

The Silent Force in Social Sciences: How Home Economics Shapes Families and Societies

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Abstract: Home Economics, as a subject that is always busy with being mundane as a domestic discipline, is a silent but revolutionary force in the social sciences, which is tough on families and societies. The present paper illustrates the interdisciplinary value of Home Economics, which has been regarded as crucial where it intersects with nutrition, sustainable development, gender equity, family resource management, and consumer sciences. Culturally seen as a skills-oriented course in managing the household, the discipline has retrogressed into a live and active academic field, which encounters extremely relevant issues that face the whole world, including, but not limited to, food security, mental wellbeing, and economic sustainability. Home Economics offers people a set of life skills to advance their welfare, both personal and societal, as it incorporates the principles of psychology, sociology, and public policy. Its contributions towards financial literacy, healthy lifestyles, and environmental sustainability serve to highlight the overarching impacts on society, especially the marginalized communities. Moreover, the field disrupts the conventionality of gender by supporting fair sharing of household chores and empowerment of women in socio-economic areas. This paper provides insights into the role of Home Economics education in poverty alleviation and intergenerational knowledge waves, as well as crisis-based adaptive coping responses through case study analysis and theoretical discussion. Against the backdrop of modern urbanization and the shift to technically advanced households, the paper pleads the case of reinvigorating Home Economics in social science curricula as having the potential to raise sovereign communities and knowledgeable citizens. This piece shifts its own discourse on home economics, in that it is no longer about home but rather about empowerment and describes home economics as an important, though shunned, generator of sustainable growth and community integration. This data promotes policy combination and cross-functional involvement so that it can enhance its power of transformation in the modern field of education and the development of society.

Keywords: Home Economics, Social Sciences, Sustainable Development, Gender Equity, Life Skills Education.

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1. Introduction

Home Economics, a subject much ridiculed as a domestic skills subject, is a broad and multi-professional discipline that plays an essential role in defining individuals, families, and societies. Inspired by the concepts of nutrition, management of resources, and human development, Home Economics breaks the conventional borders to cover the present-day issues of sustainability, gender equality, and economic versatility [1]. Historically, the field was developed in the late 19th and early 20th century as a reaction against industrialization to transform living conditions with the help of a scientifically organized household [2]. It has, however, broadened its scope to include knowledge gained in the field of psychology,

sociology, education, and even public policy to promote overall well-being. Even though it has a transformative power, Home Economics lacks academic and policy recognition and is usually suppressed by other, more recognizable social sciences. This paper is an attempt to reinstate its value by studying the role of Home Economics in the family lives, society, and sustainability.

Home Economics has a residual marginalization that can be justified by the fact that people still tend to stereotype this academic discipline as a feminine domestic sphere, but not as an academic challenge [3]. It has been historically walled off by critics as a soft discipline, ignoring that it has helped the health of the masses, financial literacy, and closing the wealth gap, as well as the sustainability of the environment [4]. Nevertheless, empirical study findings indicate that the Home Economics educational curriculum is designed to provide individuals with the following essential life skills: budgeting, meal planning, and conflict resolution skills, among others, which boost individual and communal resilience [5]. These competencies come at a time when most aspects of the economy are changing, as well as climate change and changing families. In defining Home Economics as a vital constituent in social science, the paper is a disruption of old ways of thinking and a call to the adoption in contemporary education and policy making.

The misunderstanding of Home Economics as a domestic skills subject means that many people miss the interdisciplinary and dynamic nature of Home Economics and the key role that it plays in informing people, families, and societies. Based on guidelines of nutrition, resource utilization, and human growth and development, Home Economics takes a transnational strategy that both breaks the conventional paradigm of barricades, and derives to cope with modern issues like sustainable living, disparity in gender relations, and economic stability [1]. Originally, the field appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an outreach to industrialization when it sought to palliate the living conditions by relying on science in the field of household management [2]. Nevertheless, its area has over the years grown to include issues like psychology, sociology, education, as well as public policy to create a well-rounded well-being. Though with its transformative potential, Home Economics is still an under-recognised academic and policy discourse, dominated by other more recognised social sciences. This paper proposes to reclaim its relevance through an exploration of the role of Home Economics in family and society, structures, and sustainable development.

It is possible to understand the subordination of Home Economics also with references to the uninterrupted stereotypes of reduction of Home Economics to the female household labor,

rather than to the academic subject [3]. This is because critics have always labeled it a weak discipline that does not warrant its utility to society in the light of the three features of usefulness, which they refer to, namely the public wellbeing, monetary consciousness, and ecological sustainability [4]. However, the empirical research is proving that Home Economics education as a part of the gradual enlightenment of the citizens with the needed skills in life provides the adequate circumstances under which people are becoming able to cope with the non-observed rivers flowing down the mountains (have to manage the finances, turn the best out of coming to new solutions to the conflicts, to organize the meals etc.) thereby remaining high in the widest sense which makes them more apt to riding the storms on both individual and social levels [5]. The skills will prove extremely convenient in the event of economic uncertainty, climate change, and family systems alterations under the present environment. The above paper has transformed the thought that Home Economics is a subset of social science because the paper has been nourished with the old thoughts of Home Economics; this paper, therefore, presents a case that demonstrates that Home Economics should be a component of the contemporary education policy and systems.

This paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach, synthesizing historical, sociological, and educational perspectives to demonstrate Home Economics' enduring relevance. Through literature review and case studies, it examines how the discipline:

Enhances individual and family well-being,

Promotes sustainable consumption and environmental stewardship,

Challenges gender stereotypes and fosters equitable societies, and

Contributes to broader social science discourse.

By illuminating these dimensions, the study calls for renewed academic and policy engagement with Home Economics, ensuring its rightful place as a cornerstone of social science research and education.

2. Literature Review

Home Economics has greatly changed since it was initiated at the end of the 19th century. Originally formed as a science oriented towards the efficiency of the domestic sphere, it has become rather a multidisciplinary stream that crosses with nutrition, education, psychology, economics, and sustainability studies [13]. Stage and Vincenti (1997) in early works explained that Home Economics began as a reaction to industrialization, where knowledge to manage households using scientific principles was to be pursued [14]. Nevertheless, the modern studies of Pendergast and McGregor (2017) note that the domain has been broadening beyond traditional focus areas, generally focusing on vital social causes like food

security, gender equity, and environmental sustainability [15]. Such transition is an indication of the trend in overall social need of society as Home Economics is a branch that is considered essential but underemphasized in terms of when it comes to social science research. Nevertheless, such an academically and practically relevant subject as Home Economics remains peripheral in the learning programs. The author claims that these losses have been driven by gender stereotypes that have repeatedly linked the discipline to women and their work inside the home, not in academia (Pike 2019) [16]. On the same note, Lichtenstein and Ludwig (2010) state that depreciation of Home Economics is the result of wider disdain of the wider society that favours STEM subjects instead due to a perceived economic sustainability [17]. This trend has also resulted in decreased budgetary provisions as well as enrolments in Home Economics programs, especially in the Western education systems [18]. Yet the current research contradicts this mindset, showing that Home Economics prepares students with the skills necessary to live a healthy and productive life, which is vital to the individual and the society [19]. An increasing catalogue of studies finds support in the application of Home Economics to improve family dynamics and strengthen personalities. According to Fox and Peterson (2018), students with Home Economics education had greater skills in financial planning and management; they also had healthier eating habits and were better at relationships than their peers [20]. The results are consistent with those of Worsley (2002) in his study that showed that nutrition education programs in Home Economics curricula enhance the improvement in dietary habits more among adolescents than other education levels [21]. Moreover, Home Economics can help with the transfer of knowledge between generations so that families can embrace more sustainable lifestyles (consumption) and adaptive coping skills in the face of economic difficulty [22]. The discipline is also involved in emotional well-being and mental health. Other studies, conducted by Smith (2020), have pointed out the beneficial effect of Home Economics programs that involve skills practice such as stress management and communication, which leads to a decreased level of anxiety and increased family cohesion [23]. It will be especially applicable in modern societies where psychosocial issues, such as increased incidences of mental health diseases and family splits, will require functional responses [24]. Home Economics offers a novel avenue to countering such issues since it combines elements of theory and practice through dealing with specific psychological issues related to the academic field [25]. It means that one of the most relevant impacts of Home Economics is its compliance with global sustainability ambitions. McGregor (2010) asserts that the discipline facilitates sustainable consumerism that fosters environmental awareness in individuals,

focusing on environmental conservation through the reduction of waste and the conservation of resources. This view can be backed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) introduced by the United Nations, where the production and consumption in the education system are put as one of the crucial values that should be addressed by the education systems. The example of case studies in the developing countries has shown how the Home Economics programs have enabled the communities to compete with the food crisis using urban gardens and preservation measures. In addition, climate change mitigation is a point of intersection between Home Economics and climate change mitigation. Recent studies conducted by Rumble (2019) proved that sustainable textile and clothing modules in Home Economics education reduce the consumption of fast fashion, which is one of the causes of environmental decay. Likewise, lessons in energy conservation and recycling in Home Economics lessons coincide with larger-scale campaigns of environmental education and enforce the place of the discipline in building up eco-literacy. Such results imply the idea that Home Economics is not only a domestic science but a much-needed means of attaining ecological sustainability. Home Economics has in the past been strongly associated with a gendered assumption, sometimes serving to perpetuate the traditional work division. Nevertheless, modern researchers such as Pendergast (2013) suggest that it is possible to undermine these norms with the help of gender-inclusive units of instruction in the discipline. As an example, home economics education in contemporary times is taking on more and more of an imputation in common household jobs, financial autonomy, and professional life predispositions in both sexes. This transition indicates much larger trends in society to achieve gender equity, thus Home Economics can be seen as a social change agent. This view is backed by empirical works. Investigations in the Scandinavian countries where male participation in domestic chores and parenting is increasing, as Home Economics is compulsory for men and women of all ages. These results indicate that Home Economics may become central to breaking up the patriarchal systems and creating more just cultures. Nevertheless, this will be only possible with systemic changes, such as training of teachers, policy backing, and education campaigns aimed at dispelling existing stereotypes. Home Economics has systemic challenges to revitalization, even though it has the potential. Retired teachers, dwindling student population, poor funding, and ageing curriculum are some of the persistent problems. Marginson et al. (2013) explain this with the fact that STEM teaching is given global priority in most cases, relegating other perceived less economically friendly disciplines. To counter this, scientists put forward the idea to modernize the curriculum in terms of including digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and global citizenship into Home

Economics programs. There is also a need to have greater integration of policy to raise the stature of the discipline. The United Nations' focus on the idea of lifelong learning and sustainable education provides a chance to reorient Home Economics to one of the major elements of social progress. A possible direction of further research can be experiments on new kinds of educational methods, e.g., virtual reality simulations in the topic of financial literacy or sustainability projects in which students can take part in community improvement.

3. Proposed Work

This study aims to:

1. **Examine the evolving role of Home Economics** in addressing contemporary social challenges, including sustainability, gender equity, and family well-being.
2. **Evaluate the impact of Home Economics education** on life skills development (e.g., financial literacy, nutrition, conflict resolution) across diverse socioeconomic groups.
3. **Identify systemic barriers** (e.g., curriculum marginalization, gender stereotypes) hindering the revitalization of Home Economics in modern education systems.
4. **Propose policy and pedagogical reforms** to integrate Home Economics into interdisciplinary social science frameworks and sustainable development agendas.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A **mixed-methods approach** will be employed, combining:

- **Quantitative Surveys:** Structured questionnaires distributed to educators, students, and policymakers to assess perceptions and outcomes of Home Economics programs.
- **Qualitative Interviews:** In-depth interviews with Home Economics professionals, curriculum designers, and NGO representatives to explore challenges and innovations.
- **Case Studies:** Analysis of successful Home Economics initiatives in countries with mandatory programs (e.g., Sweden, Japan) to derive best practices.

4.2 Data Collection

- **Sample:** Target participants include secondary school students (n=500), teachers (n=50), and policymakers (n=20) across urban and rural regions.
- **Tools:**
 - Standardized questionnaires (5-point Likert scales) on skill acquisition and societal perceptions.
 - Interview guides focusing on curriculum gaps and gender dynamics.

- Policy documents and UNESCO/UN reports on Home Economics' alignment with SDGs.

4.3 Data Analysis

- **Statistical Analysis:** SPSS will be used to analyze survey data (descriptive statistics, ANOVA for group comparisons).
- **Thematic Analysis:** NVivo will code interview transcripts for recurring themes (e.g., "stereotypes," "sustainability integration").
- **Comparative Analysis:** Cross-case synthesis of international programs to identify scalable models.

4.4 Expected Contributions

1. Theoretical:

- Reframe Home Economics as a critical social science discipline through empirical evidence.
- Bridge gaps between Home Economics and fields like environmental studies, gender studies, and behavioral economics.

2. Practical:

- Provide actionable recommendations for curriculum modernization (e.g., digital literacy modules, community projects).
- Advocate for policy changes to align Home Economics with national education goals and SDGs (e.g., Zero Hunger, Gender Equality).

3. Social Impact:

- Empower marginalized communities through skill-based interventions (e.g., budgeting workshops for low-income families).
- Challenge gender stereotypes by highlighting male engagement in Home Economics programs.

5. Conclusion

Home Economics is in a pivotal position to take on, with enormous potential to solve some of the most pressing global problems, and is burdened with systemic neglect and outdated perceptions. I have shown in this paper that Home Economics is much more than a remnant of the homemaker school in the 1900s; it is a vibrant, interdisciplinary major that is connected to issues of sustainability, gender equity, public health, and economic resilience. Home Economics also creates a more wholesome society by giving people the ability to be financially literate, to consume sustainably, and as a potential life coach, this kind of knowledge is essential in evolving a society into a prosperous one.

Its findings reveal the strong necessity of reforming the state of Home Economics within education systems all over the world. As much as it is of great value, the discipline has remained marginalized on a gendered basis with curriculum reduction and an erroneous focus on STEM subjects. Nevertheless, as indicated in this study, Home Economics acts as a supplement to STEM, as it helps to define the human aspects of technological and economic development. It is unavoidable in the modern world of climate change crisis, economic crises, and turnover in family relationships due to its focus on the concepts of critical thinking, resource management, and social responsibility.

Moving forward, policymakers, educators, and researchers must collaborate to:

1. **Modernize Curricula:** Integrate digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sustainability into Home Economics programs to enhance relevance.
2. **Promote Inclusivity:** Challenge gender biases by encouraging equal participation of all students and highlighting career pathways in food science, social work, and environmental policy.
3. **Strengthen Policy Support:** Align Home Economics with national education frameworks and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to secure funding and institutional backing.
4. **Expand Research:** Investigate the long-term societal impacts of Home Economics education, particularly in low-income and marginalized communities.

In reclaiming Home Economics as a vital social science, we invest in a future where individuals are not only academically proficient but also equipped to navigate the complexities of modern life. The discipline's holistic approach—bridging theory and practice, individual and community, tradition and innovation—positions it as a silent yet transformative force for sustainable development. By embracing this vision, we can ensure that Home Economics finally receives the recognition and resources it deserves, empowering generations to build resilient, equitable, and thriving societies.

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