

Research on Participation Willingness of Farmers' Professional Cooperatives Members

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Abstract

In order to study the influencing factors of farmers' professional cooperative members' willingness to participate in-depth, this paper conducts a field survey of 10 farmers' professional cooperatives in Linan District of Hangzhou City, and makes an empirical analysis of the influencing factors of farmers' participation willingness based on their members' cognition by using binary logistic model. The research shows that management cognitive factors have the greatest impact on the willingness to participate among members, followed by cooperative cognitive factors, interest cognitive factors and risk cognitive factors, while the nature, function, earnings distribution system, and operational risk cognitive degree of cooperatives have no significant relationship with members' willingness to participate.

Keywords

Farmers' Professional Cooperatives, Members' Cognition, Willingness to Participate, Influencing Factors

1. Introduction

Since 2017, the State has clearly put forward the strategy of Rural Revitalization and revised the Law on Farmers' professional Cooperatives. This series of measures highlighted the country's exploration of the "three rural" issues into a deep well area. The complexity of the countryside dooms the difficulty of rural revitalization. The key to the Rural Revitalization is the industrial prosperity, and the form of industrial prosperity is to promote the development of all kinds of business entities and promote the rural "integration of three industries". Among them, as a part of the main body of new agricultural management, farmers' professional cooperatives play an important role in reducing costs, increasing efficiency and income, avoiding risks, industrial upgrading, scale development and

other aspects, as well as an effective way to promote rural modernization. After more than 160 years of baptism, cooperative economy has achieved unprecedented development worldwide. It is a long-term practice of capitalist free market and international cooperation movement in developed countries of Europe and America. For China, cooperatives are “imported goods”. By the end of February 2018, 2.044 million farmers’ professional cooperatives were registered according to law in China. With the rapid growth of cooperatives, there was a trend of “high quantity, low quality” and “different horizontal and vertical” development. There was insufficient hematopoiesis in cooperatives, which led to the lack of active effect of cooperative organizations on the development of modern agriculture as a whole. In order to break this situation, it is not only necessary to strictly control the declaration conditions of cooperatives from the source, improve the difficulty of horizontal expansion, but also need the vertical integration of cooperative members, optimize resources and improve their participation. The most difficult point is to improve the vertical participation and analyze the influencing factors of members’ deep participation.

In the existing studies, many scholars have studied the willingness to participate in cooperatives from different perspectives, and have achieved a series of valuable research results. “Participation” is a form of democratic thought, which is recognized in various fields of social life and reflects the process of participating in decision-making. Whether farmers have strong willingness to participate in cooperatives depends on whether they are profitable or not. They also believe that the participation of members is an important basis for the development of cooperatives. The lack of participation of members will affect the sustainable development of farmers’ professional cooperatives. From the perspective of participation characteristics, Shao Ke and Xu Xuchu (2013) elaborated that the differences in resource elements of peasant households contributed to the formation of cooperatives. Therefore, the performance characteristics of most cooperatives in China are “the strong lead, the weak participate” [1]. Karli *et al.* (2006) based on the stochastic effect model, showed that the age, education level, information acquisition ability, planting scale and new technology adoption ability of farmers are the main factors affecting their participation in cooperatives [2]. Sun Yafan and Yu Haipeng (2012) established a framework of influencing factors from the micro level. They believed that the main factors affecting members’ willingness to cooperate included their level of cooperation awareness, the degree of cooperation income and satisfaction, and the system of surplus return and distribution of cooperatives [3]. In addition, some scholars also pointed out the importance of cognitive level to the participation of cooperative members. For example, Fang Ming and Ying Ruiyao (2011) found that farmers’ cognitive level and subjective judgment played a decisive role in considering whether to join the cooperative [4]. Fang Kai and Wang Houjun (2013) believed that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavior control had a significant impact on farmers’ willingness to participate; and subjective norms had the greatest impact on farmers’ willingness to participate, while farmers’ trust in coopera-

tives and sense of belonging indirectly affected farmers' willingness to participate [5]. Hu Zhen and Li Na (2014) show through case studies that farmers' cognitive level has a positive impact on their willingness to participate [6]. Sun Yafan (2014) thought that most members lack strong willingness to participate actively in management. The level of members' awareness of the cooperative system and the trust of managers have a significant impact on the willingness of members to participate in management [7]. Zhou Jiehong (2007), Wang Huimin (2011) and other scholars believe that farmers' knowledge and attitudes towards learning and training, industrial organizations, government policies and so on will affect farmers' willingness to participate, and ultimately affect participation behavior [8] [9].

Cognition is a process of information processing and a product of the cognitive process of a thing or thing. With the continuous improvement of cognitive process, the cognitive level of cooperative members affects their understanding of the formation, operation, development, system and policy of cooperatives, and even affects the major decision-making results of cooperatives. In the existing studies, the more familiar members are with the nature, function, obligation and basic system of cooperatives, the more clearly they are aware of the relationship between the cost of participating in management and the possible benefits, so as to enhance their willingness to participate, and then actively promote their participation behavior and recognition of cooperatives themselves. Members are the main body and backbone of cooperatives, and their willingness to participate will restrict their participation behavior. The willingness of cooperative members to participate further affects their various participating behaviors. Only when the members are fully mobilized, the vitality of cooperatives can constantly emerge. Through various participating behaviors, cooperatives can be hematopoietic, and the development process of cooperatives can be accelerated. Cognition is a dynamic process. From the above review, we can find that scholars mainly focus on farmers' willingness to participate in the cooperative and the impact of farmers' cognition on their willingness to join the cooperative. They lack the influence of the cognitive ability and level of the members of the cooperative on the willingness to participate in the cooperative. This also urgently requires us to establish an analytical framework, which can be improved from the micro level. Step by step, to explore whether there is a certain correlation between the cognitive ability of cooperative members and their willingness to participate. Therefore, from a cognitive point of view, this paper analyses the willingness of cooperative members to participate in decision-making, management, risk-taking and other behaviors, clarifies the relationship, carries out targeted intra-cooperative hematopoiesis, and instills new forces.

2. Research Hypothesis and Variable Interpretation

2.1. Research Hypothesis

From the existing studies, we can find that most of the studies focused on the

willingness of ordinary farmers to participate in cooperatives, the content of which is relatively scattered, while the research on the willingness of cooperative members to participate in depth is relatively less. Based on the above analysis, this paper takes the membership cognition as a foothold through the field survey of farmers' professional cooperatives in Linan District of Hangzhou City, and makes an empirical analysis of the willingness of cooperative members to participate in depth to have a more comprehensive understanding of cooperative members' participation behavior by using binary logistic model. Therefore, this paper refines the members' cognition, and measures the influence of members' main body on deep participation willingness from the four dimensions of cooperation cognition, interest cognition, management cognition and risk cognition. Firstly, cooperative cognition is mainly measured by its nature, function, member's obligation to cooperative and evaluation of its role, and divided into five different degrees to test whether it has an impact on member's deep participation. Interest cognition is based on the profit distribution system, income satisfaction and development prospects of cooperative. Management cognition is mainly from the management mode of cooperatives, then to the recognition of existing governance modes, and finally the participation of cooperative members in affairs to measure their willingness to further participate in cooperative affairs; while risk awareness is mainly from the attitude of managing risks and exploiting markets. Is there any relationship between their perception and members' further participation? Based on this, the following assumptions are put forward:

H1: Cognition of cooperation has a positive impact on members' willingness to participate.

H2: Interest Cognition has a positive effect on members' willingness to Participate.

H3: Management perception has a significant impact on members' willingness to participate deeply.

H4: Risk perception has a significant impact on members' willingness to participate deeply.

2.2. Data Sources and Basic Information of Samples

In order to explore the relationship between farmers' professional cooperative members' cognition and willingness to participate in depth, the author went on a field to a supply and marketing cooperatives for one month, initially having a more comprehensive understanding of the cooperatives. Then I visited the cooperatives for pre-investigation and gradually revised and improved the questionnaire. The data used in this paper was from the author's questionnaire survey on members of farmers' professional cooperatives in Linan District, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, from July to August 2018. According to the normal operation of cooperatives, relative norms and other factors, 10 farmer professional cooperatives mainly planting species were selected for field research, and their members were surveyed by questionnaire. The questionnaires

involved the information of gender, age, education level, role in cooperatives, cooperative awareness, interest awareness, management awareness, risk awareness and willingness of members to further participate in cooperation. Cooperative cognition, interest cognition, management cognition and risk cognition include 11 specific indicators. These variables mainly cover the cognition of cooperatives, the contents of cooperative development and management and so on. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed in this survey, 176 of which were valid, with an effective rate of 97.8%. The basic information of sample members is shown in **Table 1**.

From **Table 1**, we can see that in terms of gender, most of the members interviewed were male; 61.4% were male and 38.6% were female. As for age structure, the members interviewed mainly concentrated in the age group of 50 - 60 years old, followed by 40 - 50 years old, indicating that most of the members of cooperatives are middle-aged and old-aged people at present. 60.4% of the respondents were junior high school or below, stating that most of the respondents had low educational level. And 88.1% of the respondents were ordinary members, showing that the main role of the respondents was ordinary members.

2.3. Variable Interpretation

Members are the main body of cooperatives and the human capital of cooperatives. Farmers' further participation after joining the cooperative will affect the vertical development power of the cooperative. Therefore, this paper argues that

Table 1. Basic information of sample members.

Characteristic	Classification Index	Frequency	Effective Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	108	61.4
	Female	68	38.6
Age	Under 30	5	2.8
	30 - 40 years old	36	20.5
	40 - 50 years old	46	26.1
	50 - 60 years old	78	44.3
	Over 60 years of age	11	6.3
Education	Primary school and below	35	19.9
	Junior middle school	73	41.5
	high school	34	19.3
	Specialty	25	14.2
	Bachelor degree or above	9	5.1
Role in Cooperatives	Chairman	11	6.3
	Supervisor	6	3.4
	Major shareholders	4	2.3
	General membership	155	88.1

the further participation of cooperative members in cooperative affairs not only has an important impact on the sustainable development of cooperatives, but also reflects members to further drive the contribution of cooperatives.

1) Independent variable. Based on the previous research hypothesis, this paper chooses four kinds of influencing factors to explain members' willingness to participate in depth: cooperative cognition, interest cognition, management cognition and risk cognition, including 11 specific indicators. The meanings and statistical characteristics of all explanatory variables are shown in **Table 2**. $X_1 - X_3$ is the cognitive variable of member cooperation; $X_4 - X_6$ is the cognitive variable of member interest; $X_7 - X_{10}$ is the cognitive variable of member management; $X_{11} - X_{12}$ is the cognitive variable of member risk. In order to accurately reflect all kinds of cognitive level, the questionnaire divides the independent variables into five levels, which are assigned 1 to 5. The higher the score, the higher the cognitive level of the members.

2) Dependent variables. Cognitive influence restricts willingness behavior. Therefore, members' willingness to participate is regarded as a dependent variable. The results of willingness to participate are divided into "yes" and "no" situations, and are assigned "1" and "0" respectively. This is also a typical discrete

Table 2. The meaning and statistical characteristics of independent variables model.

classification	Variable	Variable Value	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Cooperative Cognition	Understanding the nature and function of cooperatives (X_1)	never = 1; not very = 2; general = 3; comparative = 4; very = 5	2.90	1.042
	Understanding the obligations of cooperative members (X_2)	never = 1; not very = 2; general = 3; comparative = 4; very = 5	2.72	0.93
	The evaluation status of the role of cooperatives (X_3)	No effect = 1; very small = 2; some = 3; more = 4; Great = 5	3.55	0.937
Interest Cognition	Understanding the earnings distribution system of cooperatives (X_4)	never = 1; not very = 2; general = 3; comparative = 4; very = 5	3.94	0.694
	Satisfaction with cooperative income (X_5)	Very unsatisfactory = 1; unsatisfactory = 2; general = 3, satisfaction = 4; Very = 5	3.33	0.838
	The development prospect of cooperatives (X_6)	Very unsatisfactory = 1; unsatisfactory = 2; general = 3, satisfaction = 4; Very = 5	3.47	0.944
Management Cognition	Understanding of management model (X_7)	never = 1; not very = 2; general = 3; comparative = 4; very = 5	3.21	0.954
	Identifying of cooperative governance (X_8)	never = 1; disapproval = 2; approval = 3, Comparatively = 4; Very = 5	3.34	0.846
	Participating in decision-making and management of cooperatives (X_9)	Never = 1; occasionally = 2; often = 3, Majority = 4; basically = 5	3.23	1.028
Risk perception	Operating Risk attitudes of cooperatives (X_{10})	never = 1; not very = 2; generally = 3, More = 4; very positive = 5	3.10	1.003
	Attitudes towards cooperative market exploitation (X_{11})	never = 1; disapproval = 2; approval = 3, Comparatively = 4; Very = 5	3.36	1.004

variable with a value of 1 or 0. Therefore binary Logistic model is used for analysis.

3) Control variables. This paper mainly studies the influence of members' cognition on willingness to participate. In order to better reflect the influencing factors of cooperative members' deep willingness to participate from the micro level, the gender, age, educational level and role in the cooperative are not considered as control variables.

3. Model Construction and Empirical Analysis

According to the explanations of independent variables and dependent variables, cooperative awareness, interest awareness, management awareness and risk awareness are taken as independent variables, while dependent variables are willingness to participate. There are two kinds of results, so this paper will use the binary Logistic model.

3.1. Model Design

This paper mainly studies the relationship between members' cognition and willingness to participate. The explanatory variable is a discrete binary variable, and the value is 1 or 0. When the variables do not conform to the normal distribution in statistics, the maximum likelihood number is used to estimate the coefficients. The conditional probability is " $p\{y = 1 | X_i\} = p_i$ ", and the willingness of cooperative members to participate can be summarized as follows:

$$P_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\alpha + \beta\chi_i)}} = \frac{e^{(\alpha + \beta\chi_i)}}{1 + e^{(\alpha + \beta\chi_i)}}$$

In the above formula, P_i is the probability that members will participate in events, and $1 - P_i$ is the probability that members will not participate in events. Using P_i ratio $1 - P_i$ the occurrence ratio of members willing to participate in events is obtained, and then natural logarithms are taken on both sides of the ratio, and a linear function is obtained.

$$\ln\left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right) = \alpha + \beta\chi_i$$

After transformation, the concrete formulas of regression model can be obtained:

$$P(y = 1 | \chi_1, \dots, \chi_k) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\alpha + \beta_1\chi_1 + \dots + \beta_k\chi_k)}}$$

In the formula, " y " is a dummy variable of two classifications. It is " k " factors that affect members' willingness to participate. " α " is a constant term of the regression equation and " β_i " is a regression coefficient.

3.2. Empirical Analysis

Using the binary logistic model, this paper divides the members' cognition into four categories: cooperative cognition, interest cognition, management cognition

and risk cognition, and empirically analyses the relationship between the members' subjective cognition and participation willingness of farmers' professional cooperatives. Using backward conditional, the likelihood ratio of the model is 64.806, and the corresponding P value is less than 0.05, which indicates that the model is meaningful in general. In the goodness-of-fit test of simulation, the negative 2-fold logarithmic likelihood ratio of the model is 80.232, which is relatively small. NagelkerkeR2 is 0.601, and the prediction accuracy of the model is 92.6%. This shows that the prediction effect of the model is ideal. The specific model results are shown in **Table 3**.

From **Table 3**, we can see that members' cooperative cognition, interest cognition, management cognition and risk cognition all have certain influence on dependent variables' willingness to participate. In terms of Significance, besides members' understanding of the nature and function of cooperatives (X_1), earnings distribution system (X_4) and management risk attitude (X_{10}), other independent variables have significant positive effects on members' deep participation intention at 95% confidence interval level.

From the regression results, we can find that the larger the wald value of the explanatory variable or the smaller the significance value, the more significant the influence is, and more important. From the wald value or significance point of view, " X_3 : evaluation of the role of cooperatives", " X_6 : development prospects of cooperatives", " X_7 : understanding of management model", " X_9 : participation in decision-making and management of cooperatives" are the four independent variables with large wald values or significant values of 0. In order to explore whether there is a certain relationship between these four variables, the correlation analysis is carried out. The specific results are as follows: **Table 4**. The correlation coefficient between the evaluation of cooperative role and the development prospects of cooperatives is 0.541 and the significant level is 0. The

Table 3. Results of cognition and participation willingness model of cooperative members.

Explanatory variable	regression coefficient	Standard error	Wald	Significance
X1	0.634	0.323	3.847	0.050
X2	0.821	0.394	4.340	0.037*
X3	1.600	0.331	23.426	0.000*
X4	0.293	0.504	0.338	0.561
X5	0.924	0.390	5.601	0.018*
X6	2.192	0.495	19.605	0.000*
X7	1.923	0.463	17.265	0.000*
X8	1.147	0.565	4.127	0.042*
X9	2.593	3.043	19.955	0.000*
X10	-0.22	0.749	0.001	0.977
X11	5.449	1.651	10.893	0.001*

Note: *The results are significant at the 5% level.

Table 4. Coefficient of correlation between variables.

Project	Pearson Relevance	Significance
Evaluation of the Role of Cooperatives & Development Prospect of Cooperatives	0.541**	0.000
The Understanding of Cooperative Management Model & The Participation of Cooperatives in Decision-making Management	0.569**	0.000

Note: *The results are significant at the 1% level.

correlation coefficient between the understanding of cooperative management model. What's more, the participation of cooperatives in decision-making management is 0.569 and the significant level is 0. It is found that the variables of each cooperative are mutually influential.

3.3. Findings

According to the results of model estimation, the factors that affect the willingness of members to deepen their participation in the management of cooperatives are analyzed as follows:

1) The influence of members' cooperative cognitive factors. Members' understanding of cooperatives' obligations and evaluation of cooperatives' role have a positive impact on their willingness to participate in management, while members' perception of the nature and function of cooperatives is not significant. At 95% confidence level, the willingness to participate was increased by 2.273 times for every unit that members of cooperatives knew more about their obligations, and 4.952 times for every unit that members perceived more about the role of cooperatives. Therefore, members' understanding of their obligations and evaluation of their roles have a significant impact on their willingness to participate deeply. In the process of field interviews, we know that members' definition of cooperatives is vague. Most of them keep the concept, nature and function of cooperatives in the reality of cooperatives, while members have a relatively high understanding of the obligations of cooperatives. Because cooperatives need people to do things, have rules and regulations, and know about them. What obligations need to be fulfilled in a cooperative? As far as the evaluation of the role of cooperatives is concerned, members are satisfied with the policy support and technical service consultation provided by cooperatives. In addition, this highlights the role of cooperatives. Therefore, members' willingness to further participate in management should consider the mechanism of the cooperatives' own role and interests.

2) The influence of members' interests cognitive factors. The perception of member cooperatives' income satisfaction and development prospects has a positive impact on their willingness to deepen participation, while the perception of cooperatives' earnings distribution system is not significant. The willingness to participate increases by 2.519 times for every unit that members of cooperatives are satisfied with their income, and 8.951 times for every unit that members of

cooperatives are satisfied with their development prospects. On the one hand, the benefits that members gain from joining cooperatives are generally perceived, and the more satisfied they are with the benefits of cooperatives, the more willing they are to deepen their participation in management. On the other hand, the state has issued various policies in the past one or two years. Some members believe that cooperatives have great potential for development and will surely show blowout in the future. However, members' perceptions and assumptions about the surplus distribution system of cooperatives are different. It is known that some cooperatives do not have surplus returns at all, or that very few cooperatives are similar to family farms, thus affecting the enthusiasm and initiative of members to deepen their participation in management.

3) The influence of members' management cognitive factors. Members' recognition of cooperative management mode, governance style, and participation in cooperative decision-making and management has a positive impact on their willingness to participate. The participation willingness of members of cooperatives increases by 6.844 times with the increase of one unit's awareness of their management model, 3.150 times with the increase of one unit's recognition of their governance style, and 13.406 times with the increase of one unit's awareness of their participation in decision-making and management. Management is a knowledge Good management can drive the efficient development of the organization. The clearer the cooperative members are about the internal management model, the more willing they are to further participate in cooperative management; ordinary members are more concerned about their own interests. As long as their own interests can be protected, they generally agree with the management's governance mode. Members' participation in decision-making and management is an important indicator of their in-depth participation. Cooperative members have a clearer orientation for the overall operation and management of cooperatives. The clearer their internal operation is, the more relevant to the development of the whole cooperative. And members are willing to deepen their participation in order to protect their vital interests.

4) The influence of members' risk perception factors. Cooperatives' market development and members' willingness to participate deeply have a significant impact, while the perception of cooperatives' operational risk has no significant impact on it. In the field interviews, we know that most members have a kind of ambivalent mentality. Although they want to expand the scale and seize the market share to obtain more economic benefits, they are not willing to bear the potential risks in investment. Previous members of cooperatives are still more active in market development. Once they understand that their investment risks are high, their return cycle is long and their benefits are low, some members begin to avoid risks. They do not participate in investment discussions as actively as before, and even transfer their decision-making power to the elite to shirk their risk responsibilities. In fact, we know that members of cooperatives are still sensitive to risk perception. If their personal interests are not guaranteed, some members prefer to avoid risk and seek stability rather than participate in the de-

cision-making of risk-related matters.

4. Conclusions

Based on the survey, this paper establishes a binary logistic model to analyze the impact of cognition on members' willingness to participate in depth. The conclusions are as follows: 1) Management cognitive factors have the greatest impact on members' willingness to participate in depth, followed by cooperative cognitive factors, interest cognitive factors, and finally risk cognitive factors; 2) The nature, function, surplus distribution system, and operational risk cognitive level of cooperatives have no significant relationship with members' willingness to participate.

According to the above analysis, this study has the following enlightenment:

1) Promoting cooperative cognitive ability. First of all, in order to avoid members' inaction after peasant household joining the cooperative, the cooperative should clarify the duties and responsibilities of each member, highlight the individual role, make each member deeply feel their own value, do not let members feel that their further participation in cooperative affairs is indispensable, make members have a sense of responsibility. For cooperative development, every member is inseparable. Secondly, cooperatives can accurately locate, build the cultural concept of cooperatives with "value" as the core, and enhance the humanistic care of cooperatives, so as to create a "community is home" atmosphere, finally, make strategic planning. Members should actively care about relevant national policies and have a preliminary understanding of the development prospects of cooperatives. In practical exploration, they should give full play to the advantages of cooperatives, constantly create new bright spots, expand influence and enhance visibility.

2) Deepening the level of management awareness. The essence of management is to improve efficiency and profits, and its core is people. Firstly, we should build an excellent team of talents, inject new blood into the management of cooperatives, strengthen members' understanding of cooperative organizations themselves, increase their recognition of cooperatives, and use lectures and propaganda to make members truly understand the management methods of cooperatives; secondly, we should arrange human, financial and material elements scientifically and integrate them. Moreover, all kinds of decision-making of cooperatives are democratic and scientific, and the implementation should take into account efficiency and fairness. Finally, the cooperatives should be managed scientifically and standardizatively, and each member should be self-managed to restrict his own behavior with strict standards throughout his life.

3) Enhancing the cognitive ability of members. Firstly, cooperatives are closely related to the interests of their members. Improving their cognitive abilities of interests is conducive to them obtaining more benefits within a limited range, making use of various preferential policies, attracting more active participation and cooperation of their members. And ultimately, it can promote the sustaina-

ble development of cooperatives. Secondly, “development is the absolute principle”. Only the continuous development of cooperatives can maintain their vitality. It is necessary to strengthen members’ awareness of cooperative management development and set clear development orientation and goals. Furthermore, we should build up risk awareness, seize opportunities, dare to accept challenges, and constantly break through the internal development power of cooperatives. Finally, talent is the endogenous driving force for the development of cooperatives. Through professional training, technical guidance and experience exchange, the skills of the chairman and managers of cooperatives should be improved. The chairman and managers should pay more attention to both internal and external training, enhance the sense of responsibility and be able to convince people. The training of members provides follow-up force for the development of cooperatives, advancing with the times. professional training can broaden the members’ deep understanding of cooperatives so as to improve the participation of members.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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