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Examining The Contributions of Women Self-Help Groups To Decision-Making Processes and Political Discussion in Thiruporur Block

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Abstract

This examination explores the contributions of Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to selection-making procedures and political discussions in Thiruporur Block, a semi-city region within the Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu, India. Women SHGs have emerged as effective motors for fostering network development and enhancing women's empowerment. These businesses had been instrumental in supplying a platform for ladies to engage in monetary activities, enhance their socio-monetary status, and actively participate in local governance and political discussions. Findings suggest that SHGs considerably beautify women's participation in choice-making at each family and community range. Women in SHGs file expanded confidence in voicing their critiques and influencing selections related to the circle of relatives' welfare, education, healthcare, and economic control. At the network stage, SHG participants have emerged as key stakeholders in nearby governance, participating in Gram Sabha conferences, and engaging with Panchayat officials. Their collective movement has led to improved infrastructure, better admission to public services, and increased duty of nearby governments. Additionally, the examination highlights the role of SHGs in fostering political discussions and raising attention about women's rights and political tactics. Through everyday conferences and potential-constructing initiatives, SHG individuals are educated about their felony rights, electoral strategies, and the importance of voting. This has brought about better voter turnout among girls and a growing hobby of running for nearby office. The SHGs also function as systems for discussing broader political troubles, thereby nurturing a politically informed and energetic girl citizenry. The research underscores the transformative potential of SHGs in enhancing women's company and participation in democratic procedures. It recommends strengthening the help structures for SHGs, together with financial help, education applications, and policy interventions, to maintain and make their effect bigger.

Introduction

Understanding the wider implications of SHGs' contributions in Thiruporur Block offers good- sized insights into the mechanisms of rural improvement and gender empowerment. The effectiveness of SHGs in this place displays the capability for these groups to be scaled and tailored to different rural settings going through comparable socio-economic demanding situations (Setia et al 2017). As SHGs continue to grow and evolve, they can reshape the panorama of rural improvement by way of empowering girls to tackle management roles and grow to be lively contributors in their groups' growth and governance.

One of the key factors of the success of SHGs in Thiruporur Block is their capability to offer ladies monetary independence. Through collective financial savings and getting the right of entry to microcredit, girls are capable of starting small businesses, putting money into education, and improving their households' dwelling conditions (Dr.M.Nirmala. 2017). This financial independence is a cornerstone of broader socio-monetary empowerment because it allows women to make decisions that have an effect on their lives and people in their households. The economic sports undertaken through SHGs also make contributions to the neighborhood economy, growing a ripple effect that blesses the wider community.

Aim and Objectives

The study aims to assess the influence of Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) on political discussion and decision-making processes within the Thiruporur block community.

Objectives

RO1 To examine the importance of women in Self-help groups (SHGs) participation in the decision-making process at the community level in Thiruporur block

RO2 To determine the role of Women's Self-Help Groups in political discussions and engagement with governance levels in Thiruporur block

RO3 To analyze the factors affecting women's involvement in the processes of decision-making and political discussions.

RO4 To scrutinize issues and opportunities faced by Women's self-help groups in the Thiruporur block in participating in political discussion and decision-making processes.

Literature Review

Overview of Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the rural context

Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have garnered considerable attention and acclaim as a grassroots model for promoting socio-monetary improvement and empowering girls, specifically in rural regions. The idea of SHGs originated in Bangladesh in the 1970s with the Grameen Bank, and it has been extensively followed across developing nations, consisting of India. These groups typically consist of 10 to 20 women who come together voluntarily to shop for money, offer loans to each other, and engage in collective financial sports. The essential premise of SHGs is based on the standards of mutual support, collective decision-making, and monetary unity (Anand et al 2020).

In the rural context, SHGs have emerged as crucial devices for financial inclusion. Many rural girls lack the right of entry to formal banking services due to numerous barriers, including illiteracy, loss of collateral, and social regulations. SHGs bridge this hole by offering microcredit to their contributors, permitting them to undertake income-producing sports which include farming, handicrafts, and small-scale buying and selling (Prabhu et al 2019). The microfinance provided via SHGs is regularly observed using decreased interest fees and bendy compensation schedules, making it extra reachable and attainable for rural women. Studies have proven that SHGs substantially beautify the economic balance and resilience of their contributors, leading to improved household earnings and decreased poverty tiers.

Beyond financial inclusion, SHGs play a pivotal position in fostering social empowerment and community development. The institution conferences offer a secure space for girls to talk about their troubles, and proportionate experiences, and assist each other. This social interaction enables to break the isolation that many rural ladies experience because of traditional patriarchal norms. The collective nature of SHGs also fosters a feeling of cohesion and mutual agreement amongst individuals, which is vital for constructing social capital. Research has highlighted that SHGs make a contribution to the advanced vanity, confidence, and social status of women, which in turn complements their ability to take part in network selection-making processes (Alemu et al 2018).

The effect of SHGs on ladies' fitness and education is another location of great hobbies. Many SHGs have interacted in health and schooling projects, together with organizing health camps, promoting immunization, and advocating for ladies' schooling. By leveraging their collective power, SHGs can correctly mobilize resources and impact neighborhood authorities to improve entry to healthcare and academic centers (Kumawat et al 2018). Empirical studies suggest that SHG membership is related to better health results and better educational attainment for participants and their families. This holistic approach to improvement underscores the multifaceted function of SHGs in improving the general well-being of rural groups.

In addition to their monetary and social blessings, SHGs also are instrumental in promoting political empowerment and participation. Women in rural areas often have restricted possibilities to interaction in political techniques because of cultural obstacles and lack of information. SHGs deal with this hole by providing training and ability-building applications on prison rights, governance, and political participation (Chakraborty et al 2019). Through these tasks, SHG individuals come to be more knowledgeable about their rights and more confident in taking part in political sports inclusive of vote casting and status for local elections. The involvement of SHGs in neighborhood governance bodies, which includes Gram Panchayats, has been shown to grow responsibility and make sure that the concerns of ladies are addressed in choice-making tactics.

The fulfillment of SHGs in various rural settings has led to large popularity and support from governments and global businesses. In India, as an example, the authorities have applied several schemes and packages to promote SHGs, which include the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and the Self Help Group Bank

Linkage Program (SHGBLP) (Nikhitha et al 2022). These projects provide economic support, education, and infrastructure to beautify the ability and sustainability of SHGs. International agencies, including the World Bank and UN Women, have also been actively concerned in supporting SHG tasks as part of broader efforts to promote gender equality and sustainable improvement.

Despite their successes, SHGs face numerous demanding situations that want to be addressed to preserve their effect. One main challenge is the sustainability of SHGs in the long term. Many SHGs battle with issues which include negative monetary control, lack of ok education, and dependence on outside investment. Ensuring the sustainability of SHGs calls for non-stop ability-building efforts, getting admission to markets, and supportive coverage environments. Additionally, there is a desire to deal with the gendered energy dynamics within SHGs, as a few studies have stated that guys in some groups try to exert manipulation over SHG sports, undermining the autonomy and organization of girls (Dutta, 2015).

Another enormous assignment is the scalability of the SHG version. While SHGs have demonstrated effectiveness in certain contexts, scaling up these initiatives to attain a larger populace requires cautious consideration of neighborhood socio-financial situations and cultural elements. Tailoring SHG interventions to fulfill the particular desires of different communities is crucial for their achievement. Furthermore, the combination of eras in SHG operations can enhance their performance and outreach. Digital systems for financial transactions, schooling, and conversation can help SHGs triumph over geographical limitations and enhance their common functionality.

The literature on SHGs also emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluation to measure their effect and identify areas for development. Rigorous effect checks, using each quantitative and qualitative strategy, can offer treasured insights into the effectiveness of SHG interventions and tell policy selections. Moreover, participatory assessment methods that involve SHG individuals within the evaluation technique can decorate their possession and responsibility. Women Self-Help Groups have emerged as an effective tool for selling socio-economic development and empowering women in rural regions (Pandey et al 2012). By offering entry to monetary offerings, fostering social cohesion, and promoting political participation, SHGs contribute to the holistic development of rural communities. Despite the demanding situations they face, the achievement of SHGs in various contexts underscores their capacity to power sustainable and inclusive development. Continued aid from governments, NGOs, and worldwide groups, coupled with innovative tactics to address challenges, can similarly enhance the effect of SHGs and make contributions to a greater equitable and prosperous society.

Role of Women SHGs in Empowerment

One of the primary methods wherein SHGs empower ladies is through financial empowerment. By pooling their savings and getting access to microcredit, girls in SHGs are capable of adopting numerous earnings-producing sports. These sports vary from small-scale farming and livestock rearing to handicrafts and small groups. The economic independence received through those ventures is a massive step toward empowerment, as it permits girls to make contributions to their family earnings, improve their dwelling requirements, and reduce their dependence on male family participants (Sandhu, 2016). This monetary empowerment is frequently the first step toward broader social adjustments, as financial balance gives ladies the confidence to claim their rights and make selections.

The economic sports facilitated by using SHGs also promote entrepreneurship amongst rural girls. Through the aid and schooling provided through SHGs, ladies study important business skills such as economic management, marketing, and strategic making plans (Nithyanandhan et al 2015). This entrepreneurial spirit is crucial for sustainable development, as it not only improves the monetary status of individual individuals but also contributes to the local financial system. Moreover, the success of women-led companies challenges traditional gender roles and stereotypes, proving that girls can contribute considerably to financial improvement.

Social empowerment is another widespread outcome of SHGs. The everyday meetings and interactions inside SHGs create a sturdy assistance network amongst women, fostering cohesion and mutual belief. This social cohesion is critical for addressing not unusual problems which include fitness, education, and domestic violence (Brody et al 2017). Through collective action, SHG contributors can propose better healthcare facilities, progressed instructional possibilities, and stronger prison protections in opposition to violence. The sense of network and shared cause that SHGs cultivate enables them to interrupt the isolation that many rural ladies experience, offering them a platform to voice their concerns and work together for social alternatives.

In addition to financial and social empowerment, SHGs play a pivotal position in political empowerment. Women in rural areas frequently face considerable obstacles to political participation, inclusive of a lack of understanding, social regulations, and restricted access to facts. SHGs cope with these limitations by way of presenting education and potential-building programs on governance, legal rights, and civic responsibilities. Through these packages, girls benefit from the know-how and competencies needed to have interaction in political approaches, which includes vote casting, attending public conferences, and standing for neighborhood elections. This political engagement is vital for making sure that ladies' voices are heard in decision-making strategies that affect their lives and groups.

The involvement of SHGs in neighborhood governance is a powerful example of political empowerment. SHG participants often participate in Gram Sabha meetings and collaborate with Panchayat officials to deal with network troubles. Their participation ensures that the issues of women and marginalized groups are taken into consideration in nearby improvement plans and rules. This inclusion no longer only enhances the effectiveness of neighborhood governance but also promotes a more inclusive and democratic decision-making system. The management roles that women count on inside SHGs further empower them to take on leadership positions in their communities, hard traditional energy systems, and promote gender equality.

Moreover, SHGs make contributions to empowerment by promoting education and focus. Many SHGs have behavior literacy packages, health focus campaigns, and workshops on various social problems. By instructing their members approximately their rights and available sources, SHGs allow ladies to make informed choices and advocate for themselves and their households. This expanded awareness and expertise are crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and lack of expertise that regularly perpetuates gender inequality. The empowerment derived from training and consciousness has a multiplier effect, as empowered girls are more likely to make investments in the education and well-being of their youngsters, hence developing an advantageous cycle of development.

The effect of SHGs on empowerment is likewise evident in the improved vanity and self-assurance in their contributors. This stronger self-worth is an essential factor of empowerment because it influences how girls understand themselves and their competencies. The self-assurance received via participation in SHGs allows women to combat discriminatory practices and assert their rights in various elements of existence. This psychological empowerment is fundamental for accomplishing authentic gender equality and growing an extra simple and equitable society.

Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Decision-Making and Political Discussion

Women's participation in decision-making and political dialogue is important for attaining gender equality and inclusive development. However, different factors affect the quantity to which ladies can interact with those methods. Understanding these elements is vital for growing strategies to enhance women's participation and ensure their voices are heard in both the home and public spheres. Cultural and social norms play a big function in shaping girls' participation in choice-making and political discussions (Reshi, 2023). In many societies, traditional gender roles dictate that ladies need to prioritize home responsibilities over public engagement. These norms can restrict girl's opportunities to take part in community activities and political strategies. Social expectancies regularly discourage women from talking out or assuming leadership roles, leading to their underrepresentation in decision-making bodies. Challenging and converting those deep-seated norms calls for concerted efforts to promote gender equality and empower ladies through schooling and advocacy.

Education is a vital issue influencing ladies' participation in selection-making and political discussions. Higher ranges of education are associated with extra recognition of rights, increased self-assurance, and a higher right of entry to statistics. Educated girls are much more likely to take part in community meetings, interact in political discussions, and assume management roles. Conversely, low literacy prices and restricted right of entry to schooling can restrict girls' capacity to interact correctly in decision-making strategies. Programs that target grownup literacy, civic schooling, and leadership schooling for women can notably beautify their participation and impact (Minimol et al 2012).

Economic empowerment is intently related to girls' participation in selection-making and political discussions. Financial independence presents women with the assets and self-belief needed to interact in public lifestyles. Women who contribute economically to their families are much more likely to have a say in domestic selections and to be reputable in their communities. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinance tasks that promote women's entrepreneurship and monetary autonomy have been proven to increase their

participation in governance and political processes. Economic empowerment also allows women to put money into schooling and fitness, further strengthening their ability to take part in decision-making.

The presence of supportive networks and businesses significantly affects women's participation in selection-making and political discussions. SHGs, ladies' associations, and network-based totally companies provide structures for girls to come back collectively, proportionate studies, and suggest their rights. These groups offer schooling, assets, and supportive surroundings that foster self-assurance and management skills. By collaborating in those networks, women can benefit from the understanding and guidance they have to interact in public life (Banerjee et al 2012). The harmony and collective strength developed within these businesses are critical for overcoming limitations to participation and ensuring that ladies' voices are heard.

The felony and coverage surroundings play a crucial function in shaping girls' participation in selection-making and political discussions. Laws and rules that promote gender equality and defend girls' rights create an allowing environment for his or her participation. For instance, quotas for ladies in neighborhood governance in our bodies and legislative assemblies can ensure their representation and participation in selection-making procedures (Kathina, 2013). Legal frameworks that address gender-primarily based violence, discrimination, and access to education and healthcare are also vital for empowering girls. Effective implementation and enforcement of these legal guidelines and guidelines are important to translate criminal provisions into tangible upgrades in girls' participation.

Access to facts and technology is more and more important for girls' participation in decision-making and political discussions. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide systems for girls to get right of entry to records, connect with others, and take part in public discourse. Social media, online boards, and cell era can facilitate women's engagement in political discussions and community sports. However, digital divides and restricted right of entry to the generation can exclude many ladies, specifically in rural areas. Initiatives that sell virtual literacy and provide inexpensive get right of entry to ICTs can beautify girl's participation and ensure that they're now not left behind in the digital age.

Family aid and the distribution of domestic duties substantially impact girls's capacity to participate in decision-making and political discussions. Supportive family members who inspire girls' involvement in public life could make a widespread distinction. Conversely, heavy home workloads and lack of childcare help can limit ladies's time and energy for engagement in network and political activities. Encouraging equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities and imparting support offerings inclusive of childcare can alleviate those burdens and permit extra ladies to take part in choice-making approaches.

The presence of girl leaders and function models is a powerful element influencing ladies's participation in choice-making and political discussions. Seeing different women in management positions can inspire and motivate girls to have interaction in public existence. Role models provide tangible examples of achievement and display that ladies can correctly make a contribution to governance and selection-making. Programs that highlight the achievements of lady leaders and create possibilities for mentorship and networking can help build a new generation of women leaders.

Gender-primarily based violence and security concerns are enormous barriers to women's participation in selection-making and political discussions. Fear of violence and harassment can deter ladies from accomplishing public life. Ensuring the safety and security of women is essential for their empowerment and participation (Hora, 2014). Legal protections, network recognition campaigns, and guide offerings for survivors of violence are vital measures to cope with those issues. Creating safe and inclusive spaces for women to participate in choice-making and political discussions is fundamental for promoting gender equality.

Enhancing ladies' participation in choice-making and political discussions calls for a multifaceted approach that addresses the various factors influencing their engagement. Cultural and social norms, training and focus, economic empowerment, supportive networks, legal frameworks, get right of entry to data and era, own family aid, leadership, and protection are all critical factors that affect girls' participation (Nahar et al 2013). By addressing those elements and developing and permitting surroundings, we will ensure that ladies' voices are heard and that they can make contributions absolutely to the development and governance of their groups. Empowering ladies to take part in decision-making and political discussions is not handiest a dependence of justice and equality but additionally critical for sustainable and inclusive development.

Methods and materials

The current study was a questionnaire-based study and relevant data was collected from the persons who are associated with Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Thiruporur Block, Tamil Nadu. The questionnaire for the

study was prepared and it encompassed detailed information on activities undertaken by the SHGs and its impact on the members of the group. It also looked into the extent of involvement of SHGs in decision-making and political discourse. A detailed questionnaire was therefore the tool for data collection for the study "A Study on the Role of Women Self-Help Groups in Decision-Making and Political Discourse in Thiruporur Block". To fulfill the objectives of the study, various statistical tests were conducted based on the responses of the questionnaire. RO1 sought to study the role of women's participation in SHGs in decision-making at the grassroots level in Thiruporur Block. Regression Analysis was used to understand the correlation between participation in SHGs and grassroots level decision-making. It gave an insight into the role and effectiveness of women in SHGs in decision-making at the grassroots level.

RO2 sought to understand the role of Women's Self-Help Groups in political discourse and with different levels of governance in Thiruporur Block. Regression Analysis was used to understand the correlation between participation in SHGs and political discourse as well as with different levels of governance. It gave an insight into the role of SHGs in empowering women to participate in political discourse and with different levels of governance.

RO3 sought to study the determinants for women's participation in decision-making and political discourse. Factor Analysis was used for this study. It is used to condense and analyze various variables with interrelationships. It generated factors and identified the key determinants for and against women's participation in decision-making and political discourse. Finally, RO4 sought to examine the issues and challenges of Women's Self-Help Groups in Thiruporur Block with respect to their participation in political discourse and decision-making.

Data analysis tools

Each tool was specially decided on to address the research goals correctly. To take a look at the importance of ladies's participation in SHGs inside the choice-making manner at the community level (RO1), we completed Regression Analysis. This analysis helped quantify the effect of SHG participation on women's roles in network selections, revealing the extent to which involvement in SHGs complements ladies' choice-making electricity inside their groups.

Regression Analysis turned into once more utilized and this analysis supplied insights into the connection among SHG participation and girls' involvement in political discussions and interactions with governance systems, highlighting how SHGs impact women's political engagement and illustration. To examine (RO3), we did Factor Analysis. This method allowed us to discover and observe the underlying factors that impact women's participation in those regions. By grouping associated variables collectively, Factor Analysis helped us apprehend the principal drivers and boundaries to ladies' energetic involvement in selection-making and political sports.

The (RO4) focused on scrutinizing the issues and possibilities faced with the aid of Women's Self-Help Groups in collaborating in political discussions and decision-making strategies in Thiruporur Block. For this motive, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed.

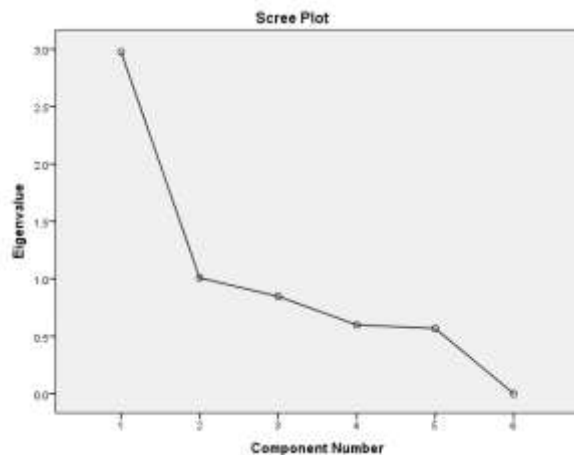


Figure 1. Scree Plot

This evaluation paved the way to supply a clearer photo of the important elements that want to be addressed to decorate the function of SHGs in political and selection-making arenas. By making use of those quantitative evaluation equipment, the have a look at become capable of fastidiously have a look at the diverse dimensions of ladies' participation in SHGs and their impact on selection-making and political engagement inside Thiruporur Block.

Results and Discussion

The data collected provides insightful information regarding the participation and representation of Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) in decision-making processes at the community level. The average score for WSHGs adequately participating in the decision-making process is 3.10, with a standard deviation of 1.137, based on a sample size of 400 respondents. This suggests that, on average, respondents perceive WSHGs as adequately involved in community decision-making.

When it comes to the ability of WSHGs to represent the needs of women at the community level, the mean score is 2.70 with a higher standard deviation of 1.618, indicating more variability in responses. This lower average score suggests that there may be some concerns or limitations in how effectively WSHGs can represent women's needs at the community level. Similarly, the ability of WSHGs to represent the concerns of women at the community level has a mean score of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 1.189. This lower score further indicates that respondents believe WSHGs have some difficulties or are less effective in addressing women's concerns within the community.

On a more positive note, the participation of WSHGs is seen to enhance the overall effectiveness of community development initiatives, with a mean score of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 1.222. This suggests that respondents recognize the beneficial impact of WSHGs on community development, acknowledging their role in improving the effectiveness of these initiatives. Moreover, WSHGs are also perceived as providing a platform for women to voice their opinions and concerns in decision-making processes, with a mean score of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 1.376. This indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents, highlighting that WSHGs are somewhat effective in facilitating women's participation in decision-making. Finally, the impact of women's leadership roles within WSHGs on influencing the outcomes of community decisions is viewed positively, with a mean score of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 1.137.

The dataset provides a detailed analysis of various aspects of Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) in Thiruporur Block, focusing on their role in decision-making processes and political discussions. Several statistical measures have been employed to examine the reliability and internal consistency of the items, using Cronbach's alpha as a primary indicator.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.768	5

For the assessment of WSHGs' participation in community decision-making, the item-total statistics show that the scale mean if the item "WSHGs adequately participate in the decision-making process at the community level" is deleted is 14.10, with a scale variance of 29.163. The corrected item-total correlation is 0.553, and Cronbach's alpha if this item is deleted is 0.877. This indicates that this item is relatively consistent with the overall scale, contributing positively to its reliability.

Similarly, the ability of WSHGs to represent women's needs at the community level has a scale mean of 14.50 if the item is deleted, a variance of 22.506, a corrected item-total correlation of 0.790, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.840. This shows a strong correlation with the total scale, indicating that this item is a significant contributor to the overall reliability. Regarding WSHGs' ability to represent women's concerns, the statistics show a scale mean of 14.90, a variance of 26.155, a corrected item-total correlation of 0.796, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.839. This high corrected item-total correlation suggests that respondents find this item closely related to the overall scale, reinforcing its importance.

When evaluating the participation of WSHGs in enhancing the effectiveness of community development initiatives, the scale mean if the item is deleted is 14.10, with a variance of 27.158, a corrected item-total correlation of 0.675, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.858. This indicates that this item also contributes significantly to the scale's reliability.

The item assessing whether WSHGs provide a platform for women to voice their opinions has a scale mean of 14.30 if deleted, a variance of 24.872, a corrected item-total correlation of 0.764, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.842. This shows that this item is an essential part of the scale, contributing to its internal consistency.

Lastly, the item on the impact of women's leadership roles within WSHGs in influencing community decisions has the same mean and variance as the first item (14.10 and 29.163, respectively), with a corrected item-total correlation of 0.553 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.877. This consistency underscores its importance within the scale.

The overall scale statistics for these items show a mean of 17.20, a variance of 37.253, and a standard deviation of 6.104, with six items included. The Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale is 0.768, which is an acceptable level of reliability, indicating that the items collectively measure the intended construct consistently.

Moving to the role of WSHGs in political discussions and engagement with governance levels, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.768 for five items, indicating acceptable reliability. The individual items show varying means and standard deviations, reflecting different aspects of political engagement and representation. For example, the item on WSHGs' representation in state and central government has a mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 1.302, indicating moderate agreement among respondents about their underrepresentation.

Table 2. Scale Statistics

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
66.10	300.521	17.336	23

The item-total statistics for this scale reveal that deleting the item on WSHGs engaging in discussions with local government authorities would result in a scale mean of 11.80, a variance of 12.190, a corrected item-total correlation of 0.641, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.686. This indicates a significant positive contribution to the overall reliability. Analyzing the factors affecting women's involvement in decision-making and political discussions, the scale's Cronbach's alpha is 0.784, indicating acceptable reliability for six items. The item on women's perceptions of their abilities has a mean of 2.90 and a standard deviation of 1.391, suggesting variability in how women perceive their own worthiness and ability to participate. Lastly, the issues and opportunities faced by WSHGs in political discussions and decision-making processes show a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.916 for six items, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Conclusion

To conclude, this analysis of Women's Self Help Groups (WSHGs) in Thiruporur Block highlights the importance of participation of people's organizations in local level decision making processes and in local politics. While the overall findings of the survey in both the districts point to a positive picture regarding the involvement and role of WSHGs, there are issues which need to be addressed in future (Sahoo, 2013). WSHGs in both the districts have been found to be involved in local level decision making processes and in local politics by creating a platform for women to voice their opinions and demand their rights. But they are underrepresented in higher level institutions like Panchayat Raj Institutions, Mahila Panchayat and Town Panchayat. The groups have limited effectiveness in lobbying and advocating people needs especially women's needs with the local bodies and other governmental institutions (Shireesha, 2019). The survey also brings out certain socio-economic and cultural barriers in the effective functioning of WSHGs. These include lack of assets like land, non-ownership of means of production, poverty, lack of education, and negative cultural attitudes towards women's participation in public affairs. All these issues need to be addressed to strengthen the role of WSHGs in promoting gender justice.

To overcome some of the above mentioned barriers, the following interventions and programmes are necessary. Programmes should be undertaken to strengthen the advocacy skills of WSHGs to enable them to effectively interact with political institutions and demand their rights. There should be concerted efforts to strengthen the groups' institutions and provide mentorship and support to build their capacity to monitor and evaluate the implementation of schemes. Networking opportunities must be provided to WSHGs to enable them to become active and responsible civil society actors. Simultaneously, measures should be taken to remove the socio-economic disparities and to challenge the negative cultural attitudes in order to create an enabling environment for women's participation.

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