

ANALYSIS OF PARTNER – COOPERATIVE RELATIONS IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVES OF BURSA PROVINCE

BURSA İLİ TARIMSAL KALKINMA KOOPERATİFLERİNDE ORTAK-KOOPERATİF İLİŞKİLERİNİN ANALİZİ

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the cooperative-partner relations in Agricultural Development Cooperatives in Bursa province. The research investigates the functioning of the cooperative management style, partner-management relations, and partner satisfaction simultaneously and thoroughly. Primary data was collected by survey. A face-to-face survey was conducted with 408 people determined by a simple random sampling method. The data were analysed with SPSS 24 program, and cross-tables were created. According to the results, Partners believe that their cooperative benefits from the good relations of the staff with the public ($\bar{X}=3.85$), and having trained and professional managers are advantageous ($\bar{X}=3.72$). The opinions and suggestions of partners are taken into account ($\bar{X}=3.45$). Partners think that managers value teamwork ($\bar{X}=3.42$). Managers allow them to join the decision-making process ($\bar{X}=3.40$). There is a fair consensus that managers successfully represent the cooperative ($\bar{X}=3.53$). Partners had substantial confidence in managers ($\bar{X}=3.52$). Partners who thought to be honoured to be a partner ($\bar{X}=4.01$) and happy to be a partner ($\bar{X}=3.96$) scored highest in satisfaction. Most importantly, partners consider their cooperative as a family and themselves as family members ($\bar{X}=3.93$).

Keywords: Agricultural Development Cooperative, Cooperative Partner Relationship, Management Style, Rural Development, Partner Satisfaction.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Bursa İli Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatiflerinde kooperatif-ortak ilişkilerini değerlendirmektir. Araştırma, kooperatifin işleyişini, yönetim tarzını, ortak-yönetim ilişkilerini ve ortak memnuniyetini eş zamanlı ve kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırmaktadır. Birincil veriler anket yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Basit rastgele örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenen 408 kişi ile yüz yüze anket yapılmıştır. Veriler SPSS 24 programı ile analiz edilmiş ve çapraz tablolar oluşturulmuştur. Ortaklar, çalışan personelin halkla ilişkilerinin iyi olmasının kooperatife fayda sağlayacağına ($X=3.85$) ve eğitilmiş ve profesyonel yöneticilere sahip olmasının avantajlı olduğuna inanmaktadır ($X=3.72$). İncelenen kooperatiflerde ortakların yöneticilerin kendi görüş ve önerileri dikkate aldığına inanmaktadır ($X=3.45$). Yöneticilerin ekip çalışmasına değer verdiğini ($X=3.42$) ve karar alma sürecine kendilerinin de katılmalarına izin verdiklerini düşünmektedirler ($X=3.40$). Ortakların yöneticilerin kooperatifi başarılı bir şekilde temsil ettiklerine ($X=3.53$) dair kabul edilebilir bir fikir birliği vardır ve yöneticilere oldukça güvenmektedirler ($X=3.52$). Ortak olmaktan onur duyan ($\bar{X}=4.01$) ve ortak olmaktan mutlu olan ortaklar ($\bar{X}=3.96$) memnuniyet kategorisinde en yüksek puanı aldı. En önemlisi ortaklar, kooperatiflerini bir aile ve kendilerini de bu ailenin üyesi olarak görmektedirler ($X = 3.93$).

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatifi, Kooperatif Ortak İlişkisi, Yönetim Tarzı, Kırsal Kalkınma, Ortak Memnuniyeti.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical elements distinguishing cooperative enterprises from other companies is that social benefits and support are their primary goals. The primary goal in all other types of companies is to make a profit; in cooperatives, the main goal is to create an organisation where the work can be conducted together in cooperation and continue this organisation with social responsibilities in mind. For such a formation to occur, the partners must have a unity of purpose, get to know each other, and have socio-economic relations.

A cooperative organisation has two main elements: a Cooperative Group and a Cooperative Enterprise. The Cooperative Group tries to create a complex management structure in which members participate at all levels (Birchall & Simmons, 2004). The Cooperative Group is a community of people formed by those who cooperate and has a sociological character. On the other hand, a cooperative enterprise is established to serve its partners and has an economic character. These two enterprises complement each other. It is vital to ensure the effective participation of partners in the cooperative's activities and achieve the growth necessary to compete with other commercial producers in the region. In order to ensure that the partners have a close relationship with their cooperatives, the following actions should be taken: Firstly, to attract the cooperative. Secondly, to ensure that these people are active partners of the cooperative, they must willingly participate in the activities and fulfil all the responsibilities required to become a partner.

Although there are numerous cooperative enterprises in Turkey, there is no real sense of cooperativism in many of them. Some of them were established under cooperatives only to take advantage of various grants provided by the state. For this reason, inter cooperative relations in general and cooperative-partner relations in many cooperatives are at a low level. One of the main reasons for many critical problems in cooperatives, such as lack of financing, dependence on state aid, insufficient work volume, and inability to provide self-control, is the result of poor cooperative-partner relations (Gürbüz & Özkan, 2018).

Without the active participation of members and satisfaction, the cooperative cannot continue to exist in the long term (Bhuyan, 2007). A cooperative can exist by having its partners not participating nominally but also by their ideas and actions. Cooperatives with a weak cooperative-partner relationship lose power and even vanish after a certain time. Occasionally, even in successful cooperatives, cooperative-partner relations are not very strong. The most distinctive feature of successful cooperatives is their talented, dedicated, working, and reliable management. In successful cooperatives, all the work and responsibility are left to one or two people. This situation, in a way, shows the importance of cooperative leaders and managers. However, since there are not always and in every institution people with such qualities, the leading solution to the problem is to raise partners' interest and strengthen cooperative-partner relations.

Literature Review and Purpose of the Research

Interest in cooperatives has been growing in recent years; consequently, research has also been increasing. Gürbüz and Acıköse (2019) discussed the importance of producer organisation in agriculture in the context of Bursa province and examined the development of this organisation. Şahin et al. (2013) attempted to analyse agricultural cooperativism in Turkey in several major provinces. Tan and Karaönder (2013) inquired about Turkey's agricultural organisation policies and legislation through agricultural cooperatives. Karlı and Çelik (2003) tested the effect of agricultural cooperatives and other farmers' organisations on the region's development in the GAP area. Gençdal, Terin and Yıldırım (2016) compared dairy cattle breeding enterprises that are and are not partners of Agricultural Development

Cooperative (ADC) Partners using the Gevaş town example in Van Province. Sayılı and Adıgüzel (2013) conducted an economic analysis of agricultural enterprises that are partners to agricultural credit cooperatives in Tokat.

It is possible to increase the examples given above. However, as mentioned earlier, since the success and sustainability of cooperatives depend on managers and partners, research examining cooperative management-partner relationships was conducted more often. Şahin et al. (2015) investigated the managers' characteristics in ADC in Turkey. Everest and Yercan (2016) analysed the factors affecting partners' participation in the management of the Agricultural Credit Cooperatives in Balıkesir Regional Association and Yercan and Kınıklı (2018) in dairy cooperatives Izmir province.

Their research focused on cooperative-partner relations in agricultural organisations in various provinces. Aktoprak (2019) examined the cooperative-partner relations in irrigation cooperatives in Edirne province and Ertan and Kaya (2012) in Çünür town. Özalp (2017) evaluated cooperative-partner relations in animal husbandry cooperatives of the Western Mediterranean Region, Paksoy and Bulut (2020) cooperatives engaged in Dairy Cattle Breeding in Aksaray Province. Alçiçek and Karlı (2016) carried out a similar study in Burdur and Özdemir (2005) in agricultural cooperatives of Tekirdag province. Koçtürk and Özbilgin (2003) aimed to establish partner-cooperative relations in Izmir, Manisa and Denizli provinces of the Tarış Grape Sales Cooperatives Association. Partner relations in ADC were investigated only in Samsun Province by Topuz and Bozoğlu (2015).

As seen above, the analysis of cooperative-partner relations for ADC in Turkey is highly scarce. The analysis of partner-cooperative relations conducted through other agricultural cooperatives has usually touched on the surface by asking questions like 'the level of participation in the General Assembly (GA)', level of participation in management' and 'general satisfaction levels'.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is no research investigating the functioning of the cooperative management style, partner-management relations and partner satisfaction simultaneously and thoroughly. For this reason, this study is critical in determining the level of ADC-partner relations in Bursa and the factors affecting this level. A similar study has not been conducted for the province of Bursa. It is also crucial for all other agricultural cooperatives in Bursa to investigate and evaluate the general situation of agricultural organisations and partners. The expectations and recommendations of the ADC partners can also serve as a roadmap for all stakeholders acting in this field.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aimed to identify factors affecting cooperative partner relations of Agricultural Development Cooperatives in Bursa Province. *This study was conducted in January-May 2018.*

This research consists of two main parts. The first part consists of a literature review. Agricultural organisations in Bursa province, the ministries they are affiliated with, and the laws to which they are subject were examined, numerical data were compiled, and statistical charts were created. Analyses were made using secondary data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Agricultural organisations are grouped according to the laws and areas of activity to which they are subject. The relevant data of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry are examined in detail and processed in tables. Primary data was collected by survey. ADC partners were preferred because of the breadth of the fields of activity and the vast number of partners for the survey study. A face-to-face survey was conducted with 408

people determined by a simple random sampling method among the partners (33 334) of 313 cooperatives selected decisively. The data obtained from the survey are analysed with SPSS 24 program, and cross-tables are created. The reliability of the data was tested, and Cronbach's Alpha level was found as 0.932. Cronbach's Alpha (α) being ≥ 0.90 confirms that the survey is "highly reliable".

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Partners

Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the partners. Of the partners surveyed, 84.2% were men, and 15.8% were women. The youngest of the surveyed partners was 18, and the oldest was over 65. The average age of the participant was 49.5. A third (33.8%) of the participants are in the 45-54 age group, with two out of three (62.6%) being 45 years of age or older.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=408)

		N	%			N	%
Gender	Male	340	83.3	Marital Status	Married	335	82.1
	Female	68	16.7		Single	73	17.9
Age	18-24	24	5.8	Education	Literate	12	2.9
	25-34	69	16.9		Primary School	168	41.2
	35-44	60	14.7		Secondary school	81	19.9
	45-54	138	33.8		High School	68	16.7
	55-64	77	19.0		Associate Degree	16	3.9
	65 and above	40	9.8		University	60	14.7
					Master Degree	3	0.7
Household Size	1	32	7.8	Farming Experience (years)	1-5	77	18.8
	2	60	14.7		6-10	36	8.9
	3	96	23.5		11-15	101	24.8
	4	140	34.4		16-20	45	10.9
	5 and above	80	19.6		21-25	40	9.9
					26 and above	109	26.7

About one-fifth of the partners in the research have less than five years of experience. 24.8% of the partners have 11-15 years, and 26.7% have 26 years or more of farming experience. The average household size of Bursa province in 2020 was 3.23, and 3.3 for Turkey (Turkstat, 2020a). The average number of households in cooperative partners in the current study is 3.43.

According to Turkstat 2020 results, the rate of high school or equivalent graduates for Bursa province was 22.98%, and the rate of university graduates was 17.32 (Turkstat, 2020b). Although the distribution of partners is not far from the Bursa provincial average, the proportion of high school graduates, in particular, is relatively lower (16.7%) for partners in the current research. Approximately half of the participants (58.78%; 51.57%, and (52.4%)

were primary school graduates. The partners' educational levels in the ADC are relatively higher than those of other crop production and livestock cooperatives; the educational levels of the partners are generally low.

Partners' Opinions on the Main Problems that may Occur in the cooperative

Cooperatives should have a good reputation in that community to attract members and ensure the continuation of the partnership, and the cooperative membership should be perceived as favourable and beneficial. Membership in the cooperative is based on volunteerism (Gürbüz & Özkan, 2020). Producers most often become partners on advice or after observing a positive experience. The influence of cooperative employees on the creation and maintenance of corporate reputation is undeniable. Good employee relations with the community will attract members and ensure the stable continuity of the partnership by increasing the satisfaction of partners with their stakeholders with whom they do business. The statement 'good relations of the working staff with the public will benefit the cooperative' has the highest mean score ($\bar{X}=3.85$), indicating that the partners have this awareness (Table 2).

Table 2. Partners' opinions on the possible problems of the Cooperative

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SS
The cooperative benefits from the good relations of the staff with public	9	29	120	107	143	3.85	1.052
It is advantageous for our cooperative that managers are adequately trained and professional in management.	12	35	141	89	131	3.72	1.094
Cooperatives possessing product packaging and processing facilities provide an advantage in marketing.	9	46	157	96	100	3.57	1.047
A state audit is sufficient in cooperative activities.	11	34	164	111	88	3.57	1.004
The long-term presence of the Board Members contributes to the cooperative's success.	33	38	129	117	91	3.48	1.171
The salary of the chairman is appropriate in today's conditions.	16	40	197	67	88	3.42	1.053

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

Many universities and institutions around the world offer programs for training Cooperative managers. Dedicated executive training for cooperative managers is newly emerging in Turkey. It is precious that the managers are cooperative partners and have experience in farming. It is vital for the success and sustainability of the cooperative that these people also have managerial experience and have professional aptitude as in other professional lines of business. The research result shows that the partners also grasp this importance ($\bar{X}= 3.72$). However, partners approach the effect of long-term tenure of cooperative board members on success with caution ($\bar{X}= 3.48$). While taking long-term positions on the boards of directors sometimes gives confidence to managers and strengthens management relationships. The renewal of the Boards of Directors can lead to a new perspective on the cooperative and more dynamic management style.

Administrative, financial and legal aspects of the management are audited to protect the interests of the partners and everyone who has a relationship with the cooperative by

detecting arbitrary decisions, malfunctioning aspects, non-legislative actions, and transactions. Cooperatives activities require regular and adequate audits to combat commercial malpractice that may arise in the domestic and foreign trade, from production to marketing. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock is the audit authority of cooperatives. The Ministry may conduct audits by its auditors and independent audit boards. There are two types of audits for cooperatives for agricultural purposes. These are internal and external audits. Cooperative auditors and senior unions conduct internal audits. On the other hand, external audits are Notary audits, Registration Officer audits, financial institution audits, and relevant ministries' audits. Even though such different institutions conduct audits, the partners do not consider cooperative audits sufficient ($\bar{X}= 3.57$). This outcome indicates that the quality and credibility of the audits should be reassessed.

Partners' Opinion regarding the Functioning of the Cooperative

The partners were asked questions about membership information. Accordingly, the average partnership period was 15.1 years. The survey found that 77% of partners participated in the General Assembly, and only 33.1% of partners had other cooperative partnerships. In addition, 94.6% of them reported that they intend to continue the partnership. The high participation rate in the General Assembly, the low membership rate to other cooperatives and the high percentage of intention to stay shows that the partners are generally satisfied with the cooperative. Furthermore, less than a third of partners reported an income increase (27.7%). The research also showed that the main activity carried out through the cooperative was the credit supply and receiving state aid support (44%), followed by educational attainment (23%). Matters related to production (providing cheap input, assistance during the production and product processing) only counted for 16% in total (Table 3).

Table 3. Partnership Features of the Participants

		N	%
Duration of partnership	0-10	160	39.2
	11-15	162	39.7
	16-20	18	4.4
	21and above	68	16.7
Income growth after becoming a partner	Yes	113	27.7
	No	164	40.2
	Partially	131	32.1
Regular participation in the General Assembly	Yes	314	77.0
	No	94	23.0
Main activities through the cooperatives	Loan provision support	128	32
	Educational support	95	23
	Product marketing	68	17
	State aid support	48	12
Partnership with other agricultural organisations	Yes	135	33.1
	No	273	66.9
The intention to continue the partnership	Yes	386	94.6
	No	22	5.4

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

The mean values (\bar{X}) of the partners' statements regarding the overall functioning of the cooperative are usually around $\bar{X}= 3$. This value corresponds to the expression 'having no opinion' on the Likert Scale. That is, partners have refrained from expressing a strong opinion.

Even though the partners had not expressed a strong negative opinion, considering the length of the membership, having a high participation rate in the GA and high intention to stay in the cooperative could have resulted in the partners more 'agreeing' with the operational activities. The fact that partners are hesitant to express opinions is not unique to this study. In the research on Tariş Grape Sales Cooperatives in the vicinity of Izmir, Manisa and Denizli, 24% of the partners did not comment on the problems in cooperative-partner relations (Koçtürk & Özbilgin, 2003). Ertan and Kaya (2012) showed that 42% of the respondents were never interested in the financial structure of the cooperative.

About half of the partners' not achieving income growth after joining the cooperative may be the reason for this 'failure to express an opinion' towards cooperative activities. A fair 62.9% of the partners ($\bar{X}= 3.23$) believed that the knowledge level of the cooperative on technical issues was sufficient. However, only 35.8% of the partners ($\bar{X}= 3.19$) agreed that the level of education on cooperation was adequate. In the same line, 33.8% of those ($\bar{X}= 3.23$) agreed that the professional knowledge of the cooperative staff was sufficient. These data show that although there is general satisfaction with the education, a level of education that will please most partners has not yet been achieved. The partners' 'agreement levels' with routine operations of the coop are even more alarming. Only 39.2% of the respondents ($\bar{X}= 3.25$) agreed that tools and equipment were sufficient, while 36.5% believed in the sufficiency of the cooperative's monetary and financial issues. Similarly, those who agreed that their cooperative did not have marketing problems remained at 31.6% ($\bar{X}= 3.20$).

More worryingly, about half (42.4) of the partners ($\bar{X}= 3.02$) 'had no opinion' not that their cooperative cares about conducting product, soil, and quality analysis. The same applies to the cooperative's competence in product processing, evaluation and storage. 41.4% of the partners ($\bar{X}= 2.91$) "had no opinion" that the cooperative was sufficient and the cooperative personnel was competent ($\bar{X}= 3.23$) (Table 4).

Table 4. Opinion of the partners regarding the functioning of the cooperative

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SS
Our cooperative has enough tools and equipment.	32	60	156	92	68	3.25	1.136
Our cooperative is sufficient in monetary and financial matters.	24	56	179	97	52	3.24	1.033
The professional competence of the personnel working in the cooperative is at the desired level.	24	56	190	79	59	3.23	1.047
In our cooperative, the level of knowledge on technical issues is sufficient.	31	56	64	106	151	3.23	1.105
Our cooperative has no marketing problems.	27	48	204	76	53	3.2	1.026
The education level on cooperativism is sufficient.	36	41	187	96	48	3.19	1.06
Our cooperative concerns conducting product, soil and quality analyses.	41	74	173	75	45	3.02	1.1
Our cooperative is sufficient in terms of product processing, evaluation and storage.	52	76	169	78	33	2.91	1.098

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

The partners' opinions regarding the Management Style

This section is intended to reveal the partners' thoughts about management style.

Partners join management by attending the GA or the Board of Directors (BOD) and thus have the opportunity to directly influence the strategies, policies and projects (Cechin et al., 2013). The willingness to participate in management varies from person to person. Some partners are enthusiastic and willing to participate in the GA or the BOD; some do not even want to attend the meetings. This situation may vary depending on the partner's age, education, past experiences, and personality traits. Partners involved in the management of cooperatives are more closely involved in cooperative issues than other partners.

However, research shows that partners are unwilling to take positions on the Management Boards. For example, Yercan and Kınıklı (2018) state that 93% of the partners in Izmir dairy cooperatives are not involved in management. The same study found that 91.7% of the partners who did not participate in management did not take a position in the past. Özalp (2017) determined that the proportion of partners who had been members of the BOD in cooperatives was 35.85%, and the proportion of those who had been members of the Supervisory Board was 22.64%. Sayılı and Adıgüzel (2013) found that only 10.61% of the partners served on the management or supervisory board of the cooperative at any time.

This apparent unwillingness to participate in management suggests that partners are less involved in issues related to the cooperative. When the responses of this research are examined, it is seen that the mean score of the statements related to the management style is higher than the statements associated with the current state. This suggests that the partners have a relatively positive view of the management style. Of course, it is more desirable to have a mean score of 4 and above for the statements. Partners may not have wanted to take a too negative attitude because they do not want to take part in the management and take responsibility for the issues criticised. Or partners refrain from expressing too positive or critical views, as they do not thoroughly familiar with the current situation (Table 5).

When looking at the individual statement, partners somewhat 'agree' that management takes their opinion and suggestion into account (54%), value teamwork (44.8%), inform them about the goals and activities of the cooperative (44.2%), just when hiring staff (43.1%) and assigning tasks (43.1%).

Table 5. Statements of partners regarding the cooperative management style.

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SS
In our cooperative, the opinions and suggestions of partners at all levels regarding the activities are taken into account.	14	60	142	113	79	3.45	1.606
Our managers value teamwork.	13	73	139	97	86	3.42	1.103
Our managers allow partners to join the decision-making process.	14	59	173	74	88	3.40	1.081
Partners are informed about the goals, objectives and activities of the cooperative.	18	64	145	97	84	3.40	1.111
When assigning duties to the BOD, their knowledge and abilities are taken into account.	30	54	149	89	86	3.36	1.167
When recruiting staff, they make the right choice.	17	49	166	127	49	3.35	0.98
Managers direct partners correctly in order to achieve cooperative or individual goals,	20	66	157	87	78	3.34	1.107
If a task is given in our cooperative, the right employee to the right job policy is applied without any favouritism.	25	56	172	76	79	3.31	1.117
The members of the Cooperative Audit Board are sufficiently educated and exhibit professional attitudes.	24	66	168	103	47	3.2	1.035
The cooperative management and the mukhtar work in harmony.	83	56	139	71	59	2.92	1.304

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

While there are not many problems with cooperative management, it can be seen that the partners had concerns about the competence of the cooperative supervisory board. About half of the partners remained undecided (no opinion=41.2%) that the supervisory board was adequately trained and behaved professionally.

It is frequently reported that mukhtar can see eye to eye with cooperative management, and conflict of interest arises. Hence, partners are doubtful that the management works in harmony with the mukhtars (agree=36.8%).

Partners' Relations with Management

The Boards of Directors are composed of people elected by the partners at the GA. These elections are held using democratic methods, and the management elected by the producers allows these organisations to operate better. If producers have negative thoughts about the management, it leads to a decoupling between the partners and the board, leading to the organisation's failure. Positive perceptions toward the management can be achieved if the management is open and honest to the partners, approachable and has mutual trust.

Participants' responses to the statements show that the relationship between the partnership and the management is perceived more favourably than the management style.

However, the high number of partners who 'do not have an opinion continues in this section (Table 6).

Partners have reasonable confidence in the managers ($\bar{X}= 3.52$). Alçiçek and Karlı (2016), in their research in the province of Burdur, stated that 50% of the partners of the ADC supported the decisions taken by the BOD. The partners believe that the cooperative managers successfully represent the cooperative ($\bar{X}= 3.53$). Karlı and Çelik (2003), in their research in agricultural cooperatives in the Gap Region, found that those who believed that managers act in their own interests were 30.8% in Agricultural Credit Cooperatives and 75.0% in Agricultural Sales Cooperatives and 20% in Agricultural Chambers.

The partners stated that the managers treated them fairly ($\bar{X}= 3.42$). In addition, partners' relations with management are open and trust-based ($\bar{X}= 3.40$).

Table 6. Statements on Partners' Relations with Management

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SS
The managers successfully represent the cooperative.	24	44	131	110	99	3.53	1.143
We have full confidence in the managers.	7	52	155	111	83	3.52	1.008
Managers share their experiences with partners and devote time to partners.	19	63	129	111	86	3.45	1.122
Managers provide quick and permanent solutions to our problems	32	43	137	114	82	3.42	1.153
Managers do not discriminate between partners; they behave decently.	32	53	127	105	91	3.42	1.193
Managers inform us about the activities and developments	21	64	131	101	91	3.43	1.148
The managers establish transparent and trust-based relationships with partners.	27	47	149	106	79	3.40	1.121
There is no miscommunication between the partners of our cooperative.	20	67	141	97	83	3.38	1.126
There is no miscommunication between the cooperative management and the partners.	23	69	129	112	75	3.36	1.130

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

Partners' Opinion on Overall Satisfaction

The overall satisfaction of the partners with the cooperative was considerably high. A large majority of respondents (70%) were pleased to be a partner and consider the cooperative a family and themselves a member of this family. In the previous sections, the mean score of the statements given by the participants on the general state of the cooperative, management style and relations with varied management between $\bar{X}= 3.6$ and $\bar{X}= 3.53$. In contrast, this section ranges from $\bar{X}= 3.72$ to $\bar{X}= 4.01$. The reason why the participants are more even-minded about management issues may be that they see cooperatives as a family environment. After all, cooperatives are formed in small communities, and partners live and work in this community. The feeling of belonging to the community and institution is extremely valuable.

Nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of the partners would recommend the cooperative to others. The state of recommending a cooperative is lower, albeit less than the partners' satisfaction. However, similarly, in Alçiçek and Karlı's (2016) study, 60.3% of the partners rated their

cooperatives as successful. The reasons why partners are hesitant to recommend the cooperative can be understood from the following statements: 59.3% of partners believe that the cooperative care about their satisfaction, and 57.8% believe it follows modern developments. All in all, only 54.2% believe that everyone appreciates cooperative activities (Table 7). Whereas, Ertan and Kaya (2012) conducted a study in Çünür irrigation cooperative. They found that the means score of partners' happiness due to being a partner was $\bar{X}= 4.65$, their pride in their cooperative was $\bar{X}= 4.58$, and the meeting of expectations was $\bar{X}= 3.95$.

Table 7. Thoughts of the cooperative partners about the overall satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	M	SS
It is a great honour to be a partner	4	32	92	108	172	4.01	1.025
I am very pleased to be a partner	4	21	98	148	137	3.96	.933
I see our cooperative as a family, and I consider myself a member of this family.	4	40	88	123	153	3.93	1.034
I would recommend partnering with our cooperative to those around me.	5	27	109	130	137	3.90	.985
Our cooperative cares about the satisfaction of its partners	4	57	105	115	127	3.75	1.074
Everyone appreciates the activities of our cooperative.	12	64	111	90	131	3.65	1.168
Our cooperative follows the change and development required by the age.	21	46	105	125	111	3.63	1.146

1= Definitely Disagree, 2=Disagree 3= No opinion 4= Agree 5= Definitely Agree

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the partner-cooperative relations in-depth, to reveal partners' opinions on the fundamentals and functioning of the cooperative, the management style, partner management relations and general satisfaction in depth.

It is evident that there are problems in cooperatives in the Bursa region, and it seems that the partners' satisfaction level is not at the desired level. Despite the high participation in the GA, the partners' dissatisfaction with the functioning of the cooperative shows that the GA cannot fully function, and management cannot exert the desired activity. Partners should attend the GA and be able to speak freely and express their thoughts and problems without hesitation.

It is difficult to say a reliable president and management team in the ADC in Bursa. This situation affects the thoughts and satisfaction of partners towards management. Management plans should be prepared according to the characteristics of the cooperative activity and partners. With this understanding, cooperatives will be able to demonstrate the behaviour of planning and creating activity programs with the ingenuity of their own management.

The increase in the services provided by cooperatives to their partners will lead to an increase in partners' income. Thus partners' satisfaction will increase. An increase in member satisfaction in organisations leads to increased partner trust and organisational performance. The project implementation should be encouraged to evolve cooperatives and increase

partner-cooperative relations. Cooperative managers should be given training on project preparation and project application opportunities.

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