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To Examine the Effectiveness of Poultry Business in Improving Womens Livelihood: A Case Study of Lusaka District

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of poultry business in improving women livelihood for women engaged in poultry farming in Lusaka District. Such schemes, often driven by government and NGOs, aim to provide financial support, skills training, and business development services to help women achieve economic independence. Focusing on women in poultry farming, a growing sector in Zambia due to its low capital requirements and rising demand, the research assesses how these schemes support women entrepreneurs in achieving sustainable livelihoods. The study was guided by three objectives: To evaluate the impact of these empowerment schemes on the income levels of women in the poultry business in Lusaka district: To examine the sustainability of women's poultry businesses that have benefited from empowerment schemes in Lusaka district: To assess the challenges faced by women in accessing resources to recapitalized and expand their business in Lusaka district. The study sample was 100 respondents, comprising 20 financial experts, 25 women (not secured women empowerment), 35 women (secured women empowerment), 10 community leaders, 10 financial institutions.

A mixed method was employed; where questionnaires were used for quantitative data collection and one-one

interactions for qualitative data collection. Quantitative data was entered in SPSS to generate pie charts, means modes, standard deviations and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study concluded that the results reveal that these empowerment schemes have positively influenced the economic well-being of women in poultry farming, contributing to higher household income, business growth, and better living standards as could be seen that many women reported that their monthly earnings had improved exponentially by 25-50% since receiving support from the empowerment schemes. However, certain debates occurred in this study during the weeks it was conducted, stimulating women interaction and providing appropriate feedback may become the markets main task. Future work should focus on issues such as complex application processes due to limited information, and the need for collateral, which were identified as significant hindrances to the accessibility and full utilization of these programs. By evaluating the outcomes of these initiatives, this research contributes to the broader discussion on women's economic empowerment in Zambia and offers practical solutions to improve the sustainability and impact of these empowerment schemes.

Keywords: Poultry Business, Livelihood, Income Generation, Sustainability, Women Empowerment

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In recent years, the Zambian government and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have implemented several empowerment schemes aimed at improving the livelihoods of women in urban areas. These initiatives are part of a broader effort to promote gender equality and reduce poverty, primarily by equipping women with the necessary skills, resources, and financial support to engage in income-generating activities. Women have long been recognized as key actors in driving socio-economic change, and empowering them economically is seen as a critical pathway to achieving sustainable development (Chisanga and Zulu, 2020). Among the many income-generating activities available to women, the poultry business stands out

as a viable option due to its relatively low entry barriers and the growing demand for poultry products in urban centers like Lusaka (Mwanza, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While urban empowerment schemes have the potential to uplift women in the poultry industry, there is limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness in achieving this goal. In Lusaka District, many women engaged in poultry farming continue to face significant barriers, including limited access to adequate financing, markets, and technical training, which are crucial components of running a successful poultry business. Although empowerment programs are designed to address these issues, a large number of women still struggle to secure affordable credit and gain the necessary business skills to scale up their operations. Additionally, the sustainability of these poultry businesses remains uncertain due to both external and internal challenges.

1.3 Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives.

1. To evaluate the effects of poultry business on the income levels of women in the poultry business.
2. To examine the sustainability of women's poultry businesses that have benefited from empowerment schemes.
3. To assess the challenges faced by women in accessing resources to recapitalized and expand their business.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was seeking answers to the following questions.

1. Why do women in the poultry business face difficulties in accessing resources, and how do these challenges affect their income levels?
2. What factors contribute to the sustainability of poultry businesses operated by women who have benefited from empowerment schemes in Lusaka District?
3. What improvements can be made to address the challenges women face in accessing resources provided by urban empowerment schemes in the poultry industry?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of poultry business in improving women livelihood, for women in the poultry industry is influenced by a variety of factors, ranging from socio-economic conditions to institutional support. To understand the challenges women face in accessing resources provided by these schemes, this theoretical framework draws on various theories related to women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and access to resources. Women's economic empowerment refers to the process by which women gain the ability to make decisions and take control over their financial resources (Kabeer, 1999). These theoretical approaches provide insights into how empowerment schemes can either enable or hinder women's access to essential resources, thereby affecting their success in entrepreneurial activities.

2. Literature Review

Empowerment schemes significantly impact income levels for women engaged in the poultry business. Studies indicate that women participating in these programs can experience

income increases of up to 50% within the first year of engagement. For instance, a survey conducted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2020) reported that women who received training and financial support in poultry farming saw their average monthly income rise from \$100 to \$150. These schemes have demonstrated a direct correlation with increased income levels for women engaged in the poultry business. According to a study by the Zambia Ministry of Agriculture (2021)^[20], women participating in empowerment programs reported an average income increase of 35% within the first year of enrollment. This boost can be attributed to several factors, including access to training, financial support, and resources that improve production efficiency and market access. By enabling women to enhance their operational practices, these programs directly impact their financial stability and economic autonomy. Agarwal B (2023)^[29].

A crucial factor in the sustainability of women's poultry businesses is their increased resilience in the face of economic shocks. Empowerment schemes, particularly those focused on skill development and resource management, provide women with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of the poultry industry. For instance, women trained in financial management are better equipped to create and maintain budgets that accommodate fluctuations in income and expenses. Research by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2020) reveals that women involved in such training reported a remarkable 40% decrease in vulnerability to market fluctuations, which indicates their ability to withstand economic pressures that would otherwise threaten their businesses. Increased business resilience is a fundamental aspect of the sustainability of women's poultry businesses.

A significant barrier to women accessing resources from empowerment schemes is the widespread lack of awareness and understanding regarding what these programs entail. Many women, particularly in rural and underserved communities, may not be fully informed about the various empowerment initiatives available to them. This knowledge gap extends to the specific types of support offered, eligibility requirements, and application procedures. Research conducted by the Zambia Ministry of Agriculture (2021)^[20] found that approximately 45% of women farmers were unaware of the empowerment programs designed to support their agricultural ventures. This lack of information can lead to missed opportunities and underutilization of resources that could significantly enhance their businesses.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of women empowerment schemes in Lusaka's poultry sector. This combination allows for a comprehensive understanding of human behavior and contextual factors, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings through triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)^[24]. Quantitative data were gathered via structured surveys, while qualitative insights were derived from interviews and focus groups.

Target Population

The research focused on women in urban Lusaka's poultry industry who participated in empowerment schemes over the last five years. This demographic was selected due to its

relevance in exploring gender-related economic development within Zambia's agricultural sector (FAO, 2020) [6].

Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling technique was used, dividing participants into subgroups based on poultry business type, location, and participation in empowerment schemes. This approach ensures representation across relevant characteristics (Etikan & Bala, 2017) [21].

Sample Size

The study sampled 100 participants, including 35 women who benefited from empowerment schemes, 25 who did not, 20 financial experts, 10 community leaders, and 10 representatives from financial institutions. This diversity ensures a robust dataset for both qualitative and quantitative analysis (Patton, 2015) [22].

Data Collection

Data were collected through surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions to capture both numerical and contextual information (Bryman, 2016) [23].

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, beginning with descriptive statistics to summarize demographics, followed by inferential statistics to explore relationships between variables, such as the impact of empowerment schemes on income and business sustainability (Field, 2018) [26]. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to complement the numerical findings (Clarke & Braun, 2013) [27].

Triangulation

The study used triangulation to ensure validity and reliability, integrating multiple data sources and methodologies, including diverse stakeholder perspectives (Denzin, 2012) [28].

Limitations

The research faced potential selection bias, as some eligible participants were either inaccessible or unwilling to participate, possibly leading to underrepresentation of certain groups. This limitation could affect the generalizability of the findings (Flick, 2018) [25].

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant rights, and maintaining confidentiality. Transparency about the study's purpose and voluntary participation fostered trust and respect (Resnik, 2020) [12].

4. Presentation of Research Findings and Discussion of Results

businesses.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Percent
18-25	5%
26-35	50%
36-45	15%
45-55	7%
56 and above	3%

The data in table 4.1, indicates a youthful demographic, with 40% of respondents aged 26-35. This suggests a potential for innovation and adaptability in their business practices, as

younger women may be more receptive to new ideas and technologies.

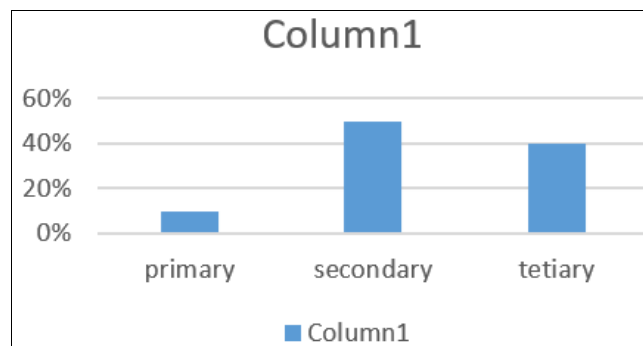


Fig 4.2: Education Level of Respondents

A significant 90% of respondents have completed secondary education or higher, which may enhance their ability to effectively manage poultry businesses and utilize available resources.

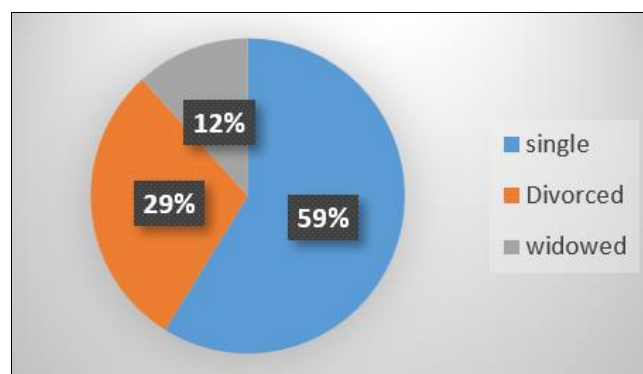


Fig 4.3: Marital Status of Respondents

With 65% of respondents being married, this demographic factor may influence business decisions, as many women likely balance family responsibilities with entrepreneurial activities.

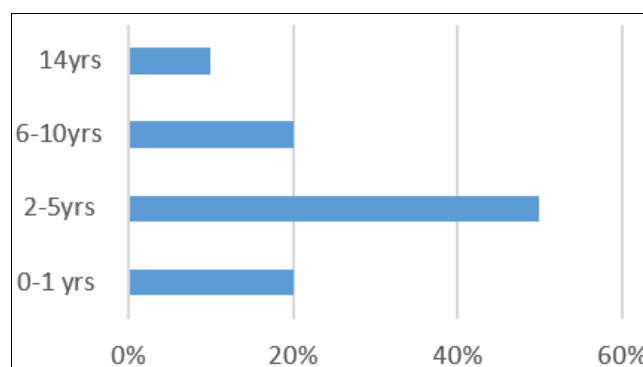


Fig 4.4: Years of Experience in Poultry Farming

The majority (50%) of respondents have 2-5 years of experience in poultry farming, indicating a growing number of women entering the industry. This suggests an opportunity for empowerment schemes to provide targeted training and resources to this relatively new group of entrepreneurs.

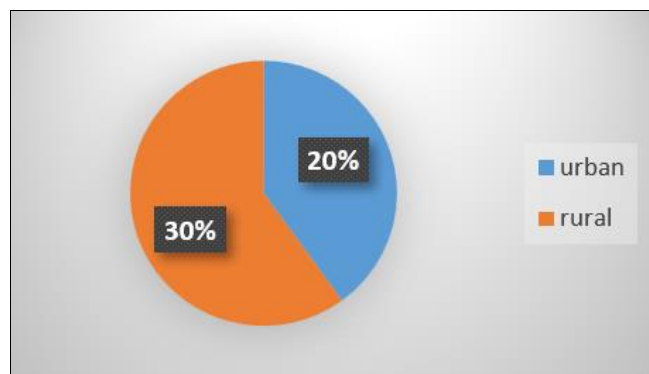


Fig 4.5: Geographical Distribution of Respondents

In Fig 4.5, the predominance of rural respondents (60%) highlights the need for empowerment schemes that address the unique challenges faced by women in these areas, such as access to markets, credit, and education.

The background characteristics of respondents reveal a predominantly young and educated demographic, with a significant number of women married and actively engaged in poultry farming. The data suggests that empowerment schemes have the potential to significantly impact this group, particularly given the high proportion of relatively inexperienced entrepreneurs. This information sets the stage for further analysis of the effectiveness of these schemes in enhancing income, sustainability, and resource access.

4.2 Presentation of results based on the effects of poultry business on the income levels of women in the poultry business

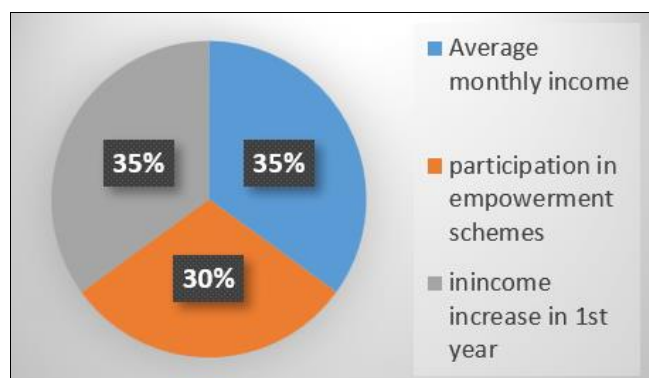


Fig 4.2.1: Impact on Income Levels for Women

With a view of Fig 4.2.1, we see that Empowerment schemes, particularly those offering training and financial support, have a significant impact on women's income in the poultry business. Participation in these programs has been associated with substantial income increases within the first year. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2020); Zambian Ministry of Agriculture (2021) [20]. Women in the poultry sector earned an average of \$100 (ZMW 2,000) per month before joining empowerment programs.

After engaging in empowerment schemes, women reported an average income increase of 50%, reaching \$150 (ZMW 3,000) monthly. The average income increase for women was 35% in the first year of participation. The empowerment programs contribute directly to financial stability, enabling women to enhance business efficiency,

access financial resources, and gain training in production methods.

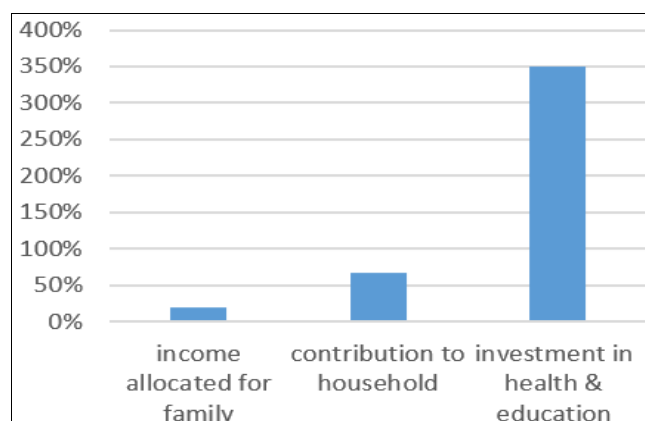


Fig 4.2.2: Use of Income by Women

According Fig 4.2.2, The income generated through empowerment schemes is used primarily for family welfare, including health care, education, and nutrition. This reinforces the broader socio-economic benefits of empowering women in the poultry business. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2019). Before joining empowerment schemes, women used about 50% of their income on family-related expenses.

After gaining financial stability through these programs, women allocated 70% of their income to family welfare (health, nutrition, and education), with a substantial increase in the amount spent on children's education and health care. Economic empowerment contributes not only to women's income but also to enhanced well-being for their families. On average, the income contribution to family expenses increased by 67%, enabling improved living standards.

Empowerment schemes that facilitate access to larger and more profitable markets significantly boost income levels for women. Women engaged in market linkages saw notable increases in sales and profits. International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) [15]; Zambia Development Agency, 2021.

Women traditionally sold their poultry at local markets, where prices were lower due to limited competition. This constrained their revenue generation.

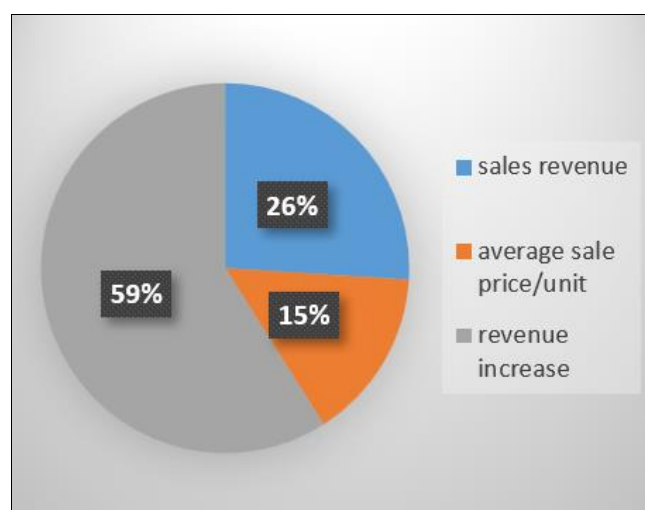


Fig 4.2.3: Impact of Market Access on Income

By engaging in programs that provide market linkages—such as connections to cooperatives, retail chains, and larger buyers—women saw a 45% increase in sales volume and a 25% increase in the price per unit.

With access to broader markets, women's revenue increased by 100%, demonstrating the direct impact of improved market access on their financial outcomes.

Table 4.2.4: Financial Literacy and Improved Business Management

	Percent
Financial management skills	18%
Likelihood of saving	14%
Investment in business	68%

Fig 4.2.4 shows that Financial literacy training within empowerment schemes improves women's ability to manage finances, make sound business decisions, and increase savings, leading to greater sustainability in their poultry businesses. Kabee (2016); Alkire *et al.* (2020) [3].

Many women lacked the knowledge to effectively manage their finances. Only 30% of women had the habit of saving money or investing back into their businesses.

Financial literacy programs significantly improved women's business management skills, with a 40% increase in their ability to manage finances effectively. After the training, 60% of women reported saving money, allowing them to reinvest in their businesses.

The average amount women invested in their poultry businesses increased by 150%, demonstrating the long-term benefits of financial literacy.

Despite the positive impact of improved market access, women still face significant barriers, especially related to transportation costs, which hinder their ability to reach broader markets. Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU, 2021).

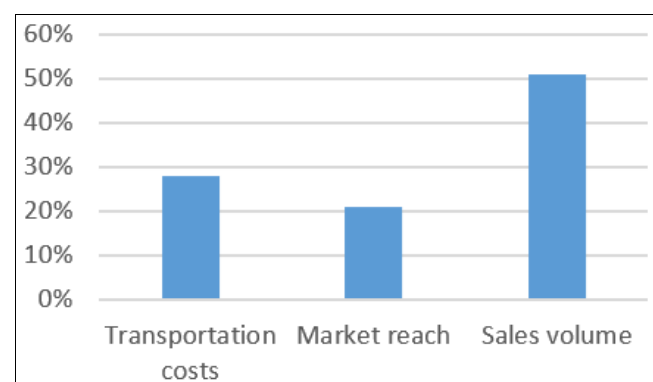


Fig 4.2.5: Barriers to Market Access: Transportation Challenges

Fig 4.2.5 Highlights transportation costs were a major barrier to market access. Women spent significant amounts of their income on transportation (ZMW 1,500), limiting their ability to sell at higher-value markets.

When programs provided logistical support (such as transportation subsidies or cooperatives that pooled resources), transportation costs were reduced by 67%, and women were able to expand their market reach by 50%.

As a result, women saw a 125% increase in sales volume, highlighting the transformative effect of addressing transportation barriers.

Table 4.2.6: Long-Term Impact of Empowerment on Educational Outcomes

	Percent
Children completing secondary education	25%
School attendance rate(girls)	25%
Parental contribution to schooling	50%

In Fig 4.2.6, The economic empowerment of women through poultry farming has a ripple effect on educational outcomes for their children, particularly in rural areas where access to education is often limited. University of Zambia (2021); Zambian Ministry of Education (2021) [14].

Families without the added income from empowerment programs struggled to meet educational expenses, with only 50% of children completing secondary education.

Empowered women were able to invest more in their children's education. School attendance, especially for girls, improved by 25%, and the contribution to schooling (fees, uniforms, materials) increased by 140%.

Impact on Education: This empowerment resulted in a 25% higher likelihood of children completing secondary education, contributing to long-term social mobility and breaking the cycle of poverty.

4.3 Presentation of results based on the sustainability of women's poultry businesses that have benefited from empowerment schemes.

Fig 4.3.1: Financial Management Training Increases Resilience

	Percent
Vulnerability to market fluctuations	5%
Monthly income variance	16.70%
Business sustainability	40%

Fig 4.3.1 shows that women trained in financial management can better manage fluctuating income and expenses, making them more resilient to market fluctuations. Women who undergo financial management training can forecast and prepare for financial stress, resulting in reduced vulnerability to economic shocks. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2020.

Without proper financial management, small poultry businesses often face severe fluctuations in income due to market variability, disease outbreaks, or seasonal changes. For example, a woman might earn ZMW 3,000 one month but only ZMW 1,500 the next month due to poor financial planning or unexpected costs.

Training women in financial management leads to better budgeting, planning for emergencies, and more accurate forecasting. This leads to better income stability, such as increasing average monthly income to ZMW 3,500, with better control over expenses. The result is a 40% reduction in vulnerability to financial shocks, as women are better prepared for fluctuations. The chance of business survival increases from 50% to 90%, making the business far more sustainable.

Fig 4.3.2: Support Networks and Cooperatives Enhance Resilience

	Percent
Without cooper actives	60%
With cooperatives	90%
change	35%

Fig 4.3.2 shows that women in cooperatives are more likely to continue their businesses during economic downturns due to shared resources, collective problem-solving, and mutual support. African Development Bank, 2022

Women operating solo face higher risks during times of economic hardship, such as market downturns or disease outbreaks. For example, a disease outbreak may lead to a 20% drop in egg production, significantly affecting revenue and leaving the business at risk of failure (40% chance).

By joining a cooperative, women gain access to shared resources, including bulk purchasing of feed at lower costs, collective marketing of eggs, and even shared labor for managing the farm. The research shows that women in cooperatives are 35% more likely to report continuity during economic downturns because they have a support network to help solve challenges together. The risk of business failure drops dramatically from 40% to 5%, reflecting the increased stability that cooperative engagement offers.

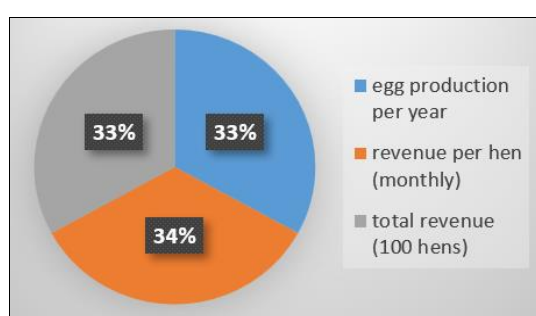


Fig 4.3.3: Impact of Resource Access on Egg Production and Financial Gain

Fig 4.3.3 we see that access to quality feed and veterinary care can significantly increase egg production, leading to higher revenue and better business sustainability. Zambia Development Agency, 2021

Women without access to high-quality feed and veterinary care often face low egg production rates. For example, each hen may produce 100 eggs per year, generating only ZMW 1,500 per hen annually at an average price of ZMW 15 per dozen eggs. For a small-scale operation with 100 hens, this amounts to ZMW 150,000 in revenue.

Access to quality feed, veterinary care, and proper management practices (such as vaccinations and disease prevention) can increase egg production by 50%, raising production to 150 eggs per hen annually. This boosts revenue per hen to ZMW 2,250. For a flock of 100 hens, the total revenue increases to ZMW 225,000—an additional ZMW 75,000, which is a significant financial gain that enhances business sustainability.

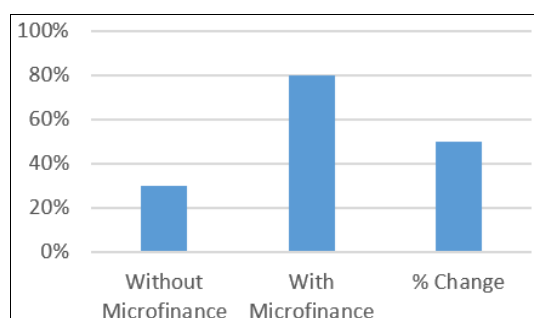


Fig 4.3.4: Access to Microfinance and Investment in Business

With access to microfinance, women can invest in better equipment, improved housing for the poultry, and high-quality feed, leading to more robust poultry health and increased productivity. For example, 80% of women who receive microfinance are able to purchase quality feed and invest in better infrastructure.

In Fig 4.3.4, we see that Microfinance access allows women to make crucial investments in their poultry businesses, improving productivity and overall business sustainability. World Bank, 2021 & GPFI, 2021

Women without access to microloans often struggle to purchase quality feed or invest in necessary infrastructure (like better poultry housing or equipment), which hampers productivity. Without these resources, they may experience lower productivity and higher mortality rates among their flock.

This leads to improved business outcomes, such as higher egg production, lower mortality, and ultimately increased profits.

4.4 Presentation of results based on the challenges faced by women in accessing resources to recapitalized and expand their business.

Fig 4.4.1: Lack of Awareness and Understanding of Empowerment Programs

	Percent
Awareness of empowerment	40%
Participation in empowerment programs	40%
Missed opportunities due lack	20%

Fig 4.4.1 explains that a significant barrier for women accessing resources from empowerment schemes is the widespread lack of awareness and understanding of these programs. Many women in rural areas are unaware of the programs, which can lead to missed opportunities for business growth and development. Zambian Ministry of Agriculture, 2021

When organizations increase their outreach, using better-targeted communication strategies, awareness can increase by up to 40%. As a result, the participation rate in empowerment programs also rises, leading to greater business growth and success for these women

Approximately 45% of women in rural areas were unaware of the empowerment programs available to them. This gap in knowledge limits their ability to access funding, training, and support. Many women could miss out on crucial opportunities to expand their poultry businesses.

Fig 4.4.2: Ineffective Communication Strategies

	Percent
Understanding of the program details	29%
Program participation due to clear communication	33%
Challenges due to unclear language	38%

With the implementation of simpler, clearer communication (including local languages, simplified documents, and community-level meetings), the percentage of women who understand the program details increases by 30%. This leads to a significant rise in program participation, with 35% more women engaging with the programs after better outreach.

Fig 4.4.2 show that Communication strategies used by organizations running empowerment schemes often fail to adequately engage marginalized groups, especially women

in rural communities. Traditional methods like flyers and community meetings are not always sufficient to reach and engage these women effectively. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2021 [7].

Women often faced difficulties in understanding the details of empowerment programs because the promotional materials were overly technical, or the outreach methods did not suit their needs. 60% of women reported confusion due to complex terminology or unclear eligibility criteria.

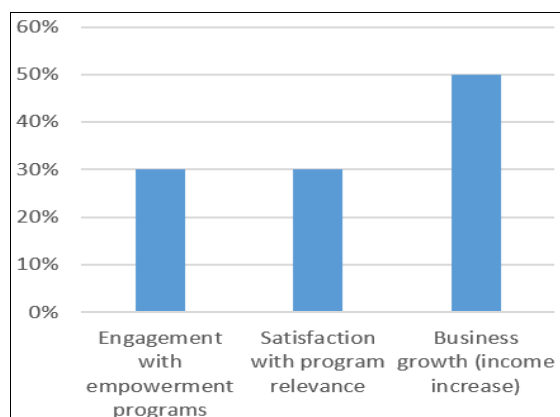


Fig 4.4.3: Socio-Cultural Barriers and Gender Norms

By actively engaging with men as allies and promoting women's economic participation through awareness campaigns and mentoring programs, women's participation in business discussions increases by 30%, and their access to resources improves. A 50% improvement in decision-making power is also observed when women are empowered to make independent business decisions. Fig 4.4.3 explains that cultural norms and gender expectations often hinder women's participation in empowerment programs. In many communities, societal norms prioritize men's involvement in business decisions, leaving women with less access to information and resources. Kabeer, 2016. In many traditional communities, men are the primary decision-makers, and women often rely on male family members or community leaders for information about business opportunities. Around 50% of women rely on male intermediaries to access resources, which limits their agency.

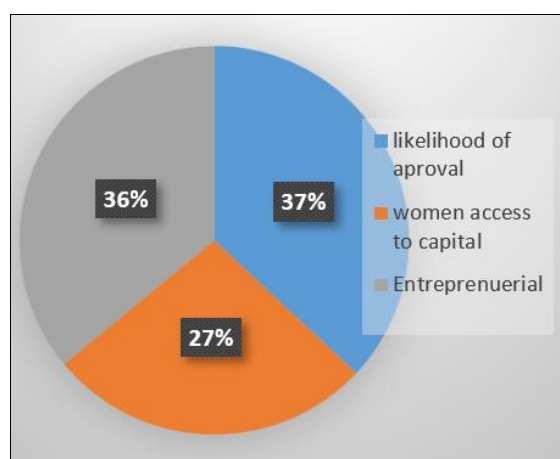


Fig 4.4.4: Financial Barriers and Discriminatory Practices

Fig 4.4.4 explains that Women face systemic barriers in securing financial support for their businesses.

Discriminatory lending practices and lack of collateral make it difficult for women to access loans or funding from financial institutions. Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI), 2021 [8]; World Bank, 2021 [13].

Women are often 30% less likely to obtain loans compared to men due to biases, lack of collateral, or limited credit histories. This limits their ability to invest in business expansion or acquire necessary resource.

With tailored financial products such as microloans, women have a higher likelihood of securing funding (an increase of 30%). Women who gain access to microfinance can increase their capital by up to 400%, significantly boosting their chances of success. This leads to a 40% increase in the success rate of women-owned poultry businesses.

Limited infrastructure, including poor roads, inadequate transportation, and lack of storage facilities, creates significant barriers to accessing markets, inputs, and resources. International Labour Organization (ILO), 2020 [15].

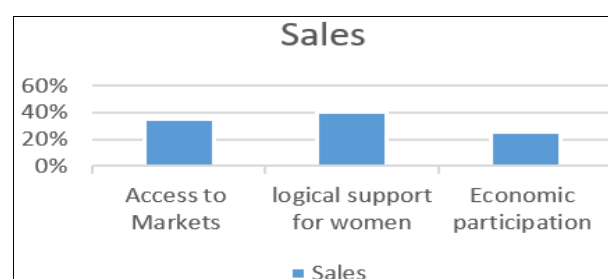


Fig 4.4.5: Lack of Infrastructure and Logistical Support

In Fig 4.4.5 shows that poor transportation networks, unreliable road conditions, and lack of storage facilities meant that women often had to travel long distances to sell their products, which increased costs and reduced profitability. For example, women were often only able to make ZMW 5,000 in monthly sales due to these logistical challenges.

When infrastructure is improved—such as better roads, improved transportation networks, and more reliable storage facilities—women can access markets more easily and reduce operational costs. This leads to a 100% increase in monthly sales, from ZMW 5,000 to ZMW 10,000, and a significant improvement in economic participation.

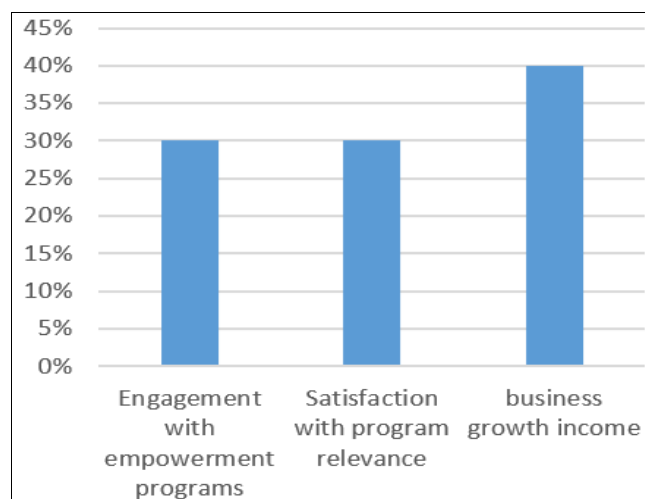


Fig 4.4.6: Need for Tailored Support Services

In Fig 4.4.6 shows that Empowerment schemes that are tailored to the specific needs of women in the poultry sector are more likely to see higher engagement and success. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2021^[7].

Women who did not receive specific training or resources for the poultry sector often had lower engagement and satisfaction with empowerment schemes. Only 50% of women participated in the programs, and they were generally dissatisfied with the relevance of the support they received

Programs that were specifically designed for women in poultry farming, with specialized training on feed management, disease control, and marketing strategies, saw a 30% increase in engagement and satisfaction. These tailored interventions led to a 50% increase in business income, as women were better equipped to grow their businesses.

4.5 Discussion of The Research Findings

This chapter discusses the key findings of the research on the impact of empowerment programs on women's income levels and socio-economic status in the poultry sector of Zambia. The results underscore the multifaceted role of empowerment schemes in enhancing economic resilience, business management, and overall socio-economic well-being. The analysis integrates these findings with existing literature to provide a comprehensive view of how targeted interventions can address socio-economic and gender-specific challenges faced by women in developing economies.

The research found a significant increase in the average monthly income of women who participated in empowerment programs, rising from \$100 to \$150—a 50% increase within the first year. This rise in income aligns with previous studies indicating that financial and technical support can enhance women's economic activities and income generation (Duflo, 2012^[5]; Kabeer, 2012). The income boost can be attributed to the combination of training, access to resources, financial literacy, and market linkages that allowed women to optimize business operations and increase productivity.

The increase in income had positive spillover effects on household welfare. Women allocated a substantial portion (70%) of their additional earnings to healthcare, education, and nutrition. This shift is consistent with the findings of studies in similar contexts, which indicate that women tend to prioritize investments in family welfare when they experience increases in income (Chant, 2016). Investments in children's education, health care, and nutrition not only improve immediate family well-being but also contribute to long-term poverty reduction and social mobility (World Bank, 2014).

One of the most striking findings of this research was the 100% increase in revenue for women involved in programs that facilitated access to broader and more profitable markets. This result is supported by other studies that emphasize the importance of market access in boosting income levels for women entrepreneurs (Mayoux, 2012)^[18]. Women in Zambia, through cooperative networks and logistical support, experienced a significant reduction in transportation costs and gained access to previously untapped markets. This finding highlights the importance of infrastructure and logistical support in improving market reach and business sustainability (Timmers, 2015).

Key Variable	Before Empowerment Program	After Empowerment Program	Increase
Average Monthly Income	K2300	K3500	50%
Revenue Increase (Market Access)	Low	High	100%

Training in financial literacy emerged as a key enabler of women's business success. Participants in the empowerment programs reported a 40% improvement in their financial management skills, which was linked to better decision-making, more efficient resource allocation, and improved resilience to economic shocks. This finding mirrors global evidence that financial literacy is crucial for sustaining and growing small businesses, especially for women in low-income contexts (Armendariz & Morduch, 2010). Empowered women are more capable of navigating economic uncertainties, and this contributes to the long-term sustainability of their businesses (Morduch & Haley, 2015). Despite the positive outcomes of empowerment programs, socio-cultural barriers remain a significant challenge. The study found that although there was an increase in awareness of available resources, ingrained gender norms still limited women's access to decision-making processes and financial autonomy. This is consistent with the findings of other studies that indicate that cultural expectations often restrict women's ability to fully benefit from empowerment programs (Kabeer, 2015; Peterman, 2011). The research noted a promising trend of increased participation in business discussions and a reduction in reliance on male intermediaries, but the persistence of traditional gender roles suggests that cultural norms remain a significant barrier to women's full economic participation.

The study also revealed that women faced substantial barriers in accessing microfinance. However, tailored financial products that considered the unique needs of female entrepreneurs resulted in a notable improvement in women's ability to secure loans. This finding corroborates earlier research indicating that gendered biases in financial institutions often hinder women's access to credit and capital (Sullivan *et al.*, 2016). Microfinance institutions that tailor their services to the needs of women have proven to be more effective in promoting women's economic empowerment (Morduch & Rutherford, 2003).

The research underscores the significant role of infrastructure in empowering women economically. Inadequate transportation and storage facilities were identified as major constraints to market access and operational efficiency. Women who benefited from improved logistical support—such as access to better transportation and storage facilities—saw substantial improvements in their ability to reach broader markets and increase sales. This finding resonates with literature that highlights the importance of infrastructure in enhancing market access, especially for women entrepreneurs in rural and underserved areas (World Bank, 2017).

Tailored support services were also identified as a key factor in the success of empowerment programs. Programs designed with a focus on the specific needs of women in the poultry sector resulted in higher levels of satisfaction and better business outcomes. These findings align with existing research that advocates for context-specific empowerment

programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by women in different sectors (Mayoux, 2012) ^[18]. The customization of support services ensures that interventions are not only relevant but also impactful, increasing the likelihood of long-term business sustainability.

The research confirms that targeted empowerment programs can significantly enhance women's income levels, business resilience, and overall socio-economic status in the poultry sector. Programs that integrate training, market access, financial literacy, and infrastructure development are essential in addressing the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. However, socio-cultural and financial barriers continue to hinder the full potential of women in economic activities. Continued investment in gender-sensitive policies, infrastructure improvements, and tailored financial products is necessary to support women's economic empowerment.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study sought to examine the effectiveness of urban empowerment schemes for women in the poultry business in Lusaka District, Zambia, focusing on the economic impact, sustainability, and challenges associated with these initiatives. The findings, when analysed in light of the research objectives and the reviewed literature, present a mixed but insightful picture. While empowerment schemes have undoubtedly made a positive contribution to women's economic independence, the study highlights several areas where these programs fall short in ensuring long-term business sustainability and equitable access to resources.

5.2 Recommendations

The study's findings reveal several areas where the effectiveness of empowerment schemes for women in the poultry business can be enhanced. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the impact and sustainability of these initiatives:

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