

Participatory Empowerment and Economic Capacitation in Disabled Peoples' Cooperatives in South Africa

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ABSTRACT Participatory paradigm can be regarded as an instrument for identifying the needs of all persons within a community, and means of empowering deprived or marginalized groups. Therefore, this study investigated the extent in which cooperatives strive to empower disabled people. A survey was conducted using a five-level Likert scale to decipher respondents' perceptions of level of participation, empowerment, capacitation, satisfaction with management and perceived benefits. The responses (N=28) were reduced using Principal Components Analysis to determine how questionnaire items contributed to variables under consideration. Hypotheses were tested using bivariate correlation and linear regression, to test the mediation effects of participation, empowerment and capacitation. The results showed that capacitation and empowerment resulted from membership cooperatives among disabled people at Zamani Disabled People's Organization. It was on the basis of the results that cooperatives have a potential of empowering disabled people and that this is achieved through democratic operation, where members equally participate in the daily business and inclusion in decision-making.