

# Cooperative Educational Training, Participation and Satisfaction: A Case Study in Agricultural Cooperatives

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## Abstract:

**T**his paper aims to investigate the level of education for cooperativism, participation and satisfaction of the cooperative members and relate these variables with their profiles. This research uses qualitative and quantitative techniques. Case study was the method selected to conduct a survey on opinions of cooperative members, who were previously selected by a stratified sample. With respect to education for cooperativism, we observed that cooperative members do not present homogeneous views on the cooperativism concept. Although the cooperative members affirm that they know the core principles, there is no consensus among them. The participation of members in decision-making is very low; however, their satisfaction with the cooperative services is high. On the relations between the studied variables and the profile of members, the main findings are: 1) older members, who have been associated for longer and have agriculture as their main activity are the most resistant to the entry of new members; 2) the sustainable development of the community is not viewed as priority for the cooperative investments, especially for members in the highest income profiles; 3) older members with higher level of education affirm that profit is not the main goal of a cooperative; on the other hand, younger members, who have agriculture as their main activity, believe that the cooperative works like any company that seeks profitability; 4) older members, with higher level of education, who have been associated for longer and with higher income are the most participative.

**Keywords:** Cooperative education; social participation; satisfaction of cooperative members; agricultural cooperatives; social management.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The increased competition between countries and economic blocks hamper the survival of low efficient companies and unprepared managers. In order to endure and grow, both the cooperative and the non-cooperative companies need to ensure good economic performance by differentiating strategies to produce competitive advantage in global markets. This new business environment drives the cooperative leaders to a moment of reflection: on the one hand, the moment offers challenges and opportunities; on the other, it encourages the competition in contemporary societies - a threat to the current cooperative management model.

To ensure the cooperative strength based on competitive advantages, only technical and managerial skills are not enough. This study assumes that the social management for a healthy relationship between members, cooperative and employees is essential to ensure the economic performance of the cooperative and members. The members' relationship could be strengthened with the educational training for cooperativism, which would motivate them to participate and intervene critically in the management of the enterprise and in the fair allocation of goods and services offered by the cooperative society. As a result, the problems of infidelity and opportunism could be potentially reduced.

In this context, this study aims to investigate the level of education for cooperativism, participation and satisfaction of cooperative members and relate these variables with their profile. It is expected that the results will help cooperatives to adopt social management practices, especially to enforce the members' collaborative attitude toward the collective, so improving the performance of the cooperative and of those who depend on it to grow, whether people or communities.

## II. DOCTRINAL ASPECTS AND COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

The cooperative movement emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century, influenced by the economic and social thoughts of French and English utopian socialists. However, in 1844, it was a group of 28 weavers of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society Limited that successfully brought the development and emergence of cooperatives in several countries, similarly to the current format occurring today. The core value of the Rochdale movement was the human valorization, which is present in the cooperative ideals until today. With the diffusion and increasingly development of the cooperatives, it was necessary to form a representative entity, so the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) emerged as a non-governmental association to ensure and defend the basic principles of the cooperativism. The first Brazilian official cooperative was the Economic Cooperative Society of Public Employees of Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, founded in 1889, which marked the beginning of the Rochdale cooperativism in Brazil (MENDES, 2010).

The early cooperativism in Brazil had no specific legislation until 1932, when a basic law for the Brazilian cooperatives was enacted, promoting a significant increase in the number of cooperatives in the country. According to Silva et al. (2003), because of the importance of the primary sector in Brazil, agricultural cooperatives were established as the most important branch in terms of business volume, being responsible for the diffusion of the cooperative ideal in

almost all regions of the country. In 1971, the 5.764 Law was enacted to govern the creation and operation of the Brazilian cooperatives to the present day. According to this law, a cooperative should be guided by a set of doctrinal principles. Its formalization occurred in 1995 during the International Cooperative Alliance Congress, when diverse members of cooperatives around the world discussed issues to strengthen the cooperative movement as well as its identity. The 5.764 Law also regulated the Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives (OCB), a technical government body that is advisor on cooperativism and aggregator of the state cooperative organizations (OCES). The OCB is governed by the same legal and institutional framework of the national entity.

Although simple and non-entrepreneurial, in which people contribute reciprocally with goods and services to a non-profitable economic activity, cooperatives are not a charitable business since they need to compete in quality and efficiency with the capital companies, ensuring the income of its members and promoting a balanced sharing of the outcome (DOMINGUES, 2002; PONA et al., 2015).

With respect to the cooperativism principles that determine the profile and the kind of operation of cooperatives, those from Rochdale are still the foundations of the modern cooperativism. However, they have been modified on three occasions (1937, 1966 and 1995) in order to suit the cooperative societies to the economic and social reality of the contemporary world. The seven core principles of the cooperativism doctrine, dictated by the pioneers of Rochdale (1844) are still in effect today: a) voluntary and open membership; b) democratic member control; c) members' economic participation; d) autonomy and independence; e) education, training and information; f) cooperation among cooperatives; g) concern for community.

According to Annibelli (2008), the cooperativism doctrine postulates the following axioms: members participate in the capital of the cooperative equitably and the control is democratic; cooperatives are autonomous and of mutual aid and may sign agreements with other companies; it is not allowed any kind of discrimination among members, whether social, political, religious, racial or gender; each member is entitled to one vote; cooperatives should serve their members effectively towards the strengthening of the cooperative movement; cooperatives should aim for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members; should provide the training of its members, promoting their ideals to society and distributing the benefits that were produced from the cooperation.

The organizational framework of cooperatives, combining features of an association and a capital society, has been a challenge for their leaders. On the one hand, if the social approach is too much prioritized, financial problems will arise. On the other, if decisions are taken solely to maximize net profits and the doctrinal principles are set aside, they will distance members from each other. Ideal is the middle path, the balance between the two approaches for an effective control of the social and economic results. Both the economic and the social growth must be achieved in association since they are not justified separately, always ensuring compliance with the constitutional principles of a Democratic State of Law with regard to citizenship, the human dignity, the social values of work and the free enterprise (MEURER, 2006; ANNIBELLI, 2008).

Ricciardi and Lemos (2000) analyzed the conflicts among social and economic goals of cooperatives and explained that such conflicts are based on solidarity among people; that is, the cooperatives are a vehicle for the promotion of people rather than a common business where the economic results is the reason of its existence. On the other hand, Meurer (2006) highlights that the economic results are also necessary, otherwise, cooperatives hardly could offer quality services for their members. Moreover, excellence is a result of the full achievement of the creative potential of all participants, whose stimulus depends on the programs for attraction and maintenance of the human capital. Therefore, only a financially balanced cooperative could safeguard human capital while in competition with commercial companies, which are often from the agribusiness sector and multinationals.

In this context, the welfare of a cooperative also depends on market principles that require a level of efficiency in the members' participation, so avoiding the transference of economic inefficiencies to the cooperative. From that point, cooperatives could remunerate adequately the capital paid by its members, stimulating new funds to meet demands for investment. The cooperatives need to work according to the reasoning of market, which should clearly be applied "outside" the organization and "inside" the organization - mainly in the relations with members. Such approaches, although apparently contradictory, can enhance the business efficiency for serving the society and, at the same time, achieving the social efficiency in the community where the organization is. For a long time, the law has defined the cooperatives based mainly on their associative character, so that the economic part that makes up the concept of cooperative has not been sufficiently taken into account. This issue should promote reflections on the future laws for cooperativism. In general, the cooperatives have a clear tendency for meeting the demands of their members rather than following market directions, that is, they lose efficiency by focusing more on the short-term benefits required by their members than on the consumer market. Such situations are not sustainable in the long term (BIALOSKORSKI NETO; MARQUES; NEVES, 1995; CRACOGNA, 1997; OCB, 1997; PONA et al., 2015).

The reason for the existence of cooperatives, justifies by itself, the effort to revitalize their best practices at whatever cost. The best practices have been contextualized in a much broader movement of modernization and strengthening of democratic principles and have produced immediate resonance in discussions on the importance of the social economy and the third sector in any societies. In the 1980s the outlook was quite different, the Brazilian cooperativism followed guidelines of a conservative modernization, in which the State acted in an authoritarian and centralized manner, favoring "the emergence of large farmers, focused on export crop, rather than the subsistence farming developed by the family-based agriculture". Unfortunately, the model adopted in Brazil, like others adopted in Latin America, "used the cooperativism as a social-political instrument for control - unlike Europe, where the cooperatives emerged as the force of the proletarian organizations. In Brazil, by contrast, it has represented the promotion of elites and agrarian policies"

(ANNIBELLI, 2008; PONA et al, 2015).

The constitution of a cooperative essentially looks for the ideals of equality, solidarity and freedom, with a differentiated organizational architecture. So, the enterprise is not a private property, but a co-ownership that is both private and common. It does not solely target the profit, but offers conditions for its members developing their activities with competitive advantages in an oligopolistic market (BIALOSKORSKI Neto, 1994; ZYLBERSZTAJN, 1994, 1999).

The difficulties of managing cooperatives came essentially from the indefinite rights of properties over the surpluses generated by the operations. Some authors like Zylbersztajn (2002), Cook (1995), Maraschin and Waquil (2005), Chaddad and Cook (2004), Bialoskorski Neto and Chaddad (2005), Barroso et al., (2007) and Carvalho and Bialoskorski Neto (2008) found five issues related to this aspect: The *horizon* problem, stemming from the difficulties in transferring the rights of capital and lack of liquidity to the shares of the cooperative members; the *free-rider* problem, occurring when the member uses the cooperative structure while advantageous, but is not loyal to the fullness of the business; the *portfolio* problem, which arises from the risk aversion of members that not bet on investments, even with reasonable prospects for good returns, due to the *horizon* problem; and the *control* problem, which arises from the conflict of interest between the agent and the principal in the contractual relations among members, managers and leaders of the cooperative. In these relations, a cooperative member is both the owner and the customer of the society, a condition that provokes many discussions and conflicts of interest, due to confront between maximization of returns at individual level and capitalization of the cooperative from a higher retention of surpluses.

According to Cracogna (1997), the legislation can help or hamper the cooperativism development, depending on the situation. However, when the cooperativism grows in a healthy manner, the success is essentially virtue of the cooperative members. In the Western Europe, the first changes in the cooperative traditional countries occurred in the last 25 years, through a reform on the Germany Cooperative Societies Act. The law reform have addressed a more entrepreneurial character to the cooperatives, enhancing the professionalism and the responsibility of the leaders and encouraging the capitalization through democratic changes for general meetings (one member = one vote). This reform influenced the cooperative laws across Europe.

For instance, the Belgian law of 1991 on social cooperatives almost equaled them to commercial companies; the French and Italian laws of 1992 addressed financial and capitalization changes to cooperatives; several Spanish autonomous communities, i.e. the Basque Country, consider in their laws a significant movement centered Mandragon and Cataluña, in which different categories of membership are conceded for these societies, as well as new rules for capital formation and financing (PONA et al., 2015).

### III. SOCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION OF MEMBERS

Education is the basic principle of cooperativism, accepted for a long time by the Rochdale pioneers in 1844 and still maintained after a number of the ICA meetings that treated of such principles. The importance of education is also considered in the Brazilian cooperativism. In Brazil, the legislation determines that at least 5% of the calculated net surplus should be applied to the Technical Assistance, Educational and Social Fund (FATES), whose goal is to assist cooperatives' members. By 1999, it was founded the National Learning Cooperative Service (SESCOOP) - a specific entity designated to the training and education of cooperative leaders and employees, managed by OCB. The goal is to organize, manage and execute professional training and development, as well as promote the cooperation work in all areas of knowledge and nationwide. The funds for the SESCOOP action came from the compulsory contribution of 2.5% of the cooperatives payroll. In ten years, its programs have benefited more than 600,000 employees, members and their families (MENDES, 2010).

Frantz and Schonardie (2007) affirm that education is essential to the performance of a cooperative, as it enhances the comprehension that receiving training for cooperativism favors the cooperation and loyalty of cooperative members, essentially in highly competitive environments and sectors.

Ferreira and Presno Amodeo (2008) explain the importance of social management in cooperatives. In their views, it generates an identity and belonging sense with the cooperative, increasing the trust and loyalty of members. The authors also highlight that the social management is translated into better education and more participation of members, being an indispensable tool for achieving excellence in management and competitiveness.

According to Schneider (2003), the training for cooperativism should be worked in leaders and members, since the cooperativism principles are to allow everyone to understand the meaning of cooperation. The training for cooperativism should promote reflection, discussion and action among all involved in the cooperative society, so gradually the interest for participation would arise and all involved would become agents of their own growth. On this way, the training for cooperativism goes beyond the simple transference of technical and scientific knowledge and could be established as a political and social practice supported by communication and participation of all involved (FRANTZ; SCHONARDIE, 2007).

Mógia et al. (2004, p. 4) explain the relation among training for cooperativism, loyalty, reciprocity and participation of members on the cooperative activities:

“In order to encourage loyalty and reciprocity, the goal is to ensure the involvement of cooperative members with the cooperative, through the effective participation of members to add value to the production chain [...] and special incentives to members. This problem can also be solved by education; the solution is basically related to comprehensive educational activities as part of the normal functioning of any large, mid and small-sized cooperative”.

The lack of education for cooperation is part of the problems of opportunism and infidelity, commonly identified on

relations between members and cooperative societies. These problems, broadly discussed by Williamson (1985), Eggertsson (1990), Cook (1995), Iliopoulos and Cook (1999), Bialoskorski Neto, Braga and Reis (2002), Zylbersztajn et al. (2002), Sykuta and Chaddad (1999), Cook, Iliopoulos and Chaddad (2002) and Lago (2008) have caused the low economic performance of cooperatives by bad results, debts, capitalization difficulties and unsustainability. So, based on the statement of Mendes (2010, p.73), it can be concluded that "Education is an essential factor for the performance of this type of organization." Furthermore, according to the Mendes (2010), there is a branch in the cooperative theory that "promotes the exaltation instead of the removal of the cooperative principles as a way to overcome structural problems."

The transcript of a paragraph taken from the study by Ferreira and Presno Amodeo (2008) clearly defines the main purpose of the cooperative education:

The cooperative education makes the members learn how to cooperate, participate and manage the cooperative in which they are owners, favoring their comprehension about their role in the organization. Therefore, it is necessary to understand what a cooperative is and what differentiates them from other types of businesses, how it works and how its structure is built; at the same time, it is necessary to observe the values and principles that guide the cooperative and directly determine their identity and their organizational culture.

Since the education is already contextualized in this work as the essential factor for social management of a cooperative, we introduce now a second factor: the member participation. According to Mendes (2010), the type of society that defines cooperative demands integration among members, leaders and employees. The participation of cooperative members is reinforced by principles of democratic control and economic participation. The first calls members to the responsibility for choices on behalf of the cooperative, which are legitimated by the general meetings; the second refers to the right of members of participating in the income and decision-making on the allocation of the surplus, since they are owners of equity shares of the society.

The participation is not only a right but a duty of cooperative members and it characterizes the main difference between cooperatives and capital firms. Therefore, due to the democratic relation among members, where one member is entitled to one vote whatever how many shares he owns, it is possible to affirm that these societies are like cooperative holding companies, in which the cooperative members participate both in the operations and in the decisions.

According to Sette, Sette and Souza (2005) the participation of members can bring advantage to the organization once it helps dealing with conflicts. Only with an effective engagement of cooperative members, the problems from the principal-agent relationship can be avoided.

Bialoskorski Neto (2007) understands that the participation of members is essential to create transparency to the society and minimize the problems with agents, as proposed by Sette, Sette and Souza (2005). Mendes (2010, p. 76) affirms that:

[...] Despite the importance of social participation, little is done to encourage it and increase it. In most cases, the participation of members is restricted to the economic aspects such as the delivery of products in the cooperative, the search for services and advantageous costs for production.

Stephanou and Villwock (2007) agreed with Mendes (2010) on his conclusion about participation when they affirmed that the financial aspect has been the main concern of the members since their major interest is the income rather than the manner in which it is achieved. From that point, the authors reinforce the importance of social management for developing a cooperative. Only the management for economic performance is not enough since it depends of social management. Incentives provided by the cooperative are necessary to make members participate actively in both operational and strategic decisions.

The third factor for social management of a cooperative is the members' satisfaction. We assume that cooperatives are peculiar societies and follow a reason based not only in the purpose of maximizing returns but also in a social logic that is based on the search and delivery of benefits to members.

From this social logic, it seems that members' satisfaction is essential for the cooperative performance, being it of great relevance. Mendes (2010, p. 77) states that cooperative is "an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their social, economic and cultural needs, so the satisfaction of the cooperative members represents the achievement of their objectives and therefore their success."

According to Hopson and Scally (1995), the most accurate way to assess success in terms of business performance is to measure the level of satisfaction of the clients. From this concept, the same is valid to cooperative societies, since the members' satisfaction is the real mission of a cooperative enterprise, over than profit. Mendes (2010) and Denton (1991) show that the search for satisfaction also drives the strategic management of cooperatives. Listening and identifying how members perceive the social and economic value added to them through an efficient management allow actions to reinforce the strengths and eliminate weaknesses, as well as face the threats and seize the opportunities of the environment in which the cooperative operates.

When managers know about the perceptions and reactions of their clients, their responsibility on decision-making is increased since they got a sign whether the company mission has been met. Therefore, it is considered highly relevant the efficacy and the way in which a company builds relationships and receives feedback of clients, focusing not only on satisfaction but also on loyalty. In the Era of the economy, knowledge and complexity of markets, the companies that best relate with and learn from their key stakeholders (customers and employees) are those that will succeed (CAJARAVILLE, 2000; HAYES, 2001).

Mendes (2010, p. 78) discusses the satisfaction of cooperative members:

Therefore the idea that cooperatives should also be concerned with the satisfaction of their "customers" becomes strong. The loyalty of cooperative members is critical to the performance of the organization. But this is a two-

way path: both the services of the cooperative members and their active participation can make the society stronger and able to offer more and better services to them.

In order to evaluate the satisfaction of a client, it is necessary to investigate how clients perceive and consider some business characteristics that underlie their opinions. However, in the case of cooperatives, the satisfaction evaluation is more complex because the client is, at the same time, the owner of the company. From the different roles assumed by the members emerge diverse interests, which are in some cases, conflicting (MENDES, 2010).

Studies about these aspects are scarce. However, it is worth mentioning the results of Meurer and Marcon (2007), who found different motivations of members to achieve satisfaction, i.e., higher return on invested capital and quality services at values lower than the market prices. In this specific case, it is very difficult to satisfy the members' wishes without partially damage the economic value of the cooperative. Therefore, the conflicting roles of the cooperative members can give an idea of how complicated is to satisfy different wishes.

Guazzi (1999) also explored this theme by analyzing, on the quality perspective, the satisfaction of cooperative members. The author observed that members of agricultural cooperatives have difficulties in expressing their needs and wishes due to a number of conflicting interests among them. A similar study was developed by Pôrto et al. (2006). The authors identified the profile of cooperative members and their level of satisfaction with the production delivery, commercialization of inputs and the granting of financing for agricultural investments.

Rosalem et al. (2009) report that people could be motivated for effective participation in the cooperative and suggest that interrelations between the members and the cooperative society should be permanent to ensure that all confidence resulting of partnership would push the organization towards the goals.

Some practices related to personal development, i.e. education, continuous training, information and others enable members to a better integration and participation on the cooperative. This process is directly related with the long-term success, although the majority of members are seeking for short-term results (SIEBERT, 2013). The same author also suggests that the personal improvement programs should have different strategies according to the users' profile and their level of commitment to the cooperative. In order to enhance these strategies, the author also suggests raising awareness in authorities like government representatives, leaders of professional associations, teachers, legal professionals and religious authorities, among others. On this way, the cooperative principles could be introduced to communities.

The dissatisfaction of members is partially due to the organizational structure, where the lack of associative spirit along with the inefficiency of educational processes contributes to disunity and discontent of cooperative members (ROSALEM et al., 2009).

Ferreira and Silva (2015) affirm that the individual skills of members and employees are restricted to the traditional education, so they create resistance to changes, innovation, creativity, participation and other peculiar aspects of cooperativism that need some "boldness from them to restructure, establish and consolidate" a new organization (FERREIRA; SILVA, 2015, p. 43). According to the authors, the conservatism proposed by traditional education has contributed to the devaluation of the human component within the cooperatives, thus promoting disinterest in cooperative members. The original proposal of these organizations was to safeguard social and economic interests, but it was usurped by market appreciation, production and product. Silva, Silva and Barros (2013) also emphasize that the lack of information also contributes to disinterest and retraction of members, in addition to the gaps in cooperative educational process.

There is a training concept suggest by Morais and Henriques (2009) and by Silva, Silva and Barros (2013) predicting an exchange of expertise among employees and cooperative in order to give opportunity for mutual learning through feedback of activities performed in the cooperative. This educational philosophy becomes a competitive differentiator and creates space for communication among internal agents (managers and employees), so promoting a pleasant environment where good relationship leads to improvements in services.

Siebert (2013, p. 12) summarizes the importance of integration between cooperative agents:

By definition, the associative nature of the cooperative requires integration between the partners and among partners, leaders and cooperative employees; that is, requires participation of all. The more conscious and active the participation in the cooperative is, the greater the possibility of being managed with transparency and responsibility. The supervision of the member's performance will create a natural process of corporate governance. Thus, a link is established between the cooperative education and the possibility of success of the cooperative venture, reaffirming the proximity of social and economic dimensions.

Thus, it is not possible to affirm that there is an ideal formula for the success of cooperatives. The success would come from a number of interrelated activities, where only the cooperation among all sectors could effectively lead to solid, efficient and productive results. Furthermore, each cooperative should observe local characteristics and available resources in order to be adapted to market opportunities (FERREIRA; SILVA, 2015).

#### **IV. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The method used in this study is the applied research with qualitative and quantitative techniques. Because there are few studies on the profile of cooperative members with respect to education, social participation and satisfaction with the cooperative, we propose an exploratory study. Descriptive and explanatory aspects are used to complement each other. Case study was the method chosen to conduct the investigation, in which a survey was done to collect information from opinions of members previously selected for a stratified sample.

The sample was composed by 600 cooperative members of an agricultural cooperative (12% of total members), selected in a non-probabilistic way. The anonymity of the participants and the cooperative was respected as the request of

its board. The participants (cooperative members) answered a questionnaire about their profile, education, participation and satisfaction with the services provided by the cooperative.

The questions was designed to be assertive in the qualitative, categorical and ordinal way in order to measure the agreement of the approached aspects with the findings of

Mendes (2010). Statements were addressed to evaluate each approached aspect: the education for cooperativism, the social participation and the members' satisfaction. In each statement, a 5-point Likert scale was used to scaling responses as the following: (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.

From all applied questionnaires, 108 were eliminated due to filling errors. In total, 492 questionnaires were used for analysis. The sample was stratified to better represent the population with respect to gender, age, education, association time and size of the farm (large, medium and small).

Data were subjected to descriptive, multivariate, non-parametric chi-square technique and cross analysis statistics, with the SPSS Statistics 17.0 package. Hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster were used for the cluster analysis in addition to the agglomeration method (*Ward's, Furthest Neighbor, Nearest Centroid Sorting*), with the quadratic Euclidean distance to the hierarchical solutions.

## V. RESULTS

Next to preparation and exploratory data analysis, the analysis of the respondents profile was performed to characterize and classify the sample.

### 5.1 Sample description

Gender information shows that the majority of participants are male (85%) and the minority are female (15%), as showed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Distribution of respondents with respect to gender

GENDER	NUMBER	SHARE
Male	420	85%
Female	72	15%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

With respect to age, the majority of respondents are between 51 to 60 years-old. The group between 41 and 60 represents 60% of the sample. The younger, up to 30 year-old, are representing 8% of all respondents and the elderly, over 70 year-old, represent 4%, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Distribution of respondents by age

AGE	NUMBER	SHARE
Up to 30 year-old	39	8%
30-40	64	13%
41-50	123	25%
51-60	172	35%
61-70	74	15%
More than 70 year-old	20	4%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the level of education of the respondents, 53% have completed high education (the majority), 35% have completed high school and 12% have only primary education. It was classified as Other, respondents who have not completed primary school, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Level of education of respondents

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NUMBER	SHARE
Primary Education	59	12%
High School	153	31%
High Education	261	53%
Other	20	4%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the years of cooperative membership, 44% (the majority) of respondents have been members of the cooperative from 6-10 years ago and 24% have been members for less than 5 years ago.

Table 4 – Years of cooperative membership of respondents

YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP	NUMBER	SHARE
Up to 5 years	116	24%
6-10 years	215	44%

11-15 years	122	25%
16-10 years	25	5%
More than 21 years	15	3%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

With respect to the frequency in which respondents attend the cooperative (Table 5), 32% go to the cooperative, in person, more than once a week; 53% go to the cooperative once a week or more; 20% rarely go to the cooperative.

Table 5 – Frequency that respondents go to the cooperative in person

FREQUENCY	NUMBER	SHARE
Rarely	98	20%
Once a week	104	21%
More than once a week	157	32%
Once every 15 days	49	10%
Monthly	84	17%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

According to the Table 6, agriculture is the main activity of 83% of respondents; 92% of the respondents said they did not know the value of their shares in the cooperative's capital; and only 2% have been part of the board.

Table 6 – Principal activity, value of the shares and participation on the board

VARIABLE	YES	NO
Is the agriculture your main activity?	83%	17%
Do you know the value of your share?	8%	92%
Have you been part of the board?	2%	98%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

With respect to income (Table 7), 53% (most of the respondents) were classified as large farmers, 25% as mid farmers and 22% as small farmers. The rule of classification on the size of the farmers was that established by the Bank of Brazil S.A.

Table 7 – Distribution of respondents by income

SIZE	NUMBER	SHARE
Small farmer (GAI <sup>1</sup> up to 160 thousand Brazilian Reais)	108	22%
Mid farmer (GAI to 160-1000 thousand Brazilian Reais)	122	25%
Large farmer (GAI more than 1000 thousand Brazilian Reais)	262	53%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

(<sup>1</sup>) GAI = Gross Annual Income.

## 5.2 Analysis of the educational training for cooperativism

Before analyzing the education for cooperativism, it was investigated the level of knowledge of respondents on this theme through the questions presented on the Table 8. The results show that 72% of the respondents know the cooperativism principles; 38% don't know their rights and duties as cooperative members, but at the same time, 78% say that they know the statute of the cooperative.

Table 8 – Knowledge on principles, rights and duties of cooperative members

VARIABLE	YES	NO
Do I know the cooperativism principles?	72%	28%
Do I Know my rights and duties as a cooperative member?	62%	38%
Do I know the statute of my cooperative?	22%	78%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the sequence of the research method, the education for cooperativism is assessed with basis on the response of the cooperative members to the following questions about cooperativism principles: voluntary and open membership, democratic control, member economic participation, education, training and information, concern for the community, cooperative meaning and spirit of community. A cluster analysis was used to group respondents with similar views and

conceptions on each principle. Next, a cross-analysis was done to obtain the profile of each group with respect to age, level of education, years of cooperative membership, size (income), main activity and knowledge on the principles.

With respect to the members' perception on the principle of voluntary and open membership (Table 9), two groups were identified: The first, representing 71% of the respondents, believe that the cooperative should be open to all, without exclusion or punishment of members that do not fulfill their roles. The second group, representing 29% of the respondents, believe that the cooperative should impose conditions to new members and exclude those that are not participating. By the cross-analysis, it was observed that the second group presented the average age and years of cooperative membership higher than the first group, but the level of education was lower. Most respondents of the first group have lower income, while in the second group, most respondents are large farmers. The respondents of the first group are those that have agriculture as their main activity, but with the lowest level of knowledge on the cooperativism principles in comparison with the second group.

Table 9 – The members' perception on the principle of voluntary and open membership

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
Should the cooperative be open to all? And not punishing or excluding members who do not fulfill their role?	351	71%
Is it necessary the imposition of conditions to new members and punishment or exclusion of those are not participating?	141	29%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the members' perception on the principle of democratic control (Table 10), it was identified 3 groups: The first group, composed by 59% of the respondents, agrees with the maintenance of the democratic principle because is the foundation of the cooperativism. The second group, representing 38% of the respondents, defends the proportional representation according to the member's movement in the cooperative. The third group, representing only 3% of the respondents, agrees with the principle - one man, one vote - but is also in favor of the proportional representation according to the member's movement in the cooperative through the voting capital. The first group is composed by those with higher age, more years of membership, higher education level and higher income. They also affirm to know the cooperativism principles. The second group is composed by those of lower age, fewer years of membership, lower education level and lower income.

Table 10 – The members' perception on the principle of democratic control.

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
The democratic principle of one man-one vote should be maintained because is the foundation of the cooperativism.	289	59%
Representation should be proportional to the members' movement in the cooperative - those who hold greater capital should get more rights to vote.	186	38%
The democratic principle of one man-one vote should be maintained, but I am also in favor of the proportional representation.	17	3%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The members' perception on the principle of member economic participation (Table 11) allowed the identification of three groups: The first group, representing 18% of the respondents, believe that the surpluses should be allocated for developing the cooperative instead of benefiting members directly. The second group, representing 26% of the respondents, thinks the opposite. They affirm that the cooperative should distribute the surpluses among members and allocate reserves only for benefiting members. The third group, representing 55% of the respondents, agrees that cooperative should distribute the surpluses among members, allocate reserves for benefiting the members, as well as allocate part of the surpluses for developing the cooperative. The first group is composed by those with higher income, lower level of education and agriculture not being their main activity. The second group is those with lower age, fewer years of membership, lower income and lower level of education. The third group is composed by those with higher education level, being agriculture their main activity.

Table 11 – The members' perception on the principle of member economic participation

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
The surpluses should be allocated for developing the cooperative instead of benefiting members.	89	18%
The cooperative should distribute the surpluses among members and allocate reserves for benefiting members instead of developing the cooperative.	130	26%
The cooperative should distribute the surpluses and allocate reserves for benefiting the members as well as for developing the cooperative.	273	55%

Source: Prepared by the authors.



From the members' perception on the principle of education, training and information (Table 12), it was possible to identify two groups. The first, represented by 97% of the respondents, believes that the cooperative should work in education and provide training for employees. The second group, formed by 3% of the respondents, doesn't value education. They don't agree that the cooperative should work in education for members and employees because they believe that this activity gives no result, being only a "waste of time". The respondents of the first group have higher level of education and higher income. The profile of the second group is characterized by lower age, fewer years of membership and lower income.

Table 12 – The members' perception on the principle of education, training and information

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
The cooperative should work in education and provide training for members and employees.	477	97%
The cooperative shouldn't work in education and training of members and employees because this gives no result, being only a waste of time.	15	3%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the members' perception on the principle of concern for community (Table 13), three groups were identified: The first group, composed by 35% of the respondents, believes that investing on the community is a priority of the cooperative, since the cooperative is responsible by the sustainable development of the community where it works. The second group, representing 61% of the respondents, agree that the cooperative should invest on the community, not as a priority, but carrying out only some projects within the community. The third group, composed by 4% of the respondents, thinks that investing on the community is not a priority because the cooperative should direct their resources only in the service of the members' interests. The first group is characterized by those of lower age, fewer years of membership and higher level of education. The second group is composed by those with higher age and higher income.

Table 13 – The members' perception on the principle of concern for community

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
Investing on the community is a priority of the cooperative, the cooperative should work for the sustainable development of the community.	172	35%
Investing on the community is not a priority of the cooperative, but the cooperative should carry out some projects for developing the community sustainably.	302	61%
Investing on the community is not a priority of the cooperative because the cooperative should direct their resources only in the service of the members' interests.	18	4%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The members' perception on the cooperative meaning (Table 14) allowed the definition of three groups. The first group, with 55% of the respondents, affirms that a cooperative society is a company like any other and the main goal is the profit obtained from its activities. The second group, representing 28% of the respondents, understands that a cooperative is different from those capital companies because is a society of people. Although they think that profit is not the main goal, they agree that it should be considered on the cooperative's activities. Finally, the third group with 17% of the respondents thinks that cooperatives are very different from capital companies and that definitely, profit is not the main goal. Respondents of the three groups affirm that they know the principles of the cooperativism, mainly the respondents of the second group. The second group is composed by those with higher age, more years of membership and higher level of education. The first group is characterized by those with higher income and with agriculture being their main activity. The third group is formed by those with fewer years of membership and lower income.

Table 14 – The members' perception on the cooperative meaning

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
The cooperative society is a company like any other, in which the main goal is the profit.	270	55%
The cooperative is different from those capital companies because is a society of people, profit should be generated but is not the main goal.	138	28%
The cooperative is very different from those capital companies because is definitely a non-profit society of people.	84	17%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

With respect to the members' perception on the spirit of community (Table 15), it was found three distinct groups. The first group, representing 34% of the respondents, accepts the decisions of the assemblies and agrees that collective interests have always been placed above personal interests. The second group, with 64% of the respondents, doesn't like participating on the assemblies because they think that assemblies don't result in effective decisions. However, they recognize that collective interests should be placed above personal interests. Finally, the third group, with only 2% of the respondents, believes that personal interests are more important than collective interests and therefore expects the cooperative prioritizing them.

Respondents of the first group have higher level of education, more years of membership, higher income and affirm to know the principles of the cooperativism. Those of the third group have fewer years of membership, lower age, and agriculture is not their main activity. The respondents of the second group have higher age, lower level of education and lower income.

Table 15 – The members' perception on the community spirit

VARIABLE	NUMBER	SHARE
I accept the decisions of the assembly and renounce some personal interests, because in a cooperative, the collective interest is the principal.	168	34%
I don't like to attend assemblies, because the results are not effective, but in a cooperative the collective interest must prevail.	315	364%
The cooperative must first meet my interests, even if that results in losses.	9	2%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

### 5.3 Analysis of the level of participation and satisfaction of the members

This section intended to check the level of participation of members. According to the results presented in Table 16, it is possible to affirm that social participation is very low. Only 31% of respondents said they attend the most of the meetings for decision making, while 63% said they didn't attend the last ordinary general meeting.

Furthermore, only 25% of respondents said they have voice and influence in the cooperative's decisions, while 10% of respondents usually make suggestions at meetings. By the results of cross-analysis, it is showed that respondents with higher age, higher level of education and more years of membership are the most participative, while respondents with lower level of education are the least participative. It appears that the most participative respondents are those with higher income, while those with lower income show a low social participation. Respondents who actively participate on the cooperative are those who have agriculture as their main activity. They affirm to know the principles of cooperativism, while the least participative respondents affirm the opposite.

Table 16 – The members' perception on the cooperative meaning

VARIABLES	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I attend most of the meetings for decision making.	32%	11%	26%	13%	18%
I was present at the last ordinary general meeting.	63%	5%	8%	7%	17%
I feel I have voice and influence in the cooperative decisions.	45%	3%	27%	19%	6%
I usually make suggestions at meetings.	53%	6%	30%	2%	9%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the level of satisfaction of the respondents (Table 16), it was observed that 84% are satisfied, 5% are indecisive and 11% are dissatisfied. Based only in these results, it is possible to say that the level of satisfaction of the members is high. By cross-analysis, it was identified that the most satisfied members are those with higher age, more years of membership, higher income, their main activity is not agriculture and they affirm to know the principles of the cooperativism.

Table 17 – Distribution of respondents according to social participation

VARIABLES	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
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I am satisfied with the overall performance of the cooperative.	3%	8%	5%	26%	58%
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Source: Prepared by the authors.

## VI. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it was possible to identify the level of education for cooperativism of the respondents, the level of participation and satisfaction of the members and analyze these variables with the members' profiles. Regarding education for cooperativism, it was observed that the members don't have a homogeneous understanding about the cooperativism concept and, although they affirm knowing the principles, there is no consensus with respect to them.

In general, the members don't clearly understand in which way the cooperatives are different from capital companies. However, the most of the respondents agree with the principles of voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member's economic participation, as well as education, training and information for members and employees.

It was verified that the level of participation of members on the cooperative decisions is very low; however, the level of satisfaction with the services and the overall performance of the cooperative is high. This result agrees with some theoretical postulates that affirm that the good performance is a disincentive for the participation of members because of the increased cost of opportunity.

With respect to the relations of the studied variables with the members' profiles, it can be conclude that: the members with higher age, more years of membership and having agriculture as their main activity are more resistant to new entrants; members that defend the democratic principle of one man – one vote are those with higher age, higher level of education, higher income and knowers of cooperative principles; the sustainable development of the community is not a priority for the cooperative investments, especially in the opinion of members with higher income; members of higher age, more years of membership, higher level of education and higher income are the most participative.

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