People crave the power to make decisions about their own lives. From political democracy to estate committees to family meetings, humans prefer not to give up control and instead have a say in decisions that affect their well-being. Employees within organisations feel the same way. No one wants a boss who makes all the choices without involving them.

Business Talk in the *Business Daily* two weeks ago discussed the impact that participative leaders have on their employees. Interestingly, do leaders that involve their subordinates in verdicts also function the same way within member-based organisations? In Kenya, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives states that the country hosts 2,996 co-operatives where citizens come together to form legal entities that support them in some sort of specific industry.
The sectors that co-operatives operate in range from bee keeping, tobacco farmers, dairy producers, coffee growers, housing co-operatives, and SACCOs, etc.

The United States International University of Africa in collaboration with Durham University, Global Communities, and USAID, surveyed 19 agricultural co-operatives in 12 Kenyan counties in order to ascertain, among other goals, the impact that participative leaders have on advantageous organizational and community outcomes within member-based co-operatives.

In continuation, participative leadership played a minimal direct role in the perceived success of the co-operative. However, when the members of co-operatives trusted the organisation and the leaders, then participative leadership became a powerful tool. When co-operative members did not trust their leaders, then the levels of participative leadership held no affect on most outcomes.

Famed researchers Roger Mayer, James Davis, and David Schoorman defined trust as the willingness to risk, not taking the risk, or acting on it. When someone decides to take a risk on another person whether in the form of getting married, being employed, or having a friend help them solve a problem, that means that the individual holds some amount of initial trust in the other person.

In terms of co-operatives, the recently conducted research shows that when members trust the co-operative, the board (called the management committee in co-operatives), and the senior managers hired by the co-operative, then the members were also more satisfied with their co-operative, more committed, and felt that they could share their opinions and be heard within the co-operative. When the members felt less trust, then the relationship between these three positive organisational outcomes were lower.

Trust also held strong direct relationships with how involved members were in their communities. When a member trusted the co-operative and its leaders, then they were more likely to feel politically empowered, socially empowered, and psychologically empowered in their local communities. However, participative leadership levels within the co-operatives had no significant impact at all on community involvement by itself. But participative leadership did relate positively to members trusting their leaders more. Then, when participative leaders had members who also trust the co-operative and the leaders, the impact of allowing members to participate in decision making was even more powerful than trust alone.

The researchers hypothesize that when co-operative members trust their leaders, then they spend less time and stress trying to watch them and make sure they do not get cheated. The members then have energy and motivation to engage in other organisational and community actions.

In summary, sometimes leaders must take multiple steps to energize their followers and get desired attitutes, involvement, and behaviours out of them. Sometimes one action alone does not suffice.

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