

Role of Consumer Cooperative Society in Price Stability in the Case of Goh Consumer Cooperatives Benchi-Maji Zone, South West of Ethiopia

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This research was conducted to assess the role of Goh consumer cooperative society in price stability in the case of Benchi-Maji zone. The main objectives of the study was investigating the pricing policy of Goh consumer cooperatives society, assessing the difference between pricing on selected commodities charged by cooperatives society and private sectors and examining factors affecting price setting process of the society. The samples were selected from both user customers and members of Goh consumer cooperatives by using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Accordingly, the researcher has been selected 40 respondents from both stratus by using simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. The study revealed the society has significant role in stabilizing price in the market by selling very important commodities to the user at the lower price as compared to private traders. Some of the challenge they face were like competition from private sectors and shortage of commodity in the supplier side. To overcome these problems, the society should have to create relation with other cooperatives like producer cooperative and SACCO to avoid the problems related with shortage of goods and finance. Beside this, cooperative promotion union should have to give training, technical assistance and cooperative education to societies to improve overall activities.

Key Words: Consumer cooperative, price stability, pricing policy


Introduction

According to ILo cooperative society is ‘‘ an autonomous association of persons varying in number, who are grappling with the same economic difficulties and who, voluntarily associate on a basis of equal rights and obligations, endeavor to solve those difficulties mainly by conducting at their own risk and undertaking to which they have transferred one or more of such of their economic functions as correspond to their common needs and by utilizing this undertaking in joint cooperation for their common material and moral benefits. Therefore, it is tool of living that enables the individual to achieve heights that cannot be reached in isolation. Consumer cooperatives are enterprises owned by consumers and managed democratically which aim at fulfilling the needs and aspirations of their members. They operate within the market systems, independently of the state, as a form of mutual aid, oriented towards services rather than pecuniary profit. Consumer cooperatives often take the form of retail outlets owned and operated by their consumers, such as health care, insurance, housing, utilities, and personal finance or including credit unions.

In addition, Price stability is a situation in which prices in an economy do not change much overtime. Price stability would mean that an economy would not

experience inflation or deflation. It is not common for an economy to have price stability. It is expected cooperatives to play a vital role in meeting the demand of consumers to porn production by providing at reasonable price compared to open market. Moreover, a cooperative provides services to members and non-members for their non-consumption purpose, and consumption and processing activity by stabilizing the market price. Therefore, the study was designed to assess the major price stabilization role of Goh consumer cooperatives society play in Aman sub city.

Today in Ethiopia there are major problems that hinder the development of country. Among those problems the most frequently occurred and dominant one is price fluctuation of products in the market. The term price fluctuation means both prolonged inflation and deflation of price of products without expectation of marketers as well as users. In this case consumer cooperatives have vital role in stabilizing the price of goods by providing consumption goods at reasonable price and it save societies from exploitation of traders

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and unexpected inflation and deflation so, the researcher motivated to study this existing problem that restrict cooperatives societies in price stabilizing activities in selected case area. Some of those problems are: Due to market instability most of the time consumers are highly affected by middlemen exploitation (meaning increasing unnecessary costs on the users) the challenge force the consumers to use the product of cooperative at reasonable price without any exploitation. But there is some challenges which make cooperative society not play this role. Among these: High competitions that face cooperatives from private sectors/traders, inability of society to make integration with other cooperative such as producer cooperatives and Low level awareness of surrounding community about cooperatives and its role in price stability. As a result the researcher is motivated to this study, to identify role of cooperatives in price stabilizing and the challenge they face during market price stabilization.

Literature Review

Definition of cooperatives

A cooperatives is an autonomous association of persons united together voluntarily to meet their common economic social and cultural need and aspiration through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Cooperative are based on values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and responsibility and ethical values like honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

In addition cooperative believes in the principle of voluntarily and membership, democratic member contour, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among cooperative and concern for the community. (FCA 2009)

Cooperative in historical prospective

The industrial revolution that has spread over the world in the past 200 years, most of all, is featured by the rising power of big businesses, forming commanding highest in marketed development. The dominant power basically coming from economy of scale, efforts to empower should focus on mobilizing scattered resources. Cooperative entrepreneurship occurs in this context. More than anything else, it aims at overcoming competitive disadvantages on the side of the powerless, and thus empowering by means of cooperatives. As cooperatives entrepreneurship takes business opportunities, it differs from charity in profit motive.

Yet the spirit of cooperation sharing, so entailing moderation in community concern and autonomous

organization, from this approach to cooperation in the perspective of industrialization –led development, we can understand better the international cooperative association's definition of cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspiration through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise." (Soon-Young Jung, 2006)

Consumer cooperative is an association of person organized by the voluntary basis of an individual who collects their money, knowledge and effort for decreasing their consumption cost by providing needed commodity services within reasonable price for the members and to build their economic capacity, and controlled by active participation of all members and its goal is satisfy the members requirements.

Consumer cooperatives development

In the past 150 years, since the first cooperatives enterprise emerged out of the excess of the industrial revolution, cooperatives have spread over 100 countries into a diverse range of sector and activities. Although cooperatives have been demonstrated to be effective in agriculture, Cooperatives are now significant in economic and social sector with membership of approximately 800 million people throughout the world (ICA, 2007).

Consumer cooperative is a business owned by its customers for their mutual benefits. It is a form of free enterprise that is oriented towards service rather than pecuniary profit. Consumer cooperatives often take the form of retail outlets owned by their customers. The customer of goods and services the cooperatives provides are often also the individual who have provided the capital required to launch or purchase that enterprise (cultivate, coop/wiki /consumer cooperatives). In some countries, consumer cooperatives are known as cooperative retail societies or retail cooperatives through they should not confused with retailers cooperatives, whose members are retailers rather than consumers (Hajala, 2000).

There are many types of cooperatives. These are health care insurance and housing cooperatives as well as credit unions, agricultural and housing cooperatives. The major difference between consumer cooperatives and other forms of business is that; the purpose of a consumer cooperative association is to provide quality of goods and services at the lowest price or cost to consumers.

Rather than to sell goods and services at the highest price above cost that consumers' cooperatives price goods and services at competitive market rates.

The difference is that where a for profit enterprise will threat that the difference between cost (including

labor etc) and selling price as financial gain or investors, the consumer owned enterprise may retain this to accumulate capital in common ownership, distribute it to meet the customers social objectives or refund this sum to the consumer owners as an over payment (J.van dooren). Large consumer's cooperatives are run much any other business and required women managers, clerks, product and customers to keep the doors open and the business running. In small business the customers (owners) are often workers as well (ibid).

Benefits of consumer cooperatives

A consumer cooperative is an independent group that is an independent group that is made up of individuals who voluntarily organize to provide themselves and their families with services they need since, cooperative represents a group of people; it has the buying power to relieve discounts value added services and accesses of exclusive offers. The consumer cooperatives have the following advantages; like facilitating its members in getting pure and unadulterated goods at a competitive price, develops a state of morale booster to the poor people who develop greater confidence among themselves as societies purchasing goods in bulk quantities from the producers these are better position to supply the goods at a competitive price to its members and it improves purchasing power of members (Wikipedia 2017).

Function of consumer cooperatives

Consumer cooperative society that the society which procure assortment of household goods to its members at a cheapest possible price and ensures availability of goods to its members at any time is been needed.

Some of the functions are listed blow as follows:

- Selling pure and unadulterated goods.
- Ensuring the availability of goods in the market.
- Selling at a very reasonable price.
- Ensuring that the goods are sold with goods measure and weights.
- Helping the government in distribution policy the period of scarcity and educating its members (Hajala, 2000).

Definition of price

Price is value that will purchase goods at finite quantity weights or other measure of a good or service. It is also the values in exchange of goods, pricing can be used at a tool of management by manipulating demands and supply (Kotele 2003).

Factors affecting price decision

The principle of decision of price affected by several factors. They are;

- The nature and the extent of consumer demand.
- Cost of manufacturing
- Channels of distribution
- Promotion strategy
- Taxation and government regulation (Learning material, principle of marketing).

Basic approaches to price policy

There are two basic approaches to price:

- Cost approach
- Market competitive approach.

The cost approach is based on cost of production. The fixed cost, variable cost, margin required and rate of returns are the determinants of pricing in this approaches. The second approaches starts from the consumer pricing is based price, which in turn will determine the retail price, whole sale price and the producer price of goods. In this approach the cost is adjusted to the markets (Kotler, 2003).

Price stability and purpose

Price stability is a situation in which prices in an economy do not change much over time. Price stability would mean that an economy would not experience inflation or deflation. It is not common for an economy to have price stability. It is shortly defined as avoiding both prolonged inflation and deflation. Price stability contributes to achieving high levels of economic activity and employment by:

- Improving the transparency of price mechanisms.
- Reducing inflation risk premium interest rates
- Avoiding unproductive activities to hedge against the negative impact of inflation or deflation.
- Reducing or preventing an arbitrary redistribution of wealth and income as a result of unexpected deflation or inflation and contributing to financial stability (European Central Bank 2017).

Cooperative marketing in price stability

The main objective of cooperative marketing is to give fair prices to farmers, especially small farmers. This will also save farmers from the exploitation of middle men. Thus, the cooperative marketing will result in establishment of fair system.

The arthiyas and commission agents not only exploit the small farmers, but they also charge higher price from urban consumers through speculation, black marketing and hoarding. Thus, their behavior contributes to inflation. Therefore, for the sake of price stability cooperative marketing becomes necessary.

With the help of cooperative marketing facilities the farmers can get rid of the problems of transportation of produce, processing of agricultural goods and storage of agricultural goods. To provide this service cooperative societies must protect interest of customers in addition to framers while formulating cooperative marketing societies the democratic values must be kept in view and more and more educated person be members of the societies to protect inters of users. (economics; exposed.com/ co-operative...)

Methods

Description of the study area

The study was conducted in SNNPR in Benchi-Maji Zone at Aman sub town, Goh consumer cooperative societies. Benchi-Maji Zone is one of the zones in SNNPR that located in south west of Addis Ababa and it found in 561 Km away from Addis. Based on the 2007 census conducted by CSA this zone has a total population of 652,531; of whom 325348 were males and 329183 were women’s. The total area of this zone was estimated to 19252km². Benchi-Maji zone population density is about 33.89 while 75,241 or 11.53% are urban habitants, and the remaining are rurals. The six largest ethnic groups reside in the zone were the Benchi (42.04%), the Me’en (15%), the Kafficho (7.46%), the Amahara (6.95%), the Dizi(6.46%) and suri (6%); and also there are other ethnic groups made up of 15.03% total population of these zone.

Table 1: Data of membership period

Description	Periods in E.C	Frequency	Percentage (%)
When you have joined Goh consumer co-operatives?	Since establishment	21	52.5%
	In 2006	7	17.5
	In 2007	12	30
	Total	40	100

The above table shows that out of the total 40 respondents 21(52.5%) were joined the society in its establishment and the remaining 7 (17.5%) and 12 (30%) joined the society in 2006 and 2007 E.C respectively. From this the researcher concludes that the numbers of

Sample size and sampling techniques

40 respondents were selected from members and non members of Goh consumer cooperatives society by using first stratified sampling techniques followed by simple random sampling To make strata researcher first categorize respondents into members and non members. The researcher selected 20 respondents from each stratum by using simple random sampling technique from both categories. Primary data were collected from members, non-members, and manger of society. Secondary data were collected from minutes meeting of the society. Annual performance reports by laws of societies and other relevant document of Goh consumer cooperatives society.

The researchers have been gathered relevant data by using semi-structured interview with management committee and paid employees. Open ended and close ended questionnaires were prepared for members and users of the society. The data has been analyzed and interpreted by using descriptive statistics such as tables and percentages and qualitative data were analyzed through brief interpretation qualitatively.

Results

Under this topic the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data that gathered from respondents through open ended; close ended questionnaires and semi structured interview. In addition to this the data collected from secondary sources were also analyzed and interpreted in this chapter by using tables, percentages and numerically as follows;

Members and period of their membership

members in the society is increasing through its operation period.

Share Contribution of members

Table 2: Summary of share contribution

Particular	Number of shares	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How many shares do you have from the total share of the society?	3	4	10
	2	11	27.5
	1	25	62.5
	Total	40	100

Based on the information that depicted on the above table, from total 40 respondent 25(62.5%) were owners of one share and the remaining 11 (27.5%) and 4(10%) were holds 2 and 3 shares respectively from the total share of society. From this one can conclude that majority of Goh consumer cooperative members

have only one share out of societies total share and this shows that the living standards of societies members was underdeveloped and not more depended on services of societies.

Reason of membership

Table 3: Reason of being member of the society

Why do you join Goh consumer cooperatives?	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	To get good at fair price	23	57.5
	To sell their own commodity to the society	5	12.5
	To avoid exploitation of middle men	12	30
	Total	40	100

Table 3 reveals that out of 40 respondents 23(57.5%) were responded that they joined the society to get goods at fair price and the remaining 30% and 12.5% of the respondents were joined to avoid the exploitation of middle man, private traders and to sell the commodities to society respectively. Therefore, depending on the response of societies the researcher conclude

that the main targets of peoples when joining to this cooperative society is to get goods at fair price and the remaining benefits comes due to this case. Then based on this data Goh consumer cooperatives has contribution in stabilizing the price goods in market.

Users and members satisfaction

Table 4: Summary of member satisfactions

Item	After you have joined this cooperative society do you get service you as you expect from the society?	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1		yes	16	40%
		No	24	60%
		Total	40	100
2	Do you satisfied with the services of your coop?	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
		Very satisfied	5	12.5
		Satisfied	13	32.5
		Moderate	18	45
		Unsatisfied at all	4	10
Total	40	100		

As it's depicted on the table 4 above 12% of the respondents were satisfied by the supply of goods quality supply at time and etc in different levels of satisfaction i.e. very satisfied, satisfied, moderate and this idea were supported by 12.5%;32.5%,45%, respectively. The remaining 10% of the respondents were not

satisfied with provision goods in the society. Generally researcher concludes that 90% of members were satisfied with society's service according to their needs and capacity of the society. Because they can get the product at fair price when compared to other market, they get supply of consumption goods at a given time, relatively high quality, continuity of supply and

save members and non members from exploitation of private traders.

Kind of commodity the society supply

Table 5: Summary of available commodity

What kind of goods you get from this society?	Products	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Sugar	10	25
	Grain	4	10
	Oil	12	30
	Others	14	35
	Total	40	100

On the above table 5 the researcher depicted the data that gathered from respondents numerically as 25% of respondents answered they get sugar, 10% are get grain, 30% get oil and the remaining 35% purchase other products (macaroni, paper, soap, etc.). From this

the researcher conclude that the society highly provide sugar, oil, and grain to users and members at fair price.

Purchasing frequency of respondents

Table 6: Summary of users purchasing frequency

Description	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How often do you purchase goods from this cooperative society?	Always	13	32.5
	Rarely	9	22.5
	Sometimes	18	45
	Total	40	100

This table shows as that out of total 40 respondents about 32% were purchase goods always, 22.5% rarely and 45% purchase sometimes. Considering this illustration the researcher concludes that members of Goh consumer cooperatives society purchase goods sometimes. Because the income of users and members not permanent seasonal and also users purchase goods out

of cooperatives such as from private shops. This indicates that low level of purchasing frequency also affect the society’s contribution to stabilize price of goods in market.

The living standards of members after the join cooperatives

Table 7: Member’s living standards after membership

Do you think your living standard improved after you join Goh cooperative society?	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Yes	32	80
	No	8	20
	Total	40	100

As we have seen from the above table 7, out of 40 respondents 32(80%) were responded ‘Yes’ and the remaining 8(20%) responded ‘No’. From this one can conclude that the living standard of Goh cooperatives society members improved after they joined the society through its services and it create job opportunities ,increase income for members ,and also for non members provide goods at comparative price. This indicate

that Goh consumer cooperatives play role on improving living standard of community and members as well as in stabilizing price of commodity in market.

Comparison of selling price of consumer cooperatives and private traders

Table 8: Consumer cooperative selling price

Description	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does a consumer cooperative sell goods at fair price with regard to private traders?	Yes	40	100
	No	0	0
	Total	40	100

As we can understand from the above table whole respondents responded that society sell goods at fair price regarding to private traders.

Comparison between selling price of Goh consumer cooperatives with other private sectors for selected commodities

Table 9: Price comparison of some selected items

Types of items	Unit per cost				Price Difference
	Cooperatives		Private market		
	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	In price
Packed food oil	3 liter	75 birr	3 liter	80-85	5-10 birr
Sugar flavor	1 Kg	18 birr	1 Kg	25 birr	7 birr
Macaroni	1 Kg	17 birr	1 Kg	18 birr	1 birr
'Misir'	1 Kg	30 birr	1Kg	32 birr	2 birr
Soap	1 Soap	9 birr	1 Soap	10 birr	1 birr

On the above table 9, the researcher provided the real price comparison between the two. As it shows that packed food oil is sold in birr 75 for litters in Goh consumer cooperative society while it sold for 80-85 birr for 3 liters in private market, as one can understand from this amounted price, there were from 5-10 birr difference between the price of the two. Also other goods that mentioned in above or out of those mentioned that exist in the society sold comparatively lower price when compared with other private sectors. According to the survey data illustrated on the table,

the prices of the goods in Goh consumer cooperative society were relatively fair and reasonable to purchase consumption goods. Because the objective of Goh consumer cooperative is not to maximize profit but they serve society with reasonable price. Based on the information gathered and analyzed above, the one can decide on the price of goods in Goh consumer cooperative society were fair and has major contribution to stabilize market price of goods.

Consumer cooperatives selling price

Table 10: Reason of cooperatives to sell their product at fair price

Why do Goh consumer cooperatives sell product at fair price?	Reasoning of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Because of its own aim/goal	14	35
	To solve the problems of members (community)	21	52.5
	To get support from government	5	12.5
	Total	40	100

Table 10 shows that 35% of respondents said that they sell their products at fair price due to its own aim, 52.5% responded that to solve the problems of members and the remaining 12.5% said that in order to get support from government. Based on the respondents answer the researcher conclude that societies through providing products without involvement of middle

man at fair price on the time of need and in the area that they required more the products. Generally the primary objective of cooperative society is to solve the problem of members and non members.

Favorability of price of goods to users

Table 11: Summary of user’s perception on price of goods

Do you think the price of goods charged by cooperative is favorable to users and reasonable?	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Yes	37	92.5
	No	3	7.5
	Total	40	100

Table 11 shows that 92.5% of respondents answered price changed by cooperative is favorable to users while only 3(7.5%) responded ‘No’. From this response of selected respondents, the researcher generalizes that price of goods changed by Goh consumer cooperative society is favorable to users. According to data collected through interviewing the manager to the society about the reasonability of price changes by cooperative to goods he responded that, price commodity

in Goh cooperative society was reasonable when compared with private traders because the price of products reduced at least 0.50 cents on each goods when compared with private soaps. From those both responses of user and manger the researcher conclude that price of goods in goods consumer cooperative society is reasonable as well as favorable to users.

Factors affecting pricing process of society

Table 12: Factors affect price setting process of society

Factors	Frequency	Percentages (%)
External factors (competitors)	10	25
Internal factors	7	17.5
Government regulation	5	12.5
Both external and internal	18	45
Total	40	100

As depicted on the table 12, majority respondents 45% responded that both external and internal factors affect pricing process of the society, 25% of respondents answered external factors, and the remaining 17.5% and 12.5% said that internal and government regulation respectively. When these tabulated idea of respondents concluded to the general existing situation of society; the pricing policy of society was affected by both external and internal factors. In this internal factors that

may affect pricing policy were; low level supply of goods of seasonal fluctuation of supply, problem finance and etc. externals were competitors from private business sector.

Interview data analysis

What types of pricing policy your society use

Table 13: Pricing policy of society

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Market approach		
Cost approach	√	100%

Manger responded that Goh consumer cooperatives use cost approach to price their products. Because the main objectives of society is to serve society by providing consumption good at fair price rather than collecting capital /profit by exploiting users. From this one can conclude that the base for pricing of goods for Goh consumer cooperatives is cost based that do not consider the existing market price changed by private traders for goods in the existing area.

Manger answered ‘Yes’ for this question because our societies base to pricing good is not the market price and it lower than market price goods with the same quality at least by 0.50 cents. So we can conclude that the society’s price of good is reasonable.

Do you think this cooperative society contribute to price stabilization

Do you think price charged by your society is reasonable?

For this question manger Mr. Tilahun responded that ‘Yes’ but there are some problems that restrict societies ability to contribute for price stability in the market i.e. scarcity of commodity in society, fluctuation of

supply of products, lack of enough capital to purchase at good season of production season, lack of awareness about in market center and customer's low level understanding about cooperative societies and its contribution to the livelihood of society. Rather this problem's restriction Goh consumer cooperative society has major contribution in stabilizing price of product in market. From this, researcher concludes that the society contributes to price stability even there were hindering factors for their contribution.

Conclusion

Consumer cooperatives are very significant in stabilizing the price of goods in today's markets and according to the study finding Goh consumer cooperative society is one which is playing a crucial role in price stabilization in the study area. As the study finding shows that Goh consumer cooperative is supplying goods at a fair price for the society and also for the members as 57.5% of respondents responded; and the society more focuses on supplying sugar as 32.5% of respondents responded and next to this Goh consumer cooperative society is delivering oil as 30% of respondents responded.

Regarding to the improvement of the living standard of members of the society after they join this cooperatives, accordingly 80% of respondents responded that majority of the members have improved their living standard after joining this society by getting goods at reasonable prices, in getting dividend to increase their income, in getting education and this shows that Goh consumer cooperatives society is playing a crucial role in improving member's living standard.

In addition, the respondents were compared the price charged by Goh society and other private traders on the same goods or items. Accordingly, majority of the respondents responded as Goh consumer cooperatives society has been selling goods at a fair price when they compare with private sectors, this is because to solve the problems of members as well as the community.

As to the factors which affect the setting market price by Goh consumer cooperatives society; the majority of respondents (45%) responded that external and internal factors affect the price setting process of the society. Among these factors scarcity of commodity is the most dominant internal factor that affected the society's price setting process. Regarding to pricing policy, the society currently uses cost approaches as 100% of the respondents responded.

Generally, Goh consumer cooperatives society is providing significant benefits for the members as well as non members/communities of the study area by improving the living standard of society. However, there

are a lot of challenges which affect the normal operation of this society; among these external pressures are private traders, shortage of commodity in the market and price fluctuation.

Recommendations

Based on the fact of discussion in the last chapter four, the researcher forwarded some recommendations that will help the society to improve their activity and achieve their objectives effectively. According to the finding of the study the society has a significant role in stabilizing price in the market. Even though they are playing a crucial role in society's economy and provision of consumption goods to society at reasonable prices the societies suffer from different problems that hinder their activity. So, the researcher has forwarded the following suggestions and recommendations for society to deal with those problems and achieve their objectives. The researcher's recommendations are:-

- Goh consumer cooperative society should have to create a relation with other cooperatives like producer cooperative and SACCO to avoid the problems related with shortage of goods and finance.
- Government and cooperative promotion union should have to give training, technical assistance and cooperative education to societies to improve overall activities.
- Benchi-Maji Zone cooperative promotion bureau should work with marketing office and cooperatives in collaboration to create awareness about cooperatives to the community.
- The society should pay special attention on the quality of supply and their relative price to satisfy society and consumers effectively rather than competing with private markets.

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