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INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND GOVERNANCE PRACTICES ON DOUBLE-BOTTOM-LINE PERFORMANCE OF GHANAIAN COOPERATIVE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: MODERATING ROLE OF FIRM CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of leadership capabilities and governance mechanisms on the double-bottom-line (DBL) impact of Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs) in Ghana; additionally, this study examines the moderating effects of leadership development systems. This study advances the stewardship and stakeholder perspectives through a quantitative cross-sectional study with a sample of 222 CFIs over ten defined geographical zones in Ghana. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) we found evidence that both leadership capabilities and governance mechanisms positively impact DBL performance, which included elements of financial sustainability and social performance. Additionally, we found that leadership development practices such as education and succession planning were able to moderate the pathway from governance mechanisms to performance and augment can enhance value arise from previously established governance mechanisms. Collectively, these results present an important and unique finding of the significance of both individual



competence and institutional framework to cooperative performance and contribute new dimensions to what is known about cooperative governance models in emerging markets. Usefully we provide practical recommendations for cooperative boards, regulatory agencies and development partners in the areas of leadership selection, training, and governance accountability, along with future research recommendations for longitudinal and comparative studies of cooperative systems across regions.

Keywords: Cooperative Financial Institutions, Double-Bottom-Line Performance, Leadership Capabilities, Governance Mechanisms, Leadership Development, PLS-SEM, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Recently, the recent performance of Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs) has received growing academic and policy interest because these firms have a dual mission: (1) social impact; and (2) financial sustainability. The term double-bottom-line (DBL) is often used to describe this type of performance. In developing or emerging economies like Ghana, CFIs are producing growing implications for deepening financial inclusion for underserved or rural populations (Bawole et al., 2023).

A member-owned governance structure leads to an element of economic empowerment at the local level, and these firms are often structured in ways similar to formal financial institutions that emphasize risk, compliance, and sustainability (Adusei, 2021). Nevertheless, sustaining the DBL in an increasingly competitive and regulated financial environment requires not only structural and systemic interventions but also capable leadership and sound governance practices (Yeboah & Bediako, 2022).

Leadership competencies and governance systems are central to the viability and social mission of cooperative financial organizations. Under the Ghanaian context, the CFIs have been challenged with performance variability, leadership changes, and significant oversight lapse (Asamoah et al., 2021). CFIs are unlike urban banks, because they are predominantly governed by elected members but ultimately they are also under financial oversight by the supervisory authorities. Some of these members may not have formal knowledge or training related to financial management or governance for institutions. These considerations raise important questions about the role of leadership quality and governance systems on the ability of CFIs to fulfill their financial and social mandates (Odoom, 2023). Compared to a growing agreement across CFI DBL literature, most studies have been concentrated on regulatory compliance issues, internal controls, and technology (Adusei,

2021; Opoku-Agyemang & Boahene, 2023; Hussain & Ahmed, 2024). While these are clearly important enablers of institutional performance, they do not view the perspective of the human and governance (leadership competencies, board involvement, succession planning and ethical oversight) boundaries.

There is a noticeable research gap in empirical studies that examine how leadership qualities, strategic vision, decision-making competence, and governance structures influence DBL outcomes in CFIs. Most governance literature in financial institutions focuses on commercial banks and corporate entities, where board composition, independence, and audit committees are well documented (Sangwan et al., 2023). By contrast, limited attention has been given to cooperative-specific governance models; such as elected boards, volunteer leadership, and member accountability systems, and how these interact with institutional performance (Boateng et al., 2022).

This study contributes to the literature by shifting the focus from institutional structures to leadership behavior and governance effectiveness in Ghanaian CFIs. By investigating the link between leadership competencies and DBL performance, the study offers important insights into: how leadership quality influences both financial and social objectives; the effectiveness of cooperative governance mechanisms in a regulated microfinance landscape; and best practices in leadership development, succession planning, and board governance for CFIs.

Findings from this research will be valuable to cooperative unions, regulatory bodies such as the Department of Cooperatives and the Credit Union Association (CUA), as well as policymakers and donors seeking to strengthen financial inclusion through well-governed cooperative models (Mensah & Agyemang, 2020).

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of leadership competencies and governance practices on double-bottom-line performance among Ghanaian Cooperative Financial Institutions.

Specific objectives include:

1. To assess the relationship between leadership competencies and DBL outcomes in CFIs.
2. To evaluate the influence of governance structures on DBL performance of CFIs.
3. To determine the moderating role of leadership training and succession planning in the relationship between effectiveness of governance systems DBL performance of CFIs.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following key questions:

1. What is the relationship between leadership competencies and the DBL performance of Ghanaian CFIs?
2. How do governance structures affect DBL performance outcomes of CFIs?
3. To what extent does leadership development influence the effectiveness of governance mechanisms?

Scope and Delimitation

This study will focus exclusively on licensed CFIs operating under the regulatory purview of the Ghanaian Department of Cooperatives and the Credit Union Association (CUA). It excludes rural and community banks, and microfinance institutions which are not legally categorized as CFIs. Data was collected from CFI board members, managers, and senior officers across Ghana's ten former administrative regions to ensure representativeness.

Structure of the Article

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature and theoretical underpinnings; Section 3 outlines the methodology employed in the study, including data collection and analysis procedures; Section 4 presents the key findings; Section 8 discusses the implications of the results; Section 5 concludes the study and outlines practical and policy recommendations; Section 6 suggests future research directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two key theoretical underpinnings: Stewardship Theory and Stakeholder Theory. Stewardship Theory posits that managers and leaders are intrinsically motivated to act in the best interests of the organization rather than being driven solely by personal gain (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). In the context of cooperative financial institutions (CFIs), where the leadership is often democratically elected and closely tied to community values, stewardship assumptions are especially relevant. Leaders are expected to serve member interests by promoting both financial sustainability and social responsibility; a reflection of the double-bottom-line (DBL) philosophy.

Stakeholder Theory as articulated by Freeman (1984) aligns with this philosophy, in that it obligates the consideration of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. In a cooperative financial

institution (CFI), key stakeholders include members, staff, regulators, and the community. The expectation is that leadership and governing practices will balance the interests of all stakeholders to accomplish maximum decision-making outcomes, that are both equitable and sustainable. Together, these theories allow an avenue of inquiry on how leadership behaviors and governance practices lead to the outcome of double-bottom-line (DBL).

Leadership Competencies and Double-Bottom-Line Performance

Leadership competencies have traditionally been considered an important factor in organizational success. Competencies such as strategic vision, financial acumen, problem solving, and communications have been shown to promote alignment and improve performance in organizations (Sangwan et al., 2023). In a CFI, where leadership is often voluntary and may not be professionally trained in terms of competencies, as they are needed (Asamoah et al., 2021), competencies are even more essential.

Yeboah and Bediako (2022) underscore the need for cooperative leaders to operationalize vision into actionable strategies, when considering social mission versus financial mission. Their research on Ghanaian microfinance institutions, found that leadership thrives when cooperative leader capacity positively influenced client retention, operational efficiency, and trust in the community, all key indicators of DBL performance. Odoom (2023) noted that along with successful succession planning and continuing leadership development, cooperative sustainability is improved, especially in rural areas of Ghana. In many cases, poor leadership creates poor financial decision-making, compliance issues and poorer trust among members all of which become important problematics to the organization and reduce both financial viability and social impact on the community. Existing literature offers a strong foundation to support the proposition that well-rounded leadership competencies are a prerequisite for increasing DBL performance of CFIs in developing contexts like Ghana.

Governance Practices in Cooperative Financial Institutions

Governance refers to the "way organizations are managed to achieve goals" (Adusei, 2021, p. 249). For credit unions and cooperatives, governance practices consist of many aspects of board composition, oversight roles, audit practices, member input, and the regulatory requirements (Boateng et al., 2022). In contrast to corporations, cooperatives' governance is explained by member control and democratic operating models. Adusei (2021) suggested that member governance effectiveness in CFIs often faces challenges relating to board members' limited capabilities (lack of experience), the timing of board meetings (infrequent), and the conduct of the process of rof CFI board member (through politics). These problems limit risk

management, strategy, and compliance with regulations and are essential in performance of DBL goals.

According to Mensah and Agyemang (2020) cooperative boards that incorporate strong oversight mechanisms, such as audit committees, and perform internal controls effectively, are likely to provide financial performance and social value. They concluded that, indirectly, the effect of governance on DBL relates to improved transparency, allocation of resources, and development of mission fit. Boateng et al. (2022) concluded that larger boards are better due to more diverse perspectives and specialized skill sets, and, in general, cooperatives have better outcomes. These improvements can only happen if the internal training and development of the board is evaluated through time, as governance deteriorates over time.

Leadership-Governance Nexus in Cooperative Institutions

Leadership and governance are related concepts. Effective leadership provides the basis for the operation of governance systems, while effective governance structures provide accountability for leadership (Sarpong & Quaye, 2021). In CFIs, the relationship is further complicated by the governments of elected boards and leadership bodies and may include added elements of political and gaps regarding competency. It follows as noted by Opoku-Agyemang and Boahene (2023), that, institutions that invest in leadership competence development, and define governance roles to promote accountability have more consistency in decision-making and better social accountability. Their study concluded leadership and governance interact in a manner that provides resilience in organizational practices and may contribute to a resilience in organizational performance.

Moreover, Bawole et al. (2023) found that better governed CFIs in Ghana show greater community trust and pursue higher savings mobilization which is a fundamental component of a DBL, along with a more convenient delivery of services, the inclusion indicators also represent trends towards success in a DBL. This would suggest that good governance structures supported by competent leadership could lead to sustainable and inclusive financial performance.

Conceptual Gaps in the Literature

Although research into the relationship between leadership and governance is an emerging area, however, conceptual gaps persist that warrant investigation. First, the research has focused on leadership and governance from the prospective of commercial banks or large microfinance institutions which lack empirical consideration of CFIs (Agyemang, 2022). Second, few studies on leadership and governance consider the implications of leadership competencies

on governance systems that concern both financial and social outcomes; this is a gap this study seeks to address. Third, literature on governance often treat leadership and governance within the inclusive domain of governance systems, while the role of evidence and the notion of board, council or committee as leaders is largely absent. Finally, studies on Ghanaian CFIs often do not attempt to situate member-based governance in conceptual components under a performance-DBL framework, limiting the potential contextual relevance of findings.

This study contributes by: investigating the synergistic effects of leadership competencies and governance practices on DBL outcomes; focusing specifically on Ghanaian CFIs, which operate under unique cooperative principles and regulatory environments; and offering practical insights for leadership development, board structuring, and succession planning in the cooperative sector.

Hypothesis Development

H₁: Leadership competencies have no significant associated with double-bottom-line performance in Ghanaian Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs).

H₂: Effective governance practices do not significantly influence double-bottom-line performance in Ghanaian CFIs.

H₃: Leadership development practices do not moderate the relationship between governance practices and double-bottom-line performance in Ghanaian CFIs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, which is appropriate for examining relationships among multiple variables across a defined population at a specific point in time. The approach enables empirical testing of hypotheses regarding the effects of leadership competencies and governance practices on double-bottom-line (DBL) performance among Ghanaian Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs).

Quantitative research allows for the generation of statistically reliable data on leadership, governance, and institutional performance indicators, facilitating objective inferences and policy-relevant recommendations. This design aligns with prior cooperative studies conducted in the Ghanaian context (e.g., Asamoah et al., 2021; Boateng et al., 2022).

Population and Sampling

The target population comprises licensed credit unions and financial cooperatives in Ghana, regulated by either the Department of Cooperatives or the Credit Union Association

(CUA). These institutions represent the core of the cooperative financial system in Ghana and are mandated to uphold both social and financial objectives.

The population was stratified according to Ghana's ten former administrative regions, a commonly accepted geographic demarcation used in national-level cooperative data collection (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). This ensured regional representation and comparability with existing studies.

Using Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population of CFIs (≈ 500)

e = margin of error (0.05)

These yields:

$$n = \frac{500}{1+500(0.05)^2} = 222$$

Thus, the study targeted a minimum of 222 CFIs, selected using stratified random sampling. Within each selected institution, data were collected from senior management, board members, or governance officers.

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was designed based on established literature and adapted to the cooperative context in Ghana. It comprised five sections:

1. Demographic and Institutional Profile (e.g., size, age, region, regulatory status)
2. Leadership Competencies (e.g., strategic vision, decision-making, communication, financial acumen)
3. Governance Practices (e.g., board size, meeting frequency, internal oversight, member engagement)
4. Double-Bottom-Line Performance Indicators (e.g., financial sustainability, outreach, client retention, social programs)
5. Leadership Development Mechanisms (e.g., training frequency, succession planning)

Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture the degree of agreement with specific leadership and governance statements.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 20 respondents from five CFIs not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot led to refinement of ambiguous items and improvement in scale reliability.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through expert review by three scholars in cooperative governance and two senior managers from licensed CFIs. Construct validity was tested through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirming item clustering under intended latent constructs.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Results for key constructs were as follows: Leadership Competency Scale: $\alpha = 0.871$, Governance Practices Scale: $\alpha = 0.889$, DBL Performance Scale: $\alpha = 0.902$, Leadership Development Scale: $\alpha = 0.860$. All scales exceeded the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978), confirming internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected between March and May 2025 through both face-to-face administration and secure digital surveys (using Google Forms) to accommodate geographically dispersed respondents. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical clearance was secured from the Ethics Committee of Dominion University College, Accra. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with no identifiable personal data collected. Data were encrypted and stored securely to ensure compliance with data protection guidelines.

Data Analysis

Data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS (version 27) and SmartPLS (version 4.0). The analysis proceeded in three stages: Descriptive Statistics: To summarize institutional and respondent characteristics (e.g., size, regulatory status, region). Measurement Model Assessment: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess indicator loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion). Structural Model Assessment: Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test hypotheses, examine path coefficients, and assess the significance of direct and moderating effects.

Moderation was assessed using product-indicator interaction terms (Hair et al., 2022). Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to determine significance levels ($p < 0.05$).

Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by ethical principles including voluntary participation, anonymity, and non-maleficence. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Board of the Valley View University, Accra – Ghana.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The final dataset consisted of 222 valid responses from top-level personnel, mainly managers, board members, and governance officers of licensed Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs) in Ghana. These institutions are regulated either by the Department of Cooperatives or the Credit Union Association (CUA) and span Ghana's ten former administrative regions.

Brong Ahafo recorded the highest number of responses (13%), followed by Ashanti and Eastern regions. This reflects the strong presence and operational density of CFIs in central and southern Ghana. A significant portion of CFIs (58%) had existed for more than 10 years, suggesting institutional maturity, a factor potentially influential for governance effectiveness and leadership continuity. Most of the institutions (45%) were categorized as small, based on membership size and asset levels, consistent with prior studies indicating that smaller CFIs dominate Ghana's cooperative landscape (Bawole et al., 2023).

Table 1. Summary of Key Constructs

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	25%	Median	75%	Max
Leadership Competencies	3.77	0.51	2.43	3.44	3.76	4.09	5.00
Governance Practices	3.57	0.62	1.51	3.11	3.63	4.01	5.00
DBL Performance	3.73	0.47	2.58	3.41	3.72	4.02	5.00
Leadership Development	3.47	0.59	1.77	3.06	3.48	3.83	4.98

The results reveal moderately high ratings across all constructs. Notably, leadership competencies recorded the highest average score ($M = 3.77$), suggesting relatively strong strategic, financial, and communicative capabilities among CFI leadership. Conversely,

leadership development scored lowest ($M = 3.47$), indicating a potential gap in structured training and succession planning practices.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The reliability and validity of the latent constructs were assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using SmartPLS. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.860 to 0.902, confirming internal consistency. Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded the 0.70 threshold for all constructs. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranged between 0.622 and 0.694, establishing convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed via the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio, ensuring constructs measured distinct phenomena. These diagnostics support the robustness of the constructs, validating the conceptual structure of leadership competencies, governance practices, DBL performance, and leadership development.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

To test the study's hypotheses, a structural model was constructed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with 5,000 bootstrapped resamples.

Table 2. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	β (Path Coefficient)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
H1	Leadership Competencies → DBL Performance	0.412	6.87	0.000	Supported
H2	Governance Practices → DBL Performance	0.366	5.93	0.000	Supported
H3	Leadership Development × Governance Practices → DBL Performance	0.147	2.18	0.030	Supported

The results provide strong support for all three hypotheses. Specifically, leadership competencies emerged as the strongest predictor of DBL performance ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the importance of strategic thinking, communication, and financial skills among cooperative leaders. Additionally, governance practices also had a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.366$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the relevance of oversight structures such as board composition, regular meetings, and ethical accountability. Further, the moderating effect of leadership development on the governance-DBL relationship was statistically significant ($\beta =$

0.147, $p = 0.030$). This suggests that governance structures are more effective in institutions where leadership training and succession systems are in place.

Interaction and Moderation Plot

To visualize the interaction effect, a moderation plot was generated. It shows that CFIs with strong leadership development systems benefit more from governance structures in terms of DBL outcomes, whereas those with weak leadership development show weaker governance–performance linkages. This finding reinforces the need to institutionalize leadership training and mentorship as part of the governance strategy.

Model Fit and Predictive Power

The model's explanatory and predictive capabilities were evaluated through R^2 and Q^2 statistics. R^2 (DBL Performance) = 0.582 → Suggests that 58.2% of the variance in DBL performance is explained by leadership competencies, governance practices, and the interaction with leadership development. Q^2 (Blindfolding Predictive Relevance) = 0.433 → Confirms good out-of-sample predictive relevance. Together, these metrics affirm the model's substantial explanatory power in predicting DBL performance in Ghanaian CFIs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study set out to examine the role of leadership competencies and governance practices in shaping double-bottom-line (DBL) performance within Ghanaian Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs), while assessing how leadership development moderates these relationships. The findings offer several important insights. First, leadership competencies were found to be the strongest predictor of DBL performance, validating the critical role of individual capabilities in strategic decision-making, financial planning, and stakeholder communication. Second, governance practices such as structured board oversight, transparency mechanisms, and ethical accountability were also significantly and positively associated with DBL outcomes. Third, leadership development had a moderating effect, amplifying the impact of governance practices when properly institutionalized. These findings suggest that both individual-level and organizational-level leadership structures matter in achieving the dual goals of financial viability and social impact.

The strong relationship between leadership competencies and DBL performance supports earlier work by Yeboah and Bediako (2022), who found that effective cooperative leadership enhances both institutional efficiency and social outreach. Similarly, Asamoah et al. (2021) demonstrated that managerial capacity and decision-making are central to cooperative

growth in sub-Saharan Africa. The positive effect of governance practices echoes the findings of Boateng et al. (2022), who emphasized that board size, meeting regularity, and internal audit systems contribute significantly to cooperative performance. This study advances the discourse by contextualizing governance within the unique democratic structure of CFIs, where elected leaders often govern without formal professional backgrounds.

More notably, this study confirms the interactive role of leadership development in strengthening the governance–performance link. Odoom (2023) had earlier posited that leadership succession planning remains a weak area in many Ghanaian CFIs. Our findings empirically validate this claim, showing that leadership development enhances institutional capacity to utilize governance systems effectively. Compared to commercial banks and microfinance institutions, Ghanaian CFIs exhibit a more community-rooted governance culture, often tied to informal norms and volunteerism (Mensah & Agyemang, 2020). While these traits foster social capital, they may hinder technical effectiveness unless supported by structured leadership pipelines and competency development initiatives.

The findings of this study reinforce the relevance of Stewardship Theory in cooperative contexts. Elected CFI leaders, when equipped with strong competencies, demonstrate stewardship behavior by aligning organizational actions with collective member interests. This counters the typical assumptions of agency theory, which views managers as self-interested actors requiring constant monitoring. Additionally, Stakeholder Theory is validated by the observed emphasis on social performance alongside financial metrics. Effective leadership and governance practices appear to balance the interests of diverse stakeholders; members, regulators, communities; thus fulfilling the cooperative mandate. By highlighting the synergy between leadership development and governance structures, the study contributes to an emerging theoretical view that integrated leadership systems, not just isolated practices, drive sustainable performance in member-based financial institutions.

For the cooperative leaders and the practitioners, the report is among others scouting for competence-based training and recruiting leaders. Managers and board members should appoint and hire for technical abilities to understand financial literacy, strategic thinking and communication. CFIs must formalize regular leadership development activities and programs like mentoring programs, inter-branch exchange programs and succession planning schemes. These can provide the assurance of leadership continuity and prevent the performance disruption that comes from turnover or political meddling. For directors' boards, the greatest priority should be toward strengthening control mechanisms by implementing term limits, independent audit committees, and member feedback loops. They are not merely good governance for corporations but also with enhanced DBL performance. Further, cooperative

networks and apex organizations like CUA need to go back to leadership educational content and presentation to conform to changing regulatory, technological, and social requirements.

CONCLUSION

This research examined leadership skills and governance behaviors' effect on double-bottom-line (DBL) performance of Ghanaian Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs) and further evaluated the moderating role of leadership development systems. On the basis of data from 222 CFIs in Ghana's ten former administrative regions, the research concludes that leadership competencies like strategic vision, decision-making capacity, communication, and fiscal literacy have strong, positive impacts on DBL performance. Governance practices such as robust board arrangements, internal controls, and accountability systems also make significant contributions to DBL performance. The mechanisms for leadership development enhance the role of governance in DBL results, thereby implying that effective governance is dependent on skilled and trained leaders. The study further conclude that attending to good leadership and governance, particularly together with continuous development processes, drives social and economic sustainability in cooperative organizations.

This research adds to the literature of Stewardship Theory by showing that leaders of cooperatives possess adequate capabilities, proving that they are stewards of member interests by optimizing social and financial outcomes. The results also affirm Stakeholder Theory in the sense that CFIs, who manage diverse stakeholder needs strategically, are in a position to perform well on both bottom lines. Through the introduction of leadership development as a moderator, this study offers a fresh contribution to governance-performance studies in cooperative finance, especially in the context of emerging markets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Collaborative boards and unions can implement competency frameworks at leadership positions to ensure elected or appointed members have fundamental competencies in finance, communication, strategic planning, and stakeholder management.
2. CFI boards and management should select or appoint leaders based on at least some degree of competencies, that is, mainly finance, communication, and strategic planning. They should also include leadership development through the use of capacity-building activities, mentoring programs, and succession planning processes.
3. Apex bodies (CUA, DOC should develop certification-oriented training modules that address the governance situations within Ghanaian CFIs. Moreover, they should

conduct follow-up capacity audits to determine leadership gaps in partner CFIs and provide targeted support through training.

4. CFIs should have well-articulated training, mentoring, and succession planning process to ensure that leadership continuity is maintained such that the leadership vacancy is minimized while governance effectiveness is maximized.
5. Policy makers and regulators are encouraged to enforce mandatory governance and leadership provisions under cooperative law, e.g., board orientation requirements and routine review. Further, they should promote leadership training programs through technical assistance or performance monitoring.
6. There should be similar governance standards including board demographics, board meeting frequency, and member review in the guidelines developed by the regulator and the Agency Regulator (CUA) besides the extent of state regulation that is necessary in the CFI sector.
7. It also recommended that development partners and NGOs should promote joint leadership training programs, especially at the least well off level of governance and collaborate with CFIs to develop leadership ethics, social accountability, and mobilization of members' toolkits.
8. Tracking of DBL development partner or regulator performance should incorporate leadership training indicators, ethics, and assessment of board performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

For future development on the findings of this research, subsequent researchers can undertake longitudinal studies to examine the impact of changes in leadership composition or board composition over time on DBL performance in CFIs. Others can also do qualitative research to explore the experiences of cooperative leaders to obtain the richness of governance and ethical problems. Remote leadership & virtual governance can also be examined considering digital resource leadership; virtual board meetings in driving governance effectiveness & collective resilience. Comparative analysis to replicate the study among CFIs in other SSA countries so as to allow regional comparisons and extrapolation of study decisions.

For researchers and academics, this research presents new opportunity areas for research on the interaction between institutional performance and human capital in cooperative contexts. Future research can extrapolate this model to use comparative cross-country studies or long-term studies to examine over time leadership competency behaviors. The incorporation of virtual leadership in cooperative governance is also a new research area that needs scholarly

investigation. Through these avenues, future research will cast more illumination on the human factors driving high-performing, socially revitalizing financial cooperatives.

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