

Effect of Savings on the Financial Performance of Saccos in Kilifi County

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the effect of savings on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County. The study was based on a cross-sectional survey research design whereby data were collected only once from a random sample of 122 SACCOs, spread out proportionately across the seven sub-counties in Kilifi County. Questionnaires were prepared and distributed among administrators in the select samples. The results at the basic level were then presented in the form of charts, tables, and explanations on major thematic areas. The findings of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between savings and the financial performance of SACCOs ($t=2.691$ & $p=0.009<0.05$). This highlights the need to foster a savings culture within SACCOs and provide members with alluring savings options. The capital base of SACCOs is strengthened by increased savings, allowing them to better meet the financial demands of their members. This is in addition to improving the financial health of individual members. For SACCO managers, diversifying financial products is essential to meet the diverse needs of their members. By offering innovative loan products, savings plans, and insurance offerings, SACCOs can attract more members and increase their overall financial performance.

Keywords: *Savings, financial performance, SACCOs*

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1. Introduction

Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) continue to be one of the most practical platforms for people or organizations looking for financial services (Angutsa, 2019). SACCOs were initially established in Germany during the 1870s with the primary objective of providing a means for individuals of limited financial means to circumvent the influence and potential exploitation of traditional moneylenders. The idea moved to North America in the 1900s. Since the founding of the Grameen Bank in the 1870s, SACCOs have developed over the years, going from being straightforward community support structures to intricate financial intermediaries (Charles, 2020). The Rockdale Pioneers formed a cooperative in the middle of the 1800s to pool their resources and open a grocery shop, which is where the contemporary SACCO got its start. In Africa, Ghana is the first country to implement the idea of SACCOs. Father John McNulty, a priest, founded a savings and credit cooperative society in Ghana in 1959 to assist

communities in securing their financial security (Shilimi, 2021). This was the first SACCO to be established in Africa. The SACCOs then spread to the rest of Africa, predominantly in English-speaking countries such as Kenya and Uganda.

Microfinance services refer to financial services provided to low-income individuals or groups who typically lack access to traditional banking services. These services include microloans, savings accounts, insurance, and other financial products tailored to meet the needs of underserved communities (Hansen, Huis & Lensink, 2021). Microfinance services play a pivotal role in enhancing the financial performance of SACCOs (Mmari & Thinyane, 2019). Through providing access to credit and savings facilities, they empower SACCO members to invest in income-generating activities, thereby increasing their overall financial stability. Additionally, these services facilitate risk management through insurance products, contributing to the resilience of SACCOs against economic shocks. The adoption of modern financial technologies in microfinance services improves operational efficiency, leading to better performance and sustainability for SACCOs in the long term (Said, Annuar & Hamdan, 2019).

In Kilifi and Kenya in general, SACCOs offering microfinance services have existed for decades, but have seldom grown to match other financial institutions such as banks (Shibutse et al., 2019). SACCOs that have depicted positive financial performance are few, and even these have revealed inconsistent performance indices over the years (Shibutse et al., 2019). However, very few studies have been done to assess the role of microfinance services on the performance of SACCOs in the county. Past studies have attributed the poor financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County to poor credit risk management practices.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

To determine the effect of savings on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County

1.2 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Savings have no significant effect on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The credit risk theory by Robert Merton is quintessential to contemplating the effects of savings and credit on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County (Merton, 1974). Credit risk encircles the possibility of a borrower failing to meet his or her financial obligations either willingly or due to unforeseeable circumstances, leading to the breach of the earlier agreed terms and conditions. It is worth noting that SACCOs have a bank risk-adjusted rate return that enables them to maintain the credit risk exposure within acceptable parameters. Robert Merton outlines that financial systems are characterized by constant parameters that act as a reference point in awarding credit to their customers, while having a closer look at the possibility of defaulting (Mabonga & Kimani, 2017). Merton premises his theory on the assessment of a company's assets and liabilities, which determine its trajectory in its business transactions. In the instance where the assets exceed the promised payment, the company's lenders receive their due while stakeholders receive a considerable amount of money as part of their dividend. On the other hand, where the liabilities exceed a company's assets, the company defaults, paying lenders equal to the asset value while the stakeholders receive nothing (Merton, 1974). Warue

and Charles (2018) stated that a SACCO might incur losses due to an increased number of defaulters or changes in the market share index. In addition, this model bears the feature of having extended non-payment occurring over a long period and not essentially during the last phase of the loan repayment, the maturity stage.

According to Shibutse et al. (2019), the analysis of credit risk has shifted from the reliance on historical information in assessing risks to adopting three quantitative methods: the structural approach, the minimum form evaluation, and partial data. The credit risk theory has been used interchangeably with the structural theory that outlines the assets under the management of a credit institution, which it uses to monitor parameters to offer microfinance services to its members.

Credit risk assessment is undertaken through this theory, where the financial players can monitor the volatility of the security market, which influences the interest rates that protect the consumer, and provide affordable financing options. Credit risk theory will act as the point of reference in determining the effect of savings and credit on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County. SACCOs operate on member contributions (savings), which are allocated to interested members as loans (credit). Repayment of these loans is made under favourable conditions, although late payments or default are common amongst members. Merton's theory is therefore essential to understanding the contribution of credit services to the financial performance of SACCOs in the county.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

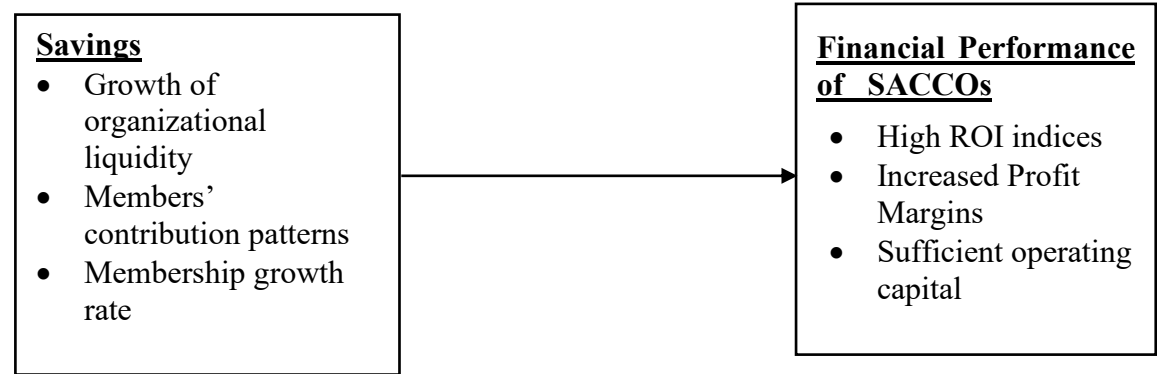


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Empirical Review

In Kiaritha (2021) study on the effect of saving culture on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kenya's banking sector emphasizes the importance of members' savings, which financial institutions invest for profitability and asset development. Kiaritha, (2021) Concludes, through her findings, that there is a positive link between saving characteristics and the performance of SACCOs in Kenya. Members' savings form the financial backing for the operations of SACCOs. These are supplemented by interest accrued on loans allocated to members. In reiteration, Ototo(2018) emphasizes the contribution of members to the financial performance of SACCOs through regular contributions to organizational financial pools. The contributions made by members earn no returns whatsoever, but the funds are allocated as low-interest loans to them or retained for the benefit of future members.

In a study on the elements of the financial performance of SACCOs in Nakuru town, Odhiambo and Ochieng (2018), emphasize the importance of Savings to the financial performance of SACCOs, proposing that the more the amount of revenue generated from member contributions, the more liquidity the cooperative has for investment and allocation as loans for profit. Further, Odhiambo and Ochieng (2018), associate liquidity to membership size, in the sense that as a Saccos' membership base expands, so does its collections in the form of member contributions. When SACCOs are incapable of adequately servicing the credit needs of members, they tend to experience poor financial performance as they cannot maximize profits accrued from loans.

3. Methodology

The study was based on a cross-sectional survey research design whereby data were collected only once from a random sample of 122 SACCOs, spread out proportionately across the seven sub-counties in Kilifi County. Questionnaires were prepared and distributed among administrators in the select samples. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the questionnaires were prepared on Google Forms and sent to respondents who were able to access and answer them. The questionnaires were then collected, coded, and analyzed using SPSS. Data collected from the research tools were coded, entered, and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data was classified into five categories: Demographic data, data on saving characteristics, data on credit characteristics, data on financial literacy training, and data on financial performance, and each category was analyzed separately. The results at the basic level were then presented in the form of charts, tables, as well as explanations on major thematic areas.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings related to Savings

4.1.1 Savings Approach, Frequency of Deposits and Savings Patterns in SACCOs

The frequency and percent of the responses were tabulated as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Savings Approach, Frequency of deposits and Savings Patterns for SACCOs

Savings Approach	Frequency	Percent
Payroll deductions	36	38.3
monthly savings from own sources	40	42.6
Quarterly savings	9	9.6
semi-annual savings	5	5.3
annual savings	4	4.2
Total	94	100
Frequency of Deposits	Frequency	Percent
Very Frequently	30	31.9
Frequently	24	25.5
Moderately	14	14.9
Rarely	22	23.4
Very Rarely	4	4.3
TOTAL	94	100
Savings Patterns for Sacco Members	Frequency	Percent

Very consistent	56	59.6
Somewhat consistent	24	25.5
Neutral	6	6.4
Somewhat inconsistent	5	5.3
Very inconsistent	3	3.2
Total	94	100

Regarding the savings approach, the data showed that the majority SACCOs (42.6%) receive savings from members monthly who get from their own sources, while a significant proportion (38.3%) get savings from payroll deductions made from the payslips of employed members. These are the employer-based societies. This indicates that a substantial number of members have adopted regular savings practices, either through payroll deductions or personal monthly contributions, which can contribute to the growth of their savings and the financial stability of the SACCOs.

Analyzing the frequency of deposits, 31.9% of SACCOs receive deposits very frequently from members, and an additional 25.5% receive deposits frequently. This indicates that a considerable number of members are actively engaged in depositing savings into their SACCO accounts on a regular basis. However, there is also a significant proportion (23.4%) who reported that they receive deposits from members rarely, and a small percentage (4.3%) that does so very rarely. Encouraging more frequent and consistent savings and deposits could potentially enhance the financial performance and liquidity of the SACCOs.

Examining the savings patterns, the majority of SACCOs (59.6%) reported that their members are very consistent in their savings practices, indicating a strong commitment to regularly saving with the SACCOs. Additionally, a significant percentage (25.5%) mentioned their members being somewhat consistent in their savings behavior. However, a small portion of respondents (3.2%) reported their members being very inconsistent in their savings practices, which suggests a potential area for improvement in encouraging more regular savings habits among members.

The analysis of these data points highlights the importance of savings as a crucial aspect of microfinance services. Regular and consistent savings practices among SACCO members contribute to the accumulation of funds and resources within the SACCOs, which can be channeled into various financial services and investments to improve the financial performance and sustainability of these co-operative societies.

Encouraging more members to adopt consistent savings practices and promoting frequent deposits can enhance the SACCOs' ability to provide more extensive and accessible microfinance services to their members. Additionally, exploring ways to address any potential barriers or challenges to savings, especially among those who deposit savings rarely, can contribute to the overall financial health and success of the SACCOs in Kilifi County.

4.1.2 Minimum Amount Required for Savings

The minimum amount required for savings in the SACCOs was presented graphically in Figure 1.

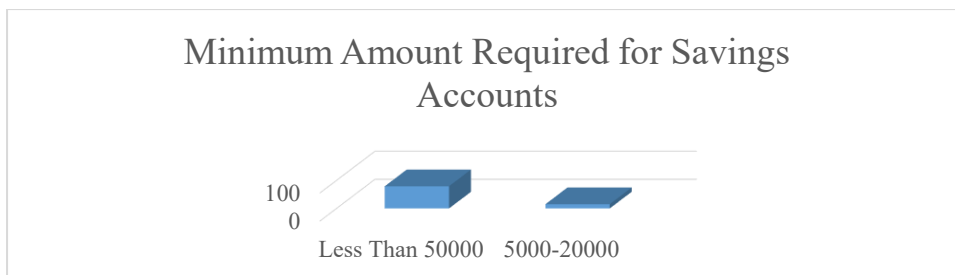


Figure 1: Minimum Amount Required for Savings

The data shows that a significant proportion of SACCOs (79 out of 94) reported that the minimum amount required for savings is less than 50,000. This suggests that the majority of members have a relatively low minimum savings requirement to maintain their accounts with the SACCOs. On the other hand, 15 SACCOS indicated that the minimum savings requirement falls within the range of 5,000 to 20,000. This indicates that there is a smaller group of members with a higher minimum savings requirement compared to the majority.

The findings regarding the minimum amount required for savings are relevant to the study. This information provides insights into the savings patterns and requirements of SACCO members, which could have implications for their financial performance. It suggests that SACCOs in Kilifi County cater to a diverse range of members, some of whom may have lower savings requirements, while others have higher savings requirements. Understanding these patterns can help SACCOs tailor their services and offerings to better meet the needs and preferences of their members, ultimately influencing their financial performance.

4.1.3 Growth in the Saccos Financial Base

The study enquired from the respondents to state whether they've witnessed growth in their Saccos' financial base. The results are presented in Figure 2.

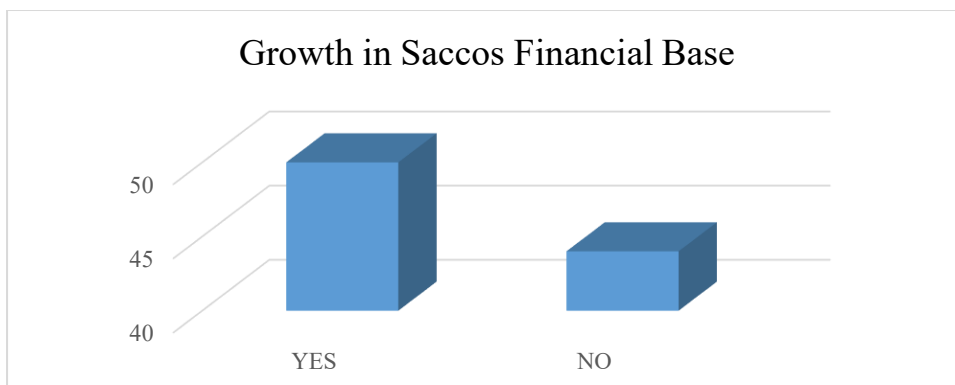


Figure 2: Growth in SACCOs' Financial Base

The data shows that out of the 94 respondents, 50 of them reported that they have witnessed growth in their SACCOs' financial base, while 44 respondents stated that they have not seen any growth. This finding is essential in the context of the study. The fact that half of the respondents have observed growth in their SACCOs' financial base indicates a positive trend in the financial performance of these institutions. A growing financial base suggests that the SACCOs are attracting more deposits and investments, which could be an indication of increased member participation and confidence in the SACCOs' financial services.

On the other hand, the 44 respondents who reported no growth in the financial base may raise concerns about the overall financial health and performance of these SACCOs. Factors contributing to stagnant or declining financial bases could include challenges in attracting new members, ineffective financial management, or limited financial product offerings that may not meet the diverse needs of members.

4.1.4 Description of causes of SACCOs growth in financial base

The respondents were asked to describe the SACCOs in financial base and the respondents were free to pick more than one response. The responses are presented in figure 3.

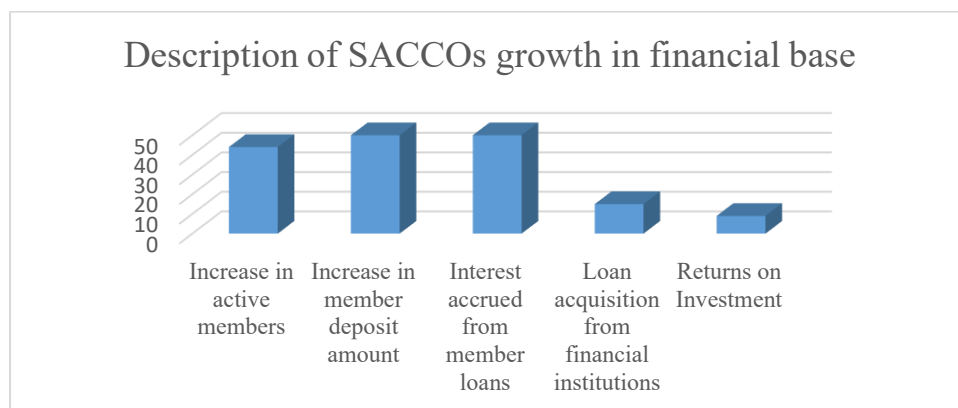


Figure 3: Description of SACCOs growth in financial base

The data presented in the study provides valuable insights into the description of SACCOs' growth in their financial base, as perceived by the respondents. There are multiple factors contributing to this growth, as the respondents were free to select more than one response. Firstly, a significant number of respondents (44) reported an increase in active members as a contributing factor to the growth in the financial base. This suggests that SACCOs are experiencing a rise in the number of members actively participating in their financial activities, which in turn leads to a larger pool of savings and investments, contributing to overall financial growth.

Secondly, a substantial portion of respondents (50) indicated that there is an increase in the amount of money deposited by members into the SACCOs. This rise in member deposits provides SACCOs with additional capital to offer loans and other financial services, potentially leading to improved financial performance and expansion. Moreover, the fact that 50 respondents mentioned interest accrued from member loans highlights the significance of loan services in contributing to the financial base growth. The interest earned from member loans is a crucial source of income for SACCOs and plays a pivotal role in bolstering their financial standing. Additionally, some SACCOs are acquiring loans from financial institutions, as indicated by 15 respondents. While this can be a potential source of funds for growth and development, SACCOs need to manage external debt carefully to ensure sustainable financial health.

Lastly, 9 respondents emphasized the role of returns on investment as a contributing factor. This suggests that SACCOs are engaging in investments, and the returns from these ventures are positively impacting their financial base. The data showcases a positive picture of the growth in SACCOs' financial base, with various factors working in synergy to drive their

success. However, it is vital to interpret these responses in context and conduct further analysis to understand the specific strategies and practices that have led to this growth and how it influences the overall financial performance and sustainability of the SACCOs. Effective monitoring and prudent financial management will be key to ensuring continued growth and stability in the future.

4.2 Findings for SACCO Financial Performance

4.2.1 Sacco Profitability, Difficulty in financing operations, financial Investments and description of financial investments made

The frequencies and percentages for the responses were tabulated as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sacco Profitability, Difficulty in financing operations, financial Investments, and description of financial investments made

Sacco Profitability	Frequency	Percent
The SACCO has not made any profits	34	36.1
The SACCO has made some profit	40	42.6
The SACCO has made a lot of profit	20	21.3
Total	94	100
Difficulties in Financing Operations	Frequency	Percent
Yes	92	97.9
No	2	2.1
Total	94	100
Financing Investments	Frequency	Percent
Yes	55	58.5
No	39	41.5
Total	94	100
Description of Investment Made	Frequency	Percent
Investment in property	42	44.7
Investment in short-term income generation activity	25	26.6
Investment in long-term income generation activity	6	6.4
Investment in stocks, bonds or mutual funds	2	2.1
Investment in capacity building for staff or members	19	20.2
Total	94	100

Regarding profitability, the majority of respondents (42.6%) reported that the SACCO has made some profit, while 21.3% indicated that the SACCO has made a lot of profit. However, a significant portion of respondents (36.1%) stated that the SACCO has not made any profit, which indicates an area of improvement.

When it comes to difficulties in financing operations, a staggering 97.9% of respondents acknowledged facing challenges in this area. These difficulties may be attributed to a lack of adequate finances to support the SACCO's operations, leading to the need to take overdraft

facilities. Additionally, turnover of employees can be another reason for the difficulties, as high staff turnover can disrupt operations and impact financial stability.

As for financing investments, 58.5% of respondents stated that the SACCO has engaged in financing investments, while 41.5% indicated otherwise. The investments made by the SACCO were diverse in nature. The majority of investments (44.7%) were directed towards property, while 26.6% were invested in short-term income generation activities. A smaller percentage (6.4%) was allocated to long-term income generation activities. Only a few respondents (2.1%) reported investing in stocks, bonds, or mutual funds, and 20.2% invested in capacity building for staff or members.

The data highlights the mixed financial performance of the SACCO, with a significant portion of respondents indicating challenges in financing operations. However, SACCOs have made efforts in financing investments, with a focus on property and income-generating activities. The difficulties in financing operations, particularly the lack of adequate finances and employee turnover, may have implications for the SACCO's financial stability and overall performance. Efforts to address these challenges and optimize investments may contribute to improving the SACCO's financial performance in the future.

4.2.2 Opinions on Financial Performance

The participants were requested to provide their perspectives on the financial performance of their SACCOs. The frequencies and percentages of the responses were tabulated as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Opinions on Financial Performance

Financial performance	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	20	21.3
Good	40	42.6
Neutral	8	8.5
Bad	24	25.5
Very Bad	2	2.1
Total	94	100

The findings reveal a noteworthy proportion of respondents (42.6%) who hold a positive opinion about their SACCOs' financial performance, categorizing it as "Good." Moreover, 21.3% of respondents expressed a highly positive view, designating the financial performance as "Very Good." These results suggest that a significant segment of the respondents is content and satisfied with the SACCOs' financial performance. Conversely, 25.5% of respondents expressed a negative opinion, characterizing the financial performance as "Bad." A smaller proportion (8.5%) took a neutral stance, indicating neither optimism nor pessimism about the financial performance. The data exhibits diverse perspectives, reflecting varying perceptions about the financial health and performance of the SACCOs among the respondents. It is

noteworthy that a small proportion (2.1%) regarded the financial performance as "Very Bad," which underscores the need for further investigation and attention in that area.

The opinions on financial performance appear to be relatively balanced, with a notable number of respondents expressing positive views, while others hold more critical or neutral perspectives. These varying viewpoints may arise from distinct experiences, expectations, and perceptions of the SACCOs' financial operations and services. Recognizing these diverse perspectives can offer valuable insights for identifying areas of improvement and implementing measures to enhance the financial performance of the SACCOs.

4.2.3 Indicators of SACCO performance

The respondents were given statements to comment on, which are the indicators of SACCO performance. Presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Indicators of SACCO Performance

Indicators of Sacco Performance	Frequency	Percent
Increased profit margins	90	95.7
Sufficient operating capital	85	90.4
Rich income pool	92	97.9
High ROI indices	91	96.8
Efficient credit management	75	79.8

The respondents' opinions regarding the indicators of SACCO performance were gathered to assess their perspectives on key factors contributing to the financial success of these cooperatives. Among the options provided, a significant majority of 90 respondents highlighted improved profit margins as a critical indicator. This suggests that profitability plays a pivotal role in determining the overall financial health of SACCOs in Kilifi County. Additionally, 85 respondents stressed the importance of Sufficient operating capital, recognizing its role in enabling smooth day-to-day operations and the provision of diverse financial services to members.

Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of 92 respondents emphasized the significance of a Rich income pool. This indicates that diversifying income streams and ensuring a stable and varied revenue base are considered crucial for the success of SACCOs. Likewise, 91 respondents recognized High ROI indices as an essential indicator, emphasizing the importance of making sound investments that yield positive returns and contribute to the SACCOs' financial growth.

Lastly, 75 respondents identified Efficient credit management as a key performance indicator. This underscores the importance of managing loans effectively, minimizing the risk of defaults, and ensuring timely repayments, which ultimately contribute to the overall financial stability of SACCOs.

These identified indicators align with the study. The responses highlight the crucial role of profitability, capital adequacy, diverse income sources, investment efficiency, and credit

management in influencing the financial performance of SACCOs. Understanding and focusing on these indicators can lead to improved financial outcomes for SACCOs in Kilifi County, enhancing the impact and effectiveness of microfinance services in the region.

4.2.4 Effect of Training Credit and Savings on Financial Performance

Guided by the Likert Scale 1-5 where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree Somewhat, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree Somewhat and 5=Strongly Agree, the respondents were presented with various statements on the effect of training, credit and savings on financial performance. The mean and SD for the responses were calculated and tabulated as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect of Savings on Financial Performance

Effect of Savings	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Savings lead to improved financial performance	94	4.83	.431

The respondents express a strong agreement (Mean = 4.83, Std. Deviation = 0.431) that Savings leads to improved financial performance. This highlights the significance of encouraging a savings culture among SACCO members. The low standard deviation indicates a high level of consensus among respondents that savings play a crucial role in enhancing the financial performance of SACCOs.

4.3 Regression Analysis

The regression model's coefficients were derived from the analysis and are displayed in the Table 6.

Table 6: Coefficients of the Regression Model

	Unstandardized Coefficients				Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.113	.139	.812	.419		
Savings(X ₁)	.153	.057	2.691	.009	.448	2.234
Dependent Variable: Financial Performance						

The regression equation is as shown below;

$$Y=0.113+0.153X_1$$

The analysis of the regression coefficients reveals valuable insights into the impact of each variable on the financial performance of the co-operative societies. The constant term (0.113) represents the expected financial performance when all microfinance services and regulatory influence are absent. The positive coefficients of X₁ (0.153) indicate that an increase in the savings services positively influences the financial performance of the co-operative societies.

4.4 Test of Hypothesis

The null hypothesis posited that there is no statistically significant impact of savings on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County. The findings of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between savings and the financial performance of SACCOs ($t=2.691$ & $p=0.009<0.05$). Consequently, the present study refutes the null hypothesis, establishing that savings exert a noteworthy impact on the financial performance of SACCOs in Kilifi County, Kenya.

5. Conclusion

The study shows that mobilizing savings has a major impact on SACCOs' financial success. The positive correlation between savings and performance shows that SACCO members who save more money do better financially. This highlights the need to foster a savings culture within SACCOs and provide members with alluring savings options. The capital base of SACCOs is strengthened by increased savings, allowing them to better meet the financial demands of their members. This is in addition to improving the financial health of individual members.

6. Recommendations

For SACCO managers, diversifying financial products is essential to meet the diverse needs of their members. By offering innovative loan products, savings plans, and insurance offerings, SACCOs can attract more members and increase their overall financial performance. Embracing digital technology is also recommended for SACCOs to improve service delivery and efficiency, allowing them to reach a broader membership base. In terms of risk management, SACCO managers should implement robust practices to mitigate potential financial risks and ensure the long-term sustainability of the institutions. This involves assessing and managing credit risk, liquidity risk, and operational risk effectively. Building strong relationships with SACCO members is crucial for fostering trust and loyalty. SACCO managers should actively engage with members, seek their feedback, and maintain regular communication to better understand their needs and preferences.

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