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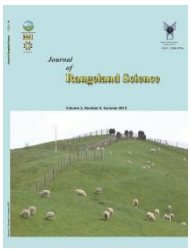

Full Length Article:

Comparison of Cooperatives' Members and Experts' Views on Public Participation in Forestry and Rangeland By-Products (Case Study: Cooperative Companies, Lorestan Province, Iran)

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Abstract. This research was conducted to investigate the factors contributing to the failure in the forestry and rangeland by-product cooperative companies in Lorestan province, Iran. A descriptive-correlative research design was used. The statistical populations were 1100 people divided into two groups of experts from natural resource agency in Lorestan province and members of cooperative companies. The sample size was 183 persons. Sampling method was simple random type using Neyman–Pearson model. Data were analyzed based on descriptive statistics (T-Test) and Pearson correlation method. Single-sample t-test results showed that the views of the two groups on the effects of technical and economic barriers causing failure in cooperatives companies were the same, but the expert's views were different for managerial, educational, cultural, social, and legal indicators. Also the results of independent t-test between the two groups showed that the views of both experts and members for economic, managerial, educational, and legal barriers were the same, but their opinions for cultural, social and technical barriers were different. The results of cooperatives' member's views ranked indicators as managerial, legal, educational, cultural, social, economic, and technical barriers. For the views of experts they were ranked as cultural, social, managerial, economic, legal, technical, and educational barriers.

Key words: Cooperation, By-products, Cooperatives company, Investment

Introduction

Renewable natural resources are quite vital and the most important factor of sustainable economic and social development. An important part of these renewable resources is the forests and Rangelands (OPP, 2000). Human local communities in Iran use various forms of forests and rangelands and their products are forage, mushroom, trees, saps, etc. After Islamic Revolution in 1977, the subject of public cooperation in economic and social activities in the form of cooperative organizations considered as the article 44 of the constitution as the second official economic cooperation with public and private sectors was adopted (Askari, 1998).

In a study entitled "natural resources management in India", it was stated that the management of natural resources can be combined to form a cooperative partly for such purposes as effectiveness, sustainability, equity and satisfactory utilization of natural resources and the adoption of political, social, local communities.

In this phase, therefore, the policies of sectorial cooperation and performers of natural resources have taken into consideration the development of cooperative companies in the field of natural resources (Wald, 1993). With respect to the importance of rangelands and forests and due to the increasing destruction of forests and rangelands and the economic, social, environmental and even natural resources' policies of the cooperatives in developing these activities, it was decided that the cooperatives contributing to the lack of success in the forestry and rangeland by-products were studied to obtain and study the factors that influence the strategies being appropriate to sustain these activities. This is the fundamental question about the views of the members and experts that what factors caused the failure in forestry and rangeland by-products cooperatives in Lorestan province. What is the preferred view for each of these factors? What are the practical strategies to tackle them? Are the views of the members and experts the same on factors contributing to this failure?

In a study entitled "the appropriate codified promotional structure for the agricultural cooperatives' workers and managers", it was concluded that they measure the access level of cooperatives to promotion services. Often in the general assembly, the loans and credit unions can be effective in promoting the participation of their members (Naraghi, 2011). In a study entitled "the pathology of agricultural production cooperatives (case study: Hamadan province, Kaboodar-ahang)", it was concluded that the damage to the threatened cooperatives includes the limited knowledge of the members on the principles and philosophy of production cooperative establishment, their strong tendency to provide services, poor education of members, limited capital and lack of trust (Sadie and Azami, 2007). In a study entitled "factors influencing the success or failure of production cooperatives in Ardabil province", a regression analysis found that the variables of participation, ease of marketing, technology use, social capital, family participation and expensive materials were included in the equation and totally, 86% of them were able to explain the changes of dependent variables (Abbasi, 2008). The factors such as lack of cooperation and responsiveness of the authorities, the costly supply of raw materials and high cost, high-rate loans, low capital, poor service delivery and lack of proper information on various issues important to agricultural cooperatives in the region have been influential (Khfayy, 2009). In a study of factors affecting the success of fishery cooperatives in Kermanshah Province, it was concluded that the independent variables (human and social aspects, the legal, institutional and policy

contexts, members` knowledge of the principles of cooperation and economic factors) and the success of cooperatives are significantly related (Moradi and Ali Beigi, 2010). In a study of factors affecting the success of agricultural cooperatives in rural economic development in the central part of Khodabandeh, it was concluded that the cooperatives are facing various structural and functional problems (Hazraty *et al*., 2010). The aim of this study was to compare the cooperatives` members and experts' viewpoints on the factors that contributed to the failure of the forestry and rangeland by-product cooperatives in Lorestan province, Iran.

Materials and Methods

Lorestan province with an area of 28,000 km is located in the central Zagros in Western Iran. Natural resources, rangeland and forest have been estimated as 2 million ha, nearly 885,000 ha and 1,200,000 ha. Weather and climate are suitable for a wide variety of medicinal, edible and industrial plants. In order to reach the goals of utilization plans for transferring non-indigenous knowledge to local indigenous beneficiaries, creating jobs, raising income, seeking public participation in natural resource conservation, and systematic and scientific utilization, the experts' views led to collect information of 10 cooperatives utilizing forest and rangeland by-products in such cities as Khoram-abad, Poldokhtar, Noor-abad, Kouh-dasht, Ali-goodarz (Fig. 1).

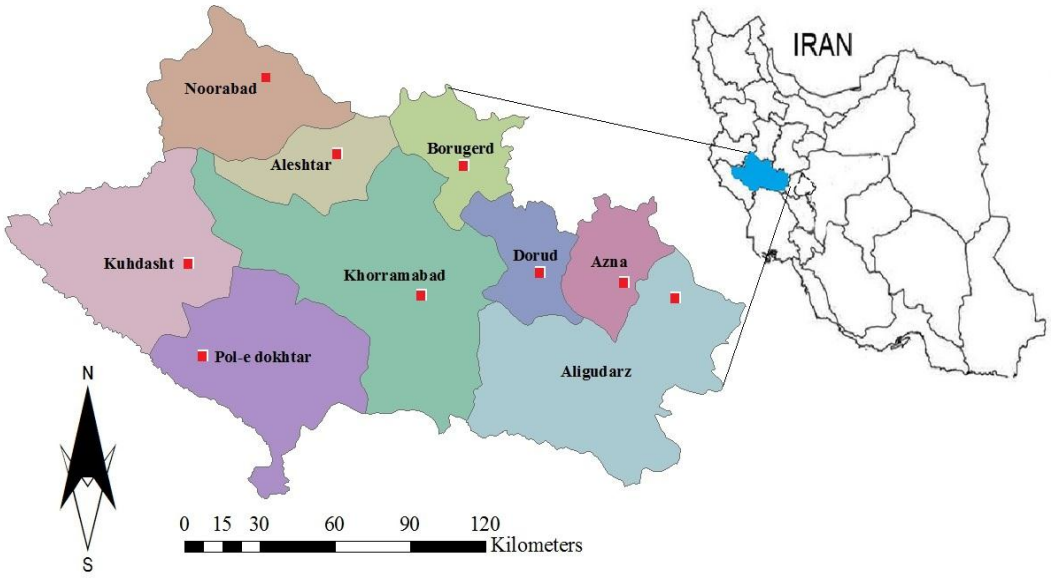

Fig. 1. Map of study area (red dots represent the cooperatives)

The study was based on an applied approach to fieldwork, descriptive statistics and correlation. The population consists of members and experts from the cooperatives that were evaluated and compared to factors affecting the lack of success in forestry and rangeland by-products cooperatives of Lorestan province. The evaluation was an inductive type. The population consists of 1100 experts and specialists from Lorestan Province Natural Resources Office and other related agencies. Data were gathered through library studies and a five-item questionnaires (using Likert scale).

The single-sample t-test was used. Regarding five-item (1 to 5) research questions, significant t-test value equaled to 3. Using a sample size of Nyman-

Pearson, 112 members and 71 experts were asked to respond to the questionnaires.

Simple random sampling was also conducted in order to study the validity of a logical approach and through consultation with the expertized advisors. In order to question the reliability of the questionnaire regarding the specific important questions of the qualitative research, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used (khfayy, 2009). In this study, Cronbach alpha coefficient was analyzed via SPSS software V.18 and considering the total population for all items, Cornbach alpha coefficient was 0.77.

Results

Characteristics

The average age of the members was 38 years, the youngest was 38, the youngest was 18 in the first age group (young), the oldest was 70 in the fifth (old), and the majority of working persons in the enterprises were young adults. Thus, the age classification is to provide the employment opportunities to the minimum juvenile group. Among 112 members of the cooperative, 35 persons (31.3%) were female and 77 (68.8%) were male; therefore, the majority of people working in the cooperatives were men and were employed in rural areas. 49.1 percent of the members were illiterate, 20.5% was high school graduates, 81.8% had a two-year college degree and 11.6 percent had a bachelor degree that was necessary in this regard, and thus, provisions should be considered. The company has been able to live in the village that holds the diploma of higher education; they are expected to provide job opportunities. The average age of the experts in this study was 34.65 as the youngest one was 25 years and the oldest one was 72 years old. Among 71 experts, 66 (93%) were male and 5 (7%) were women, 1.4 percent with a diploma, 14% with a two-year college degree, 56.3% bachelor, 26.8 % a master degree, and 1.4 percent a ph.D degree.

Descriptive statistics

The evaluation of cooperatives were done by 6 separate structures under the title of technical, economic, culture, social, management, educational and legal barriers. The ranking descriptions of all the variables in each section were presented based on Coefficient Variation (CV%). As the results show, the opinions of the members in comparison with the views of the experts were different. Thus, the most effective view on the lack of success in cooperative companies was management barriers.

From the viewpoints of the members, the issues were ranked concerning their importance as follows: management, legal, educational, cultural, social and economic issues and from the viewpoints of experts, they were classified as cultural-social, management, economic, legal, technical and educational barriers, the last of which effectively explains the lack of success in the cooperatives in Lorestan Province (Table 1).

Table 1. Prioritizing technical barriers in terms of variation coefficient from the viewpoints of respondents

Barriers	Cooperative Members			Experts		
	Mean	CV%	Rank	Mean	CV%	Rank
Management	3.54	0.17	1	3.76	0.21	2
Legal	3.39	0.17	2	3.49	0.22	4
Educational	3.95	0.19	3	3.67	0.29	5
Cultural	3.50	0.21	4	3.58	0.14	1
Economic	4.11	0.20	5	3.95	0.21	3
Technical	3.10	0.23	6	3.14	0.29	6

Likert scale: (1= very low, 2= low, 3= medium, 4= high, 5= very high)

Single-sample t-test for the evaluation of population views

To test the research hypotheses, the respondents' views were used through a single-sample t-test. In this case, the research questions were designed based on a five-option scale and the test values were equaled to 3. To test this hypothesis, H_o assumes that the mean (μ) is the hypothesis which is greater than 3 and H_1 assumes that the mean (μ) is equal or less than 3 as underpinned by single-sample t-test results which show the experts' views (Table 2) and members' comments on cooperatives (Table 3).

The results showed that two groups of views were the same in terms of the effects of economic and technical barriers on the failure of cooperatives under study, but the effects of management, educational, cultural, social and legal factors were different. Consequently, according to the experts' views, the effectiveness of the barriers is arranged on a top-down basis as follows: economic, management, educational, cultural, social, and legal ones. For the views of the members, it is as follows: economic, educational, management, legal, cultural-social, and technological ones. The significance level of 95% was for all hypotheses except technical barrier which is the failure of cooperatives. So, significance level was smaller than the error level; therefore, H_o is accepted and H_1 is rejected. Also, lower and upper limits were positive; thus, the average of all hypotheses except technical one was greater than 3. From the views of other respondents, all hypotheses except technical one were effective in the breakage of cooperatives.

Table 2. Single-sample t-test research hypotheses based on expert opinion of members

Barriers	No.	Mean	SD	t	Range	95% of Level	
						High Limit	Low Limit
Economic	71	3.94	0.84	9.49**	0.94	1.14	0.74
Management	71	3.76	0.80	7.99**	0.76	0.95	0.57
Educational	71	3.67	0.07	5.26**	0.67	0.92	0.41
Cultural	71	3.58	0.50	9.68**	0.58	0.70	0.46
Legal	71	3.48	0.78	5.20**	0.48	0.67	0.29
Technical	71	3.14	0.91	0.29 ns	0.14	0.35	- 0.07

**significant at 1% probability level, ns = non significant

Table 3. Results of one-sample t-test research hypothesis as viewed by cooperative members

Barriers	No.	Mean	SD	t	Range	95% of Level	
						High Limit	Low Limit
Economic	112	4.06	0.82	13.6**	0.94	1.14	0.74
Management	112	3.93	0.75	13.2**	0.76	0.95	0.57
Educational	112	3.63	0.61	10.8**	0.67	0.92	0.41
Cultural	112	3.53	0.62	9.10**	0.58	0.70	0.46
Legal	112	3.33	0.72	4.82**	0.48	0.67	0.29
Technical	112	3.05	0.73	0.80 ns	0.14	0.35	- 0.07

**significant at 1% probability level, ns= non significant

Independent t-test for the comparison of two sets of population

The independent t-test results showed that the views of both experts and members were the same in terms of the economic, management, educational and legal barriers but based on cultural- social and technical barriers, they were different (Table 4).

Table 4. Independent t-test results based on mean of two independent experts and members of cooperatives

Barriers	Variance	Leaven F-Test	T-Test
Technical	Balance	6.03*	0.69 ns
	Imbalance		0.66 ns
Economic	Balance	0.01 ns	- 0.93 ns
	Imbalance		- 0.92 ns
Cultural	Balance	19.74**	2.55*
	Imbalance		2.75*
Management	Balance	0.00 ns	1.27 ns
	Imbalance		1.20 ns
Educational	Balance	0.10 ns	-1.98 ns
	Imbalance		-0.83 ns
Legal	Balance	2.48 ns	-0.46 ns
	Imbalance		-0.44 ns

**, * and ns= significant at 1% and 5% probability level and non significant

Correlations between experts and members' views

The results of correlation coefficient showed that the views of experts and members regarding economic, cultural, social, educational, legal and management barriers were the same and most of them were significantly correlated ($P<0.01$). For the experts' views, the technical barriers were not significantly related with the other barriers, but from the views of members, technical barriers were significantly related with the educational and legal barriers ($P<0.05$) (Table 5).

Table 5. Results of correlation coefficients of hypotheses from the respondents' viewpoints

Barriers	Population	Technical	Economic	Cultural	Management	Educational
Economic	Experts	-0.00				
	Members	-0.07				
Cultural	Experts	0.02	0.39**			
	Members	-0.06	0.27**			
Management	Experts	0.05	0.43**	0.35**		
	Members	0.03	0.43**	0.60**		
Educational	Experts	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.32**	
	Members	-0.19*	0.47**	0.65**	0.61**	
Legal	Experts	0.08	0.11	0.41**	0.32**	0.61**
	Members	0.24*	0.24*	0.37**	0.66**	0.42**

* and ** = significance at 1% and 5% probability level, respectively

Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicated that the views of the members and experts regarding cultural-social, management, economic, legal, educational and technical barriers were effective on the lack of success in the forestry and rangeland by-products utilization cooperatives in Lorestan province. Therefore, in terms of the community, both views on the technical barriers had little effects but other barriers had different effects. This was due to the difficult way of forestry and rangeland cooperatives and it caused the dissatisfaction of the members. Moreover, the members' incomes were not touchable. So, the activities of cooperatives were not so significant and acceptable and the majority of these companies were inadequate. When the members were not effective in their companies, the control and/or laws enacted carelessly were tuned with the local customs; also, when the groups and members do not follow the legal procedure, competition over the utilization of byproducts becomes uncontrollable and the government does

not act to fulfill its obligations regarding the protection of cooperatives, and these companies do not give any loans. Consequently, the members are not willing to do their jobs. The efficiency of members was greatly under the influences of legal and management barriers to the success in the forestry and rangeland cooperatives and experts think that legal barriers' impacts range from medium to high. According to the experts' views, the cultural–social barriers affect the lack of success in the cooperatives under study but according to the views of the members, cultural–social barriers' influences range from medium to high. Comments of members and experts' view were compared and it has been shown that the views of both groups were the same in terms of the economic, management, educational and legal barriers, but the views on the cultural–social and technical barriers were different.

From the experts and members' views, it may be concluded that there was a significant difference between economic, cultural-social, management and legal barriers and also, there was a significant relationship with the education. Experts' views regarding technical barriers were not correspondent with other barriers, but member's views were in correspondence with technical, logical and cultural barriers. This difference between the views was due to the fact that the members believe in training, education and promotion programs and the proper implementation of the rules and instructions if the technical barriers are going to be overcome.

Members' limited information on the principles and philosophy of the establishment of by-product cooperatives, poor training of cooperatives' members, limited funding and lack of trust are the main explanations for the failure in this study, and they were referred to a study (Sadie and Azami, 2007). There is a significant correlation between management practices and the success of cooperatives in this study and also other studies (Bruynis *et al*., 1997). The economic, educational, social and managerial factors (planning and policy), insufficient legislation and lack of proper methods to apply promotion are difficult and important to the development of these cooperatives (Bostani *et al*., 2009). Several factors affected the success of the cooperatives which may be in the form of a variable (the legal, institutional and policy, members' knowledge of principles, human factors, and social and corporate factors) classified in this paper and another one (Rostami Tabor, 2007). The main cause of cooperatives' failure was at first low-income economy and second, it is the factors of low education, awareness of members, limited resources, infrastructure and loans given to the cooperatives. The factors affecting the success of cooperatives are not mentioned in this study and another one (Hazraty *et al*., 2010). Subsequently, the research suggestion for the evaluation of technical barriers to the lack of success and success in natural resources cooperatives are the feasibility study on forming cooperatives, natural resources graduates, evaluation of economic and social problems, giving priority to the cooperative over contracting out programs, cooperative banking reform policies, and banking and credits in order to provide long-term and low-rate loans, a dynamic center as "cooperative counsel and supervision" to provide scientific and technical services to the cooperatives to evaluate and review rules, guidelines and the objectives in a way that they meet the needs of cooperatives and social and economic development, training and education-advocacy, educational workshops while designing and creating a database on cooperatives using radio programs and popular newspapers.

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مقایسه دیدگاه اعضای تعاونی و کارشناسان در خصوص عوامل مؤثر بر عدم موفقیت شرکت‌های تعاونی احیا و بهره‌برداری از محصولات فرعی مرتعی و جنگلی در استان لرستان

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چکیده. با توجه به گذشت بیش از نیم قرن از پیدایش شرکت‌های تعاونی کشاورزی، این شرکت‌ها نتوانسته‌اند نقش متناسب با گستردگی و اهمیت بخش کشاورزی و منابع طبیعی در اقتصاد ملی ایفا کنند و جایگاه واقعی خود را در توسعه و ترویج کشاورزی و منابع طبیعی پایدار پیدا نمایند. این تحقیق با هدف مقایسه دیدگاه اعضای تعاونی‌ها و کارشناسان در خصوص عوامل مؤثر بر عدم موفقیت شرکت‌های تعاونی احیاء و بهره برداری از محصولات فرعی مرتعی و جنگلی در استان لرستان صورت گرفته است. تحقیق حاضر از نوع توصیفی پیمایشی و کاربردی است و جامعه آماری آن شامل کارشناسان و اعضا شرکت‌های تعاونی استان شامل ۱۱۰۰ نفر می باشند که با استفاده از روش نیمن- پیرسن ۱۸۳ نفر به عنوان نمونه به صورت تصادفی مورد مطالعه قرار گرفتند. داده ها بر اساس آمار توصیفی (آزمون t) و روش همبستگی پیرسون تجزیه و تحلیل شد. نتایج آزمون t تک نمونه ای نشان داد که نظرات دو گروه در خصوص میزان تاثیر موانع اقتصادی و فنی در عدم موفقیت شرکت‌های تعاونی احیاء و بهره برداری مورد تحقیق یکسان، ولی نظرات کارشناسان و اعضا تعاونی‌ها در خصوص میزان تاثیر عوامل مدیریتی، آموزشی، فرهنگی- اجتماعی، قانونی متفاوت است. هم چنین نتایج t مستقل نشان داد که دیدگاه هر دو گروه کارشناسان و اعضا تعاونی‌ها، نسبت به موانع اقتصادی، مدیریتی، آموزشی و قانونی یکسان اما نسبت به موانع فرهنگی- اجتماعی و فنی متفاوت است. نتایج اولویت‌بندی نشان داد که از دیدگاه اعضا تعاونی‌ها به ترتیب، موانع مدیریتی، قانونی، آموزشی، فرهنگی- اجتماعی، اقتصادی و فنی و از دیدگاه کارشناسان نیز به ترتیب، موانع فرهنگی- اجتماعی، مدیریتی، اقتصادی، قانونی، فنی، آموزشی در عدم موفقیت شرکت‌های تعاونی مورد تحقیق نقش داشته‌اند.

کلمات کلیدی: تعاون، محصولات فرعی، شرکت‌های تعاونی، سرمایه گذاری