

## **HARNESSING HOME ECONOMICS ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS BY NIGERIAN FAMILIES IN AN ERA OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES.**

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### **Abstract**

As Nigeria struggles with economic challenges, the need for Nigerian families to acquire entrepreneurial skills is crucial in reducing inflation and unemployment, and their attendant effects. Home Economics entrepreneurial skills serve as viable assets to Nigerian families in an era of economic uncertainties. The inflation rate increased from 26.72% in September 2023 to 33.4% in July 2024. The unemployment rate also rose from 4.19% in the second quarter of 2023 to 5.0% in the third Quarter of the same year. The paper highlights skills in clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, and home management as Home Economics entrepreneurial skills. This paper recommends that it is essential to promote education and training in Home Economics. This can be achieved by integrating Home Economics entrepreneurship into formal and informal education systems, including vocational training programs that equip individuals and families with the necessary skills to start and sustain businesses. The paper concluded that these skills offer a pathway to financial stability, self-reliance, and employment, particularly for women and youth in an era of economic uncertainties.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial skills, Unemployment, Income Inequality, self-reliance, Economic challenges.

### **Introduction**

A typical Nigerian family is patriarchal with the husband/father as the head of the household and decision-maker" (Offiong, Eyo, and Offiong, 2021), conversely, in some families, the wife/mother plays a significant role by often managing the household and caring for children, as well as contributing to the family income. When women earn an independent income, they take up some family financial responsibility and are less dependent on their partners or families for financial support (Zunaidi and Maghfiroh, 2021). Despite this combined effort,

Nigerian families find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. It is therefore important that during periods of economic uncertainty, families should seek alternative sources that can enhance their financial stability and resilience. One such source lies in an unexploited potential, Home Economics entrepreneurial skills, although economic empowerment is usually treated without considering help from the field of Home Economics.

Home Economics provides individuals with the practical knowledge and skills to generate, income, manage resources well, and support sustainable living within Nigerian households. This is achieved through acquiring entrepreneurial skills incorporated into the curriculum of the various Home Economics areas: human development, personal and family finances, consumer issues, housing and interior design, nutrition, food preparation, textile apparel (Usoroh, 2023).

The skills taught in these various areas range from cooking, nutrition, managing textiles, laundry and financial literacy, which are essential for managing a home effectively. They also create business opportunities. In a time of economic uncertainty, using these skills as a means of alternative financial sources can help strengthen family economic empowerment. This paper highlights that entrepreneurial skills learned in Home Economics are essential for managing economic uncertainties, as these can help families start their businesses and enhance their overall well-being, despite the state of the economy. Nigeria is currently facing significant economic problems that are affecting its citizens. Several challenges, including high inflation, unemployment, and income inequality, mark Nigeria's current situation.

### **High Inflation**

As of September 2023, the inflation rate in Nigeria was 26.72%, the highest since 2005, and in July 2024, the inflation rate had risen to 33.40%. The major reason for this increase is the removal of fuel subsidies that occurred in May 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Increased food prices, changing global oil prices, and the depreciation of the currency have all reduced the purchasing power of Nigerians, making it harder for them to afford goods and services. Government policies, like ending the fuel subsidy and allowing the naira to fluctuate in value, have caused an increase in food prices, and this affects low-income households. The study by the World Bank Group and Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2023) has shown that the increase in the price of goods and services is a result of a threefold increase in fuel prices since May 2023. This has put much financial pressure on households, pushing many Nigerians deeper into poverty as inflation rates reached all-time highs.

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment remains a pressing issue, with Nigeria recording a high unemployment rate affecting the citizens, especially the youth population. According to Trading Economics (2024), the unemployment rate in Nigeria was 4.19% as of the second quarter i 2023 and rose to 5% by the third quarter of the same year, with the unemployment rate of the youth rising from 7.2 % to 8.6%. This has led to a reduction in productivity compared to the population growth and job demands. Among the reasons for unemployment is the inability to incorporate entrepreneurial skills into the education system's curriculum. Despite attempts to stimulate the economy, such as raising interest rates and changing government spending, economic growth has been sluggish. (Michael, Emeka, & Emmanuel, 2016).

### **Income Inequality**

Developing countries like Nigeria experience glaring income inequality because a significant portion of the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small elite, leaving the majority of the population living in poverty. The Gini coefficient, a measure of income

inequality, has remained high, indicating a wide gap between the rich and the poor. This disparity is further aggravated by unequal access to opportunities, education, and healthcare, making it difficult for families in lower-income brackets to improve their socioeconomic status. This is reflected in the high cost of essential goods, driven by food inflation and rising prices for basic services, as it has deepened poverty levels across the country. Income inequalities have prompted incessant labour unions' agitation for an increased minimum wage to narrow the gap (Nwosa, 2019; Hasell, 2023).

Nigerian families are trying to afford their basic needs and maintain a good standard of living due to the combined effect of high inflation, unemployment, and income inequality. This has led to increased dependence on unofficial work and social networks to make ends meet. Their standard of living is poor as they are faced with food insecurity, inadequate healthcare services, and education. There is therefore a need to seek alternative income and independence. Harnessing practical entrepreneurial skills in Home Economics, such as Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, and Home Management skills to navigate economic uncertainties will help build resilience and financial stability.

### **The Importance of Home Economics in Entrepreneurship**

The entrepreneurial potential of Home Economics skills cannot be over-emphasized as they hold tremendous value in the business world.

It opens up numerous avenues for income generation, which are especially important in Nigeria's current economic climate. Entrepreneurship is integrated into the Home Economics curriculum to provide sustainable livelihood options to families. Entrepreneurship comprises a range of processes and attributes including the ability to see business opportunities from everyday problems, creating something new from scratch, the willingness to take risks, starting up and managing a business, and the passion to continuously innovate and carry out the operations of an enterprise despite adversity (Chua, 2018). Also, Nwanna (2021) explains entrepreneurship to be the acquisition and application of skills and ideas to create employment for self and others. It also involves development based on creativity. Entrepreneurship leads to small, medium and sometimes large businesses based on creativity and innovation. It is essential for economic growth because it creates quick job opportunities. Entrepreneurs are considered risk-takers, organisers, leaders, and innovators, playing crucial roles in generating wealth and promoting self-sufficiency, ultimately contributing to national development. Prospective entrepreneurs should ensure that the necessary skills to enhance their businesses are acquired before venturing into their choice businesses (Barinua and Olarewaju, 2022). Entrepreneurs are more productive with practical skills. Nwanna (2021) also claims that practical skills for better living involve a wide range of activities and knowledge that empower individuals to manage their daily lives, achieve self-sufficiency, and improve overall well-being. According to Barinua and Olarewaju (2022), skill is the ability to acquire practical knowledge in new conditions based on the abilities and experiences a person has had previously. It is an activity developed over time and becomes automatic in terms of performing the required skill. Skill is the ability to expertly perform a specific activity that involves a planned sequence of actions developed through repeated practice. Possessing skill means demonstrating the habit of acting, thinking, and behaving in a way that makes the process feel natural to the individual. This idea aligns with Home Economics, which focuses on teaching practical skills for better living.

Home Economics Education helps people identify unmet needs in their lives and communities, and find creative solutions to address them, while also managing associated risks. Home Economics is an arm of vocational and technical education and a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, context-based and skill-abundant field that aims to enhance individuals, families, and societies' quality of life. The subject embraces various

areas related to family life, including food preparation and nutrition, budgeting, personal and family finance, housing, personal relationships, human development, textile apparel, etc. (Nwanna, 2021).

Home Economics teaches people important life skills that help them manage their homes and finances better. Based on the major areas of Home Economics, examples of entrepreneurial skills are sewing and textile production in Clothing and Textile; cooking cuisines, baking and culinary arts in Foods and Nutrition, and Hospitality and interior decoration in Home Management. Additionally, the skills can be used to start small-scale businesses to generate income in an era of economic uncertainty. Appropriate use of the skills can be transformed into entrepreneurial endeavours to promote financial empowerment in an era of economic uncertainties.

In times of economic uncertainty, Nigerian families can build financial strength and independence by using skills learned in Home Economics. These skills offer practical ways to earn money, live sustainably, and manage households effectively. This approach contributes to economic strength and community growth. Apart from empowering families through practical skills, Home Economics also helps families to promote self-reliance by enabling families to produce and manage their resources efficiently: supports sustainable living by teaching families how to effectively utilize local resources, save money and lower the overall cost of living (Azonuche, 2023).

### **Home Economics Entrepreneurial Skills**

Adebayo and Nwabah (2023) presented a detailed catalogue of entrepreneurial skills grouped under the three major areas of Home Economics that can translate into business opportunities, hence improving economic empowerment. These skills can be classified as follows:

1. **Clothing and Textile Skills:** These include activities such as sewing and textile production, which can lead to various businesses like garment construction and manufacturing, tailoring, fabric and apparel shops, laundry services, bridal shops, weaving and knitting centres, costume and pattern design, fashion design schools, children's clothing shops, and clothing remodelling, beauty and personal care services.
2. **Food and Nutrition Skills:** Skills in cooking and baking can result in businesses like restaurants and fast-food establishments, grocery and bakery shops, culinary art, cake making and designing, catering services (both indoor and outdoor), production of jams, jellies, ice creams, and yoghurt, nutrition and diet counselling, and confectionery such as candies and biscuits.
3. **Home Management, Housing, and Furniture Skills** such as hospitality and interior decorating expertise, which will lead to household equipment and gift shops, craft production centres, supermarkets, and production of items like bed sheets, soaps, detergent, and creams, rental services for party equipment (e.g., canopies, dishes), outdoor decoration services, and gardening.

Home Economics provides many skills for self-employment and entrepreneurship for families if properly implemented, and the knowledge and skills gained are effectively used. It can significantly lead to profitable ventures and contribute to Nigeria's economic sustainability and empowerment, particularly benefiting families in this era of economic uncertainties. Beyond individual benefit, the widespread practice of Home Economics entrepreneurship benefits community development.

When families start home-based businesses, they help the local economy by offering products and services, creating job opportunities, and supporting other nearby businesses (Reuschke & Mason, 2022). Additionally, Home Economics entrepreneurs can serve as role

models and mentors within their communities, encouraging others to develop similar skills and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. This can lead to a ripple effect, where the positive impact of their efforts can spread beyond just their families to the entire community. (Prastyaningtyas, & Sutrisno, & Soeprajitno, & Ausat, & Suherlan. 2023).

### **The Potential of Home Economics Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurial skills, when properly utilized, open up various links for income-generating, which is important in Nigeria's economic climate.

#### **Income Generation**

One of the primary advantages of Home Economics skills lies in their capacity to generate income through small-scale entrepreneurial endeavours. In the context of Nigeria, where the informal economy holds considerable significance, individuals versed in Home Economics can effectively access local markets to vend their products and services. For example, an enterprise focused on home-based catering can address the requirements of events and gatherings, while a tailoring business can fulfil the apparel needs of local communities. These modest-scale ventures not only provide financial sustenance to the participating families but also fortify the broader economy through job creation and the invigoration of local markets (Chua 2020).

#### **Empowering Women and Youth**

Home Economics entrepreneurship serves as a significant source of empowerment for women and youth in Nigeria, given the formidable barriers they often confront in securing formal employment. Women, traditionally tasked with managing household obligations, can capitalize on their Home Economics proficiencies to establish enterprises harmonizing with their extant responsibilities. Likewise, young individuals can harness these competencies to initiate independent endeavours, diminishing their reliance on scant formal positions. The empowerment of these cohorts through Home Economics entrepreneurship holds the potential to engender heightened financial autonomy and contribute to the amelioration of poverty and inequality within the nation. (Adeleye, Gyorke, & Gubacsi, 2023).

#### **Contributing to Community Development**

Beyond individual benefits, the widespread adoption of Home Economics entrepreneurship can have a positive impact on community development. As more families engage in home-based businesses, they contribute to the local economy by providing goods and services, creating jobs, and supporting other local businesses. Additionally, Home Economics entrepreneurs can serve as role models and mentors within their communities, encouraging others to develop similar skills and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. This can lead to a ripple effect, where the benefits of Home Economics entrepreneurship extend beyond individual families to the broader community (Surya, Menne, Sabhan, Suriani, Abubakar, & Idris, 2021).

#### **Challenges to Harnessing Home Economics Skills**

There are several challenges to harnessing Home Economics skills in Nigeria, especially during periods of economic uncertainty. These challenges are both structural and social, limiting the potential of families to fully benefit from these skills.

1. **Limited Access to Resources and Training:** Many Nigerian families, particularly in rural areas, lack access to the necessary resources, tools, and education to develop and apply Home Economics skills. Vocational training centres are often insufficient or

poorly funded, limiting the spread of critical skills like food preservation, tailoring, and home-based production. This issue is further exacerbated by economic constraints that prevent individuals from affording training programs or starting capital for small businesses (Oladokun, 2020).

2. **Infrastructural Challenges:** A significant barrier to harnessing entrepreneurial skills is the poor infrastructure, particularly in power supply, transportation, and markets. For home-based enterprises tailoring, food processing, or soap-making, reliable electricity and efficient transportation networks are essential. In many parts of Nigeria, these are either unavailable or unreliable, making it difficult for families to scale their businesses (Panda & Dash 2014).
  3. **Cultural and Societal Barriers:** In certain communities, people view Home Economics negatively, thinking it is old-fashioned. Societal expectations, particularly concerning gender roles, often limit the potential of women, who are the primary custodians of Home Economics skills, to engage in entrepreneurial activities. In some communities, women may face restrictions on mobility, access to markets, or control over financial resources, hampering their ability to leverage their skills for economic gain (Delgado, 2020).
  4. **Lack of Access to Finance:** Access to finance is another critical challenge. Many Nigerian families, especially in low-income areas, lack access to credit facilities that could help them start or expand small businesses based on Home Economics skills. Microfinance institutions often have stringent conditions or high interest rates, making it difficult for small entrepreneurs to thrive (Panda & Dash, 2014).
  5. **Market Saturation and Competition:** In urban areas, where entrepreneurial activities like tailoring or catering are more common, market saturation can limit income-generating opportunities. Small businesses can struggle to stand out in the competitive market without innovative approaches or unique selling points.
- These challenges necessitate strategic interventions from governmental and non-governmental organizations, and communities to assist in skill development and provide the necessary resources for success in Home Economics-related businesses.

### **Recommendations for Promoting Home Economics Entrepreneurship**

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to promote education and training in Home Economics. This can be achieved by integrating Home Economics entrepreneurial skills into formal and informal education systems, including vocational training programs that equip individuals with the necessary skills to start and sustain businesses.

Government and policy support are also crucial. Policies that support small-scale entrepreneurs, such as access to microloans and market access initiatives, can make a significant difference. Additionally, community-based initiatives, such as cooperatives and mentorship programs, can provide the support network needed for aspiring Home Economics entrepreneurs to succeed.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, harnessing Home Economics entrepreneurial skills is a practical and empowering solution for Nigerian families facing economic uncertainties. These skills offer a pathway to financial stability, self-reliance, and empowerment, particularly for women and youth. However, to understand this potential, there must be concerted efforts to overcome the challenges of access, cultural perceptions, and economic constraints. By promoting education, providing policy support, and encouraging community initiatives, Nigeria can unlock the entrepreneurial potential within every home, fostering resilience in the face of

economic adversity. The time to act is now, and the benefits will ripple through families, communities, and the nation.

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