

Research Paper

Assessment the Factors Affecting the Performance of Rural Cooperatives in Savadkooh County, Mazandaran Province, Iran

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ABSTRACT

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The agricultural sector is so vast that it is practically impossible to achieve its developmental macro goals without farmers' cooperation as cooperatives. Establishing and developing such enterprises is one of the world's today essentials in current global economy. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the factors affecting the performance of rural cooperatives in Savadkooh County, Mazandaran Province, Iran. The current study has used a surveying methodology. Data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire which its validity was verified by a group of experts and the reliability of the questions was tested using the Cronbach's α test for different parts of the questionnaire and the average calculated α value was 0.87. The statistical population of the study included two groups of cooperatives' members (N=10257) and rural cooperatives' boards (N=69). The sample size was determined as 376 and 56, respectively for cooperatives' members and boards by using Krejcie and Morgan Table. Then the samples were selected by a randomized proportional sampling method. In order to analyze data, both correlation coefficients like Spearman and Pearson and stepwise multiple regression were used. According to the results, the variables recognizing the cooperatives' tasks and objectives, sympathy between members and boards, supports and contributions of State Cooperative's Administration, relationship between the rural cooperatives and other related organizations, the existence of a strong rural cooperatives' union in the region, participation among the members, and legal governmental supports had a positive and significant effect on the performance of rural cooperatives in Savadkooh County.

Extended Abstract**1. Introduction**

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he agricultural sector is so vast that it is practically impossible to achieve its developmental macro goals without farmers' cooperation and their cooperatives.

Founding such enterprises is one of the building blocks of globalization in today's world in order to achieve mass production with reasonable price in

a global economy pool with a flexible and convergent management. Cooperative approach is one of the best mechanisms for systematic participation of people in economic and social activities that create employment and sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable and low-income people, especially the rural people. Rural producer cooperatives through their mediatory role among rural producers, governments and consumers are a key tool to achieve developmental goals.

Cooperative sector with socioeconomic approach is the only economic sector that by using cooperation, re-

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inforces the spirit of thinking and participation and plays a crucial role in achieving equality and comprehensive development programs. All organizations, whether public, private and cooperatives in order to develop and maintain growth in today's competitive world need an effective performance assessment system by which they examine efficiency and effectiveness of their programs, processes and human resources. Therefore, assessing the performance of rural production cooperatives is necessary for developing agricultural and rural sector, as well as for maintaining these organizations with changes in economic, political, social, technological developments in the globalization era. In this regard, our study aimed to identify the factors affecting the performance of rural cooperatives in Savadkoo County, Mazandaran Province, Iran.

2. Methodology

The performance of each organization like a rural cooperative can be reviewed and assessed at three levels; inter-organizational factors (management and human resource development), outer-organizational factors (governmental and non-governmental organizations and relationships), and structural factors (cooperatives principles, goals and strategies). Therefore, the theoretical framework of this study is based on these three factors for assessing the rural cooperatives performance in Savadkoo County. According to this theory and an extensive literature review, the research variables are categorized into three levels: the inter-organizational factors comprising the variables of satisfaction, sympathy and trust, participation, and success in doing activities; the external organizational factors comprising the variables of governmental policies, legal factors, services, cooperatives unions, relationships between cooperatives to other GOs and NGOs; and the structural factors in this study comprising the variables of cooperation culture, control and monitoring, functions and tasks descriptions in the cooperatives, rules and laws in cooperatives, and organizational regulation.

3. Results

The current quantitative study is an applied research in terms of purpose and according to data collection method has used a surveying methodology. Data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire which its validity was verified by a group of experts, also the reliability of the questionnaire was tested during a pretest process on 30 samples using a Cronbach's α test for different parts of the questions and the average calculated α was 0.87. The study population included two groups of cooperatives members (N=10257) and rural coopera-

tives boards (N=69). The sample size was determined as 376 and 56, respectively for cooperatives members and boards by using Krejcie and Morgan Table. Then samples were selected by a randomized proportional sampling method. In order to analyze data both correlation coefficients like Spearman and Pearson and step-wise multiple Regression were used.

4. Discussion

The study findings indicate that the cooperatives performance in Savadkoo County was a little lower than average in viewpoints of the cooperatives members, but higher than average in viewpoints of the cooperatives managers. According to the results, the variables recognizing the cooperatives' tasks and objectives, sympathy between members and boards, supports and contributions of State Cooperative's Administration, relationship between the rural cooperatives and other related organizations, the existence of a strong rural cooperatives' union in the region, participation among the members, and legal governmental supports had a positive significant effect on the performance of rural cooperatives in Savadkoo County.

5. Conclusion

According to the results, sympathy and mutual trust between cooperatives members showed a significant impact on rural cooperatives' performance. Elimination of administrative obstacles to get loans from regional rural cooperative, providing long-term loans with low commission rate can also improve the performance of the rural cooperatives in each area. The results of this research through reporting and presenting the factors affecting the performance of rural cooperatives can help the rural development planners to improve the performance of rural cooperatives in their region.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.