

Livelihood Challenges and Social Support among Single Women in Rural Himachal Pradesh: Structural Equation Modelling

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Abstract

Single women in rural areas experience livelihood vulnerabilities that extend beyond economic deprivation and encompass physical, psychological, and social dimensions. This study examined the structural relationships among livelihood challenges, perceived social support, and psychological functioning among single women in rural Himachal Pradesh. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed with 435 single women drawn from the Kangra, Shimla, and Kinnaur districts through a multistage stratified sampling procedure. The sample included never-married, widowed, divorced, separated, deserted, and abandoned women.

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Livelihood challenges were assessed across physical, psychological, social, and economic-financial dimensions. Psychological functioning was examined through Perception of Reality and Integration of Personality, while perceived social support was assessed through support from significant others, family, and friends. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS software, employing reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation Modelling (SEM). The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.259$, GFI = .840, AGFI = .811, RMSEA = .054, TLI = .919, IFI = .929, CFI = .928), supporting the adequacy of the proposed measurement framework.

This study demonstrated the value of examining livelihood vulnerability as a multidimensional phenomenon situated alongside psychological functioning and interpersonal resources. By integrating livelihood challenges and distinct sources of social support within a common analytical framework, this study provides a broader understanding of the circumstances of single women in rural Himachal Pradesh. The findings underline the need for interventions that extend beyond financial assistance to encompass livelihood opportunities, social inclusion, supportive networks, and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Single women; livelihood challenges; social support; psychological functioning; rural Himachal Pradesh; structural equation Modelling (SEM)

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1.1 Introduction

Women's livelihood security is shaped by the resources and opportunities available to them and by their ability to exercise control over those resources. Access to income, productive assets, livelihood opportunities, and social relationships can significantly influence women's economic security and autonomy (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Agarwal, 1994). Inequalities in the ownership and control of land and property can further restrict women's capacity to establish secure and sustainable livelihoods (Agarwal, 1994). These concerns are particularly relevant for single women including never-married, widowed, divorced, separated, deserted, and abandoned women whose livelihood experiences may vary according to family circumstances, access to resources, and social relationships (Chen, 2000; Berry, 2014). In Himachal Pradesh, Berry (2014) demonstrated that single women constitute a heterogeneous group and highlighted the importance of collective organization and supportive relationships in negotiating stigma and social marginalization.

In rural settings, livelihood activities, household arrangements, kinship relations, and community networks are closely interconnected. Single women may therefore experience difficulties arising from limited economic resources, restricted access to productive assets, social marginalization, and inadequate supportive relationships (Agarwal, 1994; Chen, 2000; Berry, 2014). Such circumstances can extend beyond material deprivation and become relevant to women's social and psychological experiences. Understanding the position of single women consequently requires an approach that considers livelihood challenges, psychological functioning, and social support together.

The concept of livelihood provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for this approach. Chambers and Conway (1992) conceptualized livelihood in terms of the capabilities, and assets, including material and social resources and activities required for making a living. A sustainable livelihood is one that can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks while maintaining or enhancing its capabilities and assets. Scoones (1998) further emphasized that livelihood strategies are shaped by access to different forms of livelihood resources, including natural, economic or financial, human, and social resources. Social networks, relationships, associations, and affiliations are particularly relevant because they constitute resources upon which individuals and households can draw in pursuing livelihood strategies. Social relationships are therefore integral to livelihood processes rather than being separate from them.

For single women, livelihood challenges are multidimensional and interconnected. Economic and

financial difficulties may arise from inadequate income, restricted livelihood opportunities, limited access to productive assets, and financial insecurity. Physical concerns may involve healthcare, illness, personal safety, and access to assistance. Social challenges can include stigma, rejection, marginalization, and weakened social belonging, while difficult economic and social circumstances may also be accompanied by psychological strain (Agarwal, 1994; Chen, 2000; Berry, 2014). Livelihood vulnerability therefore cannot be understood solely through income; it needs to be considered through its economic-financial, physical, social, and psychological dimensions.

This multidimensional perspective is particularly pertinent to rural Himachal Pradesh, where agriculture, horticulture, livestock rearing, wage labour, and allied activities are important components of rural livelihoods. Women's livelihood security in such settings is associated with access to productive assets, capabilities, social resources, and livelihood opportunities (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). For women living without spousal support, control over productive resources and relationships within household and family structures may further shape their economic and social circumstances (Agarwal, 1994; Chen, 2000). The experiences of single women in Himachal Pradesh also illustrate the relevance of social relationships and collective organisation in negotiating stigma and marginalization (Berry, 2014).

Within the present study, psychological functioning represents an important outcome through which these experiences are examined. It is operationalized through two dimensions i.e. the perception of reality and the integration of personality derived from the Mental Health Inventory of Jagadish and Srivastava (1983). These dimensions provide a basis for examining whether variations in livelihood challenges and interpersonal resources are associated with psychological functioning among single women. Economic insecurity, restricted productive resources, social exclusion, and marginalization may constitute continuing sources of strain, suggesting that the implications of livelihood vulnerability can extend beyond material conditions (Agarwal, 1994; Chambers & Conway, 1992; Chen, 2000; Berry, 2014). Moreover, psychological functioning needs to be considered in relation to the social resources available to women. Perceived social support represents one such interpersonal resource. Zimet et al. (1988), through the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), conceptualized social support through three distinct sources: family, friends, and significant others. This distinction is especially relevant for single women because living without a

spouse does not imply the absence of meaningful interpersonal relationships. The original study supported the multidimensional structure of the MSPSS and reported meaningful relationships between perceived support and psychological symptoms. Subsequent work by Zimet et al. (1990) provided additional evidence concerning its reliability and factorial validity.

Social support is also theoretically compatible with the sustainable livelihoods' perspective because interpersonal relationships and social networks constitute resources that people can draw upon when responding to vulnerability (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). Different sources of support may, however, have different meanings. Family and kinship relationships may remain important in everyday life, while friendships and significant interpersonal relationships can provide additional sources of social connection and support. In Himachal Pradesh, Berry (2014) demonstrated the importance of relationships and collective organization among single women in negotiating stigma and developing collective identity. These considerations justify examining family, friends, and significant others separately rather than treating social support as a single undifferentiated construct.

The present study consequently positions psychological functioning at the intersection of livelihood challenges and social support. Livelihood challenges represent the material, physical, social, and psychological difficulties encountered by single women, whereas social support represents interpersonal resources potentially relevant to their psychological functioning. The conceptual relationship underlying the study may therefore be represented follows: livelihood challenges → psychological functioning ← social support.

Structural equation Modelling (SEM) provides an appropriate analytical framework for examining these relationships because the principal variables are multidimensional constructs represented by multiple observed indicators. SEM enables the measurement of latent constructs and their theoretically specified structural relationships to be examined within an integrated model (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is particularly important in this process because an adequate measurement model should be established before structural relationships among latent constructs are interpreted (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2023).

In the present study, livelihood challenges are represented through physical, psychological, social, and economic-financial dimensions; psychological functioning through the Perception of Reality and Integration of Personality (Jagadish & Srivastava, 1983); and perceived social support through

significant others, family, and friends (Zimet et al., 1988). The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory overall fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.259$, GFI = .840, AGFI = .811, RMSEA = .054, TLI = .919, IFI = .929, and CFI = .928), providing an empirical basis for proceeding to structural analysis.

Against this background, the study titled "Livelihood Challenges and Social Support among Single Women in Rural Himachal Pradesh: Structural Equation Modelling" examines the structural relationships among multidimensional livelihood challenges, perceived social support, and psychological functioning. Specifically, it investigates the structural associations of livelihood challenges and different sources of social support with perception of reality and integration of personality. By integrating livelihood vulnerability and interpersonal resources within a common structural framework, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of psychological functioning among single women in rural Himachal Pradesh.

1.2 Method

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the structural relationships among livelihood challenges, perceived social support, and psychological functioning among single women in rural Himachal Pradesh. Although the broader doctoral research followed a convergent mixed-methods approach, the present paper draws exclusively on the quantitative component and applies structural equation modelling (SEM).

The study was conducted in rural areas of the Kangra, Kinnaur, and Shimla districts, which represent the low-hill, high-hill/tribal, and mid-hill zones of Himachal Pradesh, respectively. A multistage stratified sampling design was adopted, involving the selection of districts, development blocks, gram panchayats, villages, and eligible respondents. Using Cochran's (1977) approach, the minimum sample size was estimated at 399; however, the final sample comprised 435 single women 285 from Kangra, 136 from Shimla, and 14 from Kinnaur.

Participants included never-married, widowed, divorced, separated, deserted, and abandoned women residing in the selected rural areas. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Livelihood challenges were assessed across four dimensions: physical (2 items), psychological (4 items), social (4 items), and economic-financial (2 items). Psychological functioning was measured using adapted dimensions of the Mental Health Inventory (Jagadish & Srivastava, 1983), comprising perception of reality (4 items) and integration of personality (9 items). Perceived social support was assessed using an adapted multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988), covering significant other

(4 items), family (2 items), and friends (2 items). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .758 to .921, except for physical challenges ($\alpha = .597$), a two-item construct retained for its theoretical relevance.

CFA demonstrated satisfactory model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.259$, GFI = .840, AGFI = .811, RMSEA = .054, TLI = .919, IFI = .929, CFI = .928). The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS, employing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, CFA, and SEM, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$.

1.3 Results

1.3.1 Measurement Model Fit Summary

Before examining the structural relationships among the study variables, it is essential to evaluate the adequacy of the measurement model to ensure that the observed indicators accurately represent their respective latent constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also conducted to assess the validity of the measurement model by examining the extent to which the observed variables loaded onto the hypothesized latent constructs. A well-fitting measurement model indicates that the indicators reliably and validly measure the intended constructs, thereby providing a sound basis for subsequent structural model analysis (Brown, 2015; Hair et al., 2019).

The evaluation of the measurement model constitutes a critical preliminary step in structural equation Modelling (SEM) because the validity of the structural relationships depends upon the adequacy of the measurement model. Establishing satisfactory model fit enhances confidence that the theoretical model is consistent with the empirical data and that the latent constructs exhibit acceptable levels of construct validity and reliability (Kline, 2023).

To assess the overall adequacy of the measurement model, multiple goodness-of-fit indices were examined in accordance with established SEM guidelines. These included the chi-square statistic (χ^2), chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), incremental fit index (IFI), and comparative fit index

(CFI). The obtained values were evaluated against the recommended threshold criteria reported in the structural equation Modelling literature to determine the extent to which the hypothesized measurement model adequately represented the observed data (Hair et al., 2012; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2023).

The results of the measurement model fit assessment

Model fit	Acceptable level	Results obtained from the study
X	smaller, the better	1726.148 ($p = .000$)
χ^2/df	<3	1726.148/764 = 2.259
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	>0.8	.840
AGFI	>0.8	.811
RMSEA	<0.08	0.054
TLI(NNFI)	>0.9	.919
IFI	>0.9	.929
CFI	>0.9	.928

are presented in Table 1.1, which compares the observed goodness-of-fit indices with their recommended threshold values. Collectively, these indices provide comprehensive evidence regarding the adequacy of the measurement model and establish whether it is appropriate to proceed with the evaluation of the structural relationships among the latent constructs.

Table 1.1 Measurement Model Fit

Source: Primary Data

The goodness-of-fit indices presented in Table 1.1 indicate that the proposed

measurement model has an acceptable and satisfactory fit to the observed data. Assessment of the measurement model is a prerequisite in structural equation Modelling (SEM), as it establishes whether the observed variables adequately represent their underlying latent constructs and provides the foundation for subsequent structural model analysis.

The chi-square (χ^2) statistic for the measurement model was 1726.148 and was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Although a nonsignificant chi-square value is generally desirable, the chi-square statistic is well known to be highly sensitive to sample size, often leading to statistically significant results even when the model adequately fits the data (Kline, 2023). Consequently, researchers recommend placing greater emphasis on alternative fit indices rather than relying solely on the chi-square test (Hair et al., 2019).

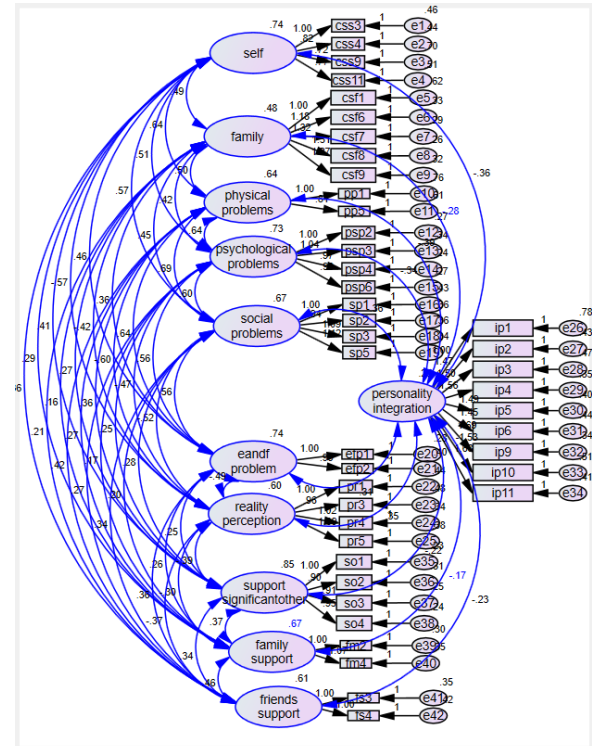
The relative chi-square (χ^2/df), which minimizes the influence of sample size, was 2.259, falling well below the recommended threshold of 3.00. This result indicates that the proposed measurement model exhibits a satisfactory level of fit between the theoretical model and the observed data.

The absolute fit indices further confirm the adequacy of the measurement model. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was 0.840, while the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was 0.811. Both values exceed the minimum acceptable criterion of 0.80 suggested by Baumgartner and Homburg (1996) and Doll et al.

(1994), indicating that the specified measurement model adequately reproduces the observed covariance matrix and provides a satisfactory representation of the empirical data.

Similarly, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.054, which is considerably below the recommended upper limit of 0.08. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), RMSEA values less than 0.08 indicate an acceptable model fit, whereas values less than 0.06 represent a close approximation between the hypothesized model and the observed data. Therefore, the obtained RMSEA value suggested that the measurement model provided a close and acceptable fit.

The incremental fit indices also provide strong evidence supporting the adequacy of the model. The Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), incremental fit index (IFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) yielded values of 0.919, 0.929, and 0.928, respectively. Since all three indices exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, they indicate that the proposed measurement model fits the observed data substantially better than the null model and demonstrates satisfactory construct representation (Hair et al., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999). In summary, the collective evidence from the absolute, incremental, and parsimonious goodness-of-fit indices confirms that the measurement model satisfies the recommended criteria for model adequacy. The observed fit statistics indicate that the latent constructs are appropriately represented by their respective observed indicators and that the model exhibits acceptable construct validity. Therefore, the measurement model is considered sufficiently robust for further assessment of construct reliability and validity and provides a sound empirical foundation for testing the structural relationships proposed in the conceptual framework.



Source: Primary Data

Figure 1.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Measurement Model

Figure 1.1 illustrates the final confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) measurement model developed to validate the latent constructs included in the study. The model depicts the relationships between the observed variables (indicators) and their respective latent constructs, providing evidence regarding the construct validity of the measurement instrument. In the figure, the ovals represent the latent constructs, the rectangles denote the observed variables (measurement items), the single-headed arrows indicate the standardized factor loadings, the small circles (e1–e42) represent measurement errors associated with each indicator, and the double-headed arrows illustrate the correlations among the latent constructs.

The final measurement model consists of 11 latent constructs, namely self, family, physical problems, psychological problems, social problems, economic and family problems, reality perception, personality integration, support from significant others, family support, and friends support. Each construct is measured by multiple observed indicators, reflecting the multidimensional nature of the study. The indicators retained in the final model demonstrated satisfactory standardized factor loadings, indicating that they adequately represented their respective latent constructs and contributed meaningfully to the measurement of the underlying theoretical concepts.

The latent constructs measuring the problem dimensions including physical problems, psychological problems, social problems, and economic and family problems are positively associated with one another, suggesting that single women experiencing one category of problems are also likely to experience challenges in other domains. Likewise, the constructs representing perceived social support namely Support from Significant Others, Family Support, and Friends Support exhibit positive interrelationships, indicating that social support is a multidimensional construct in which different sources of support complement one another.

The construct Personality Integration, representing the psychological well-being dimension of the study, is measured by multiple indicators with satisfactory factor loadings, indicating that the retained items adequately capture the underlying psychological construct. The correlations observed between Personality Integration and the dimensions of perceived social support suggest that psychological well-being is closely associated with the availability and quality of social support. Conversely, the problem-related constructs demonstrate comparatively weaker or negative associations with personality integration, indicating that increased physical, psychological, social, and economic problems are associated with reduced levels of psychological adjustment and well-being among single women.

The CFA procedure involved the systematic refinement of the initial measurement model by examining standardized factor loadings, measurement errors, and modification indices. Indicators that did not adequately represent their respective constructs or adversely affected the overall model fit were excluded while maintaining theoretical consistency. This refinement resulted in a parsimonious measurement model with acceptable psychometric properties.

The adequacy of the measurement model is further supported by the goodness-of-fit statistics presented in Table 1.1, where the model achieved satisfactory values across all major fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.259$, GFI = 0.840, AGFI = 0.811, RMSEA = 0.054, TLI = 0.919, IFI = 0.929, and CFI = 0.928). Collectively, these indices indicate that the hypothesized measurement model adequately represents the covariance structure of the observed data and satisfies the recommended criteria for structural equation Modelling (SEM).

In summary, the CFA results provide strong empirical evidence of the construct validity of the measurement instrument. The observed indicators reliably measure their respective latent constructs, the interrelationships among the constructs are theoretically meaningful, and the overall measurement model demonstrates satisfactory fit with the empirical data. Thus, the measurement model is considered appropriate for subsequent analyses of construct reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity, and for testing the hypothesized structural relationships among the study variables in the proposed conceptual framework.

1.3.2 Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), one of the most widely accepted measures of internal consistency in behavioural and social science research. Cronbach's alpha evaluates the degree to which the items within a construct consistently measure the same underlying concept. A higher alpha coefficient indicates greater homogeneity among the items and reflects the extent to which they collectively represent the intended latent construct. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable for exploratory and confirmatory research, whereas values exceeding 0.80 indicate good reliability and those above 0.90 demonstrate excellent internal consistency. Prior to estimating the final reliability coefficients, each construct was subjected to a rigorous item analysis to evaluate the contribution of individual statements to the overall reliability of the scale. Item-total correlations, Cronbach's alpha if item deleted, and the internal consistency of each construct were systematically examined to identify items that adversely affected scale reliability. Statements exhibiting low item-total correlations or those that

reduced the overall reliability coefficient were carefully evaluated. Wherever necessary, such items were excluded after considering both their statistical performance and theoretical relevance, thereby ensuring that the final measurement instrument retained only those items that reliably represented their respective constructs.

The reliability analysis was performed using responses obtained from 435 single women residing in the rural districts of the Kangra, Kinnaur, and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. The analysis was conducted separately for each latent construct included in the study to assess the consistency of the measurement scales. The final reliability coefficients presented in Table 1.2 are based on the refined questionnaire comprising only the retained items following the reliability assessment.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained for the final scales provide empirical evidence regarding the internal consistency of the measurement instrument. Constructs with reliability coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold were considered sufficiently reliable for subsequent statistical analyses, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation Modelling (SEM). The satisfactory reliability estimates indicate that the questionnaire possesses adequate measurement precision and consistency, thereby providing a dependable basis for examining the relationships among the study variables and testing the proposed research hypotheses.

Table 1.2 Reliability analysis of the questionnaire (N = 435)

Sr. No.	Variables	Items (No. of Questions)	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Singlehood as a Phenomenon		
	Causes of Singlehood with Respect to Self (CSS)	4	0.788
	Causes of Singlehood with Respect to Family (CSF)	5	0.903
2	Problems of Single Women		

	Physical Problems (PP)	2	0.597
	Psychological Problems (PSP)	4	0.912
	Social Problems (SP)	4	0.883
	Economic and Financial Problems (EFP)	2	0.812
3	Dimensions of Mental Health		
	Perception of Reality (PR)	4	0.857
	Integration of Personality (IP)	9	0.790
4	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support		
	Significant Other Support (SO)	4	0.921
	Family Support (FM)	2	0.814
	Friends' Support (FS)	2	0.758

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.2 presents the results of the reliability analysis conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the study. Cronbach's alpha (α) was employed to evaluate the extent to which the items within each construct consistently measured the underlying latent variable. Overall, the findings indicate that the questionnaire demonstrates good to excellent internal consistency, confirming the suitability of the measurement instrument for subsequent statistical analyses, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation Modelling (SEM).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the retained constructs ranged from 0.758 to 0.921, with the exception of the physical problems construct. The majority of the constructs exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70 suggested by Nunnally and

Bernstein (1994), indicating satisfactory reliability. According to Hair et al. (2019), reliability coefficients above 0.70 reflect acceptable internal consistency, values exceeding 0.80 indicate good reliability, and coefficients above 0.90 demonstrate excellent reliability.

Among the constructs, significant other support ($\alpha = 0.921$) exhibited the highest level of internal consistency, followed by psychological problems ($\alpha = 0.912$) and causes of singlehood with respect to family ($\alpha = 0.903$). These coefficients indicate excellent reliability, suggesting that the items within these constructs consistently measure their respective latent dimensions and provide highly reliable responses.

Similarly, social problems ($\alpha = 0.883$), perception of reality ($\alpha = 0.857$), family support ($\alpha = 0.814$), economic and financial problems ($\alpha = 0.812$), integration of personality ($\alpha = 0.790$), causes of singlehood with respect to self ($\alpha = 0.788$), and friends' support ($\alpha = 0.758$) also demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal consistency. These findings indicate that the retained items adequately represent their respective constructs and consistently capture the underlying concepts being investigated. The reliability coefficients obtained for these constructs are well within the acceptable range recommended in the psychometric and behavioural research literature, thereby supporting the dependability of the measurement instrument.

The physical problems construct yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.597, which is lower than the conventional threshold of 0.70. Although this value indicates relatively lower internal consistency, it should be interpreted with caution because the construct comprises only two measurement items. Cronbach's alpha is known to be sensitive to the number of items included in a scale, and shorter scales often produce comparatively lower alpha coefficients despite demonstrating acceptable interitem consistency (Cortina, 1993; Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Furthermore, the retained items were conceptually important for capturing the physical health challenges experienced by single women and demonstrated satisfactory psychometric performance during the assessment of the measurement model. Therefore, considering both the theoretical significance of the construct and the limitations of Cronbach's alpha for two-item scales, the physical problems construct was retained for further analysis. Similar approaches have been adopted in previous behavioural and health research where theoretically meaningful two-item constructs were preserved despite modest reliability estimates (Hair et al., 2019).

In summary, the reliability analysis confirmed that the refined questionnaire had adequate internal consistency and was suitable for empirical

investigation. The systematic refinement of the measurement instrument through the elimination of statistically weak items enhanced the overall reliability of the scales while preserving the conceptual integrity of the latent constructs. Consequently, the final measurement instrument provides a reliable basis for assessing the study variables and testing the hypothesized relationships within the proposed conceptual framework.

Conclusion

This study provides an integrated framework for understanding the livelihood circumstances of single women in rural Himachal Pradesh by bringing together multidimensional livelihood challenges, psychological functioning, and perceived social support. Rather than viewing livelihood vulnerability solely in terms of income or employment, the study recognizes that single women may encounter interconnected physical, psychological, social, and economic-financial challenges. Their livelihood experiences are therefore embedded within a broader context of access to resources, social relationships, and psychological functioning.

The measurement framework further demonstrates that these dimensions can be examined alongside perception of reality and integration of personality and distinct sources of social support from significant others, family, and friends. The satisfactory fit of the CFA model and generally acceptable reliability of the retained constructs provide empirical support for the adequacy of the measurement framework and establish a sound basis for examining their structural relationships.

Conceptually, the study highlights the importance of considering social support as an interpersonal resource within the wider livelihood environment of single women. Family, friends, and significant others represent distinct social relationships and should therefore not be treated as a single undifferentiated source of support. By positioning psychological functioning at the intersection of livelihood challenges and social support, the study moves beyond a purely economic understanding of vulnerability and provides a more comprehensive perspective on the circumstances of single women in rural Himachal Pradesh.

The findings have broader implications for programmes directed toward single women. Interventions should extend beyond financial assistance and incorporate livelihood security, access to productive opportunities, social inclusion, supportive interpersonal networks, and psychological well-being. Such an integrated approach can provide a stronger basis for developing responsive and context-sensitive policies for single women in rural and geographically diverse settings.

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