

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOME ECONOMICS IN THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTOR'S DIDACTIC SKILLS

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Abstract

Home economics is an essential subject in Nigeria's educational system, intending to enable students to develop a positive relationship with skills and a healthy living pattern by acquiring various do-it-yourself skills. An increasing body of evidence lends credence to the claim that the field has been struggling with low enrollment rates over the years. Thus, the present study examined the instructor's didactic skills as a factor influencing the student's attitude toward home economics education. Ninety-six undergraduates enrolled in the home economics department from two higher education institutions in the Enugu State of Nigeria participated in the study. A simple percentage score indicates that most students (65.5%) indicated a positive attitude towards home economics education, while less (34.5%) showed negative attitudes. Furthermore, a simple regression analysis was performed to test the study hypothesis. The result revealed that the instructor's didactic skills positively predicted students' attitudes toward home economics education. The result has implications for the development of home economics in the colleges of education in Nigeria.

Keywords: *instructors, didactic skills, attitudes, home economics, students*

INTRODUCTION

Home economics is frequently covered in the educational curricula of many societies because, historically, the family and home have occupied a more significant portion of a person's life. An individual's potential in relation to in-home care is enhanced by having a basic understanding of home economics. As a result, the subject has a prominent place in the curriculum because it is crucial for teaching young students how to take care of themselves (Pendergast et al., 2011). Home economics primarily focuses on empowering individuals and communities to improve their economic well-being and quality of life through developing marketable skills. (Meludu, 2020). Perhaps the goal of the subject is to support students' learning and help them expand their skills and resources. The goal of home economics education is to encourage students to develop a positive relationship with food and lead a healthy lifestyle (Azonuche, 2020; Choi, 2020; Fordyce Sandra, 2009; Hjalmskog, 2013; McCloat et al., 2017; Oogarah-Pratap et al., 2004; Øvrebø, 2013; Piscopo, 2016; Renwick & Powell, 2019; Ronto et al., 2016; Slater & Hinds, 2014). It allows the learners to acquire transferable skills, knowledge, and adaptive abilities to address everyday food and health issues. Accordingly, Pendergast et al. (2011) noted that home economics equips students with skills and the practical application of skills. Thus, it provides a comprehensive, applied, and suitable experiential learning environment for studying food education (McCloat & Caraher, 2020).

There is widespread consensus that home economics is an indispensable component of employability skills (Oladokun, 2021). Other than technical knowledge, employability skills are an essential skill to have in order to compete for employment and maintain job roles (Ismail & Mohammed, 2015). Home economics education, as a result, has received less student interest and has remained a secondary discipline in terms of societal recognition in the Nigerian context. There are intimations that students' proficiency in applying their home economics knowledge falls short of the goal. Additionally, this appears to result from inadequate parental support for the subject being studied in school (Ekaete, 2015). The classroom learning environment ((Uwameiye, 2015), teacher factors (Badmus, 2007), and gender issues (Nnubia, 2013) have been found to influence attitudes toward home economics. Nonetheless, the teacher's expertise is a critical variable that could determine attitudes toward home economics.

Attitudes describe an individual's assessments and emotional feelings towards any aspect of their environment. Attitudes are developed from human and societal needs and express personal intellectual processes. Attitudes toward home economics entail positive or negative evaluation of skills relative to homecare and the overall disposition to assume systematic skills necessary for human progression and family development. Attitudes encompass three aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive component indicates students' knowledge about home economics which determines affection and response towards the discipline. Attitudes have been linked to positive learning (Cahill et al., 2018) and predict a person's behavior, mainly when the attitude object is pertinent (Fabrigar et al., 2006). Thus, students are more likely to have a favorable attitude towards home economics education when comprehensive. Indeed, instructors are essential actors that assume the crucial position of determining the effectiveness of the learning process (Shelly et al., 2020). The present study is aimed to examine teachers' pedagogical competency as a contributory factor in students' attitudes toward home economics.

A didactic approach to education uses scientific methods in the classroom. Teachers adopt this strategy after extensive research to pique their students' interest and promote a more fruitful learning environment and knowledge transfer in any subject area. It refers to the instructor's capability relative to practical mastery and its application in teaching performance (Nopriyani et al., 2019). Pedagogical proficiency generally involves knowledge and skills (Ningtiyas & Jailani, 2018), knowledge of learning theory, classroom management, and student motivation (Auerbach & Andrews, 2018), which contributes hugely to achieving quality student learning outcomes (Fadil & Aryani, 2021). Competent teachers can effectively manage to learn, enhance students' passion, and improve learning quality (Amanah et al., 2020). Proficiency in didactic skills, however, is a critical competency that has not received prominent attention in home economics. In the clothing and textile setting, instructors impart practical skills to the learners. Consequently, the current developments in the education system have proposed the need for teacher training programs to improve the practical skills of home economics instructors. Thus, it is believed that through effective didactics, instructors can improve their individual professional abilities. Hence, it is logical to assume that didactic skills' would contribute to the development of positive attitudes in home economics.

Hypothesis: *Didactic skills predicts student's attitudes toward home economics education*

Method

A cross-sectional research design was implemented in the study. Participants in this study comprised 96 undergraduates from two colleges of education in River State, Nigeria. Students enrolled in the home economics department were randomly selected from each institution. Students in different levels of academic years comprising males and females were considered the target population because they are more likely to comprehend the concept of home economics. The participant consists of 38 males and 58 females. Their mean age was 43.37 (SD = 4.54), ranging from 19 to 30 years.

Measures

Attitude towards home economics education was measured with a scale designed to assess students' positive or negative evaluations of home economics. The scale consists of 10 items that assess attitudes and feelings about home economics

with demographic data. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-form scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always). A higher score on this scale specifies a favorable attitude. The validity of the scale was ascertained following a pilot study .76 Cronbach's alpha was obtained.

The respondents rated their perceived teacher's didactic skills with a 10-item Linkert form scale scored in 5-point ratings ranging from 1 (not likable at all) to 5 (very likable). The instrument was validated after a pilot study, and the Cronbach alpha .78 reliability coefficient was recorded in the survey. A higher score shows a high didactic skill.

Procedure

With authorization from the management of the institutions, students from all levels of the study year in the department of home economics were approached between January and February 2023. One hundred and sixteen students were asked to participate in a survey to understand their attitudes about their course of study. In all, 112 students out of the 116 contacted consented to participate in the survey. Thus, the research instruments were administered to the students. One hundred and twelve (112) copies of the questionnaire administered were completed and retrieved immediately. However, only the satisfactorily filled questionnaires (i.e., 96) were subjected to statistical analysis. The remaining 16 copies were rejected due to improper completion or unreturned.

Result

Firstly, the percentage score of the attitudes toward home economics was ascertained. Table 1 below shows that most respondents (65.5%) expressed a positive attitude toward home economics, while (34.5%) indicated a negative attitude towards home economics. This outcome presupposes that a large number of the students have a positive attitude toward home economics.

Table 1: Table showing the percentage score of attitudes towards home economics.

	Frequency	Percent
Positive attitude	72	65.5
Negative attitude	24	34.5
Total	96	100

The instructor’s didactic skills were expected to positively predict attitude towards home economics. To test the hypothesis that instructors’ didactic skills will predict students’ attitudes towards home economics education. A simple regression analysis was conducted on the data. The investigation revealed that the instructor’s didactic skills statistically significantly influenced the participant's attitude towards home economics, F (1, 94), 279.71, P<.05. With R² of .368, as shown in Table 2 below. The result indicated that instructors’ didactic skills accounted for 36.8% of the variation in students' attitudes toward home economics. Thus, the expectation that the instructor’s didactic skills will significantly predict students' attitudes toward home economics was affirmed.

Table 2: showing the simple regression results.

Model	B	SEB	β	R ²	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.431	.084			5.119	.000
IDS	.784	.051	.819	.668	15.241	.000

Note. IDS = Instructor’s Didactic Skills; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the Coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R² = Coefficient of determination. *P<.000.

Discussion

The present study aimed to determine the attitude of secondary school students towards home economics based on the instructor’s didactic skills. The percentage score outcome revealed that most respondents (65.5%) expressed a positive attitude toward home economics education. This finding indicates that home economics is held in very high esteem. It symbolizes the significance of home economics education to the students and their understanding of the field. This claim summarizes the fundamentals of attitude, including mental processes and emotional and behavioral responses. The knowledge of home economics is reflected in the cognitive part in particular. One part, the affective, describes the internal experience of liking or disliking something, while the other, the behavioral, represents the accompanying response. Students' attitudes toward home economics education are primarily determined by their level of acceptability of the instructor’s didactic skills. Perhaps this result can be explained by the fact that home economics is widely known to be skill oriented. They have the necessary knowledge and can impart a homecare attitude to their students.

Furthermore, the instructor’s didactic skills were expected to predict students' attitudes toward home economics education significantly. The simple regression analysis established a statistically significant influence of teachers' pedagogical proficiency on the respondent's attitude toward home economics education. The result revealed that the instructor’s didactic skills accounted for 63.8% of the variation in the respondent's attitude towards home economics education. Therefore, the result supported the expectation of the study. The finding is aligned with a previous study (Fauth et al.,

2019), which found that teacher competence (pedagogical content knowledge and teaching enthusiasm) was positively related to students' interests. In addition, teachers' pedagogic competence has been implicated in student motivation (Saggaf et al., 2018). More so, the study by Florence (2019) found that teachers' pedagogical competence significantly influenced students' attitudes to basic science. This study suggests more elaborate pedagogical practices in higher education institutions.

Practical implication

The present study revealed that teachers' educational and experiential backgrounds influenced the quality of students' attitudes relating to home economics. The critical importance of understanding this relationship underscores practical competence as the core reason for better student performance in home economics. This assertion is based on the relationship between attitude and enhanced learning outcomes. In particular, the present result can provide valuable data for the development and sustainability of the discipline of home economics.

Conclusion

This study focuses on assessing attitudes towards home economics education in the colleges of education in Nigeria. The study revealed a more positive attitude regarding home economics education. In addition, a positive association was established between the instructor's didactic skills and attitude toward home economics education. Thus, the study concludes that an instructor's didactic proficiency is a vital determinant of a student's attitude toward home economics education in the colleges of education. Despite this knowledge, the study's sample size might affect the generalization of the result, thus, reflecting the limitation of the study. However, the study contributes to the literature by revealing instructors' didactic skills as essential in home economics. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors in home economics education be exposed to regular training to expand their content knowledge, instruction method, use of relevant IT tools, and improvisation approach.

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