

# Relationship of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Managerial Skills Among Co-Operative Managers in Sabah and Sarawak

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**Abstract:** Co-operatives continue to dominate Malaysia's socio-economic system, as evidenced by the number of co-operatives in existence. Malaysia claimed around 14,000 co-operatives in 2019. Co-operatives' contribution to the economy was little, and they failed to meet the National Co-operative Policy's objectives (NCP). A lack of cash, activity, structure, management, governance and poor networking have plagued Malaysian co-ops. It is a mess because of bad management and violation of the Act and related laws. Despite the NCP's heavy backing for Malaysian co-operatives, the enterprises have not been as successful as predicted. The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory examines an organization's resources, both tangible and intangible. The current study focuses on intangible human capital, specifically the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) of co-operative firms and managerial skills (MS). For this study, co-operative managers in Sabah and Sarawak were asked about their entrepreneurial attitudes, managerial skills, and company success. The inquiry paradigm will be postpositivist. Because of this, the current study uses multidimensional constructs for management skills but tests each of them separately to see how EO influences the six dimensions. The resource-based approach (RBV) is theoretically based on a prospective paradigm that has aroused controversy among scholars from three research orientations. So, utilizing RBV theory to assess multidimensional managerial talents seems appropriate for this study. The study is quantitative and relies on questionnaire responses from Sabah and Sarawak residents. The research tool was pre-tested before delivering the final questionnaire. This study used 500 sets of questionnaires, with 288 returned. This study only included co-operatives that have been operating for three years or more to measure business success. Purposive sampling was used to collect data from Sabah and Sarawak co-operatives. Statistical analysis of 244 usable questionnaires. SmartPLS 3.3.3 examined the links between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and Managerial Skills (MS). The results suggest that entrepreneurial orientation (EO) improves financial, network, marketing, human resource management, organizing, and strategic planning skills. The results suggested that co-operative managers should look to entrepreneurial orientations to improve their management skills and contribute to prosperity.

**Keywords:** *Co-operative, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Managerial Skills*

## 1. Introduction

A co-operative is a group of individuals formed to advance their economic interests via the application of

co-operative principles [1]. Malaysia's co-operative movement began on July 21, 1922, with the establishment of the nation's first savings and loan co-operative. Co-operatives continue to dominate Malaysia's

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socio-economic structure, as evidenced by the number of cooperatives in operation. Malaysia claimed to have more than 14,000 co-operative organizations in 2019 [2]. Nonetheless, their economic contribution was small, and they fell short of the National Cooperatives Policies (NCP) objectives. Cooperatives in Malaysia have had a difficult time overcoming issues with size, capital, activity, structure, management, governance, and inadequate networking. Due to these worries, there has been poor performance, poor management, and disregard for the Act and related laws [1].

Although the NCP significantly supports Malaysia's co-operatives, the co-operative enterprises have not been as successful as the country anticipated. The NCP 2 aims to increase co-operatives' contribution to GDP by 5% in 2013 and 10% by 2020 [3]. The current study must first explain what makes co-operatives different from other economic formations in order to fully grasp the situation. The government reorganised the Malaysian Co-operative Development Department (founded in 1922) as the Malaysia Co-operative Societies Commission in 2008 in response to these worries (MCSC). The main goal of MCSC is to help cooperatives grow strong and steadily in line with cooperative values and principles. This helps the country reach its goals for socioeconomic development. This objective emphasizes the importance of co-operatives leveraging available resources in professional support, advice, and monitoring to establish co-operatives as a viable third catalyst for economic growth [1]. However, this did not transpire as anticipated. To realize why the failure scenario occurred first, one needs to understand how a co-operative is distinct from other business enterprises.

## 2. Justification of Research

In East Malaysia, the co-operative movement began in the late 1940s in Sarawak and the late 1950s in Sabah. With the adoption of the Co-operative Societies Regulations 1949 ordinance, the cooperative movement in Sarawak got underway in 1949. The co-operative movement began with "sagu" crop operations and has progressed through several stages of national growth, most notably in Sarawak, to where it is today [4]. To stay competitive and stand shoulder to shoulder with giants like Felda Trading and Bank Rakyat, two co-operatives that have grown into major corporations, co-operatives in Sarawak are urged to diversify and broaden the scope of their business operations [5]. Sarawak had 1,077 co-operatives in 2019, with 264,155 members spread around the state. The whole share capital amounting to RM196.41 million was accompanied by a total asset value of RM617.04 million [2]. Kuching has the most co-operative organizations in Sarawak, with 279, followed by Sibiu with 132, Miri with 118, Bintulu with

88, Sri Aman with 67, Sarikei with 62, Serian with 60, Saratok with 54, Marudi with 43, Limbang with 24, Lawas with 43, Kapit with 43, Kanowit with 12 and Meradong with 11 co-operative organizations.

Sarawak co-operatives have experienced numerous concerns and obstacles over the years. According to Jamilah et. al. [6], most co-operatives in Sarawak are operating poorly. Ngadi [7] examines some of the difficulties faced by credit co-operatives in Sarawak when the majority of their members left and collection from members decreased, thereby hindering the credit co-operative's ability to offer loans to its members. In contrast, other studies have found that credit co-operative members in Sarawak are pleased with the services they receive. They liked everything about the credit services and planned to tell others about them [8]. Kasuma et. al [5], on the other hand, has observed several of the factors that lead to women's participation in co-operative enterprise in Sarawak. At the same time, Yacob et al. [8] emphasize the importance of 'loyal members' in Sarawak's credit co-operatives. In Sarawak, Idris, and Hajirah Hati [4] identified six (6) essential success elements for co-operatives. They determined that entrepreneurialism, support, communication, competitiveness, coordination, and management were essential variables in developing co-operatives in Sarawak. Co-operative organizations are critical as a stimulus for economic progress, particularly for eradicating poverty in rural regions in Sarawak. In Sarawak, co-operatives have seen tremendous expansion in terms of registration and membership. However, they lag behind other states in Malaysia in terms of accomplishments and co-operative commercial success [9].

In contrast, Sabah's co-operative had 14 members when it first started in the late 1950s and 251 by 1977. The numbers increased significantly with the passage of the co-operative Acts of 1993, which resulted in the repeal of the co-operative Societies Ordinance No.3 of 1958. In 1977, the co-operative had around 41,000 members and a share capital of RM 2.16 million [10]. Currently, Sabah has 1,599 co-operatives with a total membership of 276,524 members spread throughout the state. The total value of the shares is RM206.97 million, whereas the total value of the assets is RM903.31 million [2]. Three industries accelerated Sabah's cooperative growth: agriculture, plantation, and tourism. The increase in the number of co-operatives in Sabah demonstrates the public's confidence in their ability to enhance the socioeconomic well-being of individuals. Nonetheless, managing co-operatives in Sabah presents certain challenges, particularly in community-based tourism.

Nawawi et. al [11] asserts that Sabah's expanding co-operative movement presents a significant opportunity for community-based tourism. However, not all co-operative management situations are straightforward. Tola et. al [10] emphasizes that co-operative management must overcome four (4) major problems. First, co-operative leaders' capacity to manage their organisations. Ineffective governance results from effective leadership, and vice versa. The effectiveness of cooperative management comes in second. They assert that the board of directors must understand their respective duties and responsibilities for good management to exist. Thirdly, additional capital for co-op expansion and growth. Lastly, the capacity of a co-op to be financially independent and not reliant on government funding and assistance.

When NCP 1 and NCP 2 were implemented, the government-sponsored several business environments and assistance programmes, but the outcomes remained dismal. On a similar line, Cheuk [12] emphasizes the need of co-operatives to prioritizing the employment or appointment of professionally skilled finance officers. She noticed that most of Sabah's co-operatives lack experienced financial and accounting personnel. Many businesses fail because they don't plan their finances well enough. This includes problems with cash flow, using too much credit, and wasting money. So, a manager's actions and behaviour, as well as how his organisation is run, are inextricably linked to failure [13]. The fact that 80% of Malaysia's co-ops aren't doing anything and have a total worth of less than RM 200,000.00 is worrying [14]. The importance and contribution of the co-operative movement to economic prosperity are dwindling [15]. As a result, Atsan's [3] findings are significant for co-operative research due to a co-operative member's owner/manager connections.

According to the researchers' perspectives on the growth of co-operatives in Malaysia, co-operatives in East Malaysia face a number of challenges. It is hypothesised that managerial skills and the business environment can influence the success or failure of a cooperative. Managerial skills in a specific field may enable specialists to invest in innovation and identify suitable initiatives more accurately. In agreement with Cheuk [12], Custódio, Ferreira, and Matos [16] said that while general managerial skills may be unique, they can be acquired through external sources such as consultants. Managerial skills are a collection of behaviours that contribute to job success and are both acquirable and learnable [17]. Katz [18] asserts that three sorts of skills are increasingly critical: human skills, intellectual skills, and technological skills; however, these skills evolve throughout time based on their value and the nature of

the job. Managerial skills alone will not determine the success of a co-operative enterprise.

According to Covin and Wales [19], EO can be the driving force behind entrepreneurial operations. In order to achieve the goal of the co-operative, this requires specific management skills. This study looks at the success of Malaysian co-ops in Sabah and Sarawak in light of these ideas. Entrepreneurial orientation (innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking) and managerial skills (financial skills, human resource management skills, marketing skills, network skills, organising skills, and strategic planning skills) were examined to see how they affected the success of co-operative businesses run by co-operative owners and managers.

### **3. Literature Review**

Based on reviews of past studies, there isn't a lot of research on how entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and multidimensional managerial skills are related (MS). More specifically, the effect of the entrepreneurial approach on financial, human resource, marketing, network, organising, and strategic planning skills. But the current study has to stick to the work dimensions that were set by earlier EO studies. Wales, Gupta, and Mousa (2013) [20] discuss how prior research viewed EO as a monolithic concept. They discovered that in 2010, 158 empirical articles with a single-dimensional view of EO were sampled. Miller [21] discovered that the traits of inventiveness, risk-taking, and proactiveness were most commonly combined to create a unidimensional picture of EO; this design was employed in almost 80% of all unidimensional publications. Consistent with Miller and Friesen [22], the second most often utilized technique characterized EO as originality and risk-taking; nonetheless, this approach was used in less than 7% of investigations. Four research utilized an aggregate measure that comprised all five of Lumpkin and Dess's [23] EO characteristics, whereas countless others combined these five theoretical aspects. As a result, this study characterizes EO as a one-dimensional phenomenon.

Santos and Marinho [24] looked for signs of a possible relationship between three things that are usually studied separately: entrepreneurial orientation, which is defined as organisational entrepreneurship; marketing capability, which is seen as a key competitive factor for the organisation; and business performance, which is seen as the organization's main goal in the context of Santa Catarina retail supermarkets (Brazil). Their results showed that there was a positive link between being an entrepreneur and being good at marketing. This was

shown by the intermediate dimensions of innovation, proactiveness, and taking risks that firm management used to study and manage the market, come up with new products and services, and lower prices. The previous literature, which looks at management skills as a single dimension, shows that management skills and entrepreneurial management are seen in different ways.

It is important to keep in mind that previous studies operationalized managerial skills by using a single construct with many dimensions. For example, Mehralian, Peikanpour, Rangchian, and Aghakhani [25] think of management skills as having four dimensions: conceptual, human, tactical, and political. The study looked at these traits as a whole (managerial skills) and found that managerial skills have a big impact on how well pharmacies do in India. In a similar way, Ahmad and Ahmad [26] thought of managerial skills in terms of six dimensions: management skills, marketing skills, financial skills, legal skills, administrative skills, and higher-order skills. They then combined all six dimensions into a single construct to look at the relationship between managerial skills and strategic planning and, ultimately, performance. As functional business skills, financial skills, technical skills, communication skills, market orientation, and networking skills were made clear [27].

Asah et al. [28] offer another example of a different view on managerial skills. They looked at managerial skills as a single construct with six dimensions: skills in marketing, networking, finance, human resource management, organising, and strategic planning. The current study used Asah et al's [28] dimensions, but it also looked at the multidimensional constructs for managerial skills separately. This was done to fill in a knowledge gap about how EO may affect the six dimensions and how the six dimensions may affect company success. As far as the researcher knows, this is a new method, which may make the research more interesting. It will add a lot to the body of knowledge, especially to the literature on management skills and on co-operative businesses. This is because previous researchers looked at management skills as a one-dimensional variable e.g. [28, 25, 26]. The following hypotheses are deduced from the preceding argument:

H1: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and financial skills.

H2: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and human resources management skills.

H3: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and marketing skills.

H4: There is a positive relationship between

entrepreneurial orientation and network skills.

H5: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and organizing skills.

H6: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and strategic planning skills.

## 4. Methodology

The goal of this study is to learn more about what makes a co-op company successful. RBV theory looks at the firm stage to figure out how efficient a market is. According to the RBV paradigm, a company can do better than its main competitors because of its internal and external, tangible and intangible assets [29]. Barney [29] says that a business with different resources, skills, and talents can gain a competitive edge and do better than its competitors in a changing market. The current study says that EO and MS are these types of intangible resources.

A correlational investigation was conducted using a cross-sectional survey in the present study. In addition, quantitative research was used to examine the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation (independent/exogenous factors) and managerial skills (mediator variable) with a focus on co-operatives in Sabah and Sarawak. We designed a self-administered questionnaire employing structured questions. The target audience for the study was Sabah and Sarawak co-operative organisations represented by their owners or managers (i.e. Board of Directors, General Manager, and Manager). The total population of co-operatives in Sabah (1577) and Sarawak (1077) was 2676 people. In this study, 500 questionnaires were distributed evenly between Sarawak and Sabah, 250 for Sarawak and 250 for Sabah. 288 surveys were gathered in total. 44 questionnaires were deemed unusable out of the 288 responses due to insufficient information or certain systemic response patterns. There were 244 complete survey questions. The first wave of questions was gathered during three months (May-July 2019) and resulted in the collection of 43 questionnaires. However, only 22 questionnaires were completed, while 21 were deemed useless. Co-operatives have a low level of engagement. As a result, the researcher can obtain assistance from Suruhanjaya Koperasi Sabah and Suruhanjaya Koperasi Sarawak in disseminating the questionnaire by email. Within 16 months, the second wave of questions was collected (July 2019 to November 2020). Co-operative owners/managers who did not respond to the questionnaire were contacted via phone. There were 288 surveys returned; however, only 244 are useable. According to Roscoe [30], a sample size of greater than 30 but less than 500 is adequate for the majority of research and multivariate analyses such as

multiple regression analysis; consequently, the sample size of this study 244 respondents, met Roscoe's requirements [30].

## 5. Results and Analysis

The final sample contained a total of 244 individuals. According to the data gathered from the respondents, there are 88 female respondents, compared to 156 male respondents (63.9%). (36.1 percent). Approximately 32.8 percent of respondents were between the ages of 36 and 45, 31.1 percent were between the ages of 46 and 55, 23.8 percent were between the ages of 25 and 35, 11.5 percent were over the age of 56, and the remaining 0.8 percent were under the age of 25. In terms of educational level, approximately 33.6 percent of respondents held a bachelor's degree, 32.4 percent held a diploma, and 23.4 percent held qualifications of SPM and less, while the remaining 4.5 percent held masters and/or certificates. According to table 4.1, most respondents (43.9 percent) were managers, 30.7 percent were general managers, and 25.4 percent were members of the board of directors. The bulk of the co-operatives involved in this study are from the Consumerism sector (53.7 percent ). The respondents were approximately evenly dispersed throughout two Malaysian states, primarily Sarawak (54.1 percent) and Sabah (54.1 percent) (45.9 percent ). The majority of the co-operatives in this survey have been in operation for more than 20 years (29.1%), followed by 5-10 years (24.6%), 11-15 years (19.3%), fewer than 5 years (18.9%), and 16-20 years (16.9%). (8.2 percent ). Finally, the bulk of the co-operatives in this survey have fewer than five employees (55.7 percent), followed by five to fifteen employees (36.1 percent), and sixteen to twenty-five employees (16-25%). (6.6 percent ).

### 5.1 Measurement Model

Convergent validity is "the degree to which a measure correlates well with other measures of the same construct" [31] pg. 102. To check for convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) value for each investigated construct was looked at. The AVE score should be higher than 0.5, which means that the given indicators explain at least half of the difference. Hair et al [31] noted that the PLS Algorithm in SmartPLS 3.3.3 is used to figure out the AVE values for each construct. As shown in Table 1.0, the AVE values for all constructions are greater than 0.5 and range from 0.526 to 0.778. So, the results show that the measurement model is good in terms of convergent validity.

**Table 1.0 Results Summary for Reflective**

#### Measurement Models

Constructs	Items	Outer Loadings	CR	AVE			
		>0.50	>0.7	>0.5			
Financial Skills	FS1	0.742	0.884	0.656			
	FS2	0.792					
	FS3	0.853					
	FS4	0.849					
Human Resource Management Skills	HR1	0.851	0.895	0.680			
	HR2	0.846					
	HR3	0.829					
	HR4	0.771					
Marketing Skills	MKS3	0.773	0.885	0.526			
	MKS4	0.817					
	MKS5	0.770					
	MKS6	0.631					
	MKS7	0.718					
	MKS8	0.668					
	MKS9	0.683					
	Network Skills	NS1			0.821	0.882	0.651
		NS2			0.802		
NS3		0.824					
NS4		0.780					
Organizing Skills	OS1	0.795	0.900	0.692			
	OS2	0.849					
	OS3	0.884					
	OS4	0.798					
Strategic Planning Skills	SP1	0.786	0.853	0.592			
	SP2	0.771					
	SP3	0.727					
	SP4	0.791					
Business Success	BS1	0.763	0.911	0.633			
	BS2	0.692					
	BS3	0.864					
	BS4	0.871					
	BS5	0.822					
	BS6	0.746					
Innovativeness	INV1	0.799	0.872	0.695			
	INV2	0.826					
	INV3	0.873					
Risk-Taking	RT1	0.793	0.880	0.709			
	RT2	0.874					
	RT3	0.858					
Proactiveness	PRO1	0.856	0.913	0.778			
	PRO2	0.901					
	PRO3	0.887					

**Table 2.0 Results of Hypothesis Testing**

H	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-values	p-values	Results
H1	EO -> Financial Skills	0.625	0.041	15.083	0.000	Supported
H2	EO -> Human Resource Management skills	0.487	0.054	9.038	0.000	Supported
H3	EO -> Marketing Skills	0.157	0.061	2.568	0.005	Supported
H4	EO -> Network Skills	0.485	0.069	7.040	0.000	Supported
H5	EO -> organizing Skills	0.529	0.051	10.366	0.000	Supported
H6	EO -> Strategic Planning Skills	0.427	0.052	8.283	0.000	Supported

## 5.2 Structural Model

The findings of hypothesis testing for the links between entrepreneurial orientation, managerial abilities, and business success are shown in Table 2. It is expected that there is a positive association between entrepreneurial mindset and managerial skills for hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6) (financial skills, Human Resource Management skills, marketing skills, network skills, organizing skills and strategic planning skills). Table 4.8 shows that entrepreneurial orientation was associated with financial skills ( $\beta=0.625$ ,  $t$ -value=15.083,  $p<0.01$ ), human resource management skills ( $\beta=0.487$ ,  $t$ -value=9.038,  $p<0.01$ ), marketing skills ( $\beta=0.157$ ,  $t$ -value=2.568,  $p<0.01$ ), network skills ( $\beta=0.485$ ,  $t$ -value=7.040,  $p<0.01$ ), organising skills ( $\beta=0.529$ ,  $t$ -value=10.366,  $p<0.01$ ). As a result, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 are all supported.

## 6. Discussion

### EO and Financial Skills

As predicted, EO improves financial capabilities (H1). Examining the beta and effect size values for EO ( $\beta=0.625$ ,  $F_2=0.643$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) reveals that this EO contributes the most to the development of financial skills. Financial skills must be taught to ensure the long-term viability of small and medium-sized enterprises [32]. One possible explanation for the correlation is that risk-taking, creativity, and initiative help employees develop their financial skills. Similarly, members of co-operative businesses in Sabah and Sarawak believe that the EO is one of the most important factors in developing financial skills. In contrast, empirical evidence supporting

entrepreneurial orientation as a driver of financial skills in the context of cooperative enterprise in Sabah and Sarawak is limited. In contrast, the current study demonstrated that the correlation is highly significant.

Similar to the findings of Maina [33] (2016), who investigated credit co-operative societies and concluded that credit co-operatives enabled many business owners to obtain capital when they wished to introduce new products, expand their enterprises, or establish new businesses, this finding demonstrates that credit co-operatives have a positive impact on the economy. However, the performance of the sponsored businesses is hindered by a lack of effective business planning and financial expertise. According to the findings of Maina [33], there is a significant positive relationship between company planning, credit risk management approaches, borrowers' advance characteristics' awareness, and borrowers' level of financial skills. Cho and Joo-Heon [34] discovered that EO subfactors impact both financial and non-financial firm performance. To begin, it was clear that innovative progressiveness, one of the entrepreneurial orientation subfactors, affected non-financial firm performance. Second, both financial and non-financial firm performance were unaffected by risk-taking proclivity. Although the dependent variable was financial and non-financial business success, based on this study's financial skills measurement item, financial skills can be considered a significant aspect in financial and non-financial business performance. The precise term for these managerial skills is financial literacy. The ability of a manager to make solid financial decisions is referred to as financial literacy [35].

### EO and Human Resource Management Skills

It was discovered that EO has a significant impact on human resource management abilities. The beta and effect size values for EO are conclusive ( $\beta=0.487$ ,  $F_2=0.311$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Human resource management methods are essential for developing an organization's entrepreneurial orientation and capabilities, as well as for enhancing, enriching, and grouping individuals' unique competencies within the context of an innovation-focused strategy [36].

Human resource management skills are crucial and required for capacity building in Sabah and Sarawak's cooperative sector. The presence of EO among human resource personnel has the potential to enhance collaborative human resource management. In this study, EO influences the ability to make decisions, the capacity to provide job satisfaction, and the use of an appropriate incentive and punishment system. The cooperative requires a qualified human resource management

professional with both theoretical and practical experience. This knowledge will enhance the efficacy of co-op operations such as recruitment, employee skill evaluation, job specification definition, performance management, and salary payment. It will be utilised to gain a competitive advantage and ensure the survival of the cooperative.

Human resource management skills can also assist cooperative businesses in becoming more competitive by encouraging managers to adopt an innovative, risk-taking, and proactive culture or behaviour. Utilizing competent human resource management and increasing product or service sales enables a company to achieve its goals and objectives.

Messersmith and Wales [37] found that EO could improve the growth trajectories of emerging enterprises based on the degree to which these organisations adopt and implement specific human resource practises and ideas. This is particularly true in the context of cooperative administration, as demonstrated by Battilani and Zamagni [38], who stated that co-operative managers develop their careers entirely within the co-operative movement, sometimes employed by the same enterprise, and in other cases through vertical mobility, which allows them to be recruited by larger size enterprises or the umbrella federation.

When EO is characterized by organizational learning formed by creativity, individual dedication, and teamwork, and HRM may influence its practises, the current outcome is also supported [39, 40]. According to Schuler [41], certain practices are required to produce good EO, and subsequent research has proven that practises that foster, for example, creativity or cooperation skills raise the intensity of the EO characteristics [42,43]. According to Schmelter, Mauer, Börsch, and Brettel [43], organizations that score high on EO base their staffing processes on important sets of EO knowledge, skills, and skills to allow for a better fit between the firm's entrepreneurial criteria and the employee's qualities. Individual performance can be improved by better knowledge, skills, or attitudes as a result of learning programmes. A Human Resource Development Fund survey conducted from 2000-2002, according to Bank Negara Malaysia (2006) [44], revealed that most small business owners agreed that the programme they implemented enhanced work performance, product quality, staff productivity, and employee satisfaction. In Malaysia, Rosli and Abdullah [45] advocated for an EO approach to attain long-term competitive advantage and superior performance through entrepreneurial training and learning.

## EO and Marketing Skills

EO has a positive effect on marketing skills, as expected. Furthermore, this EO contributes to the development of marketing skills based on its beta and effect size values ( $\beta = .157$ ,  $F^2 = 0.025$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Marketing is a crucial skill in business because it entails planning, pricing, marketing, and selling ideas, goods, and services to support client exchanges [46]. While marketing skills improve the impact of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) on innovation, specialised marketing skills improve the impact of innovation results on profits [47]. In the case of co-operatives in Sabah and Sarawak, marketing skills such as planning, promoting, selling, and advertising are critical. Effective market intelligence can be obtained through good marketing, and market information can entice more buyers to participate in cooperative activities. It was discovered that EO influences marketing skills, implying that EO components such as innovation and proactiveness may aid in the development of stronger marketing plans and strategies for cooperatives. EO can help with marketing tasks like market segmentation, customer interactions, and promotional efforts.

Co-operatives are not acknowledged in the absence of marketing knowledge. A good market introduction will make a co-operative's brand trustworthy and easier to sell goods or services. As a result, innovativeness and risk-taking in launching new items can assure a co-operative's long-term viability. Cooperatives in Sabah and Sarawak must master this talent. Sales and targets cannot be met without this competence. Proper and precise means of promoting their goods and services are essential in today's market, regardless of the print or social media materials accessible. When there is a lack of infrastructure in the interior, it is critical to employ an appropriate medium to achieve co-operative sales.

Marketing abilities are required to identify, develop, and capitalise on the best business situation. The third hypothesis discovered a significant positive relationship between EO and marketing competence. According to Smart and Conant's [48] study on apparel retailers, respondents with higher EO levels believe their companies have a diverse set of marketing competencies, which is critical in such a competitive environment, and that differences between EO groups may be less noticeable in other industries. Independent wholesalers, privately-owned manufacturers, and various types of independent retailers exist. According to Arunachalam, Ramaswami, Herrmann, and Walker [47], the performance effect of EO when combined with marketing skills is not always positive. It varies according to the degree of a company's marketing capabilities. This is important in the context of

cooperative organisations because the size and level of an entity can have an impact on the firm's longevity, particularly if the need to learn marketing skills is not addressed. Nonetheless, researchers have discovered that EO influences a company's marketing strategy-making process [49], intent to enter new markets [50], and ability to manage difficult market circumstances [51]. A high level of EO in an organization's culture can boost the flow of new ideas in the marketing strategy-making process [49] and enable businesses to engage in proactive marketing during recessions [52]. In terms of marketing activities, Arunachalam, Ramaswami, Herrmann, and Walker [47] discovered that marketing behaviours of firms with a higher level of EO differ from marketing behaviours of firms with a lower level of EO, both empirically and conceptually.

### **EO and Network Skills**

As expected, EO has a positive impact on network skills. The result shows the beta and effect size for EO ( $\beta = .485$ ,  $F^2 = 0.308$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). While previous research has shown that networking skills improve performance, data also show that EO provides competitive advantages, implying that networking skills act as a moderator between EO and organisational success [53]. This study found that EO improves network skills. Innovation and proactiveness are two key components of EO that influence network skills among co-operatives in Sabah and Sarawak. Any cooperative manager can improve their networking skills by instilling EO in them. According to this study, networking skills are related to maintaining positive relationships with suppliers, wholesalers, middlemen, and so on. It also entails the ability to form long-term relationships with partners, stakeholders, and even clients.

Through this study, the co-operatives in Sabah and Sarawak discovered that EO and networking skills play a key part in co-operative sustainability. Managers must be trained and have a functional knowledge of the networking business that co-operatives are involved in. The use of the internet and social media is extremely crucial in today's world. Networking skills must be cultivated not just within the country but also overseas. Managers should use networking from manufacturers, suppliers, and buyers and train and learn about it. This is especially essential when the EO helps managers improve their networking skills. When this occurs, operating expenses can be decreased by getting low-cost supplies or raw materials through effective networking. As a result, co-operatives can make things at a low cost and sell them at a low market price.

According to the current study, EO has a strong

relationship with H4 networking abilities. This conclusion supplemented Fatima and Bilal's findings [54]. They discovered that individual EO had a significant positive impact on active social networking, which boosted SME performance. According to the same authors, SMEs with the right psychological perspective can help to build productive social networks. SMEs owners, according to Cox, Lortie and Castrogiovanni [55], must be in the right psychological state to carry out network activities and turn their ideas into actual business results. Similarly, the success of networking activities in the current study is dependent on co-operative managers' networking skills, which are based on their ability to sustain relationships and create long-term trust. Effective social networking is critical in determining successful SME performance in emerging economies with less developed institutional structures and significantly smaller enterprise sizes [56].

### **EO and Organising Skills**

The findings show that EO has a significant impact on organisational skills ( $p = 0.01$ ,  $F^2 = 0.389$ ). According to Wajdi et al. [57], the majority of solo entrepreneurs think that organisation and planning skills are crucial for business success. Entrepreneurs succeed, according to Mwithiga et al. [58], because they have skills like organisational ability. The ability of the manager to record all business areas, participate professionally, manage amenities and facilities, and conduct regular reviews of cooperative operations are all examples of organising skills in this study. It was found that EO has an impact on management organising abilities.

Co-op managers in Sabah and Sarawak concur that organisational skills are essential for co-op operations. This is due to the fact that organisational skills can assist cooperatives in becoming more self-reliant and efficient in time management, particularly when it comes to meeting client needs. Managers with these abilities and the required EO would be able to influence the growth of co-ops in Sabah and Sarawak.

Similar to Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi [59], the results suggested that organising and strategic skills had a significant impact on the inventiveness of the tea manufacturing enterprises when the dimensions of EO were taken into consideration. It indicates the manager's capacity to organise and direct a large number of resources through sound strategic planning, which is positively related to the firm's innovation. According to Bird [60], an entrepreneur's conceptual ability is significantly impacted by his or her capacity to reason rationally and deal with ambiguity. Therefore, the ability and commitment of the owner/manager to think outside

the box has a significant impact on competitive behaviour directed toward competing businesses.

Movement leaders must constantly self-regulate and advance in order to achieve cooperative goals. Only in this way can the co-operative firm model remain competitive in existing markets while competing in new ones of economic need and opportunity, particularly in maturing movements where the movement commitments, social networks, and organising abilities of the founding members have diminished while managerial values, priorities, and practises have increased [61]. According to Diamantopoulos [61], as co-operative movements expand, the founding members' organisational commitments, social networks, and organising abilities deteriorate while the organisational values, priorities, and practises of the management cadres gain more sway.

### EO and Strategic Planning Skills

Babafemi [62] asserts that corporate organisations are emphasising strategic planning more and more in an effort to connect strategic planning to business performance. Strategic planning competence may be positively impacted by EO, according to the beta and effect size values for EO ( $\beta = .427$ ,  $F_2 = 0.183$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). The outcomes are consistent with the research by Rigtering, Eggers, Kraus, and Chang [63]. They contend that the impact of proactiveness, an EO dimension, varies depending on the cultural setting. However, proactiveness produces excellent results when combined with strategic planning in high-uncertainty environments and long-term-oriented cultural contexts that favour establishing bureaucratic organisations [63].

This also applies to cooperatives in Sabah and Sarawak. In these volatile times, leaders with strategic vision and planning are desperately needed. Determining a cooperative's co-direction and vision will ensure the co-operative society's future continuity and success. As a result, co-operatives will be able to survive in the market if they plan in accordance with time circulation and dynamics. EO should be instilled in the cooperative ecosystem to ensure the formulation of a successful and efficient strategy plan. In this study, EO was found to influence management planning skills.

Strategic planning processes, according to Kroeger [64], identify a firm's mission and goals, analyse the competitive environment, generate and assess strategic options, and coordinate implementation across the entire organisation. A previous study found that strategic planning improves cooperative performance. A long-term cooperative strategy influences co-operative performance in Malaysia, according to the preliminary framework

[65]. Strategic planning is detailed planning that aids in the achievement of organisational goals in a successful and efficient manner [66]. Strategic planning, according to Marangu and Masungu [67], is essential because it ensures that a corporation follows the process step by step and assists the organisation in reaching its goals. According to Karki [66], strategic planning differs depending on the nature of the issues in dairy cooperatives. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to strategic planning, according to the current study. Miles, White, and Munilla [68] emphasized that co-operatives need more sophisticated methods of strategic planning to adapt to the changing social environment brought on by rising population, environmental, and social pressures.

## 7. Conclusion and Future Study

This research seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the connections between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Managerial Skills (MS). MS dimensions include financial abilities, human resource management skills, marketing skills, network skills, organisational abilities, and strategic planning abilities.

The data indicate a correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and managerial abilities (financial skills, human resource management skills, marketing skills, network skills, organising skills, and strategic planning skills). In contrast, previous research has demonstrated that managerial abilities are a single construct, with each aspect of managerial skills assessed separately [69, 70, 71]. Various facets of a business may require varying degrees of managerial aptitude [25]. According to Ahmad and Ahmad [26], multidimensional managerial skills are increasingly important. However, large corporations dominate the literature on managerial skills and their relationship to business success.

Finally, co-operative managers must recognise and comprehend the importance of capitalising on their resources, especially their entrepreneurial orientation and management skills. Co-op managers must keep abreast of business trends and developments, cultivate positive relationships with all collaboration partners, and ensure the sustainability of their resources.

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