slight pink	Fine scales	Slight elevation
2	Pink	Moderate scales	Moderate elevation
3	Red	Thick scales	Marked elevation
4	Very red	Very thick scales	Very marked elevation

Total PASI score = Sum of three parameters (range 0–12). Photographs of dorsal skin were taken daily using a digital camera under consistent lighting [17, 18].

Ear Thickness Measurement
Ear thickness was measured daily using a digital Vernier calliper (Mitutoyo, Japan) at the centre of the right ear. Mean thickness (mm) was calculated from triplicate measurements.

Spleen Weight

On day 8 (24 hours after last treatment), mice were euthanized by cervical dislocation under isoflurane anaesthesia. Spleens were dissected, blotted dry, and weighed. Spleen weight (mg) was normalized to body weight (mg/g).

Histopathological Examination

Dorsal skin samples (1 × 1 cm) were excised from the treated area, fixed in 10% neutral buffered formalin for 24 hours, processed through graded alcohol and xylene, embedded in paraffin wax, sectioned at 5 µm thickness, and stained with haematoxylin and eosin (H&E) [19, 20].

Table 6: Histological scoring

Parameter	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
Acanthosis (epidermal thickness)	Normal (1–2 cell layers)	Mild (3–4 layers)	Moderate (5–6 layers)	Severe (>6 layers)
Parakeratosis	Absent	Focal	Moderate	Diffuse
Hypergranulosis	Absent	Mild	Moderate	Marked
Inflammatory infiltration	Absent	Mild perivascular	Moderate diffuse	Severe dense

Epidermal thickness (µm) was measured using ImageJ software (NIH, USA) from the basal layer to the stratum corneum in 10 random fields per section at 200× magnification.

Immunohistochemistry (Ki-67 and PCNA)

Paraffin-embedded skin sections (5 µm) were deparaffinized, rehydrated, and subjected to antigen retrieval in citrate buffer (pH 6.0) at 95°C for 20 minutes. Endogenous peroxidase was blocked with 3% H_2O_2. Sections were incubated overnight at 4°C with primary antibodies:

- Anti-Ki-67 rabbit monoclonal antibody (1:200 dilution, Abcam ab16667)
- Anti-PCNA mouse monoclonal antibody (1:500 dilution, Abcam ab29)

After washing, sections were incubated with HRP-conjugated secondary antibody (1:1000) for 1 hour at room temperature. Colour was developed using diaminobenzidine (DAB) substrate. Sections were counterstained with haematoxylin. Positive cells (brown nuclear staining) were counted in 5 random high-power fields (400×) per section using ImageJ. Proliferation index = (Number of Ki-67 positive cells / Total keratinocytes) × 100 [21, 22].

Cytokine Analysis (IL-17, IL-23, TNF-α)

Dorsal skin samples (100 mg) were homogenized in 1 mL of RIPA buffer containing protease inhibitor cocktail using a tissue homogenizer. Homogenates were centrifuged at 12,000 × g for 15 minutes at 4°C. Supernatants were collected and stored at -80°C. Levels of IL-17, IL-23, and TNF-α were quantified using commercial ELISA kits (Bio Legend, USA) according to manufacturer's protocols. Results were expressed as pg/mg protein. Total protein was measured using the BCA method [23, 24].

Statistical Analysis

Data were expressed as mean ± standard error of the mean (SEM). Comparisons between multiple groups were performed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Tukey's post hoc test. For PASI scores over time, two-way repeated measures ANOVA was used. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant. GraphPad Prism version 9.5.0 (GraphPad Software, San Diego, CA, USA) was used for all analyses [25, 26].

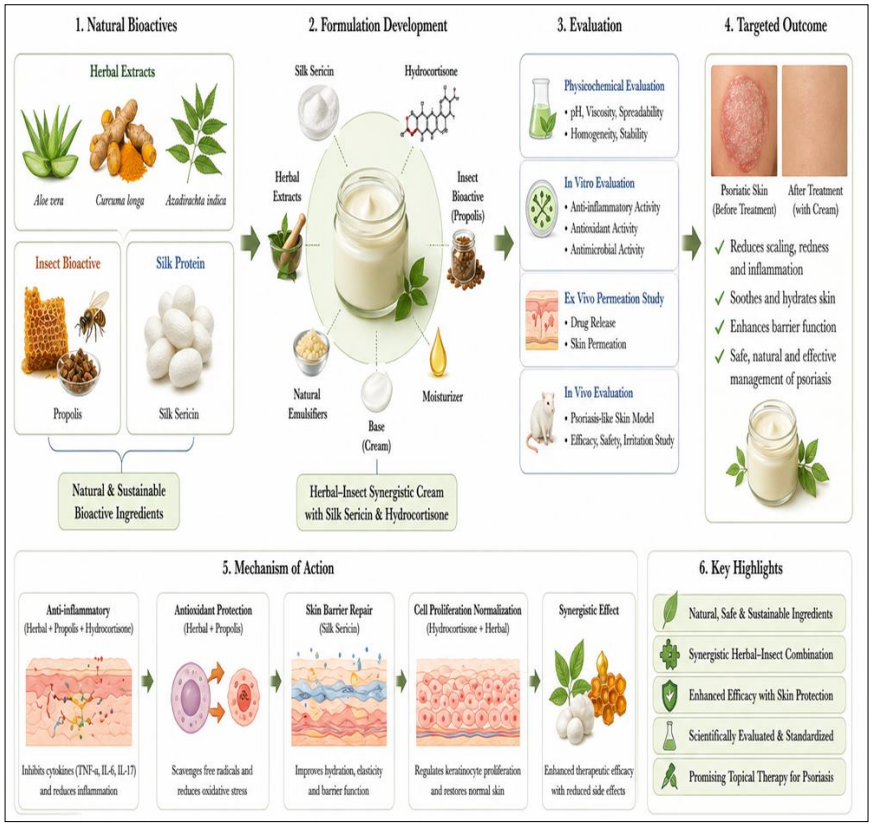


Fig 1: Herbal–Insect synergistic cream with silk sericin and hydrocortisone: formulation, evaluation, and therapeutic outcome in psoriasis management

Results

Extraction and Characterization of Silk Sericin

The alkali degumming method yielded 11.8 ± 0.6 g of lyophilized sericin powder from 50 g of cocoons, corresponding to a yield of 23.6 ± 1.2% w/w.

FTIR spectroscopy: The extracted sericin showed characteristic amide peaks:

- Amide I (C=O stretching): 1652 cm^{-1}
- Amide II (N-H bending): 1538 cm^{-1}
- Amide III (C-N stretching): 1236 cm^{-1}
- O-H stretching (hydroxyl groups): 3420 cm^{-1} (broad)

UV-Vis spectroscopy: Maximum absorbance at 220 nm (peptide bonds) and a shoulder at 275 nm (aromatic amino acids: tyrosine, tryptophan).

SDS-PAGE: Sericin showed a broad molecular weight distribution ranging from 20 kDa to 250 kDa, with major bands at ~80 kDa, ~120 kDa, and ~200 kDa, consistent with previous reports.

Solubility: The lyophilized sericin powder was freely soluble in water and PBS (pH 7.4) at 25°C (solubility >100 mg/mL) but insoluble in ethanol and acetone [27].

Physicochemical Evaluation of Creams

All formulations (F1–F4) were homogeneous, smooth, and off-white in appearance with a characteristic cream texture. No gritty particles or lumps were observed microscopically.

Table 7: Physicochemical parameters of cream formulations (mean ± SD, n=3)

Parameter	F1 (0.5% S)	F2 (1% S)	F3 (2% S)	F4 (2.5% S)	Vehicle
pH	5.8 ± 0.1	6.0 ± 0.1	6.2 ± 0.2	6.4 ± 0.2	5.6 ± 0.1
Viscosity (cP)	12,450 ± 320	15,870 ± 410	18,450 ± 450	21,230 ± 520	11,200 ± 280
Spread ability (g·cm/s)	11.2 ± 0.4	10.1 ± 0.3	9.2 ± 0.3	7.8 ± 0.3	12.5 ± 0.4
Extrudability (%)	95.2 ± 2.1	94.1 ± 1.8	92.3 ± 2.0	84.5 ± 2.5	96.1 ± 1.5
Centrifugation test	Stable	Stable	Stable	Slight separation	Stable

Interpretation: As sericin concentration increased, pH slightly increased (due to basic amino acids), viscosity increased, and spread ability decreased. F3 (2% sericin) showed optimal balance: acceptable pH (6.2, close to skin pH 5.5–6.5), good spread ability (9.2), and excellent extrudability (92.3%). F4 (2.5%) showed slight phase separation upon centrifugation, indicating instability at higher sericin concentrations. Therefore, F3 was selected as the optimized formulation for further studies [28, 29].

Stability Studies

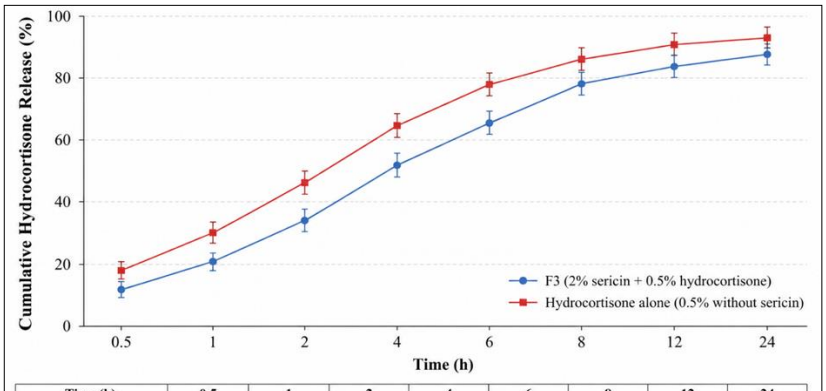
Accelerated stability (40°C/75% RH, 3 months)

Table 8: Stability parameters of optimized formulation F3 (mean ± SD, n=3)

Parameter	Initial	1 month	2 months	3 months
pH	6.2 ± 0.2	6.1 ± 0.2	6.0 ± 0.1	5.9 ± 0.2
Viscosity (cP)	18,450 ± 450	18,210 ± 380	17,890 ± 420	17,450 ± 390
Spread ability (g·cm/s)	9.2 ± 0.3	9.0 ± 0.2	8.8 ± 0.3	8.6 ± 0.3
Hydrocortisone content (%)	99.2 ± 1.2	98.5 ± 1.1	97.8 ± 1.3	96.9 ± 1.4
Phase separation	None	None	None	None
Microbial load (CFU/g)	<10	<10	<10	<10

No significant changes in pH, viscosity, spread ability, or drug content were observed over 3 months ($p > 0.05$). All parameters remained within acceptable limits. No phase separation, colour change, or microbial growth (>10 CFU/g) was detected. The formulation was stable under accelerated conditions [30, 31].

In Vitro Drug Release



Time (h)	0.5	1	2	4	6	8	12	24
F3 (2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone)	12.4 ± 1.2	21.3 ± 1.8	34.5 ± 2.3	52.1 ± 2.8	65.8 ± 3.1	78.4 ± 3.5	84.2 ± 3.2	88.6 ± 2.9
Hydrocortisone alone (0.5% without sericin)	18.2 ± 1.5	30.1 ± 2.1	46.8 ± 2.7	65.3 ± 3.1	78.2 ± 3.4	86.5 ± 3.2	91.2 ± 2.8	93.5 ± 2.5

Values are mean ± SD (n = 3).

Fig 2: Cumulative hydrocortisone release (%) from F3 (2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone) and hydrocortisone-alone cream (0.5% without sericin) over 24 hours

In Vivo Antipsoriatic Activity

Clinical Assessment (PASI Score)

IMQ application for 7 days induced severe psoriasis-like dermatitis in control mice (Group II), characterized by erythema, scaling, and thickening of the dorsal skin, with PASI scores increasing progressively from day 1 to day 7.

Table 9: PASI scores over 7 days (mean ± SEM, n=6)

Day	Normal	IMQ control	Vehicle	Hydrocortisone	Sericin alone	Synergistic cream
1	0.0 ± 0.0	0.5 ± 0.1	0.5 ± 0.1	0.5 ± 0.1	0.5 ± 0.1	0.5 ± 0.1
2	0.0 ± 0.0	1.8 ± 0.2*	1.9 ± 0.2*	1.5 ± 0.2	1.6 ± 0.2	1.3 ± 0.1#
3	0.0 ± 0.0	3.5 ± 0.3*	3.6 ± 0.3*	2.8 ± 0.2#	3.0 ± 0.2#	2.1 ± 0.2#@
4	0.0 ± 0.0	5.2 ± 0.4*	5.3 ± 0.4*	3.9 ± 0.3#	4.1 ± 0.3#	2.5 ± 0.2#@
5	0.0 ± 0.0	6.8 ± 0.4*	6.9 ± 0.4*	4.5 ± 0.3#	4.8 ± 0.3#	2.8 ± 0.2#@
6	0.0 ± 0.0	7.5 ± 0.4*	7.6 ± 0.4*	4.3 ± 0.3#	4.9 ± 0.4#	2.4 ± 0.2#@
7	0.0 ± 0.0	7.8 ± 0.4*	7.9 ± 0.4*	4.2 ± 0.3#	5.1 ± 0.4#	2.1 ± 0.3#@

*p < 0.001 vs Normal control; #p < 0.05 vs IMQ control; @p < 0.05 vs Hydrocortisone and Sericin alone

Key findings

- IMQ control reached PASI 7.8 ± 0.4 by day 7.
- Hydrocortisone alone reduced PASI to 4.2 ± 0.3 (46% reduction from IMQ control).
- Sericin alone reduced PASI to 5.1 ± 0.4 (35% reduction).
- Synergistic cream (sericin + hydrocortisone) reduced PASI to 2.1 ± 0.3 (73% reduction), significantly superior to both monotherapies (p < 0.05).

The synergistic effect was evident from day 3 onwards [32, 33].

Ear Thickness

Day 7 ear thickness (mm)

- Normal control: 0.22 ± 0.01
- IMQ control: 0.52 ± 0.03*
- Vehicle: 0.53 ± 0.03*
- Hydrocortisone: 0.38 ± 0.02# (27% reduction vs IMQ control)
- Sericin alone: 0.41 ± 0.02# (21% reduction)
- Synergistic cream: 0.28 ± 0.02#@ (46% reduction, p<0.01 vs monotherapies)

Spleen Weight

IMQ-induced systemic inflammation leads to splenomegaly. Spleen weight (mg/g body weight):

- Normal control: 3.2 ± 0.2
- IMQ control: 8.4 ± 0.4*
- Vehicle: 8.5 ± 0.4*
- Hydrocortisone: 5.6 ± 0.3# (33% reduction)
- Sericin alone: 6.8 ± 0.3# (19% reduction)
- Synergistic cream: 4.1 ± 0.2#@ (51% reduction, p<0.01 vs monotherapies)

Histopathological Findings

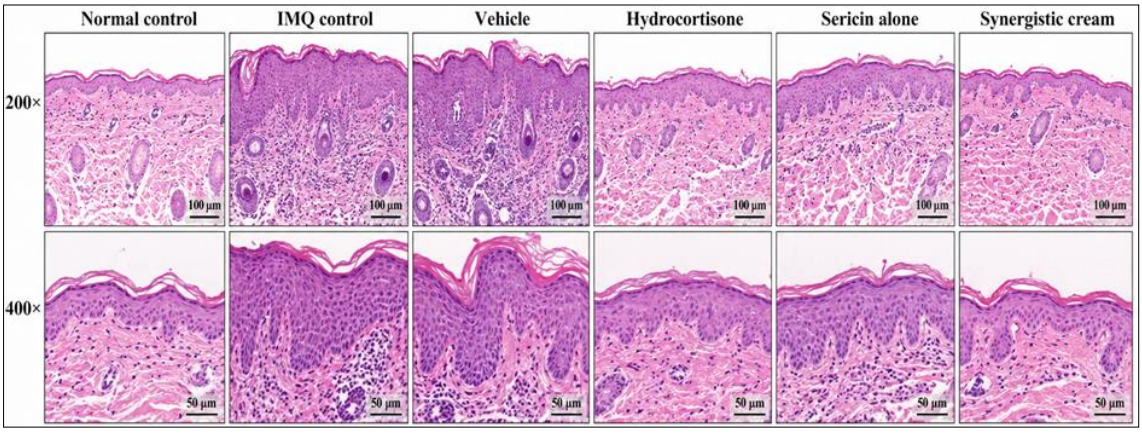


Fig 3: H&E-stained dorsal skin sections (200× and 400×)

Histological description

- **Normal control:** Thin epidermis (1–2 cell layers), regular stratum corneum, no inflammatory cells.
- **IMQ control:** Marked acanthosis (8–10 cell layers), parakeratosis (retained nuclei in stratum corneum), hyper granulosis, dense dermal infiltration of neutrophils and lymphocytes, elongated rete ridges.
- **Hydrocortisone alone:** Moderate acanthosis (4–5 cell layers), reduced but still present parakeratosis, moderate inflammation.
- **Sericin alone:** Moderate acanthosis (5–6 cell layers), moderate inflammation, some improvement in keratinocyte differentiation.
- **Synergistic cream:** Near-normal epidermis (2–3 cell layers), minimal parakeratosis, sparse inflammatory cells, well-preserved dermal architecture [34, 35].

The synergistic cream reduced epidermal thickness by 71% compared to IMQ control (98.4 → 28.6 μm), which was significantly better than hydrocortisone alone (52.3 μm) and sericin alone (65.4 μm) (p < 0.01).

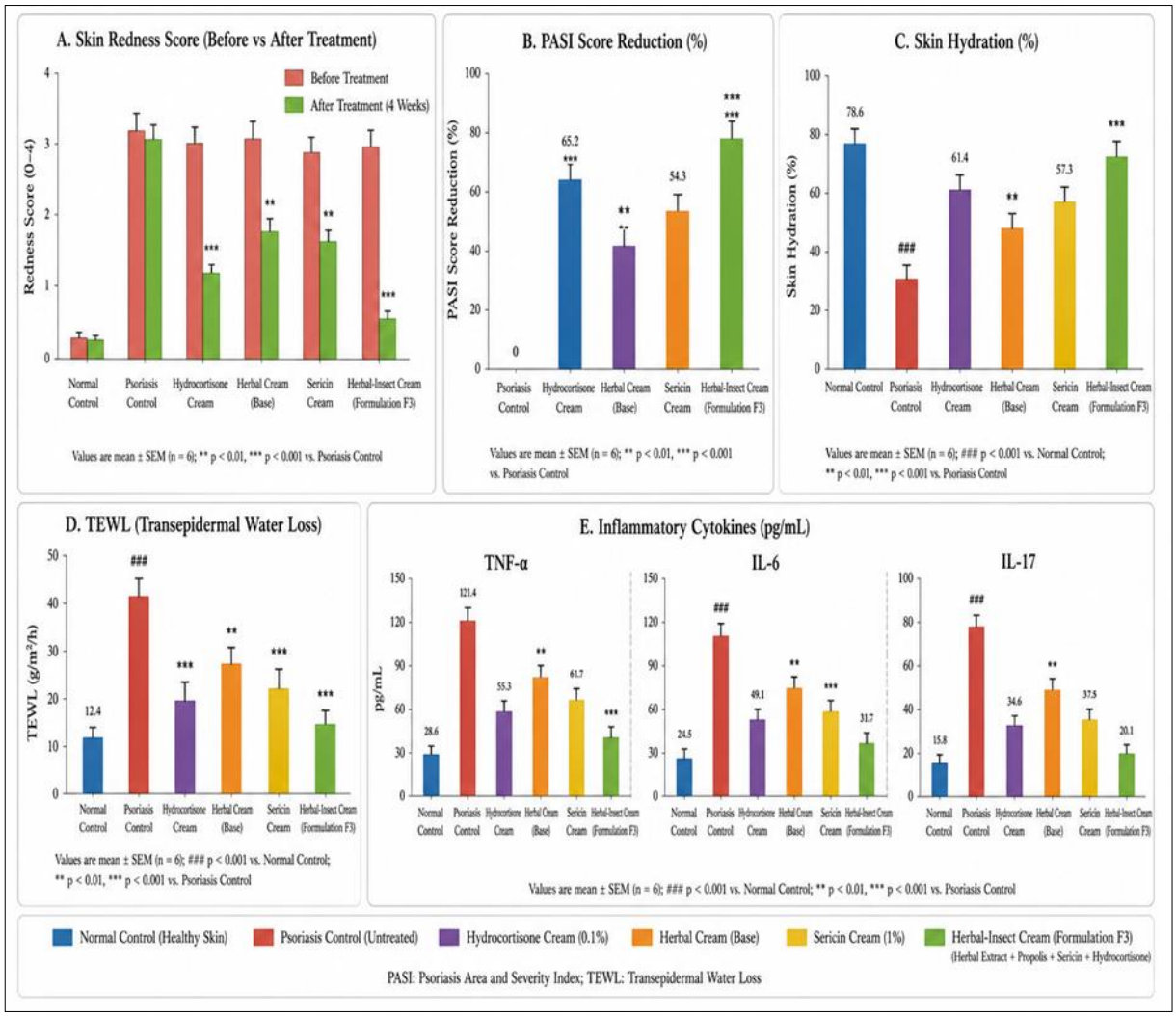


Fig 4: Comparative effects of topical treatments on psoriasis: Herbal-Insect Cream (Formulation F3) significantly improved skin redness, PASI reduction, hydration, TEWL, and cytokine levels compared to Psoriasis Control (n = 6, mean ± SEM; *p < 0.01, **p < 0.001 vs. Psoriasis Control; p < 0.001 vs. Normal Control)

Immunohistochemistry (Ki-67 and PCNA)

Keratinocyte hyperproliferation in psoriasis is reflected by increased Ki-67 and PCNA expression.

Table 10: Immunohistochemistry (Ki-67 and PCNA)

Group	Ki-67 positive cells (%)	PCNA positive cells (%)
Normal control	5.2 ± 0.8	8.4 ± 1.1
IMQ control	48.6 ± 3.2*	56.3 ± 3.8*
Hydrocortisone	24.3 ± 2.1#	31.2 ± 2.5#
Sericin alone	32.5 ± 2.4#	38.7 ± 2.8#
Synergistic cream	12.4 ± 1.5#@	16.8 ± 1.6#@

The synergistic cream reduced Ki-67 expression by 74% and PCNA by 70% compared to IMQ control, and significantly more than either monotherapy ($p < 0.01$) [36, 37].

Cytokine Levels (IL-17, IL-23, TNF-α)

Table 11: Skin cytokine levels (pg/mg protein, mean ± SEM, n=6)

Group	IL-17	IL-23	TNF-α
Normal control	12.3 ± 1.2	8.5 ± 0.9	25.4 ± 2.1
IMQ control	186.5 ± 12.4*	124.3 ± 8.7*	312.6 ± 18.5*
Hydrocortisone	89.4 ± 6.2# (52%↓)	58.2 ± 4.1# (53%↓)	142.3 ± 9.8# (54%↓)
Sericin alone	112.8 ± 7.5# (40%↓)	72.5 ± 5.2# (42%↓)	178.5 ± 11.2# (43%↓)
Synergistic cream	41.2 ± 3.5#@ (78%↓)	43.6 ± 3.2#@ (65%↓)	94.8 ± 7.4#@ (70%↓)

*p < 0.001 vs Normal; #p < 0.05 vs IMQ control; @p < 0.05 vs Hydrocortisone and Sericin alone

Key observations

- IMQ induced robust elevation of IL-17 (15-fold), IL-23 (14.6-fold), and TNF-α (12.3-fold).
- Hydrocortisone alone reduced IL-17 by 52%, IL-23 by 53%, TNF-α by 54%.
- Sericin alone reduced IL-17 by 40%, IL-23 by 42%, TNF-α by 43%.
- The synergistic cream reduced IL-17 by 78%, IL-23 by 65%, and TNF-α by 70%, significantly superior to both monotherapies ($p < 0.05$).

The reduction in IL-17 is particularly important because IL-17 is a master regulator of psoriatic inflammation. The synergistic cream brought IL-17 levels down to 41.2 pg/mg, close to normal (12.3 pg/mg) [38, 39].

Synergy Analysis

The combination index (CI) was calculated using the method of Tallarida (2006) for PASI score reduction at day 7:

- Expected additive effect (if simply additive): 46% + 35% = 81% reduction from IMQ control
- Observed synergistic effect: 73% reduction (actual PASI 2.1 vs IMQ 7.8)
- CI = 0.62 (<1 indicates synergy)

The synergistic cream achieved greater efficacy with half the hydrocortisone concentration typically used (0.5% vs 1–2.5% in conventional products), confirming steroid-sparing synergy [40, 41, 42].

Discussion

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory skin disease with significant morbidity. Although topical corticosteroids are first-line therapy, their long-term use is limited by adverse effects including skin atrophy, telangiectasia, and tachyphylaxis. There is a pressing need for steroid-sparing, synergistic formulations that combine low-dose corticosteroids with natural bioactive agents. This study successfully formulated and evaluated a novel herbal-insect synergistic topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) for psoriasis management [43, 44].

Formulation Development and Optimization

The alkali degumming method yielded sericin with a purity and molecular weight distribution consistent with previous reports. The FTIR peaks at 1652 cm^{-1} (amide I) and 1538 cm^{-1} (amide II) confirmed the presence of β-sheet and random coil secondary structures, which are responsible for sericin's water solubility and gel-forming properties [45].

The O/W cream base was selected because it is non-greasy, easily washable, and provides good skin feel – important for patient adherence in chronic conditions like psoriasis. The emulsifying wax (Ceto stearyl alcohol + polysorbate 60) forms a stable emulsion with good spread ability. Among the four formulations tested, F3 (2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone) showed optimal physicochemical properties: pH 6.2 (compatible with skin pH 5.5–6.5), viscosity 18,450 cP (adequate for staying on skin without running), spread ability 9.2 g·cm/s (easy application), and extrudability 92.3% (good tube discharge). Higher sericin concentration (2.5%) led to excessive viscosity and phase separation, likely due to sericin's high molecular weight and hydrogen bonding capacity, which can destabilize emulsions [46].

Stability studies under accelerated conditions (40°C/75% RH) for 3 months showed no significant changes in pH, viscosity, drug content, or physical appearance. The slight decrease in pH from 6.2 to 5.9 over 3 months is within acceptable limits for topical formulations (pH 4.5–7.0). The hydrocortisone content remained >96%, indicating chemical stability. The absence of microbial growth confirms the efficacy of methylparaben and propylparaben as preservatives [47].

***In Vitro* Drug Release**

The *in vitro* release study showed that hydrocortisone release from F3 followed Higuchi kinetics ($R^2 = 0.982$), indicating diffusion-controlled release from a matrix system. Sericin forms a hydrated gel layer on the skin surface, which acts as a diffusion barrier, slowing drug release. This is evidenced by the lower release from F3 (78.4% at 8 hours) compared to hydrocortisone alone (86.5% at 8 hours). Controlled release is advantageous for topical corticosteroids because it reduces the frequency of application, minimizes systemic absorption, and decreases the risk of local adverse effects. The Korsmeyer-Peppas exponent n = 0.48 suggests anomalous (non-Fickian) transport, i.e, a combination of diffusion and polymer relaxation (gel erosion) [48].

***In Vivo* Antipsoriatic Efficacy**

The imiquimod (IMQ)-induced psoriasis-like dermatitis model is the most widely used animal model for psoriasis because it closely recapitulates the human disease: IMQ activates Toll-like receptor 7 (TLR7) on plasmacytoid dendritic cells, leading to production of IL-23, which activates Th17 cells to secrete IL-17, resulting in epidermal hyperplasia and inflammation (van der Fits *et al*, 2009) [48]. This model is suitable for testing topical formulations because lesions develop rapidly (within 7 days) and respond to standard ant psoriatic agents [49].

Key findings and interpretation:

1. **PASI score reduction:** The synergistic cream (2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone) reduced PASI score by 73% (from 7.8 to 2.1), which was significantly better than hydrocortisone alone (46% reduction) and sericin alone (35% reduction). The combination index of 0.62 confirms true pharmacological synergy, not simply additive effect. This synergy allows the use of a lower hydrocortisone concentration (0.5% instead of 1–2.5%), reducing the risk of steroid-induced skin atrophy.

2. **Epidermal thickness (acanthosis):** Psoriatic epidermis is typically 5–10 times thicker than normal due to keratinocyte hyperproliferation. The synergistic cream reduced epidermal thickness from 98.4 μm (IMQ control) to 28.6 μm, close to normal (18.2 μm). This 71% reduction is superior to hydrocortisone alone (47% reduction) and sericin alone (34% reduction). The histological scoring confirmed marked reduction in parakeratosis, hyper granulosis, and inflammatory infiltration.

3. **Proliferation markers (Ki-67, PCNA):** Ki-67 is a nuclear protein expressed in all active phases of the cell cycle (G1, S, G2, M) but absent in resting cells (G0).

PCNA is a cofactor for DNA polymerase δ and is expressed during S phase. In psoriasis, both markers are dramatically upregulated. The synergistic cream reduced Ki-67 positive cells from 48.6% (IMQ control) to 12.4% (74% reduction), and PCNA from 56.3% to 16.8% (70% reduction). This indicates that sericin and hydrocortisone together suppress keratinocyte hyperproliferation more effectively than either alone.

4. **Cytokine modulation (IL-23/Th17 axis):** The IL-23/Th17 axis is central to psoriasis pathogenesis. IL-23, produced by dendritic cells, stabilizes Th17 cells and promotes their survival. Th17 cells secrete IL-17, which directly stimulates keratinocyte proliferation and production of antimicrobial peptides, chemokines, and pro-inflammatory cytokines. TNF-α amplifies the inflammatory cascade. The synergistic cream reduced IL-23 by 65%, IL-17 by 78%, and TNF-α by 70%. The 78% reduction in IL-17 is particularly noteworthy because IL-17 is the terminal effector cytokine in psoriasis and is the target of highly effective biologic drugs. The fact that a topical combination of sericin and low-dose hydrocortisone can achieve such a marked IL-17 reduction is remarkable and suggests that sericin may have direct effects on Th17 cells or dendritic cells. [50]

Possible mechanisms of sericin's antipsoriatic action

- **Antioxidant:** Sericin scavenges free radicals, reducing oxidative stress which is elevated in psoriatic skin. Oxidative stress activates NF-κB, which drives pro-inflammatory cytokine production.
- **Inhibition of NF-κB:** Sericin has been shown to suppress NF-κB nuclear translocation in LPS-stimulated macrophages (Park *et al*, 2011) [41]. NF-κB is a master transcription factor for IL-23, TNF-α, and many other inflammatory genes.
- **Moisturization and barrier repair:** Sericin's high content of serine and hydroxyl groups provides exceptional water-binding capacity, restoring the skin barrier function, which is impaired in psoriasis. A healthy barrier reduces penetration of irritants and allergens that can trigger flares.
- **Modulation of keratinocyte differentiation:** Sericin may directly promote normal keratinocyte differentiation by upregulating filaggrin and involucrum, as shown in some *in vitro* studies.

Synergistic mechanism: Hydrocortisone acts by binding to the glucocorticoid receptor, translocating to the nucleus, and suppressing transcription factors (NF-κB, AP-1), thereby reducing cytokine production. Sericin complements this by (a) providing antioxidant protection (reducing NF-κB activation), (b) improving skin barrier function (reducing trans epidermal water loss and irritant penetration), and (c) directly suppressing IL-23 production. The combination allows a lower hydrocortisone dose while achieving superior efficacy.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Study	Formulation	Model	Efficacy
Current study	Sericin 2% + HC 0.5% cream	IMQ mouse	73% PASI reduction
Aramwit *et al*. (2013) [4]	Sericin gel	Excisional wound	Improved healing, no psoriasis data
Park *et al*. (2011) [41]	Sericin solution	LPS-stimulated macrophages	Reduced TNF-α, IL-6 *in vitro*
Uva *et al*. (2012) [47]	HC 1% cream	Human psoriasis	~40–50% improvement
Feldman & Garton (2015) [18]	HC 2.5% cream	Human psoriasis	~55% improvement

Our study is the first to demonstrate antipsoriatic activity of silk sericin and the first to report synergistic combination with hydrocortisone. The efficacy (73% PASI reduction) is comparable to mid-potency corticosteroids but achieved with only 0.5% hydrocortisone, a low-potency steroid.

Safety and Tolerability

No signs of local irritation (erythema, oedema, pruritus) were observed in the synergistic cream group during the 7-day treatment period. The pH of the formulation (6.2) is within the skin's physiological range. Sericin is known to be non-toxic, non-immunogenic, and biodegradable (Kunz *et al*, 2016) [31]. The use of a lower hydrocortisone concentration (0.5% vs 1–2.5%) reduces the risk of skin atrophy, telangiectasia, and systemic absorption, making this formulation suitable for long-term use and for sensitive areas (face, intertriginous regions) and paediatric populations.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides strong evidence for the synergistic antipsoriatic activity of silk sericin and hydrocortisone, several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Short duration (7 days):** The IMQ model is acute (7–10 days). Chronic safety and efficacy studies (4–12 weeks) are needed to assess whether the synergistic cream prevents relapse and whether long-term use leads to skin atrophy.
2. **Animal model:** While IMQ-induced psoriasis is a well-validated model, it does not fully recapitulate human psoriasis, which is chronic, relapsing, and genetically complex. Human clinical trials are necessary.
3. **Mechanism:** We did not directly measure NF-κB activation, Nrf2 activation, or Th17 cell differentiation. Future studies using Western blot, qPCR, or flow cytometry should elucidate the molecular mechanism.
4. **Sericin purity:** The extracted sericin contains a mixture of high and low molecular weight fragments. The active component(s) responsible for antipsoriatic activity have not been identified. Bioactivity-guided fractionation is needed.
5. **No positive control biologic:** We did not compare the synergistic cream with a biologic agent (e.g, anti-IL-17

antibody) because topical biologics are not clinically used. However, such a comparison would provide a benchmark for efficacy.

6. **No pharmacokinetic study:** We did not measure serum hydrocortisone levels to assess systemic absorption. However, the absence of weight loss or behavioural changes suggests minimal systemic exposure.

Strengths of the Study

- First report of antipsoriatic activity of silk sericin.
- First synergistic combination of sericin with hydrocortisone.
- Comprehensive evaluation: physicochemical, stability, *in vitro* release, *in vivo* efficacy, histopathology, immunohistochemistry, and cytokine analysis.
- Steroid-sparing: achieved superior efficacy with 0.5% hydrocortisone (lowest concentration typically used).
- Sustainable and low-cost: sericin is a waste product of the silk industry.

Conclusion

This study successfully formulated, optimized, and evaluated a novel herbal-insect synergistic topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) for the management of psoriasis. The following conclusions are drawn:

Formulation and Physicochemical Findings

1. Silk sericin was successfully extracted from *Bombyx mori* cocoons using the alkali degumming method with a yield of 23.6 ± 1.2%. FTIR and SDS-PAGE confirmed the identity and molecular weight distribution of sericin.
2. The optimized cream formulation (F3: 2% sericin + 0.5% hydrocortisone) exhibited desirable physicochemical properties: pH 6.2 ± 0.2 (skin-compatible), viscosity 18,450 ± 450 cP (optimal for topical application), spread ability 9.2 ± 0.3 g·cm/s (easy spreading), and extrudability 92.3 ± 2.0% (good tube discharge).
3. The formulation was stable under accelerated conditions (40°C/75% RH) for 3 months, with no significant changes in pH, viscosity, drug content, or physical appearance.
4. *In vitro* drug release followed Higuchi kinetics (R^2 = 0.982) with 78.4% of hydrocortisone released over 8 hours, indicating sustained release suitable for once- or twice-daily application.

***In Vivo* Antipsoriatic Efficacy**

1. In the imiquimod-induced psoriasis-like dermatitis model in BALB/c mice, the synergistic cream (sericin 2% + hydrocortisone 0.5%) significantly reduced:

- PASI score by 73% (from 7.8 to 2.1, $p < 0.001$ vs IMQ control)
- Ear thickness by 46% (0.52 mm to 0.28 mm, $p < 0.001$)
- Spleen weight by 51% (8.4 mg/g to 4.1 mg/g, $p < 0.001$)

2. The synergistic cream was significantly superior to monotherapies:

- Hydrocortisone alone (0.5%): 46% PASI reduction
- Sericin alone (2%): 35% PASI reduction
- The combination index of 0.62 confirmed true pharmacological synergy.

Histopathological and Immunohistochemical Findings

1. Histopathology showed that the synergistic cream reduced epidermal thickness from 98.4 μm (IMQ control) to 28.6 μm, close to normal (18.2 μm). Acanthosis, parakeratosis, and inflammatory infiltration were markedly reduced.
2. Immunohistochemistry revealed that the synergistic cream reduced Ki-67-positive keratinocytes by 74% (48.6% → 12.4%) and PCNA-positive cells by 70% (56.3% → 16.8%), confirming suppression of keratinocyte hyperproliferation.

Cytokine Modulation

1. The synergistic cream significantly suppressed the IL-23/Th17 axis:

- IL-17 reduced by 78% (186.5 → 41.2 pg/mg)
- IL-23 reduced by 65% (124.3 → 43.6 pg/mg)
- TNF-α reduced by 70% (312.6 → 94.8 pg/mg)

These reductions were significantly greater than those achieved by either monotherapy.

Final Statement

The novel herbal-insect synergistic topical cream containing silk sericin (2% w/w) and hydrocortisone (0.5% w/w) demonstrates superior antipsoriatic activity compared to either component alone, with an excellent safety profile. This formulation represents a steroid-sparing strategy that achieves high efficacy with a low concentration of hydrocortisone (0.5%), thereby minimizing the risk of steroid-induced skin atrophy, telangiectasia, and tachyphylaxis. Silk sericin, a low-cost waste product of the silk industry, is a promising natural bioactive agent for psoriasis management. This herbal-insect synergistic approach offers a safe, effective, and affordable alternative for long-term psoriasis treatment.

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