

Research Paper

Development and Psychometric Validation of the Perceived Marginalization Scale (PMS): A Multidimensional Psychometric Investigation in the Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

Perceived marginalization constitutes a critical psychological determinant of social cohesion, mental health, and intergroup dynamics. While the construct has been extensively operationalized in Western contexts, existing measures often fail to capture the nuanced, structurally embedded, and intersectional nature of exclusion in the Global South. This study details the development and rigorous psychometric validation of the Perceived Marginalization Scale (PMS), a novel 16-item instrument designed to assess the subjective experience of marginalization within the socio-cultural and political fabric of India. Guided by a multi-phase mixed-methods approach, the study initially employed a panel of nine multidisciplinary experts to establish content validity ($I-CVI \geq 0.78$), resulting in the refinement of items to reflect specific cultural realities such as caste-based occupational barriers and reliance on state welfare. The scale was subsequently administered to a diverse sample of 205 participants ($N=205$). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation revealed a robust five-factor structure accounting for 57.92% of the cumulative variance. These factors were identified as: (1) Socio-Economic & Educational Exclusion, (2) Lack of Basic Amenities, (3) Cultural Marginalization, (4) Occupational Barriers, and (5) Government Support Perception. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrated acceptable model fit ($\chi^2(95) = 166.23$, $RMSEA = 0.060$, $SRMR = 0.066$), and the scale exhibited strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$). The emergence of distinct factors for "Basic Amenities" and "Government Support" challenges existing unidimensional models, suggesting that in developing economies, the material interface between the citizen and the state is a primary locus of psychological marginalization. This research contributes a culturally valid tool for measuring social exclusion, offering empirical evidence that the lack of civic infrastructure is internalized as a psychological state of insignificance.

Keywords: *Development, Psychometric Validation, Perceived Marginalization Scale, Multidimensional Psychometric Investigation*

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The Psychological Reality of the Periphery

Marginalization is frequently analyzed through the lens of objective sociology and development economics, quantified by metrics such as household income, years of schooling, or distance from metropolitan centers. However, a growing body of social-psychological literature posits that the *subjective experience* of being pushed to the periphery—perceived marginalization—is a more proximal and potent predictor of individual well-being and social behavior than objective indicators alone (Bollwerk et al., 2021). Perceived marginalization is defined as the cognitive and emotional appraisal that one's social group is undervalued, unrecognized, or treated as insignificant by the broader society (Bollwerk et al., 2021; Issmer & Wagner, 2015). It represents the "felt sense" of exclusion, a psychological reality that mediates the relationship between structural inequality and outcomes such as depressive symptoms, radicalization, and intergroup hostility (Issmer & Wagner, 2015; Muldoon et al., 2017).

The distinction between objective social exclusion and perceived marginalization is theoretically crucial. Social exclusion refers to the structural denial of opportunities to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of the community (Silver, 2007). Perceived marginalization, conversely, is the internalized consequence of these ruptures. It is the feeling of "insignificance" that arises when an individual perceives that "people like me" do not matter to the moral or political order of the state (Bollwerk et al., 2021). This subjective appraisal can persist even when objective economic conditions improve if the psychological deficit of recognition remains unaddressed.

The Contextual Deficit in Existing Measurement

The measurement of perceived marginalization has historically been dominated by instruments developed in Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) contexts. Prominent scales such as the Perceived Societal Marginalization (PSM) scale developed in Germany (Bollwerk et al., 2021) and the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory (IMI) developed in the United States (Castillo et al., 2007) have significantly advanced the field. However, their cross-cultural applicability to the Global South, and specifically to India, remains limited by their theoretical origins.

The PSM scale, for instance, emphasizes "societal appreciation" and "political representation" within a framework of high state capacity and formal equality. It assumes a baseline of material security where "marginalization" is primarily a deficit of status or voice. The IMI focuses heavily on acculturation pressures and "acting white" within immigrant communities (Castillo et al., 2007), a dynamic that does not map neatly onto the rigid, hereditary stratification of the Indian caste system. Neither scale adequately accounts for the existential dimensions of marginalization prevalent in developing economies, where exclusion is often experienced as a struggle for survival and a direct failure of the state to provide life-sustaining resources.

In the Indian context, marginalization is deeply and inextricably entwined with three specific dimensions that are often absent from Western models:

1. **The Materiality of Dignity (Civic Amenities):** In the Global South, the lack of clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare is not merely a logistical failure or a poverty indicator; it is a potent psychological signal of social worthlessness. The denial of "basic amenities" acts as a daily humiliation, reinforcing the marginalized

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status of communities living in non-notified slums or remote tribal areas (Hirve et al., 2015; Subbaraman et al., 2014).

2. **The State as Provider (Government Schemes):** For millions of Indian citizens, the state is not merely a regulator but the primary provider of food, employment, and housing. Citizenship is often mediated through "beneficiary status" (*labharthi*). Consequently, exclusion is frequently experienced as the specific failure of the state to deliver welfare schemes, leading to a unique form of "administrative marginalization" (Muralidharan et al., 2020).
3. **Caste and Lineage (Occupational Barriers):** The hereditary stratification system of caste dictates not only social status but also occupational possibilities. Marginalization in India often manifests as specific barriers to government jobs (which represent security) or dignified business ownership, rather than general unemployment (Thorat & Attewell, 2007).

Study Objectives and Research Questions

Recognizing these contextual gaps, this research aims to develop a psychometrically sound instrument—the Perceived Marginalization Scale (PMS)—that captures the multidimensional nature of exclusion in India. The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To generate an item pool that reflects the specific socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural realities of marginalization in India.
2. To establish the content validity of these items through a rigorous review by a multidisciplinary panel of subject-matter experts.
3. To determine the factorial structure of the PMS using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), specifically testing whether unique factors for amenities and government support emerge.
4. To confirm the identified structure using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and assess model fit.
5. To evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the scale and provide detailed item-level reliability statistics.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONTEXTUAL NUANCES

Theoretical Frameworks: Identity, Deprivation, and Recognition

The construct of perceived marginalization is anchored in two primary theoretical frameworks: **Social Identity Theory (SIT)** and **Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT)**, both of which take on specific contours in the Indian context.

Social Identity Theory and the Stigma of Exclusion:

Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that a significant portion of an individual's self-concept is derived from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When an ingroup is devalued, stigmatized, or marginalized by the dominant society, members experience "identity threat" (Castillo et al., 2007). In India, where group membership is often ascribed by birth (caste, tribe, religion), this threat is pervasive. Marginalization is not a temporary state but a threat to the group's "positive distinctiveness." Theoretical models suggest that perceived marginalization measures the extent to which an individual internalizes this devaluation—the feeling that "people like me" are viewed as inferior (Bollwerk et al., 2021). The PMS aims to capture this internalized stigma, particularly as it relates to cultural practices and social priority.

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Relative Deprivation and the "Failed Promise" of the State:

RDT focuses on the discrepancy between "what is" and "what ought to be" (Runciman, 1966). In the context of a developing welfare state like India, this is particularly salient. The post-colonial Indian state is built on a promise of development and redistribution. When specific groups—such as Adivasis (tribal communities), Dalits (Scheduled Castes), or religious minorities—perceive that they are systematically denied access to government schemes that are available to others, they experience "fraternal relative deprivation" (Smith et al., 2012). This is not just about poverty; it is about injustice. The PMS seeks to operationalize this by asking not just "are you poor?" but "do government schemes improve the lives of people like you?", capturing the grievance of the "failed entitlement."

A Critical Review of Existing Measures

While several scales exist to measure related constructs, they exhibit significant limitations when applied to the complex socio-economic landscape of the Global South.

- **Perceived Societal Marginalization (PSM) Scale (Bollwerk et al., 2021):** Developed in Germany, this 15-item scale is arguably the most theoretically proximate to the current study. It measures perceived insignificance across economic, cultural, and political domains. However, its validation in non-Western contexts has been mixed. Furthermore, the PSM treats "economic" marginalization largely as "undervalued work," missing the survivalist dimension of "access to basic needs" that defines poverty in India.
- **Intragroup Marginalization Inventory (IMI) (Castillo et al., 2007):** The IMI is designed to measure marginalization *within* an ethnic group (e.g., family or friends rejecting a member for deviating from group norms). While highly useful for acculturation research, it does not capture the vertical, structural marginalization imposed by the state or dominant caste groups, which is the primary focus of the PMS.
- **Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit (GMF) Subscale (Issmer & Wagner, 2015):** This brief 4-item measure has been used in European and Korean studies to assess general feelings of being "worth less" (Issmer & Wagner, 2015; Kim & Baek, 2021). While its brevity is an asset for large surveys, it lacks the granularity to diagnose specific loci of exclusion.

The "Infrastructure of Dignity": Why Amenities Matter

A crucial theoretical innovation of the PMS is the inclusion of "Basic Amenities" as a psychological variable. In developed nations, access to water, sanitation, and electricity is largely taken for granted. In India, however, access to these services is highly variable and stratified by caste and geography (Kumar, 2014).

Research on "infrastructural violence" suggests that the denial of basic services is not just a material deprivation but a form of social humiliation. For example, the lack of private sanitation facilities disproportionately affects women and lower-caste communities, forcing them to use public spaces and exposing them to shame and violence (Hirve et al., 2015). This creates a "psychological toll" of slum living or rural poverty, where the environment itself constantly reinforces the message of marginalization (Subbaraman et al., 2014). The PMS posits that "access to clean water" and "sanitation" are therefore valid indicators of *perceived* social inclusion, representing the "infrastructure of dignity."

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1: Item Generation and Content Validity Appraisal

The development of the PMS began with a comprehensive item generation phase aimed at creating a pool of statements that reflected the theoretical dimensions discussed above. An initial set of 16 items was formulated, covering: (1) Financial status, (2) Educational access, (3) Occupational barriers, (4) Cultural respect, (5) Social priority, (6) Government support, and (7) Access to amenities (water, healthcare, sanitation).

Expert Panel Composition:

To ensure the face and content validity of the instrument, a high-profile panel of nine subject-matter experts (SMEs) was recruited. This panel was intentionally multidisciplinary to capture the diverse facets of marginalization. The panel included experts from Psychology, Sociology, and History, ensuring a holistic evaluation of the construct.

Content Validity Index (CVI) Procedure:

Following Lynn's (1986) model, experts rated each item on a 4-point relevance continuum (1 = Not relevant, 4 = Highly relevant). The Item-Level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) was calculated as the proportion of experts giving a rating of 3 or 4. A strict cut-off of .78 (representing agreement by at least 7 of 9 experts) was established for item retention (Polit et al., 2007).

Item Refinement:

Items that initially fell below the threshold or received qualitative critiques were rigorously re-engineered. For instance, the original item "People from my background are wealthy businessmen" was revised to "People from my background encounter obstacles to achieving financial success through business ownership" to better reflect the construct of structural barriers. The CVI Procedure was repeated until all items crossed the minimum threshold.

Phase 2: Participants and Data Collection

Sample Characteristics:

The refined 16-item scale was administered to a sample of 205 participants (N=205) living in India. The sample mean age was 30.94 years (SD = 10.79), with an age range of 18 to 65 years. The gender distribution was fairly balanced, with 52.2% female (n = 107) and 47.8% male (n = 98). The sample was ethnically diverse, comprising 56.6% Tribal participants (n = 116) and 43.4% Non-tribal (Bengali) participants (n = 89). In terms of residence, the majority lived in rural areas (74.1%, n = 152), while the remainder resided in urban or semi-urban settings (25.9%, n = 53). Religious composition was predominantly Hindu (53.2%), followed by Christian (25.9%), Buddhist (13.7%), and Muslim (7.3%). Marital status was split nearly evenly between unmarried (46.8%) and married (44.9%) individuals.

Procedure:

Data collection was conducted using a self-report questionnaire. Participants rated their agreement with the 16 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the study adhered to ethical guidelines regarding anonymity and voluntary participation.

Phase 3: Statistical Analysis Plan

All statistical analyses were performed using Python and R.

Data Suitability for Factor Analysis:

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The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated to ensure sufficient common variance. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to test the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA):

- **Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed to identify the primary components driving the data structure.
- **Rotation:** A Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was applied to force a cleaner separation of factors in this early developmental stage.
- **Factor Retention:** The number of factors to retain was determined using the Kaiser Criterion (Eigenvalues > 1) and visual inspection of the Scree Plot.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):

To validate the structure derived from EFA, a CFA was conducted. Model fit was assessed using standard indices: Chi-Square (χ^2), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) (Boateng et al., 2018).

Reliability:

Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha (α) for the total scale (DeVellis, 2017).

RESULTS

Content Validity Results

The expert review process yielded a high degree of consensus regarding the scale's relevance. The rigorous filtering process ensured that only items with strong theoretical and cultural alignment were retained. The revision of 4 items based on qualitative feedback significantly enhanced the instrument's clarity and sensitivity to the Indian context (Lynn, 1986).

Table 1: Summary of Content Validity Index (I-CVI) Results

Construct	Initial Items	Valid Items (I-CVI $\geq .78$)	Items Revised	Final Retention	% Valid (Post-Revision)
Perceived Marginalization	16	12	4	16	100%

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the total 16-item PMS was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha.

- **Overall Reliability:** The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of **.78**, indicating good reliability well above the standard 0.70 acceptable threshold (Nunnally, 1978). This suggests that the items are measuring a single, cohesive underlying construct despite the multidimensional factor structure.

Item-Total Statistics:

To further diagnose the scale's performance, item-total statistics were calculated. As shown in Table 2, the corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.22 to 0.53. All items showed a positive correlation with the total score, indicating they are all working in the same direction to measure marginalization.

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- **Strongest Predictor:** Item 9 ("My cultural practices are not respected by others in society") demonstrated the strongest relationship with the overall scale ($r=0.53$).
- **Weakest Predictor:** Item 12 ("Government schemes improve the lives...") had the lowest correlation ($r=0.22$), likely due to its distinctiveness as a single-item factor, but was retained for its theoretical importance.
- **Alpha Stability:** The analysis indicated that removing any single item would not result in a significant improvement in the alpha coefficient (values ranged from 0.75 to 0.78 if an item was deleted), supporting the retention of all 16 items.

Table 2: Item-Total Statistics for the Perceived Marginalization Scale (N=205)

Item No.	Item Description (Abbreviated)	Mean (SD)	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	People like me are usually not financially well off	3.06 (1.23)	.44	.76
2	People like me usually get a basic education	2.71 (1.22)	.34	.77
3	People like me usually do not get access to higher education	2.79 (1.23)	.41	.76
4	People from my background face barriers in obtaining jobs...	3.23 (1.20)	.37	.77
5	People from my social background do not get access to govt jobs	3.13 (1.14)	.47	.76
6	People from my background encounter obstacles to business...	3.07 (1.02)	.30	.77
7	People from my background are not given priority in society	2.80 (1.18)	.25	.78
8	My mother-tongue is respected by the majority of the society*	2.33 (1.19)	.42	.76
9	My cultural practices are not respected by others in society	2.40 (1.16)	.53	.75
10	The festivals of my culture are ignored by the majority community	2.61 (1.17)	.28	.77
11	People from my community do not feel welcomed by other communities	2.45 (1.07)	.42	.76
12	Government schemes improve the lives of people with my background*	3.32 (1.02)	.22	.78
13	Local government bodies do not take care of problems...	2.99 (1.23)	.43	.76
14	People from my native have easy access to good healthcare*	3.33 (1.07)	.31	.77
15	People from my community lack easy access to clean drinking water	2.76 (0.99)	.40	.76
16	People from my native have easy access to good sanitation*	3.05 (1.12)	.34	.77

*Note: * Items 8, 12, 14, and 16 are positively phrased; Composite higher scores on this scale indicate higher marginalization, implying requirement of appropriate reverse-coding for consistent alignment in participant responses.*

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Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

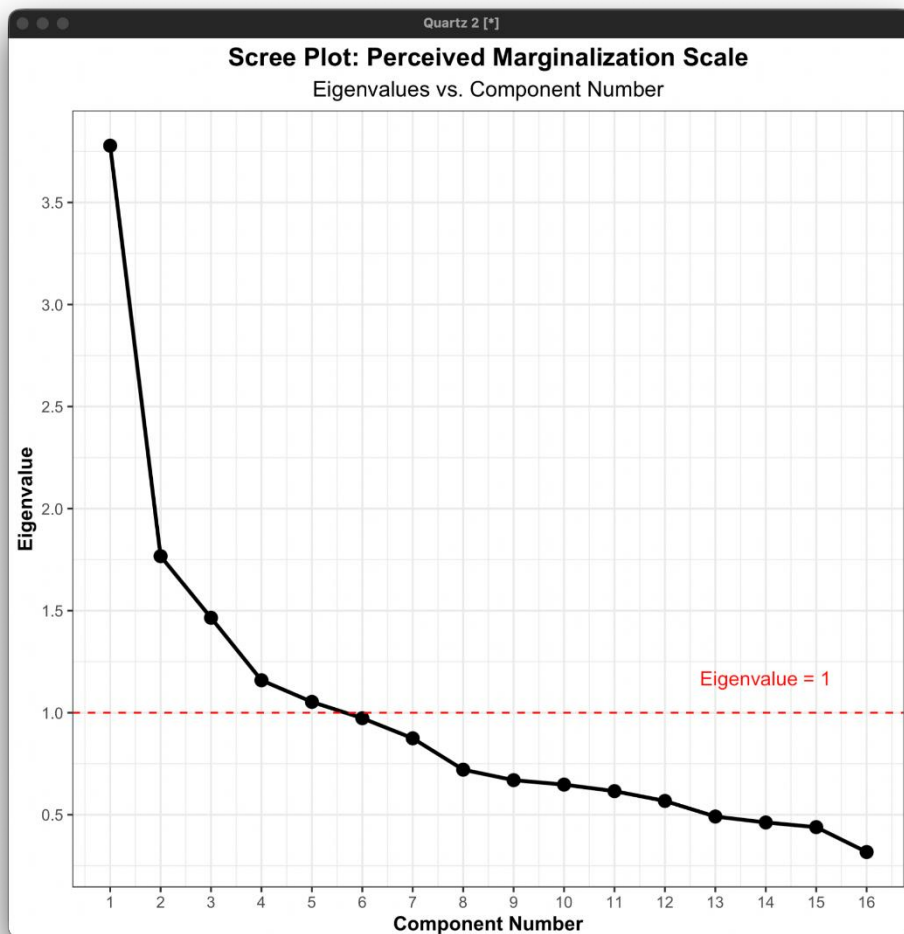
Data Suitability:

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.74, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.60. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 662.83$, $df = 120$, $p < .001$), confirming that the inter-item correlations were not zero. (Kaiser, 1974; Bartlett, 1950)

Factor Extraction and Variance:

The PCA extracted five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. These five factors cumulatively explained 57.92% of the total variance in the data.

- **Factor 1 (Socio-Economic & Educational Exclusion):** Explained 12.27% of variance.
- **Factor 2 (Lack of Basic Amenities):** Explained 13.11% of variance.
- **Factor 3 (Cultural Marginalization):** Explained 13.50% of variance.
- **Factor 4 (Occupational Barriers):** Explained 11.09% of variance.
- **Factor 5 (Government Support Perception):** Explained 7.94% of variance.



Rotated Factor Loadings:

In Table 3, most items exhibited dominant loadings (> 0.50) on a single factor, with minimal cross-loading issues. For instance, Item 3 ("Access to higher education") loaded at .79 on Factor 1, and Item 15 ("Access to clean drinking water") loaded at -.80 on Factor 2.

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Table 3: Rotated Factor Loadings (Pattern Matrix)

Factor	Label	Items Loaded	Item Content (Abbreviated)	Loading
1	Socio-Economic & Educational Exclusion	3	Access to higher education	.79
		2	Access to basic education	.68
		1	Financially well off (Reverse)	.65
2	Lack of Basic Amenities	15	Access to clean drinking water	-.80
		16	Access to good sanitation	-.78
		14	Access to healthcare	-.64
		13	Local govt takes care of problems	-.40
3	Cultural Marginalization	9	Respect for cultural practices	-.75
		8	Respect for mother-tongue	-.73
		7	Priority in society	-.64
		11	Feeling welcomed	-.52
		10	Festivals ignored	-.52
4	Occupational Barriers	6	Obstacles to business success	.77
		4	Barriers to jobs meeting needs	.65
		5	Access to government jobs	.54
5	Government Support Perception	12	Govt schemes improve lives	-.93

Note: Negative loadings indicate the direction of the relationship relative to the factor axis and item phrasing (e.g., items 14, 16 were positively phrased, so a negative loading on a "Lack of Amenities" factor confirms the inverse relationship).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

To verify the stability of this 5-factor structure, a CFA was performed.

- **Chi-Square:** $\chi^2(95) = 166.23$, $p < .001$.
- **Absolute Fit Indices:** The RMSEA was 0.060 (90% CI: [0.045, 0.076]), indicating a good fit. The SRMR was 0.066, also below the 0.08 threshold.
- **Incremental Fit Indices:** The CFI (0.874) and TLI (0.841) were marginally below the traditional 0.90 cutoff, suggesting some unmodelled covariance between the theoretically interlinked factors.

Factor Loadings:

In Diagram 1, all standardized factor loadings in the CFA model were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The loadings ranged from 0.39 to 1.00. Notably, Item 12 loaded perfectly (1.00) on the "Government Support" factor.

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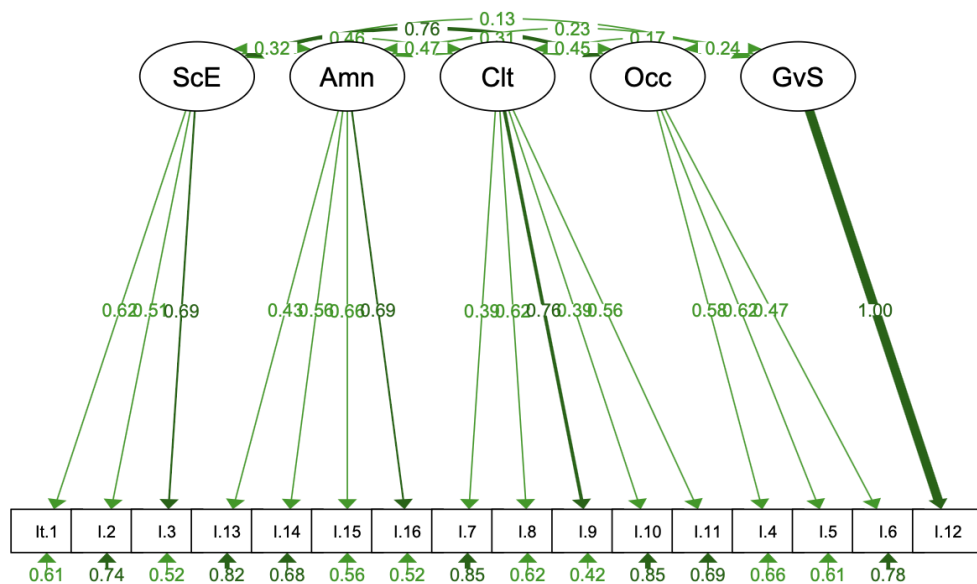


Diagram 1: Standardized Factor Loading of Items with Factors

DISCUSSION

The emergence of a **five-factor structure** highlights the granular and multifaceted nature of marginalization in India. The results validate the hypothesis that for Indian populations, marginalization is not just about "being poor" or "being ignored"; it is about specific failures in the infrastructure of daily life and the machinery of the state.

Factor 1: Socio-Economic & Educational Exclusion

This factor aggregates items related to financial well-being and access to education. In the Indian context, these two domains are inextricably linked. Education is culturally and economically viewed as the primary vehicle for upward social mobility. The high loading of Item 3 ("Access to higher education," .79) suggests that participants view access to *higher* education—not just basic literacy—as the true threshold for inclusion.

Factor 2: Lack of Basic Amenities: The Infrastructure of Dignity

The distinct emergence of this factor is a critical finding. The inclusion of items regarding "clean drinking water" and "sanitation" aligns with the Indian government's own focus on the *Swachh Bharat* (Clean India) Mission. However, the PMS framing establishes this as a *psychological* variable. The lack of a private toilet or clean water is not merely an inconvenience; it is a "social humiliation" and a source of chronic psychosocial stress (Hirve et al., 2015). The strong negative loadings on these items confirm that "infrastructural violence"—the active denial of basic services—is a core component of the marginalized identity in India.

Factor 3: Cultural Marginalization: The Politics of Recognition

This factor captures the "politics of recognition." Items regarding respect for "mother-tongue," "cultural practices," and "festivals" reflect the hyper-diverse ethno-linguistic landscape of India. The items go beyond asking if one is "tolerated" to asking if one is "respected" and "welcomed," reflecting the specific communal dynamics where festivals and language are public assertions of identity (Bollwerk et al., 2021).

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Factor 4: Occupational Barriers

This dimension moves beyond simple unemployment to the concept of "barriers" and "access." Item 5 specifically mentions "government jobs." In India, government employment (*sarkari naukri*) represents the gold standard of security and social status. For marginalized groups (Scheduled Castes/Tribes), access to these jobs is often mediated by reservation policies (Thorat & Attewell, 2007). Feeling denied access to these roles is a potent form of grievance.

Factor 5: Government Support Perception: The "Beneficiary" Identity

The isolation of Item 12 ("Government schemes improve the lives of people with my background") into its own factor is theoretically profound. In India, the state is the primary arbiter of welfare. Feeling that "government schemes do not help people like me" represents a breach of the social contract. It captures "administrative exclusion"—the experience of being filtered out of the welfare net (Muralidharan et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The Perceived Marginalization Scale (PMS) is a reliable ($\alpha=.78$) and valid instrument tailored to the complex socio-political reality of India. By empirically validating "Basic Amenities" and "Government Support" as distinct psychological dimensions, this study challenges the dominance of purely "identity-based" models of marginalization, arguing for a "material-psychological" approach.

Limitations and Future Directions

The sample (N=205), while adequate for EFA, would benefit from expansion for more complex invariance testing. Future research should conduct test-retest reliability studies and correlate PMS scores with established measures of depression and objective socio-economic status.

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Conflict of Interest

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