



YOUTH PREFERENCES AND THEIR ECONOMIC BENEFITS IN AGRICULTURAL MARKETING CO-OPERATIVE: A CASE OF KISHAPU-DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation in Agricultural Marketing Co-operative (AMCOS) has been so limited provided that services and products offered by AMCOS seem not to be youth preference as they do not physically experience the economic benefits for AMCOS activities. In that case, the study aimed at assessing the issues relating to youth preferences and youth economic benefits in Agricultural Marketing Co-operative societies in Kishapu, Tanzania. The research adopted both exploratory and descriptive research design to investigate the phenomenon and employed sampling methods such as cluster and simple random. Data were collected using survey questionnaire. The data were subjected to both thematic analysis and descriptive statistics analysis for quantification in terms of frequencies and percentages for easy interpretations. The findings established that youth farmers are not motivated to join AMCOS because of using traditional ways in delivering their services. Youth proposed for modification of co-operative services like value addition, provision of credits on farm inputs, diversification of AMCOS services, training on production technology and technological access to production information. Moreover, the finding revealed that co-operative organizations have economic benefits to youth members, especially in tackling their economic challenges. This was evidenced by asset accumulation, production and intangible benefits, but these economic benefits depend on the number of years of being a member in co-operative. Other economic benefits are reduction of storage cost, enhancing marketing bargaining strength for their members and assurance of market of the product. It is recommended that AMCOS and the government should make sure that AMCOS activities are indeed helpful to youth and they address youths' needs. Also there is a need for co-operative to strengthen their activities in order to realize their potentials. It is recommended that youth can enhance the sustainability of the co-operative especially through including them in decision making bodies and designing relevant products which address youths' desire.

Key terms: AMCOS, Youth Preferences, Youth economic Benefits.

Paper type: Research paper

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Youth participation in social and economic development is inevitable provided that 1.2 billion of the world population is occupied by youth, among which 50% of the developing world population is characterized by youth that range between 15 to 24 years olds (UNO, 2010). In that case, the International Co-operative Alliance General Assembly of 2005 through United Nations Organization (UNO) insisted on the inclusion of youth in the co-operative movement by developing innovative strategies to provide much needed employment opportunities for the world youth (UNO, 2005). The International Year of Co-operatives (IYC) in 2012 set three objectives of the IYC among others aimed to promote the formation and growth of co-operatives of which youth were encouraged to be members as one of a socio-economic empowerment strategy (Reeder, 2012).

In Africa, despite a large number of youth population as they makes up to 20% in age between 15 to 24, and 70% in age under 30years (UNO, 2010), their participation in co-operative organization is still poor. Okwany, *et. al.* (2010) present youth participation in co-operative by age groups as follows: 31-35 (40 %), 26-30 cohort (32 %), 21-25 (20 %) and 16-20 (8%), and few co-operatives have membership from pre-pubescent group. With these statistics youth participation in cooperatives seems to be low and their participation is determined by age above 30, an age with youth who are economically active.

Scholar reports that despite of 65% (15-35 years old) of youth in Tanzania population their participation in agricultural co-operative is still small regardless of its importance in reducing unemployment (Chambo, *et. al.*, 2014). In Tanzania, following the government philosophy of Ujamaa and self-reliance since independent, the country witnessed mushrooming of co-operative societies since 1950s-1970s. The situation changed since 1980s following liberalization of agricultural marketing activities which led to stiff challenges and competition (Bargawi, 2008). However, agriculture has continued to become the backbone of rural and national economy and youth in Tanzania are informally employed in the sector but they face some agricultural challenges like low productivity and over dependence on rain, low use of agricultural inputs and poor price and access to market place (FANRPAN, 2012). Through Agricultural cooperatives farmers are expected to solve collective action problem, for instance to procure inputs most efficiently and market their produce on more favourable terms than they could achieve by themselves. Tanzania Government had promoted co-operative after independence as the sector is considered to be potential for social and economic and political transformation since 1961 to 2000 (URT, 2015). Different programmes such as Co-operative Reform Modernization Program (CRMP), National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) and Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP) have emphasized on community empowerment and participation in economic activities such as co-operatives in which men, women and youth could become members in order to solve socio-economic challenges; and this is envisioned to ensure sustainability of the co-operative organizations. In this context one may question, despite the government efforts why youth have a limited participation in agricultural co-operatives while there are many opportunities which could solve their agricultural challenge. Therefore, the study aimed at addressing the issues relating to youth preferences on the cooperative activities or services and their economic benefits in AMCOS focusing on Kishapu District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the dominance of agricultural economic activities in the country, and availability of reasonable number of AMCOS, youth participations have been reported to be so limited. Their participation in agricultural co-operative is still small regardless its importance (Chambo, *et. al.*, 2014) Moreover, the government efforts invested on promoting agricultural co-operatives as a solution to subsistence agriculture problems, poor youth participation in Agricultural Marketing Co-operative still a problem in Tanzania. Youth remain to be under-represented at the membership level and in particular at the leadership level in co-operative (Okwany, 2010). However, the available studies regarding the problem do not clearly and in detail attempt to address the issue of youth preference on AMCOS-products and services as well as economic benefits of AMCOS to youth who are already in AMCOS. For instance, the available literature focused on barriers and youth participation, youth and age in AMCOS, size of youth in AMCOS and to small extent on the social and economic benefits of youth in AMCOS (Hartley MacPherson, *et al.*, 2011, 2005; Areysh, 2011; Okwany*et. al.*, 2010), which are not enough to be generalized to Tanzania context, in that case, Kishapu District Shinyanga. Due to unclear and empirically unjustified coverage regarding the existing problem as to why there is limited youth participation in agricultural co-operatives the study intended to fill the existing gap through making an assessment on the issues relating to youth preferred products and the economic benefits of AMCOS to youth, a survey of three selected AMCOS in Kishapu, Tanzania was conducted.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualisation and Definition of Key Concepts

2.1.1 Co-operative

There are many definitions by different authors of what a co-operative is. The definitions of a co-operative vary depending the source, but most agree that co-operative is one that: a) provides service at cost; b) is democratically controlled by its member-patrons; and c) limits returns on equity capital (Ochieno, 2012). The

owners of a co-operative are the same people who have access to the services it offers. Ochieno (2012) define co-operatives as voluntary closed organization in which the decision-control and risk-bearing functions repose in the membership, and decision management reposes in the agent (board and manager) who represents the principal’s interests. A co-operative is a special type of business firm owned and operated for mutual benefit by the users (member-patrons) (Ochieno, 2012). In that case, the study will adopt the definition from the above scholars whereby the following common characteristics will be observed: (a) co-operation is an economic activity; (b) it is conducted for the need of its members; and (c) it is owned and controlled by these members. Therefore, a co-operative is an organization formed by a group of people who meet voluntarily to fulfil mutual economic and social organisation formed by a group of people who join voluntarily to fulfil mutual economic and social needs through running a democratically controlled enterprise such that the benefits achieved through cooperation are greater than the benefits achieved individually.

2.1.2 Agricultural Marketing Co-operative (AMCOS)

Agricultural co-operative are unique types of private enterprises that embrace both the associative component as well as the business component for members, and are guided by the ICA values and principles of cooperation. The motives of inducing individual producers to join existing or to form new co-operatives can originate both the economic-rational sphere and in the sociological psychological sphere (Krivokapic-Skoko, 2002). By their definition, agricultural marketing co-operatives are associations of primary producers who have come together to achieve some common commercial objectives more successfully than they could do as individuals like marketing their produce, purchasing farm supplies, sharing expensive equipment or supplying services such as storage or transport (Ochieno, 2012). More generally, their goal is to enable rural people to improve their social and economic conditions by working together in ways that are more productive than working individually.

2.1.3 Co-operative Youth

According to UNO (2009) youth are those who are aged between 15 and 24 years old, similarly, Tanzania government has adopted the UNO definition as stipulated above. However, for the rationale of this study, a youth is defined as the one between 18-35 years so as to comply with the Co-operative Policy of 2002 in cooperative industry.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 The three-lens approach to Youth Participation Theory

The three lens approach theory presented by United Nations Organization (2010) articulates that development should focus on working with and for the youth toward effective development. Assistance should work for the benefit of youth (as target beneficiaries), work with youth as partners, and support youth as leaders (initiator) as shown in figure 2.

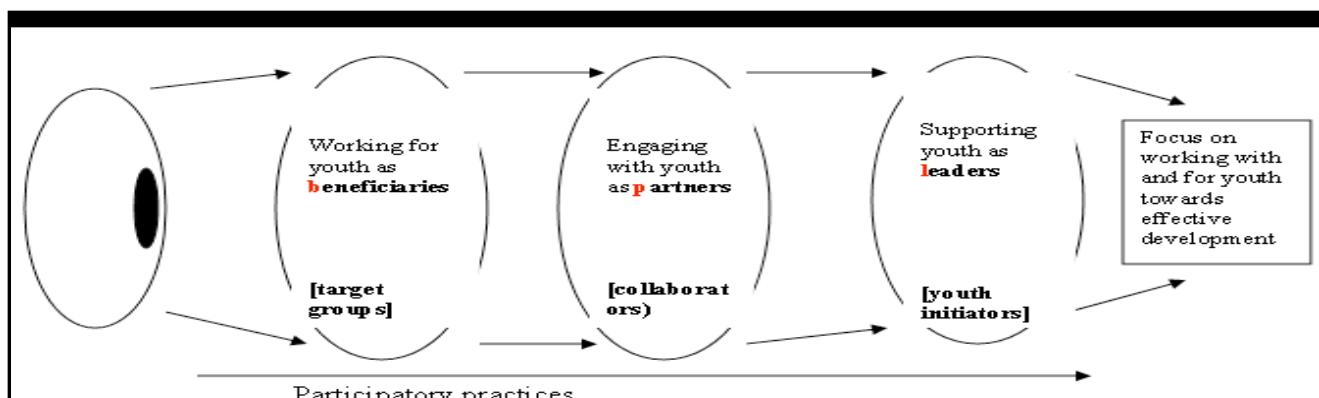


Figure 2.1: The three-lens approach to Youth Participation Theory

Source: UNO (2010).

The theory is an assets’ approach to youth participation in development which appreciates and mobilizes individual or group talents and strengths rather than focusing only on deficits (needs), problems or threats. It is important for institutions and practitioners to consider that all three lenses are not mutually exclusive. Youth

participation in development is often a combination of all three different lenses which may be used with different groups of young people during an intervention/initiative. Youth leaders may be reaching out to new groups of young people as targets. The aim is to develop youth as partners and leaders in development. This is based on youth having agency; their capacity to act, their skills and capabilities and their ability to change their own lives, and it is the central tenet of the asset based approach to youth participation. The three lens approach to youth participation is relevant to this study since institutions like co-operatives work with youth. Moreover, youth's effective development could be achieved through their participation in co-operatives focuses on youth development and sustainability of the co-operative institutions.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

Hartley (2011) in his paper "A New Space for a New Generation" The rise of co-operative amongst young people in Lesotho and Uganda found that young people who are engaged in co-operatives did benefit from the experience in a number of ways. The impacts of membership in co-operatives included social and economic benefits, including; increases in income, access to finance and financial services, employment, development of personal finance skills, development of psycho-social life skills, technical skills. Vocational skills including understanding of co-operatives, increased contacts and networks, increased involvement in the affairs of their community. MacPherson, *et al.* (2005) and Mtonga- Mukumbuta (2008) study on youth economic empowerment through co-operative in Uganda found that a co-operative can have positive impacts on a young person. Co-operatives can enable young people to take control of their own lives by providing them with an income together with the skill to make decisions and put in place strategies to deal with challenges in life. Young people's engagement with co-operatives can therefore be seen as enabling them to realize a sense of citizenship as well as supporting wealth creation (Chambo, 2007; MacPherson, *et al.*, 2005; Mtonga-Mukumbuta, 2008). All these research findings are on the same track with this study on the economic impacts. However, the research findings by Hartley and Mtonga-Mukumbuta (2011, 2008) to some extent differ from this study because their arguments are based on the general impacts of co-operative rather than on agriculture marketing co-operatives and their impacts to youth.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Both exploratory and descriptive research designs were used for the study. Because of the limited information on the phenomenon, exploratory design was preferred to guide the study. Since the researcher was also interested in collecting detail information, descriptive research design was also preferred. Questionnaires were used to get information regarding youth services and product preferences and economic benefits for AMCOS participation. Regarding the nature of design, mixed approach of data analysis namely qualitative (thematic-analysis) and quantitative analysis (descriptive analysis) were used for the study.

3.2 Description of the Study Area

The study has been conducted in Kishapu District, Western Tanzania. The region is both cotton growing region and AMCOS operating zone. For instance, the district has 31 registered Agricultural Marketing Co-operative Societies dealing with cotton cash crop (Kishapu DCO, 2015). Also the available AMCOS which are the focus of this study have a reasonable number of youth who can be used for the study. The covered AMCOS are Ikomagulilo AMCOS, Lubaga AMCOS and Igaga AMCOS

3.3 Population, Sample and Sampling Strategies

The population for this study included the members whom among of them fall in the age group of 18-35 years old. The study used a total of 51 respondents and the distribution is shown in table 1. The study used cluster sampling and simple random sampling. Cluster sampling was employed for selection of AMCOS members basing on their age focusing on members aged 18-35 years old. Simple random sampling was also used to avoid bias in selecting both registered youth and old members whom are the active member of the AMCOS due to limited number of youth in AMCOS.

3.4 Data and Collection Methods

A Questionnaire was used for data collection in this study and 51 registered members were. The researcher used yes and no nature of questions, multiple choice responses and open ended questions to capture their knowledge related to the subject. The researcher used documentary materials both official as well as non-official. The documents reviewed included AMCOS by-laws especially for membership; members' register book, general meeting minute's documents and other AMCOS documents in general. Other documents reviewed included various reports from the internet, books and journals which facilitated the acquisition of relevant data. Recoding notebook was used as a tool for data collection. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze background variables and empirical variables so as to get information relating to percentages, frequencies and averages through Microsoft Excel. Moreover, thematic analysis of qualitative data was also used from which data were coded and categorized into related themes then quantified for easy interpretations. The data were presented in forms of tables from which percentages, frequencies and averages for each theme/variable.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic characteristics

4.1.1 Gender of the respondents

The study revealed that the majority of AMCOS members (88%) were males and female respondents 12% (6). Male respondents have been found to be dominating in the selected AMCOS since they hold a larger proportion in the AMCOS membership. Most women members have been found either widows or had membership by registration number of their late husbands or the divorced one or a single separated family who had the mandate of being the head of families. Of particular interest in the three surveyed AMCOS, is that, women were discouraged to join AMCOS because one among the rules of being a legal member was to sell a given identified minimum cotton kilograms to the AMCOS. For instance in Ikomagulilo, it has been found that a minimum of 200kg had to be sold to AMCOS by a member per season, while at Lubaga and Igaga AMCOS a minimum of 500 kilograms had to be sold. This has been found to be difficult for women because of the following identified reasons: firstly, the Sukuma culture does not allow women to own land and properties, therefore married women engage in production but the produce belongs to men who are heads of families; Secondly, family decision making in Sukuma land is dominated by head of family, who are always men; therefore their wives participation in AMCOS depends on husbands influence. The above reasons imply that the participation of either youth or elder women is affected by exclusion in decision making from their family level and asset ownership taboo in their community.

4.1.2 Age of respondents

The study revealed that different respondents with different age group participated in the study as shown in Table 2. The respondents aged between 18-22 years old were 10% (5) aged between 23 and 27 years old, 28% (14) of the respondents aged between 28 and 32 years old, 50% (26) of the respondents were between 33 and 37 years, 8%(4) of the respondents were between 38 and 42 years old, and, finally, there were 2%(1) of the respondents were between 43 and 47 years old. It has been found that, Ikomagulilo AMCOS had members with age ranging from 23 and above as well as the youngest members were 26 years old. In Lubaga AMCOS there were 7 members with 22 years and the rest were 28 years and above. At Igaga AMCOS, it has been found that member's lowest age group ranged from 23 and 27, whereby the lowest member aged 26 years old. It was found out that most of youth who are between 23 and 37 years preferred to participate in AMCOS compared to the lower age group between 18 and 22 years. This implies that lower age youth between 18 and 22 are excluded because they do not own land for production and most of them are still under the control of their parents. This has been also noted from all AMCOS that youth members between 28 and 37 years old composed larger proportion compared to lower age group because most of them are heads of their families and having land or inherited land from their parents after marriage.

4.1.3 Marital status of respondents

The study found that 90% (46) of the respondents were married and most of them were male respondents, 4% (2) of the respondents were widow, 4% (2) were divorced and 2% (1) were single, This indicates that rural youth who are married are more likely to participate in AMCOS activities than unmarried ones. This is due to the fact that married youth have more family responsibilities than unmarried youth; also they own land and properties which

make them to be legal members of co-operatives. Widows were members of AMCOS by using their late husband’s registration number. In relation to these findings, it has been found that marital status has an impact on youth membership participation since the unmarried youth seemed to be excluded from co-operatives because they are not qualified to be members of AMCOS as most of them are landless; they involve in agricultural activities through working in their family farms, but the produce belongs to head of families.

4.2 Youth Preferences in AMCOS

4.2.1 Current AMCOS services in relation to youth preference

The selected AMCOS were purely marketing co-operatives; they do business with different organization and individual buyers, also they offered storage service to members to keep their produce before selling season. There was no other activity undertaken different from marketing and storage. During the study, respondents were asked whether the AMCOS provides services in relation to member preferences. The findings indicate that 35% (18) of respondents from the sampled AMCOS agreed that, the co-operative provides services in relation to their preferences. They joined AMCOS in order to have un-exploitative market of their produces and that their desires were fulfilled by AMCOS. About 65% (33) of the respondents disagreed that AMCOS provides services in relation to their preferences due to the fact that the services were limited to marketing of cotton produce only. They preferred to have more services like credit on agricultural input, education services during production process and cotton value addition activities like processing of cotton oil, seeds and cotton but due to limited capital, their co-operative failed to deliver these services. It was also revealed that youth were not actively interested in the services offered by AMCOS because of the competition between AMCOS and private buyers in aspects like price. For example, in the last selling season (2014) the price per kilogram was Tsh 750 at AMCOS, while private buyers collected the produce at Tshs 850. This implies that majority of youth who were in cooperative did not prefer the services provided by the AMCOS especially when they made comparison with the services provided by private buyers. They did not see the peculiar differences between the services provided by the AMCOS and private buyers. Since the services was limited to cotton marketing only without any support in production process like provision of credit in farm inputs. These findings are largely in agreement with the findings obtained by Adekunle, *at el.*, (2009) study on constraints to youth’s involvement in agricultural production revealed that rural credits, farming knowledge are perceived to among the factors for youths’ participation in agricultural activities in rural areas and hence in agricultural co-operatives. Youth were asked for the preferred services to be undertaken by AMCOS specifically in dealing with cotton business. It has been found that their preferences were to get support from AMCOS during production process of cotton, value addition of cotton, market searching and finally selling produce as summarized in Figure 1.

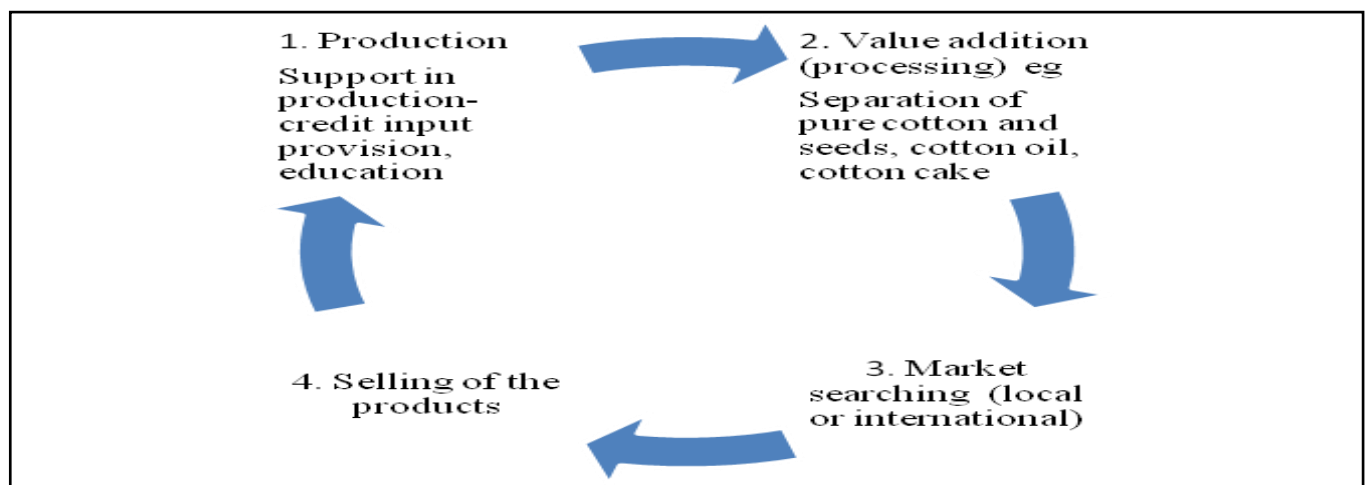


Figure 1: Youth preferred services to be undertaken in cotton AMCOS

Figure 1 summarizes the proposed services that youth were interested to access from their AMCOS. The AMCOS to support during production season through provision of lower costs inputs or credit farm inputs and farming education from their AMCOS so as to increase the quality and quantity of the cotton. However, the proposed services previously were there in AMCOS when their union -Shinyanga Co-operative Union (SHIRECU) was

active. This is evidence found from past years AMCOS documents, but due to commercial faltering the union failed to provide processing services to primary co-operatives. Poor performance of SHIRECU resulted into failure of primary co-operative to provide services in relation to members preferences since the capital invested to SHIRECU was not refunded to members hence it weakened the AMCOS capital. This implies that, youth need more services to be undertaken in co-operatives but the inadequate capital in co-operatives is one among the core causes on limited services in co-operatives organisation. Moreover, it is apparent poor horizontal connectivity among members in their cooperative whereby members are not committed to their organisation to find other sources of capital rather than depending on SHIRECU which lead to limited AMCOS services. The findings are consistent with the findings of Okwany *et al.* (2010) who found that products in co-operative were inadequate to youth needs. Chambo *et al.* (2014) concurs with the findings as he recommends that success of a co-operative enterprise depends very much on organizing as a horizontal connectivity of individual members with commitment and compliance to group work as well as the vertical co-ordination of economic operations for the benefit of the members directly.

4.2.2 Other strategies on AMCOS services in improving youth participation

The study intended to know other youth preferred service different from cotton marketing and best strategies to be implemented in AMCOS in order to attract more youth to join co-operative organizations. Findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Other strategies on improving youth participation in AMCOS

| Strategies on improving youth participation in AMCOS | AMCOS name | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Ikomagulilo | Lubaga | Igaga | Total |
| | (n=19) % | (n=15) % | (n=17) % | (n=51) % |
| Members to have power in price decision | 58 | 40 | 71 | 57 |
| Payment on time | 39 | 40 | 53 | 43 |
| Training in production technology and storage | 47 | 73 | 59 | 59 |
| Technological access to production(farming method) information | 89 | 66 | 76 | 69 |
| Diversifying of AMCOS activities | 95 | 93 | 100 | 96 |

About 96% of the respondents from the three selected AMCOS have been found to believe in the diversification of AMCOS marketing services, since it could result into positive impact on youth membership participation in AMCOS. Youth in AMCOS were in need to market other agricultural products like sunflower seeds, rice and green beans because these products have been found to have good price and markets, and that they require low costs of production compared to cotton. It has been further found that due to climatic change youth were discouraged to engage in cotton production. If AMCOS could have enough funds to buy other products youth could be encouraged to join co-operative organisations. This implies that the factor of service diversification have the highest significant relationship with youth participation in agricultural marketing co-operatives.

On the other hand about 69% of respondents suggested AMCOS to use modern technology to assist farmers to access information about agricultural production. A simple mobile phone technology can be used to provide information about new methods of production, market for purchasing quality seeds, types of inputs and other production information. The findings also found that about 59% of the respondents preferred for training services relating to new agricultural productions. They suggested that AMCOS should provide regular trainings to farmers in relation to change of technology through outsourcing agricultural officers to improve quality and quantity of cotton. It has been further found that 43% of the respondents said that payment if possible should be made in cash to encourage other youth to join. The findings also revealed that 57% of the respondents assumed that in order to encourage youth to join, members in AMCOS should have power in price decision by accessing markets beyond their locality and make decision about the market and the product.

From the finding, it was revealed that the limited products was a major challenge to the sampled AMCOS due to the fact that the sampled AMCOS were still using traditional model of doing business, they depended on selling raw cotton like the earlier co-operatives which were started during the colonies which do not reflect youths' needs as they want diversification of services. Perhaps, if the modern approach or commercialized approach via vertical integration in the provision of services including quality addition could be in operation, these co-operatives would have more services in relation to members' preferences including youth. In addition, the findings show that the selected AMCOS are doing business as usual without coping with the technological change to support their members in productions technologies. That is why at the end they prove failure to meet youth's interest in the community.

4.3 Economic Benefits of AMCOS to Youth

The study intended to identify whether youth in AMCOS benefit from being members. It examined the economic impact by focusing on the change in perception in increased income, production volume, asset accumulation and other economic related impacts. Nembhard (2014) articulates that co-operative benefits are difficult to measure. While some are tangible or direct, others are intangible or indirect such as co-operatives' effect on market price levels, quality, and service. Co-operatives are associated with many benefits as pointed out by different scholars such as Birchall and Gasana (2004, 2011). For example, co-operatives are said to be effective means of spurring development, and they help to eradicate poverty and promote social and economic goals and ensure equality in the distribution of opportunities and justice. In this study, respondents were asked on how they perceived the extent to which the AMCOS achieved its purpose in improving members' economic wellbeing after joining AMCOS. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: AMCOS achievements in improving member wellbeing

| Perception on improved wellbeing | AMCOS | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Ikomagulilo | Lubaga | Igaga | Total |
| | (n=19) % | (n=15) % | (n=17) % | (n=51) % |
| Larger extent | 21 | 40 | 6 | 22 |
| Moderate | 16 | 7 | 24 | 16 |
| Less extent | 58 | 53 | 53 | 55 |
| I do not know | 5 | 0 | 17 | 7 |

The responses as shown in Table 2 show that 22% of the respondents from the three selected AMCOS reported that the co-operatives achieved the purpose of improving their economic wellbeing to larger extent because they managed to accumulate assets and meet their basic needs like food. Most of them were found to have been using AMCOS services for a long time, from between 6 and 10 years. Either, 16% of respondents reported that the co-operative achieved its purpose of improving their economic wellbeing to moderate level for the reason that increased income assisted them to meet basic needs of their households like affording two to three meals a day and improved quality of food. However, 55% of respondents reported fewer benefits because there were just slight changes in their economic wellbeing after joining the co-operatives because of small surplus generated by their AMCOS with less impact on their economic wellbeing. Most of them found to have been using AMCOS services for short period of time, ranging from 1 to 2 years. This means that co-operatives have positive impacts on member's economic wellbeing, but their impacts depends on the performance of a co-operative and number of years of using AMCOS services; the longer the period of membership in AMCOS, the more the economic success and vice versa. The above mentioned findings concurs with the findings by MacPherson *et al.* (2005) and Mtonga-Mukumbuta (2008) who found that a co-operative can have positive impacts on a young person. Co-operatives can enable young people to take control of their own lives by providing them with income together with the skill to make decisions and put in place strategies to deal with certain challenges in life. The findings further revealed that youth members benefit from numerous aspects like being able to accumulate different types of assets. It was noted that there was relationship between the member's number of years in co-operative and asset accumulation as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: AMCOS impacts on asset accumulation in relation to membership age

| Membership age (years) | Type of assets accumulated after joining AMCOS | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------|--|------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------|
| | Built a modern house | Motor bike | Piece of land | Initiated a business | No any asset accumulated | Others | |
| less or equal 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 3 | 24 |
| 6-10 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 23 |
| 11-15 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 16-20 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 2 | 5 | 12 | 2 | 22 | 8 | 51 |

Table 3 shows that 21 youth members with less or equal to 5 years being in AMCOS have not yet accumulated any asset compared to other groups. Youth with 6-10 membership ages evidenced to accumulate different types of assets as shown in Table 3. The respondents pointed out that their co-operatives provided small amounts of income through annual surplus distribution which assisted them to buy basic necessities and make additional to household asset accumulation. This indicates that co-operative institutions can enable youth to accumulate different economic assets provided that youth use AMCOS services and the AMCOS realize some operational surplus which is distributed to members. Also weak performance of co-operatives leads to longer period of recognizing the co-operative economic advantage to members.

Furthermore, the study found other economic benefits including: reduction of storage costs whereby AMCOS have their warehouse and members kept their produces before selling season free of charge; AMCOS enhances strength in market bargaining for their members than individual member efforts; assurance of market of the product; members of AMCOS are assured with the availability of market as one of the AMCOS responsibilities; AMCOS is the place where farm inputs are sold to village farmers (members and non-members) and private organisations, so co-operative are like agents of supplying farm inputs to the community. From the findings, it implies that co-operatives have economic benefits to all members regardless their age and the community in general, but their economic benefits depend on efficiency of the services delivered by co-operatives and proper identification of the members and prospective members' need. If the sampled AMCOS could have more products/services, the economic benefits could be more than the identified one and therefore, more youth could be encouraged to join co-operative. This is in line with the youth empowerment theory by Zimmerman (2000), that youth need opportunities to become active in the community through organization empowerment in order to improve their lives. Therefore, co-operatives need to create youth opportunities in the provision of services in order to empower youth members.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings established that youth farmers both members and non-members of co-operatives are not motivated to join AMCOS because of using traditional ways in delivering their services. Youth proposed for modification of co-operative services like value addition, provision of credits for farm inputs, diversification of AMCOS services not depending only in cotton marketing, training for production technology and technological access to production information. The agricultural marketing co-operatives society had no special products targeting on the promoting youth participation in AMCOS, and therefore continue doing traditional marketing activities. Moreover, the finding revealed that co-operative organizations have economic benefits to youth members, especially in tackling their economic challenges. This was evidenced by the asset accumulation, production and intangible benefits, but these economic benefits depend on the number of years of being in co-operative. Other economic benefits are reduction of storage cost, enhancing marketing bargaining strength to their members and assurance of market of the product.

5.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that AMCOS members through District Cooperative officers and cooperative practitioners should design strategies to accumulate capital from members, as it was seen the services were limited to cotton marketing because of insufficient capital to finance other services which were preferred by youth and other members of AMCOS. If capital is available co-operative may support youth preferred product that may be used as a tool to attract more youth to join AMCOS. Diversification of AMCOS services to attract youths; the AMCOS should be placed where varieties of agricultural produce are traded. The evidence shows that co-operatives are experiencing low youths participation since the cotton business does not create continuous cash flow, while youth are interested with the business that constantly generates income. Therefore, there is a need for the co-operatives to diversify their economic activities that generate more income throughout the year rather than relying only in one business of buying and selling cotton. For instance engaging in buying, processing and selling other agricultural products which are available in the area like paddy, small green beans (choroko), turtle (dengu) and sunflower may attract more youth and even create youth employment

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