

Rabbit Growers and Meat Producers amidst COVID-19: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract: Major changes were brought about in many facets of people's lives worldwide by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focused on the lived experiences of rabbit growers and meat producers, their source and motivation in pursuing rabbit production, and how these serve as their coping mechanism amidst COVID-19. Ten rabbit growers and meat producers were identified purposively from Tigaon and Goa, Camarines Sur. Combinations of internationally published qualitative research were utilized in this study including a survey and interview using a standardized questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed through descriptive phenomenology design. Findings revealed that the majority of the respondents engaged in rabbit production for personal reasons such as love for a pet, leisure, inspired by the different vloggers, and the potential and health benefits of rabbit meat as an alternative to pork especially when the ASF outbreak rises. The charm and joy brought by rabbits make them feel relaxed, relieves stress and anxiety, and reduces discouragement and depressing feeling at the height of the pandemic. Financially, it serves as a source of income and developed a sense of responsibility and teamwork among family members. However, since knowledge on rabbit production was merely derived through shared knowledge with other rabbit breeders as well as the internet. It was suggested in the study to conduct capacity training on rabbit production for rabbit growers and meat producers through extension services by SUCs in collaboration with the Local Government Units of Tigaon and Goa, Camarines Sur. As such future research on the marketability and acceptability of rabbit meat may be conducted to determine consumer preference, acceptability, and future market.

Keywords: COVID-19, coping mechanism, phenomenology, rabbit growers, meat producers

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed major effects in all aspects of people's lives around the world. These pandemic made them suffered from stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions especially those in the health sector. These health and safety protocol such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they can make people feel isolated, lonely and can increase their level stress and anxiety. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make individual become more resilient in a holistic way. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)

In response to these challenges, rabbit farming becomes more abundant nowadays as it gives its owner the coping mechanism to overcome stress brought by pandemic. According Molnar, Reka Ivancsik, Barbara DiBlasio, & Istvan Naev (2019), rabbit-assisted interventions proved to be efficient, as anxiety level scores were significantly lower during the animal-assisted periods. The rabbits actively initiated encounters with humans, not only in the framework of animal-assisted interventions, but also at other occasions. In cases of discomfort, the rabbit retreated to the cage and stayed inside for a short time. The children displayed signs of pleasure when the rabbits approached them. The favorable effect of animal assistance was more apparent in the integrating class. It could be concluded that rabbit assisted interventions were suitable for decreasing the anxiety levels of elementary school children, improving the efficacy of the educational ability of teachers. (Molnar, 2019)

The rabbit industry all over countries has rapidly emerging alternative for livestock farming. Rabbit meat has high nutritional value but in developed countries continues to be considered for rural usage or limited to ethnic groups despite its outstanding dietetic properties. Likewise, the industry is

sustainable and profitable due to its growing number of demands in the market. Rabbits make great pets, but they can also be a source of meat. The rabbit industry in the Philippines is not new; however, it is not well known as well. (Dalle Zotte, 2014)

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture (NASS), there were more than 4,300 farms selling almost 890,000 rabbits nationally. In Pennsylvania, 298 farms sold more than 112,000 rabbits, making it the top producer nationally. Rabbits are raised not only for meat, laboratory use, breeding stock, and Angora wool but also for their skins and for youth programs, such as 4-H, FFA, Pennsylvania Rabbit Breeders, and American Rabbit Breeders Associations. (Lynn, 2021)

This paper aimed to characterize the lived experiences of rabbit growers and meat producers using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. For phenomenology the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings. All philosophical systems, scientific theories, or aesthetic judgments have the status of abstractions from the ebb and flow of the lived world. The task of the philosopher, according to phenomenology, is to describe the structures of experience, in particular consciousness, the imagination, relations with other persons, and the situation of the human subject in society and history. Phenomenological theories of literature regard works of art as mediators between the consciousness's of the author and the reader or as attempts to disclose aspects of the being of humans and their worlds.[Lester, 1999]

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation.

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Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Phenomenological research has overlaps with other essentially qualitative approaches including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions. (Joukowsky Institute for Archeology & Ancient World, 2021)

2. Literature Survey

Rabbit farming is a relatively recent industry in the region, but it is crucial given the economic threats posed by the spread of Asian bird flu (Otte et al., 2007). Backyard rabbit husbandry, according to the FAO (2001), provides additional income and protein for disadvantaged rural and urban households with modest investment and labor inputs. Rabbits have small body size, short generation interval, high reproductive potential, rapid growth rate, genetic diversity, and the ability to utilize forages and by-products as major diet components that make the animal appropriate for small livestock keeping in developing countries (Cheeke, 1986).

Rabbit programs have aided food security and income in other underdeveloped nations (Casidra, 2015). Rabbit experts have long argued that rabbits have a great deal of potential in LDCs. This means that when rabbits are kept properly, they can help improve the income and food of both rural and urban low-income people. Successful rabbit programs have been documented in several regions of Africa through the execution of R&D, such as the CECURI Rabbit Project in Benin Republic (Lukefahr, 2000), Egypt, and Ghana.

In the study of Tan et.al., (2020) found out that pet and animal interaction may bring mental health advantages throughout the pandemic since they are able to engage and provide emotional support to people. They also encourage good habits and physical activity, which add to the favorable mental health advantages. We previously demonstrated age-related favorable relationships between pet ownership and emotional well-being and social functioning. As individuals seek strategies to cope with the psychological stress caused on by diminished human connection, such social prescription of animals for mental well-being might explain the surge in pet adoption seen during the pandemic.

According to Codero (2021) pets or animals that we care for are seen as similarly beneficial during this epidemic since they serve the same aim of combating the pandemic's harmful consequences. While interaction with pets poses ecological and evolutionary hazards in terms of COVID-19 transmission, the possibility of animals transmitting the virus to humans is deemed minimal. Animals infected with the virus have been reported all across the world, and the majority of these animals got infected after coming into touch with COVID-19-infected people, such as owners, caregivers, or others in close proximity. Despite this, humans' biophilic behaviors are unaltered. Pet retailers, animal rescue shelters, and private breeders have seen an

increase in clients as the epidemic continues. Some of the negative psychological impacts of lockdown appeared to be mitigated by animal ownership. Another study found that walking dogs can increase physical activity and help people lose weight. Residents in high-walkable communities tend to get their physical exercise through walking their dogs. Finally, 17 research were examined that looked at both the good and negative aspects of pet ownership. According to the study, having a pet can help those with mental illnesses.

Additional to these, Amin (2011) believed that rabbit farming has been started in several LDC nations by governments and non-governmental groups in order to alleviate poverty. It has the potential to transform the lives of our country's rural residents. Rabbit farming is both low-risk and low-cost compared to poultry or cow production. It takes up the least amount of room, making it more appropriate for our country's rural environment. For farmers, the death of a breeding cow, goat, or pig is a significant loss. Rabbits have a competitive advantage over poultry in Asia since they are not dependent on cereal grains, not to mention the threat of Asian Bird Influenza." Rabbits have a short generation interval, good production quality, and quick multiplication, making them more appropriate as meat-producing small livestock in our nation. Furthermore, rabbit fur and meat may be sold to foreign nations at reasonable costs.

2.1 Problem Definition

General Objective: Characterize the lived experiences of rabbit growers and meat producers in response COVID-19 Pandemic.

Specific Objectives:

- a) Determine the source of motivation of rabbits growers and meat producers in pursuing rabbit production
- b) Characterize how rabbit farming serves as a coping mechanism amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

3. Methodology

The study was carried out in the nearby municipalities of PSU Salogon Campus such as: Tigaon Goa, and San Jose. The study area was considered due to the reason that there is a growing number of rabbit growers and producers. This was found out in the facebook group namely Bicol Rabbit Raisers Association and in the Tigaon Bigvonn's Rabbitory Page. The main respondents of the study are the ten (10) identified rabbit growers and meat producers in the study area. The criteria for the respondents are: at least 1 year engagement in growing rabbits and producing rabbit meats, and with at least 10 rabbits heads in the backyard/farm. This will be done using purposive sampling.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Specifically, it used the following instrument: descriptive survey, semi-structured interview to rabbits growers and producers, and review of related literature and studies. In profiling and describing the lived experiences and additional or follow-up questions were also asked.

Qualitative research and descriptive phenomenology design (Colaizzi's Seven Steps of Data Analysis) was used to

discover and interpret the meaning of Rabbits Growers and Meat Producers' Lived Experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. To document the profile of the respondents, a quantitative approach using survey and interview was also used.

The study followed the following procedures in gathering data. First, conduct a review of literature and studies to support the study. Second, set criteria for the respondent and identify the 10 possible respondents for this study. Due to the restrictions on mobility and face to face interaction, the researcher set an appointment with the chosen respondents and sent Google Form questionnaire via email and or messenger. The researcher conducted an interview to reinforce the gathered data and validate the responses. The researcher also ask questions and take note the responses. After collecting the data, tabulation, transcription and analysis followed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1.1 Impact of Pandemic to Mental Condition of Rabbit Growers and Meat Producers

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on respondents' mental health was explored. Some people consider the epidemic as useful to their survival tactics and capacities, despite its terrible effect on their lives and stress during those times. As a result, one of them stated:

Rui "For me it was tolerable, I even became wiser. In every situation, we should always have positive outlook in our lives. Because it will be more difficult if we let ourselves drown to the situations just because you are suffering. We must have will to continue even if we lost our jobs, we should have alternative ways on how to generate income, and should not only rely on reliefs, should make a way for a living."

While various stressors occur, stress levels rise, having a negative impact on one's intellectual health. Farming troubles and poor mental health are inextricably linked, thus it's been said that "farmers find it difficult to ask for help." However, some farmers do seek treatment, even if it's later in the midst of their sorrow when the issues have become very difficult to address or overcome. Rose et.al., (2022)

In the study of Sapbamrer, R.. et al. (2022) said that mental pressure is the body's reaction to stressful situations, and it causes a variety of physical and emotional problems. Farmers are overburdened during the pandemic because of loss of family revenues and increased costs. This demonstrates that farmers were more concerned with internal financial losses than with changes in their agricultural operating activities. Early identification of melancholy symptoms is critical for controlling the serious problems that might emerge. As a result, governments and healthcare providers must establish scientific help structures to improve farmers' intellectual fitness, in addition to agricultural and financial assistance.

This implies that, rabbit producers look into opportunities and ways to overcome and continue surviving despite the hardship and negative effects of this pandemic.

4.1.2 Impact of Pandemic to Emotional Condition of Rabbit Growers and Meat Producers

As to impact of COVID-19 to emotional condition of rabbit growers and meat producers, the following are the statements of some respondents:

Vin "Very challenging to my mental health. We have different experience on it, but for me I felt I was gone nearly to depression due to the effects of this pandemic."

Mike "Not free, always worrying, doubting if I will made it physically. But in business side, it got better. Derived high profits due to the number of people that were venturing into agribusiness when the pandemic happened."

Pandemic not only disrupt livelihoods, but also mobility of people, thus we must endure with them in order to safeguard our health. Because the COVID-19 pandemic is only one of many possible stresses, many of which are long-term, organizations require long-term assistance. The majority of respondents experienced emotional stress during the pandemic as a result of the constraints imposed by the unanticipated lockdown, which hampered their livelihood, employment and normal daily routines.

Coping methods have a direct and considerable influence on behavior. A problem-focused coping style is a proactive approach that includes things like brainstorming many solutions to an issue or seeking assistance from family or friends. Lazarus (1999). According to the findings of Prati et al. (2011) the positive cognition and knowing more about the COVID-19 virus, as well as self-protection, led to increased coping behavior. This implies that despite the negative effect of the pandemic in the emotional state of rabbit producers they still find the will to pursue and look into the positive side of the situation such as in the agribusiness side.

4.1.3 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to finances and livelihood

As to the impact of COVID-19 on the finances and livelihood of rabbit growers and meat producers they evidently revealed the following:

Rui "Too much affected, I lose my clients, before the lockdown I was expecting around 25 schedules for make-up services but when the pandemic comes followed by lockdowns, my other customers re-scheduled my make-up services, some canceled their appointments and others were no longer responding to calls and messages."

Iza "I lose my only source of income, before the pandemic I was able to work as a seamstress, where I do sewing which in turn become the source of our living but when the pandemic happened the only source of living we had were gone. However, today farming and sales from rabbitry really helped us cope with our financial struggles."

Vin "I lost my job during the pandemic as my contract came to an end where I was not renewed, thus greatly affecting my income."

The most affected by the COVID-19 epidemic were the respondents' source of income and livelihood. As a result, concerns about the ASF outbreak have discreetly exacerbated the situation, making it a danger not just to food supplies but also to certain individuals who also own hogs. Resources and finances became a challenge for households during the epidemic. Some lost their job because their contracts were not extended, clients canceled appointments, and sales on rabbits and other part-time occupations were lost owing to some rules prohibiting face-to-face transactions and meetings of friends or clients in order to prevent disease transmission.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic appear to extend beyond health to include major social and economic consequences. According to reports, COVID-19 created negative impacts on the livelihoods of around half of the global workforce, both in cities and in rural regions. Limited economic opportunities, restricted movement, fewer opportunities to meet relatives, friends, and neighbors from whom they had previously sought assistance in an emergency, fear of contracting COVID-19, and a lack of confirmed government support had all made lower-income people's lives vulnerable and stressful. Nath et al., (2020)

4.2 Motivation to start engaging in rabbit farming, growing and production

Motivation was one of the aspects looked at in engaging rabbit farming, growing, and production. As such each respondent has distinct reasons for engaging in rabbit production as follows:

Yhan "Personal choice. When I was assigned in Masbate as PNP Personnel I don't have a pet at that time so I start searching thru the internet where I found vloggers TDM and Tierra Del Menor, I was inspired by them. Through it, I discovered that rabbits can also be a pet, a business, or a source of income so I push with it, I studied about it.

Iza "At first, I find rabbits cute thus my purpose of having a pet. Then when they start growing and multiplying I was unable to manage it properly so I started to sell some of my rabbits until I engage in rabbit production."

Jo "Market factor and health benefits of rabbit meat, since I have hypertension, I read from the internet that rabbit meats are good for the health, especially for people like me who have elevated blood pressure.

Ron "My sibling was worried when the ASF outbreak occur, so he decided to substitute rabbits especially when he knew that rabbit meats have health benefits.

Mike "It's the meat production and ASF outbreak. What if there's no chance for ASF to end? At least ready, we have rabbits.

Some of the responders began rabbitry as a personal choice because of its charm and cuteness, health benefits and potential of rabbit meat was also taken, some were encouraged by friends and inspired by vloggers. Technical knowledge influenced the introduction of commercial rabbit production. Males are more involved in commercial rabbit farming than females. The age of respondents has an effect on commercial rabbit output. As a consequence, age is acceptable for commercial rabbit production, which

necessitates commitment and sound judgment. Farmers become more concerned about agricultural technology that would give them more food and cash to satisfy their obligations as a result of marriage, which assigns them familial responsibilities.

Rabbits are one of the most adaptable livestock animals, responding well to bio-economic concepts that encourage resource efficiency and conversion into high-value goods like functional meals (FFs). Rabbit meat's outstanding nutritional and dietetic characteristics support its designation as an FF. Customer attention should be a major feature in commercial or public meat industry plans, based on the assumption that the consumer ultimately determines what sort of meat to buy. Petrescu (2018)

According to the study of Saxon et al., (2016) it was concluded that training and extension influence commercial rabbit production. Agricultural extension provides the bridge between the research stations and the farmers, carrying and bringing back knowledge based on local experience for further investigation. The commonly used extension methods are individual farm visits, group visits, demonstrations, field days, barazas, on-farm trials, and mass media. Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock production and Fisheries is leading in the provision of training on commercial rabbit production. Commercial rabbit production is very effective if the right technology, effective extension services, access to inputs, adequate market, and complementary infrastructural facilities are provided.

As quoted from Rastogi (2000) the advantages of small-scale rabbit production are shown as: – Small size and quiet nature of rabbits makes it easy to raise them in cities, suburbs and village communities; – Large litter size and short generation interval allows for economic returns in the short term (12-15 fryers/doe/year); – Rabbits are 2.5 and 4 times more efficient in extracting protein from forages than sheep and beef cattle; – Rabbits can easily subsist on waste materials from the vegetable garden, family kitchen and institutional canteens/cafeterias; – Low investment is required for establishing a small rabbitry with 3-5 breeding does; – Meat of rabbits is an excellent, alternative source of healthy food is low in fat, salt and cholesterol.

The meat quality concept is continuously changing and, nowadays, the consumer is very interested in the healthiness of meat, hedonistic quality, sensory properties, cooking easiness and swiftness, and price. During the last two decades, rabbit meat researchers have focused their interests on how to increase live performance and carcass yield. Mensah (2022)

This implies that people are growing interested in rearing and producing rabbits not only because of its allure, but also because of its by-products, like as meats, which have nutritional and health advantages, and so provide them with additional revenue when sold as pets or meat. People are becoming health conscious about the foods they ate and the fact that there was a pork shortage due to ASF outbreak.

4.2.1 Persons that influenced Rabbit Grower's perception that rabbit farming, growing and meat production is feasible

Persons who influenced the respondents were also investigated, as these individuals motivate them to begin and have a favorable attitude toward the rabbitry.

Rui "I have been following a youtuber named Ginoong Magsasaka. He is one of my motivations to continue in rabbit production, because in rabbit production, of course, we're not hypocrites, in this time, there's money in the rabbit.

Vin "I had attended seminars and I often watched vloggers like Tierra del Menor and Papa Rabbitry YT.

Mike "Inkling, trial and error philosophy. Also, low maintenance in managing rabbitry. I was influenced by my friend who owned a rabbit.

Nhel "Self-influence and I was watching technical practices of the vloggers. They are different from one another so we can say that there are different or unique practices per YouTuber.

Based on the analysis of Mensah (2014) it was concluded that meat rabbit production is feasible in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The study recommends embarking on a mass advertisement; farmer associations and adapting to new technologies in the production process will help to enhance productivity.

This implies that current rabbit producers in the two municipalities were aware of how the rabbitry was run because they were kept up to date on the vlogs and expertise shared by the vloggers they followed, and they believed rabbit production was feasible, particularly once the rabbit market was established. As a result, vloggers and Youtuber personalities that promote bunnies and rabbit production play an important role as influencers and encourage others to participate in rabbit production.

4.2.2 Primary Emotion or Feeling attributed to Rabbit

Apart from its cuteness, all respondents characterized bunnies as bringing them joy, happiness, and relaxation. They also delighted visitors and children playing in the garden by allowing rabbits to wander freely. Their cuteness lowers tension, inspires a lot, and may increase confidence, particularly since rabbits are numerous and easy to handle.

Yhan "Stress reliever, it brings joy. In my previous job, we can't go home often so rabbits became my pastime and diverted my attention. At least I had a pet to entertain me."

Vin "Aside from the income, they are happy to watch and stress reliever.

Iza "It gives so much joy. When I have free time, I will just go outside and visit my rabbits and I even talked to them. Children also do the same, it also entertained them."

Ino "It brings joy, especially when they multiply. It became a form of entertainment for it was happy to take care of."

Ed "Happy especially nowadays, people are starting to recognize rabbitry."

In the study of Wilkins et.al., (2015) the findings revealed that animal emotion attribution is inconsistent. The uncertainty appears to be based in part on an animal's functional category and its perceived position in the widely held, but incorrect, linear hierarchy of species. Nonetheless, the vast range of feelings assigned to all species emphasizes the human mind's complex and perhaps confused ideas about animals. The greatest and sole predictor of emotion attribution to animals, in general, was found to be belief in the animal mind, which is likely due to the fact that both are part of the same underlying construct. Rabbits, horses, rats, and birds were among the animals for which ownership mediated the emotions associated with them. We find that unclear sentiment has an impact on humane animal welfare standards.

This implies that rabbits are one of the pet animals that, owing to their appealing character, assist their owners to relax. They experience happiness and joy as a result of this.

4.3 Rabbit farming, growing and meat production serve as a coping mechanism in times of pandemic

4.3.1 Emotionally

Rui "Emotionally, they are a stress reliever.

Ed "Emotionally: stress-reliever, leisure during free time."

Ino "My attention was diverted to my rabbits instead of thinking of the things that made me sad or problems. It's like my full attention was solely for them, after work I took care of them, before I sleep and when I woke up it's them I'm always thinking of.

Nhel "Pastime, relaxing and movement-change in livestock."

4.3.2 Physically

Rui "it became my routine. When I woke up in the morning, I have to attend to my rabbits because it was not just an obligation but a must that I should always do"

Ed "Routine and exercise it became a daily routine in life and if I have free time, I looked for grass and leaves.

Ino "It really became part of my routine."

Nhel "routine and at the same time some sort of exercise."

4.3.3 Socially

Rui "I seldom go out and socialize since its pandemic, but because of social media I was able to build connections especially if I were to deliver orders, but not in a way I visit a farm just to see rabbits."

Ed "Making friends and connections."

Ino "I've met new acquaintances, and learned new experiences and knowledge shared by others."

Nhel "It develops teamwork among the family and also with the other breeders. Even our neighborhood is showing appreciation and encouragement."

4.3.4 Financially

Rui "Financially, it became a source of income."

Ed "Very helpful especially in times like this, it is really income generating."

Ino "Can derive additional income however only a little for now, maybe it will turn into big profits when there will be a fixed market for rabbit industry."

Nhel "Not that much because of a small number of rabbits, but as it reached the goal and the number of produce or when multiplied, potentially it will be profitable."

In the study of Ratchen et.al., (2020) revealed that the human-animal relationship is a concept that has been related to animal owners' mental health susceptibility. The emotional closeness or intimate characteristics of the human-animal interaction appear to be unaffected by animal species. The psychological impacts of COVID-19 lockdown appeared to be mitigated by animal ownership.

This implies that rabbits serve a number of functions in the life of rabbit growers in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, including not just as a relaxing pet, a daily routine and exercise, but also as a means of meeting new people, acquaintances, and friends who have a shared objective and interest. These also let people supplement their daily needs and costs by selling bunnies, making them a valuable alternative source of revenue during the pandemic.

4.4 The most fulfilling part of rabbit farming, growing, and meat production

Rui "In rabbitry there are stages, from kits to a breeder. For me, the most satisfying part where you will be so much delighted is from the first day to the fifth day of the kits, which is the critical stage of the kits, when they surpassed that time, it's sure that they will continue to live. That's why I am delighted when I saw kits pass the first 5 days of their lives, I'm happy because surely they will survive. Fulfilling when they multiplied."

Ed "Fulfilling as a source of income, there are no losses since production is not so costly like feeds where mostly are weeds and only uses commercial feeds during the rainy season. Also fulfilling when people were able to recognize me because of rabbitry and if there are many buyers."

Jo "It makes me happy when the person I gave the bunny to is happy, when I inspire others, when I make people happy and can share information and thoughts."

Nhel "When it gives joy due to its charm. Especially to my children, during the pandemic, their movement was so much affected."

The study of Airina et.al., (2021) revealed that majority of respondents feel that rabbit farming may provide new jobs and improve their family's quality of life. Small livestock, such as rabbits, have a variety of traits that might be beneficial in developing nations' smallholder, subsistence-type integrated farming and gardening food production systems. (Cheeke, 2007). There are several advantages to owning rabbits over other animals. Schiere (2004) mentioned that launching a rabbit project required a little initial investment. A rabbit can also be simply sold when

only a little sum of money is required to cover immediate household requirements.

This means that revenue is only one of the elements that satisfied rabbit farmers, who were also happy when their rabbits multiplied, they had no losses, and they shared their expertise with others.

4.5 The most disappointing or dissatisfying part of rabbit farming, growing and meat production

Rui "Discrimination and crab mentality. We should put different thinking in the minds of people engaging in rabbit production, for instance when "Juan's rabbitry" is more salable than others, "Pedro" will be envious. It shouldn't be like that, or if they want to also gain income, they should learn how to sell. What happened is, when two or three were able to sell rabbits others will get envious. Others will say, you won't be able to sell because you're a member of LGBTQ. It also hurts when rabbits die."

Mike "When rabbits die during giving birth, I felt it was my failure in the preparations like during the rabbit's pregnancy and giving birth. But the good thing about that is you can always try again."

Nhel "Deaths, mortality and sensitivity of rabbits when let unattended can really cause death."

Ed "Diseases like "mange" and "diarrhea" and those diseases that can get by the pregnant rabbits."

Ron "Sometimes, when there are false pregnancies I thought my rabbits will increase in number. And when they got sick, diarrhea that sometimes caused by wet grasses being fed on them. That's why leaves should be dried before feeding to rabbits."

Farmers and advisors lack a technical understanding in rabbit farming. Ramodisa (2007). Oseni et al. (2008) cited that one of the greatest obstacles in rabbit production, according to them, is a lack of information on rabbit management in smallholder units. Another is that government assistance is lacking. Rabbits, unlike cattle, chickens, and small stocks, are not eligible for government assistance under the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) program. Increased government assistance is required for rabbit farming to flourish and play a vital role in delivering high-quality protein in both rural and urban regions. Moreki (2012)

One thing is the inadequacies in health care. Because rabbit farming is still in its infancy, extension agents are unfamiliar with rabbit illnesses and parasites, and they are ill-equipped to transmit information and skills to rabbit farmers. In Nigeria, Ozor and Madukwe (2005) described healthcare issues in small-scale rabbit agriculture. Rabbit producers had difficulties obtaining particular medications for specific treatments of rabbit ailments, as well as the inability to quickly separate sick animals and limited access to medical services.

On the other hand, Isaac (2016) in her study found that farmers that are LGBT and straight have similar lifestyles and environmental motivations to farm. Regardless of sexuality, most farmers enjoyed being outside, performing hard labor, seeing concrete results, and feeling better. Many said that feeding others made them feel good. Others expressed their delight in feeling linked to the planet and the seasons. Farming incentives were similar for gay and heterosexual farmers, however, queer farmers stated reasons based on sexuality and gender. The decision to become a sustainable farmer is influenced by a variety of variables that are unrelated to sexuality or gender. Regardless, it is crucial that sexuality and gender attracted women and gay farmers to farming.

This suggests that rabbit farmers and meat producers require assistance from local government units or other organizations to ensure adequate rabbit production management, as infections and diseases are prevalent among kits and during rabbit pregnancy. Despite of these, different genders were involved in rabbit farming, where they encouraged and believed in rabbit production.

4.6 Significant Changes in the Lives of Rabbit Growers and Meat Producers

Yhan "Became more responsible not only to my family but also to my pets. Since I started it already, once they got sick more you should take care of them. I love taking care of those sick ones because I find it more enjoyable to do."

Rui "Became wiser and more responsible in taking care of pets even though it is said that we are marketing our pets, still, the attachment is there. It is not easy as if you're selling your own child. Actually, before I burst into tears."

Jo "Created linkages and meet people with whom I shared the same interest and want to share and expand knowledge."

Nhel "Not so much, but I became open to helping people to benefit and engaged in livestock. It became part of my goal, to help people engage in livestock."

Rabbit farming is a lucrative enterprise with a high likelihood of recouping initial investment (Onebunne, 2013). In fact, it is a viable solution to Nigeria's animal protein shortfall. (Ajala and Balogun, 2004). This indicates that keeping rabbits as pets encourages rabbit farmers and meat producers to be more intelligent and responsible, not only because of the joy have they experienced, but also because of their desire to pursue and expand livestock production.

4.7 Significant Learning gained from Experience in Rabbit Farming, Growing and Meat Production

Yhan "Important learning in rabbit production, it changed my mindset. Of course, I have to push to reach my goal. For example in the market, you need to push hard, never cease posting...do not stop. Perseverance should be motivated always, low morale should not be entertained during those times."

Edmund "To save, budget our finances wisely especially if you have plans to venture in a business like this."

The efficiency of the usage of production components determines the degree of profit from the livestock industry. Elements of efficiency in the livestock industry are directly tied to the size of the company; a larger company has a higher degree of efficiency, as evidenced by the optimization of production. In the study of Tohir (1991), the size of the company or the quantity of livestock owned by the farmer/breeder determines the profit and growth in the farmer's/income. The more animals they have, the bigger the profit and increase in the breeder's/income.

This denotes that rabbit production has caused rabbit growers and meat producers to become wiser, work more, budget their money, and adjust their viewpoints in order to achieve their life goals as they venture into rabbit production.

4.8 Role to Perform in Food Security

4.8.1 As Rabbit Meat Supplier

Jo "Maybe a meat supplier will be my contribution to food security."

Ed "I am looking into the perspectives of having slaughter just like the slaughterhouse for pigs. I just hope in the near future there will be the same slaughterhouse for rabbits. I guess it would be fine as long as we follow the safety and sanitation protocols."

4.8.2 Role in Food Security

Rui "We should work on removing the taboo. We should change the perspectives of other people that rabbit meats in other countries were consumed, we should not have culture shock. I consider myself a responsible provider for food security, since we have outbreaks such as ASF, and bird flu, what if the time would come when we won't have enough supply of chickens for instance, so I can contribute to the food supply, right?"

4.8.3 As Farmer/Livestock Raiser

Yhan "Respondent 4 states "I consider myself as a farmer and livestock raiser, only these two. Because I have my interest in these, we still have a rice farm, I'm also managing lands, so... for myself. We became successful in our lives through our parent's engagement in farming so our mindset was just the same as our parents. For food security, that's already given cause if you raise a rabbit, it also answers food security since it is where you get the food for your table, food consumption, you will no longer buy food especially if you don't have money to buy pork since you already have rabbits, you can cook dishes out of rabbit. So for me, it is right to raise animals."

4.8.4 In Marketing of Rabbit as pet stock

Iza "Maybe in the marketing of rabbit meat and as a pet, since it can be a counterpart of other meat either in the poultry or hog industry."

Food security includes both physical and monetary availability to food. Meat, like the economy, has supply and demand, with high demand pushing up prices and low

supply driving up costs. Low food security refers to a scarcity of safe and nutritious food, which is influenced by a number of issues, mostly on the supply and production side of the livestock industry. (Espino, 2022) rabbits are tiny, prolific animals that provide nutrient-dense meat (Dalle Zotte, 2014). These animals, whether raised on small-scale or large-scale farms, convert greens to animal proteins remarkably effectively. Rabbit meat is historically sold as corpses all throughout the world. Meat rabbit farming, which is becoming a key business in the local economies of several Sub-Saharan African countries, requires careful management, nutrition, and breeding. (Suman, 2014)

Rabbit production is related to the rural environment and represents an important economic choice, not only for farms but also for the surrounding sector, such as feed manufacturers and distributors, technicians, slaughterhouses, and leather processors, among others. Rabbit farms are often self-contained and not interconnected like other livestock operations. Slaughterhouses, which are either focused on traditional or large-scale distribution, are today one of the key axes of the rabbit meat manufacturing chain. The most significant strategic shifts may be seen at slaughterhouses focused on large-scale distribution, where cooperative working methods, slaughterhouse groups, and vertical integration procedures are employed. (Baviera, 2017). This suggests that there are several rabbit-producing prospects that may be pursued. People are becoming more conscious of rabbits as a meat source, not simply as a pet or stock.

5. Conclusion

Because of their features and allure qualities, rabbits were identified as the respondent's stress relievers during the COVID-19 pandemic which aids in their mental and emotional feeling during those times. Findings showed that the majority of rabbit growers and meat producers were influenced by the vloggers and YouTubers they watched, sparking their interest in the rabbitry. Furthermore, it was shown that by raising rabbits, respondents grew wiser, more physically active, and socially inclined with other breeders with whom they shared a common interest and that selling bunnies monetarily helped them supplement their daily requirements and costs. Moreover, respondents assure their role to perform in food security by utilizing rabbits such that they are willing to be a meat suppliers as farmers/livestock raisers.

The result of the study revealed that since most rabbit growers and meat producers solely derived their knowledge and ideas on the internet it is recommended to conduct capacity training for rabbit growers and meat producers. Moreover, this study will serve as a baseline for the Local Government Units of Tigaon and Goa to implement an ordinance or policy that will help rabbit growers and meat producers come up with a rabbit market or slaughterhouse for rabbits.

6. Future Scope

Based on the result of the study, knowledge on rabbit production was merely derived through shared knowledge with other rabbit breeders as well as the internet. It was

suggested in the study to conduct capacity training on rabbit production for rabbit growers and meat producers through extension services by SUCs in collaboration with the Local Government Units of Tigaon and Goa, Camarines Sur. As such future research on marketability and acceptability should be conducted to determine consumer preferences, acceptability, and future market.

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