

Members' Commitment to Cooperative Organizations: An Analysis from Social Identity Perspective

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Introdução

Cooperatives are organizations created to achieve the interests of its members. A big question surrounding those types of organizations is: How to keep members committed? The ability of the board of directors and management to strengthen loyalty and commitment of members is likely to depend on how well they understand and align the interests and actions of the cooperative with those multiple and differing interests and needs of the members. Cooperatives are a kind of collective action initiatives. Social identification is considered as lying at the heart of collective actions.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

The literature on cooperative organizations highlights the importance of maintaining members committed and loyal to the organization to improve its resilience and sustainability in the long run. Many scholars tried to identify the factors influencing members' commitment to cooperative organizations. This paper contributes to this debate by exploring psychological theories of self and group identification. This paper aims to explore the use of social identity theories to explain people's association and commitment to cooperative organizations.

Fundamentação Teórica

Theoretical background is based in two segments. First, it is discussed the concept of cooperative organizations and a brief discussion of cooperatives as a form of collective action. Then it is presented a discussion of social identity theories. A systematic literature review was conducted to collect papers that used social identity theories or mentioned members identification as a predictor of member commitment in cooperatives. Analysis was made based on the discussion of social identity theories in the papers; how do these theories explain members affiliation and commitment to cooperatives.

Discussão

Social identification is mainly defined based on Ashforth and Mael (1989), as the extent to which individuals identify themselves with the organization; as a social capital concept (Bauwens & Defourny, 2017); or as different identities people may have while members of a cooperative (Ghuri et al., 2022; Limnios et al., 2018). Only a few papers use social identity theories to explain why people associate to cooperatives. On the other side, these theories are widely used to explain member commitment, sense of belonging, decision to leave the cooperative and burnout.

Conclusão

It can be concluded that social psychological factors, based on social identity approaches, can explain why people associate with cooperative organizations and why they remain members and keep committed to them. This can be said from the number of studies using those socio-psychological approaches to explain member commitment to cooperatives. An insight of the paper's analysis is the role and relevance of communication in building members' trust and shared meanings.

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