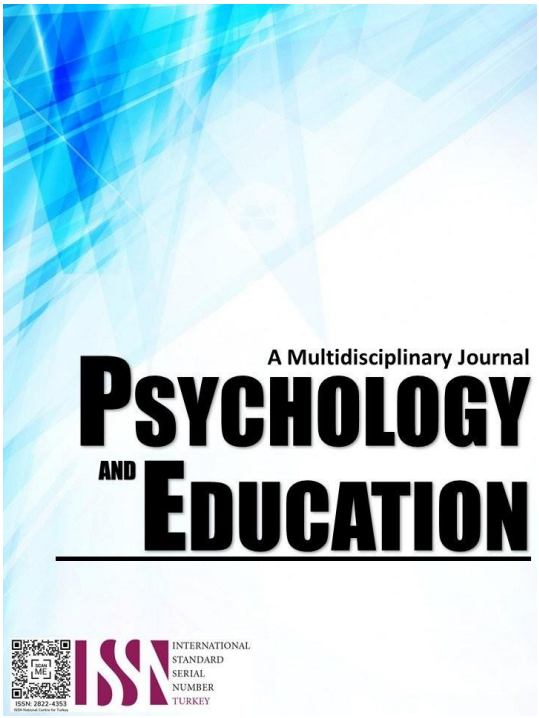
BEST PRACTICES UTILIZED AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY SELECTED COOPERATIVES IN LIPA CITY: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM



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Research Article

Best Practices Utilized and Challenges Encountered by Selected Cooperatives in Lipa City: Basis for Enhancement Program

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the best practices utilized and challenges encountered by selected cooperatives in Lipa City. A quantitative research design was utilized to achieve this goal. The researcher has opted for purposive sampling as best sampling method. This approach enables to deliberately select participants who closely align with the specific objectives of the investigation. The purpose of this intentional selection is to guarantee that the sample offers detailed insights into the complexities of cooperatives in Lipa, Batangas, in relation to sustainable economic development. A total of sixty-nine (69) members was carefully selected from a pool of cooperatives in the region, ensuring a diverse representation of cooperative types through the use of this purposive sampling method, the researcher seek to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices, challenges, and overall dynamics within these cooperatives. The findings reveal that the implementation of best practices in planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling significantly impacts a cooperative's ability to overcome obstacles and achieve sustainable economic development. The analysis demonstrated that cooperatives with longer operational histories and larger business sizes are more likely to have adopted and implemented best practices across all four management areas. This suggests that experience and scale provide valuable insights and resources that contribute to effective management practices. However, the study also found that the type of cooperative did not have a significant influence on the adoption of best practices. This suggests that effective management strategies can be universally applied across different cooperative types, emphasizing the importance of focusing on best practices regardless of the specific cooperative model.

Keywords: *best practices, cooperatives*

Introduction

The ongoing digital transformation of the economy, with a specific emphasis on cooperatives and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is propelling substantial economic advancements towards the establishment of an advanced Economic Society. Within this context, cooperatives play a pivotal role in fortifying the local economy, consequently contributing to the overall national economic landscape. The collaborative efforts of entities, guided by kinship and economic democracy principles outlined in the Regulation of Minister of Cooperatives Number 09 of 2018, are instrumental in strengthening the national economy.

Recognized globally as catalysts for economic and social growth, cooperatives have garnered attention from the UN and industrialized nations. The establishment of the International Cooperatives in 2012 reflects a concerted effort to facilitate the global expansion and fortification of cooperatives. This initiative seeks to empower small producers by providing them access to vital resources such as information, markets, technology, credit, training, and warehousing. Cooperatives, as highlighted by Shafii et al. (2019), have played a significant role in fostering economic and social growth for individuals and communities.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines cooperatives as voluntary associations of individuals striving to fulfill shared economic, social, and cultural needs and goals through collectively-owned and democratically- governed enterprises. Prioritizing democracy, self-governance, and member well-being, cooperatives, as emphasized by Mojtahed and Deriada (cited by Mina, 2022) represent a global socio-economic movement addressing community needs often overlooked by conventional businesses. Ramos (2018) underscores the varied benefits provided by cooperatives, including savings, loans, education, training, and low-cost buying and selling. Governed by the Philippine Cooperative Code (Republic Act No. 6938) and the Cooperative Development Authority (Republic Act No. 6939), cooperatives in the Philippines operate within a legal framework aiming to promote self-sufficiency, mobilize collective efforts for economic development, and ensure social justice, according to Ramos (2018).

Despite their potential for rural development in third-world countries and their contribution to economic growth in developed nations, cooperatives face challenges in the contemporary business landscape. Societal changes have prompted significant shifts in the cooperative sector, leading to the closure of many entities. Citing a 2009 analysis by the CDA and Department of Finance, it was revealed that only 30% of the 78,611 registered cooperatives in the Philippines are currently operational, with factors such as a lack of education and training, mismanagement of resources, insufficient business volume, market competition, inactive member participation, and a lack of government support contributing to their dissolution.

Effectively overseen by best practices, cooperatives can achieve their full potential, functioning similarly to businesses. Bello-Dogarawa's study emphasizes the need for efficient management for successful market service, distinguishing cooperatives from corporate capitalism by prioritizing sustainability.

The success of cooperatives depends on the implementation of efficient cooperative best practices and addressing operational

challenges promptly. The urgent need to revitalize cooperatives in the country is highlighted by the study's focus on investigating the best practices and challenges faced by registered cooperatives in Lipa, Batangas, aiming to contribute to the global understanding of cooperatives' impact on sustainability and evaluation.

Research Questions

This study aims to determine the best practices utilized and challenges encountered by selected cooperatives in Lipa City. Therefore, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the business participants in terms of:
    1.1. type of cooperative;
    1.2. length of operation; and
    1.3. number of members (business size)?
2. What is best the practices utilized by selected cooperative participants in terms of:
    2.1. planning;
    2.2. commanding;
    2.3. coordinating; and
    2.4. controlling?
3. What are the challenges faced by selected cooperative participants in terms of:
    3.1. planning;
    3.2. commanding;
    3.3. coordinating; and
    3.4. controlling?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the best practices utilized and challenges faced by selected cooperative participants?
5. Is there any significant relationship between the profile of the participants and their responses on the bestpractices utilized by the cooperatives when grouped according to profile?
6. What strategic plan should be proposed to sustain cooperatives' operations?

Methodology

Research Design

This study aims to systematically investigate the best practices of cooperatives in Lipa, focusing on their practices and status for the purpose of revitalization and sustainable economic development. A quantitative research design was utilized to achieve this goal. This paper was thoroughly described the operations of the cooperatives, examining their planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling practices. To accomplish this, the researcher utilized survey instruments that are specifically designed to measure the frequency of each procedure. In addition, this paper provided a detailed description of the cooperatives' status by analyzing the difficulties encountered by participants in various aspects of their operations. This gave a comprehensive description of the challenges they face in planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling.

Respondents

In this study, the researcher has opted for purposive sampling as best sampling method. This approach enables to deliberately select participants who closely align with the specific objectives of the investigation. The purpose of this intentional selection is to guarantee that the sample offers detailed insights into the complexities of cooperatives in Lipa, Batangas, in relation to sustainable economic development. A total of sixty-nine (69) members was carefully selected from a pool of cooperatives in the region, ensuring a diverse representation of cooperative types through the use of this purposive sampling method, the researcher seek to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices, challenges, and overall dynamics within these cooperatives. The aim is to utilize the diverse experiences and viewpoints of the participants, guaranteeing that the results make a valuable contribution to the study's overall objective of identifying and advocating for the most effective methods to revive cooperatives in order to achieve sustainable economic development in Lipa, Batangas.

Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study a researcher-made questionnaire. This tool covers four dimensions, each designed to gather in- depth insights from the respondents. Firstly, the questionnaire delves into the profile of the participants, providing a comprehensive understanding of the background and characteristics of the cooperative members involved.

Afterwards, it explores the best practices used in cooperatives, focusing on four key aspects: planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. The second section of the questionnaire focuses on the challenges that cooperatives encounter, which are divided into the same four categories: planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. In addition, the third section explores how cooperatives contribute to sustainability by focusing on two key aspects: the well-being of members and the positive effects on the community. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the wider significance of cooperative activities.

Due to the nature of the study, responses are measured and quantified using a 4-point Likert scale. This scale offers a well-organized framework for participants to share their thoughts and experiences, allowing researchers to analyze the data in a quantitative manner. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability and relevance, we derive specific statements from recent and reputable research conducted by experts in the field. In addition, the questionnaire goes through a validation process guided by the research adviser to ensure that it effectively captures meaningful data that aligns with the study's objectives.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis phase of this study, various statistical tools was utilized to extract valuable insights from the collected information. At first, researcher used frequency distribution and percentage calculations to present and describe the profiling distribution of the respondents. This method enables a precise and thorough portrayal of the attributes of the participants.

Second, ranking method and a Likert scale was used to display the ratings and rankings of the responses given by the participants. Utilizing a 4-point Likert scale improves the precision of description, allowing for a more nuanced comprehension of the viewpoints expressed by the respondents. This approach guarantees that the gathered data accurately captures the range of opinions on particular statements. In order to summarize and interpret generally the extent of responses on the questionnaire, researcher utilized the Weighted Mean (WM). The Weighted Mean provides a more nuanced understanding by considering the accompanying legends, providing a numerical representation of the average value of the data. Furthermore, the study utilized the statistical tool ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to assess potential variations among variables. ANOVA is a valuable tool for comparing means across multiple groups, and its use in this study to help to determine the differences in practices and experiences of cooperatives with varying profiles.

Ethical Considerations

To assess the effectiveness of the questionnaire as a data collection tool, the researcher conducted a trial run with employees from a cooperative that was not part of the actual study. The collected data underwent rigorous testing to ensure its reliability and internal consistency. Following that, the researcher then proceeds with the actual process of collecting data.

After obtaining approval from the cooperative managers, the respondents were given a questionnaire along with a letter that provided details about the questions and their purpose. The researcher was available throughout the entire questionnaire process to address any questions or concerns raised by the respondents and provide clarification on instrument terms when necessary. Thorough consideration was given to ethical issues during the course of this research. Every questionnaire includes a letter encouraging respondents to actively participate at their own discretion. Strict adherence to principles of anonymity, confidentiality, and neutrality was always maintained. All information and previous studies used in this study were properly cited.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents*

Profile Variables Type:	*Frequency*	*Percentage*	*Rank*
Credit	14	20.29	2
Consumer	5	7.25	5
Marketing	8	11.59	3
Service	6	8.70	4
Producer	2	2.90	6
Multipurpose	34	49.28	1
Total	69	100	
Length of Operation:			
1	3	4.35	5
1 - 3	5	7.25	4
4 - 6	9	13.04	3
7 - 10	19	27.54	2
More than 10 years	33	47.83	1
Total	69	100	
Business Size:			
Less than 50	6	8.70	5
50 - 100	12	17.39	2.5
101 - 300	12	17.39	2.5
301 - 500	11	15.94	4
More than 500	28	40.58	1
Total	69	100	

As presented in Table 1, in terms of the type of cooperative, .34 or 49,28% at rank 1 were multipurpose while two or 2.90% at rank 6 were producer.

In terms of length of operation, more than 10 years got the highest frequency count of 33 or 47.83% at rank 1 while 1 year and below made the least frequency of one or 4.35% at rank 5.

With regard to the business size, more than 500 employees got the highest frequency count of 28 or 40.58% at rank 1 whereas less than 50 got the least frequency count of six or 8.70% at rank 5.

Best Practices Utilized by Selected Cooperative Participants In Terms of Planning

Table 2. *Best Practices Utilized by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Planning*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
The board is actively involved in discussing, reviewing, and ultimately approving the plan of the cooperative	3.55	Strongly Agree	1.5
The board determine and systematically arranges all the main factors to achieve the goals and objectives of the cooperative	3.51	Strongly Agree	3
The board designs the operating procedures and makes financial projections	3.55	Strongly Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	**3.54**	**Strongly Agree**	

As shown in Table 2, the respondents strongly agreed that the board is actively involved in discussing, reviewing, and ultimately approving the plan of the cooperative, and the board designs the operating procedures and makes financial projections which yielded the highest equal weighted means of 3.55 and similar ranks of 1.5.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed that the cooperative board is actively involved in discussing, reviewing and approving the plan, designing operating procedures and making financial projections is a positive indicator of strong governance and a well-functioning cooperative. This finding aligns with best practices for successful cooperatives, particularly in the City of Lipa.

The survey results highlight the crucial role of the board in a cooperative success. The board's active involvement in key areas like strategic planning, operational procedures and financial projections demonstrates a commitment to transparency, accountability, and member-centric decision-making. This finding is consistent with the Cooperative Principles established by the International Cooperative Alliance.

Board involvement in cooperative governance is crucial for organizational success, but the extent and nature of this involvement can vary. While board participation in reviewing financial statements may not always add significant value (Bart, 2004), effective oversight of retail rate policies is essential for balancing financial objectives and member interests (Hedrick, 2005). Board members' human and social capital, along with their participation, can influence cooperative performance (Buang & Abu Samah, 2021). Member participation in governance, particularly through annual general meetings and board positions, is vital for cooperative operations and survival (Buang & Samah, 2021). However, research on member participation in strategic decision-making remains limited.

In addition, the said group of respondents also strongly agreed that the board determine and systematically arranges all the main factors to achieve the goals and objectives of the cooperative which got the least weighted mean of 3.51 and the least rank of 3.

The survey finding that respondents strongly agree with the board's ability to determine and systematically arrange factors to achieve the cooperative's goals and objectives is a significant indicator of the board's effectiveness and strategic thinking. This finding speaks to the board's capacity for strategic planning and execution, which are vital for any organization's success, especially for cooperatives.

To enhance board effectiveness, cooperatives should focus on developing board members' understanding of complex issues, such as rate development, while also promoting broader member involvement in governance processes (Hedrick, 2005; Buang & Samah, 2021). This balanced approach can help cooperatives maintain financial stability while serving member interests.

The composite mean of 3.54 implied that the respondents strongly agreed on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of planning.

A complete mean of 3.54 on a scale likely measuring agreement with best practices in planning suggest a strong level of approval from the respondents. This finding is significant because it indicates that the cooperatives being studied are perceived as effectively implementing planning principles which are crucial for their success.

Effective management practices are crucial for the sustainability and success of cooperatives. In terms of planning, best practices include developing strategic plans to achieve goals and objectives, with high involvement from the board of directors (Mina et al., 2022).

In Terms of Commanding

Table 3. *Best Practices Utilized by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Commanding*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
The board groups all the cooperative's resources, both physical and human, according to their functions	3.38	Strongly Agree	3
The Board establishes the function or definite endeavor essentially to attain a set of defined goals and objectives	3.35	Strongly Agree	2
The board is responsible for grouping operational processes, assets, and establishing their relationships for the efficient day-to-day business operations	3.43	Strongly Agree	1
Composite Mean	**3.39**	**Strongly Agree**	

As given in Table 3, the respondents strongly agreed that the board is responsible for grouping operational processes, assets, and establishing their relationships for the efficient day-to-day business operationswhich obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.43 and the highest rank of 1.

The survey finding that respondents strongly agree with the board's responsibility for grouping operational processes, assets, and establishing their relationships for efficient day-to-day business operations is a crucial indicator of effective governance and operational management within the cooperative. This finding underscores the board's role in overseeing and optimizing the cooperative's operational functions, which is essential for its smooth functioning and long-term sustainability.

The board of directors in cooperatives plays a crucial role in organizational governance and performance. While theoretically expected to focus on strategic issues, research shows that boards in agricultural cooperatives often engage more in day-to-day operations (Kanitkar & Belavadi, 1993). The relationship between the board and managers significantly impacts cooperative performance, with factors like strategic planning engagement and job satisfaction positively affecting profitability (Zivkovic & Hudson, 2015). Effective strategy implementation requires alignment of operational plans with strategic goals, adequate resource allocation, skilled personnel, and regular reviews (Ogeto, 2017).

Additionally, the said group of respondents also strongly agreed that the board groups all the cooperative's resources, both physical and human, according to their functionswhich got the least weighted mean of 3.38 and the least rank of 3.

The survey finding that respondents strongly agree with the board's responsibility for grouping cooperative resources, both physical and human, according to their functions, despite having the least weighted mean of 3.38 and the least rank of 3, is still a significant indicator of effective resource management within the cooperative. While it might seem less important compared to other areas, it's crucial for the cooperative's overall efficiency and success.

Organizational structures in cooperatives can vary, with different models considering relationships between units, employee groupings, and communication systems (Matson & Gehrke, 2001). Successful cooperatives need to balance strategic focus with operational oversight, ensuring proper resource allocation, communication, and monitoring of environmental changes to adapt their strategies effectively (Ogeto, 2017; Zivkovic & Hudson, 2015).

The composite mean of 3.39 affirmed that the respondents strongly agreed on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of commanding.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in "commanding" (likely referring to leadership or management) with a composite mean of 3.39 is a significant indicator of positive perception towards the leadership within these cooperatives. This suggests that the cooperatives are perceived as having strong, effective, and well-respected leadership, which is crucial for their success and sustainability.

In Terms of Coordinating

As seen in Table 4, the respondents strongly agreed that the board organizes at least once a month regular meeting for the members of the board and yearly general assembly for the memberswhich made the highest weighted mean of 3.49 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed (with a mean of 3.49 and the highest rank of 1) that the board organizes regular monthly meetings and yearly general assemblies is a strong indicator of good governance and member engagement within the cooperative. This high level of agreement signifies that the respondents perceive these meetings as crucial for the cooperative's functioning and their own participation in decision-making.

Table 4. *Best Practices Utilized by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Coordinating*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
The board organizes at least once a month regular meeting for the members of the board and yearly general assembly for the members	3.49	Strongly Agree	1
The board disseminates to members, officers, and employees regarding significant developments or activities of the organization.	3.39	Strongly Agree	3
The manager is responsible for internal and external interpersonal relationships of the cooperative	3.42	Strongly Agree	2
Composite Mean	**3.43**	**Strongly Agree**	

Board meetings play a crucial role in cooperative governance, influencing various aspects of performance and effectiveness. Regular board meetings have been found to positively impact strategic, resource provision, and monitoring roles in Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies (Mlay et al., 2022). However, some studies suggest that the frequency of board meetings may not directly correlate with overall cooperative performance (Othman et al., 2016). Board attributes, such as financial skills, are important for effective role execution (Mlay et al., 2022).

Active participation of board members in meetings, open communication, and constructive idea-sharing are essential for good governance (Abd Kadir et al., 2016). While board size and gender diversity may not significantly affect performance, board members' perceptions of corporate governance practices are generally positive (Shariff et al., 2016). Despite these findings, some research indicates that cooperative governance may require revision to increase its effectiveness in achieving members' objectives (Othman et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the said group of respondents also strongly agreed that the board disseminates to members, officers, and employees regarding significant developments or activities of the organizationwhich gained the least weighted mean of 3.39 and the least rank of 3.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed (with a weighted mean of 3.39 and a rank of 3) that the board disseminates information about significant developments or activities to members, officers, and employees, despite having the lowest weighted mean and rank, is still a positive indicator of the cooperative's communication practices. While it might not be perceived as the most critical aspect of board communication, it's still considered important for the cooperative's transparency and member engagement.

Board members' human and social capital, along with their participation, can influence cooperative performance (Buang & Abu Samah, 2021). Member participation in governance, particularly through annual general meetings and board positions, is vital for cooperative operations and survival (Buang & Samah, 2021). However, research on member participation in strategic decision-making remains limited.

The composite mean of 3.43 concluded that the respondents strongly agreed on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of coordinating.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed (with a composite mean of 3.43) on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of "coordinating" is a significant indicator of effective collaboration and teamwork within these organizations. This suggests that the cooperatives are perceived as having strong internal coordination mechanisms, which are crucial for their efficiency, effectiveness, and overall success.

In Terms of Controlling

As stated in Table 5, the respondents strongly agreed that the board makes sure that they submit the annual and audited financial reports to the Cooperative Development Authority which got the highest weighted mean of 3.45 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents strongly agree that the board ensures the submission of annual and audited financial reports to the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), as indicated by a high weighted mean of 3.45 and a top rank of 1 in Table 5, reflects a positive perception of the board's commitment to transparency and accountability.

The SPU Multipurpose Cooperative, for instance, maintained conservative working capital management and met Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) standards, indicating capability to sustain services (Guillermo, 2021).

This finding is consistent with the importance of financial reporting in cooperative governance and the role of the CDA in overseeing cooperative operations. Importance of Financial Reporting in Cooperatives Financial reporting is crucial for cooperatives as it provides

stakeholders with essential information about the organization's financial health and performance. This information enables members, investors, and regulatory bodies to make informed decisions about their involvement with the cooperative transparency and accountability, decision-making, compliance and regulation.

Table 5. *Best Practices Utilized by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Controlling*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
The board accepts and approves management reports and review financial statements	3.38	Strongly Agree	3
The board makes sure that they submit the annual and audited financial reports to the Cooperative Development Authority	3.45	Strongly Agree	1
The manager must take corrective actions with regards to the unmet goals and objectives	3.42	Strongly Agree	2
Composite Mean	**3.42**	**Strongly Agree**	

Moreover, the said group of respondents also strongly agreed that the board accepts and approves management reports and review financial statementswhich made the least weighted mean of 3.38 and the least rank of 3.

The finding that respondents strongly agreed (with a weighted mean of 3.38 and a rank of 3) that the board accepts and approves management reports and reviews financial statements, despite having the lowest weighted mean and rank, is still a positive indicator of the cooperative's governance and financial oversight. While it might not be perceived as the most critical aspect of board responsibility, it's still considered important for the cooperative's financial health and accountability.

Cooperatives in the Philippines face challenges in complying with regulatory requirements and achieving financial sustainability. A study in Northeastern Cagayan found that while cooperatives focused on social initiatives, only 80% allocated budgets for social audit requirements, with lack of sincerity and budget constraints hindering implementation (Vivit & Morales-Garma, 2023).

The composite mean of 3.42 signified that the respondents strongly agreed on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of controlling.

The composite mean of 3.42, indicating strong agreement from respondents on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of controlling, suggests a positive perception of the cooperatives' management practices. This finding highlights the importance of effective control mechanisms in ensuring the success and sustainability of cooperative organizations.

Understanding Control in Cooperative Management Control, within the context of cooperative management, refers to the processes and systems that cooperatives employ to ensure that their operations are conducted efficiently, effectively, and in accordance with their objectives. This includes: - Monitoring Performance: Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the cooperative's progress towards its goals and identify areas for improvement.

In conclusion, the high level of agreement among respondents regarding the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives in terms of controlling underscores the importance of effective control mechanisms in ensuring the success and sustainability of cooperative organizations. These practices foster financial stability, build member trust, ensure compliance, and contribute to long- term growth. The findings suggest that the cooperatives studied are actively implementing best practices to manage their operations effectively and achieve their goals.

Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants In Terms of Planning

Table 6. *Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Planning*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Generates a plan that is not based on cooperative resources.	2.32	Disagree	1
Difficulty in developing a long-term plan	2.41	Disagree	2
Difficulty in designing the operating procedures and making financial projections	2.42	Disagree	3
Composite Mean	**2.38**	**Disagree**	

As revealed in Table 6, the respondents disagreed that the cooperative generates a plan that is not based on resources which got the highest weighted mean of 2.32 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents disagreed (with a weighted mean of 2.32 and a rank of 1) that the cooperative generates a plan that is not based on resources is a positive indicator of the cooperative's planning practices. It suggests that the cooperative is recognized for its responsible and realistic approach to planning, ensuring that its plans are grounded in available resources and are therefore more likely to be successful.

Effective management practices are crucial for the sustainability and success of cooperatives. In terms of planning, best practices include developing strategic plans to achieve goals and objectives, with high involvement from the board of directors (Mina et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the said group of respondents also disagreed on the difficulty in designing the operating procedures and making financial projections which obtained the least weighted mean of 2.42 and the least rank of 3.

The finding that respondents disagreed (with a weighted mean of 2.42 and a rank of 3) on the difficulty of designing operating procedures and making financial projections is a positive sign for the cooperative's operational efficiency and financial planning. It suggests that the cooperative is perceived as having a sound understanding of its operations and a reasonable ability to forecast its financial future.

The composite mean of 2.38 implied that the respondents disagreed on the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of planning.

The finding that respondents disagreed (with a composite mean of 2.38) on the challenges faced by cooperatives in terms of planning is a positive indicator of the cooperative's planning capabilities. It suggests that the cooperatives are perceived as being relatively adept at planning, and that the respondents do not see planning as a major obstacle for these organizations.

Successful cooperatives need to balance strategic focus with operational oversight, ensuring proper resource allocation, communication, and monitoring of environmental changes to adapt their strategies effectively (Ogeto, 2017; Zivkovic & Hudson, 2015).

In Terms of Commanding

Table 7. *Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Commanding*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Difficulty in commanding all the cooperative's resources, both physical and human	2.26	Disagree	3
Difficulty in establishing personnel the function to attain a set of defined goals and objectives	2.36	Disagree	1
Difficulty in motivating members into the cooperatives' top priority	2.32	Disagree	2
Composite Mean	**2.31**	**Disagree**	

As reflected in Table 7, the respondents disagreed on the difficulty in establishing personnels the function to attain a set of defined goals and objectives which got the highest weighted mean of 2.36 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents disagreed (with a weighted mean of 2.36 and a rank of 1) on the difficulty of establishing personnel functions to attain defined goals and objectives is a positive indicator of the cooperative's human resource management capabilities. It suggests that the cooperatives are perceived as being relatively adept at aligning their workforce with their strategic goals and objectives.

Board members' human and social capital, along with their participation, can influence cooperative performance (Buang & Abu Samah, 2021). Member participation in governance, particularly through annual general meetings and board positions, is vital for cooperative operations and survival (Buang & Samah, 2021).

On the other hand, the said group of respondents also disagreed on the difficulty in commanding all the cooperative's resources, both physical and human which made the least weighted mean of 2.26 and the least rank of 3.

The finding that respondents disagreed on the difficulty of commanding the cooperative's resources, resulting in the least weighted mean of 2.26 and the lowest rank of 3, suggests a significant challenge for the cooperative. This disagreement highlights a potential disconnect between the cooperative's leadership and its members regarding resource management and utilization.

Effective leaders differ from other members, influencing decisions and fostering group cohesion (Hejkrlik et al., 2021). In natural resource management cooperatives, successful collective action depends on fulfilling specific conditions and understanding actors' interdependence (Hagedorn, 2013). The Board of Directors is central to cooperative success, with factors such as education, gender composition, and experience influencing leadership quality (Gebrehiwet & Tesfay, 2015).

The composite mean of 2.31 affirmed that the respondents disagreed on the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of commanding.

The composite mean of 2.31 indicating that respondents disagreed on the challenges faced by the selected cooperatives in terms of commanding suggests that there is a lack of consensus among the respondents regarding the difficulties encountered by these cooperatives.

In Terms of Coordinating

Table 8. *Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Coordinating*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Difficulty in organizing once a month regular meeting for the members of the board and yearly general assembly for the members	2.39	Disagree	2.5
Difficulty in disseminating significant developments or activities of the organization	2.39	Disagree	2.5
Difficulty in handling internal and external interpersonal relationships of the cooperative	2.41	Disagree	1
Composite Mean	**2.40**	**Disagree**	

As reported in Table 8, the respondents disagreed on the difficulty in handling internal and external interpersonal relationships of the cooperative which gained the highest weighted mean of 2.41 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents disagreed on the difficulty in handling internal and external interpersonal relationships of the cooperative, resulting in the highest weighted mean of 2.41 and the highest rank of 1, indicates a significant challenge in managing relationships within and outside the cooperative. This finding suggests that respondents perceive interpersonal relationships as one of the most challenging aspects of cooperative management.

Interpersonal relationships within a cooperative setting can be complex and multifaceted. The high weighted mean and rank suggest that respondents recognize the challenges involved in navigating these relationships, which can include internal dynamics and external interactions.

Interpersonal communication plays a vital role in organizational effectiveness and relationship-building. It is essential for the functioning and survival of organizations, acting as their lifeblood (D. Sethi & Manisha Seth, 2009). Effective interpersonal communication is influenced by factors such as self-efficacy, leadership behavior, and team cohesion (Sri Rahayu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the said group of respondents also disagreed on the difficulty in organizing once a month regular meeting for the members of the board and yearly general assembly for the members, and difficulty in disseminating significant developments or activities of the organizationwhich got the least equal weighted means of 2.39 and the least ranks of 2.5.

The finding that respondents disagreed on the difficulty in organizing monthly board meetings, yearly general assemblies, and disseminating significant developments, with a low weighted mean of 2.39 and a rank of 2.5, presents a curious situation. It suggests that while these activities are perceived as important, there's a lack of consensus on how challenging they actually are.

Some board members might find monthly meetings straightforward, while others may struggle with scheduling conflicts or finding time for preparation.

Board members' human and social capital, along with their participation, can influence cooperative performance (Buang & Abu Samah, 2021). Member participation in governance, particularly through annual general meetings and board positions, is vital for cooperative operations and survival (Buang & Samah, 2021). However, research on member participation in strategic decision-making remains limited.

The composite mean of 2.40 implied that the respondents disagreed on the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of coordination. The composite mean of 2.40, indicating disagreement among respondents about the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of coordination, highlights a key area of concern for these organizations. This finding suggests that there is no

clear consensus on the level of difficulty cooperatives experience in coordinating their activities.

In Terms of Controlling

Table 9. *Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants in Terms of Controlling*

Items	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Difficulty in accepting and approving management reports and review financial statements	2.33	Disagree	3
Difficulty in making sure to submit the annual and audited financial reports to the Cooperative Development Authority	2.36	Disagree	2
Difficulty in making corrective actions with regards to the unmet goals and objectives	2.41	Disagree	1
Composite Mean	**2.37**	**Disagree**	

As displayed in Table 9, the respondents disagreed on the difficulty in making corrective actions with regards to the unmet goals and objectiveswhich got the highest weighted mean of 2.41 and the highest rank of 1.

The finding that respondents disagreed on the difficulty in making corrective actions with regards to unmet goals and objectives, resulting in the highest weighted mean of 2.41 and the highest rank of 1, suggests a significant challenge for the cooperatives.

This disagreement highlights a potential disconnect between the cooperative's leadership and its members regarding how to effectively address shortcomings and course-correct when goals are not met.

Leadership plays a crucial role in preventing misunderstandings and can be carried out through both traditional and modern means (Sri Rahayu et al., 2023). To improve interpersonal communication, organizations should focus on simplifying language, controlling emotions, active listening, and using feedback (D. Sethi & Manisha Seth, 2009). Enhancing interpersonal skills can also serve as an effective employee retention strategy (Vandana Khetarpal, 2010).

Meanwhile, the said group of respondents also disagreed on the difficulty in accepting and approving management reports and review financial statements which made the least weighted mean of 2.33 and the least rank of 3.

The finding that respondents disagreed on the difficulty in accepting and approving management reports and reviewing financial statements, with a low weighted mean of 2.33 and a rank of 3, suggests that the cooperative might have well-established processes for handling management reports and financial statements, making the task seem relatively straightforward to respondents. Moreover, the cooperative might have a history of transparent and open communication regarding financial information, leading to a sense of trust and confidence among members.

Financial statements play a crucial role in evaluating the performance and financial condition of cooperatives (Dadi Akhmad Perdana et al., 2023). Proper financial reporting allows for year-to-year comparisons and helps assess whether performance has improved or declined. However, many cooperative managers lack the necessary skills to prepare and analyze financial statements effectively (Mohklas et al., 2023). This deficiency can lead to delays in Annual Member Meetings and hinder decision-making processes.

To address this issue, technical guidance and training sessions are being conducted to enhance the competency of cooperative management in financial reporting (Rima Elya Dasuki, 2023). Improved financial reporting practices are essential for maintaining accountability and increasing member trust in cooperatives (Bq. Anggun Hilendri, 2018). By implementing proper financial accounting standards and analysis techniques, cooperatives can better evaluate their financial performance, make informed decisions, and fulfill their accountability obligations to both the government and their members.

The composite mean of 2.37 signified that the respondents disagreed on the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of controlling. The composite mean of 2.37, indicating disagreement among respondents about the challenges faced by selected cooperatives in terms of "controlling," suggests a complex situation. It implies that there's no clear consensus on how difficult it is for cooperatives to manage their operations and resources effectively.

Relationship Between the Best Practices Utilized and Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants

As displayed in Table 10, when the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by cooperative participants were compared to the challenges they faced, the computed r-values of 0.50 for planning, 0.55 for both commanding and controlling, and 0.54 for coordinating have corresponding p- values of less than 0.05, thus rejecting the hypothesis.

These concluded that the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by cooperative participants have high significant relationships to the challenges they faced,in terms of planning, commanding, controlling, and coordinating.

Table 10. *Relationship Between the est Practices Utilized and Challenges Faced by Selected Cooperative Participants*

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Best Practices Versus Challenges:				
Planning	0.50	0.00001	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Commanding	0.55	9.80E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Coordinating	0.54	1.68E-6	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Controlling	0.55	9.80E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant

The computed correlation coefficients (r-values) of 0.50 for planning, 0.55 for commanding, 0.55 for controlling, and 0.54 for coordinating, with corresponding p-values less than 0.05, indicate a statistically significant relationship between the best practices utilized by cooperative participants and the challenges they face in terms of planning, commanding, controlling, and coordinating.

This finding suggests that the extent to which cooperative participants apply best practices is closely related to the challenges they encounter in these key areas of cooperative management. Here's an explanation of this significant relationship for each aspect: This means that the correlation coefficient of 0.50 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the best practices utilized in planning and the challenges faced in planning within the cooperative.

This suggests that the effectiveness of planning practices directly influences how well the cooperative can address planning challenges. Strong planning practices likely lead to better preparedness and the ability to navigate planning obstacles more effectively.

Moreover, a correlation coefficient of 0.55 suggests a strong positive relationship between the best practices in commanding and the challenges faced in commanding within the cooperative.

This implies that effective commanding practices, such as leadership strategies and decision-making processes, have a significant impact on the cooperative's ability to overcome commanding challenges. Implementing best practices in commanding can lead to improved coordination and resource utilization.

On the other hand, correlation coefficient of 0.55 indicates a strong positive relationship between the best practices in controlling and the challenges faced in controlling within the cooperative. Efficient control practices, such as financial management, risk assessment, and compliance measures, play a crucial role in addressing control challenges. Implementing best practices in controlling can enhance transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency.

Moreover, a correlation coefficient of 0.54 signifies a strong positive relationship between the best practices in coordinating and the challenges faced in coordinating within the cooperative. This means that effective coordination practices, including communication channels, decision-making processes, and collaboration strategies, are essential for overcoming coordination challenges. Implementing best practices in coordinating can enhance teamwork, alignment, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Relationship Between the Profile of the Participants and Their Responses on the Best Practices Utilized by the Cooperatives

Table 11. *Relationship Between the Profile of the Participants and Their Responses on the Best Practices Utilized by the Cooperatives*

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Type:				
Planning	0.01	0.93500	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Commanding	0.01	0.93500	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Coordinating	0.02	0.87043	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Controlling	0.06	0.62432	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Length of Operation:				
Planning	0.58	1.80E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Commanding	0.58	1.80E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Coordinating	0.59	1.00E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Controlling	0.59	1.00E-7	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Business Size:				
Planning	0.50		Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Commanding	0.54	1.68E-6	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Coordinating	0.54	1.68E-6	Reject Ho	Highly Significant
Controlling	0.53	2.83E-6	Reject Ho	Highly Significant

As revealed in Table 11, when the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives were compared to their types, the computed r-values of 0.01 for for both planning and commanding, 0.02 for coordinating, and 0.06 for controlling have corresponding p-values of more than 0.05, thus failing to reject the hypothesis..

These safely deduced that the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by the cooperatives have no significant relationships in terms of planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling when compared based on their types.

The computed correlation coefficients (r-values) of 0.01 for planning, 0.01 for commanding, 0.02 for coordinating, and 0.06 for controlling, with corresponding p-values greater than 0.05, indicate that there are no significant relationships between the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives and their types in terms of planning, coordinating, and controlling. This finding suggests that the particular type or category of cooperative does not strongly influence the implementation of best practices in these key management areas.

A correlation coefficient of 0.01 suggests an almost negligible relationship between the best practices in planning and the types of cooperatives.

This indicates that the specific type of cooperative does not significantly impact how planning best practices are applied or the challenges faced in planning.

On the other hand, a correlation coefficient of 0.01 indicates a very weak relationship between the best practices in commanding and the types of cooperatives.

The type of cooperative does not appear to be a determining factor in how commanding best practices are implemented or the challenges encountered in commanding.

The correlation coefficient of 0.02 signifies a minimal relationship between the best practices in coordinating and the types of cooperatives.

The type of cooperative does not seem to have a significant influence on how coordinating best practices are utilized or the challenges faced in coordinating. A correlation coefficient of 0.06 suggests a very weak relationship between the best practices in controlling and the types of cooperatives.

The specific type of cooperative does not play a substantial role in determining how controlling best practices are implemented or the challenges encountered in controlling.

Moreover, when the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives were compared to their length of operations, the computed r-values of 0.58 for for both planning and commanding, and 0.59 for both coordinating and controlling have corresponding p-values of less than 0.01, thus rejecting the hypothesis...

These safely concluded that the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by the cooperatives have high significant relationships in terms of planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling when compared based on their length of operations.

The computed correlation coefficients (r-values) of 0.58 for planning and commanding, and 0.59 for coordinating and controlling, with corresponding p- values less than 0.01, indicate a highly significant relationship between the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives and their length of operations in terms of planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. This finding suggests that the duration of a cooperative's operations significantly influences the implementation of best practices in these key management areas. Here's an explanation of this significant relationship for each aspect:

A correlation coefficient of 0.58 indicates a strong positive relationship between the best practices in planning and the length of operations of the cooperatives. This suggests that as cooperatives operate for a longer period, they are more likely to implement effective planning practices, indicating a positive correlation between experience and planning efficiency.

Moreover, a correlation coefficient of 0.58 signifies a strong positive relationship between the best practices in commanding and the length of operations of the cooperatives.

The significant correlation implies that as cooperatives have been in operation for a longer time, they are more adept at implementing commanding best practices, indicating a positive relationship between experience and effective leadership strategies.

The correlation coefficient of 0.59 indicates a strong positive relationship between the best practices in coordinating and the length of operations of the cooperatives. This suggests that longer-operating cooperatives are more proficient in implementing coordination best practices, highlighting the influence of experience on effective coordination strategies.

Meanwhile, a correlation coefficient of 0.59 suggests a strong positive relationship between the best practices in controlling and the length of operations of the cooperatives. The significant correlation implies that as cooperatives operate for a longer period, they are more skilled at implementing control best practices, indicating a positive association between experience and effective control mechanisms.

Finally, when the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives were compared to their business sizes, the computed r-values of 0.50 for planning, 0.54 for both commanding and coordinating, and 0.53 for controlling have corresponding p-values of less than 0.01, thus rejecting the hypothesis...

These safely generalized that the responses of the respondents on the best practices utilized by the cooperatives have high significant relationships in terms of planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling when compared based on their business sizes.

The computed correlation coefficients (r-values) of 0.50 for planning, 0.54 for commanding and coordinating, and 0.53 for controlling, with corresponding p- values less than 0.01, indicate a highly significant relationship between the best practices utilized by selected cooperatives and their business sizes in terms of planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. This finding suggests that the size of a cooperative's business significantly influences the implementation of best practices in these key management areas. Here's an explanation of this significant relationship for each aspect:

Moreover, a correlation coefficient of 0.50 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the best practices in planning and the business sizes of the cooperatives.

This suggests that the size of a cooperative's business has a notable impact on the implementation of effective planning practices. Larger cooperatives may have more complex planning needs and structures compared to smaller ones.

A correlation coefficient of 0.54 signifies a strong positive relationship between the best practices in commanding and the business sizes of the cooperatives. The significant correlation suggests that the size of a cooperative's business influences the effectiveness of commanding practices. Larger cooperatives may require more robust leadership strategies and decision-making processes.

Additionally, the correlation coefficient of 0.54 indicates a strong positive relationship between the best practices in coordinating and the business sizes of the cooperatives. This suggests that the size of a cooperative's business plays a significant role in the implementation of coordination best practices. Larger cooperatives may face more complex coordination challenges that require effective strategies.

Furthermore, a correlation coefficient of 0.53 suggests a strong positive relationship between the best practices in controlling and the business sizes of the cooperatives. The significant correlation implies that the size of a cooperative's business impacts the implementation of control best practices. Larger cooperatives may have more extensive control needs and structures to manage their operations effectively.

Conclusions

This study has shed light on the crucial relationship between best practices and the challenges faced by cooperatives in key management areas. The findings reveal that the implementation of best practices in planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling significantly impacts a cooperative's ability to overcome obstacles and achieve sustainable economic development. The analysis demonstrated that cooperatives with longer operational histories and larger business sizes are more likely to have adopted and implemented best practices across all four management areas. This suggests that experience and scale provide valuable insights and resources that contribute to effective management practices.

However, the study also found that the type of cooperative did not have a significant influence on the adoption of best practices. This suggests that effective management strategies can be universally applied across different cooperative types, emphasizing the importance of focusing on best practices regardless of the specific cooperative model.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the economic development and sustainability of cooperatives:

Cooperatives should prioritize the adoption and implementation of best practices in planning, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Continuous improvement efforts should be encouraged to ensure that management practices remain effective and responsive to evolving challenges.

Cooperatives should leverage the experience and expertise of longer- operating cooperatives and larger organizations to learn from their best practices and adapt them to their own unique contexts.

Cooperatives should actively engage in collaboration and knowledge sharing with other cooperatives, regardless of their type, to exchange best practices, learn from each other's experiences, and collectively address common challenges.

Cooperatives should invest in leadership development programs to equip leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively implement best practices and guide the cooperative towards sustainable growth.

Cooperatives should promote transparency and accountability in their operations by implementing robust control systems, ensuring open communication, and actively engaging members in decision-making processes.

Cooperatives should be agile and adaptable to changing circumstances by regularly reviewing and updating their strategic plans,

monitoring performance, and making necessary adjustments to their management practices. By implementing these recommendations, cooperatives can strengthen their management practices, enhance their operational efficiency, and ultimately achieve greater economic success and sustainability.

Future Researchers should conduct more in-depth studies to explore the specific best practices that are most effective for different types of cooperatives and in different industry sectors.

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