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Justice and Leadership Antecedents of Organizational Trust Effects on Attitudes, Behavior, and Community Empowerment Outcomes in Kenyan Agricultural Cooperatives

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Abstract

Organizational trust within co-operatives significantly impacts outcomes like member satisfaction, commitment, and various dimensions of empowerment. However, research, particularly in the African context, is limited. This study addresses the gap by investigating the effects of participative leadership and interactional justice on trust and their influence on co-operative outcomes. Our findings indicate that trust, largely influenced by participative leadership and interactional justice, positively affects outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment and empowerment. However, for active membership, the effects were direct, not mediated by trust. Trust in the co-operative and its governing structure showed more pervasive impacts than trust in fellow members. These results significantly enrich the existing literature on organizational trust within co-operatives, providing valuable insights for co-operative leaders, members, policy makers, and donor agencies. By underscoring the importance of trust, participative leadership, and interactional justice, we offer a roadmap towards enhancing co-operative performance and community empowerment. Furthermore, these findings set stage for future research in this critical area. The study offers a notable contribution to the field, emphasizing the integral role of trust, participative leadership, and interactional justice in shaping a range of co-operative outcomes. This study can significantly benefit co-operative leaders and members by informing their strategies for enhancing trust, performance, and empowerment within their organizations. Furthermore, the study provides valuable insights for community leaders, government policy makers, and donor agencies who aim to bolster the capacity of co-operatives to foster rural development and community empowerment.

Key Words: Organization trust, Agriculture, Cooperatives, Africa, Leadership

Introduction

Agricultural cooperatives have played a significant role in the development of Kenya's rural areas. The history of cooperative development in Kenya is closely tied to the aims of the Government of Kenya's rural development policy. The promotional efforts of Government started soon after Independence in 1963 with an overall aim to utilize cooperatives as a tool to facilitate the commercialization of Kenya's smallholder farm sector (FAO, 2023).

Most of Kenya's smallholders own their farms and farmers produce a wide range of agricultural produce for the commercial market. The current membership in farmer cooperatives in Kenya stands at approximately 600,000 active members, located in two main sectors with the

cooperative coffee sector and the cooperative dairy sector (FAO, 2023; Government of Kenya, 2021). The government has also developed a National Agricultural Marketing Strategy (NAMS) which focuses on increasing market access and competitiveness of locally produced commodities in both the domestic and international markets. In addition, it aims at improving the income and livelihoods of value chain actors with cooperatives-a key component (Government of Kenya, 2021).

Given the vital role of agricultural cooperatives in Kenya's sustainable development, organizational success is crucial. Trust represents a critical component of organizational success. Trust research is most commonly tested in North America, Europe, and Asia thus leaving a lack of empirical studies conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only two known studies have looked at international development and organizational trust quantitatively in Sub-Saharan Africa (Heyns & Rothman, 2015; Bellows, 2017). Since North America and Europe are higher trust societies compared to Sub-Saharan Africa, the antecedents and outcomes of organizational trust could have proved different than other continents (Nwankpa & Datta, 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Bove et al., 2022).

Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) famously define trust as a "psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior on another". Research shows a positive relationship between trust and organizational performance (Utomo et al., 2023).

Trust expands the opportunity set for the coordination of work within and outside organizations. Trust is not unconditional. Three stages exist to arrive at organizational trust:

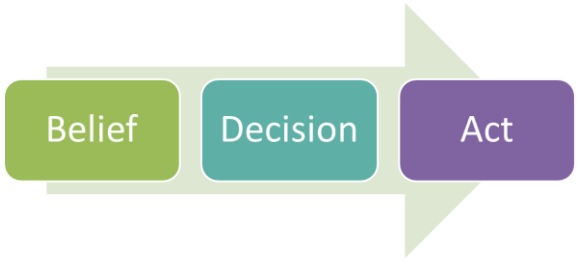

Figure 1. Organizational Trust Stages. (Colquitt et al., 2007)

This research desired to examine the role of trust in cooperatives in Kenya with antecedents as well as attitude, behavior, and community involvement variables. Trust in a cooperative's leadership represents an upward view of vulnerability by cooperative members. When members think collectively of trust in those holding leadership, it therefore represents a collective authority (Empson et al., 2023; Yada & Jäppinen, 2022).

Overview of Conceptual Model

Based upon literature on organizational behavior, this paper proposes that the practice of participative leadership and interactional justice in agricultural cooperatives will have effects on a variety of outcome variables relevant to cooperative members and might also have implications for the community at large. *Participative leadership* refers to a form of leadership in which cooperative members have a substantial amount of input into the specific goals to be pursued by the cooperative (Hoch, 2013) and previous research shows it relates positively with trust (Li et al., 2012). *Interactional justice* is a more encompassing term referring to two more specific types of justice: interpersonal justice and informational justice. Interpersonal justice refers to the extent to which cooperative members are treated politely, with dignity and respect.

Informational justice refers to the extent to which communications about decision making in the cooperative is thorough and open (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Although in general one might expect that cooperative members hold relatively high levels of participative leadership and interactional justice overall, one would still expect some variability across different organizations.

The outcome variables that were studied can be grouped into two broad categories. The first one includes cooperative member attitudes and behaviors, specifically, member satisfaction, commitment to the cooperative, active participation as a member, and perceived voice. *Member satisfaction* represents the amount of overall positive affect that individual members hold toward their cooperative, adapted from Hombrados-Mandieta & Cosano-Rivas (2011). *Commitment to the cooperative* in the psychological tradition, affective organization commitment involves the degree to which an employee, or in this study a member, feels devotion to a particular entity (Lew, 2011). *Active membership* means the level of functional engagement in a membership-based organization, here referring to cooperatives (Borda-Rodriguez et al., 2016). *Member perceived voice* entails the perception that members can intentionally express cooperative related ideas, information, and opinions (Ruck et al., 2017). The second category is three dimensions of community involvement consisting of *political empowerment* encompassing voice in community decision-making and believing that one's vote makes a difference in the community; *social empowerment* meaning feelings of community connection and community spirit; and *psychological empowerment* involving motivation and pride in one's community (Strzelecka et al., 2017).

The authors anticipated that the effects of participative leadership and interactional justice were at least partially carried through trust. Casimir et al. (2006) found out that trust played a mediating role between leadership and follower performance. Intra organizations can have three different types of referents as the organization itself, groups, or individuals (Korsgaard et al., 2002). In the first set of results reported here, this study specifically looked at *trust in the cooperative*, a variable that consisted of participant responses to reliance trust items (Gillespie, 2003) that referred to three related entities: (a) the cooperative as a whole, (b) the board of directors (called the management committee elected by cooperative members), and (c) the senior staff as three different upward referents. More specifically, it was expected that leaders who were more participative would generate higher trust in the cooperative, with resultingly higher levels of member attitudes and behaviors as well as greater community involvement. This would expectedly be consistent with antecedents of organizational trust (Chan & Mak, 2014) and effects of organizational trust on desirable organizational outcomes in the literature including performance (Utomo et.al., 2023) and organizational commitment (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2016). In the second model presented below, the authors utilized a referent of fellow cooperative members. Similarly, the team expected that higher levels of interactional justice, viewed by members as originating from the cooperative overall, the management committee, and the senior staff, would also be associated with greater trust in the cooperative and thus higher levels of outcomes. To this end, trust in the cooperative is viewed as a critical psychological state that carries the effects of leadership and justice through to the outcomes. Nevertheless, this study anticipated that there might be some additional, direct effects of leadership and justice that were not carried through trust, thus the analytical model utilized included both direct and indirect paths from leadership and justice to the outcomes. Previous research supports direct relationships between leadership and performance (Hoch, 2013) and between organizational justice and satisfaction (Usmani & Jamal, 2013). Generaly, it seems that cooperatives that are higher in participative leadership are also higher in interactional justice, so the analytical model allowed these two antecedent variables to relate to each other. A conceptual diagram of this model is seen in Figure 2 below.

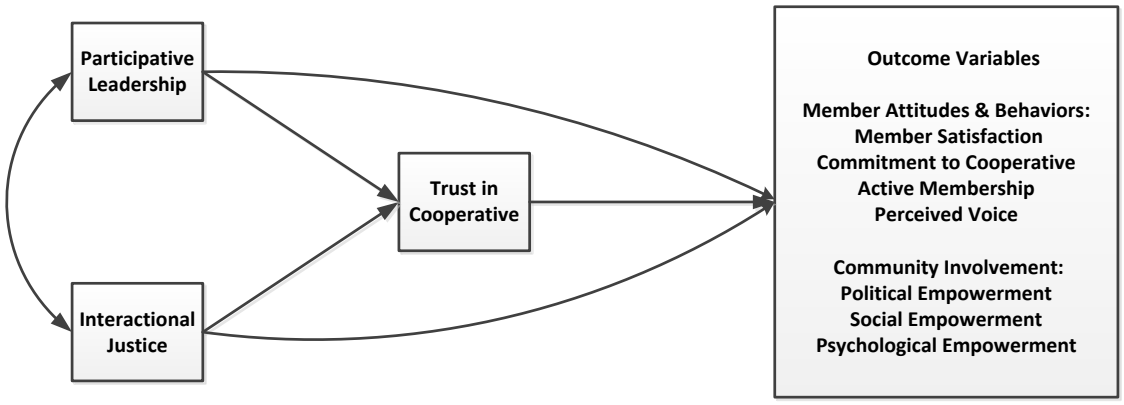

Figure 2. Conceptual model of the direct effects and indirect effects (via trust in cooperative) of participative leadership and interactional justice on outcomes

Methodology

In order to address the research objective, the study targeted a number of Republic of Kenya cooperatives from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives that comprised 2,996 cooperatives delineated by county, sector, and name. However, the research interest was focused on agricultural cooperatives only. Among the list were 308 specifically designated agricultural cooperatives. Sectors included sugar cane, livestock, tea, coffee, horticulture, fishing, dairy, cotton, bananas, bee keeping, poultry, pyrethrum, ranching, and tobacco. This population was narrowed down through purposive sampling of counties to 12 out of Kenya's 47 counties based on USAID, Global Communities, and USIU-Africa cooperative programming priorities as shown in Table 1 and Figure 3.

Table 1. Sample Counties

Embu	Usain-Gichu
Kitui	Kisumu
Machakos	Kakamega
Makueni	Busia
Taita-Tavetta	Murang'a
Kilifi	Kisii

Figure 3. Map with Sample Sites within Counties

In selecting the specific cooperatives per county, random number generator feature within Microsoft Excel was used. Field officers from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives in each of the 12 selected counties were further sought to jointly communicate with those specific cooperatives. The research team met independently with the county field officer for the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives in Kiambu County to discuss questionnaire terms, cooperative terms, proposed collection methodology, and cooperative member possible reactions. Kiambu County was not part of the sample. Adjustments to the methodology and collection instrument were made at this time. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in Kenya among 19 agricultural cooperatives in 12 counties comprising 9 different ethnicities leading to a sample size of (n = 506). Deductive quantitative methodology with structured equation modelling was utilized. However, of the total questionnaires administered, 74 were not considered for inappropriateness of filling.

Analytic Approach: Test of Measurement Model

Once the data were cleaned and any necessary scales scores created, a structural equation modelling software (Mplus v.8, Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) with a robust estimator (i.e., MLR, was used to accommodate any non-normality in the indicators for the latent variables) to test latent variable models of the relationships implied in Figure 1. The first step was to estimate a measurement model that specified the relationships between each latent variable in the model and its indicators. This was done to ensure that the quality of measurement was at an acceptable level. As is typical for confirmatory factor analytic (CFA) models of this general type, the measurement model allowed all latent variables to freely covary with each other and did not impose any directional relationships among them. Although the chi-square test of model fit was statistically significant, indicating some degree of model misfit, other indices indicated an acceptable fit of the model, $\chi^2 = 763.037$, $df = 419$, $p < .0001$, *RMSEA* = .040 (*90%CI* .036, .045), *CFI* = .952, *SRMR* = .037.

Results

Factor Loadings

Table 1 summarizes the factor loadings of the indicator variables on their latent factors. As can be seen, the standardized values of the factor loadings, which ranged from .492 to .972, indicated moderate to strong relationships of the indicators to their latent constructs, and all were statistically significant at $p < .001$, again supporting the adequacy of the measurement model.

Table 2: Standardized factor loadings from measurement model

Latent Variables & their Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading
Interactional Justice	
Interpersonal justice	.882
Informational justice	.907
Participative Leadership	
PL from Co-operative	.948
PL from Management Committee	.972
PL from Senior Staff	.915
Trust (Reliance)	
TR from Co-operative	.903
TR from Management Committee	.944
TR from Senior Staff	.929
Member Satisfaction	
Member satisfaction parcel 1 (items 1 & 2)	.805
Member satisfaction parcel 2 (items 3 & 4)	.697
Member satisfaction parcel 3 (items 5 & 6)	.818
Commitment to Co-operative[a]	
Commitment item 1	.623
Commitment item 2	.760
Commitment item 3	.550
Commitment item 6	.492
Active Participation as Member	
Active participation parcel 1 (items 1 & 2)	.754
Active participation parcel 2 (items 3 & 4)	.756
Active participation parcel 3 (items 5 & 6)	.641
Perceived Voice: Upward Communication	
Upward communication item 1	.666
Upward communication item 2	.633
Upward communication item 3	.685
Community Involvement: Political Empowerment	
Political empowerment item 1	.691
Political empowerment item 2	.741
Political empowerment item 3	.625
Political empowerment item 4	.761

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Latent Variables & their Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading
Community Involvement: Social Empowerment	
Social empowerment item 1	.804
Social empowerment item 2	.799
Social empowerment item 3	.811
Community Involvement: Psychological Empowerment	
Psychological empowerment item 1	.840
Psychological empowerment item 2	.724
Psychological empowerment item 3	.754
Psychological empowerment item 4	.766

Note. $N = 506$. All factor loadings were statistically significant at $p < .001$.
[a] Only positively worded items from the commitment scale were used as indicators.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The following tables represent the descriptive statistics from the study.

Table 3. Number of Respondents per Cooperative

Cooperative #	N
1	39
2	17
3	31
4	19
5	56
6	33
7	21
8	15
9	13
10	27
11	14
12	26
13	9
14	101
15	26
16	25
18	14
19	20

Table 4. Gender Breakdown

Gender	N
Male	358
Female	125

NB. 23 respondents did not indicate their gender.

The researchers also analyzed correlations matrices to assess the strength of similarity in movement and direction between two variables.

Table 5. Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

				Correlations									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Participative Leadership	5.35	1.57										
2	Interactional Justice	3.76	1.00	.70**									
3	Trust: Reliance	5.56	1.32	.61**	.56**								
4	Member Satisfaction	3.79	0.98	.56**	.56**	.51**							
5	Commitment to Cooperative	5.04	0.85	.31**	.31**	.35**	.45**						
6	Active Membership	6.08	1.04	.47**	.42**	.39**	.57**	.49**					
7	Voice: Upward Communication	3.83	0.95	.47**	.40**	.45**	.65**	.42**	.48**				
8	Political Empowerment	5.28	1.43	.39**	.35**	.41**	.48**	.27**	.41**	.44**			
9	Social Empowerment	5.63	1.49	.43**	.39**	.45**	.51**	.45**	.53**	.48**	.66**		
10	Psychological Empowerment	5.87	1.32	.46**	.47**	.47**	.55**	.47**	.57**	.50**	.56**	.81**	
	** p<0.05; **<0.01*		*N=506*										

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among research study variables are as shown in Table 5 above. All of the significant correlations were in the expected positive directions and statistically significant. The correlations of antecedents and trust ranged from .56 to .61 for interactional justice and participative leadership. The outcome measures ranged from .27 and .81 with each other and .35 and .51 with trust.

Variance Components by Cooperative

The study also examined the variance by gender to ascertain if differences did exist between male and female cooperative members showing whether cooperative perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors are similar or divergent as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Variance Components per Variable by Gender

All Summated Variables by Gender	Variance
Participative Leadership	0.00%
Interactional Justice	0.00%
Organizational Trust	0.86%
Member Satisfaction	0.00%
Co-operative Commitment	0.00%
Active Membership	0.00%
Perceived Voice	0.00%
Political Empowerment	0.00%
Social Empowerment	0.00%
Psychological Empowerment	0.00%

No differences of perceptions, attitudes, intentions, or behaviors on account of gender were however predicted. The variance componence per variable above in Table 6 showed no difference in variance per gender. Only organizational trust showed a slight 0.86% variance due to ethnicity, but the amount remains minimal. So, women did not hold different perceptions, attitudes, intentions, or behaviors than did men throughout the study.

Model for Estimating Effects of Participative Leadership and Interactional Justice

After establishing that the measurement model fit sufficiently well, a second latent variable model was estimated that included all covariance and directional paths implied by Figure 2. This model was saturated; thus, the values of chi-square and the additional fit indices were identical to those of the measurement model and therefore were equally acceptable. The advantage of this model stands that it provided estimates of the values of the proposed direct and indirect paths of participative leadership and interactional justice to the outcome variables. Table 7 summarizes the standardized path coefficients for all direct and indirect paths in this model.

Table 7: Values of standardized path coefficients from structural model estimation, showing direct and indirect effects of participative leadership and interactional justice on the trust mediator and the outcome variables.

	Effects of Antecedent and Mediator Variables						
	Trust in Co-operative		Participative Leadership		Interactional Justice		
	β	*p*	*β*	*p*	*β*	*p*	R^2 for Model
Summary of Direct Effects							
Mediating Variable:							
Trust in Co-operative	---	---	**.39**	<.001	**.34**	<.001	**.49**, p < .001
Outcome Variables:							
Member Attitudes & Behaviors:							
Member Satisfaction	**.21**	.002	.16	.062	**.44**	<.001	**.53**, p < .001
Commitment to Co-operative	**.29**	<.001	.11	.293	**.25**	.022	**.33**, p < .001
Active Membership	.07	.370	**.31**	.001	**.26**	.006	**.36,** p < .001
Perceived Voice	**.24**	.003	**.29**	.007	.19	.096	**.41**, p < .001
Community Involvement:							
Political Empowerment	**.26**	<.001	.14	.175	.17	.087	**.26**, p < .001
Social Empowerment	**.21**	.006	.12	.263	**.27**	.009	**.29**, p < .001
Psychological Empowerment	**.19**	.021	.05	.595	**.40**	<.001	**.35**, p < .001
Summary of Indirect Effects (via Trust)							
Outcome Variables:			*αβ*	*95%CI [LL, UL]*	*αβ*	*95%CI [LL, UL]*	
Member Attitudes & Behaviors:							
Member Satisfaction	---	---	**.082**	[.021, .159]	**.071**	[.030, .150]	
Commitment to Co-operative	---	---	**.112**	[.044, .205]	**.096**	[.043, .202]	
Active Membership	---	---	.029	[-.031, .107]	.025	[-.024, .109]	
Perceived Voice	---	---	**.093**	[.025, .181]	**.080**	[.034, .179]	
Community Involvement:							
Political Empowerment	---	---	**.102**	[.039, .202]	**.088**	[.036, .169]	
Social Empowerment	---	---	**.083**	[.023, .177]	**.072**	[.024, .158]	
Psychological Empowerment	---	---	**.074**	[.012, .168]	**.064**	[.017, .159]	

Note. $N = 506$. Participative Leadership correlates .80 with Interactional Justice. Indirect effects were tested with bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals. Statistically significant results are reported in boldface font.

Effects

Effects of Leadership and Justice on Trust in Cooperative

As can be seen above in Table 7, the path coefficients from participative leadership (β= .39, $p < .001$) and interactional justice (β= .34, $p < .001$) both supported our expectations that these two variables had statistically significant, positive unique effects on members' trust in their cooperative. These two antecedent variables taken together explained almost half of the observed variance in trust in the cooperative, $R^2 = .49$, suggesting that they have non-trivial effects.

The remaining path coefficients in Table 2 indicate: (a) the extent to which trust in the cooperative relates to each of the outcome variables, (b) the extent to which participative leadership and interactional justice have effects on the outcome variables that are not mediated by trust, and (c) the extent to which participative leadership and interactional justice have effects on the outcome variables that are carried through trust.

Effects on Cooperative Member Satisfaction

Overall, the model explained over half (53%) of the variance in cooperative member satisfaction. The effect of trust in the cooperative on member satisfaction was positive, and statistically significant, β= .21. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on satisfaction, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .08 and αβ = .07, respectively. In addition, there was a remaining statistically significant direct effect of interactional justice on satisfaction that was not mediated through trust, β= .44.

Effects on Member Commitment to the Cooperative

The model explained about a third (33%) of the total variance in member commitment to the cooperative. The effect of trust in the cooperative on commitment was positive, and statistically significant, β= .29. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on member commitment, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .11 and αβ = .05, respectively. In addition, there was also a statistically direct effect of interactional justice on commitment that was not mediated through trust, β= .25.

Effects on Active Cooperative Membership

Overall, the model explained about a third (36%) of the variance in active cooperative membership. However, unlike the other outcomes that were studied, these effects did not appear to be carried through trust in the cooperative. In fact, trust in the cooperative did not have a statistically significant effect on active membership. Instead, both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant direct effects on active membership, with standardized effects of β = .31 and β = .26, respectively.

Effects on Perceived Voice

The model explained more than a third (41%) of the total variance in perceived voice. The effect of trust in the cooperative on perceived voice was positive and statistically significant, β= .24. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on member commitment, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .09 and αβ = .08, respectively. In addition, there was also a statistically significant direct effect of participative leadership on perceived voice that was not mediated through trust, β= .29.

Effects on Political Empowerment

The model explained about a quarter (26%) of the total variance in community involvement: political empowerment. The effect of trust in the cooperative on political empowerment was positive and statistically significant, β= .26. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on political empowerment, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .10 and αβ = .09, respectively. There were no statistically significant remaining direct effects of either participative leadership or interactional justice on political empowerment.

Effects on Social Empowerment

The model explained somewhat more than a quarter (29%) of the total variance in community involvement: social empowerment. The effect of trust in the cooperative on social empowerment was positive and statistically significant, β= .21. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on social empowerment, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .08 and αβ = .07, respectively. There also was a statistically significant direct effect of interactional justice on social empowerment, β= .27.

Effects on Psychological Empowerment

The model explained slightly more than a third (35%) of the total variance in community involvement: psychological empowerment. The effect of trust in the cooperative on psychological empowerment was positive and statistically significant, β= .19. Both participative leadership and interactional justice had statistically significant indirect effects on psychological empowerment, carried through trust in the cooperative, with standardized effects of αβ = .07 and αβ = .06, respectively. There also was a statistically significant direct effect of interactional justice on psychological empowerment, β= .40.

Follow-up Model: Trust in Cooperative Members

A second trust model was estimated that was very similar to the first, except that the mediating variable of trust in the cooperative was placed with a parallel measure that specifically reflects trust in the (non-leadership) fellow cooperative members. In this model, the organizational factors of participative leadership and interactional justice did have statistically significant, positive effects on trust in members, β= .28 and β= .33, respectively.

The model accounted for a practically meaningful amount of variance in the four-member attitude and behaviour outcomes, specifically: (a) member satisfaction, 52%; (b) commitment to cooperative, 29%, (c) active membership, 36%; and (d) perceived voice, 39%. However, in contrast to what was seen in the prior model, trust in members was not a statistically significant carrier of the leadership and justice effects – these effects were all direct.

The model also accounted for a practically meaningful amount of variance in the three community involvement dimensions, specifically: (a) political empowerment, 27%; (b) social empowerment, 30%; and psychological empowerment, 35%. And for this set of variables, trust in members did significantly relate to each of these three outcomes, β's = .25, .21, and .18, respectively. The tests of the indirect effects, however, were only statistically significant for the effect of justice on political empowerment via trust in members, αβ= .08.

Discussion on Model Results

Trust in Cooperative Model Discussion

Overall, the model explained a meaningful amount of variance in all seven outcome variables, with the proportion of variance explained ranging from 26% to 53%. Six out of seven of the outcome variables (member satisfaction, commitment to cooperative, perceived voice, and political, social and psychological empowerment) were positively and statistically significantly related to trust in the cooperative. Additionally, the same six of these outcomes had statistically significant indirect effects of both participative leadership and interactional justice that were carried through trust in the cooperative. Some of these outcomes also showed direct effects of participative leadership (i.e., perceived voice) and interactional justice (i.e. satisfaction, commitment, social empowerment and psychological empowerment). Effect sizes ranged from small to moderate, which is not surprising as there are likely many other factors that also affect these outcomes.

The exception to the above pattern of results was for active participation as a member. This outcome did not significantly relate to trust in the cooperative, nor did it show any indirect effects of participative leadership and interactional justice. Instead, for active membership, the effects of leadership and justice were direct. These results suggest that both participative leadership and interactional justice play unique roles in influencing both member attitudes and behaviors and their perceptions of community involvement. Trust in the cooperative appears to be an important psychological mechanism that accounts for a relatively large proportion of the effects of leadership and justice on six of the seven outcomes, but does not explain the observed effects of leadership and justice on active membership.

Trust in Cooperative Model Results

A comparison of the results of the two models suggests that it is trust in the cooperative and its governing structure that is particularly important to carrying the positive effects of leadership and interactional justice on outcomes that include both member attitudes and behaviors and the broader outcome of community involvement as reflected in political, social and psychological empowerment.

Conclusion

The study critically examines the role of organizational trust, its antecedents, and its influence on cooperative outcomes. The results highlight the influential role of trust in cooperatives, shaping member satisfaction, commitment, perceived voice, and various dimensions of empowerment. The importance of participative leadership and interactional justice as significant drivers of this trust is also noteworthy, underlying the vital role of transparent and inclusive decision-making processes in fostering trust and positive outcomes in cooperatives.

Interestingly, while the influence of trust was evident across most outcome variables, active membership was an exception. Findings underscored a direct effect of leadership and justice on active membership, rather than an indirect effect mediated by trust, offering a unique insight into the dynamics of cooperatives. This suggests the multifaceted nature of trust and its differential impacts across various aspects of cooperative membership, highlighting areas that may warrant further investigation.

When comparing trust in the cooperative and its governing structure with trust in fellow members, our results pointed out that it was the former that significantly mediated the positive effects of leadership and interactional justice on both member attitudes/behaviors and perceptions of community involvement. Although both forms of trust have their place, the

impact of trust in the cooperative appears more far-reaching, underlining its critical importance in the cooperative framework.

Our study has successfully expanded upon the limited literature on organizational trust within African cooperatives, providing valuable practical knowledge for cooperative leaders, members, community leaders, policy makers, and donor agencies. The insights drawn highlight desirable behaviors and practices that can enhance trust, cooperative performance, and community empowerment. They emphasize the necessity of participative leadership and interactional justice, while also underscoring the integral role of trust in shaping cooperative outcomes. Future research could further delve into other factors that may influence these outcomes, as well as exploring the complex dynamics between trust in the cooperative, trust in fellow members, and their interplay with leadership and justice in different contexts.

Recommendations for further Research

i. Limitations of this study include that it did not engage a longitudinal data collection procedure or yet performed a multilevel analysis on the data to determine the extent to which these effects replicate at the cooperative level, compared to the level of the individual respondent. Therefore, future studies may consider adopting a longitudinal approach to data collection.
ii. There is need to collect additional alternative leadership style measures, which when analysed, would help to understand whether it is participative leadership in particular that is relevant to the cooperative's members' outcomes.

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