

Full Length Research Paper

Farmers' perceptions of farmer organizations in rural areas

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Agricultural organizations are important tools in enhancing the living standards in rural areas; better utilizing farmer's resources, increasing revenues, and achieving agricultural development. Organizational development in rural areas in Turkey is not at a desired level yet. It is very clear that organizing is for the benefit of farmers. Despite this, it is necessary to determine perceptions of farmers about farmer organizations in order to understand the reasons for their not being organized. This study is undertaken to determine the perception of farmers about organization of producers in rural areas. The research is carried out in the province of Van in eastern Turkey. The study material consists of primary data collected from 118 major producers through a questionnaire. As a result, it is determined that a meaningful relationship exists ($P<0.05$) between the producers' desire to become a member of farmer cooperatives and the level of education. There is also a meaningful relationship between the level of income and the belief that a farmer organization can be beneficial, as well as between the level of income and the desire to become a member of a cooperative ($P<0.05$). It is seen that the level of desire to become a member of cooperative increases as the level of education increases. The results show that the producers do not trust the organizations fully (50%) and that they believe that there is unfair preferential treatment of some members (30 - 33%). There is a meaningful relationship between the realization of members' expectations and the success of their cooperatives ($P<0.05$). According to these results, the farmers who realize their expectations within cooperative see the cooperative as a successful one.

Key words: Farmer organizations, extension, perception, organization.

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural producers in developed and developing countries are trained and informed by organizations. Agricultural organizations are one of the important means of enhancing the standards of living, utilizing the available resources more effectively, increasing the incomes of producers and maintaining agricultural development (Đnan et al., 2005). Producers have had a tradition of informal cooperation and mutual aid; therefore, they can use organizations in order to resolve their problems and convey their demands and problems to relevant their problems institutions and organizations (Yıldırım, 1994). Resolving their problems and conflicts depends on producers'

organization and cooperation. As indicated by Harsanyi (1969), "People's behavior can largely be explained in terms of two dominant interests: economic gain and social acceptance". Thus, economic gain and social acceptance can be the reasons for organizing. Collective action (in the sense of "voluntary action taken by a group to achieve common interests") (Meinzen-Dick and Di Gregorio, 2004) can exist in the absence of farmer organization, which we see as a more formal expression of collective action (Hellin et al., 2009). The informal cooperation of the farmers cannot replace the organization in this sense. The organizational level in rural areas of Turkey is unsatisfactory, but farmers are known to be unwilling to address this issue, despite the evidence that organization is for the benefit of the farmers. However, the perception of the organizing of farmers should be known in order to understand why the farmers are against organizing. The goal of this study is to determine

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the perception of organizing and organization in rural areas by producers. The data of the study are collected from the eastern province of Van, Turkey. In this context, the organizational levels, sense of trust for the farmer organizations, favoritism between the members of the farmer organizations, the views of members about the farmer organizations are examined and thus the perception of organization of farmers are determined.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main material of the study is the data collected through surveys from the agricultural producers in the Çatak, Erci and Özalp districts of Van. The registries of the Provincial Agricultural Directorate, Agricultural Credit Cooperative of Chamber of Agriculture Van Offices and other research and documentation results related to the issue are used in this study. The choice of these three districts to represent Van is made randomly from each region considering agro-ecologic factors. Van has three agro-ecologic regions (Table 1). An agro-ecologic region is determined according to climate, lay, soil structure and land (Anonymous, 2003).

Accordingly, the first agro-ecologic region is Erci, the second one is Özalp and the third one is Çatak. These three regions are selected randomly. The villages that are easy to access and can represent the district in terms of socio-economic and agricultural production are determined in consultation with the authorities of the Provincial Agricultural Directorate. In this context four villages are selected within each district. Sample size is determined as 118 farms, taking 10% of 1180 farms which have agricultural production. Sample size is distributed among selected villages in proportion to the number of producers (Cochran, 1977). The results of the research are presented in terms of proportionality and in absolute distributions. The Chi-square independence test is also applied to the related data. In addition, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) test is applied among the variables.

The MCA is a useful and a popular descriptive technique to examine relationships among more than two sets of discrete variables. MCA is primarily a descriptive method designed to assign scores to rows (representing the subjects) and columns (representing the response categories of the discrete variables), yielding a graphical display that may facilitate the understanding of the interdependency among the data set. The parameters of MCA are estimated by pooling the data across respondents under the implicit assumption that all respondents come from a single, homogeneous group. However, it often seems more realistic to assume that respondents come from heterogeneous groups, such that they are different with respect to their attitudes and preference (Hwong and Takane, 2002; Hwong et al., 2006). In this study the MCA test is appropriate, as the number of variables is high.

The organization level of farmers

The Chamber of Agriculture (CA), Agricultural Development Cooperative (ADC), Agricultural Credit Cooperative (ACC), Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative (SBPC) are the producer-organization models in the research area. Thus, the cooperatives and Chamber of Agriculture are referred to as the farmer organizations in the research. Among farmers interviewed, 83.1% are members of agricultural organizations. According to this result it is seen that the organization level is very good. However, the producers need to get a producer license from Chamber of Agriculture in order to get Direct Income Support (DIS) and this situation contributes to the results showing the high organization level. Accordingly, this ratio does not reflect the organization level accurately. Nearly 75% of the

producers interviewed are the members of Chamber of Agriculture; however, only 8.5% of the producers interviewed are the members of agricultural organizations other than Chamber of Agriculture. This ratio shows that organizational level, except for the Chamber of Agriculture, is rather low.

It is a common idea that organization is linked with education levels. According to the Chi-square analysis, there is a statistically significant relation between the education levels of the farmers and membership of any agricultural organization ($P < 0.05$). As the education level of the farmers increases, the membership of an agricultural organization increases. Stated in another words, the awareness to become a member of agricultural organization is greater for the producers with higher education levels. High education is consistently found to predict organizational and other types of community participation (Matarrita-Cascante and Luloff 2008; Putnam 2000; Smith 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wilson 2000). Education is believed to broaden social horizons and build self-confidence. The well-educated farmers are more likely to possess the skills and networks necessary to initiate and manage an association (Wuthnow, 2002). On the other hand, highly educated people are not only more likely to join an organization but also are more likely to drop out (Wilson, 2000). Thus, increased educational levels are likely to result in both growth and volatility, as members with higher education are less loyal to their organizations (Wollebæk, 2010).

According to the results of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), the members of any agricultural organizations are elementary school graduates in the 41 - 50 age groups (Figure 1). The farmer organizations of which the producers are the members in the research area are as follows: Agriculture Credit Cooperative (ACC), Agricultural Development Cooperative (ADC), Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative (SBPC) and Chambers of Agriculture (CA). It is determined that 74.6% of the farmers are the members of Chamber of Agriculture, 27.1% of farmers are the members of Agricultural Development Cooperative, 5.1% of farmers are the members of Agriculture Credit Cooperative and 11% of farmers are the members Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative (Table 2). As can be seen 74.6% of the farmers belong to the Chamber of Agriculture. However, this ratio is expected to be higher. The reason for this is that it is a requirement for the producers to get a producer license from the Chamber of Agriculture in order to get Direct Income Support (DIS). Ninety percent of the farmers who are not members of the Chamber of Agriculture have not become a member because of the fact that they do not have land, and 10% of the farmers think that being a member of Chamber of Agriculture has no benefits. According to these results, the producers become a member of the Chamber of Agriculture in order to get DIS. In this situation, it is not possible to conclude that successful farmer organizations exist in the research area. There are many success stories of farmer organizations leading to effective farmer participation in value chains. However, the process of establishing viable organizations is not simple. It is often a challenge to establish collectively agreed rules, to secure members' commitments to abide by the rules, and to monitor and enforce compliance. In some cases, the establishment of farmer organizations incurs transaction costs, implying that farmers may be better off not organizing (Stockbridge et al., 2003).

The proportion of farmers who are members of Agricultural Development Cooperative in the research area is rather low (27.1%). The main reason for this is that the number of cooperatives in the region is low and the producers do not have knowledge about cooperatives. 40% of the farmers who are not members of Agricultural Development Cooperative say that they will become members after they see a benefit, 40% of the farmers say that they want to become members but they think the priority is given to poor producers, and 20% of the farmers think that being members of the cooperative does not have any benefit. According to these results, the producers must be informed about cooperatives. At the same time, through establishing modern and

Table 1. Distribution of Agro-ecologic regions of Van Province.

Agro-ecologic regions		
I. Region	II. Region	III. Region
Erci	Ba kale	Bahçesaray
Edremit	Çaldıran	Çatak
Geva	Gürpınar	
Merkez	Özalp	
Muradiye	Saray	

Source: Anonymous (2003).

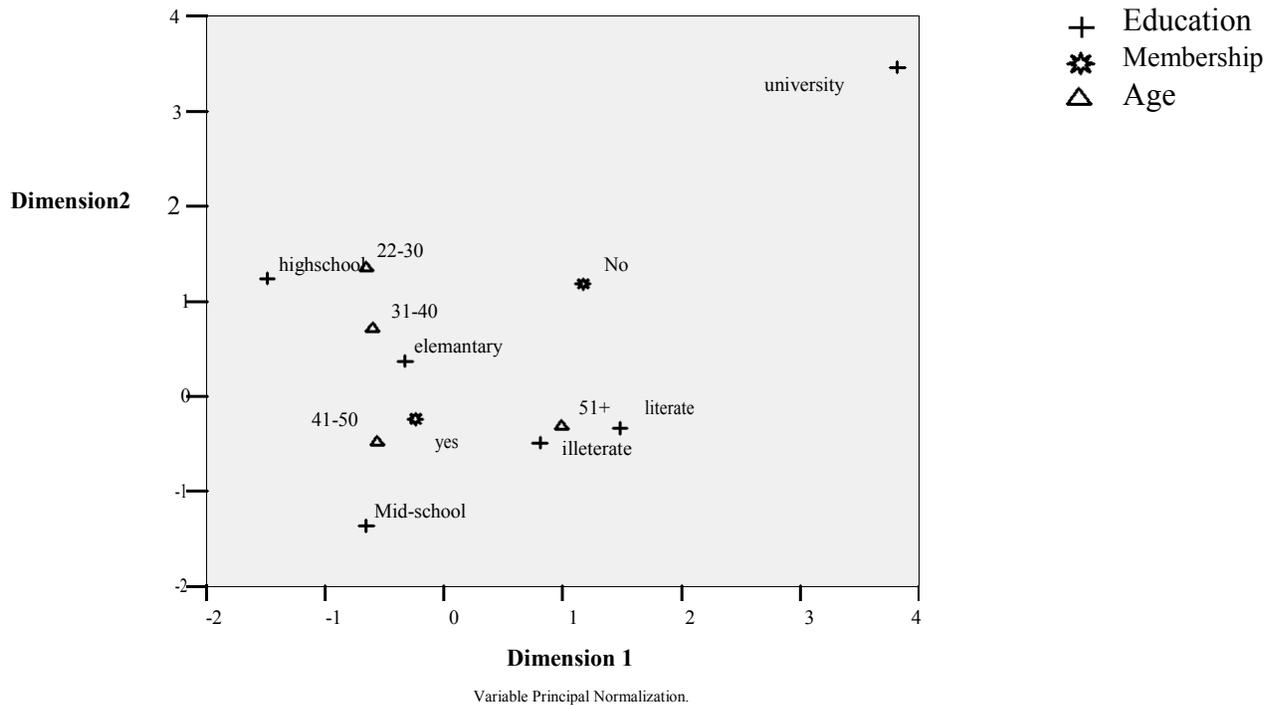


Figure 1. Multiple correspondence analyses.

successful cooperative samples in the region, producers can be directed towards organization. The mission falls on extension staff in order to accomplish this. On the other hand, extension staff should convince the producers that cooperatives have benefits for them. Seventy-five percent of the farmers who are members of the Chamber of Agriculture are members for 4 - 6 years, 13.6% of farmers are members for more than 6 years and 11.4% of farmers are members for 1 - 3 years. The reason for high membership (86.4%) in the 1 - 6 years category is that DIS started in 2002. This means that producers become members not voluntarily but necessarily. Nearly 66% of the farmers who are members of the Agricultural Development Cooperative are members for 4 - 6 years, 21.9% of the producers have been members for 1 - 3 years and 12.5% of the farmers have been members for more than 6 years. It is seen that the majority of the farmers have had relations with the cooperative in recent years.

The results of the research mean that the producers are willing to become members of newly established cooperatives. The

willingness of the producers to become members show that they want to cooperate, make decisions together, be organized, and that they need this association. There is a significant relationship between the education level of the farmers and the willingness to become a member ($P < 0.05$). Stated in other words, as the education level increases, the willingness of the farmers to become a member also increases. In addition to this, there is a significant relationship between income and believing in the benefits of being a member and the willingness to become a member ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, as the income level increases, the willingness to become a member also increases. This means that the farmers with high income levels want to increase their income through cooperatives. When it is considered that the education and income levels of agricultural producers in Turkey are low, it is understood that the awareness of organization is therefore low. As can be seen from Table 3, the majority of the farmers stated that they do not make any attempt as they do not have enough knowledge. For this reason, the farmers with low education levels should be informed

Table 2. Membership of farmer organizations.

Farmer organizations	Member		Non member		Total	
	No. of farmers	(%)	No. of farmers	(%)	No. of farmers	(%)
The Chamber of Agriculture(CA)	88	74.6	30	25.4	118	100.0
Agricultural Development Cooperative (ADC)	32	27.1	86	72.9	118	100.0
Agricultural Credit Cooperative(ACC)	6	5.1	112	94.9	118	100.0
Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative (SBPC)	13	11.0	105	89.0	118	100.0

Table 3. Reasons for not attempting to establish a cooperative.

Reasons for not attempting to establish a cooperative	No. of farmers	(%)
Because I have no knowledge about it	45	38.1
Because I don't have enough income	4	3.4
Because I don't want to take responsibility	3	2.5
I'll attempt to establish a coop. by consulting experts	2	1.7
We attempted	10	8.5
Elders of village should be attempting	8	6.8
There is no will to act together in the village	6	5.1
There is a cooperative in the village	37	31.4
They don't follow my advice in the village	3	2.5
Total	118	100.0

by the extension activities. According to the results, it is seen that there are not enough extension activities in the province and producers are not informed about organization.

The sense of trust of farmers in organizations of which they are members

The sense of trust of the producers in the organization is important. Producers should trust the organization which they are members. The sense of trust of the farmers in the organizations of which they are members are given in Table 4. According to the results of the research, the highest membership ratio belongs to the Agricultural Development Cooperative, with 90.6%, the highest distrust ratio belongs to the Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative with 50%. The 30 - 33% distrust ratios of the Agriculture Credit Cooperative and Chamber of Agriculture cannot be considered as low. Therefore, the trust of producers in the cooperatives has not reached the level needed to increase the organization level.

The trust of the producers is vitally important for cooperative-member relationships. According to MCA analysis, the producers trusting Agricultural Development Cooperative have 51 - 100 da of land and 5 - 10 thousand YTL of income. Stated in another words, the producers trusting the cooperative have medium-sized land and medium income levels (Figure 2).

Fifty percent of the member-producers trust the SBPC while the other 50% of the producers do not. According to Chi-square analysis, there is a significant relationship between the sense of trust in the SBPC and the extent of meetings held regarding cooperatives ($P < 0.05$). According to this result, the sense of trust increases in the places where meetings are held about cooperatives, and the sense of trust decreases when there are no meetings. So, as the awareness of organization and education level increases, so does the sense of trust (Table 5). The main reason of the distrust is "not getting any benefits" and this shows that the expectations of the producers from the cooperatives are not met.

According to these results, in order to gain the trust of the producers, producer organizations must meet the expectations of the producers and manager must be trustable and educated. Organizations not accomplishing these cannot maintain their activities.

Favoritism among the members

One of the most important responsibilities of the producer organizations is to treat the members equally and make sure that every member benefits from their services. Stated in another words, the privileges that may lead to unfair competition must be avoided. In the research, 12.5% of the farmers that are the members of the ADC think that privilege is bestowed on some members, and 87.5% of the farmers think that there is no favoritism among the members (Table 6). According to the results, farmers thinking that there is no favoritism in the ADC predominates (87.5%). However, this ratio is not as high for other cooperatives (SBPC, ACC and CA). The proportion of the farmers thinking that there is favoritism in these cooperatives is 30 - 33%. This ratio is enough to shake the trust. The cooperatives or agricultural organizations bestowing privilege on some members cannot succeed, because favoritism or doubts about this issue shakes the trust. According to Chi-square analysis, there is a significant relationship between the sense of trust to the ADC and favoritism ($P < 0.05$). According to this result, the sense of trust in organizations bestowing privileges on some members decreases.

According to MCA analysis, the producers thinking that there is no favoritism in ADC are the farmers attending the meetings about the cooperative system and organizations (Figure 3). This result proves the effect of education and information on organization.

The results above demonstrate that the farmers thinking that there is no favoritism are the producers who have knowledge about the cooperative system and organization. In order for producer organizations to gain and maintain the trust of their members, the

Table 4. Members’s level of trust in their organizations.

Farmer organizations	Trust (%)	No trust (%)
Agricultural Development Cooperative(ADC)	90.6	9.4
Sugar Beet Producers’ Cooperative (SBPC)	50.0	50.0
Agricultural Credit Cooperative(ACC)	66.7	33.3
Chamber of Agriculture(AC)	68.2	31.8

Table 5. Reasons of distrust.

Reason for distrust	%
Because it has no use	58.8
Because the managers lack the necessary education and knowledge	23.5
Because there is an unfair preferential treatment of some members and relatives	11.8
Because the managers are non-trustworthy	5.9
Total	100.0

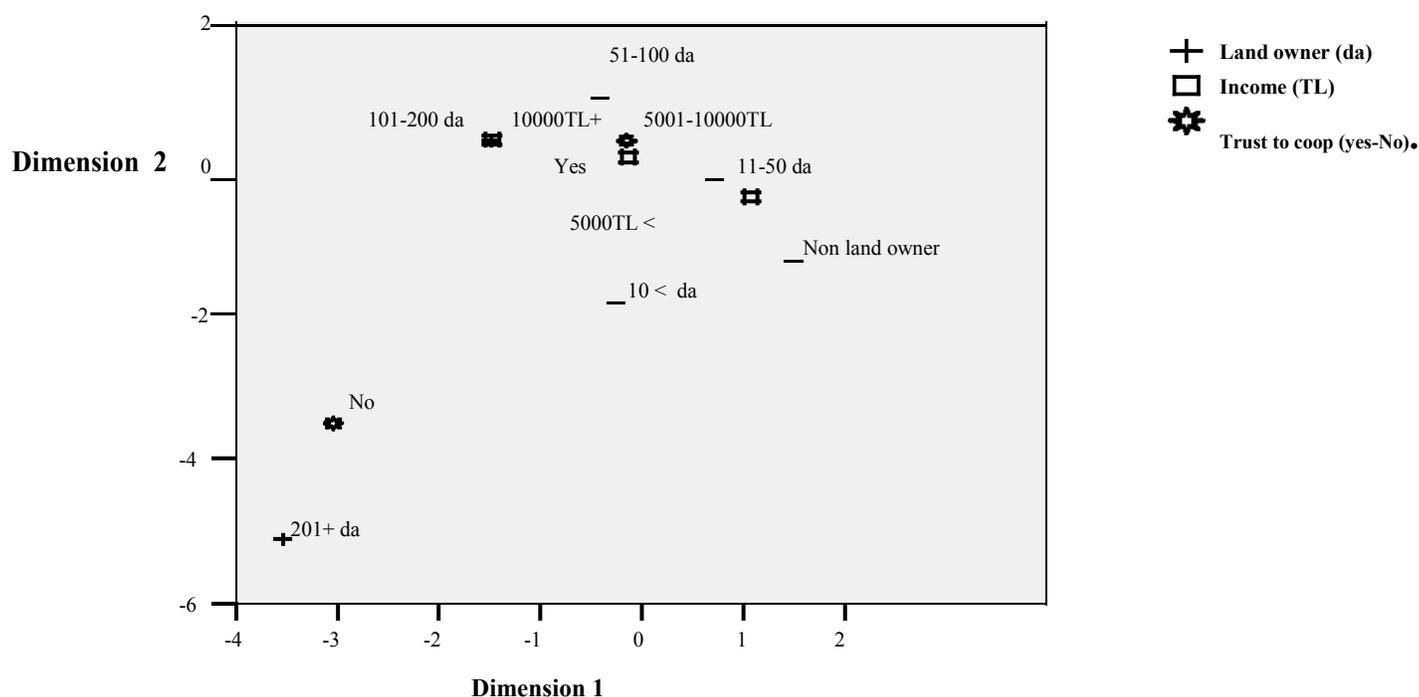


Figure 2. Multiple correspondence analyses.

producer organization should not bestow privilege on some members and make sure that their services are available to all members.

The views of the farmers about their organizations

The positive opinions of the producers about their organization increase the organization level while negative opinions decrease the organization level. Successful farmer organizations are supported by the producers because of the fact that they meet the expectations of the producers and perform their duties for the society. The success of the agricultural organizations will help farmers

to become a member. There is a significant relationship between meeting the expectations of the farmers and the belief the cooperative is successful ($P < 0.05$). According to this result, the farmers, whose expectations are met, think the cooperative is successful. Twenty-five percent of the members of SBPC think that the cooperative is successful while 75% of the members think the cooperative is not successful. One of the main obstacles to organization is that producers think the cooperative is not successful, and resolving this problem will contribute to an increase in the organization level.

According to MCA analysis, the farmers who think the SBPC is successful are middle school graduates with 1 – 5 years of

Table 6. Favouritism among members in farmer organizations.

Farmer organizations	Favouritism (%)	No Favouritism (%)	No idea	Total
Agricultural Development Cooperative (ADC)	12.5	87.5	-	100.0
Sugar Beat Producers' Cooperative(SBPC)	33.3	58.4	8.3	100.0
Agricultural Credit Cooperative(ACC)	33.3	33.4	33.3	100.0
Chamber of Agriculture(CA)	30.7	58.0	11.3	100.0

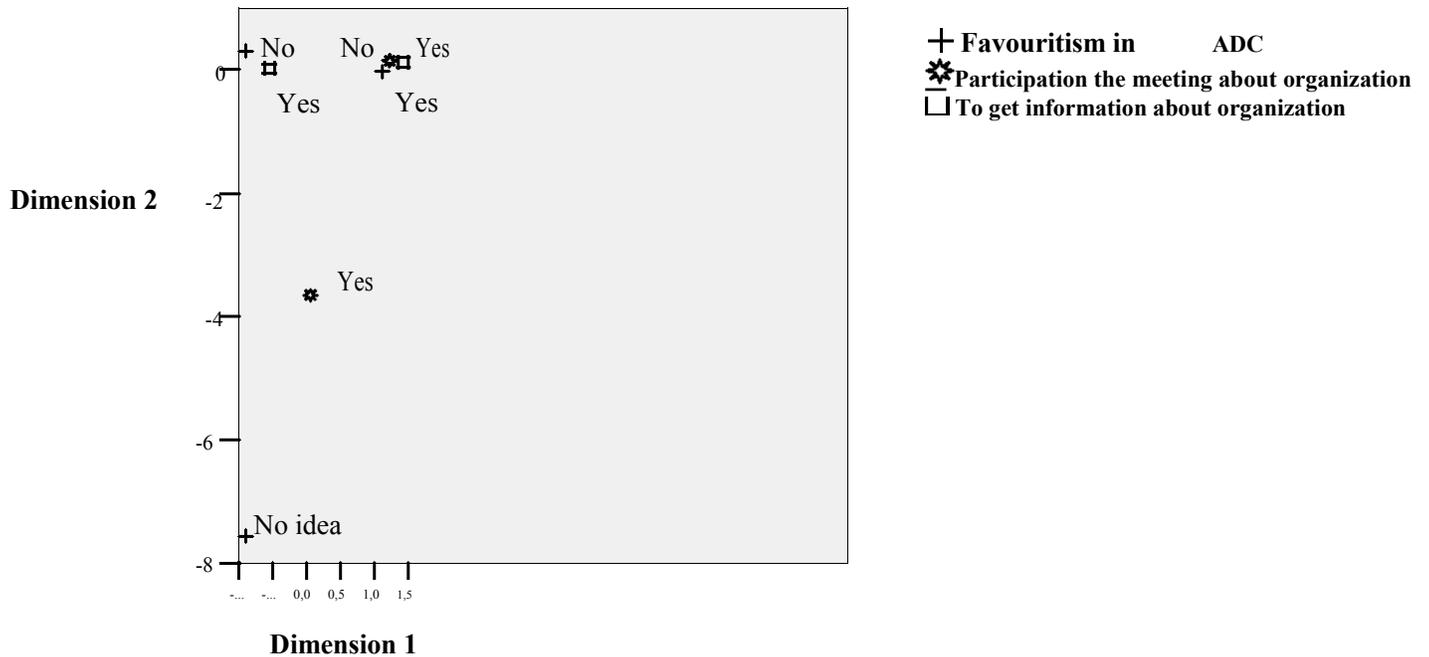


Figure 3. Multiple correspondence analyses.

experience, while the farmers regarding the cooperative as unsuccessful are elementary school graduates with 16 - 20 years of experience (Figure 4). According to this result, the experienced producers with low education levels think the cooperative is unsuccessful and the less-experienced producers with high education think the cooperative is successful. According to MCA analysis, the farmers considering the CA as successful are the farmers over 51 years old, illiterate, with more than 21 years of experience (Figure 5). Stated in another words, the producers believing the CA to be successful are experienced, uneducated and old.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The farmer organization levels are low in rural areas. However, organization contributes to higher standards of living, utilize the available resources more effectively, and increase the income levels of the producers. The perception of organization is an important issue for increasing the organization level. Only then can the obstacles to organization can be understood in a realistic way. Nearly 75% of the farmers interviewed are members of the Chamber of Agriculture. The necessity of

membership to get a license for the Direct Income Support increases this ratio. Only 8.5% of the producers interviewed are the members of an agricultural organization other than the Chambers of Agriculture. This result shows that organization levels are rather low. It is a common thought that the level of organization is related to education. According to the results of this research, as the education levels of the producers' increase, so does the member/non-member ratio of any agricultural organization. Stated in another words, the farmers with high education levels have more awareness of becoming a member of agricultural organizations. For this reason, extension activities should be raised in order to increase the organization levels (Table 7).

The results of the research also show that the farmers are willing to take membership in a newly established cooperative. The willingness of the farmers to become a member shows that producers want to act in unison, to make decisions together, to be organized and they need this association. However, the main reason for not becoming a member of the cooperative is that there are not enough cooperatives in the region and producers do

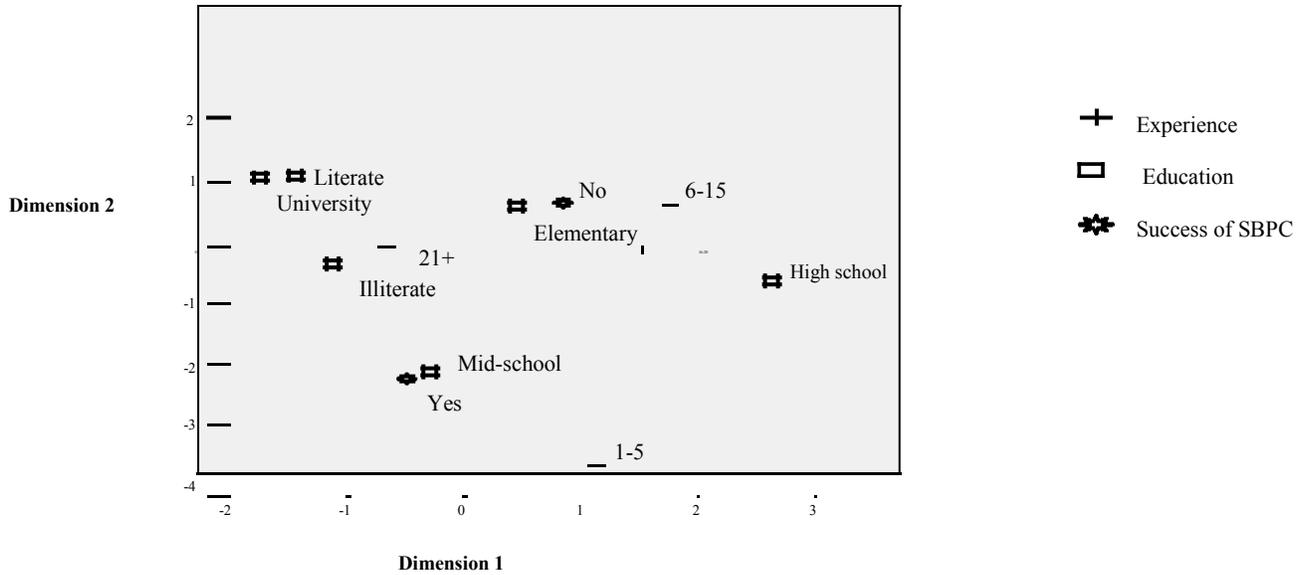


Figure 4. Multiple correspondence analyses.

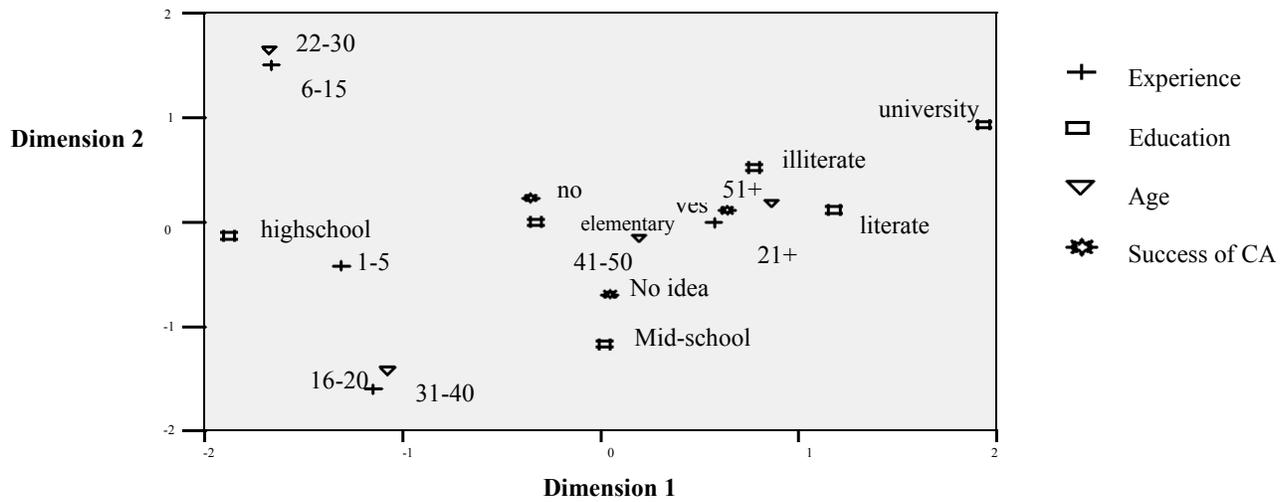


Figure 5. Multiple correspondence analyses.

Table 7. Views of member farmers about their organizations.

Farmer organizations	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)	No idea	Total
Agricultural Development Cooperative(ADC)	75.0	18.8	6.3	100.0
Sugar Beet Producers' Cooperative(SBPC)	25.0	75.0	-	100.0
Agricultural Credit Cooperative(ACC)	-	100.0	-	100.0
Chamber of Agriculture (CA)	28.4	59.1	12.5	100.0

not have knowledge about the cooperative system. In order to resolve this problem, the producers must be informed about the cooperative system. At the same time, through establishing a modern and successful cooperative

model in the region, producers can be attracted towards such organizations. Accomplishing this becomes the mission of extension staff. There is a significant relationship between the willingness to become a member of the

cooperative and the education levels ($P < 0.05$). As the education level increases, also the willingness to become a member of the cooperative increases. These results demonstrate, once more, that extension activities are necessary for organization. Extension studies about organizing will contribute to solving this problem. In addition to this, there is a significant relationship between income and believing in the benefits of being a member, and the willingness to become a member ($P < 0.05$). The reason for this is that organizations offer economic profit for their members. The willingness to earn more money elevates the organization level. Because of the low education and income levels of the farmers in Turkey, the awareness of organization is also low. According to the results of this research, there are not enough extension studies in the province and producers are not informed about organization.

The sense of trust of the farmers in organizations is not very high. In this research, the sense of trust to one cooperative is high; however, the sense of trust to other three cooperatives is rather low. In order to gain the trust of farmers, organizations must meet the expectations of their members, and their managers should be trustworthy and educated; therefore, importance should be attached to the characteristics of the managers. The proportion of the farmers thinking that there is favoritism is not that low (30 - 33%). The cooperatives or agricultural organizations bestowing privilege on some members cannot succeed, because favoritism or doubts about this issue shakes the trust. Avoiding favoritism is possible through the selection of honest, educated managers who stick to the principles of the cooperative. Successful farmer organizations are supported by the producers because they meet the expectations of the producers and perform duties for the society. There is a significant positive relationship between meeting the expectations of the producers and the belief that the cooperative is successful ($P < 0.05$). The producers who believe that organizations have social and economic benefits, and who trust the organization increase the organization level. Therefore, the benefits of the organizations and the role of the organization in solving the agricultural problems should be explained to the producers and extension studies should be increased to accomplish this goal.

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