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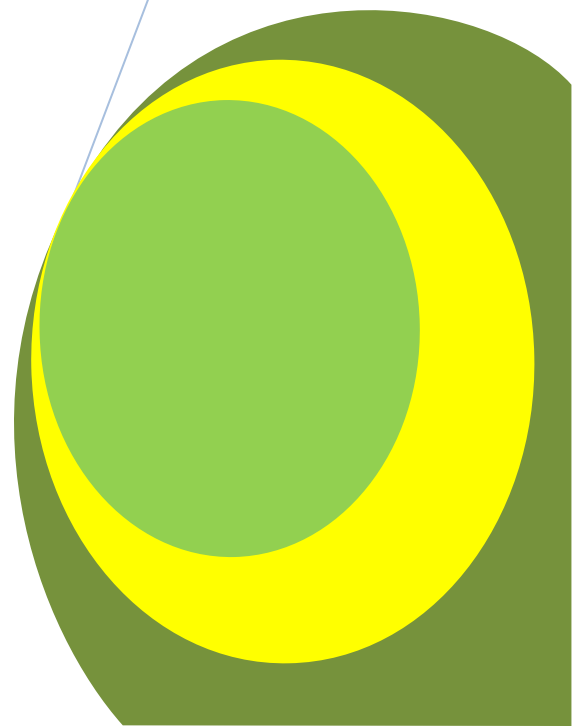
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By

**Hlabiso G
Ngirazi Anyway**



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***Hlabiso G and Ngirazi Anyway**

Department of Accounting and Marketing, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Stand No. 1901 Barassie Road, P O Box 350 Bindura, Zimbabwe.

*Corresponding Author's Email: ghlabiso@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present economic deflationary conditions in which there is very little cash chasing a lot of goods, now requires entrepreneurial skills if one is to put food on his or her plate. The high unemployment rate prevalent in Zimbabwe, is also calling for creative minds that can come up with innovative business ideas. It is out of this situation that the Chipinge rural women had the intuitive to embark on a lucrative business venture of beekeeping, a business domain which was culturally always reserved for man. The focal point of this paper is to find out how the entrepreneurial skills of these rural women of Chipinge District have managed to salvage them out of poverty. This study is based on 56 women of South Down rural area of Chipinge District found in ward 8, who are into beekeeping. This is a qualitative and as well as a quantitative research in which purposive sampling technique was used as an instrument to select the 56 women as respondents for this research. Interviews and a structured questionnaire were used as instruments to collect data from the field. The most important finding of this study is that beekeeping is a business venture which does not only create employment but most importantly it brings in lucrative income for these women. Again the beekeeping business has managed to provide significant income for the women to pay school and medical fees for their children. It has also enabled the women to buy clothing, food, household goods and establish a reasonably decent life for themselves. This research is to assist central government in the formulation of rural development policies for poverty alleviation. Again the research is to become an insight into the formulation of environmental management policies for the sustainable uses of natural resources.

Key words: entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, beekeeping.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present situation regarding women's economic well-being seems to be precarious, with a whopping sixty percent of them constituting world's poorest people according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The major reasons for such a great affluence disparity relative to men emanate from the society that women's labour and toil do not constitute to any economic development to an African household. Her home chores and duties are regarded as non-economic activities, which are construed as part of what should be done by a normal married woman in an African rural area. The division of labour between a man and a woman relegates her to the kitchen chores, which sometimes become economically difficult to quantify thus further entrapping her into an economic precipice. Her effort and work are thus mostly regarded as services which decay the moment they are delivered and cannot be rendered as evidence in the books of accounts. The girl child is economically chastened even from birth in that most rural parents do not sacrifice the little they earn in sending her to school, hence, depriving her of the best opportunity to economic freedom. In some instances, women were regarded as minors, hence they had no contractual capacity to have a bank account, a situation which further relegated them into economic doldrums in this modern era where banks have become the nerve center of all prudent business activities.

The fact that in most parts of the rural areas, women are excluded and economically marginalized does not mean that they are predestined to eternal poverty. Many organizations including the government of Zimbabwe, of late have taken the bull by its horns in trying to ameliorate the plight of rural women. This idea did not miss the keen observation of Dejene Y. (2007) who concurs with this idea when he says that, "over the last three decades, gender issues and women's empowerment have received greater visibility and attention on global, regional and country level development agendas resulting in modest and uneven attainments in most regions in general, in Sub - Sahara Africa

in particular.” This is to say, at the present moment there are strong winds of economic change, sweeping through most rural areas, restoring the dignity of women and putting them at their rightful position in our society. This is being evidenced by the proliferations of many women organizations which inundated most newspapers space canvassing for the improvements of women lives. In addition, most rural communities are increasing the role of women in the economy as part of the solution to the financial and economic crisis and as well as to the economic resilience and growth, DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET 2011).

With many such organizations rallying behind women empowerment, it is not then surprising that 56 women of Chipinge rural areas of South down, ward 8 out of the 38 wards found in Chipinge District have organized themselves into honey production. Ward 8 is a rural ward which is located fifteen kilometers in the Eastern part of Chipinge Town. This ward is found in prime farming area in which many crops are grown including macadamia nuts, avocado pears, tea, coffee, bananas, maize and even many timber plantations which include eucalyptus, pine, and pines. It is to this end that this paper is trying to unravel how such a business venture is empowering them. The presence of such a wide range of crops, plantations as well as many wild plants ensures plentiful foraging vegetation for the bees as envisaged by the resource based theory. The plentiful timber is another enabling factor in the making of beehives for the 56 women who are into beekeeping. South Down rural, being close to Chipinge Town is a factor which allows these women to sell their beekeeping products where there is higher demand than in the rural areas.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

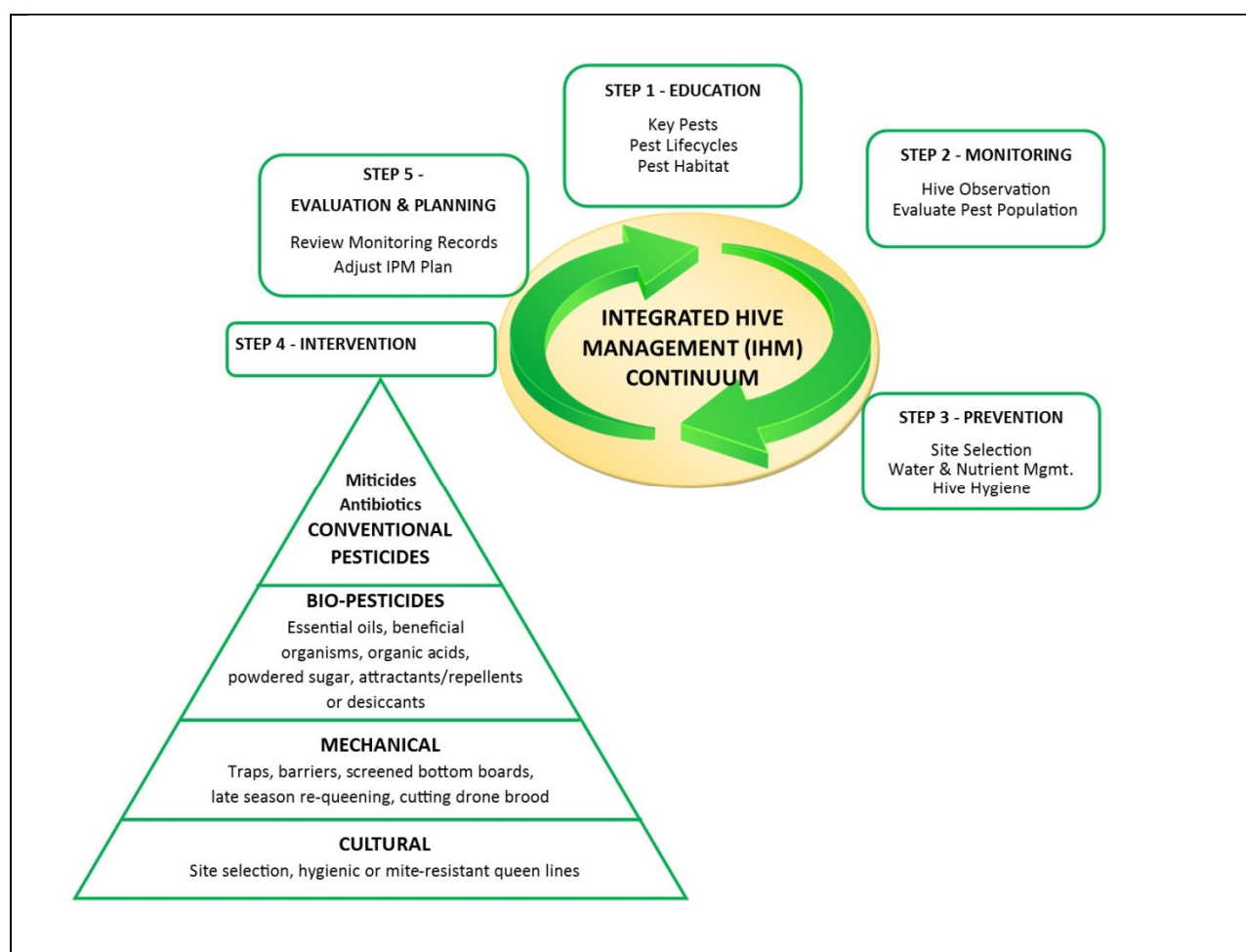
In order to have an in depth understanding of the beekeeping business of these Chipinge women, this study is anchored on a number of entrepreneurial theories. The resource based and the social change theories were used in this study. Through the social change theory, sociological factors can be explained as the enablers that have accelerated the involvement of women in beekeeping in the rural parts of Chipinge. The theory of social change according to Hagen Everet E., explains that society is organic and that it experiences both social and technological changes, which can ultimately results in the birth of entrepreneurial classes of people as is the case with women who are into beekeeping in Chipinge. Social changes in this country in which there are now policies on women empowerment, cannot be ignored when explaining the rise of the entrepreneurial women of Chipinge. The social change theory submitted by Max Weber can also be used to explain the entrance of the beekeeping business by the Chipinge rural women. This theory explains that most business people have the dedicated spirit of acquiring wealth and Chipinge women are no exception.

One can also exploit the resource based theory in shedding more light on the entrepreneurial women of Chipinge. The resource based theory explains that the exploitation of available natural resources can be used as a leverage to start and grow their business. Such exploitable resources available in Chipinge include water, many flowering plants as well as timber for bee-hive making. In other words the available resources in a given community can be a source of entrepreneurial ideas and as a result can be exploited for employment and income generation. This is the valuable position these Chipinge women have, hence they are able to exploit it by generating income and employment for the well-being of their families.

2.2 Management of beekeeping.

In order to realize the full benefits out of beekeeping, there should be proper management of this delicate business. Management as explained by Daft R. L. et al. (2003) is the “attainment of organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning organizing, leading and controlling organizational resources.” Another definition of management is when people take accountability for an activity and intentionally try to shape its development and result, (Boddy 2005). The management of beekeeping then entails several crucial activities which all seek to ensure the production of acceptable quantities of honey per hive, quality honey, safety of the bees and even the foliage from which the bees get their pollen and nectar. Of recent, the beekeeping industry has been encountering a number of negative challenges. Such negative challenges include the increase in population which has resulted into wanton destruction of large tracks of natural vegetation through veldt fires and even destruction through clearing of land for settlement. Such destructions are directly decimating large swarms of bees as well as destroying their natural habitats and sources of food. The increase in the use of toxic chemicals in farming has become one of the major stumbling blocks in the beekeeping industry in that they instantly kill large swarms of bees. This is well summarized by The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (2007), which explains that “the beekeeping industry is under relentless threat due to land clearing for agriculture, fires, including back fires and natural fires as well as urban sprawl which reduce mature vegetation as well as limiting the size of apiary sites due to safety concerns.” In addition, such man-induced adverse effects on bees are also compounded by natural bee diseases and pests.

It is from this background that proper beekeeping management should be regarded as a cornerstone for this industry if ever it is to survive in this twenty first century. The management of beekeeping calls for a number of specific concrete measures which include among others, ensuring availability of water when required, ensuring that the colonies have adequate honey as it is part of their food, all fire warnings and restrictions should be strictly adhered to and local fire codes should be taken into considerations as well as storing and disposing chemicals in the most appropriate manner, (The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council 2007). However one of the most important management facets which can ensure the survival of bee colonies is the controlling of bee pests and diseases. Bee pests include wax moth, ants, beetles, wasps, spiders, varroa mite, honey bees, beetles and the honey bee. On the other hand, some of the diseases found in beekeeping include nosema ceranae, nosema apis, the American foul brood, European foul brood, chalk brood, sacbrood and some parasitic diseases like tracheal mites. Constant apiary and beehive inspections as well as the use of biological and chemical measures are some of the management control activities which can be used to reduce such bee menace. Further elaboration on this idea is put across by Colorado State University (2014) which posits that "an Integrated Hive Management (IHM) program can control pests and diseases by using a combination of strategies designed to be safe, effective and economical." An illustration of such Integrated Hive Management program is being depicted on figure 1.



Source: Adopted from Cranshaw W. (2014)

However the other management strategies which can be used by beekeepers in the management of bees are the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system explained by Cramp D. (2008). It is a management of pest strategy which employs a combination of methods that include economic, ecological and toxicological factors, which put precedence on biological as opposed to chemical controls. He further explains the basic components of IPM programme as:

- prevention and awareness (by regular inspection and through knowledge),

- observation and monitoring and
- intervention (where necessary), (Cramp D. (2008)

Both the Integrated Hive Management (IHM) and the Integrated Pest Management system share a number of similar approaches in that they all emphasize the need for apiarist to have thorough knowledge about the management of beekeeping. They all regard close monitoring of the apiary and hives as a preventive measure against pests, diseases and any other disaster which may befall the bee colonies. They all call for the use of biological measures as third strategy to control pests and diseases. The last resort from these two strategies is the use of chemicals for both pests and disease control.

The other management area which is of great importance in the business of beekeeping is the apiary management. An apiary is regarded as a place where beehives are kept for the purpose of honey production. Facets of apiary management include choosing a site which is sheltered in order to give shade to the bees. However, recent researches suggest that it is best to place them in full sunlight to help combat the small hive beetle, Kaiser C. et al. (2013). Again, the site should not be more than three kilometers to the nearest source of water. A good supply of clean water near the apiary is helpful for cooling the hive and for processing honey, James E.T. (2004). The apiary site should have short grass as well as having a functional fire guards in order to protect the hives and their bees in the event of fire outbreak as being shown on photograph 1 taken from one of the apiaries found in ward 8, South Down rural areas of Chipinge. Note the plastic covers which prevent the unprecedented high rainfalls this area receives from entering the bee hives.



Photograph 1 by Roland G. Hlabiso (the researcher's son)

Some apiaries are fenced for a number of important reasons which include among others preventing unwary children from disturbing and being stung by the bees. Again fencing the apiary is a sure way of keeping away both wild and domestic animals from encroaching into the apiary area where they can possibly disturb the hives and can also be stung by the bees, an idea which is also well supported by the Beekeepers Association of Zimbabwe (2011) when it explains that your apiary (place where you keep bees) should be fenced to stop stray animals and vandals. Again,

near the apiary, there should be warning signage to the public pertaining to starting a fire near the apiary since this can entirely wipe the bee colonies. Again, the signage should warn the public on the dangers of smoking as well as having a strong perfume. Such beekeeping facets of management if well executed can lead to beekeeping business viability as well as being a source of income for many impoverished rural communities.

2.3 Marketing strategies for honey and its products

The history of opportunistic honey hunting of wild bee nests in Zimbabwe can be regarded as an old historical economic activity. It came into existence time immemorial as part of the early subsistence way of feeding for one's family. However the present historical records of these episodic wild honey hunting relies heavily on rock paintings done by the San and the Khoi-Khoi people who included honey as part of their diet. However, with the increase in population, the demand for honey and its products as well as the present more commercialized and scientific management of beekeeping are acting as a transitional period of learning and an experimenting stage in which beekeepers are now learning new methods of bee hive making and new scientific methods of beekeeping management thus substantially increasing the amount of honey being harvested. It is due to all this that beekeepers have realized that beekeeping can be a lucrative business that can be profitably exploited by rural women as a means for self-reliance and to economic independence. This is succinctly explained by Hilm M. et al. (2011) when he presented that "beekeeping enables women to be part of an economic activity, which can provide them with income and independence that can support them in difficult times."

In order to fully realize such a noble end, there should be proper marketing of raw honey and its plethora of products (honey, wax, pollen, royal jelly, propolis, venom) and this provides a portfolio of products that a small-scale farmer can sell from a single farm enterprise, (Hilm M. et al. 2011). One of the inherent advantages of selling honey is that it has a very long shelf life and high demand within the local communities and in urban areas or even abroad. In addition, honey can be sold raw or as a processed product. Selling honey in its raw state, that is comb honey has a great advantage of authenticating its originality especially in urban areas where there could be bogus people who would be selling adulterated honey to unwary people as original honey, an idea which is also supported by Gemechis L.Y. (2015) when he points out that "in many cases adulteration of honey has been a frustrating factor for both the producers and legal buyers and sellers as the traceability and accountability is hardly possible."

In rural community areas, raw honey is sold by the producers directly to the local consumers. Selling honey to the local communities and along highways is a common practice in most rural areas of Zimbabwe due to the low production but high demand for this product. This strategy for most rural honey producers proves to be a popular practice since it incurs low transport costs; however the prices of honey are also low in most cases in such areas. On the other hand it can also be sold as purified honey with no beeswax and honey impurities or debris. Processing honey before selling improves its quality as well as being able to extract beeswax, which can be used to make honey by-products. The other merit is that, selling honey in this state enables the keepers to charge a premium price for their product. However, the downside of selling processed honey or pure honey and packed table honeys mostly experiences granulation and problems linked with granulation like, are "coarse crystallization, different layer formation, fermentation and the resulting gas bubble production," (Nuru, unpublished data) in (Gemechis L.Y. 201).

The other method which is also gaining ground especially with the substantial increase in the amount of honey being harvested, is selling it to the urban dwellers where there is both higher demand and higher prices for the product. Besides this strategy, honey producers also sell to middle men known as honey collectors who would then sell to wholesalers or food processors in towns. This idea is well summarized by Gemechis L.Y. (2015) who explains that "the domestic honey markets starts at the smallholder beekeepers level, who majorly sell crude honey to collectors in the nearest town/village markets as well as passing the honey to the wholesalers in big cities and towns." The wholesalers would then package the honey to sell to the end consumers. They can also sell it as bulky honey to food processors or to drug manufacturers.

Collective marketing of honey as cooperatives is the other strategic marketing pattern which the rural beekeepers usually depend on. This marketing strategy involves selling of the honey to a central cooperative at a wholesale price. It is then the cooperative which would sell the honey to other buyers at a profit. However the disadvantage of this strategy is that it involves a lot of handling of honey thus rendering it to high chances of contamination and poor storage. Honey is regarded as a bulky product hence the cooperative which collects the honey from different group members should have proper transport, to then transfer the collected honey to the market. Most rural beekeepers do not have the capacity to directly export their honey but they depend on cooperatives or middlemen who can do that on their behalf. Processing (value addition) of honey into different by-products is another route for marketing which is being taken by some beekeepers. This is the processing of honey to make other products such as candles from beeswax. Such products can be marketed locally but can be exported to earn the country foreign currency.

2.4 Ways in which women exploit beekeeping for poverty alleviation

The unbridled presence of rural poverty particularly in Africa, is one of the reasons why most women in the rural areas are reaching out to other entrepreneurial sources of income. The other notable reason according to the United Nations (2008) is that even though it is known that the agricultural sector is the main employer of women, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, rural households are finding it increasingly difficult to support themselves with land based activities alone and are turning to other sources of income. It is then due to these reasons that many women, with no exception for the Chipinge rural women, are turning to beekeeping as an alternative source for income. This idea is also shared by Hilmi M. *et al.* (2011) who posit that "in rural societies where access to income is inadequate, small-scale beekeeping can add considerably to livelihood security." It is also due to the many benefits which include low initial capital, low level of managerial skills required and most importantly it can be a means out of poverty for these women. This idea that beekeeping is a new entrepreneurial business for poverty alleviation especially for women is now an undisputable fact and has not missed the observations of many people including Joseph J. *et al.* (2011) who contend that "small scale, micro-enterprise development is an important objective for reducing poverty as micro-enterprise which creates employment, generates income and improves livelihoods."

Poverty alleviation through beekeeping brings with it numerable benefits for women. Such benefits can be grouped into social, economic to ecological benefits. The ecological benefits include the fact that bees are cable of pollinating both the natural vegetation as well as crops grown by man. This is further explained by Warre E. *et al.* (2012) who say that bees "fertilize the flowers of the fruit, thus contribute greatly to filling our fruit basket." The cross pollination of crops using bees is said to increase crops of farmers substantially, an undertaking which can benefit women especially for the African woman who culturally is frequently the one who is in charge of farming under the African culture, (United Nations 2008). It is then from this point of view that beekeeping if well practiced by women would go a long way in helping to increase their crop yields thus improving on food security which is the basic priority for most African families that are always ravaged by unremitting droughts. Such food security means that they would be in a position to save the little money they have for buying other items. Creating such food security especially for an African family is an important social benefit that ensures the total well-being of that given family, a fit which most families try to achieve but in most cases with very little success. It is from this observation that beekeeping can be regarded as a means to poverty alleviation especially for an African family that regards food security as one of its singular means of survival.

The other benefits for beekeeping, which can also be tools for poverty alleviation especially for women, can be attained through the many products and by-products from honey. Such products which are realized from beekeeping include raw honey, propolis, wax, venom and pollen. These honey products can be a source of livelihood especially for rural women whose means and sources of income are very narrow in scope. Selling the different honey products which include raw honey, propolis, venom, and beeswax can be a refreshing new entrepreneurial business venture for the African women whose right place culturally is always the home. This does not only bring new business experience but most importantly sustainable source of income for the family, (Hilm M. *et al.* 2011).

Beekeeping is also a source of social benefit for the rural woman who had to share beekeeping ideas with other women. In addition, the making of beehives in most cases call for cooperation in which the women had to liaise in ordering the material and the actual making of the hives themselves. Again the marketing of honey and its product is usually another point in which the women had to group themselves to form cooperatives in order to sell the honey in bulky to one or several honey collectors. Honey also provides dietary value for most rural families especially for the rural women who usually had nothing to give to her children. Honey mixed with pounded roasted dried maize is nutritious food for children. All these benefits cumulatively help to significantly provide a woman with a secure source of food to fend for her children and a constant supply of income thus salvaging her from the unchecked rural poverty.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative as well as quantitative research approach models were used in this paper. These research approaches were used in the collection and analysis of the collected data. The quantitative approach model enabled the researcher to carry out surveys in which questionnaires with closed and open ended questions were used. The qualitative allowed the researchers to carry out interviews as instruments for collecting data on beekeeping management, honey marketing strategies, as well as collecting data on poverty alleviation through beekeeping. Lastly, the quantitative approach allowed the researchers to describe and graphically present the collected data on key issues of this research.

The research adopted the judgmental or purposive sampling technique because expert knowledge was required in order to come up with those respondents who were into beekeeping. This type of data collecting instrument was also necessitated by the need to select only those respondents who could provide the researchers

with appropriate data pertaining to beekeeping for this research. A total of 56 respondents who are into beekeeping were selected.

A questionnaire with 10 questions was administered. The questionnaire had both opened and closed ended questions. The administration of the questionnaire required the researchers to wait while the respondents were filling in and answering the questions. Self-administration of the questionnaires enabled the researchers to shed light on any grey area from the respondents. Again this was a convenient and cheaper way of collecting the filled in questionnaires from the respondents. The researchers also used face to face interviews in order to collect data for this research. The researchers also used a structured interview guide to collect the required data. The face to face interviews were only carried with 10 coordinators of the beekeepers so as to reduce transport costs.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 This part of the research uses the content analysis approach for data analysis. This involves categorizing the collected data in order to have a discussion and summary of the major findings. The data is quantified and tabulated in tables. This was done in order to create a clear pattern of the collected data.

4.2 Response Rate

A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to the beekeepers of Chipinge District in ward 8. The response rate is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Number of respondents N= 80

Target group	Questionnaires issued out	Questionnaires returned	Response rate
Ward 8 Chipinge beekeepers	56	4	93%
Beekeeping coordinators	10	1	90%

Source: Adapted from field data

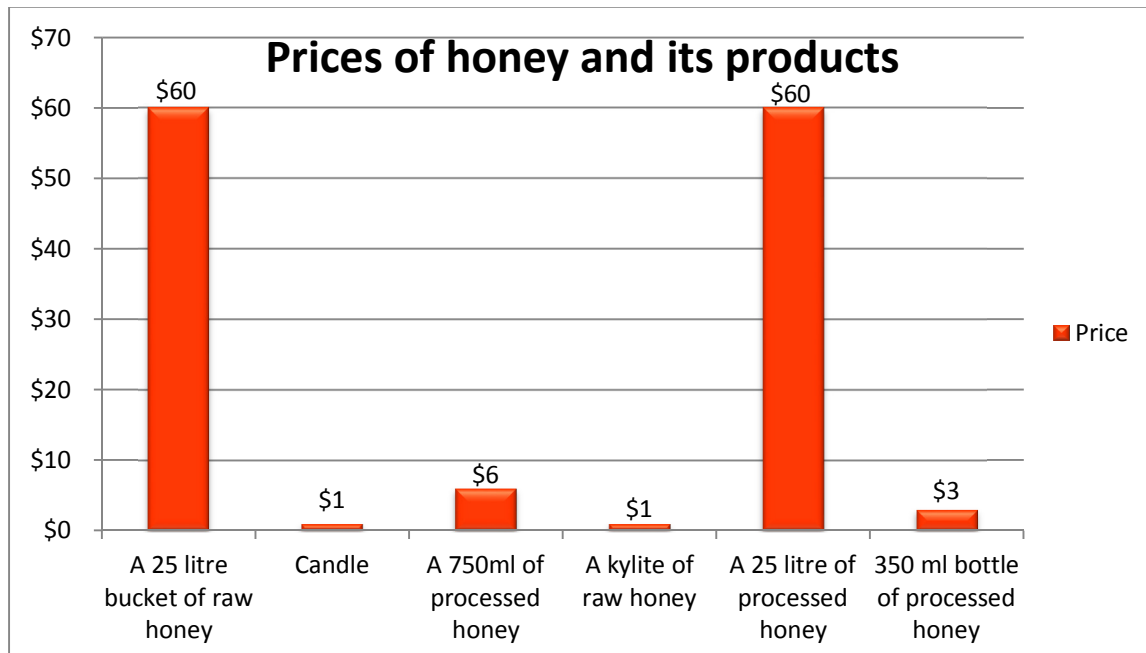
From table 1, 93% of the beekeepers that is (52 out of 56) responded to the questionnaires and 90% of the coordinators (that is 9 out of 10) responded the questionnaires. This high response rate was within the acceptable range to proceed with the analysis of the collected data for this research. The high response rate means that the conclusions and recommendations of this research would be valid as well as being reliable. Again, the recommendations would be free from bias in cognizance of the high response rate.

4.3 Beekeeping Management

The major findings of this research pertaining to beekeeping management included the fact that the beekeepers had to select a suitable location for their apiaries. The ward 8 apiaries which are predominately run by women (56 women against 26 men) are located away from peoples' place of residence, thus effectively preventing chances of people being stung by bees. In addition, these apiaries are located in areas with a variety of trees which provide both nectar and pollen for honey making. Another major finding is that these women beekeepers routinely scout for both pests and diseases in their hives. However, the major problem being faced by these beekeepers are honey birds which feed on bees, a problem which reduces the sizes of the bee swarms. High rainfalls which drip into the hives, pose another problem that disturbs the process of honey production. To mitigate this type of problem, the women had to cover the hives with black plastic papers as being shown on photograph 1. These women had to cut grass around their apiary as a measure against veldt fires as well as to make their hives accessible especially when harvesting honey. The locations of the apiaries did indicate that due planning was carried out since they are in areas where bees can get water, pollen and nectar for honey making.

4.4 Marketing strategies for honey and its products

The other significant finding of this research pertaining to the marketing of honey and its products are that even though they sell processed honey, the major product which they sell is unprocessed honey. They process beeswax to get candles. Bar graph 1 shows the prices of the respective honey products they process.



Bar graph 1

Source: Adapted from field data

Another finding is that they use different package sizes in order to create product variety and affordability as being depicted on bar graph 1. The other research finding is that they use a number of different distribution channels for marketing their honey, as being illustrated on figure 1.

Distribution Marketing Channels for Honey Products

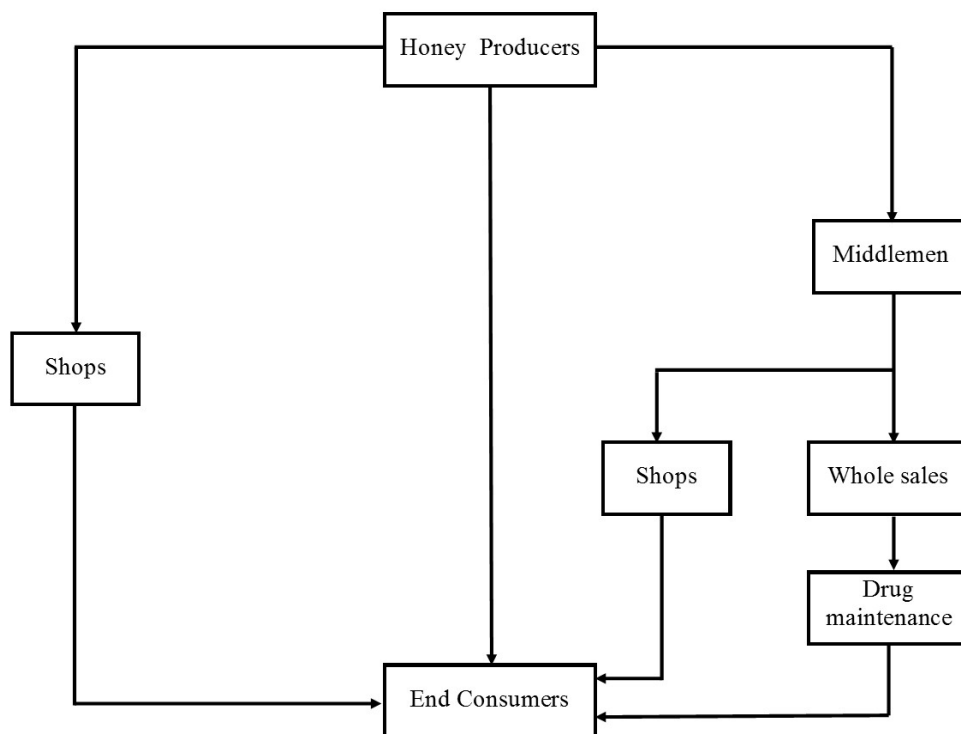


Figure 1. Adapted from field data

From figure 1, these beekeepers sell their honey directly to shops, middle men, and to end consumers. This idea is also comparatively similar to what Hilm M. *et al.* (2011:14) explained when he says that “small-scale farmers can sell bee products directly to final consumers at the local village market, or on the road side.” It may also be possible to sell bee products to a rural trader, processor or wholesaler or retailer. At the present moment, they do not have access to the export market. Another material research finding is that ward 8 women beekeepers had registered their business as a private business enterprise. In addition they also have Standard Association of Zimbabwe Certificate. They can use these two advantages as synergistic multipliers to get sponsorship and they also act as leverage for securing reputable markets inform of supermarkets for their honey and its products.

4.5 Poverty alleviation through beekeeping.

The dire need for women to economically extricate themselves from the dungeons of poverty has compelled them to be quick receptors of the new beekeeping projects in this part of the country and according to the research results, there are 56 women beekeepers against 26 men. The other major finding from this research was that women are not only getting significant income from this business enterprise, but they are also gaining entrepreneurial skills on how to run a beekeeping business venture. The revenue being realized from this is being used for expanding their beekeeping project that is making new hives as well as buying new equipment. At personal level, the income being realized has gone a long way in improving the social welfare of these women. This research discovered that the earnings from the bee project has helped these women to pay electricity bills, school fees for their children, as well as buying food for the whole family. The beekeeping project, according to the research results, has tremendously transformed the social standing of these women since their families are now looking up to them for financial support which previously was not the case. The earnings from the beekeeping project have also economically empowered these women since they are now able to buy house properties such as furniture. Besides this, two families from this area were able to build houses out of this beekeeping business venture. Most importantly, beekeeping has also created employment for these women, an idea well summarized by Babatunde R. *et al* (2007) when he presents that “beekeeping for honey production has been identified as one of the activities that could serve both purposes of providing employment and reducing poverty among rural dwellers.”

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Relatively, there are few commercial beekeepers in Chipinge envisaging the fact that this area is very rich in terms of forage, water as well as sheltered area for bees. The Chipinge Small to Medium Enterprise office is of the strong opinion that Chipinge District alone is in a position to produce and meet the requirements of the whole Manicaland Province honey production targets. However, the nagging problem in the whole process is that the largest number of these beekeepers is still subsistence keepers, due to lack of knowledge about superior ways of beekeeping. Again, most of these people are still ingrained in their societal ideas thus they cannot fathom the idea that beekeeping is a lucrative occupation which if well executed can sustain and economically empower rural people especially women. This means that there is still a mammoth task to enlighten the local people about the overall benefits of beekeeping. One of the recommendations from this research is that the beekeepers should create a consortium so that they can share information on several areas which include the management of beekeeping, honey processing and even on how to market the honey and its products. Such a consortium is in a better position to leverage on the pricing of honey and its products. The other notable fact is that most honey buyers prefer to buy honey in large quantities. This means that if the beekeepers have their own consortium it becomes very handy to collect and gather all the honey on one collection point for the convenience of the buyers and at the same time this would create synergies which would enhance consistent market presence and recognition. Again such groupings become platforms and linkages for discussions, disseminating and sharing of ideas especially among women. This idea is well supported by Ruzvidzo V. (2015) when she says that “coalesce of women in such clusters form a formidable force which enables knowledge gaps to be dealt with decisively.” In the same vein these women can also create business linkages especially in the marketing of their honey and its products. Business linkages “are commercial dealings between separate, profit-oriented enterprises,” (John Gierson and Donald St Gallen 1995). Both vertical and horizontal business linkages should be pursued by these honey producers, which are collaborative between firms along the value chain and cooperative type of activities between firms on the same step in the same value chain respectively. The advantages of such business linkages to the Chipinge honey producers are that they create economies of scale which enable them to serve larger market segments, as well as being able to overcome the disadvantages set by being individual honey producers, (Dr. Kerstin Schulenburg 2006). Value chain analysis can also assist these women honey producers in the production and marketing of the honey and its products. Value chain is aptly defined as a “full range of activities which are required to bring a product (involving a combination of physical transformation and input of various

producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use,” (Raphael K and Mike M. 2000). One of the corner stone of value chain is value addition and beneficiation. Value addition is defined as “the process of changing the product’s value by changing its current place, time, and form characteristics more preferred in the market,” (Mugano G. 2015). The Chipinge women beekeepers mostly produce primary products which are raw honey, wax pollen, royal jelly, propolis and even larvae. It is from such primary honey products that they should create secondary honey products through value addition. The benefit of value addition is well clarified by Krell R, (1996) when she says that the combination of several bee products synergistically increases their beneficial significance beyond their individual values. Value addition has the benefit of reducing bulk. This means that in steady of selling raw honey, it can be processed into other lighter valuable products. In the same light, value addition has the advantage of increasing the value of the honey and its by-products. Again, value added honey and its by-products have an increased shelf life. The production of honey is intermittent so that the period when there is no honey harvesting can be exploited for beneficiating the honey into products such as honey beer, honeypaste, fruit marmalade, honey gums, honey drugs, honey cosmetics and many other products. In a nutshell the rural women would not be short of both employment and cash during off season of honey.

5.1 CONCLUSION

Poverty alleviation programmes especially those which target women are very important in that they have the effect of reducing poverty for the whole family. It is therefore prudent to always involve women in entrepreneurial projects like beekeeping for honey production since this would transcend into poverty alleviation for the rampant poverty found in rural areas. The use of available natural resources like bees, timber, and land as explained by the resource based model, is one of the unsurpassed ways to go especially in this economic situation whereby it has become very expensive to borrow money from banks which requires stringent collateral security. For the success of such business entrepreneurship, there should be direct involvement of the women at grassroots levels who should take responsibility and ownership of their enterprises.

COMPETING INTERESTS

There were no competing interests.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

The two authors were able to refine the topic as well as gathering the field data for this paper together. However the corresponding author had to analyze, interpret, presenting and to eventually come up with the final paper.

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