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An Assessment of Agricultural Cooperative's Leadership Style In Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine agricultural cooperative's leadership style among farmers in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty cooperative farmers were randomly selected from different cooperative societies across villages of six political wards in the study area. Data were collected using structure questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and chi square analysis were used to analyse the data collected for the study. Results of the findings showed that majority (65.0%) of the cooperative farmers interviewed were male, adult/primary education (56.7%), farm size of 1-2 hectares (49.2%), and 4 -7 years of farming experience (30.0%). Saving schedule among most (35.8%) of the respondents was monthly while 40% also indicated ₦100 - ₦500 was their saving per schedule. Results further revealed that majority (54.2%) indicates that appointment of leaders was by selection. Qualities mostly considered for selection include self-confidence (70%) and intelligence (69.2%). Democratic and transitional leadership styles were mostly practiced as indicated by majority 41.7% and 18.0% respectively. Chi square analysis showed that age and educational status were significantly related to leadership style at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The study concludes that democratic leadership style was mostly practiced among farmer's cooperative societies. Leaders are selected on the basis of intelligence, age and educational status. The study recommends that government and other relevant agencies should intensify effect to create awareness to cooperative farmers in the study area about leadership roles, qualities expected and the importance of leadership style to the success of their various agricultural cooperatives.

Key words: Assessment, cooperative societies, farmers, leadership style.

Introduction

Agriculture account for 70% of the non-oil export and provide over 80% of the food needs in Nigeria (Akande, 2002). Despite this contribution, farmers in the rural areas of the country often face some challenges to increase productivity such as; access to loan from commercial banks, purchase farm inputs and marketing of their products. At this stage farmers always start identifying their weak individual economic position. As a way of solving this issues they joining forces and initiate economic cooperation, by this farmers could pool their limited resources together to improve agricultural output and this will enhance socio-economic activities in the rural areas (Ebonyi and Jimoh, 2002).

The International Cooperative Alliance (1995) defines cooperative as an autonomous association of persons, united voluntarily to meet their common economic,

social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Several studies have identified some important roles of cooperative societies to farmers include production and marketing of farm products (Ibitoye, 2012), tools to create job and for the mobilization of resources for income (Bhuyan, 2007), granting credit facilities to members (Adefila, 2012), mobilizing and distributing credit to the farmers (Nweze, 2002; Omotesho, 2007), and tool towards improving farmers' productivity (Toluwase and Apata, 2013).

Leaders are the driving force in cooperative endeavours. The future of every cooperative depends upon the identification and development of active and committed leaders. Adefila and Madaki (2014) found that the quality of leadership is significantly related to farmers' cooperatives effectiveness for agricultural development. Northouse, (2007) viewed leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to attain a common goal. Gardner (1993) noted that leaders' styles encompass how they relate to others within and outside the organization, how they view themselves and their position, and to a very large extent - whether or not they are successful as leaders. If a task needs to be accomplished, how does a particular leader set out to get it done? If an emergency arises, how does a leader handle it? If the organization needs the support of the community, how does a leader go about mobilizing it? All of these depend on leadership style.

Leadership styles identified by Toor and Ofori, (2008) in a study on leadership include; democratic, authoritarian, autocratic, consultative, joint decision making, servant leadership, team management, transactional, transformational, laissez-faire, charismatic leadership, self-leadership, and spiritual leadership. Nadeem *et al.* (2012) stated that absence of leadership style brings about lack of direction from the leader resulting in low morale and lack of interest in the work.

Literatures have cited studies that revealed problems facing cooperative society to include bad leadership (Aribaba, 2013), poor supervision of societal activities by elected cooperative officials and government officials (Audu et al., 2007), poor management/leadership (Ihenacho et al., 2012), dishonesty among cooperative leaders (Onje, 2003) and no supervision of cooperative loan (Adeyemo and Bamire, 2005). The success and failure of an organisation depends on the quality of its leadership. It has therefore become imperative to conduct an empirical study that examines leadership style of agricultural cooperative in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The general objective of the study was to examine agricultural cooperatives leadership style among farmers in the study area. Specifically, the study was to examine the;

- i. socioeconomic characteristics of respondents
- ii. saving schedule and savings per schedule of respondents

- iii. leadership appointment procedure and leadership style among respondents
- iv. qualities consideration for appointment of leaders

Hypothesis of the study

HO: there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic characteristics of respondents and their leadership styles

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Ilorin West local government area equally known as the premier local governments was carved out in Ilorin in 1991 by the Federal Military Government. The local government host headquarter is in the town of Oja Oba. It has an area of 105 km² and a population of 364,666 at the 2006 census. It is made up of four districts of many villages. The districts are: Alanamu, Ajikobi, Magaji-Ngari and Wara/Osin/Egbejila which were further divided into eleven wards namely; Ajikobi, Sarumi, Ubandawak, Ogidi, Oko-Erin, Oju-Ekun, Alanamu, Adewole, Magaji-Ngari, Badari, and Wara/Osin/Egbejila. The inhabitants of the study area are majorly Yoruba speaking people. Others are Fulani, Nupes and Ibo. Major occupation is farming.

Sampling Technique

Sampling frame was made up from contact farmers both male and female who were members of agricultural cooperative societies in the study area. Six wards (Ajikobi, Oju-Ekun, Adeole, Ogidi, Badari and Oko-Erin) were randomly selected from the eleven wards of the study area. Interview schedule with open and close-ended questionnaires were randomly administered to 20 cooperative farmers in each selected wards between the periods of November to December, 2005. A total of one hundred and twenty respondents were used as sample size. The questionnaire solicited information from the respondents on issues that bother on the set objectives of the study.

Data Analytical tools

The socio-economic characteristics of farmers, savings schedules, Leadership appointment, leadership styles and qualities consideration for appointing leaders were the variable examined in the study. The descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean were used with Chi-square (X^2) analysis was used to test the hypothesis stated above.

The Chi-Square test statistic was calculated as:

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

Where o_{ij} = observed frequency in the row and i th column

e_{ij} = was calculated by the formula

$$e_{ij} = \frac{n_i (n_j)}{n}$$

Decision rule: Hypothesis stated was rejected whenever the calculated X^2 is greater or equal to the critical value and accepted when X^2 is lesser than the critical value.

Results and Discussion

Findings in table 1 revealed that 65% of the respondents were male. This shows that there were more males involve in cooperative than female. This study is agrees with Adeyemo and Bamire (2005) who found out in a study that cooperative farmers in South-western Nigeria are mostly males. Babatunde *et al.* (2007) had identified gender as variable that determines the amount of saving by cooperative farmers. Results in table 1 further revealed that majority (56.7%) of the respondents had primary education while few (16.7%) had no formal education. Table 1 also shows that 33.3% and 26.7% of the respondents indicated civil service and weaving jobs as secondary occupation. High percentage 41.7% cultivates between 1 – 2 hectares of farm land while 33.3% indicated 2.1 – 3.0 hectares of land. Majority (49.2%) of respondents were aged between 31 – 40 years of age. This shows that cooperative farmers in the study area constitute more of agile farmers who are still at their productive age. Kilsfalvi (2000) stated that leaders' demographic heterogeneity, which is variation in sex, age and job tenure of leaders who are open-minded with wider range of ideas influence escalation of commitment.

Data analysis illustrated in table 2 shows that about 35.8%, 21.7, and 23.3% of the respondents indicated their saving pattern were monthly, weekly, and daily respectively. Table 2 further revealed saving schedules among 40% and 25% of respondents were ₦100 - ₦500 and ₦ 600 - ₦ 1000. Results in table 3 revealed that majority (54.2%) of the respondents indicated leadership appointment was by selection in their various agricultural cooperatives. This means that certain criteria are been followed and quality are expected to be possessed by the prospective leader before been selected. However, results in table 3 also showed that most 41.7% cooperative farmers indicated democratic leadership style as their leadership style. Robert (2005) have noted that democratic leaders were the most successful leaders overall because they empowered their followers.

The table 4 shows that majority indicated Empathy, Intelligence, Competency, Consistency and Self-consideration as quality needed to be a cooperative leader. It shows that Self-confidence (84%) and intelligence (83%) were most considered among cooperative farmers for selecting leaders. This implies that farmers are interested in the intelligent and self-confident leaders who can represent them. This finding corroborate with studies by (Hedlund *et al.*, 2003; Caruso *et al.*, 2002; Zaccaro *et al.*, 2004) that established correlation between intelligence and leadership effectiveness. Zaccaro *et al.* (2004) further ascertained that the positive correlation in a field study appears to be robust.

Results of the Chi square analysis in table 5 revealed that farmers' age and educational status of respondent were significant at 5% level of significant relationship with leadership style among cooperative farmers. This report implies that the higher the age and level of education of agricultural cooperative leaders the more they are influenced in leadership style. This finding further affirmed self-confidence and intelligence qualities as indicated by majority in table 4 as consideration for selecting leaders who are aged and educated. Aged farmers with several years of experience will be able to lead the affairs of their cooperative with good moral and ethical behaviour in an atmosphere of justice and equity. Also, fairly educated members could also represent the organization where necessary with self-confidence. This result is similar to report by Mgbade and Agumagu (2007) that established strong relationship between age and experience as important factors influencing the performance of local leaders in sustaining agricultural production.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on primary data collected from cooperative farmers and analysed in the study, it was concluded that democratic style of government was most practiced by farmer's cooperative leaders, although appointment were mostly by selection, such persons should be highly intelligent and must be self-confidence. These criteria had simply put more light to why farmers' age and educational status were significant to leadership style among cooperative farmers in the study area.

The study recommends that government and other relevant agencies should intensify effect to create awareness to cooperative farmers in the study area about leadership roles, qualities expected and the importance of leadership style to the success of their various agricultural cooperatives.

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Table1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (N=120)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	78	65
Female	42	35
Age Group (years)		
21 - 30	30	25.0
31 – 40	59	49.2
41 – 50	20	16.7
51 and above	11	9.2
Educational Status		
No formal Education	20	16.7
Quranic Education	10	8.3
Adult/ primary Education	68	56.7
Secondary Education	15	12.5
Tertiary Education	07	5.8
Farm size (hectre)		
1.0 – 2.0	50	41.7
2.1 – 3.0	40	33.3
3.1 – 4.0	22	18.3
4.1 – 5.0	8	6.7
Year of Practice		
1 -3	21	17.5
4 – 7	36	30.0
8 – 11	15	12.5
12 – 15	25	20.8
16 – 19	15	12.5
20 – 23	8	6.7
Secondary Occupation		
Trading	23	19.2
Weaving	32	26.7
Civil servant	40	33.3
Tailoring	25	20.8

Table 2: Savings Schedule of Respondents

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Schedule of savings</i>		
Daily	28	23.3
Weekly	26	21.7
Monthly	43	35.8
Yearly	12	10.0
As intended	11	9.2
Total	120	100
<i>Saving per schedule (Naira)</i>		
100 – 500	48	40.0
600 – 1000	30	25.0
1100 – 1500	18	15.0
1600 – 2000	12	10.0
2100 - 2500	9	7.5
26000 and above	5	4.2
Total	120	100

Table 3: Leadership Appointments and Leadership Style of Leaders among Respondents

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Appointment of leaders</i>		
Election	30	25.0
Selection	65	54.2
Self- imposed	10	8.3
Government-imposed	10	8.3
No response	5	4.2
Total	120	100
<i>Types of leadership style</i>		
Democratic	50	41.7
Autocratic	12	10.5
Pseudo-Democratic	15	12.5
Transitional	22	18.0
Charismatic	21	17.5
Total	120	100

Table 4: Quality Consideration for Leadership Appointment among Respondents

<i>Expected Qualities</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Empathy	79	65.8	41	34.2
Intelligence	83	69.2	37	30.8
Competency	75	62.5	45	37.5
Consistency	78	65.0	42	35.0
Consideration	50	4.7	70	58.3
Self – confidence	84	70.0	36	30.0

Table 5: Results of Chi square analysis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Chi Square Value</i>	<i>Degree of freedom</i>	<i>Critical Value</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Financial status	12.8133	12	21.0261	Not significant
Educational status	33.1317	16	26.2962	Significant
farmers' age	34.1308	16	26.2962	Significant
Farm size	10.8008	16	26.2962	Not significant

Significant at 0.05level of significant