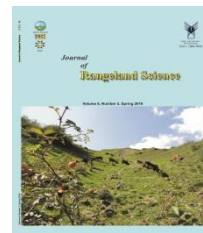


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Research and Full Length Article:

Investigating Factors Affecting the Success of Official and Unofficial Range Management Cooperatives in Three Provinces of Iran

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Abstract. The aim of this study was to investigate the members' opinions regarding the influencing factors contributing the success of range management cooperatives in three provinces as Markazi, Tehran and Isfahan of Iran in 2014. The study populations were board and ordinary members of cooperatives (N=750) and the samples were selected using Krejcie and Morgan method through stratified and random sampling (n=98). Data of questionnaires were collected using scaling method. Statistical tests of Chronbach's alpha coefficient indicated high validity and reliability of data. The results demonstrated that the unofficial range management cooperatives were more successful compared to the official ones, but in overall, both cooperatives were not successful in achieving the given goals in the system and satisfying the expectations of members. To study the effects of independent variables on the success of both cooperatives, path analysis and multivariate regression were used. The results showed that the factors of education, technical skills of managers, social participation, financial elements, performance of public departments and knowledge of members as the promotion factors had the most impact on the success of the official cooperatives. For unofficial cooperatives, education, financial fairness, comprehension skills of managers, experience and skills of members and performance of public departments had the highest effects on the success of these cooperatives.

Key words: Cooperatives, Range management, Success, Evaluation

Introduction

Natural resources are an integral part of human life (Krywkow and Hare, 2008). Many researchers believe that rural participation in the conservation and protection of natural resources is essential (Fakoy *et al.*, 2007). The cooperative sector as one of the three economic sectors of the Iran, with public and private sector has an importance role in development of country (Manuchehri *et al.*, 2012).

Cooperatives by creating jobs, increasing and balancing of rural income can led to sustainable development (Lee, 2007). Uche *et al.* (2010) in study on agricultural cooperatives in Nigeria found that the formation of agricultural cooperatives in developing countries leads to participation in decision-making and it creates a sense of trust and a sense of belonging in the agricultural cooperatives. Jones (2003) concluded that forestry cooperatives reduce deforestation and provide proper management of forests. Similarly, range management cooperatives may be one of the solutions that can be employed to encourage the participation of villagers and rangers in making effective decisions in order to avoid the destruction of natural resources and enhance the cooperation between government and rangers in this regard (Zamani and Abdi, 2009). Official and unofficial range management cooperatives as the executive of range management plans can play significant roles in improving the exploitation system and restoring the rangelands. Therefore, it is essential that the performance of these cooperatives be evaluated by the authorities concerned with the reservation and restoration of rangelands and other predetermined goals. So far, some researches emphasis on the success of cooperatives and factors influencing on it. In the following, some of the results obtained are presented. Harda (2003) found business training and improving job skills and knowledge of

members were important factors affecting cooperative success. Nyoro and Lsaac (2005) showed investment in productive activities and access to credit and bank loans were important factors affecting the success of cooperatives. Other factors as strong management (Vanderrwalt, 2005), members participating in the cooperative (Bhuyan, 2007) were important factors for success of cooperatives. Communication between members, proper management and internal and external coordination could also affect the success of cooperatives (Atmis *et al.*, 2009).

Xiangyuo (2010) stated that government support, participation of cooperatives, the cooperative's experience and knowledge of managers and financial power were important. Garnevska *et al.* (2011) in China stated that legal stability, leadership, commitment, technical and financial support from the government, member participation and their awareness were effective in success of cooperatives. In the same country, Wang (2012) suggested the guidance and support of the government, members' participation, good managers, satisfy the financial support of members were important factors in success of cooperatives. Mau Dung (2011) In Vietnam showed that the lack of skilled personnel and lack of investment were the major problem in success of agricultural cooperatives.

Here in Iran, Isfahani and Khazaei (2010) showed that members experience, education, facilities, and membership bank facilities, had significant effects on the broiler chicken cooperative success. Garavandi and Ali Beigi (2011) found lack of financial and legal problems, policies, mismanagement, lack of knowledge and technical information were important factors in depression and the disability of calf farming cooperatives in Kermanshah, Iran. Shahraki (2011) found positive relationships between education, the presence of capable

managers, available resources and facilities as important factors on the success of range management cooperative in Golestan province, Iran. Shemshad *et al.* (2012) found support services; loan and marketing were important factors in the development of job creation in natural resources cooperatives in Golestan province, Iran.

Maleki (2012) in study of the reason of inactivity of range management cooperatives in North-western provinces of Iran reported that financial problems were important elements leading to the weakening and inactivity of cooperatives. Biranvand (2015) suggested some factors such as economic, education, administrative, socio-cultural and legal barriers played an important role in the failure of natural resources cooperative companies in the Lorestan province, Iran.

According to the literature, it can be concluded that the factors affecting the success of cooperative companies may be classified as internal and externals. The aim of this study was to investigating effective factors contributing to the success of official and unofficial range management cooperatives in three province of Iran as Markazi, Tehran and Isfahan.

Materials and Methods

For data collection, two methods of documentary and field study were used. According to this, members and managers of cooperative were judged in terms of the success of the cooperatives in achieving the predetermined goals in 2014. Scope of the research consisted of individuals who were the members of range management cooperatives in Markazi, Tehran and Isfahan provinces. According to this manner 13 range management cooperative were selected in Markazi province (contains: Anjodan, Qohie Paradise, Mohammad Gholi Winter quarters, Aznojan, Akhtaj, Babaklo, Shrub in Alla, Kalako, Ashtian Mount), Tehran province (Tochal, Darvazeh, Div

Asiab) and Isfahan province (Qav Khoni).

Because of few number of cooperatives managers, all of personals including the managers, board of directors, inspectors and ordinary members were considered as the statistical society. To estimate the statistical samples frequency, Morgan-Korjessi method was used. Thus, among 647 members of cooperatives, 228 people and among the 103 members of unofficial cooperatives, 70 people were selected. To distribute the samples among the given cooperatives, proportional assignment formula was used (Jolliffe, 1986). For data collection, two methods of direct observation and survey were used. According to the research goals, both official and unofficial cooperatives questionnaires were designed to assess the members' opinions regarding the performance of cooperatives.

In the pilot study, validity and reliability indices were tested using Chronbach's Alpha (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Test results indicated that the questions prepared in each questionnaire for each index had relative suitable validity and reliability, as well as essential efficiency to construct the desired concepts.

The success degree of cooperatives was considered as dependent variable and internal factors (age of members, education of members, knowledge of members, social participation, training, financial ability, technical skills of managers, financial elements, comprehension skills of managers, skills and experiences of members, cultural factors, financial contribution, members vision, number of livestock, individualism of members, risk-taking, financial fairness and management style) and external factors (performance of public organizations, performance of media) were considered as independent variables. To identify and describe the status of cooperatives the descriptive

statistical method were used and comparison between official and unofficial cooperatives were made using Kruskal- Wallis Test. For assessing of relationship between two group of cooperatives the Spearman correlation test were used and finally to determine the effective variables on the success of cooperative the multivariate regression analysis and path analysis were used (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

The Frequency of success both official and unofficial cooperatives based on members' opinion is shown in Fig. 1. Result showed that 58.8% and 25.8% of official and unofficial cooperatives members were conceded as weak and very weak, respectively. The unofficial cooperatives were more successful than the official ones. Amini and Ramezani (2006) found the same results. But the findings of Shahraki (2011) were contrary to the current findings.

In view of the age (Fig. 2), the elderly and mid-age members of both cooperatives showed the highest frequency. The members of official cooperatives were older than those of the unofficial ones. There were no significant relationships between the age and success of cooperatives ($r=-0.08^{ns}$). Findings obtained by Shahraki (2011) were contrary to the current findings.

For education of members, there were 19 and 49%, illiterate and more than 61 and 36% receiving primary education for official and unofficial cooperatives, respectively. In other words, 80% of members of official cooperatives had no high education, thereby demonstrating that range management cooperatives did not generally consist of educated human forces. Undoubtedly, there are some obstacles for their success. According to Fig. 3, the members of official cooperatives were more educated than the unofficial ones ($p<0.05$).

There was weak correlation ($r=0.12$) between the education of individuals and the success of cooperatives. Shahraki (2011), Karami and Agahi (2010) found the same results. The frequency of knowledge and recognition of cooperatives members are shown in Fig. 4. Result showed that only 25% of members both official and unofficial cooperatives had higher knowledge and almost 75% had no knowledge in this regard. In general, recognition of cooperation and range management principles at such a level can be regarded as an obstacle for the success of cooperatives. There was significant correlation ($r=0.29^{**}$) between the knowledge of members and the success of cooperatives ($p<0.01$). Shahraki (2011), Amini and Ramezani (2006) found the same results.

Results of member collaboration and participation in cooperative affairs is shown in (Fig. 5). results indicated that 33.2 and 62.8% of members in official and unofficial cooperatives, respectively, assessed their collaboration and participation in cooperative affairs as good. Members of unofficial cooperatives had more social participation than those of the official ones and this difference was significant ($p<0.01$). There was strong significant correlation ($r=0.55^{**}$) between the Social participation and the success of cooperatives ($p<0.01$). Shahraki (2011), Amini and Ramezani (2006) found the same results.

The financial capabilities of cooperative members are shown in Fig. 6.

Results showed that 6 and 44% of members of official and unofficial cooperatives, respectively, had good financial capabilities. Members of unofficial cooperatives had higher financial capabilities in comparison with those of the official ones and this difference was significant ($p<0.01$). That there was a significant relationship between the financial capabilities of members and the success of cooperatives

($r=0.304^{**}$). Shahraki (2011) found the same results. The results of technical abilities of managers (Fig. 7) showed that 27.6 and 48.6% of members of official than those of the official ones and this difference was significant ($p<0.01$). There was also strong significant relationship ($r=0.551^{**}$) between the technical abilities of managers and the

and unofficial cooperatives, respectively considered technical abilities of managers as good. Managers of unofficial cooperatives had higher technical abilities success of cooperatives ($p<0.01$). Amini and Ramezani)2006(found the same results.

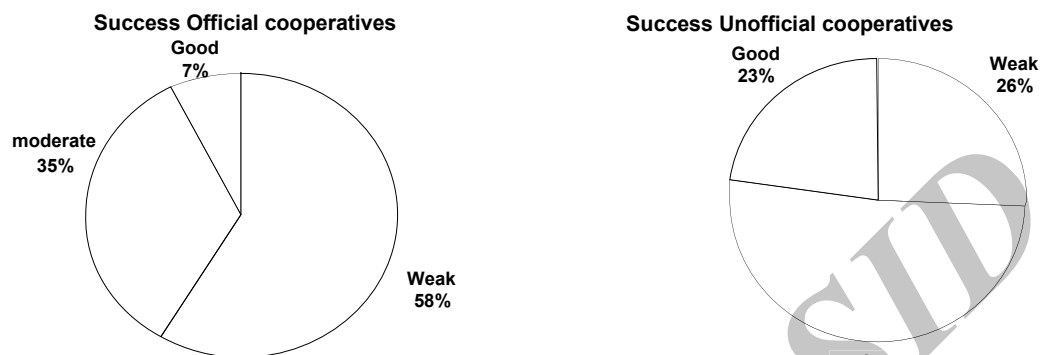


Fig. 1. Frequency of success based on range management cooperatives opinion

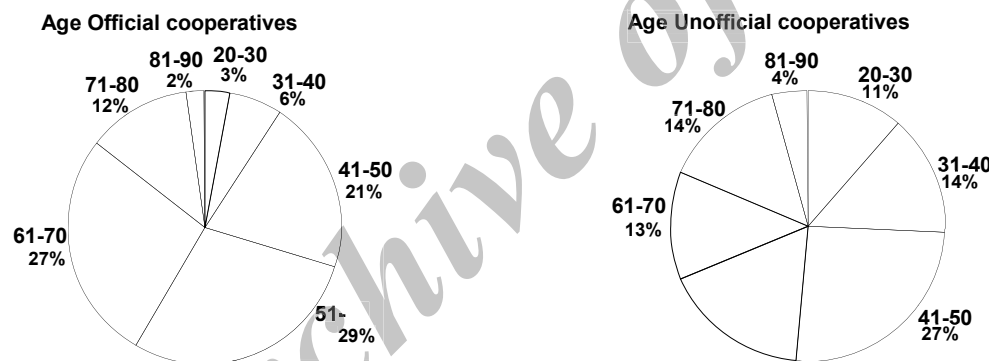


Fig. 2. Frequency of age of individuals' of range management cooperatives members

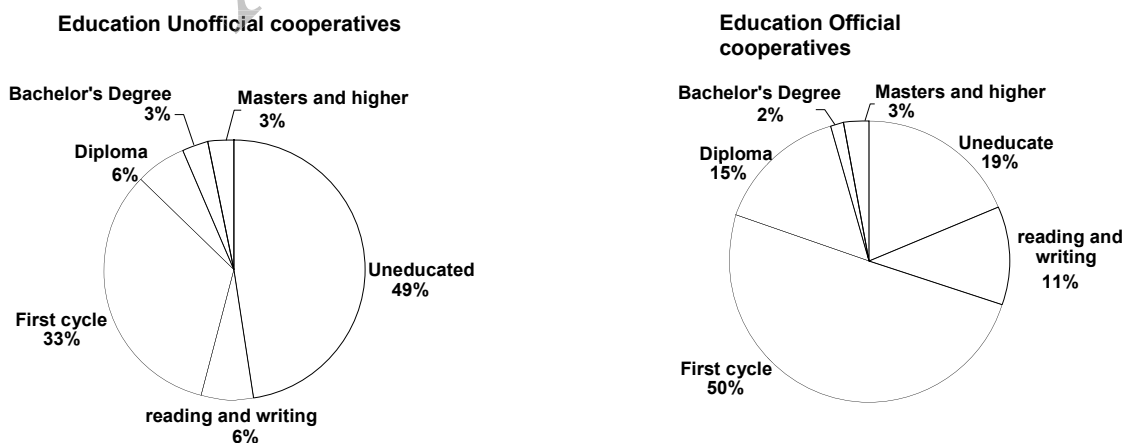


Fig. 3. Frequency of education of cooperatives members

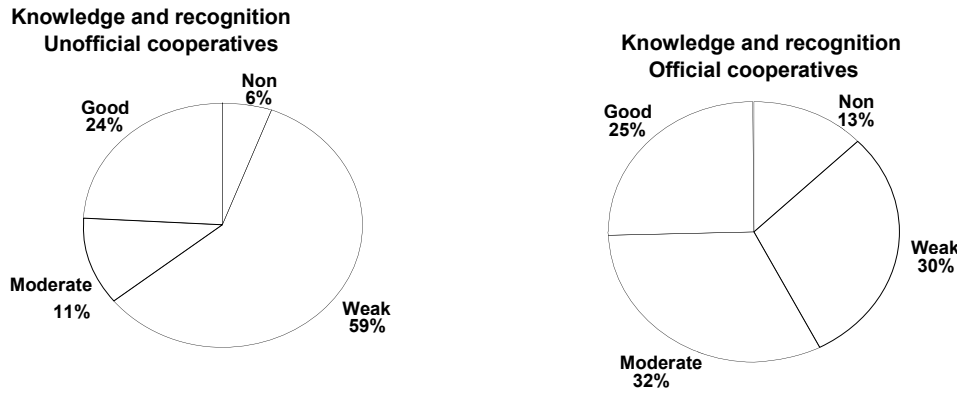


Fig. 4. Frequency of knowledge and recognition of cooperatives members

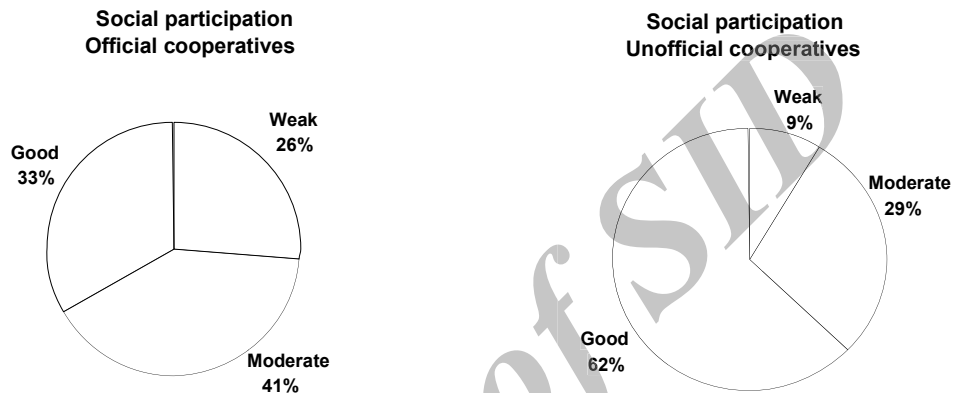


Fig. 5. Frequency of social cooperation level of members in cooperative affairs

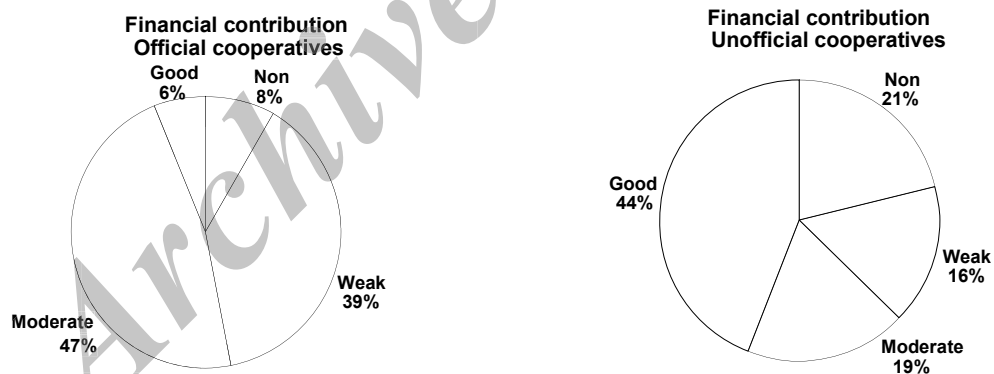


Fig. 6. Frequency of financial capabilities of cooperative members

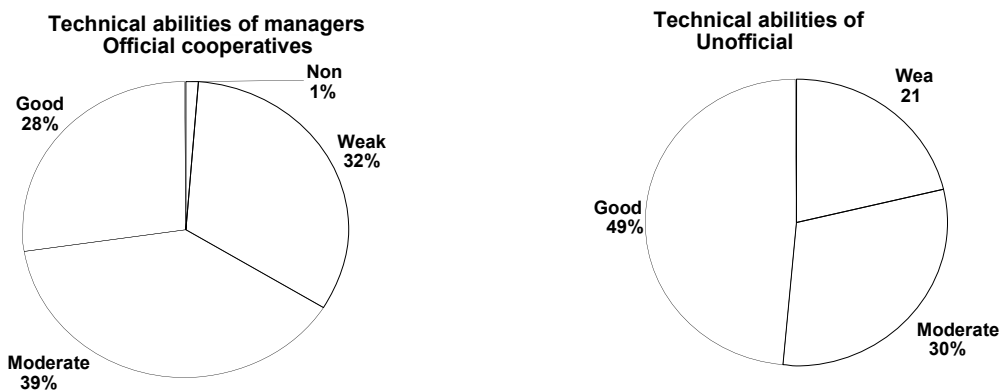


Fig. 7. Frequency of technical abilities of managers in range management cooperatives

Evaluation of performance of cooperatives

Means comparison of the performance of cooperatives is presented in Table 1. The performances of cooperatives were classified into four groups. There was a significant difference between the opinions of members of official and unofficial cooperatives ($p < 0.01$). In official cooperatives, members assessed the performance of the cooperative as

weaker, than that for unofficial cooperatives. As shown in Table 1, all the desired cooperatives had the most activities in creating cooperation and collaboration and they ignored the supply of economic and vital needs of members. They were deploying moderate collaborative performance ways while showing the weakest performance in meeting the economic and vital needs of members.

Table 1. Performance evaluation of range management cooperatives from the viewpoints of members and managers

Performance of Cooperatives	Official Ones	Unofficial Ones	Total
Establishing public cooperation and collaboration	1027.16 a	899.11 a	958.57 a
Meeting economic and livelihood needs	537.89 d	425.31 c	511.45 c
Meeting social and cultural needs	764.28 b	735.16 b	735.11 b
Using cooperative ways of range management	683.77 c	640.11 b	734.36 b
X^2	180.31	57.611	173.24
Sig	0.000	0.000	0.000
df	4	4	4

Means of Colum followed by the similar letters has no significant differences

Regression analysis

To study the effects of independent variables on the success of official and unofficial cooperatives (dependent variable), multivariate regression and path analysis were used.

A) Official cooperatives

As shown in Table 2, the final model of multiple linear regression equation was significant ($p < 0.01$), thereby demonstrating that there was a significant relationship between the independent variables in the equation and the

dependent ones. Multiple correlation coefficient ($R=0.72$) and coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.53$) were obtained (Table 2). Regression coefficients concerning independent variables as: training, technical skills of managers, social participation, financial elements, public organizations performance and knowledge of members were entered in the final model and they had positive and significant effects on the success of official range management cooperatives.

Table 2. Multiple linear regression of identification of effective factors contributing to the degree of success in official range management cooperatives

Variables	Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T Values	P Value
Constant	-4.276	3.656	-	-1.169	0.244
X_1 : Training	6.825	1.519	0.217	4.495	0.000
X_2 : Technical skills of managers	2.237	0.388	0.323	5.772	0.000
X_3 : Social participation	1.281	0.268	0.299	4.772	0.000
X_4 : Financial elements	1.100	0.420	0.139	2.618	0.009
X_5 : Performance of public organizations	0.564	0.325	0.082	1.738	0.084
X_6 : Knowledge of members	0.269	0.111	0.131	2.423	0.016

B) Unofficial range management cooperatives

As shown in Table 3, the final model of regression equation was significant ($p < 0.01$), thereby demonstrating that there was a significant relationship between the independent variables in the

equation and the dependent ones. Multiple correlation coefficient ($R=0.91$) and coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.83$). Result showed strong correlation between dependent and

independent variables (Table 3). In final regression equation the independent variables as: education, financial fairness, comprehension skills of managers, skills and experiences of members and

performance of public organizations were entered in the final model and they had positive and significant effects on the success of unofficial range management cooperatives (Table 3).

Table 3. Multiple linear regression for the identification of effective factors contributing to the degree of success in unofficial range management cooperatives

Variables	Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T Values	P Value
C: constant	4.158	6.394	-	- 0.650	0.518
X ₁ : education	3.380	0.419	0.496	8.060	0.000
X ₂ : financial fairness	3.228	0.551	0.331	5.857	0.000
X ₃ : comprehension skills of managers	2.389	0.551	0.302	4.333	0.000
X ₄ : skills and experiences of members	1.821	0.881	0.126	2.067	0.043
X ₅ : performance of public organizations	1.026	0.300	0.189	3.414	0.001

Path analysis

Multiple regression analysis and path analysis provide important complements to the traditional regression analysis. Although regression analysis is a useful, there is a problem of limited measurability that only the direct effects of independent variables can be captured and ignored indirect effects in some cases. In other hand, path analysis separates direct effects and indirect effects through a medium variable while regression analysis considers direct effect only.

To realize the effects of independent variables that extracted via regression model on the degree of success in official range management cooperatives (Table 2), direct and indirect effects of every independent variable were separated. The results have been presented in Tables 4 and 5 for official and unofficial cooperatives, respectively.

A) Official cooperatives

The direct effects of variables were determined using standardized Beta values in multiple regressions (Table 2). Result of path analysis determined the same variables as direct effect. The variables of education, technical skills of managers, social collaboration, financial elements, performance of public organizations, knowledge of members were estimated as 6.82, 2.23, 1.28, 1.10, 0.56 and 0.26. Therefore, the education had higher priority followed by technical skills of managers and social collaboration. The cultural factor, financial participation, members' vision, financial ability, risk-taking and comprehension skills of managers had positively and individualism had negatively indirect effects on success of official cooperatives. The individualism was recognized as the most important element inhibiting the success of official cooperatives (Table 4).

Table 4. Direct and indirect effects of the research indices on the success of formal range management cooperatives

Variables	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
Training	6.825	3.387	10.212
Technical skills of managers	2.237	0.534	2.771
Social participation	1.281	0.678	1.959
Financial elements	1.100	0.938	2.038
Performance of public organizations	0.564	0.362	0.926
Knowledge of members	0.269	0.135	0.404
Cultural factors	-	0.311	0.311
Financial participation	-	0.722	0.722
Members vision	-	0.899	0.899
Number of livestock	-	0.007	0.007
Financial ability	-	0.528	0.528
Education	-	0.062	0.062
Individualism	-	-0.780	-0.780
Risk-taking	-	0.703	0.703
Comprehension skills of managers	-	0.691	0.691

B) Unofficial cooperatives

The direct effects of variables were previously estimated via multiple regression analysis (Table 2). Result of path analysis determined the same variables as: education, financial fair, comprehension skill of managers, skills and experiences of members and performance of public organizations with path coefficient values of 3.380, 3.228, 2.389, 1.821 and 1.026, respectively.

They have been suggested as the most important promotion variables influencing the success of unofficial cooperatives (Table 5).

The result indicated that variables of management style, financial elements, cultural factors, members vision, financial contribution and performance of media had positively indirect effects on success of unofficial cooperatives (Table 5).

Table 5. Direct and indirect effects of the research indices on the success of informal range management cooperatives

Variable Title	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects
Education	3.380	-	3.380
Financial fairness	3.228	-	3.228
Comprehension skills of managers	2.389	-	2.389
Skills and experiences of members	1.821	-	1.821
Performance of public organizations	1.026	-	1.026
Management style	-	0.952	0.952
Financial elements	-	0.540	0.540
Cultural factors	-	0.867	0.867
Members vision	-	0.411	0.411
Financial contribution	-	0.638	0.638
Performance of Media	-	0.961	0.961

Conclusions

The results demonstrated that official and unofficial range management cooperatives generally achieved their goals by the degree of 37 and 49%.

Accordingly, 58.8 and 25.8% of members evaluated the success of official and unofficial cooperatives as below moderate performance, respectively.

The results showed that unofficial cooperatives were more successful with regard to range management in collaborative ways, as compared to the official ones. In total, it could be concluded that range management cooperatives were successful in achieving the desired goals in Tehran, Isfahan and Markazi provinces.

According to the results, the following suggestions can be offered to increase the success of range management cooperatives in Markazi, Tehran and Isfahan provinces:

1. Considering the critical role of training in achieving the success and low education and knowledge level

of members, one of the solutions to improve the quality of human forces is to hold general (cooperation and management principles) and professional (correct range exploitation and management) training courses. Thus, it is required that long-term policies and strategies be applied in order to enhance the quality of human forces. In this respect, holding continuous and suitable training courses based on the needs of pastoralists can enable them to implement the plans.

2. Cooperation of active members leads to providing the interests of members and increasing the investments along with profits and success; in order to raise the cooperation level of members in the desired cooperatives, it is essential to apply suitable solutions. It is evident that awareness of cooperation philosophy and capabilities may be achieved through formal and informal trainings.

3. One of the most important problems for the cooperatives is the lack of investment and financial potential and since the investment plays a critical role in implementing plans and achieving the cooperative goals, financial and credit departments which provide the capital for cooperatives should further consider the required investment.

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بررسی عوامل مؤثر بر موفقیت تعاونی‌های رسمی و غیررسمی مرتعداری در سه استان ایران

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^د دانشیار گروه توسعه روستایی دانشگاه صنعتی اصفهان

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چکیده. این تحقیق با هدف بررسی دیدگاه مرتعداران عضو تعاونی‌های مرتعداری در مورد موفقیت تعاونی‌ها و عوامل مؤثر بر آن در استانهای مرکزی، تهران و اصفهان در سال ۱۳۹۳ انجام شد. جامعه مورد پژوهش کلیه اعضای هیات مدیره و اعضای عادی این تعاونی‌ها بودند (N=۷۵۰). در این تحقیق از روش نمونه‌گیری طبقه‌ای تصادفی با انتساب متناسب و با استفاده از جدول کرجسی مورگان استفاده شد (n=۲۹۸). پس از تکمیل پرسش‌نامه‌ها برای ترکیب گویه‌ها از روش مقیاس‌سازی استفاده شد. آزمون‌های آماری (تحلیل عامل و ضریب آلفای کرونباخ) نشان داد که مفاهیم به کار رفته در تحقیق از روایی و پایایی بالایی برخوردار بوده است. نتایج پژوهش نشان داد که تعاونی‌های غیررسمی مرتعداری نسبت به رسمی در راستای مدیریت مراتع به شیوه مشارکتی از موفقیت بیشتری برخوردار بودند اما در مجموع تعاونی‌های رسمی و غیررسمی مرتعداری در دستیابی به اهداف مورد نظر در اساسنامه و برآوردن انتظارات اعضا، چندان موفق نبودند. برای بررسی اثر متغیرهای مستقل بر موفقیت شرکت‌های تعاونی رسمی و غیررسمی، از روش رگرسیون چند متغیره و تحلیل مسیر استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد که آموزش، مهارت فنی مدیران، مشارکت اجتماعی اعضا، عوامل مالی، عملکرد دستگاه‌های دولتی، دانش اعضا، بیشترین تاثیر را به عنوان عوامل پیشبرنده بر موفقیت تعاونی‌های رسمی داشتند. در مقابل، در تعاونی‌های غیررسمی متغیرهای میزان تحصیلات، عدالت مالی، مهارت ادراکی مدیران، تجربه و مهارت اعضا، عملکرد سازمان‌های دولتی، بیشترین تاثیر را به عنوان عوامل پیشبرنده بر موفقیت این تعاونی‌ها داشتند.

کلمات کلیدی: تعاونی، مرتعداری، موفقیت، ارزیابی