

## Group Leadership and Its Influence on Group Activities among Small-Holder Dairy Self Help Groups in Molo Nakuru County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Although a number of studies have been conducted on smallholder dairy farming in Kenya, very few of these have focused on how group leadership influences group activities. The study addressed this issue by determining group leadership influence on levels of milk production. The research design used was survey. The target population comprised of smallholder dairy farmers belonging to self-help groups in Molo sub-county. The study used interview schedule for data collection. Respondents were picked through systematic random sampling from the accessible population. Data was then analyzed using the software package for social sciences. Audiotapes from the focus group discussions were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively using Krueger's framework analysis method. According to this study group leadership has not helped these groups achieve their objective of increasing levels of milk production. Rather, group leaders seem to hold the groups behind as evidence from the respondents show. Group leaders are faced with setbacks which prevent them from effectively managing the group resources, handling in group conflicts as well as guiding the groups towards achieving increased levels of milk production. There is lack of accountability and transparency from the leaders which has prompted members to lose trust in them and hence this affects their capability to increase their levels of milk production.

**Keywords:** Group leadership, smallholder dairy farming, dairy self-help groups, milk production.

## INTRODUCTION

According to FAO [1], approximately 150 million households globally are engaged in milk production. In developing countries of Asia and Africa, milk is produced by small holder dairy farmers and this contributes to their livelihoods, food security and nutrition. In Kenya Dairy cattle produce about 70 percent of total national milk output, which translates to more than 3 billion litres, [2]. The domination of smallholder dairy farmers in the dairy business was triggered during the post colonial era. The Kenya government made available incentives that could allow smallholder dairy farmers to expand their trade such as abolishing the quota and contract system of dairy marketing which prevented farmers from selling milk directly to KCC as well as providing animal health services such as artificial insemination [3].

Milk producer groups often engage in a variety of activities including collection of milk, milk processing and marketing as well as organizing livestock services such as animal breeding. Small holder milk producer groups facilitate dialogue between members and this prevents them from being dominated

by few members which can potentially lead to poor decision making [2]. In Kenya, smallholder milk producers come together to form dairy self help groups in order to collectively sell their milk as well as increase their milk production.

Smallholder milk producers in Kenya have often been encouraged to join self help groups since group run enterprises have a better chance to succeed since individuals have different skills, hence working in groups combines abilities to produce better results. In addition groups have better bargaining power than individuals as well as easier access to services such as advice and assistance from development partners such as NGOs the government and individual donors [7]. Despite the dairy sector being a vital contributor to the national economy, its main actors who are the smallholder dairy farmers experience a number of social and economic issues that prevent these farmers from efficient milk production processing and marketing. These constraints affect the ability of the sector to participate and compete in the domestic and regional markets.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Information and technical assistance provided to smallholder farmers by the Kenya government and other development partners has been documented. However, little exists on how group leadership influences the levels of milk production among smallholder dairy farmers in Molo. Therefore the study sought to fill this gap through generation of relevant knowledge with intent to provide possible answers to this question.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

In every group, whether formal or informal, leaders are present and chosen by virtue of certain aspects such as charisma, education, and experience in leadership among others. Leaders are essential during group development process and are tasked with carrying out certain activities that are geared towards the success of the group. In the group formation process, leaders set the structures of the group, clarify the goals and expectations to the members and establish group connections. In the storming stage, leaders resolve conflicts by addressing points of tension and discomfort among the members. Leaders ought to define one’s position and ideas in the group, share their role as leaders, and incorporate diversity and creativity. Leaders, who create interpersonal communication with their members, provide others with feedback on issues raised, develop and nurture sets of executive skills as well as tackling real challenges head on, enhance growth and development of their groups, [4]. The study aimed to find out whether leaders of the molo dairy self-help groups interact with their members and how quickly they responded to issues raised within the group.

According to Bales and Slater [5] as cited in Hare, there is a distinction between instrumental leaders and expressive leaders. The former are more involved in roles that focus on building group solidarity, whereas the latter focus on accomplishing group goals. Ridgeway, [6] holds that instrumental leaders ensure completion of tasks and maintain productivity. Therefore, these kinds of leaders make good managers because they ensure the job is done, but they tend to alienate other members of the groups. On the others hand, expressive leaders strive to maintain friendly relationships and ensure that members well-being is

taken care of. However these kinds of leaders often lack efficiency and organizational skills.

**METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey research design was used to gather information on the aspect of group leadership and its influence on the levels of milk production among smallholder dairy farmers in Molo. The interview schedule tool was used to gather information from the respondents. Through the survey, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes of the respondents were captured. The target population of this study included all the smallholder dairy farmers of Molo Sub-County, Nakuru County. According to information obtained from the state department of agriculture in Nakuru County, there are 5 registered groups in Molo Sub-County that is Elburgon Progressive Dairy Farmers, Besin Visionary Network, Sakaitim Dairy, Saki Youth Group and Wazo Moja, with a total of 517 members. In this case the sample size of each group is proportionate to the entire population; hence a sampling fraction of ½ for all the groups was used. Therefore the final sample size for Wazo Moja which had 300 members was 150, Elburgon which had 110 members was 55, Sakaitim which had 50 members was 25, Besin which had 30 members was 15 and Saki which had 27 members was 13. In total the combined sample was 258 members from all the five groups where members were selected randomly based on their participation in their respective groups. Data collected through the interview schedule was edited, coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive analysis was employed in analyzing the objectives.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The following research question was formulated to guide this study; how does group leadership influence the levels of milk production among Molo dairy self-help groups? In order to address this question this study sought to find out what challenges group leaders face when carrying out their responsibilities, and how it influences the levels of milk production of those groups. The results are presented in the following tables with respect to the five groups. The first group was Wazo Moja and their results are presented in the following table;

**Table 1: Challenges faced by group leaders of Wazo Moja dairy self-help group**

Challenges faced by leaders	Frequency	Percentage
Leaders make decisions without involving members	8	30
Leaders do not co-operate	6	20
Leaders have misunderstandings with members	6	20
Leaders are dishonest and unwilling to work	5	15
Leaders make poor decisions	5	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the respondents from Wazo Moja, majority 30% say that leaders make decisions without involving members, 20% hold that leaders do not coordinate amongst themselves, 20% say that leaders usually have misunderstandings with members. 15% hold that some leaders are dishonest and unwilling to work while another 15% said that poor decision making was also another challenge facing their leaders. This information is presented in the table above. The box below contains some of the excerpts that were captured during the interview with some of the members from this group.

**Challenges faced by leaders of Wazo Moja**

“Sometimes the course on which the group takes concerning how money should be spent is not what has been agreed on by members because the leaders amongst themselves decide what is best which does not please members”. Source: Respondent 12 July 2016.

“At times leaders do not want to cooperate with members in solving group problems”. Source: Respondent 15 July 2016

“Some leaders have to be “pushed” to perform their duties to the group”. Source: Respondent 12 July 2016.

“In the past poor decisions made by the leaders in terms of investments have resulted in the group losing money”. Source: Respondent 7 July 2016.

In this case, leaders are oblivious to the members concerns at times, when they decide on how money should be spent, instead of what was agreed upon. This makes the members anxious and they lose trust in their leaders. Also, some leaders are uncooperative, while others have to be reminded to do their work. This does not foster a healthy relationship between the leaders and members hence affecting their objective of improving their levels of milk production. Additionally leaders have made some poor decisions which have cost the group valuable money which if put to good use would have yielded income for the group. The next group was Elburgon dairy self-help group and their results are presented in the following table;

**Table 2: Challenges faced by group leaders of Elburgon dairy self-help group**

<b>Challenges faced by leaders</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Leaders do not attend meetings	10	50
Leaders mismanage group funds	8	30
Some leaders have misunderstandings with members	6	10
Leaders do not co-operate with each other	6	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

With respect to the respondents from Elburgon dairy self-help group, 50% say that some of the leaders fail to attend group meetings, 30% hold that leaders mismanage the group funds, 10% say that leaders usually have misunderstandings with members. Finally 10% hold that some leaders do not co-ordinate with one another hence interfering with the achievement of group goals as shown in the table above. The box below contains some of the excerpts that were captured during the interview with some of the members from this group.

**Challenges faced by leaders of Elburgon**

“Leaders sometimes do not attend meetings they are supposed to chair which makes the members anxious”. Source: Respondent 8 July 2016.

“Some leaders argue openly with members during meetings instead of listening to their grievances, this

makes members lose faith in their ability to lead the group”. Source: Respondent 17 July 2016.

“Some members feel that some of the leaders do not manage their funds well since there are no audits of the group funds”. Source: Respondent 23 July 2016.

In this case, leaders are also not concerned with concerns from the members in that they quarrel with some of the members when an issue is raised about their style of leadership. Furthermore, the leaders do not give an account of how group money is spent and to what extent. This leads the members to losing trust in their leaders.

In the next group, Sakaitim dairy self-help group, the following were the responds from the members about challenges faced by their leaders.

**Table 3: Challenges faced by group leaders of Sakaitim dairy self-help group**

Challenges faced by leaders	Frequency	Percentage
Leaders have dictatorship behaviour	9	35
Leaders are slow in decision making	9	35
Some leaders do not inform members about their decisions	7	20
Leaders mismanage group funds	5	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

35% say that some of the leaders possess dictatorship behaviour, 35% also hold that leaders are slow in making decisions for the group. 20% say that leaders do not inform members about some of the decisions they make for the group. Finally 10% hold that leaders have been mismanaging the group funds. This is shown in the table above. The narratives below were captured during the interview with members from this group

**Challenges faced by leaders of Sakaitim**

“Some leaders are dictators, they do not want to hear the concerns of members and if they do they do not respond accordingly or do anything about it”. Source: Respondent 18 July 2016.

“It takes leaders a lot of time to deliberate on some of the issues raised by members; this therefore leads to

members not having faith in them in handling a number of group issues”. Source: Respondent 15 July 2016.

“Leaders do not give us sufficient information about how group money is used and this leads to suspicion of mismanagement”. Source: Respondent 6 July 2016.

Here, some members feel that their leaders have dictatorship attributes because they do not address the issues raised by the members. Additionally the leaders take a lot of time in addressing some of the issues raised by members which creates anxiety within the group. Like in other groups also, leaders do not provide members with a clear account on how group money is spent. The following are results from the fourth group Besin dairy self-help group.

**Table 4: Challenges faced by group leaders of Besin dairy self-help group**

Challenges faced by leaders	Frequency	Percentage
Leaders are dishonest	11	45
Some leaders are lazy and unwilling to work	10	25
Leaders are not well informed about members needs	7	20
Leaders have not fulfilled their promises	2	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The members from Besin dairy had the following sentiments about the challenges that prevent their leaders from performing their duties well. 45% claim that some of the leaders are dishonest, 25% hold that some leaders are lazy and have an unwillingness to perform their duties to the group. 20% say that leaders are not well informed about the needs of the group. Finally 10% hold that leaders have not been fulfilling their promises to the members and hence have not lived up to their expectations. This information is illustrated in the table above. The narratives below were captured during the interview with members from this group

**Challenges faced by leaders of Besin**

“Some of the promises the leaders made have not been fulfilled, for example there is still insufficient extension services which they said would be available to farmers”. Source: Respondent 19 July 2016.

“Some leaders take group work lightly and hence do not finish their jobs in the required time which hampers the development of the group”. Source: Respondent 4 July 2016.

According to results from this group, leaders have failed to deliver some of the promises they delivered to members, which has led to members losing faith in them. Additionally, members feel as if leaders are dishonest since they do not inform them on some of the decisions they make. Also, members feel that some leaders are lazy in carrying out their duties and hence do not take seriously the needs of the group.

The next group was Saki dairy self help group and their results are presented in the table below;

**Table 5: Challenges faced by group leaders of Saki dairy self-help group**

Challenges faced by leaders	Frequency	Percentage
Leaders are dishonest	9	50
Some leaders quarrel amongst themselves	6	20
Leaders fail to attend meetings	5	15
Leaders do not make informed decisions	4	10
Some leaders are not easily accessible by members	3	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

According to members from the final group, Saki dairy self-help group 50% claim that some of the leaders are dishonest, 20% hold that leaders quarrel amongst themselves. 15% say that some leaders fail to attend group meetings, 10% hold that leaders do not make informed decisions, while 5% say that some leaders are not easily accessible by the members as shown in the table above. In the box below, narratives captured during the interview with some members from this group are presented.

**Challenges faced by leaders of Saki**

*“When the leaders do not agree with each other, this creates factions within the group that support either leader and hence no progress can prevail in this state”.* Source: Respondent 2 July 2016.

*“Some decisions our leaders made have cost the group time and resources which we cannot get back”.* Source: Respondent 10 July 2016.

*“There is dishonesty in the leadership because they do not clearly explain to the members what their resources have achieved and if they do its always scanty”.* Source: Respondent 5 July 2016.

In this case, leaders disagree with each other thereby creating a rift in the group. Therefore members become divided and therefore cannot agree on issues. Also poor decisions made by leaders have cost the group money. Moreover, members feel that leaders are not clear on how their resources have been used, thereby leading members to not trusting them.

According to the results from this study, group leadership has not helped these groups achieve their objective of increasing levels of milk production. Rather, group leaders seem to hold the groups behind as evidence from the respondents show. Group leaders are faced with setbacks which prevent them from effectively managing the group resources, handling in group conflicts as well as guiding the groups towards achieving increased levels of milk production. There is lack of accountability and transparency from the leaders which has prompted members to lose trust in them and hence this affects their capability to increase their levels of milk production.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The second objective intended to determine the influence of group leaders on the levels of milk production among smallholder dairy farmers in Molo. Leaders are an important part of a group since they are looked up on by their members to provide guidance and help solve problems that exist within the group. However, some of the leaders within these self-help groups had setbacks which prevented them from helping their members improve their levels of milk production. These included, exclusion of members while making decisions, misappropriating group finances, showing dictatorship qualities as well as absenteeism in meetings they are supposed to chair. In addition, these leaders did not seem to take into consideration the importance of involving members in the decision making process.

Despite these setbacks, some members still choose to remain in the group due to a number of reasons. One is that it is easier to access markets for milk through a group rather than working as an individual dairy farmer. Another reason is that these groups have already formed networks with extensionists who provide them with important services vital for the growth of their businesses. Moreover, these farmers would rather stay in the group and help it grow through choosing leaders who share the same vision as them and care about their needs and removing those that are not willing to help the group prosper.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is need to educate and train leaders on ways to effectively manage groups, as well as solve issues within the groups. Leaders should be empowered to bring their members to work together. It is also important for leaders’ skills to be sharpened through training. These trainings can be facilitated by the ministry of agriculture and livestock through their representatives or extension officers.

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