

SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BOARD PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOUR IN THE CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT. This review paper expanded knowledge and improved understanding of active participation behaviour among Board of Director (BOD) in the governance of co-operative organization. To understand the role of BOD in the co-operatives' governance structure, we began this paper with the introduction of philosophy, universal values and principles of co-operatives. The formation of the co-operative organization is briefly described to illustrate the importance of member participation in the governance. Current issues related to participation based on research findings were discussed to illustrate the importance of this study. The concept of participation in previous studies was reviewed to develop an operational definition of active participation behavior in the co-operative governance. BOD is responsible for carrying out its functions on a voluntary basis and some of their roles are the attending of meetings, having open communication, giving constructive ideas and solutions, being involved in decision making and as well as performing tasks in a team. Several factors were highlighted to explain the BOD participation phenomenon in the co-operative organizations using relevant theories. The Social Capital Theory (SCT) and Mutual Incentive Theory (MIT) were described briefly in this paper to explain the social factors and individual factors in shaping active participation behaviour. Finally, this paper suggested that further studies can be conducted to explore other factors that could explain the participation behaviour especially in the governance of co-operatives that can contribute to the theory and existing knowledge.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies on social capital based organizations show that public participation plays a vital role in the development of a community (Mori, 2014; Saidu, Samah, Redzuan, & Ahmad, 2014). Participation in co-operative became an important phenomenon for behavioral studies and often attract the attention from researchers (Birchall & Simmons, 2004b; Cechin, Bijman, Pascussi, Zybersztajn, & Omta, 2013; Simmons & Birchall, 2007). Participation of BOD became a vital element in the co-operative movement through the philosophy, principles and values shared by members of this organization (Choi, Choi, Jang, & Park, 2014; Neville & Neville, 2011).

This paper will explore the concept of participation in the co-operative governance, which explains the importance and benefits of participation to the members and the organization. This article will also enhance the understanding of the concept of voluntary participation in the governance of the co-operative. Numerous authors note that there has been limited empirical study of the actual behaviour of board directors performing their task (Cabrera-fernández & Martínez-jiménez, 2016; Petrovic, 2010).

2. THE CO-OPERATIVE PHILOSOPHY, PRINCIPLES AND STRUCTURE

A co-operative society is an organization that has played a significant role in realizing the economic prosperity of the people. As a self-help organization, participation in co-operative will optimize the utilization of the economic potential of its members. The co-operative

role is to develop and build the capacity and potential of co-operative members in particular and society in general to improve the socio-economic welfare (Md. Salleh, Arshad, Shaarani, & Kasmuri, 2008).

A co-operative member owns and controls the business democratically as a patron. Members will receive their profit in proportion to their use, or “patronage,” of the cooperative's services. In some countries, some cooperatives are treated as a type of nonprofit organization. This is because the co-operative's primary objective is to provide goods or services at a cost to the members. However, both the profit or non-profit type co-operative is similar in the terms of statutes provided for member patron ownership, member voting rights for board of directors, profit distributions to members, and member rights to assets sold if the cooperative should dissolve (Cechin et al., 2013).

Members' participation is a foundation in the co-operative movement. The practice of philosophy principles and values adopted by this organization is consistent with the definition of the group themselves. The co-operative society definition has been accepted all over the world through the Declaration in Co-operative Identity Statement in 1995 by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) as, “An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.” (Md. Salleh et al., 2008).

Seven principles underlying the establishment of co-operatives based on the declaration of ICA (1995) are: 1) voluntary and open membership; 2) member economic participation; 3) democratic member control; 4) autonomy and independence; 5) training, education, and information; 6) cooperation among co-operatives; and 7) concern for community. These principles could explain that the co-operative is a social organization motivated by economic cooperation that existed between groups of individuals who want to achieve the same goal (Hartley, 2014).

2.1 The Importance of Participation in Co-operative Governance

The co-operative is governed systematically through democratic control by members. Members, via its rights in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will appoint a Board of Directors (BOD) through majority vote. The BOD is responsible for executing and implementing the effective

governance based on co-operative policy and rules approved at the AGM. The roles and responsibilities of BOD were determined in the by-laws of the co-operative, and this task is carried out involuntarily. A BOD position either as a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer or Committee is established to develop a mechanism control on the administrative and daily operations of the cooperative (Md. Salleh et al., 2008). Therefore, BOD active participation in their role when performing a task is vital for the co-operative organization's success (Choi et al., 2014).

Hanel (1992) categorized members' participation into two: first as an investor or lender to co-operatives. Second, participation in governance and involvement in decision making related to goal setting and governance policies. The co-operative governance is controlled by its members through voluntary democratic participation (Birchall & Simmons, 2004a). Members cannot be forced to participate. The volunteerism spirit will keep the members motivated and continue to provide the best in business together (Jussila, 2013). Through their active participation and the implementation of good governance, the BOD tries to protect the interests of society as a whole based on the values and ethics of co-operatives (Bijman, Hendrikse, & Oijen, 2013).

The study on BOD active participation in governing a co-operative is important for understanding participation behavior, especially in the context of co-operative organization.

3. THE PARTICIPATION ISSUES

Active participation is very important because it gives space for members to implement control mechanisms in governance more effectively (Osterberg & Nilsson, 2009). Second, active participation will create a competitive advantage over corporations, and thus became value added to member-customer participation (Bhuyan, 2007). Third, it simplifies the process which could lead to changes to the co-operative to provide better benefits to its members and thus, increase the commitment and loyalty of members (Morfi, Ollila, Nilsson, Feng, & Karantininis, 2015).

However, the co-operative movement is constantly faced with issues of participation. One of the critical issues which has attracted the attention of many scholars is the free rider. A free rider is defined as a

member who is not active in the operation or governance of co-operatives and is only interested in the benefits derived from the co-operative. This is also known as the apathy attitude (Hooper, Kaplan, & Boone, 2010; Iliopoulos & Theodorakopoulou, 2014). Among the BOD team, free riders exist when some BOD do not play their appropriate roles and responsibilities.

What determines active participation? Recent studies showed that various factors determine participation. Researchers have thus far focused on social factors as strong determinants toward participation in co-operatives (Deng & Hendrikse, 2014) (Kasabov, 2015; Ruben & Heras, 2012). However, these are not sufficient to explain active participation behavior. Other studies have also shown that there is an individual factor that contributes to participation (Birchall & Simmons, 2004b; Tijnaitiene, Neverauskas, & Balciunas, 2009). Therefore, the author will look into all factors mentioned in the context of co-operative governance.

4. THE PARTICIPATION CONCEPT

Participation means to act or take part in an activity. In addition to the term "participation", some authors also used the term "involvement" to reflect the behavior of the subject takes part in a number of organizations (Ballard, 2014). There are also some authors who use the term "engagement" in which they described the involvement of a person to take part physically and emotionally (Barrutia, Echebarria, Hartmann, & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2013; Dodd, Brummette, & Hazleton, 2015). This study will use the term 'participation' as it is thought fit, where the behavior of members' participation in co-operative governance focuses on the physical act of taking part in the governance of the co-operative (Cechin et al., 2013; Liang, Huang, Lu, & Wang, 2015; Zheng, Wang, & Awokuse, 2012).

The study by Phipps, Prieto, & Ndinguri (2013) described the concept of participation as a joint construct communication, team work and participation in decision-making but this study was conducted at the corporate organization instead of co-operative organization. Verhees, Sergaki, & Van Dijk (2015) and Cechin et al. (2013) described active participation as attending meetings, communicate their views or criticism and involved in decision making. However, some literature suggest that a BOD should display a set of quality for the role - open communication, questioning and

challenging one another's assumptions and beliefs, frequent communication and regular attendance, actively participating in board discussions, giving constructive ideas and solution (Choi et al., 2014; Petrovic, 2010).

Based on the literature review and the BOD function in the co-operative organization, constructs of participation behavior in this study should include voluntary behaviour, open communication, attending of meetings, giving constructive ideas, involvement in decision making and performing tasks for teamwork.

5. DETERMINANTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

5.1. Social Factor

The influence of social factors was shown as being able to increase voluntary participation in social movements. Social factors are considered as social capital stock which was determined to have a positive influence towards participation in the collective action. Social capital can increase the level of participation, productivity, and socioeconomic member and address the issue of free riders in the co-operative (Liang et al., 2015; Oh, Lee, & Bush, 2014; Ruben & Heras, 2012). In fact, the communities endowed with a diverse stock of social capital and collective associations will be in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). The effort and focus in increasing social capital need to be addressed by the co-operative movement, to ensure that the co-operative movement continues to develop and achieve the common objectives of its members. This is because, as a co-operative association, the organization needs a high social capital in creating the unity of members, to make it successful in achieving their shared goal.

In the context of participation in the governance of co-operative society, the character of social capital is similar to the philosophy, values and principles of co-operatives. It allows participants to act together more effectively to achieve the common objectives in cooperation (Deng & Hendrikse, 2013). This is supported by other studies which show that of the organization, a combination of social and economic approach that suggests social resources (relations, norms and beliefs) can be used as a form of exchange to achieve the organization goals (Dodd et al., 2015).

According to Putnam (2001) features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks, can improve the efficiency of a society by facilitating coordinated actions. In addition, social capital can be defined as resources that exist in social relations that facilitate collective action. It exists in any group of affiliate consistently to achieve collective goals. The resources for social capital raised from the interactions within a community. This interaction, both among individuals and institutions will deliver an emotional bond of trust, reciprocal relationships and social networks, form values and norms that are useful for coordination and cooperation to achieve common goals.

5.1.1. Social Network

Network is one of the social factors that influence participation. People have the ability to get involved in a network of social relations, through a wide variety of relationships that co-exist and upon the principle of volunteerism, equality, freedom and civility. The ability of the group members or members of the public to always unite themselves in a pattern of synergistic relationship will be very influential in determining how strong the social capital of a group can be (Adler & Kwon, 2009).

In the governance context, community members who have access to co-operative representatives, and are able to use the co-operative product as well as been given information about the co-operative activity will have a higher possibility of being more active (Deng & Hendrikse, 2013; Ruben & Heras, 2012). A recent study showed that members with wider social network i.e. government official, another co-operative BOD, supplier and community leader will participate actively in co-operative (Wim, Xueqin, & Lu, 2011).

5.1.2. Social Norms

Social norm is defined as a set of rules expected to be obeyed and followed by society in a social entity. These rules are usually institutionalized, unwritten but understood as a determinant of behavior patterns in the context of social relationships and social sanctions are applied if violated. Social norms will determine the strength of the

relationship between individuals because it stimulates social cohesiveness and creates a positive impact on the development of society. Therefore, the social norm is referred to as one of the social capital (Deng & Hendrikse, 2013; Ruben & Heras, 2012).

Studies on participation in co-operative organization also described social norms as a shared value among members in the group. Values are ideas that have been hereditarily considered right and important by members of the community. Values are important and are normally dominant in certain population groups in our culture. They grow and develop as well as influence the rules by which to act and behave in society. A group of people with a set of shared values also work together easily and cooperate to achieve their goal. In the co-operative governance context, the BOD shared their norms and values by appreciating the co-operatives philosophy, values and principles and played their role and responsibility by obeying the co-operatives by-laws (Morfi et al., 2015).

5.1.3. Trust

Trust is about a willingness to take risk in social relationships based on the confidence that the others will do something as expected. This feeling will always act in a pattern of action that is mutually supportive. At least, he will not harm himself and his group (Ruben & Heras, 2012). Collective action based on mutual trust will increase people's participation in various forms and dimensions, especially in the context of common progress. It allows people to unite and contribute to the improvement of social capital (Chloupkova et al., 2003; Kasabov, 2015; Ruben & Heras, 2012). People with the same language, norms and values, find it easier to build trust and take collective action. Trust is seen as having a positive relationship with participation in the co-operative governance (Barraud-Didier, Henninger, & Akremi, 2012).

5.2. Individual Factors

Studies also showed that the factors that encourage participation also stem from the individual, either from the internal or external drive. The urge to act or behave is due to the motivation of the individual (Cechin et al., 2013; Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). Birchall & Simmons (2004a), in their

study, concluded that the motives of members' participation in co-operative governance were led by their interests to achieve personal and collective goals. The findings of this study eventually led to the formation of a new theory known as Mutual Incentive Theory-MIT.

5.2.1. Individualistic

According to MIT, members are driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors to take part in the co-operative activity. The factor that concludes a positive relationship with participation is a benefit (extrinsic driven) and habit (intrinsic driven). Members are looking for the financial benefit (i.e. dividend and shares) and quality product. Those who served in the BOD, expected social recognition in the community and built better networks in business or politics. This is considered as an intangible benefit. A person who has participated in cooperative activities and has a strong social identity of co-operative, will form a habit of participation. Habit means a routine that has become part of life, which one loves and does, regardless of the benefits obtained (Birchall & Simmons, 2004a).

5.2.2. Collectivistic

Collectivistic orientation interprets individual action differently, assuming that when members decide to participate, their action are driven by three variables: (1) Shared goals: the individual expresses mutual needs that translate into common goals; (2) Shared values: the individual feels a duty to participate as an expression of common values; and 3) Sense of community: the individual identifies with and cares about the community he lives in or is like them in some respect (Birchall & Simmons, 2004a).

As described in paragraph 4.1, social factors such as social networks, social norms and trust play a significant role on the behavior of participation in the cooperative organization. These factors will lead to the formation of social identity in a person due to social influence. According to Birchall & Simmons (2004b) in the co-operative society, the committee members will actively participate in collective action because they want to get benefits for the group as a whole as opposed to individual benefits. With this reinforcement, one is able to act more actively to participate in the governance of co-operative.

6. THEORIES

6.1. Social Capital Theory (SCT)

Various theories have been used to explain the behavior of participation. Among them, the Social Capital Theory explained that social features in the community will lead to participation behavior and collective action (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994). Features of social affiliation such as trust, norms and networks can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. In other words, social capital can be defined as resources that exist in social relations that facilitate collective action. Sources of social capital include trust, norms and networks that represent a relationship of any group affiliated consistently to achieve collective goals (Putnam, 2001).

In the context of participation in the governance of the co-operative, social capital factors allow participants to act together more effectively to achieve their shared objectives (Deng & Hendrikse, 2013). This is supported by other studies where social capital is generally understood as a combination of social and economic approach that suggests social resources (network, norms and trust) and which can be used as a form of exchange to achieve the organization goals (Dodd et al., 2015).

6.2. Mutual Incentive Theory (MIT)

As explained in paragraph 2.0, the co-operative society is motivated by economic and social capital where it was founded by a group of individuals to meet common needs. Later on, MIT described that the dimensions that constitute participation in co-operatives are individualistic-collectivistic orientation. This theory explains the individual and collective factors that influence members to participate in co-operative (Birchall & Simmons, 2004a, 2004b).

According to MIT, individuals will be driven by self-interest and collective interest of the community groups when deciding whether to participate or not in a co-operative. The interests of individuals are described by two factors- benefit and habit, and these and associated positively with participation. MIT also explains that three other factors that will negatively connect with the participation are cost, opportunity cost, and satiation. Three factors that established collective orientation by individual are shared goal, shared value and concern to the community

(Birchall & Simmons, 2004a). In this study MIT will be used to establish whether collectivistic incentives or individualistic incentives predominate in members' behavior to participate actively in their role as BOD governing the co-operative.

7. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to determine whether social factors and individual factors have positive relationship with participation behavior. However, the existing variables are still not sufficient to explain what leads to active participation. Therefore, another variable needs to be identified whether a direct or indirect relationship exists with active participation behavior. We will consider another variable as mediator or moderator to test the best competent model in the explanation of active participation. The use of SCT and MIT are relevant and can be applied in the research on BOD's participation in the governance of co-operatives. The combination of these theories can better describe the encouragement of active participation of BOD governing co-operatives.

The role of co-operative members in governing co-operative at the AGM and the BOD level are equally important and should be strengthened in order to realize the benefit of the community. In addition, active participation can improve the efficiency of the governance of the co-operative. Only then, can the collective co-operative goal be achieved and hence contribute to the economic development of its members.

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