

## **THE IDEAL LEADERSHIP FOR COOPERATIVES: A PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE MODEL**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study tried to observe the ideal leadership model for co-operatives. By positing two folds of questions (1) how leadership had been developed in the organization and (2) what should be the ideal model. In order to provide clear evidence to the first problem, the study uses cross case analysis from six selected Credit Unions in Indonesia. Having considered the characteristic of each unit, the study developed two categories: complex organization and simple organization. The common model found in the two categories in which leadership must be seen as mechanistic process which encompasses from individual to community leadership. Therefore the study posed the needs for community collective leadership model by proposing a firmly framework. After identifying several dimensions from the model, the study used Dematel method to identify the most considerable dimension. Finally, the study appointed visionary, communicative and popular leader as dimensions to the model, thus preparing future research agenda.*

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership, Cooperatives, Collective leadership model

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### **INTRODUCTION**

As one of fundamental factors in organization, leadership theory had been developed massively. Using the term leadership as a keyword, Google scholar database resulted on more than three millions academic works including books, research papers and popular articles. Due to its plethora of studies, some scholars begin to address the effectiveness of leadership in directing organization towards the goals (Druskat and Wheeler, 2003; Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Palmer et al., 2001; Yukl, 1999; Dorfman et al., 1997). Uniquely, the analysis is varied from educational sector (Bryman, 2007; Spendlove, 2007; Simkins, 2005), health-care sector (Spinelli, 2006; Kleinman, 2004; Upenieks, 2003), manufacture sector (Masood et al., 2006; Hobday et al., 2004; Walumbwa and Lawler, 2003), up to public sector (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006; Wart, 2003). But few of them tried to analyze the third socio-economy sector (Hailey and James, 2004; Fletcher et al., 2003).

Compared to the other sector, third socio-economy sector is needed for firmly leadership as a benchmark. First, the organization relied more on the power of society, thus having an effective leadership who can posed public interest is very crucial (Mitchell, 2012). Second, in most cases, third sector organization must compete with the commercial sector therefore visionary leaders are needed to provide clear guidance for sustainable strategy (Stid and Bradach, 2009; Wallis and Dollery, 2005; Santora et al., 1999). The reality also applied for co-operatives.

As one branch from the third sector economy, the development of co-operatives shared a huge gap between Western and Eastern region. Lack of attention from local-respective economy player, low policy and improper paradigm has identified as the major caused (Aref, 2011; Prakash, 2000; Weitzman and Xu, 1994; Huppi and Feder, 1990). Therefore, positing firmly benchmark for third-sector leadership is still plausible. Using six co-operative organizations from three different levels of performance, this study try to solve the current phenomenon, while posing comprehensive framework as the final outcome. By deploying cross-analysis from case study research approach, the study tries to find the clear linkage between factual findings and current theory of leadership, thus proposing new insight to the field of knowledge. Following this section, the study will fully described the context and background in which the unit of analysis being analyzed. Section three will describe the case-study approach used in the study. Section four will briefly discuss each finding while posing new insight to the existing paradigm. After proposing leadership model for co-operatives, the study enclosed with firmly conclusion and future directions.

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Characteristic of co-operative movement**

As one types of cooperatives, credit unions established and serves member as the most respective stakeholder. Known as global economic movement, cooperatives consists of seven core principles which are: (1) voluntary and open membership, (2) democratic member control, (3) member economic participation, (4) autonomy and independence, (5) education, training and information, (6) co-operation among co-operatives and (7) concern for the community. Moreover, these principles were derived from the original Rochdale Society with the last revision on 1995 (Battilani and Schroter, 2012). To date, the principles still managed as the foundation of the movement in every country.

For the values level, co-operatives consists of five core beliefs which are: (1) self-help, (2) self-responsibility, (3) democracy, (4) equality and (5) solidarity. These values apply for every member of the co-operatives from all levels, including the advisory board, management team and members. Self-help value means that co-operative shall be seen as a unit of economic movement in which rely on the term independency. Every problem should be solved independently using firmly organizational mechanism which has written on the 'document of establishment'.

The first value is acting as the basis for the second 'self-responsibility'. As social movement, co-operatives emphasized more on member's productivity, means that every member should bear the same responsibility in terms of (1) ownership, (2) activity and (3) achievement. This is why in the productive organization one might see that every member shares their ideas and energy to achieve the common goals. Furthermore, this spirit is best representing the value of democracy. In terms of individual rights and organizational responsibility, membership is based on the spirit of equality. Every member will be treated equally based on the common beliefs. Co-operatives organization must serve all members upon their best interest. Unconsciously, this mechanism will develop the spirits of solidarity. Membership is not only seen as the common choice, but more to the most valuable opportunity.

In the reality, the process in which principles and values are being learned and implemented is not happened on a formal way. At this point, co-operatives must be seen as unique organization which relates the role of economy with the humanity. Almost in every research that analyzed

organizational commitment in this organization always concludes that co-operatives is more to spiritual economy based paradigm (Wu, 2012; Simpson, 2000; Knox, 1998).

In terms of humanity, members are taking vital roles in co-operatives (Pozzobon and Zylbersztajn, 2011; Kalogeras et al., 2009; Osterberg and Nilsson, 2009; Reynolds, 1997). Starting from the early stage, members are the one who develop consensus for long-term direction of the organization. The directions were then known as fundamental document which leads organization towards the agreeable goals. Moreover, these directions were the basis for every strategic planning and actions. At this point, one can concludes that in co-operatives, members share three important positions, as the initiator of the movement, implementers and evaluator for the overall performance. This is the reason why scholars also try to analyze the importance of heterogeneity among membership to organizational performance (Hendrikse and Bijman, 2002; Gripsrud et al., 2000; Heckathron, 1993).

### **Importance of leadership**

Putting the term heterogeneity of membership into co-operatives' leadership is very crucial since the leader should able to accommodate diverse opinion and interests into one comprehensive strategy (Banerjee et al., 2001; Cook, 1994). Referring to Singh and Ballabh (1994), leadership in co-operatives should be defined as a natural common pool among all respective resources, including knowledge and other tangible assets. The idea was derived from the common ground of leadership theory. Leadership that once believed as focused on persons (called a leader), now has shifted to the terms of process. It is the process in which individuals use their influence and authority to convince other towards one paradigm (Ospina and Sorenson, 2006; Palus and Horth, 2002).

One important key from the previous research was the acknowledgements of social justice as the basic spirits of the movement. This might imply that cooperatives' leadership must be able to bring the social justice as supportive paradigm to achieve the common goods of the entire members. In details, this key also performed uniqueness which differ the co-operatives' leadership and the ordinary concepts. Though it had been addressed clearly, research that focused on how those abilities should be developed is still rare and inclusive (Boyatzis et al., 2009; Fulton, 2009). The early signal found from the previous works is that the leaderships should encompass several dimensions such as: (1) visionary, (2) communicative, (3) popularity, (4) trust-worthiness and (5) accountable. We will use every dimension as considerations in developing the model.

### **CASE STUDY METHOD**

Putting the leadership context on Indonesian credit unions needs comprehensive insight including the diversity of culture among members. This is true since Indonesia is very famous for its archipelago which consists of thousands of tribe who shares different beliefs, language and customs. Introduced on early 70's by two Catholic Priests, Credit Unions has now become one of the economic pillars for some regions, especially those who categorized as underdeveloped area. Unfortunately, massive development of the Credit Unions must face tough competition from rural commercial banking sector. Supported by stronger capital power, the commercial banking industry targeted the same market as those Credit Unions. Up to this point, the organization has no other choice except sharpening their competitiveness using the strong power of collectivist membership. On early 2016, the level of competition became higher since the government decided to subsidize the interest rate from the commercial banking. Wider discrepancy of interest rate between

commercial banking sector and co-operatives happened. At this moment, Credit Unions need to struggle to maintain all members' loyalty, while at the same time try to stabilize the overall productivity. Nonetheless, this chaotic condition required strong leaderships in terms of strategy and actions.

Having considered that the situation happened in almost all regions, this study try to analyzed the phenomenon using six selected Credit Unions from three different organizational sizes in terms of memberships and the factor of heterogeneity. Details of each sample characteristic can be seen on Table 1.

**Table 1. Characteristic of the unit of analysis**

Credit Unions	Characteristics					
	Locations	Categorization	Approximate number of member	Member's profession	Cultural diversity	Length of operations (years)
A	West Kalimantan	A	200,000	Entrepreneur, Farmer, Teacher	Homogeneous - Dayak - Catholic	40
B	South Sumatera	B	20,000	Professional, Teacher	Heterogeneous - Java, Sumatera, Moslem	35
C	Lubuk Linggau	B	10,000	Farmer, Teacher, Labor	Heterogeneous - Java, Sumatera, Moslem	30
D	East Nusa Tenggara	B	10,000	Professional, Teacher	Heterogeneous - Java, Timor, Catholic	38
E	West Timor	A	50,000	Professional, Teacher, Farmer	Heterogeneous - Java, Timor, Catholic	37
F	East Nusa Tenggara	C	6,000	Teacher, Entrepreneur	Heterogeneous - Java, Timor, Catholic	27

categorization:  
IDR 8 Billion, B class: IDR 1 Billion - 8 Billion, C class: < IDR 1 Billion

Source: author's compilation data

By posing two folds of questions (1) how leadership being applied on every Credit Unions and (2) what are the possible antecedents for leadership model in co-operatives organization, the study try to deployed series of process as seen on Table 2. The overall steps can be divided into two majors. The first is targeting firmly-framework as the outcome and used the results as the antecedents which later be identified using Dematel.

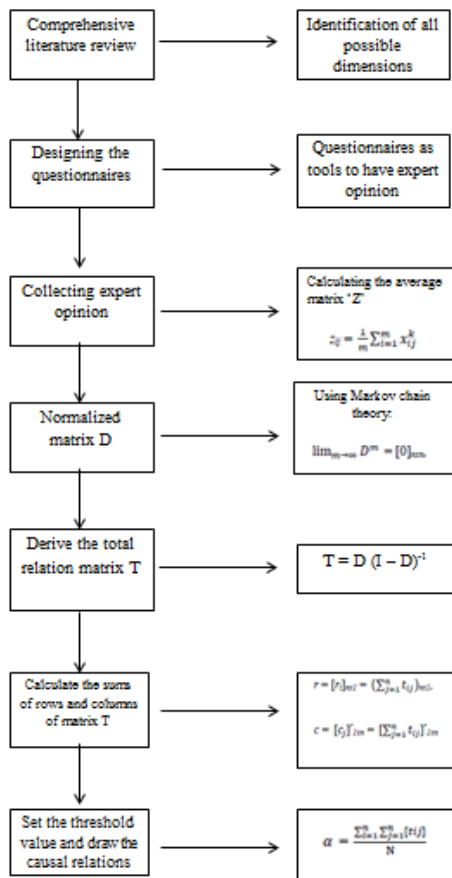
Our considerations of using Dematel is regarding to the complexity of the problems and the needs to portray the cause-analysis path diagram in which useful for future explanations. In order to enhance the objectivity of the study, we appointed six experts in co-operative field of knowledge who are excluded from the first study.

Once data can be collected, then we will use Dematel approach for further analysis. We begin with creating the Z matrices by compiling all opinions from the experts, followed by determining the normalized matrices. The next steps would be calculating the total relation matrix to identify the sums of each row and column. After setting the threshold index, then we can continue with discussing the results. Details for Dematel steps can be seen on Figure 1.

**Table 2. Steps in performing the study**

Step	Process
1	Desk audit of the literature
2	Setting up the criteria for unit of analysis
3	Designing interview protocols
4	Interviews with informants from every unit of analysis
5	Analysis of data and results
6	Proposing the framework
7	Deriving the framework into questionnaires
8	Performing the Dematel analysis
9	Analysis of data and final results

Source: author's own framework



**Figure 1. Dematel steps**

Source: author's own framework

## FINDINGS

### Cross case findings

For the first study, the characteristic of our informant for each unit of analysis can be seen on table 3. In total, the study interviewed 21 informants from six different Credit Unions which spread into 5 islands. For each Credit Unions we succeeded to explore some information from the top management level. Meanwhile, to achieve the objectivity of the results, we also performed the interview with senior and junior member through random sampling methods. By posing those facts, we believed that the information given for the first study is accurate and relevant for further analysis.

**Table 3. Characteristic of informant**

No	Indicators	Credit Unions					
		A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Number of informant	5	4	3	3	4	2
2	Managerial level of informant	CEO, middle management, new member and senior member	CEO, middle management, new member and senior member	CEO and two middle management	CEO and two middle management	CEO, middle management, new member and senior member	Manager and staff
3	Highest educational background of the CEO	Master level	Bachelor level	Bachelor level	Bachelor level	Master level	Bachelor level
4	Length of working experience in CU (average)	9	8	10	12	12	7
5	Time spent for the interview (average in minutes)	75	65	32	48	41	28
6	Round of interview	3	2	1	2	2	1

Source: author's field observations

From desk review, we can categorize the six units into two major types: (1) complex and (2) simple organization. Credit Union A, D and E can be categorized into complex organization, while B, C and F belong to simple organization. Using cross case analysis, the study begin with addressing the important of vision and mission from strategic point of view down to the operational activities. For complex organizations, the study found that vision and mission are easier to be communicating to all members compared to the simple one. Though the organization need to deal with complexity relating to diversity of member's characteristic, awareness of member's rights and responsibility in cultivating the spirit is higher than the simple organization. For simple form, the study detected the existence of weak ties among members. Vision and mission dialectic process seems weaken. Member only sees their membership in contractual basis. As long as I become the member of this Credit Union, then I will devote my commitment to the organization.

If we retrieved this fact from the early process of member recruitment, most of the simple organization posing that the management team will serve the member at their best interest, without any further emphasized relating to the term ownership in co-operatives. Meanwhile, for the complex organization, the leaders provide comprehensive education and training program for each member.

*'We believed that equality in terms of knowledge is a must to prolong the Credit Unions. Our task would be more in reminding all members that the productivity of the overall organization is depend on their individual contribution. Therefore, we need to emphasize the differentiations between co-operatives and any commercial organization. Management team has the responsibility as member's knowledge mediator, not in terms of providing the best service to the customer. Members need to be reminded that the Unions are theirs' – CEO of Credit Unions A.*

Moreover, regular training for member to deepen their knowledge regarding organization's vision, mission and how the two provide continuing spirits to the organization is provided. As point to that, most leaders in the complex organization saw this event as golden opportunity to develop productive communication to all members.

*'I always give directions to all managers to use the training session as important event to develop proper communication with members. I know that it's not simple, but in order to have their trust,*

*the top management should be able to convince the member that we are doing the best stewardship of organization's vision and mission, thus representing their best interest' – CEO Credit Unions D.*

The statement is also supported by the testimony from the managers as follows:

*'We always forced by the CEO to utilize every event to develop productive communication scheme with the member, including when we have field visitation to the community. Through sharing session, we found that we are not only improving the communication, but also reaching out the neighborhood. As a manager, I can testify that every time we finish one visitation, the number of new member can increase significantly. At that moment, I realize that I have more responsibility to be a good steward' – Top management Credit Unions D.*

On contrary, the top management from simple organization focused more on the administrative process of the organization. They believed that setting up the most adequate management process, they are preparing to develop their Credit Unions to become bigger one day. Therefore, for this category, the leader is not to focus on increasing the number of membership, but more to perform the internal mechanism accurately.

Although the idea is right, but limiting the access of the leader to the community might results on lower popularity. For the complex organization, most of the leaders are well known in the region. Their expertise in co-operatives and management field of knowledge has made them become one of public figure. Furthermore, the leaders acknowledged this as another golden opportunity to perform the discipleships.

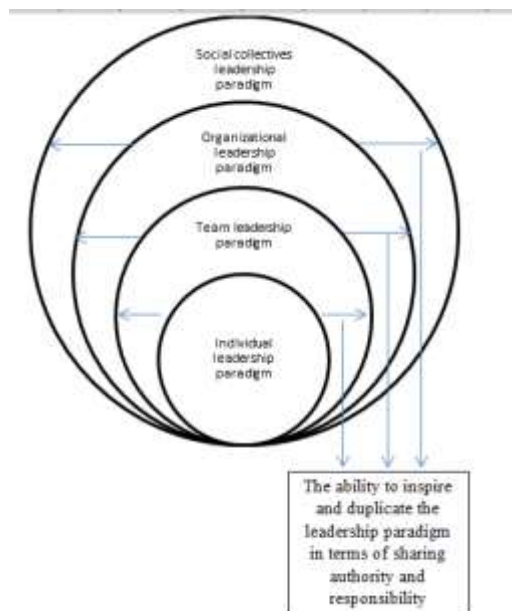
*'In every occasion, when I was invited to give speech, I always address information regarding co-operatives especially credit unions. We also appointed our position in the community as the best reflections to convince them that our movement is toward the common good of the people. As point to that, we also asked members to do the same. They need to take the responsibility of becoming teachers for their community' – CEO Credit Unions E.*

This is unique since they refused to use the term promotion, and replace it with discipleships. Having considered that they will bear higher responsibility once the number of the member increased, we might say that co-operatives' leadership rely more on the spirit of collectivism. By inviting members to take part in these processes, Credit Unions are found to perform spiritual movement in which everyone will be convinced to become future's leader of the community.

Once the idea are accepted by the community, every leader needs to bear another consequences which relates to the term 'trust-worthiness'. By addressing this paradigm, taking part as the top management of the Credit Union should be seen as mandatory from all stakeholders. Therefore, they need to be more accountable since they shared high position in the society. Up to this essence, the local Indonesian beliefs have insight to the term leadership. Though it is known as mechanistic process, the leader must be willing to be the teacher of the community. Their paradigm, behavior and thoughts will be acknowledged as a living example for future generations. Uniquely, this also implied on the simple organizational categories.

## DISCUSSION

From the first study, we acknowledged that co-operatives leadership is more to social collective model in which the leader is not only defined in terms of person, but more to sets of mechanistic process to convince the society towards the paradigm. Social collective leadership can be defined as the process in which individual leader consciously converted themselves to become the good steward for the goodness of the entire community. They must be able to inspire others to take the same roles by sharing the authority and responsibility to achieve the common goals. Moreover, the leaders need to (1) accommodate every interest to develop one common goods, (2) convince all stakeholders to achieve the common goods through one specific movement and (3) at the same time try to cultivate the leaderships spirits among members while using the mechanism to preserve the values from one generation to the next generation. This is why we stressed on the term social. Our proposed framework can be seen on Figure 2.



**Figure 2. The proposed framework for social collective leadership**

Source: author's conceptualization

Compared to any other leadership models, our proposed framework emphasized more on how leadership should take the ability to convert the ordinary society to share the spirits of future leaders as an outcome, thus it's a matter of duplicating the movement to reach-out the overall society. In order to promote the model, we identified six possible dimensions for social collective leadership which consists of: (1) visionary, (2) communicative, (3), popularity, (4) trust-worthiness, (5) accountable and (6) cultural fitness. We will find out how each dimension will influence one another using Dematel techniques.

### Dematel analysis

After succeeded in portraying all possible dimensions, we selected 9 experts in the field of co-operatives and Credit Union to join our further analysis. The expert consists of: 2 CEO from fisheries cooperatives, 2 top management from consumption-co-operatives, 2 from Credit Union and 3 from co-operatives researchers. After clarifying the objective of the study, we asked each



expert to fill in the questionnaires which representing their best opinion to find the most powerful factor and portraying the causal relationship among dimensions. We use the five scales from 0 (for very low influence) and 4 (for the greatest influence). Matrix 'D' which derived from expert opinion can be seen on Table 4.

**Table 4. Matrix D**

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	0.0000	0.1665	0.1429	0.2125	0.2781	0.3933
D2	0.3252	0.0000	0.3508	0.3643	0.4450	0.6293
D3	0.1469	0.1784	0.0000	0.2125	0.2410	0.3671
D4	0.2203	0.2022	0.2599	0.0000	0.2966	0.4196
D5	0.1469	0.1665	0.1429	0.2125	0.0000	0.2885
D6	0.1574	0.1903	0.1949	0.2580	0.2966	0.0000

Source: expert opinion compilation data

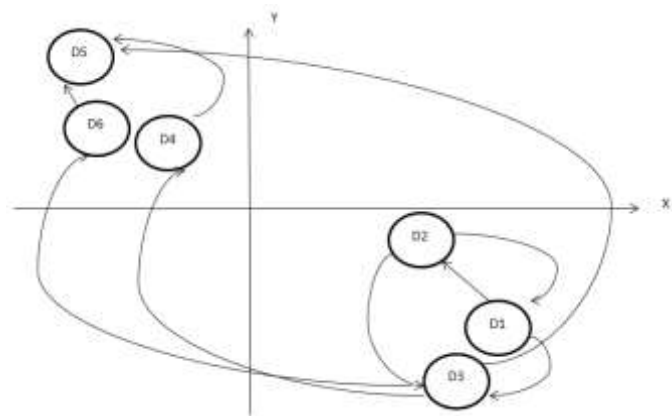
Using Dematel method, the final matrix T can be seen on Table 5.

**Table 5. Final result**

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	157.778	9.90507	32.2944	-39.325	-61.849	-29.922
D2	55.7365	10.2794	8.83457	-21.219	-30.332	-15.524
D3	-47.737	-5.6171	9.64539	7.24858	10.5868	4.85474
D4	-16.681	-3.3163	-3.9394	13.4679	1.85514	-2.941
D5	-4.3426	-0.4809	-7.4998	-0.8699	12.6206	-2.4806
D6	-27.578	-2.4511	-8.2071	6.18776	9.54541	10.1126

Source: expert opinion compilation data

Furthermore, after setting up the threshold index, the causal path diagram can be seen on Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Final path diagram**

Source: author's compilation results

From Dematel process, the most considerable dimension for social collective leadership is a visionary, second dimension is communicative and the third dimension is popularity. This might imply that in collective model, visionary leader is the basic requirement to develop the leadership. An individual leader needs to have great vision relating to how the foundations of the organization need to be communicate effectively to another member within co-operatives. The first outcome would be a major shifting from individual to team leadership. At this phase, leadership has been

performed in terms of a team. Every decision, strategy and policy will be discuss and decided by the team. The same responsibility also applied to how the team tried to induce the idea to all members.

As the teams become more frequent in disseminating the idea, the leadership has shifted from team to organizational leadership. At this phase, the idea started to reach out the entire community. As results, co-operatives have become one of the knowledge resources for the whole society. This is how the leadership turned into social collective model.

### **Practical implication**

Our proposed model of leadership shares major contribution to practical terms. Credit Union as well as co-operatives need to focus more on how existing leaders must fully aware that the leadership must encompasses community and not limited only to their organization. This is the unique things about co-operative leadership model. For the commercial sector, the contra flows happened: leadership is limited for internal purposes while sharing small portions for external stakeholders.

Moreover, the awareness shares several consequences: (1) a leadership must be defined on the organizational level and no longer use individual or team level, (2) the power of leadership will be determined by the ability to influence another party and (3) the outcome from a leadership should be evaluate by their success level in expanding the influential power to reach out the whole community. In that point, co-operatives must begin to acknowledged social leadership in terms of strategy. Top management of co-operatives might use the proposed model to develop firmly mechanism in preserving the leadership's spirits among member, thus preparing the future's leader to prolong the organization.

Collectivism in co-operatives must be understood as an integral part. Co-operative should be seen as one subset of the community. Therefore, the leadership must aim to improve the quality of life for the society and at the same time achieving the common goods for the community.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study succeeded to find the appropriate solutions for leadership in co-operative movement. Using cross case analyses among six Credit Unions in Indonesia, we found that the ideal leadership for co-operative is a social collective leadership model. This is supported by the two category of organization used in the previous explanations. Moreover, the leadership must be defined as mechanistic process in which individual leader must be able to increase the power of influence to develop a team leadership while promoting the spirits to all members. The ultimate outcome from this process would be an organizational leadership. This is where organization can positioned themselves as the leader for their society. They will collectively engage with other organization to pursue the common good for the whole society.

Second contribution can be found on our leadership framework. Social collective leadership model emphasize more on the power to duplicate the model into higher level of society. Therefore co-operatives need to put the model into a strategic paradigm. A deeper analysis appointed six dimensions for social collective leadership model which are: (1) visionary, (2) communicative, (3) popularity, (4) trust-worthiness, (5) accountable and (6) cultural fitness.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Drawing back from the result of the study, using Dematel as a method, we found that visionary has become the most prominent factor which has greater influence among other dimension. Co-operative's leader need to focus on deploying organizational vision and mission to perform the ideal leadership model. The second considerable dimension is a communicative leader. Having considered that the ultimate outcome is targeting the community as a whole then leadership must fully equipped with good communication and wide popularity. Together, the three dimensions can be used to develop co-operative to become pivotal economic player in the future.

Our study shared limitation in which we only proposed the model. Future research must be able to develop a testable construct for empirical test stage. Having performed this agenda, we can contribute more to the field of knowledge especially in terms of leadership theory.

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