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Women's Empowerment through Agricultural Cooperative Movements in Goromonzi District,  
Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

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## **Assignment**

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that I have done this thesis entitled **“Women’s Empowerment through Agricultural Cooperative Movements in Goromonzi District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe”** independently. All texts in this thesis are original and all the sources have been quoted and acknowledged by means of complete references according to citation rules of the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTA).

In Prague,

.....

Rutendo Aurelie Mazvi

## **Acknowledgments**

## **Abstract**

Agricultural cooperatives have been used as a powerful tool to eradicate poverty and improve the livelihoods of rural people all over the world. Although their popularity continues to increase little research has been done on agricultural cooperatives and how they empower women in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this study investigates the dynamics of gender and the benefits of women participation in cooperatives. We identified the factors that influence male and female membership in cooperatives, level of participation of women in cooperatives and the challenges faced by women participating in agricultural cooperatives. Data from 150 farmers was collected in Goromonzi district (Zimbabwe). We used Probit Regression, Independent t-test, the Likert Scale and Thematic Analysis to analyze the data. Our results show that the level of participation, of women in cooperatives in Goromonzi is high. At the same time the economic and social benefits derived from the cooperatives are the main determinants of female joining cooperatives. In conclusion the women empowerment is significant among cooperatives though more needs to be done to encourage women to talk leadership positions in cooperatives.

**Key words:** Women empowerment, gender equality, agricultural cooperatives, Goromonzi district

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## **List of abbreviations**

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

FHH Female Headed Households

FTLRP Fast Track Land Reform Policy

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GOZ Government of Zimbabwe

GPS Global Positioning System

ICA International Cooperative Alliance

IOF Investor-Owned Firms

ILO International Labour Organization

MHH Male Headed Households

MDG Millennium Development Goal

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

UN United Nations

ZIMSTAT Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency



## **1. Introduction**

Cooperatives play an important role in improving the livelihoods of rural societies all over the world. According to the definition by the International Cooperative Alliance [ICA] (2015) cooperatives are self-governed groups of people who voluntarily unite to realize their shared economic, social and cultural needs through mutually owned and democratically governed bodies. Cooperative members pool their resources together to achieve their combined goals which are often unattainable as individuals (Tchami2007). They concentrate on the social welfare of their members while simultaneously undertaking business ventures (Majurin 2012 ).

The United Nations (UN) acknowledges the integral role cooperatives play in societal development by engaging local communities to participate in economic and social affairs. For example, the U.S department of Agriculture (2017) found that 1 871 cooperatives with approximately two (2) million members produced 197 billion dollars (\$) in sales. Another study carried out by the International Labor Organization [ILO] (1997) found that 160 000 jobs were created in 15 African countries because of cooperatives alone (Wanyama et al. 2008). Policymakers have observed the profitability of cooperatives further increasing their popularity on a global scale. The International Labor Organization (ILO) underlines that cooperatives also support the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the following unveiled in this study; ‘(1) no poverty, (4) quality education, (5) gender equality, (8) decent work and economic growth and (10) reduced inequalities.’ In developing countries, women amount to 43% of the labour force (FAO 2011) and in Africa, they contribute to the production of 80% of locally consumed food (Palacios-Lopez et al. 2015). Schwettmann (2004) noted a rise in cooperative membership in African countries with approximately 40% of families belonging to one. The resurgence of cooperative movements in the continent have been recognized as opportunities to build upon women empowerment as they mitigate gender inequalities (Majurin 2012). Through cooperative membership, women experience substantial direct and indirect benefits of empowerment as their socio-economic standing is enhanced (Majurin 2012).

Agriculture is the cornerstone of Zimbabwe’s economy and prosperity, with the agricultural sector adding 17% to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (FAO 2017). Ian and Brian (2000) state that prior to the colonial era, the preponderance of Zimbabweans were cultivators

and to this day, a greater part of the population still resides in rural areas with their livelihoods primarily supported by farming. Agriculture alone generates 66.27% of employment in the country (ILO 2020) with both men and women being active participants, however, it is imperative to note that women constitute 70% of that labour pool (FAO 2017; Huyer & Nyasimi 2017). Regardless of their contribution, large inequalities still exist between female and male farmers. These inequalities affect their access to; input and extension services (Fu & Akter 2016), asset ownership, education, credit (Quisumbing 1996; Doss 2001; World Bank 2001; FAO 2011) and capacity building (Huyer & Nyasimi 2017; Wang et al. 2017) which ultimately reduces their productivity. Due this marginalization, many female farmers in Zimbabwe have begun to join cooperatives to improve their chances of agricultural success.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Gender is a social construct that assigns roles and scripts for male and female behavior to adhere to throughout an individual's existence. It determines how people relate to each other in society and differs by country to culture (FAO 1997). For example, in Africa women play integral roles towards agricultural success, however, they have limited decision making power and receive lower wages as opposed to their male counterparts in the same field (Chingarande 2004). As the world continues to strive for gender equality, there is no place for discrimination against women to persist. This chapter examines the history of gender inequality from a cultural and legal perspective in Africa's agricultural sector with particular focus on Zimbabwe, it explores the Fast Track Land Reform Policy, history of cooperative movements in the country and factors that influence membership. Definitions and measurements of women empowerment are explored and the current global framework for gender equality is discussed. Lastly, the challenges women experience within these associations are presented.

### **2.2. Patriarchy, Land and Gender**

The agricultural sector in Africa is hierarchical nature. It is organized in accordance with an individuals' race, ethnicity and gender and discrimination is structured along these identifiers (Moyo 2004). As a result, women and other minority groups are systematically marginalized considering the principal role agriculture plays in African economies (Moyo 2004). For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa women have limited rights to the access and control of land (Lumumba 2003). In Kenya only 4% of women have land that is registered under their names, in Uganda and Tanzania 7% and 10% of women own title deeds of land respectively. Alston (1994) states that women face significant challenges when trying to acquire and govern land because plots are administered in a patriarchal fashion. Patriarchy and customary tenure systems are cemented by local chiefdoms or authorities which engender iniquitous land distribution in Africa. As a form of tenure, customary systems have colonial roots and many post-colonial regimes in Africa inherited those systems (Bierema 2003), further exploiting and impeding the agricultural success of women at the core.

### **2.3. Women, Gender, and Land in Zimbabwe**

Sylvester (1995; 2000) believes that women are defined, socialized, and treated differently through prevailing cultural practices and political ideologies. For Goebel (2005) there are two distinct groups, "women" and "men". These groups have prearranged roles and norms between

them. Starting from an early age boys and girls are socialized by different scripts which divide their labor, access to resources, positions in society or hierarchy, identities, and reproductive duties. McFadden and Zinanga (1996) and Rutherford (2001), note that ever present power systems exist that sustain the various roles given to women in society. These systems are spread across different institutions including culture and laws that ultimately shape the different realities of men and women- usually to the disadvantage of women (Sylvester 1995).

Sylvester (2000) observes that most people defend “traditional” gender-based roles as the ‘right way’ to differentiate between men and women– especially in African rural societies. However, other variables such as class, ancestry and totems can play a role in determining a woman’s predefined gender identity, which may combat her typical role in rural communities. For example, Lingren (2001) recounts the appointment of a female chief in Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe during the 1990’s. Since she was born as the chief’s first child, her role as the first born superseded her social status as a woman, thus challenging stereotypical gender roles. In Zimbabwe, a large part of masculinity is forged through the relationship between land and culture (Kesby 1999). Thus, for men to be considered masculine in rural communities, women must be removed from the land factor (particularly in patriarchal communities). Therefore, land acquisition by women in such societies goes against the grain and they are condemned for stepping out of their cultural roles (Sylvester 2000). Schmidt (1992a) highlights another issue of land and gender in rural Zimbabwe dating back to the colonial era. During this period, the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) was enforced and British settlers legally labelled black women as “minors” hindering their access and right to land ownership (Stewart et al. 1990; Maboreke 1991). Passes were granted to black women limiting their mobility and they were prohibited from working in urban areas and opening bank accounts. These barriers cut across the colonial and post-colonial era of Zimbabwe (Rutherford 2001) and coupled with strict patriarchal customs, women were boxed into a particular category impeding their social and economic advancement (Schmidt 1992a & 1992b; Hansen 1992; Jeater 1993; McCulloch 2000).

#### **2.4. Fast Track Land Reform Policy and Gender in Zimbabwe**

Before Zimbabwe gained independence in April 1980, 51% of the arable land was owned by white settler farmers (approximately 6000 farmers) and black farmers occupied marginal land in communal areas (Moyo 1995). Communal areas constituted 42% of the agrarian structure yet

accommodated 700,000 farmers which reflected the inequitable agrarian structure inherited at independence (Moyo 1995). As a result, the incoming post-colonial Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) was forced to redress these imbalances. The Fast Track Land Reform Policy (FTLRP) implemented in 2000 contested these racial disparities, however, social hierarchies based off gender and class were neglected (Chingarande 2008). The FTLRP perpetuated customary inheritance and land distribution laws that disregarded widowed women (Gaidzanwa 1995). Female beneficiaries were considerably lower than male beneficiaries (Gaidzanwa 1991; Utete 2000; Ruuswa 2007) and less than 20% of recipients obtained land under their own name (Moyo et al 2014; Chingarande 2004). These variances were a result of the gender bias by policymakers which reflected patriarchal attitudes discussed earlier in this chapter.

## **2.5 Agricultural Cooperatives**

Alliance (2015b) defines a cooperative as an independent association of people who voluntarily come together to achieve shared economic, social, and cultural needs and ambitions through an equally owned and democratically governed organization. Cooperatives are founded on principles of self-reliance, equality, democracy, self-accountability, and solidarity. Members follow ethical guidelines of honesty, openness, and social accountability. These values are highlighted through principles that put them into action.

According to Alliance (2015b), principles of a cooperative are:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training, and information
6. Co-operation among co-operatives

## **2.6. A Brief History of Agricultural Cooperatives in Zimbabwe**

A history of cooperation can be identified in Zimbabwe's pre-colonial custom of 'ubuntu' that governed its social and economic activities (Samkange 1980). However, the first 'formal' cooperative movements recognized in our modern society commenced during the colonial period under the Cooperative Agricultural Act of 1909. These movements were designed to tackle input

and output challenges encountered by white commercial farmers and the government had substantial control over them (Schwettmann 2000). Following Zimbabwe's independence, the government formally assumed socialist policies due to political influence from Russia and China which also extended into cooperative practices. This design necessitated equality and called for the capacity building of small-scale farmers. Over the years, Zimbabwe has become more inclined to liberal ideologies of capitalism and as a result, has assumed the legal framework of cooperative movements as outlined by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). Although this policy guides the basic concept of cooperative movements in the country, a hybrid between the colonial British cooperative style and post-colonial communist cooperative method still exists at its core. This is highlighted by the significant role the government plays in present day cooperative movements.

## **2.7. Factors influencing Farmers Membership in cooperatives.**

Contemporary empirical findings have outlined the following variables as factors that influence farmers' membership in agricultural cooperatives; age, number of years farming, level of education, gender, household head, size of land and market distance (Agbonlahor et al. 2012; Arayesh 2011; Fisher & Qaim 2012; Gijssels & Bussels 2014; Gyau et al. 2016; Karlı et al. 2006; Mojo et al. 2017; Nugusse et al. 2013; Zheng et al. 2012). Other factors such as marital status (Banaszak 2008; Meier zu Selhausen 2016) and produce farmed (Masten 2000) are also key elements that influence farmer's membership in cooperatives.

Various studies present that a farmers' increased age and level of education raise the likelihood of their membership in cooperatives (Chagwiza et al. 2016; Fischer & Qaim 2012; Wossen et al. 2017). Senior and more educated farmers presumably possess greater knowledge, expertise and social networks which are beneficial to cooperatives and leadership roles within the groups (Gyau et al. 2016). For example in Zambia, the more years an individual attended school increased their likelihood of joining a cooperative by 1.4% (Manda et. al 2020). However, it must also be noted that higher education does not always result in cooperative membership. Kaliyeva et al (2020) noted a decrease in cooperative membership in rural Kazakhstan from individuals with a higher level of education since they perceive agriculture as unappealing and prefer to pursue more formal employment. A farmer's age and the number of years they have

spent farming also influence their membership in cooperatives. When farmers have increased knowledge and farming experience, they are more likely to join cooperatives.

Gender, household head and marital status are intertwined determinates of farmer's membership in cooperatives. Abebaw and Haile (2013) found that women in Africa have a lower probability of participating in cooperatives because of their gender. This finding is supported by Weinberger and Jütting (2001) who elaborate on the time-consuming nature that cooperatives have on women's schedules affecting their gender assigned roles as discussed earlier in this chapter and ultimately deterring their membership in cooperatives. Regarding household head, Matchaya (2010) noted that in Malawi male headed households (MHH) are expected to be members of cooperatives compared to female headed households. This is as a result of cultural practices that impede women's decision making ability to participate in cooperatives (Adegbite & Machethe 2020). The gender of the household head and their marital status are interconnected determinants that also influence a farmer's membership in cooperatives. This is highlighted in comparative studies conducted in Ethiopia that discuss the willingness of farmers to adopt sustainable and innovative practices in agriculture. For example, men in male headed households (MHH) are more likely to engage in innovative agricultural practices (such as adopting improved maize varieties) as opposed to women in female headed households (O'Brien et al. 2016). A study conducted by Kassa et al. (2013) explained this occurrence because of men having access to extension services, information a higher level of education and greater decision-making power as opposed to FHH. Lastly, a study conducted in Poland found that a farmers' marital status influences their membership in cooperatives (Banaszak 2008). Spouses of men in MHH households are more likely to join cooperatives than FHH. Meier zu Selhausen (2016) projected that women in western Uganda who combined their land and wages with their spouses were projected to partake in collective marketing of coffee.

Over the years, conflicting results concerning land size and cooperative membership have emerged. Afolabi and Ganiyu (2021) and Wossen et al. (2017) discovered that farmers with larger areas of land were more inclined to join cooperatives. However, it must be noted that although cooperative membership positively correlates with farmers increased land holdings, an inverse relationship between the two variables often occurs when farmers own land greater than

11 acres or 4.45 hectares as is the case with Kenyan farmers (Fischer & Qaim 2012). Lastly, research conducted in Bihar, India discovered that land size had no effect on cooperative membership (Kumar et al. 2018).

The distance from a farmer's land holding to the nearest market also influences their decision in cooperative membership. For example in Oromia Ethiopia, farmers who reside closer to markets have a lower likelihood of joining cooperatives (Ahmed & Mesfin 2017). Farmers within this locality (15 km radius from nearest market) were 15% less likely to join cooperatives (Nugusse et al. 2013). Thus, it can be inferred that the greater the distance between a farmer dwelling to the nearest market influences their choice in joining cooperatives. Larger distances increase transaction costs for farmers, thus driving their decision to seek assistance from cooperatives.

Hovhannisyan and Gould (2012) state that cooperatives tackle obstacles that stifle a farmer's ability to acquire trainings, information, resources and access to input and output markets. Thus, when farmers join cooperatives, they can participate in the production of more expensive cash crops such as tobacco. Masten (2000) also notes that certain produce needs to be gathered in a recurring and timely fashion. For example, a dairy or poultry farmer would experience more benefits in cooperative membership in comparison to flexibility granted to meat producers. Cooperative membership reduces the cost of production, advertising and dispersion of produce and the possible risks faced by the farmers (Nugusse et al. 2013).

## **2.8. Definitions of Women Empowerment**

The discipline of developmental economics defines women empowerment as a process by which women secure the ability to execute calculated decisions pertaining their lives in circumstances that formerly impeded their ability to do so (Kabeer 1999). For Kabeer (1999), an individual's decision-making power is derivative of three (3) interconnected elements which are; 'agency, resources and achievements.' Agency refers to an individual's ability to determine their life's goals and work towards their fulfillment, resources are the instruments that facilitate that agency and lastly, achievements are the outcomes exercised agency and resources. Therefore, women empowerment leads to transformative agency which can be seen through their achievements



(Kabeer 1999; Malhotra et al. 2002; Bali Swain & Wallentin 2009; Khan and Khan 2016). For example, women occupying more seats in parliament.

In the field of psychology, empowerment is characterized by an individual's ability to tackle issues affecting their lives and community while simultaneously ameliorating the circumstance (Bandura 1986; Page & Czuba 1999; Maton 2008; Cattaneo & Chapman 2010). In regards to woman empowerment, the necessity to develop women's capabilities and preserve their decision making power is highlighted (Budgeon, 2015; Kurtiş et al 2016). However, 'choice feminists' (Budgeon 2015) argue that a woman's decision-making power does not essentially correlate with improved outcomes and Henrich et al. (2010) believe that such attitudes are rooted in Western ideals. Carby (1997) and Kurtiş and Adams (2015) support his perspective by adding that experiences of women from other communities and countries are disregarded when viewing women empowerment through that lens.

The decolonial feminist branch of psychology emphasizes the significance of cultural mindfulness towards women in developing countries when gathering information concerning their experiences (Kağıtçıbaşı 1995; Kurtiş & Adams 2015; Kurtiş et al. 2016). For example, Dutt et al. (2016) believe that women empowerment should be defined from a cooperative perspective relevant to current cultural norms as opposed to an individual's growth achieved through private enterprises (Kurtiş et al. 2016). Stromquist (1995) delineates women empowerment as a multi-layered model that spans from women's rationalization of their disempowerment to their partnership towards social development. Thus, women empowerment is accomplished through membership in small associations with a shared agenda.

Different schools of thought have established varied definitions of women empowerment. However, they all correspond with the notion that women empowerment is a multidimensional theory that transforms women from a disenfranchised state to one of self-determination.

## **2.9. Measurements of Women Empowerment**

### **2.9.1. Three- Dimensional Model of Women Empowerment**

VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) define women's empowerment as a shift in the lives of women and girls whereby the limited power they possess is increased. The Three-dimensional framework notes that transformation takes place at three levels which are personal (micro) changes occurring within an individual. Personal changes are the lense in which women see themselves through. This change is noted through the role women believe they play in society,

the economy as well as their increased levels of confidence to make decisions over their lives. Relational (meso) changes are those that women make through their relationships with others. This aspect affects their social network, household, and local institutions (such as markets and decision makers). Lastly, environmental (macro) changes look at the impact made on a woman's life on a larger scale. This is seen through the shift in beliefs, societal norms and/ or political changes that affect the social standing of women and girls within society. Lombardini et al. (2017) appreciate the versatility of the Women Empowerment Index Framework model as it can be utilized in different circumstances and the course of empowerment can go either way. Movement in empowerment can be seen from the personal (micro-level) to the environmental (macro-level).

## **2.10. Benefits of Cooperative Membership for Women**

Duguid and Weber (2016) state that agricultural cooperatives assist women by providing them with business and managerial education, providing them with decision making power and the possibility to access land and have rights over it reducing discrepancies between men and women. Which in turn mitigate poverty and increase agricultural production Duguid and Weber (2016). The economic and social benefits of cooperative are highlighted in this section.

### **2.10.1. Economic benefits**

When women are members of cooperatives, many of them can access loans (Périlleux & Szafarz 2015) which gives them opportunities to purchase homes and let out rooms, build stores and start businesses which increases their income (Rani & Yadeta 2016). Loans are often difficult for women to attain on their own. Research carried out in Mekelle, Ethiopia by Ghebremichael (2013) found that women experienced economic benefits when they joined cooperatives. The study observed that 67% of the women were able to reduce the amount of money owed on a loan and 97% increased their income and later became self-employed. In Uganda it was found that women who are members of cooperatives experience less insecurity in terms of basic needs and food as opposed to women that are not members of cooperatives.

Du (2006) found that cooperatives gradually and consistently increase the income of their members and develop their organizational competency. This is supported by a study conducted by Sun et al. (2007) that established that farmers who are members in cooperatives earned more than independent farmers. Xue et al. (2012) and Hang et al. (2012) noted that both full-time and

part-time cooperative members experienced a rise in their net income. Households with family members in cooperatives also report the associations creating multiple sources of income for their families in comparison to non-members (Lecoutere 2017).

Kirkwood (2005) defines bargaining power as the ability for an association to negotiate with another by levying a cost or withdrawing their services if their needs are not met. Bijman et al. (2012) state that when farmers combine their resources and production outputs, they simultaneously increase their bargaining power with prospective buyers and input dealers. Cooperative members can mitigate risks incurred through farming activities, acquire access to marketing services and profit from economies of scale. As a result, farmers experience an increase in their production and a reduction in costs. Farmers are also able to have a stable purchase of their produce.

#### **2.10.2. Personal and Social benefits**

Through their own empowerment, women are also able to positively impact the community as well. Masabo (2015) states that women who are members of cooperatives receive more respect as they are self-sufficient, employed and they assist people within their communities. Rani and Yadeta (2016) found that these women join open and welcoming cooperatives which guarantee gender equality, expand their social network, and allow them to unreservedly divide their needs. Cooperative membership positively affects women's decision-making power at three different levels. The minor way in which this ability is showcased is at a household level, then on a larger scale they can make decisions within groups and the community at large as they have more power (Lecoutere 2017). Women can access more resources because of their membership in agricultural cooperatives as a resulting boosting both their power and confidence. Through cooperatives women also acquire knowledge on agronomy and advanced farming techniques (Lecoutere 2017). By having the power to make decisions at a cooperate level, this skill is then translated to a personal level where they then make decisions in their homes (Masabo 2015). Female exclusive cooperatives exist mainly in patriarchal societies. Although their opinions are embraced, and they can practice their decision- making skills without judgment, they are often ineffective because they do not receive support from organizations or society (Duguid & Weber 2016). As a result, not reducing their inequalities and empowering them. Ghebremichael (2013) believes these cooperatives would be more successful if legal frameworks were more inclusive and supportive on women's issues. However, there are exceptions. For example, in Tanzania, a

female-only cooperative found in Kilimanjaro has seen its cooperative members become more empowered as they have greater salaries, can pay their children's tuition and access medical services. As well as improving their social status and increasing their knowledge (Sumelius et al. 2015).

### **2.11. Global Policy for Women Empowerment**

*“An ideal state in which women and men are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, or prejudices.”* - The United Nations (2011).

All over the world, women and girls are discriminated against in political, economic and social arenas, which subsequently leads to their vulnerability. In 2000, the United Nations introduced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The policy comprised of eight (8) objectives that sought to tackle urgent social issues faced in developing countries and MDG 3 specifically focused on gender equality and women empowerment. The MDGs were replaced by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 which were formulated at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The SDGs differ from the MDGs in that; they established a global and sustainable framework to address humanitarian issues on a social, political, economic, and environmental stage, they supplement nine (9) goals to the preliminary eight (8) goals and member states govern how the policy is implemented in their countries. From the 17 SDGs two (2) goals in particular, SDG 5 and SDG 10 strive to achieve gender equality by empowering women and girls by reducing the inequalities they face throughout their lifetimes. Gender equality understands that men and women are not the same, however, it strives to safeguard the rights and opportunities that all human beings should have access to across their lifespan, regardless of the gender they are born into (OSAGI 2001). Kabeer and Natali (2013) note that gender equality should not be viewed or treated as the transfer of power from men to women, on the contrary it creates an environment in which human potential is reached regardless of an individual's gender.

## **2.12. Challenges Faced by Women in Cooperatives**

### **2.12.1. Time allocation**

All over the world, women are primary laborers in the “reproductive economy”. This means that they are the main caregivers in their families, presiding over their household’s needs and food security. Such activities are more burdensome in rural areas due to the scarcity of basic services such as energy and water. Studies conducted in the Middle East and North Africa established that women with access to electricity and water have more freedom and time to access the labour market. Another aspect that affects the probability of women finding decent work and generating a stable income is their ability to secure inexpensive childcare (Duetsche et al. 2001). Thus, a consensus among social scientists presents that many women struggle to balance their time between reproductive duties and regular cooperative attendance and/or participation.

### **2.12.2. Trust and Distrust**

According to Lewicki et al. (1998) trust is a self-assured anticipation of another person’s behavior. Trust is crucial for the success of Investor Owned Firms (IoFs) (Greenberg 2014) and cooperatives alike (Hansen et al. 2002). Some authors (Stolle 1998) assert that when cooperatives create an environment of trust, their members internalize positive behaviours. Conversely, Borgen (2001) reported that cooperatives contain different types of members, values and numbers may face more issues in regard to trust building. Studies have highlighted the significance of trust in cooperatives as it mitigates free riding, raises commitment levels and increases efficiency (Ostrom 2000). Nonetheless, it must be noted that the length of a person’s membership within the cooperative does not relate with the level of trust they may hold for the group (Stolle 1998). With cooperatives becoming larger and more diverse, social ties have begun to lessen (Nilsson 2001). Lack of such relationships among members results in their obscurity and in other cases ignorance and non-participation Österberg and Nilsson (2009).

### **2.12.3. Conflict**

Conflict, is defined as a mismatch of morals, wants, behavior and interests (Deutsch 1977; Putnam Poole 1987; Wall & Callister 1995). Conflict occurs in our everyday lives and how people handle it determines its result and future relationships with everyone involved (Zarankin, 2008). Pondy (1967) states that conflict can affect the success and stability of a cooperative in a

good or bad way. This is because it encourages change which may be accepted or rejected by members. Bigger cooperatives often face more conflicts because of structural norms and procedures (Galanter & Palay 1991), as well as the possibility of more opposing beliefs which results in “emotional exhaustion” (Chlebicka & Pietrzak 2018). Anderson and Henehan (2003) noted a positive correlation between large cooperative sizes and conflicts. A cooperative with differentiated members may have opposing goals. For example, if members who have polarized ages, social status and live in different areas may possess different goals (Anderson & Henehan 2003). Which may in turn affect the productivity of the cooperative.

### **3. Aim and objectives of the thesis**

The main objective of this study is to determine the current dynamics of gender in agricultural cooperatives and how women are empowered through these organizations in the Goromonzi district of Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe.

This will be determined through the following specific objectives: -

1. To discern the factors that influence male and female membership in cooperatives.
2. To determine female and male cooperative members' level of participation within cooperatives.
3. To investigate the benefits female cooperative members, attain from cooperative membership compared to female non-members.

$H_0$  = Women participate in cooperatives because of benefits derived

$H_1$  = No correlation exists between benefits derived and women participation

4. To examine the challenges faced by women in agricultural cooperatives.

### **3.1. Methodology**

This study is based on a mixed research approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This chapter describes the data collection methods, target groups, study area, and data analysis methods.

### **3.2. Primary Data**

Primary data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire used in the study was divided into seven sections which include socio-demographic characteristics, economic impact of cooperative membership, information and training, voluntary and open membership, democratic membership control, active female participation and the challenges faced by women cooperatives. Each section is made up of various statements and respondents were asked to evaluate each statement using a five-point Likert scale. This measurement tool determined the participants satisfaction by how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement (Cummins, 2003). The five choices used in this study were strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Other sections of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions and closed ended questions that required 'yes' and 'no' answers. A pilot study was conducted on the first day of the interviews with 10 members from the cooperative group Mupedza Nhamo and an additional 10 independent farmers. A pilot study is a smaller form or provisional guide carried out to prepare for the final instrument (Polit et al 2001). After the pilot study was analyzed, the final instrument was used to conduct the present research. One hundred (100) questionnaires were collected by Mr. Kudzerema in the months of March and April 2022. These responses were collected through the mobile application NestForms. An additional fifty (50) questionnaires were collected by the author in the month of January 2023.

### **Table 1: Questionnaire Variables**



<b>Description</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Questions</b>
<b>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</b>	Gender	17
	Age	
	Education	
	Main produce	
	Size of land	
	Market distance	
<b>Economic Impact on Members</b>	Increased income	24
	Better bargaining power	
	Access to services	
	Access to market	
	Increased yield	
	Increased social contacts.	
	Reduced production costs	
	Access to credit	
<b>Education, Training, and Information</b>	Access to market information	4
	Sharing experiences	
	Capacity building	
	Better agricultural practices	
<b>Voluntary and Open Membership</b>	Gender equality in leadership	2
	Gender equality in membership	
<b>Democratic Member Control</b>	Opinion influences decision-making	14
	Attending all meetings	
	Leadership selection	
	Transparency	
	Sharing needs and concerns	
	Trust between members and directors	
<b>Active Female Participation</b>	Equal opportunities for capacity building	4
	Female membership and leadership are important	
<b>Challenges faced by women within cooperatives</b>	Challenges faced by women in cooperatives	1

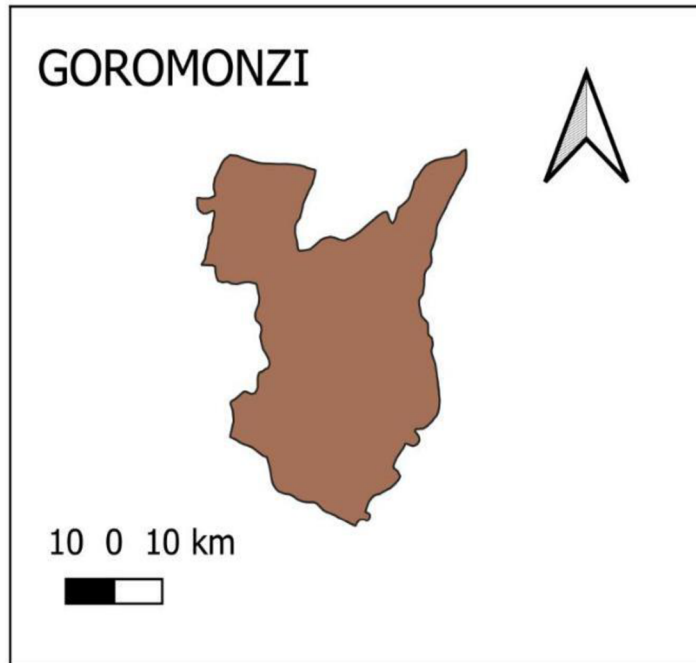
### **3.3. Secondary Data**

The secondary data utilized in this study was found in scientific journals. Scientific articles used for this study included but were not limited to websites such as JSTOR, Research Gates, FAO, ILO, and the UN.

**Table 2: List of Cooperatives in Goromonzi- Bromley Ward 22**

<b>Name of Cooperative</b>	<b>Produce Farmed</b>	<b>Number of Members</b>	<b>Number of Females</b>	<b>Number of Males</b>	<b>Number of Years of the Cooperative</b>
Adullusa B	Tobacco	10	8	2	3
Secuta A	Tobacco	30	28	2	3
Secuta B	Potatoes	8	5	3	1
Bromely Club	Maize	15	10	5	2
Adullusa A	Vegetables	8	2	6	3
Brookmead	Maize	10	8	2	3
Iversand A	Tobacco	10	8	2	4
Iversand B	Tobacco	20	10	10	10
Adullusa A	Beef	10	8	2	3
Tagutu	Vegetables	20	15	5	3
Secuta	Tobacco	10	7	3	3
Tashinga	Tobacco	10	8	2	4
Eddlesigh	Tomatoes	30	25	5	5
Maguta	Beans	20	7	13	4
Pfumbudza Soya	Soybeans	6	4	2	3
Pfumbudza Maize	Maize	20	18	2	5
Majoka	Tobacco	10	8	2	4
Mimosa	Maize, beans & broilers	15	6	9	3
Makagona	Beans	18	6	12	6
Taguta Group	Tomatoes	9	3	6	8
Kuwirirarna	Broilers	27	13	14	5
Surry Group	Beef	13	8	5	5
Madiro 1	Tobacco Grading	6	4	2	3
Tazviita	Vegetables, layers	8	4	4	4
Kubatana	Vegetables	25	13	12	3
Mupedza Nhamo	Tobacco Grading	20	15	5	4
Compound wing 1	Tobacco Grading	8	6	2	5
Madiro 2	Maize	6	4	2	3
T.M.C Tobacco	Tobacco	15	7	8	5

### 3.3. Study Site



**Figure 1: Map of Goromonzi.**

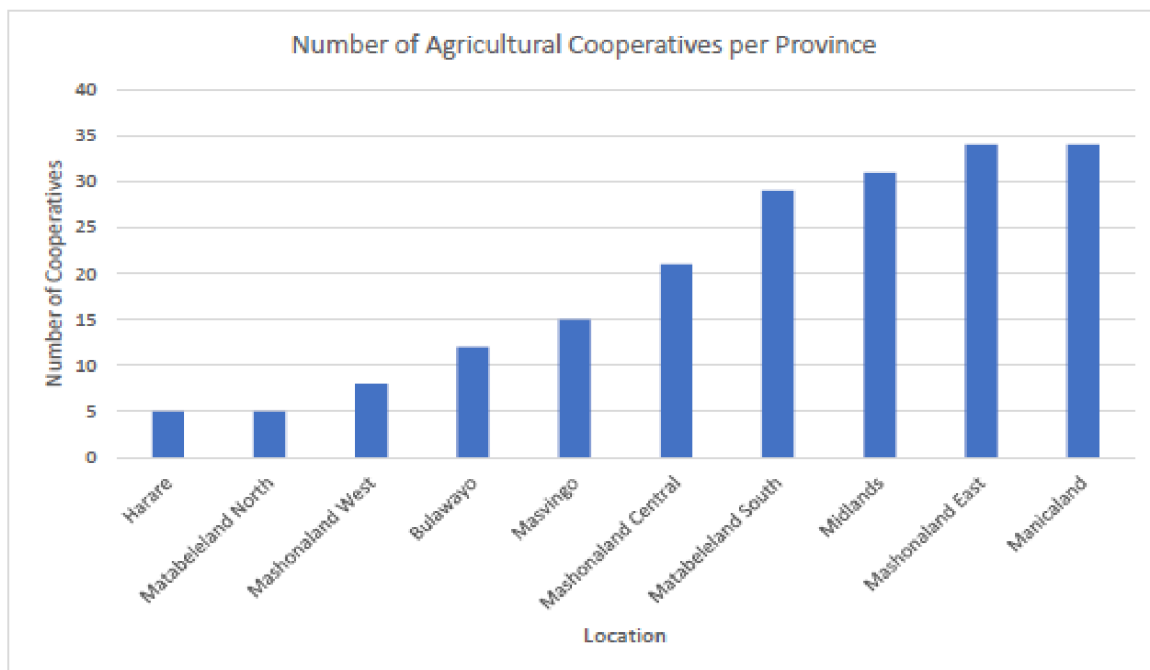
**The map was created by the author using QGIS 3.22.4 software.**

Zimbabwe is divided into ten provinces and within those provinces are fifty-nine districts. Goromonzi is one of the districts found in Mashonaland East province and it is an agro-ecological area. Zimbabwe has five agro-ecological areas in total determined by mean temperatures, land use and rainfall patterns. The agro-ecological areas vary from Natural Region I (NRI) which are regions that experience the most rain with mild temperatures, which make them the most favorable region for crop production, to Natural Region V (NRV) which are dry, hot, and more favorable for bringing up livestock (Vincent & Thomas 1960). Mashonaland East is in the Natural Region II which has rich soil suitable for rigorous crop production. The yearly rainfall ranges from 800 mm to 1000 mm and the temperatures vary from 15 to 20 Degrees Celsius. Goromonzi itself is split into twenty-five wards and is governed by a local council. The area is estimated to be 25,407,200 hectares of land with roughly 78% being arable. Out of the twenty-five wards, 13 are used for commercial farming, 11 are communal regions and 1 is used for small level farming. The area has a total population of 224,987 people (50.5% of the

population are women) and the average home consists of four members (ZimStats 2012). The area is considered rural as only 44.3% of the population reside in commercial farming locations and the remainder in communal areas. Goromonzi is divided into three different agricultural styles which are small scale, medium scale (A1) and large scale (A2). This study is conducted in Great Bromely- ward twenty-two (22) of this district. Great Bromely is the largest ward in Goromonzi comprising of different agricultural types, diverse farmers (resettled, those who purchased land and those with title deeds) and cooperatives. The GPS coordinates of this ward are Latitude: -18,03494 S18°2’5,79815’’ Longitude: 31,3236 E31°19’24,97436’’.

### 3.4. Sampling Technique

Out of the ten (10) provinces in the country, two (2) are metropolitan and have very little agricultural activity. The provinces with the greatest number of cooperatives include Midlands, Manicaland and Mashonaland East (see Figure 1). Thus, for this study Mashonaland East was purposively chosen because it contains one of the largest number of cooperatives in the country.



**Figure 2: Number of agricultural cooperatives per province (CACU database 2016)**

This study utilized the non-probability sampling method, particularly the purposive sampling technique and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling selected participants relevant to the

present research (Kelly 2010) and through convenience sampling participants were selected regarding their locality, availability, and willingness to participate in the study Dörnyei (2007). Member-farmers were selected from producer cooperatives listed in Table 1 and non-members were selected within the same ward. A total of 107 cooperative members (leaders, female and males) were interviewed, and a control group of 43 non-members (female and male) were interviewed.

### 3.5 Data Analysis methods for each objective

The first objective of this research discerned the factors that influence male and female membership in cooperatives. The Probit regression model was adopted to examine these factors. Based on previous studies by Agbonlahor et al. (2012); Arayesh (2011); Fisher & Qaim (2012); Gijssels & Bussels (2014); Gyau et al. (2016); Karlı et al. (2006); Mojo et al. (2017); Nugusse et al. (2013); Zheng et al. (2012); Meier zu Selhausen (2016), and Masten (2000) the following variables were considered as the independent variables; gender, age, marital status, household head, level of education, number of years farming, size of land, market distance and produce farmed.

**Table 3: Dependent and Independent Variables used in Probit Regression Model**

Independent variables	Description	Measurement
	Cooperative Member	Cooperative Member= 0
	Non-coop Member	Non-coop Member= 1
Gender	Sex of farmers	Male= 0, Female=1
Age	Age of Farmers	Years (continuous variable)
Marital Status	Marital Status of farmer	Single= 1, Married=2, Divorced=3; Separated=4; Widow=5
Household Head	Head of their household	No=0; Yes=1
Level of Education	Level of education attained by the farmer	Non-formal; Primary=1; Secondary=2; Graduate=3; post-Graduate=4
Number of Years Farming	Years the farmer has spent farming in cooperative/ non-members total years farming	Years (continuous variable)
Size of Land	Total land size of farmer	In hectares (continuous variable)
Market Distance	Total distance to market	In kilometers (continuous variable)
Produce Farmed	Main produce farmed by farmer	Tobacco=1, Beans=2, Soyabeans=3, Maize=4, Vegetables=5, Tobacco grading= 6, Broilers= 7, Layers= 8,

The second objective determined factors that affect female and male cooperative members' level of participation within cooperatives. This objective was analyzed through three questions. The first question sought to determine what percentage of the participants produce was sold through the cooperative. Answers over 50% show an active level of participation. This criterion was taken from Duguid & Weber (2016) who found that women with increased income from cooperative membership had greater decision-making power over the finances in their homes. The second question asked if members were active in choosing leaders within the cooperative as women are often not represented in leadership roles (Dohmwirth & Hanisch 2019). Since women do not have time because of domestic responsibilities (Goebel 2005) and cooperatives do not hold many leadership roles, voting for leaders was used as a criterion rather than being a leader. This factor was measured through "yes" and "no" answers. The third question used as a determinate for participation levels within the cooperative was whether members viewed themselves as active members within the group. Po and Hickey (2020) established that women with more social capital and connections have more power over their budgeting choices. The responses were measured through the five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The members participation levels were then classified into three categories: active, medium, and low. For a member to be considered 'active' in the cooperative they had to satisfy all three conditions, participants with a 'medium' rank fulfilled two of the conditions and those with 'low' participation levels only satisfied one of the criteria. If members did not meet any of the criteria, they were deemed 'passive'.

The third objective investigated the benefits female cooperative members attained from cooperative membership compared to female non-members. This objective focused on the economic and social benefits members in cooperatives attain. The target groups were male and female cooperative members and male and female non-cooperative members. To illustrate the differences between the group's descriptive statistics of; mean and standard deviation were used. The data was analyzed using the independent t-test.

The fourth objective used thematic analysis to examine the challenges faced by women in agricultural cooperatives. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research tool distinguished for its flexible nature. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it assumes a pragmatist standpoint that considers the experiences and realities of the participants. They also define the model as ‘contextualist’, which means the author was able to deduce meanings from the challenges farmers experience in cooperatives and then sort them into different, broader categories. This objective followed the six (6) steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) required for thematic analysis. In the first step the author familiarized with the collected data. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that it is imperative to examine the data, searching for meanings and patterns. The author ensured that key notes from interviews were written down to refer to the data in the second step. Primary codes were then created by the author in the third step from key elements highlighted in the interviews. Once the codes were generated, the author began to sort the codes into broader themes. In fourth step, the themes were reviewed and in the fifth they were defined and polished. The author then merged the analysis and produced the report in the final step. This step calls for cohesion of themes with the specific objective.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Fouka and Mantzorou (2011) deem research ethics as important because they ensure researchers maintain the self-respect and dignity of the participants as well as issue the attained information effectively. Ethics are regarded as dealing with notions of what is acceptable or unacceptable in society’s laws and what is right and wrong (McMillan & Schumacher 1993).

### **3.7. Informed Consent**

Data enumerators attained permission from participants. They explained the aims and purpose of the study and notified participants of their ability to withdraw from the study at any given time and to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering in the interview (Coaley 2010).

### **3.8. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a key element in social research and participants were notified on how their data would be accessed (BSA 2004; Oliver 2003). Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to participants to allow for an open discourse between the interviewer and participant and establish a rapport.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 4: Characteristics of cooperative members and non-members in the Goromonzi district of Mashonaland East Province**

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Cooperative Members</b>	<b>Non-Cooperative Members</b>	
<b>Total number of members</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>43</b>	
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Cooperative Members</b>	<b>Non- Members</b>	<b>Mean diff.</b>
	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	
Gender	0.48 (0.50)	0.47 (0.50)	0.01
Age	48.1 (10.32)	51.05 (11.10)	-2.95
Marital Status	2.28 (0.98)	2.56 (1.20)	-0.28
Household Head	0.64 (0.48)	0.79 (0.41)	-0.15
Level of Education	2.25 (0.91)	3.02 (0.86)	-0.77
Number of Years Farming	3.78 (1.34)	4.74 (2.05)	-0.96
Size of Land (ha)	3.308 (2.05)	4.453 (1.99)	-1.145
Market Distance (km)	24.98 (5.72)	26.63 (7.44)	-1.65
Produce Farmed	4.42 (2.82)	4.37 (3.17)	0.05

Table 4 illustrates data that was analyzed using chi-square and the results were illustrated using descriptive statistics of; mean, standard deviation and mean difference. The following variables were measured; gender, age, marital status, household head, level of education, number of years farming, size of land, market distance and produce farmed.

The difference in age between the cooperative members and non-members is -2.95 with the non-members having an average age of 51.05 while cooperative members have a mean age of 48.1. The standard deviation of the non-members is greater than that of the cooperatives members by 0.78 which illustrates that their age ranges are more dispersed than cooperative members ages.

The size of land



**Table 5: Factors that influence male and female membership in cooperatives.**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>z.</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>.0597778</b>	<b>.3583314</b>	<b>.017</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>-.0053907</b>	<b>.0148808</b>	<b>-0.36</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>-.2736171</b>	<b>.01394089</b>	<b>-1.96</b>
<b>Household Head</b>	<b>-.2408638</b>	<b>.1394089</b>	<b>-1.96</b>
Level of Education	-4221392	.1465416	-2.88
Number of Years Farming	-.1932331	.0896522	-2.88
Size of Land (ha)	-.2122428	.0735881	-2.88
Market Distance (km)	-.0479752	.02116	-2.27
<b>Produce Farmed</b>	<b>.0056936</b>	<b>.0485348</b>	<b>0.12</b>
<b>Farming Main Household Income</b>	<b>-.5392427</b>	<b>.2921216</b>	<b>-1.85</b>
% Sold through the Cooperative	0.0303618	.0092021	3.30

Our results show that gender, age marital status, household head, produce farmed, farming main source of household income are significant factors that influence male and female membership in cooperatives. According to Abebaw and Haile (2013) women are less likely to participate in cooperatives due to their gender. At the same time Weinberger and Jütting (2001) further argue that women are limited to join cooperatives because the cooperative schedules clash with household duties which are normally assigned to women in Africa. Matchaya (2010) in his findings postulates that male headed households are expected to be members of cooperatives in comparison to those headed by females. Matchay attributes this to cultural practices which impede women's participation in cooperatives.

Comparative studies conducted in Ethiopia that find that male headed households (MHH) are more likely to engage in innovative agricultural practices (such as adopting improved maize varieties) as opposed to women in female headed households (O'Brien et al. 2016). A study conducted by Kassa et al. (2013) explained this occurrence because of men having access to extension services, information a higher level of education and greater decision-making power as opposed to FHH.

In Poland, a farmer's marital status was found to influence his membership in a cooperative (Banaszak 2008). Wives of men in MHH households are more likely to join cooperatives than FHH. Meier zu Selhausen (2016) calculated that women in western Uganda who pooled their land and wages with their spouses were more likely to participate in collective marketing of coffee.

Hovhannisyan and Gould (2012) find that cooperatives remove barriers that prevent farmers from accessing training, information, resources, and input and output markets. When farmers join cooperatives, they can participate in the production of more expensive cash crops such as tobacco. Masten (2000) also points out that certain products must be harvested regularly and in a timely manner. Cooperative membership lowers the costs of production, promotion, and distribution of products, as well as the potential risks to farmers (Nugusse et al. 2013).

Studies show that older age and higher education levels among farmers increase the likelihood of membership in cooperatives (Chagwiza et al. 2016; Fischer & Qaim 2012; Wossen et al. 2017). Older and better educated farmers are likely to have more knowledge, expertise, and social networks that are beneficial for cooperatives and leadership roles within groups (Gyau et al. 2016). In Zambia, for example, the probability of joining a cooperative increased by 1.4% the more years a person attended school (Manda et al. 2020). However, it is also important to note that higher education does not always lead to membership in a cooperative. Kaliyeva et al. (2020) found a decline in cooperative membership in rural Kazakhstan among individuals with higher levels of education, as they find farming unattractive and prefer more formal employment. Farmers' age and the number of years they have spent in agriculture also influence their membership in cooperatives. When farmers have more knowledge and experience in agriculture, they are more likely to join cooperatives.

Du (2006) found that cooperatives gradually and continuously increase the income of their members and develop their organizational competence. This is supported by a study by Sun et al. (2007), who found that farmers who are members of cooperatives earn more than independent farmers. Xue et al. (2012) and Hang et al. (2012) found that both full-time and part-time cooperative members experienced an increase in their net income. Households with family

members in cooperatives also report that associations create multiple sources of income for their families compared to non-members (Lecoutere 2017).

Kirkwood (2005) defines bargaining power as the ability of one association to negotiate with another by charging costs or withdrawing services when its needs are not met. Bijman et al.

(2012) find that farmers who pool their resources and production outputs simultaneously increase their bargaining power with potential buyers and input traders. Cooperative members can mitigate risks associated with farming activities, gain access to marketing services, and benefit from economies of scale. As a result, farmers can increase production and reduce costs. In addition, farmers can purchase their products in a stable manner.

**Table 6: Percentage (%) of produce sold via cooperatives**

<b>Output (n) sold through coop %</b>	<b>Number of farmers</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
n ≤ 25 %	2	1	1
25 > n < 50 %	1	1	0
50 ≥ n ≤ 75 %	29	19	10
75 > n ≤ 100 %	75	35	39
<b>Total ≥ 50 %</b>		<b>54</b>	

From our sample, our results show that 54 out of 56 women from our sample sell at least 50% of their produce through the cooperative as indicated in Table 6 above. According to Duguid & Weber (2016) showed that women who earned a greater revenue through cooperative membership were able to make financial decisions within their homes.

**Table 7: Active cooperative participation**

<b>Active Cooperative Participation</b>	<b>Number of farmers</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
n ≤ 1	42	24	18
1 > n ≤ 2	60	31	29
2 > n ≤ 3	5	1	4

The second question determined if members were active in choosing leaders within the cooperative as women are often not represented in leadership roles (Dohmwirth & Hanisch 2019). According to Omotesho et al. (2019) level of women's level of participation in cooperatives was determined by voting payment of subscriptions of dues and attendance of meetings. Their results show that women relegate their participation level to less critical roles

and they are unwilling to participate as leaders or decision makers. These results are enforced by the high levels of participation of women in the selection process which is a less demanding responsibility.

**Table 8: Leadership Selection**

<b>Leadership Selection</b>	<b>Number of farmers</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>
1= Yes	105	56	49
2= No	2	0	2

The third criteria used as a determinant of the level of participation within the cooperative was whether members considered themselves active members within the group. Po and Hickey (2020) found that women with more social capital and connections had more power over their household decisions. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The level of member participation was then divided into three categories: active, moderate, and low. For a member to be classified as 'active' in the cooperative, he or she had to meet all three conditions, participants with a 'medium' classification met two of the conditions, and those with 'low' participation met only one of the criteria. If members did not meet any of the criteria, they were classified as 'passive.'" We can confirm from that women level of participation in cooperatives is high since its satisfies all the three conditions which are; % of produce sold through cooperatives, active cooperative participation and leadership selection.

**Table 9: Economic benefits female cooperative members attain from cooperative membership compared to female non-members**

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Female members</b>	<b>Female non-members</b>	
<b>Total number of members</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>23</b>	
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Sign level</b>
Increased Income	1.64 (0.483)	3.48 (0.992)	0.00
Increased Bargaining power	1.77 (0.467)	4.00 (1.000)	.059
Better access to services	1.86 (.0586)	3.74 (0.964)	.055
<b>Lower Operating Costs</b>	<b>1.79 (0.414)</b>	<b>4.09 (0.949)</b>	<b>.013</b>
<b>Access to Input Markets</b>	<b>1.84 (0.458)</b>	<b>3.74 (0.810)</b>	<b>.002</b>
Access to Output Markets	1.80 (0.553)	3.13 (0.815)	.058
Increased Yield	1.77 (0.467)	3.16 (0.941)	.000
<b>Reduced Production Cost</b>	<b>1.77 (3.43)</b>	<b>3.16 (0.788)</b>	<b>.002</b>
<b>Stable Purchase of Produce</b>	<b>1.68 (0.543)</b>	<b>3.39 (0.839)</b>	<b>.026</b>
Less Marketing Time	1.68 (0.543)	3.87 (0.815)	.490
Better Produce	1.84 (0.458)	3.74 (0.810)	.000

Results from the above table 9 shows the level of significance of each economic benefit. From the table we can deduce that lower operating costs, access to input markets, reduced production cost and stable purchase of produce are the main economic benefits derived from cooperative membership.

When women are members of cooperatives, many of them can access loans, market and lower cost (Périlleux & Szafarz 2015) which gives them opportunities to purchase homes and let out rooms, build stores and start businesses which increases their income (Rani & Yadeta 2016).

It is often difficult for women to obtain credit on their own. A study conducted by Ghebremichael (2013) in Mekelle, Ethiopia, found that women experienced economic benefits when they joined cooperatives. The study found that 67% of women were able to reduce their loan liabilities and 97% increased their income and later became self-employed. In Uganda, women who are members of a cooperative were found to be less insecure about their basic needs and nutrition than women who are not members of a cooperative.

Kirkwood (2005) defines bargaining power as the ability of one association to negotiate with another by charging costs or withdrawing services when its needs are not met. Bijman et al. (2012) find that farmers who pool their resources and production outputs simultaneously increase their bargaining power with potential buyers and input traders. Cooperative members can mitigate risks associated with farming activities, gain access to marketing services, and benefit from economies of scale. As a result, farmers can increase production and reduce costs. In addition, farmers can purchase their products in a stable manner.

#### **4.5. Challenges faced by Women in Cooperatives**

##### **4.5.1. Time Allocation**

Participants stated that one major challenge they face in cooperatives is juggling household responsibilities and making it on time to meetings.

*“Although I manage to attend meetings regularly, because of my duties at home, sometimes I arrive to meetings late. Latecomers are made to pay fines which at times can become costly. If I see I am running too late, I may skip one or two meetings to avoid fines.”* (Female cooperative member)

*“My husband expects me to cook, clean and collect water all before I leave for the meeting. Sometimes it’s a lot of pressure for me and its difficult catching meeting times.”* (Female cooperative member)

This theme captured the participant’s difficulties in allocating enough time for household duties and the cooperative. These participants experienced negative emotions as they felt overwhelmed because of their domestic responsibilities. They also feel they do not receive sympathy as they

are forced to pay fines when they arrive late. As expressed by (Duetsche et al. 2001) cooperatives have increased in popularity due to their informal nature and greater time flexibility. However, they still face challenges allocating enough time for such groups as they do not receive help for their household duties from their spouse.

#### **4.5.2. Distrust**

Participants feel that there is dishonesty among the treasurers in the committee and they believe that funds are often misused.

*“Most of the members have little trust in the treasurers because sometimes we do not see the profits. Some of the treasurers are honest, but others use the money to pay their children’s fees or buy alcohol at the bar”* (Male Members)

*“Sometimes we do not want to pay our membership fees because the money goes straight into their pockets. There have been times when membership fees have been forcibly taken from us.”* (Male Member)

For cooperatives to be successful, trust must be present. Studies have highlighted the significance of trust in cooperatives as it mitigates free riding, raises commitment levels and increases efficiency (Ostrom 2000). In this case, some cooperative members (both female and male) report feeling levels of distrust towards those in higher positions. As a result, this affects their commitment towards paying membership fees.

#### **4.5.3. Conflict**

Cooperative members agreed that conflict is a major challenge experienced in the cooperative. Women stated that they felt a lack of respect from male members, while both male and female members state that it is hard for them to reach a consensus when it comes to decision making.

*“Often times the men in the group do not view us as equal members in the cooperative. Sometimes they show very little respect towards us (women) and our views.”* (Female cooperative member)

*“When women raise issues in the cooperative they are not taken as seriously as when an issue is raised by male members. This sometimes causes conflict among members.”* (Male cooperative member)

Anderson and Henehan (2003) noted cooperatives with differentiated members may have opposing goals. In this case, in rural areas men and women hold different social statuses and responsibilities in their communities. This causes opposition among members as men often take women’s views lightly.

#### **4.5.4. Culture**

All cooperative members agreed that conflict is a major challenge experienced among members. Women stated that they felt a lack of respect from male members, while both male and female members state that it is hard for them to reach a consensus when it comes to decision making.

*“Often times the men in the group do not view us as equal members in the cooperative. Sometimes they show very little respect towards us (women) and our views.”* (Female cooperative member)

*“When women raise issues in the cooperative they are not taken as seriously as when an issue is raised by male members. This sometimes causes conflict among members.”* (Male cooperative member)

Anderson and Henehan (2003) noted cooperatives with differentiated members may have opposing goals. In this case, in rural areas men and women hold different social statuses and responsibilities in their communities. This causes opposition among members as men often take women’s views lightly.



## **5. Conclusion**

This research aimed to explore female and male cooperative member's levels of participation within the cooperative, the benefits that female cooperative members receive as members in cooperatives in comparison to males and females that are not in a cooperative and lastly, the challenges that women face within the cooperatives. Regarding the member's level of participation, what is interesting to note is that despite the many responsibilities' women have (taking care of children and the home), women were more active in cooperatives than men. In terms of the third specific objective, women and male cooperative members highlighted five main challenges face by women within cooperatives. These challenges were coded into the following themes by the author, time allocation, wage gaps, distrust, culture and conflict.

Although women face challenges in cooperatives it must be noted that cooperatives have more benefits than they do negatives. This is seen through the benefits women attain through membership (objective 2.). However, by identifying the challenges recommendations could be drawn to try and improve working environments for its female members.

## **6. Recommendations**

- The government of Zimbabwe should carry out research to identify all agricultural cooperatives in the country as well as formulate a database with this information and make it accessible to the public.
- The government of Zimbabwe should implement laws that protect women and their rights and access to land.
- Communities should stray away from patriarchal views in cooperatives and cultivate equality in the groups. Men should respect the opinions and views of female cooperative members.

- Treasurers in cooperatives should have an open book policy, whereby their account books are available to all cooperative members. They should encourage an atmosphere of trust among members by being transparent.

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## Appendices



Figure 1: Author with female cooperative member





Figure 2: Cooperative members standing around their crops



Figure 3: Picture of Cooperative members in a meeting



Date: .....

I am a student at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague conducting a research on women empowerment through agricultural cooperatives. I kindly ask for your participation in this survey. All responses will remain anonymous. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

**Women Empowerment through agricultural cooperatives in Goromonzi (Great Bromely-Ward 22), Mashonaland East.**

**Questionnaire**

**Section A: Socio-demographic Characteristics**

1. Gender of respondent

Male  Female

2. Age of Respondent:

.....

3. Marital Status:

Single  Married  Divorced  Separated  Polygamous union   
Widow

4. You are the head of your household

Yes  No

5. How many cooperative members are in your household? (**Specify relationship with member**)

.....

6. Level of Education

Non-formal  Primary  Secondary  Graduate  Post-Graduate

7. What is your position within the cooperative

Member of the coop  Employee of the coop  Director, Member of the board   
Chairman of the board  Non-memeber

8. Name of cooperative

.....

9. Number of female members in the cooperative

.....

10. Number of male members in the cooperative

.....

11. Number of years spent as a member in the cooperative

.....

12. Main produce farmed

.....

13. Total size of your land (in hectares)

.....

14. Distance from your farm to the market (km)

.....

15. Farming is your main source of Income

Yes  No

16. Your salary is the main source of income in the household

Yes  No

17. Land is a prerequisite to join the cooperative

Yes

18. Productive resources are required to join the cooperative

Yes  No

**Section B: Economic Impact on Members**

19. Perceived benefits you have received from being in a cooperative

19.1 Increased Income

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.2 Better bargaining power

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.3 Access to services otherwise unavailable (e.g. credit)

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.4 Lower operating costs

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.5 Access to input markets

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.6 Access to output markets

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.7 Increased yield

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

19.8 Reduced Production Costs

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

If other, please state the benefits:

.....

20. My social contacts have increased since joining the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

21. Purchase of my produce is more stable since joining the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

22. I spend less time marketing and selling my produce since joining the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

23. I can process my produce better since joining the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

24. Percentage of your production sold through the cooperative [%]

.....

25. Women have access to and control over household resources  
Yes  No

**Section C: Education, Training, and Information**

26. Access to relevant market information has improved because of my membership in the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

27. Access to information about good agricultural practices has improved because of my membership in the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

28. I have better chance to share my experiences with other farmers because of the membership in cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

29. Cooperative provides me opportunities for capacity building (e.g. trainings, information)

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Section D: Voluntary and Open Membership**

30. It is important that most members are of the same gender.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

31. It is important that both gender is present in the leadership position of the cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Section E: Democratic Member Control**

32. I participated in the selection of the leader of the cooperative

Yes  No

33. My cooperative functions according to the cooperative principles of democracy and transparency.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

34. Members honestly and openly share their views in the cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

35. Members share their limitations and concerns with each other.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

36. Members share their needs with each other.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

37. I believe that my opinion can influence the decision-making processes in the cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

38. I attend all the meetings of the cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

39. I consider myself as an active member of the cooperative? (eg. discussion, voting, proposing new topics).

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

If not, what hinders your participation? (Please explain)

.....

40. The director always consults the members before important decision.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

41. The director creates an atmosphere of trust in the cooperative.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

42. The director allows the members to express dissenting point of views.

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

43. Members in the cooperative trust me

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

44. I trust members in the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

45. I am autonomous in the cooperative

Strongly agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**Section F: Active female participation**

46. Women and men have the same opportunity to participate in training provided by the cooperative.

Strongly agree       Agree       Neutral       Disagree       Strongly Disagree

47. It is crucial to have women members because they can enrich the cooperative performance.

Strongly agr      Agree       Neutral       Disagree       Strongly Disagree

48. It is crucial to have a woman representative in the Board of the cooperative.

Strongly agre      Agree       Neutral       Disagree      Strongly Disagree

49. I have freedom and mobility to participate in cooperatives

Yes       No

**Section G: Challenges faced by women within the cooperative**

50. What major challenges do women face within the cooperative?

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