

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE-BASED COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

Oduntan Oluwakemi

Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
Federal University of Technology, PMB 704, Akure.

Email: ooduntan@futa.edu.ng +2348065701012

ABSTRACT

The study examined the factors influencing women's participation in agriculture-based cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 80 respondents through a multistage random sampling procedure. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, logistic regression model and 5-point Likert scale. The results revealed that a significant number of women were members of these cooperatives but participation in leadership roles remains limited. Most (45.3%, 87.5%, 45.0%) of women were middle-aged, married, and had at least secondary education respectively. Farming was the dominant primary occupation, with moderate experience. The results from the logistic regression analysis revealed that age, marital status, traditional roles and responsibilities, support from communities and male counterparts, interest in leadership, role models in the cooperative, educational qualification, cooperative support, policies promoting women's leadership, leadership training programs and network of mentors and sponsors significantly influenced leadership participation. Mentorship programs and flexible work arrangements are highly favored strategies for leadership development. Therefore, it is recommended that agriculture-based cooperative societies should increase the representation of women in leadership by setting targets for gender diversity in leadership positions and by implementing programs to develop and promote women leaders effectively in the study area.

KEYWORDS: Agriculture-based, Cooperative societies, Determinants, Women, Participation

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the ability to direct the actions of an individual or group or their behavior towards a specific purpose. When talking about women's leadership, certain barriers prevent women from achieving positions as men in organizations as well as in cooperatives. Women can rise to higher positions but they face many obstacles on the way hindering them from achieving such positions. Even when in leadership positions, women cooperative leaders still find themselves in what is a traditionally male-dominated environment in which they face a multitude of

challenges. There still exists gender inequality which is one of the fundamental reasons women are few in leadership positions in cooperatives despite all that has been done to bridge the gap for equality.

Participation is a development approach that acknowledges the importance of engaging vulnerable groups in the planning and execution of policies that promote their welfare. In this regard, women's participation means that they are actively involved in all areas of life, including economics, society, culture, the environment, and politics, and that they have a

role in making decisions and empowering themselves (Ademe and Singh, 2016).

Women in the world play an important role in the development of both rural and urban areas. They are also believed to play a crucial role in ensuring that their families and communities have enough nutritious food, make money, and live better lives in rural areas (UN Women Watch Organization, 2017). Across the globe, women are the primary caregivers for children and the elderly. Research from around the world shows that women play a leading role in helping their families adapt to new challenges and realities when a society's economy and political system change.

Agricultural cooperatives as defined by Ibitoye (2012) are a mechanism through which services such as farm inputs, farm implements, farm mechanization, agricultural loans, agricultural extension, member education, marketing of farm produce members, and other economic activities and services rendered are provided. The daily and efficient performance of these roles is essential for the transition and sustainability of cooperatives, and for the agricultural and rural economies, they support. Agricultural cooperatives play a vital role in both on-farm and off-farm activities and are seen as a key tool for empowering economically vulnerable members of society, especially women.

Women's participation in cooperatives means that women are actively involved in all aspects of cooperative operations, including financial management, leadership, decision-making, and governance. Women's equal participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperatives is a human right and essential for sustainable, people-centered development. If cooperatives are gender-responsive and inclusive, they can help women overcome gender constraints to improve their self-confidence, knowledge, leadership skills, income, access to agricultural inputs, social networks, and position in value chains (FAO,

2013).

Women's economic empowerment leads to direct and positive impacts on their households, communities, and access to and control over productive assets. This results in improved household nutrition, food, and economic security, broader development outcomes, and more coordinated production of both food and cash crops. Cooperatives with active female involvement are more economically and politically viable. Increasing women's participation in decision-making and implementation in cooperative societies will promote the prospects of cooperatives, diversify their activities, and strengthen the cooperatives as a whole.

Women's under-representation in decision-making and leadership positions in cooperatives is a major gender issue facing the cooperative movement today. As Awotide (2012) points out, women, especially in developing countries, are confronted with formidable constraints that hinder their active participation in cooperatives. The traditional role of women in society and the common misconception that their main role is to reproduce and care for the home are the primary barriers to women's participation in formal groups.

Women's marginalization in the cooperative business world is due to their heavy workload and time constraints, which are caused by the traditional gender roles that restrict their economic opportunities and the expectation that they will perform unpaid domestic and childcare work (Mzuyanda *et al.*, 2018). Cooperatives have been regarded as one of the main institutional societies and efforts of government at all levels, it appears that a significant proportion of rural women are either unaware of the existence of such co-operative societies or are lacking in the basic socio-economic characteristics that form the prerequisite for participation in such activities (Okoye, 2024).

Additionally, women's lower socio-economic

status, due to gender norms and interactions, limits their opportunities to participate in formal groups. This is, therefore, an indication that given their important contributions to the lives of their families and communities, women are deprived of equal access to productive resources, markets, and services (FAO, 2010). Gender inequality is a major barrier to women's participation in cooperative leadership. Deep-rooted sociocultural norms and practices, as well as dominant gender norms, stereotypes, and practices, shape gender power relations at all levels, from the household to the community to the institution.

Women's productivity is often limited by cultural, social, economic, political, and patriarchal factors, which restrict their access to resources and opportunities. Historically, men have dominated community leadership and administration, especially in cooperative societies. Women's participation in local politics and public processes has been limited by institutional, socio-economic, and cultural barriers (Brien and Rickne, 2016; Wijers, 2019; Henock, 2021).

Women's lack of access to resources is also a major barrier to their participation in existing cooperatives and their ability to start new ones. Without independent assets, it is also difficult for women to invest in cooperatives on their own. In many countries, women face significant barriers to participating in cooperatives, including lack of access to resources, lower levels of education than men, and limited business experience and knowledge of cooperatives, and are excluded from the benefits of cooperatives, such as credit, training, production input, technology, and marketing outlets, because they are unable to participate in cooperatives. Due to their existing disadvantages, women have even greater difficulty changing their situation because they lack access to resources.

Agricultural cooperatives have long been considered one of the main institutional

mechanisms for empowering economically disadvantaged members of society, especially women. Despite the availability of cooperative societies, it appears that a significant proportion of rural women are either unaware of the existence of such co-operative societies or are lacking in the basic socioeconomic characteristics that form the prerequisite for participation in such activities of cooperatives (Hamsatu *et al.*, 2023). Increasing women's participation in cooperatives cannot be realized if they do not fully engage in the leadership of agricultural cooperative activities and decision-making (Chiyoge, 2013).

Many cooperatives, especially agricultural cooperatives, face the challenge of low female participation. It is important to explore how to increase the participation of women in cooperatives especially in leadership positions, as this could help improve their performance. Hence, this study aims to investigate the factors that influence women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies aiming to understand the challenges and barriers women face to achieve such positions. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following objectives;

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of women in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies;
2. determine the factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies;
3. evaluate strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

This study was carried out in Ondo State, Nigeria. Ondo State lies between longitudes 4°30' and 6° East of the Greenwich Meridian, 5°45' and 8°15' North of the Equator. It has an

estimated land mass of about 14,798.8 square kilometers and a population of over 3.9 million people. Women make up 48.9% of the population and the people of the State are predominantly Yorubas. The major languages spoken by the inhabitants are Yoruba, Ijaw, and English. Ondo State enjoys luxuriant vegetation where various cash crops such as cashew, oil palm, cocoa, kola nut, timber, maize, yam, plantain, cocoyam, cassava, banana, etc. are grown. The traditional occupation of the people inhabiting the study area is agriculture. The State is also known for its mineral resources such as bitumen, kaolin, and limestone.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for this study. The first stage involved the random selection of two (2) local government areas in Ondo State. At the second stage, a random selection of two (2) communities each from the two local government areas was made. The third stage involved the purposive selection of four (4) agriculture-based cooperative societies, one each from the four communities from which 20 women members, including those in leadership positions were selected for the interview, making a total of 80 respondents for this study.

Sources of Data

Primary data were collected with the use of a structured questionnaire distributed to the respondents in the selected agriculture-based cooperative societies. The information collected include socio-economic characteristics such as age, sex, household size, level of education, marital status, rank/position, duration of membership/years of experience in the cooperative; socio-cultural factors,

individual/personal factors, organizational/institutional factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies and strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, tables, percentages and mean were used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of women in agriculture-based cooperative societies and likert scale was used to evaluate strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies. To analyze factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies, logit regression was used to model the probability of whether women hold leadership positions or not, as a function of independent variables such as age, education level, marital status, household size and years of experience in the cooperative/duration of membership.

Model Specification: To analyze factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies, logit regression was used to model the probability of whether women hold leadership positions or not, as a function of independent variables such as age, education level, marital status, household size and years of experience in the cooperative/duration of membership. The dependent variable is whether or not the woman holds a leadership position in an agriculture-based cooperative society.

The logit regression model is defined as follows:

$$I_i = \ln \left(\frac{p}{1-p} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + \beta_{10} X_{10} + \beta_{11} X_{11} + \beta_{12} X_{12} + \beta_{13} X_{13} + \beta_{14} X_{14} + \beta_{15} X_{15} + \beta_{16} X_{16} + \beta_{17} X_{17} + \beta_{18} X_{18} + \beta_{19} X_{19} + \beta_{20} X_{20} + \beta_{21} X_{21} + \epsilon_i$$

$x_{17}+$

Where p = the probability of whether or not the woman holds a leadership position in an agriculture-based cooperative society (dependent variable)

β_0 = the constant intercept of the model

$\beta_1 - \beta_7$ = the coefficients of the independent variables

x_1 = Age (years)

x_2 = Marital status (married = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_3 = Level of education (formal = 1; no formal = 0)

x_4 = Duration of membership (years)

x_5 = Household size (number)

x_6 = Annual income (Naira)

x_7 = Primary occupation (farming = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_8 = Traditional roles and responsibilities (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_9 = Access to education and training (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{10} = Access to support networks and resources (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{11} = Social and cultural barriers (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{12} = Support from communities (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{13} = Support from male counterparts (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{14} = Interest in leadership participation (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{15} = Role models in the cooperative (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{16} = Educational qualifications (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{17} = Effective and strong networking skills (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{18} = Cooperative support in leadership positions (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{19} = Policies and procedures (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{20} = Leadership training programs (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

x_{21} = Network of mentors and sponsors (yes = 1; otherwise = 0)

μ = Error term

A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies. Respondents were asked to respond to statements relating to challenges faced during participation in leadership positions in the cooperative, their perceptions and opinions of participating in leadership positions in the cooperative, using Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were scored as 5,4,3,2 and 1 for SA, A, N, D and SD, respectively. The mean from each statement

was obtained and used to classify the responses on each statement into SA (>4.5), A (3.5-4.4), N (2.5-3.4), D (1.5-2.4) and SD (<1.5). The grand means for all the statements was calculated to be able to place all the responses on a continuum that enable a conclusion to be drawn on what the perception of the respondents are with regard to evaluating the strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on socio-economic characteristics of the Women in Agriculture-based Cooperative Societies (n=80)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Age (years)			47.86
30 – 40	18	22.7	
41 – 50	36	45.3	
51 – 60	23	29	
61 – 70	3	3	
Marital Status			
Married	70	87.5	
Widowed	4	5.0	
Separated	5	6.2	
Single	1	1.3	
Level of Education			
No formal	2	2.5	
Primary	33	41.3	
Secondary	36	45.0	
Tertiary	9	11.2	
Primary Occupation			
Farming	50	62.5	
Trading	1	1.3	
Farming and trading	22	27.5	
Farming, Trading and Agro-processing	5	6.2	
Farming and Agro-processing	2	2.5	
Years of Occupation Experience			
5 – 15	39	48.7	
16 – 26	31	38.8	
27 – 42	10	12.5	

Duration of membership (years)		
2 – 6	72	90.1
7 – 11	8	10.1
Leadership position participation		
Yes	7	8.7
No	73	91.3
Past participation in leadership positions		
Yes	14	17.5
No	66	82.5
Current position in the cooperative		
Vice President	1	1.25
General Secretary	1	1.25
Assistant General Secretary	2	2.50
Member	73	91.25
Women Coordinator	1	1.25
Welfare Officer	1	1.25
Assistant Financial Secretary	1	1.25

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Women in Agriculture-based Cooperative Societies

Table 1 shows the results of the socio-economic characteristics of women in agriculture-based cooperative societies in the study area. The findings from the results revealed that about 45.3% of the women members fell within the age range of 41–50 which implies that there is a predominant presence of women members within the 41–50 age group who participated actively in agricultural cooperatives, suggesting a potential trend of women engaging in agricultural activities during this phase of life. The mean age of the respondents was 47.86. Olabisi, et. al., (2015) in a similar finding revealed that majority of the women are still in their active and productive stage while most of them were married. With regards to marital status, the result revealed that majority of the women in the cooperative societies were married as indicated by 87.5%. This implies that majority of the women in the cooperative

societies in the study area valued marriage. This finding is synonymous with the findings of (Okoye, 2024) whose research findings revealed that majority of the respondents were married.

In terms of educational status, the table shows that 45.0% women in the cooperative societies in the study area had secondary education. This means that women in agriculture-based cooperative societies in the study area had the necessary level of education needed to participate in leadership positions. The implication is that the respondents are likely to be conversant and willing to adopt new skill and technologies which can impact their level of productivity positively, and also help in decision making especially in terms of leadership and investments. The finding is in agreement with the findings of (Ibrahim, 2015; Stead and Elliott, 2009) whose findings revealed that a higher level of education among women increases their chances of taking leadership roles. The result also revealed that farming is the most prevalent primary occupation accounting for 62.5%. This

implies that the dominance of farming as the primary occupation suggests a significant reliance on agricultural activities. In terms of years of occupation experience, the table shows that about 49.1% of the women had 5–15 years of occupation experience. This implies that majority of the women in the cooperative societies had great years of experience in their business.

According to respondents' membership duration, the table shows that about 90.1% of the women reported a membership duration ranging from 2 – 6 years, and 10.1% ranging from 7 –11 years. This implies that majority of the women in the cooperative societies had a significant membership duration spanning from 2–6 years, suggesting a predominant presence within this range. Regarding leadership position participation, the table shows that about 91.3% of women in the cooperative societies did not participate in leadership positions, while 8.8% participated in leadership positions. This implies that the minority of the women in the

cooperative societies indicated active involvement in leadership positions. In terms of past participation in leadership position, about 82.5% of women in the cooperative societies did not participate in past leadership positions, while 17.5% participated in past leadership positions. This implies that the minority of the women in the cooperative societies indicated active involvement in past participation in leadership positions.

With regards to respondents' current position in the cooperative, about 91.3% of women in the cooperative societies occupied the role of a general member. Conversely, each of the other specified positions which include vice president, general secretary, women coordinator, welfare officer, assistant financial secretary, and assistant general secretary, held a minor representation, each accounting for 1.3% and 2.5%. This highlights a substantial concentration of members in standard positions within the cooperative, with limited representation in specialized roles.

Table 2: Factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies.

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	P-value
Age	.000**	.142	.000
Marital status	12.977**	8222.588	.000
Level of education	-1.501	1.513	.984
Primary occupation	.492	.397	1.540
Household size	.394	.919	.183
Annual income	.000	.000	.098
Duration of membership	-.419	.422	.986
Traditional roles and responsibilities	20.694**	17289.543	.000
Access to education and training as men	-2.088	2.716	.591
Access to support networks and resources	1.618	1.849	.766
Social and cultural barriers	-4.351	2.718	2.562
Support from communities	16.174**	40192.981	.000
Support from male counterparts	-19.144**	40192.981	.000
Interest in leadership participation	-8.675**	43427.165	.000
Role models in the cooperative	-1.343**	56841.443	.000
Educational qualifications	4.761**	41025.428	.000
Effective and strong networking skills	1.157	2.391	.234
Cooperative support in leadership positions	-35.474**	24304.980	.000
Policies and procedures	18.530**	17186.240	.000
Leadership training programs	-15.575**	40192.930	.000
Network of mentors and sponsors	35.146**	43713.136	.000
Constant	-9.088	8222.590	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2024. ** represents significance at 5% level.

Factors influencing Women's Participation in Leadership Positions in Agriculture-based Cooperative Societies

Table 2 shows the output of a logistic regression analysis where the aim is to understand the relationship between various predictor variables and a binary outcome whereby the dependent variable is whether or not a woman holds a leadership position in an agriculture-based cooperative society which can also be related to leadership participation or likelihood of holding leadership positions. The output displays coefficients, standard error, and p-

values for each predictor variable. The confidence interval used was 95%. The result indicated that age was found to have a significant effect on leadership participation ($B = .000$, $SE = .142$, $p < .050$), indicating that as age increases, there is a statistically significant increase in leadership participation. Marital status also showed a significant association with leadership position ($B = 12.977$, $SE = 8222.588$, $p < .050$), indicating that married individuals are more likely to participate in leadership roles than unmarried individuals. Among other variables, traditional roles and responsibilities

($B = 20.694$, $SE = 17289.543$, $p < .050$), support from communities ($B = 16.174$, $SE = 40192.981$, $p < .050$), support from male counterparts ($B = -19.144$, $SE = 40192.98$, $p < .050$), interest in leadership participation ($B = -8.675$, $SE = 43427.165$, $p < .050$), role models in the cooperative ($B = -1.343$, $SE = 56841.443$, $p < .050$), educational qualifications ($B = 4.761$, $SE = 41025.428$, $p < .050$), cooperative support in leadership positions ($B = -35.474$, $SE = 24304.980$, $p < .050$), policies and procedures ($B = 18.530$, $SE = 17186.240$, $p < .050$), leadership training programs ($B = -15.575$, $SE = 40192.930$, $p < .050$), and network of mentors and sponsors ($B = 35.146$, $SE = 43713.136$, $p < .050$) were also found to be statistically significant in association with leadership

participation. Interestingly, despite having a non-significant coefficient, level of education ($B = -1.501$, $SE = 1.513$, $p = .984$) appears to have an unexpected high standard error, which could imply uncertainty in the estimate. It is important to note that some variables, such as household size, annual income, and access to education and training as men, did not show statistically significant associations with leadership participation.

Overall, these findings suggest that factors such as age, marital status, traditional roles, and support from communities and male counterparts play significant roles in influencing leadership participation in cooperatives.

Table 3: Strategies to enhance women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies

Strategies	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	Rank
Providing mentorship and coaching programs	64 (80%)	16 (20%)	-	-	-	4.80	2 nd
Offering leadership training and capacity building programs	58 (72.5%)	22 (27.5%)	-	-	-	4.72	4 th
Promoting networking and collaboration opportunities	54 (67.5%)	26 (32.5%)	-	-	-	4.68	6 th
Creating a supportive and inclusive organizational culture	41 (51.2%)	39 (48.8%)	-	-	-	4.51	11 th
Implementing gender-responsive policies and practices	48 (60%)	32 (40%)	-	-	-	4.60	9 th
Raising awareness and changing societal perceptions about women's leadership abilities	49 (61.3%)	31 (38.8%)	-	-	-	4.61	8 th
Promoting work-life balance initiatives	38 (47.5%)	42 (52.5%)	-	-	-	4.47	12 th
Fostering partnerships with government agencies and NGOs	55 (68.8%)	25 (31.3%)	-	-	-	4.69	5 th
Addressing gender stereotypes and biases	50 (62.5%)	30 (37.5%)	-	-	-	4.63	7 th
Promoting equal representation and participation of women in decision-making processes	63 (78.8%)	17 (21.3%)	-	-	-	4.79	3 rd

Developing mentorship programs specifically for women	47 (58.8%)	33 (41.3%)	-	-	-	4.59	10 th
Providing flexible work arrangements for women leaders	71 (88.8%)	9 (11.3%)	-	-	-	4.89	1 st

Source: Field Survey, 2024. The numbers in the bracket represents the percentages of the variables.

Strategies to Enhance Women's Leadership Development in Agriculture-based Cooperative Societies

Table 3 shows the result of the survey conducted to evaluate and identify strategies aimed at promoting and supporting women's leadership within organizational and societal frameworks. The strategy perceived as the most effective was providing flexible work arrangements for women leaders ($M = 4.89$). An overwhelming majority (88.8%) strongly supported this strategy, indicating a consensus on the significance of flexible work options in facilitating women's leadership. Additionally, providing mentorship and coaching programs ($M = 4.80$) and promoting equal representation and participation of women in decision-making processes ($M = 4.79$) were highly endorsed strategies. These findings underscore the recognition of mentorship, coaching, and active involvement in decision-making as pivotal elements in advancing women's leadership. Kirton and Healy (2012) also emphasized the importance of "lift as you rise" mentality, where women in leadership positions support and mentor other women to increase their participation in leadership positions. The strategy of offering leadership training and capacity-building programs also received substantial support, with 72.5% in agreement ($M = 4.72$), emphasizing the perceived importance of skill development and capacity building for women in leadership positions. Moreover, fostering partnerships with government agencies and NGOs ($M = 4.69$) and

promoting networking and collaboration opportunities ($M = 4.68$) were identified as strategies of significance, highlighting the value placed on collaborative efforts and external partnerships in supporting women's leadership.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the factors influencing women's participation in leadership positions in agriculture-based cooperative societies in Ondo State, Nigeria. A significant number of women were members of the cooperative societies but had low participation in leadership roles. Most of the women were middle-aged, married, and had at least secondary education. Farming was the dominant primary occupation of majority of the respondents. The factors influencing participation in leadership positions were age, marital status, traditional roles and responsibilities, support from communities and male counterparts, interest in leadership, role models in the cooperative, educational qualification, cooperative support, policies promoting women's leadership, leadership training programs and network of mentors and sponsors. However, flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs were highly rated strategies for enhancing women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Mentorship and Training Programs:** Providing mentorship and training programs can help women to develop

- the skills and confidence they need to be effective leaders. This can be done through formal mentorship programs or through informal relationships with more experienced leaders.
2. **Policy Implementation:** Government and cooperative societies should ensure gender-responsive policies and practices as well as implementing policies and practices that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements by the cooperatives can make it easier for women to balance their work and family responsibilities, which can make them more likely to pursue leadership positions.
 3. **Awareness and Perception Change:**
 4. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Engaging with government agencies and NGOs for support can promote women's leadership development in agriculture-based cooperative societies.
- Addressing societal biases and promoting inclusive cultures is very important and can help encourage women to pursue leadership positions. This can be done through awareness-raising programs, as well as by promoting positive role models of women in leadership positions.

REFERENCES

- Ademe, G. and Singh, M. (2016). Factors affecting women's participation in leadership and management in selected public higher education institutions in Amhara region, Ethiopia. *Ethiopia European Journal of Business and Management*, 7(31): 18-29.
- Awotide, D. O. (2012). Assessment of women's participation in cooperative societies and its determinants in Yewa north local government area of Ogun State, Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development*, 2(39):344-350.
- Brien, D. Z. and Rickne, J. (2016). Gender Quotas and Women's Political Leadership. *American Political Science Review*, 110(1), 112–126.
- Chiyoge, B. S. (2013). Role of cooperatives in agricultural development and food security in Africa. *Role of cooperatives in agriculture in Africa*. – <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/2014/coopsegm/Sifa--Coops%20and%20agric>.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2010). Food security, concept and measurement In: food security: The Science, Sociology and Economics of Food Production and Access to Food. <https://www.fao.org/4/y4671e/y4671e06.htm>.
- FAO (2013). Agricultural cooperatives and gender equality. International Year of Cooperatives Issue: Brief Series. Pp.1-6.
- Hamsatu, M., Bashir, K. M. and Mohammed, A. G. (2023). Assessing the impact of cooperative societies on the financial welfare of Maiduguri residence. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 11(6): 170-178.
- Henock, M. (2021). Women leadership and governance of cooperatives: the case of dire Dawa city administration. *International Journal of Community and Cooperative Studies*, 9(1): 1-21.
- Ibitoye, S. J. (2012). Survey of the performance of agricultural cooperative societies in Kogi State, Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(24): 99-101.
- Ibrahim, S. F. (2015). Women's leadership. *Developing Country Studies*, 5(1): 57–60.
- Kirton, G. and Healy, G. (2012). Lift as you rise: Union women's leadership talk. *Human Relations*, 65(8): 979–999.
- Mzuyanda, C., Hans, T. and Gidi, L. (2018). Factors affecting performance of youth and women's agricultural cooperatives: A case of some selected cooperative societies in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Journal of Development & Agricultural Economics*, 10(12): 394-403.
- Okoye, M. C. (2024). Role and contribution of cooperative societies in the economy of Awka north local government area. *NG-Journal of Social Development*, 13(2):232-242. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ngjsd.v13i2.15>
- Olabisi, T. A., MacDonald, U. U. and Emmanuel, A. O. (2015). Effect of cooperative membership on the economic empowerment of women in Osun State of Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 4(2): 21-29.
- Stead, V. and Elliott, C. (2009). Women's leadership learning: A reflexive review of representations and leadership teaching. *Management Learning*, 44(4): 373-394.
- UN Women Watch Organization (2017). UN information and resources on gender equality and empowerment of women, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/> [accessed 28 October 2024].
- Wijers, G. D. M. (2019). Inequality regimes in Indonesian dairy cooperatives: understanding institutional barriers to gender equality. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 36(2): 167–181.