

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF HOME ECONOMICS PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Home Economics is a comprehensive field of study which offers students with skills and knowledge for livelihood diversification. As a discipline, it offers both diverse prospects as well as challenges. However, there is attitudinal reluctance on the part of students and at times parents towards choosing the course as a profession. Assessing students' beliefs and perception towards learning and evaluation of Home Economics is germane to developing positive attitude to studying it. This paper therefore examines the trend of events in terms of progress, prospect and challenges of home economics as a profession. The study is both exploratory and descriptive using both content analysis and survey research involving descriptive statistics, Chi-square, correlation and t-test analyses. The findings revealed that educational level of students ($\chi^2 = 1.359E2$, $C = 0.036$) made a significant contribution to their knowledge and awareness about the challenges of home economics profession. Also, poor state of general practical equipment ($r = 0.041$; $p < 0.05$ $r^2 = 0.0016$) is one of the most recognized problems facing both lecturers and students of home economics alike while the most identified prospects include self-reliance after school, diverse career opportunities and knowledge about various handicrafts. From the study, it was concluded that both lecturers and students of Home Economics were aware of the various prospects and challenges of home economics.

Background of the study

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities (IFHE, 2008). It is not only a science but also an Art that incorporates both creative and technical aspects into its teaching. It is a field of formal study including such topics as consumer education, institutional management, interior design, home furnishing, cleaning, handicrafts, sewing, clothing and textiles, cooking, nutrition, food preservation, hygiene, child development, and family relationships. It prepares students for homemaking or professional careers. Home Economics is also known as Family and Consumer Science in some schools in the Bahamas. It is taught in secondary schools, colleges and universities, vocational schools and in adult education centers, where students include women and some men (IFHE, 2003). It is also known as Home sciences and management, human sciences, home sciences, home management, domestic science and family, nutrition and consumer sciences.

In addition, Pendergast and Deagon (2021) defined Home Economics as the original field of research on economic, social and ecological aspects of everyday life. Sakuwunda, Gyau & Agei (2023) described Home Economics as a skill-oriented, decision making subject that equips learners with skills and knowledge which will help them to be self employed and at the same time contribute effectively to the socio-economic development of the family and society. Home Economics through its numerous courses has provided individuals and families with learning experiences and practical skills in order to improve physical, mental and social lives of people for better living (Eze, 2023). Historically, home economics has

been in the context of the home and household, but this has extended in the 21st century to include the wider living environments as we better understand that the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from the household, to the local and also the global community (Wikipedia, 2009).

The content of Home Economics comes from the synthesis of multiple disciplines. This interdisciplinary knowledge is essential because the phenomena and challenges of everyday life are not typically one-dimensional. The content varies but might include: food, nutrition and health; textiles and clothing; shelter and housing; consumerism and consumer science; household management; design and technology; food science and hospitality; human development and family studies; education and community services, among others. The capacity to draw from such disciplinary diversity is strength of the profession, allowing for the development of specific interpretations of the field, as relevant to the context.

Statement of the problem

The field of home economics is one of the fast growing which offers variety of interesting and challenging careers. It is essential to note the various prospects of the course as well as possibility of the challenges or limitations facing the profession and professionals, students and tutors of the course which can be minimized if not totally eliminated while appreciating the prospects.

In view of this, home economics as a profession in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions has been faced with problems such as inadequate and inappropriate of both manpower requirements and teaching as well as practical facilities in various institutions. Others include cost implication of running the programme, teachers' knowledge about the course and background of the course among others. The prospects of home economics include employment and diverse job opportunities in different sectors, teaching profession, public health services, airline industries, housing corporation, child care worker, textile design, research, consumer advocate, investment management, event planning, resource management, marketing, restaurant manager, culinary arts, chef, home management among others. Also graduates of home economics can be self-employed, engage in job creation for self and others. Despite all these opportunities, the department is not well embraced by students in the higher institutions of learning.

1. This paper is therefore, investigating the prospects of home economics as a professional course of study and also the challenges facing the profession and those in the profession. In the light of the aforementioned, this study provides answer to the following research questions: What are the prospects of home economics?
2. What are the challenges associated with the structure, facilities and equipment that are in place in order to ensure effective and efficient learning?
3. What are the challenges associated with the cost of running the programme

Objectives of the study: The main objective of the study is to investigate the prospects and challenges of home economics in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

1. identify and describe the prospects of home economics;
2. identify the challenges associated with the structure, facilities and equipment in the tertiary institutions; and
3. compare the prospects and challenges as perceived by lecturers and students in the various institutions.

Hypotheses of the study.

The following hypotheses are to be tested in the study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the students and lecturers and the challenges facing home economics as a profession in Nigeria tertiary institutions
- ii. There is no significant difference between the perception of students and lecturers on the prospects and challenges of Home Economics.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in selected tertiary institutions of Southwestern Nigeria. Nigeria is located at the Eastern hemisphere of the globe and situated in West Africa. It is bounded on the North by Niger, on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, on the West by Republic of Benin and on the East by Chad and Cameroon. Furthermore, Nigeria had been recognized as the most populous country in Africa with the population of about 218.5million with an area of 923,768sqkm (Nationsonline.org, 2022). The sixth most populous in the world (World Bank open data, 2023)

Nigeria is divided into six geopolitical delineations; these are south-south, south-east, south-west, north-central, north-east and north-west. The southwestern part of Nigeria consists of the following states: Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun and Osun out of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory that make up the nation. The inhabitants of the southwestern part of Nigeria consist mainly of the Yoruba, the region comprises of six states Oyo, Osun, Lagos, Ekiti, Ondo and Ogun (www.myguidenigeria.com, 2023)

Sample size and sampling procedure

Six institutions were purposely selected from four of the Southwestern States comprising 3 Universities and 3 colleges of education that offers Home Economics as a course of study. The schools are Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Osun State College of Education, Ilesa both in Osun state; Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and; Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye both in Ogun state; Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo State and Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo State.

Data collection and analysis

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire. A total number of two hundred and ten structured questionnaires were administered in the six institutions. Thirty five structured questionnaires were administered in each school, thirty for students and the remaining five for lecturers, making a total of 180 for students and 30 for lecturers. However, 193 structured questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed, 170 for students and 23 for lecturers. Students at different levels in the institutions were sampled for this study. Primary data were collected directly from both the students and lecturers of Home Economics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and mean scores were used to summarize and describe the data. Hypotheses were tested with the use of Chi-square, t- test and correlation analysis.

Measurement of Variables

There are two types of variables measured in the study; dependent variable and independent variables. The dependent variable is prospects and challenges of home economics. This was measured using five-point Likert scale of strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed. Statements were scored based on the scale and prospects and challenges index score was obtained. The minimum score is 1 while the maximum score is 5. Independent variables include perception of respondents in the study

area. This was measured using five point Likert scale to obtain perceptual score. Other independent variables include age, sex, marital status, e.t.c were recorded as stated by the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics of respondents.

Results in Table 1 showed that majority of the students' ages fell within the range of 20 and 29 years contributing about 88.2% of the total respondents while 11.2% of the respondents were less than 20 years old and the remaining 0.6% fell between 30 and 39 years. This implies that a very high number of respondents (students) involved in this study were in their productive years. Also, for ages of lecturers, 43.7% fell between 40 and 49, 26.0% each were between 30 and 39 years old and 50 and 59 years old while the remaining 4.3% fell between 20 and 29 years of age. The mean age for students is 24 while that of lecturers is 44. This implied that most of the lecturers sampled were in their productive years. Most (65.2%) of the lecturers were female while the remaining 34.8% were male. Also, majority (75.9%) of the students, were female while the remaining 24.1% were male revealing that there are more female than male in the profession of Home Economics. This is corroborated with the findings of Soyebó, Ogbimi, Ogumba & Olumakaiye *l*, (2015).

Furthermore, all the lecturers were married, represented by 100% which is a sign of maturity and responsibility while majority (92.3%) of the students were single, 5.3% were married and 2.4% of the students stated other forms of marital status. This implies that most of the students were single therefore would be able to concentrate on their studies with little or no distractions that accompanies marital responsibilities.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' personal characteristics

Age	Lecturers Frequency	Percent (%)	Students Frequency	Percent (%)
Below 20	-	0.0	21	11.2
20 – 29	1	4.3	148	88.2
30 – 39	6	26.0	1	0.6
40 – 49	10	43.7		
50 – 59	6	26.0		
60 and above	0	0.0		
Total	23	100.0	170	100.0
Sex				
Male	8	34.8	41	24.1
Female	15	65.2	129	75.9
Total	23	100.0	170	100.0
Marital status				
Single	0	0.0	157	92.3
Married	23	100.0	9	5.3
Others	0	0.0	4	2.4
Total	23	100.0	170	100.0

Available manpower, sufficiency, and cost of running the course

Results in Table 2 show that 21.8% of lecturers revealed that the available manpower in their institution was adequate, 39.1% revealed that the available manpower was moderate while the remaining 39.1% revealed that the available manpower was inadequate. Also, 61.2% of students revealed that the available manpower of their schools was moderate, 34.1% stated it was adequate and 4.7% stated it was inadequate. Some (39.1%) lecturers indicated that the available manpower was just sufficient while less than half of the students (42.9%) stated that the available manpower of their Department was very sufficient. Furthermore, 47.8% of lecturers viewed the cost of running home economics course as moderately expensive and about half of the students (51.4%) ascertained that the cost was very expensive. Only 26.1% of lecturers viewed the cost as average while 14.1% students viewed it as average. Just 17.4% of lecturers viewed it as very expensive and 8.7% of them viewed it as low. The finding implies that the cost of running Home Economics was expensive as expressed by majority of students and many lecturers.

Table 2
Distribution of respondents according to available manpower, sufficiency, and perceived cost of running the course.

Variables	Lecturer		Students	
	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	Frequency (f)	Percent (f)
Available manpower				
Adequate	5	21.8	58	34.1
Moderate	9	39.1	104	61.2
(Average)				
Inadequate	9	39.1	8	4.7
Total	23	100	170	100
Sufficiency				
Very sufficient	3	21.8	73	42.9
Just sufficient	9	39.1	58	34.9
Insufficient	9	39.1	39	23
Total	23	100.0	170	100.0
Perceived cost				
Very expensive	4	17.4	84	51.4
Moderately expensive	11	47.8	62	36.2
Average	6	26.1	24	14.1
Low	2	8.7	0	0
Total	23	100.0	170	100.0

Prospects of Home Economics by lecturers and students

Results in Tables 3 and 4 indicate that the mean score of the perceived prospects by lecturers and students. In Table 3, results show that students perceived the course as a means of “self-reliance” with mean score = 4.9), which was the highest. “Home Economics as a professional discipline and as a practical oriented course” had the second best mean score of 4.7. “Employer of graduate from other disciplines, national growth and development, production of skilled and qualified personnel in the field” ranked fourth with a mean of 4.6. “Knowledge about various hand crafts” (mean = 4.5) ranked 7th and “employment opportunity” (mean = 4.3) ranked 8th. This implied that, respondents to a greater extent had positive perception towards the prospects of Home Economics programme. It was perceived that home economics graduate should not face unemployment challenges when compared to

other disciplines. This is in tandem with the finding of Soyebó and Olumakaiye (2015) that University undergraduates have discovered skill acquisition in addition to formal education as a solution to unemployment or under-employment.

In Table 4, results show that the students perceived self-reliance (mean= 4.8) as the most important prospect and it ranked 1st ; Home Economics is a professional discipline (mean = 4.7), and a practical oriented course (mean = 4.7) ranked 2nd, provision of employment opportunities for graduates from other disciplines (mean = 4.6), production of skilled and qualified personnel (mean = 4.6), knowledge about different handcrafts (mean = 4.6) and employment opportunities in various sectors of the economy (mean = 4.6) ranked 4th as the prospect of home economics while national growth and development has the lowest mean of 3.9 and it ranked 8th. The findings here imply that home economics is a professional course that made graduates to be self-reliant and create employment to aid national development.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents (lecturers) by prospects of Home Economics programme

Prospects	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean	Rank
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Employment opportunities	9	39.1	12	52.2	1	4.3	1	4.3	0	0.0	4.3	8 th
Knowledge about different handcrafts	15	65.2	7	30.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.3	4.5	7 th
Employer of other graduates	13	56.5	10	43.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.6	4 th
Production of skilled and qualified personnel	13	56.5	10	43.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.6	4 th
National growth and development	14	60.9	9	39.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.6	4 th
Home economics is a professional discipline	16	69.6	7	30.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.7	2 nd
Home economics is practical oriented course	17	73.9	6	26.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.7	2 nd
Self-reliance	20	87.0	3	13.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.9	1 st

Note: SA = strongly Agreed; A = Agreed; U = Undecided; D = Disagreed; SD = Strongly disagreed

Table 4: Distribution of respondents (students) by prospects n=170

Prospects	SA F	%	A F	%	U F	%	D F	%	SD F	%	Mean	Rank
National growth and development	102	60.0	50	29.4	15	8.8	2	1.2	1	0.6	3.9	8 th
Employment opportunities	111	65.1	41	24.1	7	4.1	8	4.7	3	1.8	4.5	4 th
Employer of other graduates	112	65.8	42	24.7	9	5.3	6	3.5	1	0.6	4.5	4 th
Knowledge about various handcrafts	110	64.7	49	28.8	4	2.4	4	2.4	3	1.8	4.5	4 th
Provision of skilled and qualified personnel+	98	57.6	56	32.9	13	7.6	2	1.2	1	0.6	4.5	4 th
Home economics is a professional discipline	120	70.6	44	25.9	4	2.4	2	1.2	0	0.0	4.7	2 nd
Home economics is practical oriented course	125	73.5	42	24.7	1	0.6	1	0.6	1	0.6	4.7	2 nd
Self reliance	140	82.4	30	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.8	1 st

Perceived Challenges of Home Economics

Results in Tables 5 show that the respondents were aware of the challenges which include “Inadequate manpower”(mean = 3.9), “Inadequate teaching and practical facilities” (mean = 3.7), “Poor state of equipment” (mean = 3.2), “High cost of running the course” (mean = 3.1), “Negative perception and attitudes toward the course” (mean = 3.1), “Teachers’ knowledge about the course” (mean = 3.7), “Background of the course considered as a female domain” (mean = 4.2), “Poor orientation” (mean = 3.9) and “Non-supportive attitude of parents towards the course” (mean = 3.9). This implies that to a greater extent, respondents perceived background of the course as the major challenge while high cost of running the course and negative perception and attitudes toward the course were perceived as the least challenges. In addition, students perceived negative attitudes and perception, and high cost of running the course as the main challenges while poor state of equipment was perceived as the least challenge (Table 6). Azonuche (2020) identified various factors that hinder students’ skills acquisition in Home Economic education including lack of enough practical demonstrations, more emphasis on teaching theory than practical, poorly equipped laboratory, no money for the practical, individualized practical class and lack of interest from students, among others. Furthermore, Ejiofor and Nwakile (2016) found that lack of fund and personnel for practical, less emphasis on the practical and poor attitude of students towards the course are factors affecting practical skill acquisition in vocational courses in a tertiary institution. Another issue of significant importance is the gender disparity among students of home economics having wrong perception of the course as a female dominated course and seen as a preparatory course for becoming good housewives (Nwabuisi & Oladokun, 2022).

Table 5: Distribution of respondents (lecturers) by perceived challenges n=170

Problems	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
High cost of running the course	3	13.0	9	39.1	1	4.3	9	39.1	1	4.3	3.1
Negative perception and attitudes toward the course	8	34.8	12	52.2	3	13.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.1
Poor state of equipment	1	4.3	13	56.5	0	0.0	9	39.1	0	0.0	3.2
Inadequate teaching facilities	2	8.7	14	60.9	2	8.7	5	21.7	0	0.0	3.7
Inadequate practical facilities	2	8.7	14	60.9	2	8.7	5	21.7	0	0.0	3.7
Teachers knowledge	6	26.1	11	47.8	0	0.0	5	21.7	1	4.3	3.7
Inadequate manpower	4	17.4	17	73.9	0	0.0	1	4.3	1	4.3	3.9
Poor orientation	5	21.7	14	60.9	2	8.7	2	8.7	0	0.0	3.9
Non supportive attitude of parents	4	17.4	15	65.2	2	8.7	2	8.7	0	0.0	3.9
Background of the course	8	34.8	13	56.5	1	4.3	1	4.3	0	0.0	4.2

Table 6: Distribution of respondents (students) by perceived challenges. n=170

Problems	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Poor state of equipment	29	17.1	67	39.4	14	8.1	41	24.1	4	2.4	3.2
Inadequate teaching facilities	37	21.8	83	48.8	12	7.1	23	13.5	15	8.8	3.6
Inadequate practical facilities	37	21.8	83	48.8	12	7.1	23	13.5	15	8.8	3.6
Non supportive attitude of parent	57	33.5	50	29.4	20	11.8	35	20.6	8	4.7	3.7
Teacher's knowledge	47	27.6	54	31.8	30	17.7	35	20.6	41	2.4	3.8
Background of the course	47	27.6	54	31.8	30	17.7	35	20.6	41	2.4	3.8
Poor orientation	61	35.9	60	35.3	21	12.3	15	8.8	13	7.6	3.8
Inadequate manpower	60	35.3	68	40.0	16	9.4	19	11.2	7	4.1	3.9
High cost of running the course	74	43.5	61	35.9	15	8.8	16	9.4	4	2.4	4.1
Negative attitude and perception	78	45.9	59	34.7	28	16.4	1	0.6	4	2.4	4.2

Test of Hypotheses

Table 7: Result of Chi-square analysis

Variables	Chi-square value (X)	Df	Contingency value (C)
Sex	26.962	27	0.46
Marital status	62.712	81	0.934
Educational level	1.359E2	108	0.036

Dependent Variable: Perceived Problems of Home Economics

Level of Significance: $P \leq 0.05$

Chi-square: 0.036 (or 3.6%)

Table 8: Correlation result showing relationship between age and respondents' perceived problems of home economics.

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	Coefficient of determination (r^2)
Age	- 0.143	0.020

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the challenges of Home Economics Profession.

The results in Tables 7 and 8 show that sex, ($X = 26.962$, $C = 0.466$), marital status ($X = 62.712$, $C = 0.934$) and age ($r = -0.143$, $r^2 = 0.020$) of respondents did not relate to the challenges of Home Economics profession in any way. However, the educational level of respondents ($X = 1.359E2$, $C = 0.036$) is significantly related to the challenges of home economics. This means that as students spend more years (from one level to another) in school, they are more aware of various challenges of the profession.

Table 9: t – Test Analysis

	Means	Std. Deviation	Paired Difference		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Std. Error Means		Lower	Upper
Pair 1 total economic prospects of lecturers and students	-2.26087	6.26837	1.30705		-4.97157	.44978
Pair 2 total economic prospects of lecturers and students	-.13043	10.11886	2.10993		-4.50616	4.24529

Paired Samples Test

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 economic prospect total-lecturers and students	-1.730	22	0.98
Pair 2 economic prospect total-lecturers and students	-.062	22	.951

Dependent variable: Challenges of Home Economics
Prospects of Home Economics

Level of significance: $P = 0.05$

t- test: 0.98 and 0.951

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the perception of students and lecturers on the prospects and challenges of Home Economics.

Data from the Table 9 showed that there is no significant difference in the means of the two pairs of variable; the perceived prospects of the students and lecturers ($t=-1.730$) in Home Economics and the perceived challenges of the students and lecturers ($t=-0.062$) in Home Economics. This means that there was no significant difference between perception of students and lectures about the prospects and challenges of Home Economics. In the same way, they are both aware of the prospects as well as the challenges of the profession in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it was observed that both lecturers and students of Home Economics were aware of the challenges as well as prospects of Home Economics and viewed it almost the same way. Moreover, the academic level of respondents (students) had significant influence on their knowledge about the challenges and prospects of home economics. This means that as they move up the ladder, their knowledge and awareness of challenges and prospects of home economics increase thereby making a significant contribution to it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings, it is recommended that the appropriate authorities and policy makers should assist in providing adequate and appropriate teaching and practical facilities for Home Economics departments. Also there is need to recruit more manpower so as to combat the challenges of inadequate manpower. Students of home economics should be encouraged to provide unavailable materials and equipment when and where necessary.

Also the challenges of negative perception and attitudes and poor orientation of students should be combated through proper orientation and awareness programmes such as seminars, workshop, career talk and so on that will enlighten people about what the course entails and its benefits if embraced by them.

In addition the various prospects such as self-reliance after school, employment opportunities in various sectors of the economy, knowledge about various handicrafts and others should be made known to the general public in a way to enlighten and improve on the existing knowledge of people in the field of home economics thereby repositioning the profession for a better future.

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