

STUDENTS' ENROLMENT IN HOME ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field of study which helps families and individuals to understand and adapt to the effects of social, economic, cultural and technological changes. These potentials are not fully harnessed for national development due to the poor representation of the course in tertiary institutions. The study examined the students' enrolment in Home Economics departments in Colleges of Education. It was carried out on two hundred and forty (240) students in selected Colleges of Education. The study employed the use of descriptive survey research design. A structured questionnaire with reliability index 0.877 was used for data collection. Three research questions were analysed descriptively. Findings revealed that gender, academic performance, subjects offered in secondary school, students' career aspirations and goals, difficulty/academic stress, status of Home Economics, cost of acquiring equipments, availability and utilisation of laboratory equipment, overall perception about the course and its relationship with other courses and profession were some of the factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course. Parents also played significant roles in students' choice of Home Economics as a course. Preferred course of study for children/ward and the cost of Home Economics in Colleges of Education were the parental and socioeconomic factors influencing students' choice of Home Economics. It was recommended that preconceptions that are usually baseless and fictions need to be changed through public enlightenment and orientation programmes and that exhibitions and fields trip should be used to encourage students to study Home Economics.

Keywords: Home Economics, Enrolment, Colleges of Education, Students, Career.

Introduction

Home Economics is the study of activities that relates to the home and the family; it is a field of study that is concerned with improving and strengthening family life. Home Economics as an applied science subject, draws knowledge from many other subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Economics, Sociology, History, Geography, Psychology, Agriculture, Fine and Applied Arts. It unifies the knowledge drawn and uses it to form its own body of knowledge (Anyakoha, 2009). The Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2007) noted that Home Economics affords students the opportunity of developing manipulative skills thereby improving their dexterity as they tackle problems associated with life and living. Uzoka (2013) viewed Home Economics Education as the focus of individual and families living in a society throughout their life span. It focuses on families and their interrelationship with the communities. Home Economics Education is concerned with strengthening and enriching family life through:

- educating the individual for family living
- improving the services and goods used by the families
- satisfying different needs of the families
- promoting community, national and world conditions favourable to family living.

Home Economics can be grouped into four (4) major areas namely:

- Food and nutrition
- Clothing and textiles
- Home management
- Child care and development

With many different careers in Home Economics such as dietetics, nutrition, among others. Home Economics programme at College of Education level is geared towards providing professional training for students, who will teach in primary and junior secondary schools with these three basic objectives of teaching Home Economics:

- develop a general awareness of a career in Home Economics
- develop basic skills in domestic activities , and
- prepare the students for home making and family life (Uzoka 2013).

Teaching people about the importance of Home Economics cannot be over-emphasized. There should be enlightenment through seminars, workshops, mass media, etc about the importance and the career opportunities that Home Economics as a subject provides. Eze (2001) recommended that parents should encourage their sons and daughters to develop interest and select Home Economics as a subject of study in schools, and that there should be no mark of sex discrimination in the activities and games which boys and girls are allowed to participate in at home. Uwameiye (2015) highlighted some of the factors responsible for the state of enrolment in Home Economics as follows, negative attitudes of parents, poor institutional funding and low awareness to the relevance of Home Economics Education to the students.

Ode and Babayeju (2013) recommended that parents should encourage their children to study Home Economics; they should also provide finance and resources for their children to study the subject, students should be taken on field trips/excursions to various established areas of Home Economics such as food processing industries, textile mills, sewing institutions as these will give them opportunities to see both male and female employed to work in these areas and finally, Government, NGOs and schools, should provide facilities, equipment and materials for teaching and learning Home Economics.

Uwamaiye (2015) stated the strategies that are capable of enhancing the enrolment of Home Economics as increased funding of tertiary institution by the government, provision of well equipped laboratories and libraries, creating awareness among parents and students, giving loans to graduates of Home Economics to aid their business and also students should spend longer periods in industrial attachment, protecting the welfare of individuals, families and communities, they facilitate the development of attributes for long life learning, for paid, unpaid and voluntary work. Home Economics is a vocational subject that is unique and dynamic, it contributes meaningfully to the solutions of the problems of the society such as unemployment, poverty, undernutrition and malnutrition. In Colleges of Education the objectives of the Home Economics programme include:

To ensure that the students acquire adequate knowledge and skills in all the areas included in Home Economics field of study

To produce teachers who are able to apply the principles and skills in Home Economics to the needs of individuals, homes and family life in the Nigerian society

To instill in the students an awareness of the rapid expansion of knowledge and willingness to experiment with new ideas and practices for the improvement of the field.

To promote desirable attitudes in the students and develop teaching skills and abilities

To develop in the teacher an awareness of her responsibilities and duties as a leader and innovator in the community in which she lives and works (NCCE, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Home Economics is an interdisciplinary field of study which helps families and individuals to understand and adapt to the effects of social, economic, cultural and technological changes. It enquires how individual gets income and how the income is being used. Uzoka (2013) defined Home Economics as a study of laws, conditions, principles and ideals which are concerned on the one hand, with man's hand with his nature as a social being and in the other hand the study of the relationship between the two factors. Therefore, the study of Home Economics as a vocational subject ought to attract the interest of many students and even parents in this period/era of economic recession because of its laudable importance which cannot be over-emphasized, but reverse has been observed to be the case. Students prefer to study other courses in Colleges of Education which are majorly based on theory rather than self reliance courses which will make them stand out and be productive citizens after their study. The reasons for this may be people's perception that it is exorbitant, does not require specialized kind of training, low self esteem on the side of both parents and students, and ignorance. Home Economics enables the students to acquire skills, competences, abilities

essential for independent life rather than dependent life especially in the midst of economic difficulties.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine students' enrolment in Home Economics departments in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study: highlighted the factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course examined the influence of parental and socio-economic status on students' choice of Home Economics proffered possible ways to encourage students' enrolment in Home Economics departments.

Methodology

The design used for the study was descriptive survey research design. The present study examined students' enrolment in Home Economics departments in Colleges of Education collecting information from students without intention of manipulating variables. The study was carried out in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The respondents were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling technique was used to categorise the Colleges of Education in Nigeria into two (federal and state). Simple random sampling technique was used to select eighty (80) respondents from three Colleges of Education. Two experts validated Questionnaire with reliability index (r) 0.877 consisting of 27 structured items was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using frequency count, mean and standard deviation.

Results

Factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course

Table 1: Factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course

N = 240, C = 2.5				
S/N	Factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a Course		SD	Decision
1.	Gender	3.39	0.539	Agree
2.	Academic performance	3.13	0.528	Agree
3.	Subjects offered in secondary school	2.78	0.614	Agree
4.	Friends in the department	2.18	0.545	Disagree
5.	Students' entry examination score/point	2.30	0.616	Disagree
6.	Students' career aspirations and goals	2.92	0.460	Agree
7.	Individual interests, ability and self expectation	2.38	0.553	Disagree
8.	Difficulty/Academic stress	2.60	0.636	Agree
9.	Status of the course	2.84	0.638	Agree
10.	Cost of acquiring equipments	3.12	0.672	Agree
11.	Availability and utilization of laboratory equipment	3.32	0.681	Agree
12.	Overall perception about the course.	3.04	0.808	Agree
13.	Relationship with other courses and professions	2.52	0.882	Agree

N – total number of respondents, C – cut-off point

Table 1 revealed that gender, academic performance, subjects offered in secondary school, students' career aspirations and goals as well as difficulty/academic stress were some of the factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course. The table also revealed that status of Home Economics, cost of acquiring equipments, availability and utilization of laboratory equipment, overall perception about the course and its relationship with other courses and profession also predicted students' choice of Home Economics as their course of study.

Influence of parental and socio-economic status has on students' choice of Home Economics

Table 2: Influence of parental and socio-economic status on students' choice of Home Economics

N = 240, C = 2.5				
S/N	Parental and socioeconomic status influence on students' choice of Home Economics		SD	Decision
1.	Parents' preferred course of study for children/ward.	2.57	0.959	Agree
2.	Friends and peer influence	2.16	0.485	Disagree
3.	Home Economics relatively cheaper in Colleges of Education	2.63	0.849	Agree
4.	Fear of failure in 'hard courses'	2.38	0.663	Disagree
5.	Lack of confidence	2.04	0.509	Disagree
6.	Non availability of finance is affecting students' enrolment in Home Economics Department	2.18	0.498	Disagree

N – total number of respondents, C – cut-off point

Table 2 revealed that the mean responses of students on items 1 and 3 were greater than the cut-off point (2.5) hence, parents' preferred course of study for children/ward and the cost of Home Economics in Colleges of Education were the parental and socioeconomic status influencing students' choice of Home Economics. Friends and peer influence, fear of failure, lack of confidence and non-availability of finance were not parental and socioeconomic factors influencing students' choice of Home Economics.

Possible ways to encourage students enrolment in Home Economics Department

Table 3: Possible ways to encourage students enrolment in Home Economics

N = 240, C = 2.5				
S/N	Possible ways to encourage students enrolment in Home Economics		SD	Decision
1.	Wrong conception and perception of Home Economics as 'woman subject' should be changed through public enlightenment programmes.	2.91	0.889	Agree

2.	Parents should be educated through media on the importance of career opportunities in Home Economics.	3.04	0.657	Agree
3.	Exhibitions and field trips should be used to encourage students to study Home Economics.	3.01	0.612	Agree
4.	Lecturers should be encouraged to make use of innovative instructional methods.	3.05	0.690	Agree
5.	Schools should ensure effective guidance and counselling services. This is to ensure that the students are made to understand the concept of Home Economics and its importance	3.09	0.569	Agree
6.	Students no matter their areas of study should be compelled to study any area of the subject as an elective apart from those that are offering the course	2.41	1.154	Disagree
7.	Career days/orientation should be organized from time to time for primary and secondary school students	3.09	0.564	Agree
8.	The lecturers should be encouraged to prudently offer academic advices to the students to help them understand their career options and credit unit requirements	2.80	0.937	Agree

N – total number of respondents, C – cut-off point

Table 3 presents an array of students' suggestions on the possible ways to encourage students' enrolment in Home Economics. The table revealed that the mean responses of students on virtually all items except item 6 was greater than the cut-off point (2.5). Hence, students agreed to the item statements.

Discussion

It is a fact that education is receiving recognition in third world countries and citizenry approach to it is quite encouraging. This is evident in the trends in enrolment of male and female students at all levels of education, including the tertiary level. Despite this great stride, not all aspects of education are exploited. Commenting on the enrolment of students in Vocational and Technical Education, Akinbani (2016) stated that the School of Vocational and Technical Education has witnessed tremendous developments in terms of students' enrolment, staff strength, infrastructures, teaching and learning resources over the years. The Students' enrolment over the years has increased greatly. However, it is noteworthy that, these developments do not measure up to the level of recognition given to education. Studies on improving the enrolment of students in some vocational and technical education courses, most especially the gender stereotyped ones are not new. Efforts have been made to improve the status of Home Economics education at all levels of education; however, recent trends seem to make it more difficult for the course to be widely acceptable.

Notable among these trends is the new curriculum and number of school subjects students are expected to offer at the secondary school level. The old style allowed for versatility and of course professionalism in the chosen career choice. The curriculum also ensured that each student in Arts, Commercial, Humanities or Sciences had a broad knowledge of what holds in other fields of endeavour unlike the new style. This has further, made students at the

secondary school choose other non-Home Economics related course. Similarly, at the tertiary institution level, students whose background does not reflect Home Economics might find it difficult to further in the course. In this study, some of the factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course was examined. It was found out that gender, academic performance, subjects offered in secondary school, students' career aspirations and goals as well as difficulty/academic stress were some of the factors responsible for students' choice of Home Economics as a course.

Ezenwanne (2015) identified poor relationship with students as a factor causing academic stress among Home Economics students in Colleges of Education. Based on her study, academic stress is directly related to relationship with friends. Academic stress in Colleges of Education is one of the factors that students are likely to consider before choosing a career path. Just as observed in the study, academic stress is a factor that has been established by several authors (Agolla and Ongori, 2009; Rafidah, Azizah, Norzaidi, Chong and Salwani, 2009; Amponsah and Owolabi, 2011; Ezenwanne, 2015) to be responsible for students participation in a course. Stress is part of a college student's existence and has a profound impact on their ability to cope with college life (Dussellier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley and Whalen, 2005). As against the submission of Ezenwanne (2015) this study found that students do not consider their relationship with their friend while choosing Home Economics or their career path.

The identified factors influencing students' choice of Home Economics can be broadly categorized as wrong perception of students, parents and the general public about the course. Dike (2006) expressed that wrong perception of Home Economics dated back from the colonial era, this makes it difficult for the perception to change. Bound and Hopson (1989) stated that boys are more concerned with careers that will make quick money while girls tend to pay more attention to future family improvement. This perception has transcended over the years and has continued to influence the choice of career in Home Economics which culminates to poor enrolment of students in the course. Irrespective of gender, there should be practical interest in home planning, budgeting, production of and preparation of food for home use. Home Economics is so paramount to both males and females, in that, it takes a man and women to make a family and the family is the centre for human behaviour personality.

Other factors based on the findings of the study were status of Home Economics, cost of acquiring equipments, availability and utilization of laboratory equipment, overall perception about the course and its relationship with other courses and profession. Furthermore, parents' preferred course of study for children/ward and the cost of Home Economics in Colleges of Education were the parental and socioeconomic status influencing students' choice of Home Economics.

In Colleges of Education, Home Economics programmes are fashioned to provide comprehensive and multi-disciplinary training skills. This is demonstrated, for example, in many curricula today by the practical activities students undertake to acquire skills. Such skills that cannot always be learned in a theoretical context include the ability to plan, establish priorities in relation to resources available like time and money (Azubuike, 2012).

Importantly, these skills also allow students to recognise the importance of families at the core of everything that is done. Ekpenyong (2008) asserted that among the areas of education employed to enhance development, Home Economics has persistently identified itself as the right step in the right direction. It has passed the period when it was regarded as only the acquisition of skill in household arts or just cooking which prevents male's enrollment in the course related areas of the study in higher institutions of learning. Several factors such as the ones identified earlier need to be addressed to tap into the multifarious benefits of studying the course.

Based on the findings of the study, some probable solutions to the identified problems include public enlightenment programmes, parent education on career opportunities in Home Economics, the use of innovative instructional methods and effective guidance counselling services, career days/orientation in primary and secondary schools as well as lecturer's readiness and prudence in advising students on career options and credit unit requirements. In line with this finding Ode and Babayeju (2013) suggested that there is need for enlightenment campaign through seminars, mass media about the importance of Home Economics and the career opportunities that the subject provides to students and the society. This is necessary because a lot of people are not aware of the importance of the subject in national development.

Conclusion

Home Economics is a multi-disciplinary course, one of those important ones in national development and in saving the country as it strives to achieve economic recovery. The course is offered in Colleges of Education as one of the vocational and technical education courses that enables its learners to be self-reliant. It is however faced with challenges limiting the overall acceptability in the society. One of the chief factors influencing students' choice of the course as a career is the wrong perception of students, parents and the general public about the nature of the course, the content and the essence. Similarly, being a practical-oriented course, it requires the availability and utilization of equipment including laboratories and the cost of this could be expensive. Academic stress, status of the course, career aspirations and goals of students are factors influencing the choice of the course. Parents' socioeconomic status also plays significant roles in discouraging or encouraging students to choose the subject. Improving the status of the course and helping people form right attitude towards Home Economics requires the effort of the school, the government and other concerned bodies through education and orientation services. Professionals in the course also need to guide students in their career path to be able to make informed choices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the problems identified, it is important for the following recommendations to be considered and employed to improve the choice of Home Economics as a course:

Preconceptions that are usually baseless and fictitious need to be changed through public enlightenment programmes in form of television/radio broadcast, prints, and house to house orientation programmes. This can be organised by the government through secondary and

tertiary educational institutions. Colleges of Education can try to orientate members in their host community.

Due to the wrong notion that it is a “kitchen” course, exhibitions and field trips should be used to encourage students to study Home Economics.

Lecturers should be encouraged to make use of innovative instructional methods.

Schools should ensure effective guidance and counselling services. This is to ensure that the pupils at entry/admission understand the concept of Home Economics and its importance. Career days/orientation should be organised from time to time for primary and secondary school students.

The lecturers should be encouraged to prudently offer academic advices to the students to help them understand their career options and credit unit requirements.

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