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Strategic Orientation, Culture, and Commitment Toward Institutional Performance of Independent Palm Oil Farmers

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ABSTRACT

Independent oil palm farmers are crucial to the growth of the national economy. However, due to subpar institutional and farmer group performance, independent oil palm farmers' productivity still needs to improve. This research aimed to maximize institutional performance within the frameworks of social exchange theory and resource-based view theory. The study employed structural equation modeling, or SMART-PLS, and quantitative descriptive methodologies to examine 92 farmer group administrators in Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan. The study's findings illustrate that strategic orientation, culture, and commitment affect institutional/farmer group performance. In maximizing institutional performance, the following was done: 1) planning for environmental conservation by setting clear deadlines and assigning members to consider environmental sustainability and refrain from burning land; 2) communicating with the community and members to foster community harmony; 3) holding online group discussions for members who are unable to attend in order to save time discussing issues collectively; b. imposing strict sanctions for infractions by its members; 4) fostering active dialogues among members and working directly or virtually with instructors regarding oil palm cultivation knowledge. The most recent study aims to develop strategies for enhancing institutional and farmer group performance through strategic orientation, culture, and commitment.

Keywords: farmer group, performance, independent oil palm farmers, SMART-PLS

INTRODUCTION

Palm oil in Indonesia is the world's largest producer as well as the largest contributor to foreign exchange by producing more than 50% of the world's palm oil (Papilo *et al.* 2020; Saragih *et al.* 2020; Shigetomi *et al.* 2020; Sokoastri *et al.* 2019). Palm oil contributes USD 35.53 billion to the trade balance (GAPKI 2022), overcoming poverty reduction, income equity, and improving people's welfare (Raharja *et al.* 2020; Shahputra and Zen 2018) by absorbing a workforce of 16.2 million people (BPDP 2018). Independent oil palm smallholders are key to oil palm productivity in Indonesia (Bakhtary *et al.* 2021). The area of oil palm plantations of independent smallholders was 5.8 million hectares out of a total of 14.3 million hectares (40.56%) of the area of Indonesian oil palm plantations (Ditjenbun 2020), and yet only produces 17.38 out of 49.12 million tons (35.38%) of CPO (Nashr *et al.* 2021) of the total oil palm production in state plantations, private plantations, and people's plantations (BPS 2020).

However, independent oil palm smallholders face many problems in increasing their productivity, such as limited market access However, independent oil palm smallholders face many problems in increasing their productivity, such as limited market access (Ogahara *et al.* 2022), tropical deforestation and plantation expansion (Apriyanto *et al.* 2021; Qaim *et al.* 2020), lack of knowledge and poor management (Rhebergen *et al.* 2018). This condition is motivated by the role of institutions/farmer groups that is still not optimal (Jafar *et al*. 2022), including the limited role of administrators, unclear group members, incomplete and dysfunctional organizational structures, low productivity of member farming, and lack of guidance by extension workers and related agencies (Eskarya and Elihami 2019) thus causing low performance. In fact, independent oil palm farmer groups are expected to make farming activities easier for farmers so that they are more efficient than being carried out individually (Lestari and Idris 2019). Farmer groups are also a forum to improve cultivation knowledge, market prices, production inputs, access to capital, and marketing to increase oil palm productivity (Jafar *et al.* 2022; Raharja *et al.* 2020) are more efficient than being carried out individually (Lestari and Idris

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2019). Farmer groups are also a forum to improve cultivation knowledge, market prices, production inputs, access to capital, and marketing to increase oil palm productivity (Jafar *et al.* 2022; Raharja *et al.* 2020).

The performance of the farmer group includes aspects of planning, organization, carrying out activities, controlling and reporting, and developing leadership. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture (2018) grouped the performance scores of institutions/farmer groups as follows: (i) Beginner class (score 245); (ii) Advanced class (score 246–455); (iii) Intermediate class (score 456–700); and (iv) First class (score 701–1000). Independent oil palm farmer groups show a classification of the abilities of beginner classes that have been established for a long time with an adequate number of members but have yet to be able to move up to the advanced or intermediate classes (Disbunnak 2022).

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to formulate an improvement in the performance of institutions/farmer groups with an organizational performance model that includes strategic orientation, culture, and commitment (Ahmed *et al.* 2018) with the classification of assessment of the ability of farmer groups (Ministry of Agriculture 2018), and based on the framework of a theory of resource-based view and social exchange theory (Emerson 1976; Wernerfelt 1984). Previous research has shown that strategic orientation is socially complex, irreplaceable, and practical (Han *et al.* 2022), and culture creates collective identity. It strengthens social cohesion, and commitment is a prerequisite for individuals and institutions (Kochoska and Petrovski 2015).

The novelty of this study is the use of *resource-based view theory* as the basis of a performance framework that has resources as a source of strengths and weaknesses in institutions/farmer groups and *social exchange theory* as a framework for human relationships built through the process of providing mutual benefits through the classification of farmer group ability assessments (Ministry of Agriculture 2018). The two theories complement each other to form a model of institutional performance/independent oil palm farmer groups. The research results are expected to be considered for the development of institutional capabilities/independent oil palm farmer groups so that they can move up from the beginner class to the higher class.

METHODS

The research was conducted in Sambas Regency, which is one of the largest oil palm areas for independent smallholders and West Kalimantan, Indonesia, covering an area of 27.3 thousand ha (BPS Kalbar 2021), as well as the largest population of oil palm farmer groups, which is 185 groups (Disbunna 2022). The research used a quantitative descriptive method with *a* purposive sampling technique, namely oil palm farmer groups in the beginner class, more than 15 years old, more than 20 members, but still in the beginner class and have not moved up to the advanced class and intermediate class (Disbunnak 2022) to provide a more accurate picture of the research (Sharma 2017) in a widespread research area (Ames *et al.* 2019).

The number of samples was 92 groups of oil palm farmers considering the suitability of the sample size criteria of the SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) model using SMART PLS, which is 30 to 100 (Singkheeprapha *et al.* 2021). The selected farmer group respondents were the core management of the farmer group such as the chairman, secretary, or treasurer as well as one person per farmer group representing the regional center (BPS Sambas 2021).

The research was carried out through four stages. The first stage was identifying the characteristics of the respondents, which included gender, age, education level, number of dependents, and length of service in the independent oil palm farmer group, in a quantitative descriptive manner. The second stage was identifying institutional characteristics with an *organizational performance model* that includes strategic orientation, culture, and institutional/farmer group commitment (Ahmed *et al.* 2018) descriptively quantitatively. The performance characteristics of the farmer group (*Y*) include the ability to plan, the ability to organize, the ability to carry out activities, the ability to control and report, and the ability to develop leadership (Ministry of Agriculture 2018) with 4 Likert scale. Strategic orientation (X1) characteristics include decision-making, social responsibility, and natural (Goll and Rakesh 1986; Wernerfelt 1984) with 4 differential semantic scales. Cultural characteristics (X2) include trust, justice, and cooperation (Hofstede 2011; Emerson 1976) with 4 differential semantic scales. Commitment characteristics (X3) include affective, continuous, and normative attitudes (Allen and Meyer 1996; Jakada *et al.* 2019*;* Emerson 1976) with 4 differential semantic scales.

The third stage was to simultaneously connect the strategic orientation, culture, and commitment of the institution/farmer group to the performance of the institution/farmer group using *Structural Equation Modeling/SEM* with SMART PLS 3.0. The SEM was used because the data did not have to be normally distributed multivariate; the use of a small sample of at least 30 could confirm the theory through the relationship between its latent variables and could estimate large and complex models (Haryono and Wardoyo 2017). The stages in the

SMART PLS 3.0 analysis consisted of evaluating *the outer model* (measurement model) or test of research instruments and evaluating *the inner model* (structural model). The evaluation stages of *the outer model* (measurement model) included a reflective measurement model and a formative measurement model. The reflective measurement model for reliability test through CR *(Composite Reliability)* ≥0.70, and AVE *(Averange Variance Extracted) validity test* ≥0.50. A formative measurement model for the multicolliability value test through VIF *(Variance Inflation Factor)* <10, and *R*2 with criteria of 0.75 (strong), 0.50 (moderate), and 0.25 (weak), as well as *q*2>0. The evaluation stage of *the inner model*(structural model) to find out the hypothesis through *t*-statistics >1.96 and *p*-value <0.05. The magnitude of the correlation between variables and indicators through factor loading ≥0.70 and *f*2 with the criteria of 0.75 (strong), 0.50 (moderate), and 0.25 (weak) (Hair *et al.* 2021). The last stage was to determine how to optimize performance based on the descriptive results of the third stage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the management

The characteristics of the management of the independent farmer group include gender, age, length of management, education, and the number of dependents presented in Table 1. The management of the male independent oil palm farmer group affects physical ability, logical reasoning ability, and as the backbone of the family (Rachmadian *et al.* 2021). Dominated by the productive age of 36–50 (Nurhaliza *et al.* 2021) with junior high school education, which determines experience, information absorption, and innovation practices (Kurniati & Voulina, 2020), as well as influencing farmers in increasing productivity, especially farmer group administrators (Nurhaliza *et al.* 2021)The duration of management is 3–5 years, and the family dependents of 4–6 people which affects the activities and decision-making methods, as well as affecting the level of per capita household income (Nurhaliza *et al.* 2021).

Table 1 Characteristics of the management of independent oil palm farmer groups (in percentage)

Gender	
Male	100
Age (year)	
20–35	23.9
36–50	62.0
51–65	14.1
Duration in management	
1–2 year	22.8
3–5 year	77.2
Formal education (year)	
6 (elementary school)	3.2
9 (junior high school)	44.6
12 (senior high school)	43.5
>12	8.7
Number of dependents	
1–3 person	22.8
4–6 person	77.2

Organizational Performance Characteristics Strategic Orientation, Organizational Culture, and Organizational Commitment

The characteristics of organizational performance in farmer groups include the ability to plan, the ability to organize, the ability to carry out activities, the ability to control and report, and the ability to develop leadership. Characteristics of strategic orientation include decision-making, social responsibility, and naturalness. Characteristics of organizational culture include trust, justice, and cooperation. Characteristics of organizational commitment include affective attitudes, continuous attitudes, and normative attitudes (Table 2). Organizational performance is dominated by the ability to plan in meetings/deliberations of farmer group members, the ability to organize in making rules and norms, the ability to implement activities in meetings/deliberations of farmer group members, the ability to control and report in evaluating the plans that have been made, the ability to develop leadership in making rotations of management. The strategic orientation component can make decisions for farmer groups in the sale of palm oil, be socially responsible by participating in social needs, and be able to make members follow the rules. The organizational culture component can create members' trust in the group, provide justice in applying sanctions to all members, and organize members to cooperate with the workforce's contribution. In the organizational commitment component, someone can be effectively committed if he/she feels happy to join, continuously committed because he/she is dependent and normative committed. After all, he/she contributes.

Organizational Performance, Orientation Strategy, Organizational Culture, and Organizational Commitment

The first stage was testing the reflective measurement model to determine the reliability and validity values through CR *(Composite Reliability)* and AVE (*Averange Variance Extracted*). Table 3 shows that the variables of Organizational Performance (Y), Strategic Orientation (X1), Organizational Culture (X2), and Organizational Commitment (X3) are tested to be reliable and valid in measuring the model.

Table 2 Characteristics of organizational performance, strategic orientation, organizational culture, and organizational commitment (in percentage)

Organizational performance	
Planning ability	
Meetings/deliberations	80.43
Environmental preservation	64.13
Organizing ability	
Disciplining the group	32.61
Creating rules and norms	53.26
Ability to carry out activities	
Meetings/deliberations	79.35
Environmental preservation	55.43
Getting capital fertilization	65.22
Control and reporting capabilities	
Evaluate planning	68.48
Evaluate performance	76.09
Ability to develop leadership	
Create a rotation of administrators	86.96
Strategic orientation	
Making decisions in farmer groups	
Troubleshooting	80.43
Palm oil sales	89.13
Agreement of the parties involved	82.61
Social responsibility	
Participation in social needs	88.04
Creating harmony with the community	71.74
Rules and handling of violations	
Make members follow the rules	71.74
Addressing member violations	65.22
Organizational culture	
Gaining and creating trust	
Members to groups	80.43
Member to other members	59.78
Providing justice to all members	
Meetings/deliberations	65.22
Application of sanction	82.61
Application of norms and rules	63.04
Organizing members in collaboration	
Contribute time	60.87
Contribute energy	80.43
Contribute knowledge	60.87
Contribute financially	79.35
Organizational commitment	
Committed out of emotion (affective)	
Feel happy to join	72.83
Feel familiar	50.00
Committed because of dependence (continuity)	
Already dependent	83.70
Committed out of morality (normative)	
Making a good impact	65.22
Contribute	75.00

The second stage was testing the formative measurement model to determine the value of multicoliability through VIF (Variance Inflation Factor), and the model's goodness through R2 and q2 presented in Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 displays the variable indicators of Organizational Performance (Y), Strategic Orientation (X1), Organizational Culture (X2), and Organizational Commitment (X3) were tested without multicollinearity among the independent variables. Table 5 shows that the variables of Strategic Orientation (X1), Organizational Culture (X2), and Organizational Commitment (X3) are classified as strong categories and can be said to be appropriate for measuring Organizational Performance (Y). The third stage was to test the structural model to determine the hypothesis through *t*-statistics and *p*-value and the magnitude of the relationship between variables and indicators through *f*2 and loading factors.

Table 6 shows that the variables of Strategic Orientation (X1), Organizational Culture (X2), and Organizational Commitment (X3) influence the variables of Organizational Performance (Y). The Strategic Orientation variable (X1) has a good model, while Organizational Culture (X2) and Organizational Commitment (X3) have weak but still valid models. The institutional/farmer group performance (Y), Strategic Orientation (X1), Culture (X2), and Commitment (X3) are related to each other (Figure 1).

Organizational performance was affected by the ability to plan, especially environmental conservation (Table 2). The ability to plan environmental conservation by members of farmer groups was not scheduled and needs more affirmation, especially related to land burning, even though environmental conservation planning needs to be carried out periodically to improve the negative impact of environmental pollution on humans (Dogaru 2013). Efforts to improve conservation planning require time for planning, implementation, and clear affirmation to members of farmer groups. It is also an effort to maintain land conditions and soil chemistry (Singh 2014).

Strategic orientation was affected by social responsibility. Social responsibility would create

Table 3 CR (composite reliability) dan AVE (average variance extracted)

Variable	CR	AVE
Strategic orientation (X1)	0.862	0.676
Organizational culture (X2)	0.915	0.782
Organizational commitment (X3)	0.920	0.792
Organizational performance (Y)	0.905	0.656

Table 4 VIF (variance inflation factor)

Indicator	VIF
Planning ability (Y1)	3.708
Organizational ability (Y2)	2.595
Ability to carry out activities (Y3)	2.221
Control and reporting capabilities (Y4)	1.939
Leadership development abilities (Y5)	2.544
Decision takers (X11)	1.428
Social responsibility (X12)	1.813
Natural (X13)	1.575
Trust (X21)	2.162
Justice (X22)	2.331
Collaboration (X23)	2.088
Affective (X31)	2.210
Continuous (X32)	2.240
Normative (X33)	2.420

Table 5 R^2 (R-square) dan q^2 (q-square)

Variable	R^2	R-Adj	q^2
Organizational performance (Y)	0.727	0.717	0.461

Table 6 t-statistics, p-value, dan f^2

Variable	t-statistics	p-value	f^2
Strategic orientation (X1)	4.001	0.000	0.301
Organizational culture (X2)	2.234	0.026	0.066
Organizational commitment (X3)	2.375	0.018	0.061

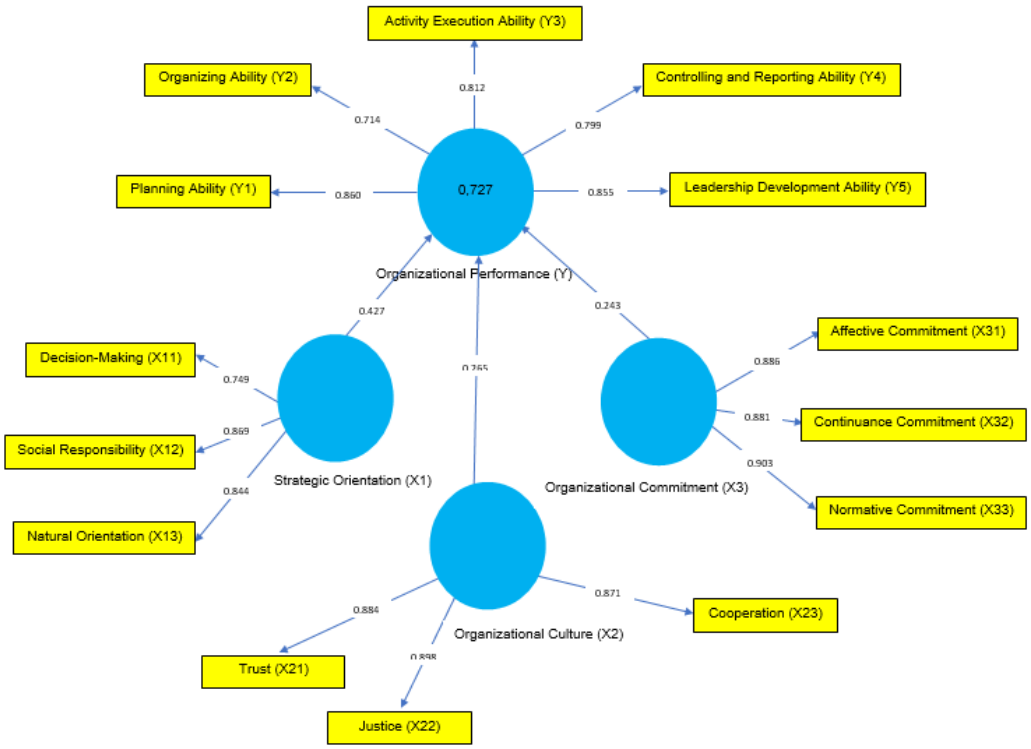

Figure 1 Estimation coefficient.

community harmony (Table 2). Many co mmunities/members of farmer groups still needed to participate in social activities, attend and help activities in the village, or participate in religious activities. Creating community harmony is essential to building peaceful conditions and helping each other between communities (Arsal *et al.* 2021). Efforts to improve community harmony/farmer group members require the participation of f armer group administrators with adequate communication skills (Aryani 2018), and take the initiative to invite the community/farmer group members to participate in production and oil palm sales activities.

Culture is influenced by justice. Fairness in meetings/deliberations and the application of norms and rules (Table 2) are needed to provide opportunities for each member to have an opinion during meetings/deliberations. However, this could only sometimes be done due to the limited time of meetings/deliberations, so only a few people could have an opinion, and the application of norms and rules for each member is uneven. Fairness in meetings/deliberations is essential for better attitudes (Cropanzano & Molina 2015). Fairness in applying norms and rules is also important because it can coordinate appropriate actions and maintain cooperation between individuals (Gross and Vostroknutov 2021). Therefore, fairness in meetings/deliberations needs to be improved by considering discussions via online groups, especially for members who are unable to attend and efficient time in discussing important topics. The fairness of the application of norms and rules can be improved by implementing sanctions for members who violate clearly and decisively (Rashidi *et al.* 2020) so that there is a deterrent effect. Farmer groups should pay attention, value experience, and enhance leadership roles (Singh and Salazar 2010) because good cooperation is greatly influenced by the justice obtained (Zhang and Zhou 2018).

Commitment in institutions/farmer groups was affected by normative commitments. Normative commitment is important to provide the desired impact (Table 2) and motivate the attainment of quality results (Betanzos and Paz 2011). The commitment is influenced by exchanging information about oil palm cultivation, from planting to harvesting. However, information related to the selling price of the mills to be targeted has been carried out through an online group of members (Kumar *et al.* 2017).

CONCLUSION

Strategic orientation, culture, and commitment affect the performance of independent oil palm farmer institutions/groups. Social responsibility mainly influenced strategic orientation, namely, creating community harmony. Organizational culture was mainly guided by providing justice to members, namely the application of sanctions, norms, and rules. Commitment is primarily influenced by normative/moral commitment, which is an effort to make an impact. The performance of farmer institutions/groups was mainly influenced by the ability to plan for environmental conservation. Efforts to optimize the performance of the institution/group of independent oil palm farmers include (1) Clarity of time, implementation, and affirmation of environmental conservation planning to members, especially related to not burning land); (2) The participation of farmer group management in a good manner and taking the initiative to invite the community/members to community activities; (3) Discussion via online group for members who are unable to attend and streamline time by discussing essential points, and clarity of sanctions for members who commit violations without any differences; and (4) Active discussions between members about oil palm cultivation knowledge directly or online in collaboration with extension workers and related agencies.

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