

## **Women Leadership and Governance of Cooperatives: The Case of Dire Dawa City Administration**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Women continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sector. Increasing the level of women's cooperative leadership and governance is an important objective internationally and domestically. The main objective of this study was to investigate factors affecting women leadership performance and governance of cooperatives in Dire Dawa City Administration. This study employed explanatory research design. 239 women leaders and committee members were selected using census method and 233 questionnaires were returned. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, and standard deviation and analytical statistics in terms multiple liner regression model was employed. The study found that women are effective in leadership and ensuring good governance of cooperatives. Self-efficacy, social status, economic independency and organizational flexibility positively affect the women leadership performance. This study implies that formulation of comprehensive policy and women empowerment will ensure their ascendancy to leadership on cooperative societies and cooperatives should design flexible organizational structure and administration system to suit the conditions of women members participating in cooperatives so as to improve their leadership performance.*

**KEY WORDS:** Cooperatives, governance, women leadership

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is an inherently subjective topic with many definitions associated to it. More or less, leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project (Cohen cited in Aikaterini, 2015). Recent writings also noted that there are notions of leadership that are assumed either implicitly or explicitly linking leadership to gender (Hassan & Silong, 2008; Hassan, 2004). Various studies show that there are differences in the leadership styles of males and females leaders (Bajcar & Babiak, 2019).

Currently, women continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sector. Historically, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women is still common today. Although the number of female leaders has increased, they are often named as an afterthought. There was a time that that

leaders were born with certain leadership traits though the current thinking assumes that leadership can be taught and learned (Fleenor,2006).

According to Svennerstal (2015) leadership performance is a way to manage and adjust leadership behaviors, strategies and outcomes, including the three important elements, which are the realization of organizational, team and individual performance. Yoder (2001) state that women leaders who are in contexts hospitable to transformational leadership are freed from the status disadvantages explored in masculinized contexts and may enact a form of leadership that is consistent with that displayed by men in transformational settings. In other words, in the appropriate context, transformational leadership should prove just as effective for women as it does for men. Transformational leaders are leaders who engage in the same work as subordinates, focus on intrinsic higher order needs, and highlight new ways in which organizational outcomes could be achieved (Hay, 2012). Transformational leadership is a sustainable and exemplary form of leadership that liberates subordinates' ideas, enables subordinates to view problems from a different perspective, and helps adaptation to changing environments (Kilic & Uludag, 2021).The nurturing and task-oriented style, managerial practices, organizational orientation, especially followed by women entrepreneurs/ leaders/ managers has carved a niche for women leadership in national as well as international platforms (Kaushik, 2020).

The inter-dependent and the mutual help among human beings have been the basis of social and economic development. This mutual help and interdependence were successful with the active participation of both men and women indifferent aspects. Women participation in cooperatives is the active involvement of women in financing, managing, decision making and governance of cooperatives. Cooperatives have a key role to play as they are able to respond to both women's practical and strategic needs by providing access to income generating activities as worker owners (Maleko, 2015). Increasing the level of women's cooperative leadership and governance is an important objective internationally and domestically. Women are known to differ from men in their leadership style Cuadrado, etal (2012).They tend to adopt a more participative, less directive style than their male counterparts. This distinctive style is people-oriented and "transformational" rather than task-oriented and "transactional". It also embeds higher social concerns (Eagley and Johnson, 1990).

According to Azad (2017) women participation in leadership position is critical since many women have special skills in management including budgeting, marketing and trading, mobilizing as well as knowledge of local contexts. Harnessing these special skills of women is indispensable for the benefits of women themselves and cooperatives. Involving women in management of cooperatives including the board is good business. Women create a dynamic responsive workforce impact economic growth and development

Gender inequalities contribute to the fact that cooperative organizations are controlled and lead by men. If cooperatives are gender responsive and inclusive, they can help women overcome gender

specific constraints to improve their self-confidence, knowledge, leadership skills, income, access to inputs social network and position in value- chains. When women are more economically and socially empowered, evidence shows that there are direct and positive impacts on women's household and community decision-making power and on access to and control over productive assets (Woldu, Tadesse & Waller, 2015).

In Ethiopia, there are about 85,496 different types of cooperatives with total membership 6,635,458 and 19,502,786 in 2015 and 2019 (of which 31.5 % are women) with total capital \$118,582,392.9 and \$713,371,651 respectively. At national level, women participation is one third of total membership. In the study area, Dire Dawa City Administration, there are 110 Primary Cooperatives affiliated to three Unions with 14,577 members of which 36.4 % are women and with \$702,331.532 assets (FCA, 2019). This quantitative growth in terms of membership and capital should include the participation of women in financing, decision making; leadership and governance in the affairs of each cooperative to ensure mutual benefits of both women and their cooperatives.

Basically, there are many socio-economic factors that affect women leadership participation and governance in cooperatives such as low level of education, negative socio-cultural attitudes towards women competences to lead and govern, high household responsibilities, and lack of role models of women leaders ( Aju, and Adeosun, 2021; Lugaga, 2015; Sebhatu, & Mekelle, 2015; Hora, 2014). Thus, it is worthy to examine women leadership performance and governance of cooperatives.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A vibrant cooperative sector is central to multidimensional socio-economic development in developing countries. Efficient and organized institution is essential for the healthy growth of any community. In this regard, cooperatives are a practical women training centers where women exercise leadership competencies and other important skills. According to World Bank Report (2020) Ethiopian women constitute nearly half of the population (49.58%) and play a key role, not only in family organization but also for the success of production sector. They are actively involved in all aspects of life and participate in social and cultural activities of the community (Alema, 2008).

Although women play a crucial role in the socio-economic development through their contribution to the overall economic growth, their equitable participation in various development organization remains minimal. Women usually have limited access to resources and opportunities and their productivity remains low relative to their potential. This is due to cultural, social, economic, political and patriarchal mind set; women often have less access to various opportunities. In addition, the dominance of men in various income generating activities affects highly the economic empowerment of women (Azad, 2017 & Tegegne, 2012). Traditionally, community affairs and administration has been the domain of men. This is evident from the gender imbalance

of leaders and office bearers across community, local council and associations. Women have not been active in local politics and are relatively inactive in public processes due to institutional, socio-economic and cultural constraints (Hassan & Silong, 2008). As a result, their role in decision-making and in leadership positions within these development processes remains negligible. This disproportionate mismatch in participation is not only detrimental for women but also has negative effects on the household and on the entire economy (Gamisonia, 2017).

A main contributing factor that affect the leadership participation of women in cooperatives are deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices which put women and girls in a much lower position relative to men and boys. Dominant gender norms, stereotypes, and practices shape gender power relations at household, community, and institutional levels. These influence women's social and economic capabilities and opportunities to engage in cooperative activities in the same way as men (Woldu, Tadesse & Waller, 2015). A by study found that the main barriers in women's career enhancement were work-life imbalance, subordinates' perceptions regarding women leaders, social networking, and personal factors. The factors which motivated women leaders to advance in their career path were continuous family and mentor support, changing mindset of employers, and potential leadership competency of women leaders.

As in other traditional societies, in Ethiopia a woman's worth is measured in terms of her role both as a mother and wife. Over 85 percent of Ethiopian women reside in rural areas, where households are engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%) in Ethiopia was reported at 38.76 % in 2020 (World Bank Report, 2021). The level of women's representation in the FDRE House of People's Representatives grew from 27.9 percent to 38.76 percent in 2010 and 2020 respectively. This is a remarkable increase compared to the 1995 and 2000 elections in which women held only 2.83 percent, (13 of out of 547 seats) and 7.7 percent, (42 out of 547 seats), respectively. Starting from 2018, there is also a dramatic increase in the number women's representation in the executive branch which is 50%. The gender parity index (GPI) at primary level which was 0.98 in 2009/10 has dropped to 0.96 in 2012/13 indicating higher gaps in the enrollment of girls. This is attributed to socio-economic challenges such as girls' responsibilities for time-taking household chores and institutional challenges including lack of gender sensitive facilities and services at all levels. In addition to this, lower completion rates of females along with lower performance in Grade 10 national examination is a major gap that the finding revealed. In TVET and higher-level education, females are underrepresented in certain fields of technology and science (UN Women, 2014).

Women's presence on management teams is generally associated with a stronger social commitment and a more participatory leadership style. An analysis of women's impact at cooperative enterprises which have specific characteristics in terms of organization and purpose shows that their influence leads to greater motivation and better results motherhood, marriage, and of course household chores are the traditional obstacles that have prevented women from achieving a balance between business and family. Their professional role

has tended to come into conflict with these other roles. But nowadays, female leaders are trying to overcome these obstacles by introducing policies that favor work-family balance (Castro, Justo & Márquez, 2020).

Empowering women is an indispensable strategy for advancing development and reducing poverty and this demands recognition of people's rightful place in the development activities and decision making process. Involving women in organizations like cooperative will be one important way to think over. A study by Jemal (2008) showed that co-operatives are providing the mechanism to organize and mobilize women for self-help action in providing the services required by farmer members and rural community. As self-administered rural institutions, cooperatives have the capacity to reflect, and to respond to the needs of their members; and, at the same time, to help fostering attitudes of self-reliance and self-confidence within a framework of mutual aspirations and mutual action.

Globally, cooperative leaders and members are working to ensure that increasing women's cooperative leadership and governance remains a primary objective. In Ethiopia, women's participation in cooperatives is generally very low which is 31.5 percent, even few found in management positions (FCA, 2019). Women are encouraged to form women cooperatives in particular and motivated to take key leadership role in cooperatives in general so as to harness their leadership potential. The legal framework of cooperatives put women to participate at least in 30 percent leadership positions. In the study area, relatively higher participation which is 36.4 percent women membership and leadership positions are reported (FCA, 2019). Though women are motivated to participate in leadership and management of cooperatives, there are many constraints that impeded them.

Different studies showed that cooperatives that involve women in the management position succeeded more than those cooperatives that have no women in management. Nakkiran, Karthikeyan and Karunakaran (2009) also showed that women can look for the growth of membership of fellow who have not so far become members of various cooperatives. They alone can explain the advantage of cooperatives to other people. Women by doing this can increase the members in which success and failure of cooperatives can be depend on. A study by Maheshwari, & Nayak (2020) found that the main barriers in women's career enhancement were work-life imbalance, subordinates' perceptions regarding women leaders, social networking, and personal factors. Furthermore, self-efficacy perceptions were found to fully mediate the self-leadership/performance relationship (Fitzgerald, Schutte, 2010; Prussia, Anderson Manz, 1989; Cormick, 2001). The good relationship between work-life balance and organizational culture would lead to a high women leadership (Hua, Mahmood, Zakaria, Lin, Yang, 2018).

Several studies admitted the effectiveness of women in cooperatives management and governance. Many other studies emphasized predominantly the gender-specific socioeconomic constraints of women empowerment and participation in cooperatives. On the other hand, there is very limited

study that primarily examines gender specific factors that enable women to be effective in cooperative management and governance. Pinpointing the main characteristics of the most successful women in the leadership and governance of cooperatives is too crucial. It will enable the selection and development of women leaders.

Thus, answering the following questions fill the critical knowledge gap of gender issues of cooperative management and governance which will be useful for improvement of leadership and governance policies and programs to cooperatives. (1) What factors promote women leadership and governance performance of Cooperatives? (2) How much personal and socio-economic factors affect performance of women leaders? Hence, it is imperative to measure the leadership and governance performance of women and the determinants of women leadership performance in cooperatives.

Theoretical analysis of cooperatives, women leadership and governance are analyzed in the first part. Prepared methodology and quantitative research based on the theoretical analysis is conducted and presented in the second part, and conclusions are proposed in the final part of this article.

### **Cooperative identity, values & principles**

Cooperative identity, values & principles ICA in 1995 define a cooperative 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. The statement also identifies the cooperative values (self-help, responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity) and lists the seven cooperative principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership – Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities that come with their membership.
2. Democratic Member Control – Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members who make decisions and actively participate in setting their policies, serve as elected representatives, and have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).
3. Member Economic Participation – Members contribute equitably to the capital of their cooperative receiving limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. At least part of that capital is typically the common property of the cooperative. Surpluses are usually allocated to the development of the cooperative.
4. Autonomy and Independence – Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.
5. Education, Training, and Information – Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and their employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives.
6. Cooperation between Cooperatives – Cooperatives work together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

7. Concern for Community – The goal of cooperatives is the sustainable development of their communities.

Modern type of co-operative enterprise has its origins in the 19th century as a business enterprise, so they are not the same as non-profits; yet they do not exist to maximize profits, so they are not the same as investor-owned firms (Alema, 2008, Margaret, 2013 and Medhin, 2015). Generally, Cooperative is a user-owned, user-controlled business that distributes benefits on the basis of participation of members which is in line with the three primary principles of cooperation namely user ownership, user control and proportional distribution of benefits (Alema, 2008). The unique democratic nature of cooperatives makes it possible to identify the impact of women conditionally on their place in the decision-making structure of the organization

Cooperatives in Ethiopia are classified on the basis of activities in which they engage. The cooperatives could engage in a single activity, such as production and marketing; or could be involved in multiple activities. Accordingly, there are producers' cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, SACCOs, consumer cooperatives, handcrafts cooperatives, mining cooperatives, housing cooperatives, construction cooperatives, multipurpose cooperatives and services cooperatives, among others (Coop AFRICA, 2009).

### **Nature and Characteristics of Saving & Credit Cooperatives**

SACCOs are village level cooperative which directly deals with the local mass. They provide short-term credit and inculcate saving habit on members. They are financial organization owned and operated by and for its members according to democratic principles for the purpose of encouraging savings and using pooled funds to extend loans to members at reasonable rates of interest and providing financial services to enable members improves their economic and social wellbeing (Tumwine, Mbabazize and Shukla, 2015). According to Zikalala (2016) financial cooperatives are viewed as a vehicle to cultivate a culture of saving among low income earners. In short, SACCOs are member-based institutions, that intermediate savings into loans. They are usually rather small, independent financial institutions. This enables the rural and urban poor population to deposit savings as well as to take loans (Distler and Schmidt, 2011). Small loans are believed to bring significant improvement in the lives of the active poor by increasing their productive capacity.

Membership is voluntary and open to all people who are willing to take the responsibility of membership such as payment of registration fee and buying minimum number of shares and active economic participation. Only members can use the services of SACCOs. Members control their cooperatives by attending in annual general meetings and electing a board of directors. The board of directors hires a manager who will control the day to day operations of the society (Zeuli.& Cropp, 2004).

The principles of cooperation and Ethiopian Cooperative Act No. 985/2016 prohibit SACCOs to take savings or lent out money to the public. It enables members to save their money on a regular basis, or according to their needs. Loans are granted to members out of the members' accumulated

savings. Saving is the major source of finance for SACCOs. In addition, SACCOs are supported by NGOs in the form of grant in some selected regions like Eastern Ethiopia. Unlike other financial institutions, the SACCO sector in Ethiopia is regulated by both the National Bank of Ethiopia and the Federal Cooperative Agency.

### **What are Consumer Cooperatives?**

Consumer cooperative is a business owned by its customers for their mutual benefits. Consumer cooperatives aim to provide quality goods to consumers in the desired quantity and at reasonable prices (Himachalam, 1991). It is a form of free enterprise that is oriented towards service rather than pecuniary profit. Consumer cooperatives often take the form of retail outlets owned by their customers. The customer of goods and services the cooperatives provides are often also the individual who have provided the capital required to launch or purchase that enterprise (cultivate, coop/wiki /consumer cooperatives). In some countries, consumer cooperatives are known as cooperative retail societies or retail cooperatives through they should not confused with retailers cooperatives, whose members are retailers rather than consumers (Hajala, 2000).

The consumer cooperative enterprise is becoming an increasingly noteworthy company form. Various forms of sharing economy and recent initiatives in collaborative consumption further amplify the relevance of a company form wherein the members have a dual role, acting both as owners and as customers (Talonen,, Jussila, Saarijärvi, & Rintamäki, 2016).

### **Objective of the study**

#### ***1.3.1. General Objective***

The main objective of this study was to examine factors affecting women leadership and governance of cooperatives in Dire Dawa City Administration.

#### ***1.3.2. Specific Objectives***

- To identify determinant factors affecting women in leadership and governance of cooperative management
- To analyze the gender-specific factors that reinforce women leadership performance in cooperatives

### **Research question**

1. What are the main factors that promote women leadership and governance performance in Cooperatives?
2. What is the level of extent that personal and socio-economic factors influence performance of women leaders?



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study has attempted to measure and determine factors affecting performance of women leadership and governance in cooperatives. It has employed both descriptive and casual research design in order to address the main objective of the study.

### **The data**

The study was conducted in Eastern Ethiopia particularly in the Dire Dawa City Administration. It is densely populated and business hub of the country. In the region, many women are engaged in small business. To this effect, the Administration organized cooperatives to support women economically in which majority of cooperatives members are female and cooperatives are women managed. Thus, it is significant to examine the leadership and governance performance of women in cooperatives that are operating in the region.

In the study area, there are 83 consumer cooperatives and 156(SACCOs) Saving & Credit Cooperatives (DACPA, 2019). The study purposely targeted Consumer and SACCOs since most of those cooperatives are women dominated in membership size and leadership positions. This is because, women are so active in both social and economic activities due to cultural and societal specific factor associated with the study area. The sampling frame of this study was the total list of Consumer and SACCOs. A cross-sectional survey was administered to collect data; from each cooperative one woman leader was selected using census techniques. Thus, 239 women leaders and committee members were selected. Structured questionnaire were used to collect data from samples and 233 questionnaires were returned. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value using *stata software*. Additionally, analytical statistics in terms multiple liner regression model was employed to measure the magnitude of relationship that exists between demographic, social and economic variables which determine women leadership performance.

### **Reliability of Instruments**

The reliability of the instruments used in this study was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Results showed that the Experience, Education level, Self-efficacy, Social status, and Strategic/organizational flexibility have reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.86, 0.82, 0.79, and 0.80 respectively. On the other hand, when all the 6 items were considered economic independency scale yielded an alpha value of 0.69. Hence there was a need to examine if there are items that have poor or negative contributions to the internal consistency of the scale. Accordingly, items 4, was removed because of its negative or poor correlation with the total score of economic independency. This lifted the reliability to 0.72, which is very close to the acceptable level of internal consistency,

**Validity**

To ensure the scale validity; three professional experts from Woldia university in management and gender studies assessed the items suitability and checked relevance of scale domains. Accordingly, the instrument was modified based on their point of views.

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable in this section is leadership performance which is measured by assessing the (1) analytical competencies;(2) communicational competencies;(3) organizational competencies;(4) personal competencies; (5) professional competencies and their expected behaviors on a personal and interpersonal levels of women leaders (Esser, Kahrens, Mouzugh, & Eomois, 2018).

**Independent Variables**

Depending on the research questions the independent variables used to determine the factors affecting women leadership performance are experience, education level, self-efficacy, social status, economic independency and strategic/organizational flexibility.

Those variables are reported significant in the following literatures; (Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, & Marx, 2007; McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998; Cherian, & Jacob, 2013; McDonald, Toussaint & Schweiger, 2004; Ridgeway, 2001).

The following table presents the description of the explanatory variables used in this study.

**Table 1: Independent Variables**

Variables Name	Measurement	Variable Name in Regression Model	Variable Description as used in regression model	Expected Effect
Experience	Number of years on leadership position	Exp	No. of years	+
Education level	Education level & training completed	EL	No. of levels completed/attained	+
Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy, perceived competency value	SE	Scale	+
Social status	Hierarchy in social status; and networks and societal value	SS	Strength of social	+
Economic Independency	Degree of Independency & Economic empowerment	EI	“	+
Strategic/organizational flexibility	Degree of organizational flexibility	OF	”	+

**Specification of the Model**

The ordinary List Square (OLS) method is employed to analyze the major factors which determine the leadership performance of women using *Stata software*. This model is used to measure the average change in a dependent variable given a one-unit change in each independent variable and the analysis estimates parameters by minimizing the sum of squared errors.

$$LP = \beta_1Exp + \beta_2EL + \beta_3SE + \beta_4SS + \beta_5EI + \beta_6OF + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

**Where:**

- LP = Leadership competency of women (Dependent Variable)
- Exp = Number of years on leadership position
- EL = Education level & training completed
- SE = Self-efficacy, perceived competency
- SS= Social status; motivating social status and networks
- EI= Economic Independency & empowerment
- OF = Organizational flexibility
- ε = error term

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Descriptive Result**

Dependent Variables

Leadership performance is the level of leadership competency that women demonstrated while managing the cooperatives. Governance performance is commonly understood as the way and practice of directing, organizing, and controlling the cooperative activities. Governance a system designed to professionally direct the organization based on good governance principles. Good governance principles are transparency, accountability, responsibility, independence, and fairness. The following Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables: leadership performance and governance performance. Accordingly, the mean value of leadership performance is 3.92 which indicate that women leadership performance is remarkably encouraging and high. Likewise, governance performance of women in management of cooperatives is 4.18. This indicates that women are successful in ensuring good governance in cooperative enterprises. Therefore, women should be encouraged to take leadership position in cooperatives so as to improve the overall performance and governance of cooperatives.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variables**

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
LP	233	3.918455	.6950894	2	5
GP	233	4.178541	.6322262	2.2	5

Source: Extracted from Stata result

### **Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables**

Based on the descriptive result presented below in Table 3, the following statistical implications have been reached for the independent variables of the study.

**Experience** shows the leadership experience and maturity level of members that are serving the cooperative in leadership positions. The mean value for this variable shows that the experience of women leader is between 1-3 years. This indicates that the leaders' are young in the leadership experience.

**Education level** is the level of education or training that leaders have attained. Education plays a major part in shaping the quality of leadership in modern society. The interaction of gender and education produced consistent differences in leadership behaviors. The education and experience of a leader has a direct positive impact on their leadership performance (Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, & Marx, 2007). The higher the value is, the more it implies that the leaders are educated under formal education system. As the mean value of this variable (3.51) indicates that leader in those cooperatives have completed at least secondary school. On the other hand, the minimum women education level is (1) indicating few women leaders are still illiterate. However, the maximum value for this variable is 5 which indicate that some of them have completed some graduate courses.

**Self-efficacy** is the women's self-belief and confidence in their personal competency and positive attitude towards their performance in competitive environments. The higher this value, the more it implies that the women have higher self-efficacy in taking leadership position and participating decision making. It is measured by comprising three dimensions; direction setting, gaining followers, and overcoming obstacles to change

**Social status** is a measurement of social value. More specifically, it refers to the relative level of respect, honor, assumed competence, and deference accorded to people, groups, and organizations in a society. It is the societal value that motivates women to participate in key leadership positions. The higher this value is, the more it implies that the social status are encouraging than being prohibitive towards women. As the mean value of this variable (3.59) indicate that social status of the society are contributing positively to women to participate in such socio-economic enterprises with leading role. They enjoy several advantages by virtue of their social position.

**Economic independency** measures the level of independency of women leader in terms of financial freedom and decision making power over economic resources. Cooperative enterprises can play a role in contributing towards the achievement of the economic and social empowerment of women. The mean value of the variable is 4.06 values indicate that almost all of women in leadership positions are economically dependent.

**Organizational flexibility (strategic flexibility)** measures the simplicity and flexibility nature of the organizational systems of cooperatives towards gender specific conditions. Flexibility is evident in a goal-directed type of organization (having clear goals but low levels of formal rules) (Ken and Betsy, 2002). Flexible structural design means attaining a structure that allows the flexible organization to succeed under environmental pressure and unpredictability. Flexible structure requires decentralization in decision-making, low levels of formalization, and a high degree of permeability of boundaries and collaborative partnerships. Based on the descriptive result, the mean value of organizational flexibility is 3.62 which indicate that organizational structure and management systems of cooperatives are relatively easier to run and manage by women.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables**

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Exp	233	1.360515	.5240621	1	3
EL	233	3.51073	1.11073	1	5
SE	233	3.467811	1.196274	1	5
SS	233	3.593133	.85215	1	5
EI	233	4.058369	.7083437	1.8	5
OF	233	3.621459	.7442096	1	5

**Source:** Extracted from Stata result

### Regression Diagnostic Tests

**Table 4** Below presents the multiple regression result for the factors explaining leadership performance of women. The variables included in the model explained about 50% of the total variation of leadership performance of women scores which is reasonably a good fit. Moreover, it measures 50 percent of the total variation in the leadership performance, is explained by independent variables (experience, education level, self-efficacy, social status, economic independency and organizational flexibility) jointly. Therefore, these six variables explain 50% of the variance of leadership performance of women in cooperatives.

The regression result of the analysis indicate that self-efficacy, social status, economic independency and organizational flexibility positively affect the women leadership performance significantly. Economic independency affects the leadership performance significant at 1 percent significance level. Likewise, the self-efficacy, social status of women and organizational flexibility is found to be positively significant in affecting the leadership performance of leaders at 5 percent. Self-efficacy indicates that the perception of women towards their competency in leadership. This variable is significant at 5% significance level. Keeping all other variables constant, as a one unit improvement of women self-efficacy, on average their leadership performance will increase by 6.5%. An increase in positive self-efficacy of women increases women leadership performance in

cooperatives. Similar to the findings of the present study with respect to leadership indicates that the role played by self-efficacy is paramount (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000; McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002; Cherian, & Jacob, 2013; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998). Similarly, other things remain constant, as the one unit increase of economic independence of women; it will result in a 60% leadership performance.

Likewise, social status indicates that the social value of women in their community which enables women to work with confidence in leadership positions. A one unit increase in social status of women increases a 9.9% leadership performance. Therefore, the higher the social status of women is the greater reinforcement to them to excel in their leadership performance. This seems to go in line with findings of a meta-analysis conducted by McDonald, Toussaint & Schweiger (2004). Organizational flexibility indicates that the easiness of the organizational structure and management of cooperative organizations. As the flexibility and simplicity of organizational settings increases by one unit, it will increase the leadership performance of women by 11%. The easiness or simplicity of the organization facilitates the leadership performance of women. These results are in line with the theory and support the finding from (Maheshwari, & Nayak 2020, Woldu, Tadesse & Waller, 2015, Hua, Mahmood, Zakaria, Lin, Yang, 2018; Vaari (2015)). On the other hand, the coefficients of experience and education level of women are insignificant predictors. These variables are not significant in determining the leadership performance women in cooperative enterprises. The result shows that the role gender in cooperative management and governance is indispensable for good governance and help in enhancing the performance and sustainability of the cooperatives. The success of a cooperative depends on the degree of participation of women members in the leadership and management of cooperatives.

There are several gender issues in cooperative management and governance. Involvement and actively participation of women in cooperatives can promote practice of the basic principles and values of cooperatives management and governance. Cooperatives are gender responsive and inclusive socio-economic enterprises; they can aid women overcome gender-specific socio-cultural and economic constraints. Designing the overall legislation, goals, missions, bye-laws, policies, strategies, plans, programs, projects, etc. of cooperatives should reflect gender issues. Mainstreaming gender issues in all aspects of planning cooperatives is crucial strategy to grasp the complexity constraints for gender equality. Cooperative management and governance has three basic challenges which is the economic viability business activities undertaken, the cooperative leadership and management capacity, and the lack of democratic control by the members. To this effect, enabling women to take on multiple roles within co-operatives as well as develop high-level skills promote knowledge of co-operative values, principles, and the identity of the movement improves the overall cooperative management and good governance.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Results on women leadership performance**

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	233
		F( 6, 226)	=	39.17		
Model	57.14452	6	9.52408667	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Residual	54.9461238	226	.243124441	R-squared	=	0.5098
		Adj R-squared	=	0.4968		
Total	112.090644	232	.483149327	Root MSE	=	.49308

LP	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Exp	.0292028	.0688302	0.42	0.672	-.1064281	.1648338
EL	.0483619	.0308052	1.57	0.118	-.0123403	.1090641
SE	.0651452	.0296198	2.20	0.029**	.006779	.1235114
SS	.0995574	.0407185	2.45	0.015**	.019321	.1797938
EI	.6043988	.0484467	12.48	0.000*	.5089338	.6998637
OF	.1133423	.0464791	2.44	0.016**	.0217546	.20493
_cons	.2619664	.2979147	0.88	0.380	-.3250792	.8490121

\*Significant at 1%, \*\*Significant at 1%

Source: Extracted from Stata result

Findings from this study indicate that there are important socioeconomic factor that enables women to be effective in management and governance of cooperatives. Earlier studies conclude that women are effective enough in cooperative management and governance but fail to examine further what makes women significantly effective. This study measured and showed the most important factors that determine the success of women in leadership and overniece of cooperative organizations.

The paper provides a large scale theoretical work on performance of women leadership and governance of cooperatives in developing countries like Ethiopia. This is a valuable contribution because it will help to specify the most important factors which enable women to perform effectively in the management of cooperatives. This study may help policy makers to focus on women to devise strategies to encourage women to hold leadership position. It may lead other researcher to examine further on leadership and governance performance of cooperatives.

Moreover, the proportion of women members is more likely to be higher in cooperatives that have leaders that are literate and trained. In terms of socio-economic characteristics that influence the leadership and governance of cooperatives, one of the main reasons for women's higher leadership performance is related to the education level, social status and personal attitude of women and organizational flexibility. Empowering women to have decision-making and management skills could play an important role in improving the management and governance of cooperatives.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to analyse the leadership and governance performance of women in cooperatives. The findings of descriptive show that women leaders Dire Dawa City Administration are successful in their leadership and governance performance of cooperative management. Majority of women leaders have 1-3 years of leadership experience. This indicates their leaders experience is too young. Most leaders in those cooperatives have completed at least secondary school. Organizational flexibility of cooperatives is relatively high which is suitable for women to use and manage it successfully. Women relatively with higher social status are in leadership positions. Nearly half of women in leadership positions are economically dependent. Women in leadership positions have respectful personality and ethics and employ participatory decision making approaches.

On the other hand, education level, organizational flexibility, social status, and self-efficacy are statistically significant predictor variables in determining the leadership performance of women in cooperatives.

Women play a significant role in improving the management performance of cooperatives by assuring effective leadership and governance. The study found that women with higher education level, higher social status and good personal attitude and organizational flexibility helped them to be effective in leadership positions.

The overall aim was to contribute to wider discussions on how to improve women's participation and leadership in cooperatives, so that they benefit equally from the fruit of cooperative that can offer them to develop more successful businesses.

To empower more women to reach the highest ranks, we must focus on three key areas: leadership education and training, socializing leadership early in life and building confidence with positive attitude with flexible organizational set up and providing or enhancing cooperative leadership development programs.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Despite the fact that this study has several important contributions to the existing literature, it is still not beyond limitations that can be addressed in future studies. The most important limitation is the cross-sectional design of this research. Even though least squares was employed, interpretation of the causality between constructs should be accepted with caution. A longitudinal study in future will provide better results regarding causality.

Furthermore, the scales employed in the survey are measured from the leaders' point of view and should be complemented with objective data. Besides, single informants were used as the



information source for the questions related to leadership performance, self-efficacy and organizational flexibility. Multiple informants would improve the validity of the results.

For future research, several approaches that could enrich the study of the analyzed relationships may be identified. First, future research should analyze the relationship between women leadership and governance capabilities with the performance of Cooperatives. Second, compare the performance of women managed cooperatives and men managed cooperatives to better understand the gender specific differences with regard to leadership performance. Moreover, other terms could be considered in the final effect of the analyzed concepts in leadership governance performance. For example, future researchers are encouraged to measure and identify the type of leadership, apart from leadership performance. Finally, although selected variables in this research explain an important part of changes in leadership performance, other constructs could be examined.

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