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Influence of Students' Interests and Counseling Services on Subject Area Specialization Preferences Among Home Economics Students in Colleges of Education in Delta State

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Keywords:

Influence, Students' interests, Counseling services, Subject area specialization, Home Economics students, Colleges of Education.

Abstract: This study delves into the intricate relationship between students' interests, counseling services, and subject area specialization preferences among Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. Employing a descriptive survey method and Pearson product-moment correlation research design, the study embraces a comprehensive approach to understand the intricate motivations driving students. The population under consideration comprises 381 Home Economics students across various Colleges of Education in Delta State, eliminating the need for sampling techniques due to the manageable size. The findings reveal that students' preferences within Home Economics are deeply rooted in intrinsic motivations, transcending traditional academic considerations. The study underscores the influential role of counseling services as catalysts in shaping academic and career trajectories. Well-equipped and accessible guidance and counseling units are identified as vital components, providing students with informed perspectives and unbiased opinions. The study offers practical implications for educational policies and practices. It advocates for flexible curricular structures that accommodate diverse preferences, emphasizing the need for continuous investment in counseling services.

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of students' interests and counseling services on the selection of specializations within the Home Economics field is a complex and crucial aspect of education. Home Economics, comprising areas such as Foods and Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, and Home Management, demands a nuanced understanding of individual preferences and needs (Park et al., 2020). Clothing and Textiles involve textile work, clothing design and sewing, as well as the selection of clothes, personal hygiene, and grooming. Home Management encompasses processes that utilize family resources to meet the family's needs, such as money, time, energy, and household equipment. While students in the Home Economics program are expected to acquire skills in all three areas, personal interests often lead to preferences for specific aspects (Choi, 2022).

Students' interests play a central role in shaping their educational and career paths, particularly in Home Economics, where practical skills and personal engagement are paramount. When students are interested and focused in their studies, they are less likely to engage in behaviors that could lead to negative consequences (Ani et al., 2015). The level of preference for a particular specialization, as highlighted by Arubayi (2014), indicates its desirability for the individual. This preference is not solely an academic choice but is influenced by genuine desires, enjoyment, or perceived benefits associated with a specific area. For instance, an interest in Clothing and Textiles may stem from the ability to create personal attire or the potential for self-employment, while an interest in Foods and Nutrition may be driven by immediate and tangible results (Azonuche, 2021; Azonuche & Abamba, 2024).

Subject preference, as explored in this study, refers to students' desires, interests, and likings for one area of Home Economics over others. Developing situational interest can enhance learning by increasing students' attention and engagement (Bernacki & Walkington, 2018). If this interest evolves into an individual interest, students are more likely to stay engaged with the material over time and explore the topic further. Counseling services emerge as a significant factor in guiding students toward informed and meaningful subject area preferences and interests. Counseling programs in schools, as emphasized by Cahyono (2022), are essential given the increasing enrollment of students, the growing needs of youths, and the dynamic educational landscape. Guidance, defined by Andra et al., (2023), involves specialized activities aimed at helping individuals make wise choices. Counseling is a transformative process that assists individuals in learning about themselves, their environment, and making informed choices for personal and academic growth progress and mature vocationally and socio personally, (Ebizie, et al 2016). This transformative process of helping people to learn all that are to be learnt can be achieved both in and outside the school system.

The role of guidance counseling services are vital as they help to direct student's choice of career based on student's, needs attitude and interest, hence Abamba (2023) noted that students need adequate guidance at any level of education to make subject choice. This is because it is common to find students choosing subject area for which they have little or no aptitude or interest only to end in frustration on the long run. Similarly, Anozie (2002) observed that students who choose subject areas for which they have no interest or ability on the long run may fail and may become frustrated and eventually drop out. Importantly, students should consider interest and ability seriously, before making a choice of career.

The motivation for this study stems from the recognition of the pivotal roles of students' interests and counseling services in shaping educational experiences and career trajectories (Subhi & Habibi, 2022). The study aims to unravel the intrinsic motivations behind students'

choices within the Home Economics curriculum, extending beyond academic preferences to encompass personal, practical, and vocational aspects. Additionally, the study acknowledges the crucial role of counseling services as influential agents in providing informed perspectives and shaping students' perceptions. The study is driven by a desire to understand how well-equipped and accessible guidance and counseling units contribute to students' decision-making processes. As counseling services are increasingly recognized as essential components of the educational ecosystem, understanding their impact on subject area preferences becomes imperative (Nie et al., 2019).

The field of Home Economics as a multifaceted reservoir of knowledge subjects the learners to like and preference for one area over the other. From observation it seems that students prefer for food and nutrition because of immediate gratification of eating practical products to the others. As a field of knowledge, Home Economics is loaded with numerous career options and it is expected that Home Economics students should be well-grounded in all aspects of the major areas of the subjects so that, they can be competently equipped with knowledge, skills and abilities needed to enable them make wise career choices. Despite the numerous options available in Home Economics, there seem to be high preference in favor of one aspect of the subject to the other. The assumption that the policies of the Government and society may affects student's choice of course of study, and that students lack interest, poor guidance and counseling services may be the plausible indices that may influence subject area preference by Home Economics students. Previous studies Arubayi, (2014a); Azonuche, . (2021), showed that lack of training facilities, qualified and competent, and job prospects teachers determine Home Economics students subject area choice but the influence of guidance counseling services and students' interests in the subject is not empirically well known. This study therefore, is set to find out why students prefer one area of Home Economics to another in Delta State.

Furthermore, the study anticipates implications for educational policies and practices. By uncovering the intricate interplay between students' interests, counseling services, and subject area preferences, The study's recommendations could inform Home Economics education curriculum planners to make necessary modifications, ensuring graduates are equipped with relevant skills for effective performance in the workforce. The findings could also benefit academic boards in Colleges of Education in Delta State, guiding them in developing strategies for the equitable use of resources in the Home Economics program to enhance effective teaching and learning.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive survey method and a Pearson product-moment correlation research design to investigate the relationship between variables. The choice of this design, as suggested by Nworgu (2006), is apt when exploring individual opinions, attitudes, and perceptions on a personal basis. This design is deemed suitable for examining the correlation between students' preferences in the subject area of Home Economics and the influencing factors in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The population under consideration comprises 381 Home Economics students across all Colleges of Education in Delta State, namely College of Education Warri, College of Physical and Health Education Mosogar, and Federal College of Education Technical Asaba. No sampling technique was employed, as the entire population of 381 students was manageable for the study.

The distribution of Home Economics students among the institutions comprised of 136 students are enrolled in the College of Education Warri, 116 students are in the College of Physical

and Health Education Mosogar, and 129 students attend the Federal College of Education Technical Asaba. Consequently, the total number of Home Economics students across these institutions amounts to 381. Data collection involves the use of a structured questionnaire titled "Subject Area Preference of the Students in Colleges of Education". The questionnaire comprises two sections: Section A captures demographic data, while Section B contains 19 items derived from the study's purpose and literature review. Respondents provide their responses using a four-point rating scale: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 1, Agreed (A) = 2, Disagreed (D) = 3, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 4.

The research instrument underwent validation by the supervisor and experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Home Economics. Their feedback informed necessary corrections, ensuring the instrument's validity. Additionally, a pilot test involving 20 Home Economics students at Federal College of Education, Ekiadolor, Edo State, established a reliability coefficient of 0.77 using Cronbach's alpha method. Administered by the researcher and three assistants, the 381 questionnaires were filled and returned promptly. The study spanned a year and three months. Mean and standard deviation were employed in data analysis to address research questions and assess the homogeneity of respondents' mean ratings. A mean score of 2.50 and above was considered as Strongly Agreed, while a mean below 2.50 indicated Strongly Disagreed. Hypotheses were tested using the Pearson product-moment correlation statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. The statistical tools employed for answering research questions were mean and standard deviation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

In the results section, the comprehensive findings of this study are presented, shedding light on the relationships between variables and students' preferences in the field of Home Economics across various Colleges of Education in Delta State.

Research question 1: How does students' interest influence the subject area preference of Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Delta State?

Table 1.

Mean rating of the influence of students' interest on the subject area preference of Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Delta State.

S/N		Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1	My interest in clothing and Textiles is influenced by my ability to make my own clothes	3.56	.567	Agreed
2.	I have interest in Food and Nutrition because of the quick end result	3.43	.512	Agreed
3.	I enjoy Home management practical's because the class atmosphere is always friendly	3.53	.515	Agreed
4.	My interest in the skills taught in clothing and textiles has influenced my preference of the subject	3.50	.516	Agreed
5.	I enjoy Food and Nutrition classes because the teacher gives total commitment to the teaching	3.44	.497	Agreed

6.	My interest in Home Management is motivated by the method of teaching	3.46	.499	Agreed
7.	I have interest in Clothing and Textiles because I can become self – employed	3.51	.516	Agreed
8.	I have interest in Food and nutrition because it requires less patience	3.35	.581	Agreed
9.	I enjoy Home Management classes because the teacher gives total commitment to the teaching	3.55	.498	Agreed
10.	I enjoy clothing and textiles classes because the teacher gives total commitment to the teaching	3.52	.500	Agreed
11.	The fact that I can bake and use skills taught in food and nutrition has influenced my interest	3.49	.501	Agreed
12.	The fact that I can sew my own clothes and use skills taught in clothing and textiles has influenced my interest	3.57	.496	Agreed

Table 1 showed that the respondents accepted all the items because the mean (\bar{X}) was above 2.50 which was used as the benchmark. This showed that student's interest is influenced by their ability to make their own clothes, quick ends results in Food and Nutrition, friendly atmosphere, skills thought among others. Indication is that students interest influence the subject area preference of Home Economics in Colleges of Education.

Research question 2

How does availability of counseling services influence Home Economics students' preference of subject area in colleges of education in Delta State?

Table 2.
Mean rating of the influence of availability of counseling services on Home Economics students' preference of subject area in colleges of education in Delta State.

S/N	Items	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Decision
1.	The availability of guidance and counseling services has influence my area of preference in Home Management	3.53	.500	Agreed
2.	Counselors bring validity to what I am feeling because they have unbiased opinions	3.51	.501	Agreed
3.	Guidance counseling's abilities to listen, has influenced my subject area preference in Home Economics	3.52	.500	Agreed
4.	The school functional Guidance and Counseling unit has influence my subject area preference	2.52	.500	Agreed
5.	The Guidance and Counseling unit are very well equipped with adequate human resource to meet students need.	3.44	.562	Agreed
6.	Accessible nature of the school Guidance and Counselor has influence my subject area preference	3.44	.527	Agreed
7.	Friendly nature of the Guidance and Counseling unit has influence my subject area preference	3.41	.572	Agreed

Result in table 2 showed that the respondents accepted all the items because the mean (\bar{X}) was above 2.50 which was used as the benchmark. The statement that the availability of guidance and counseling services has influence my area of preference in Home Management, had the highest mean of 3.53 followed by item 3, which states that the listening abilities of the Guidance and Counselors had influence on subject area preference. The school functional guidance and counseling unit has influenced their subject area preference, well equipped Guidance and counseling unit with adequate human resource to meet students need, among others. While friendly nature of the guidance and Counseling unit has influenced my subject area preference was rated the least. Indication is that Guidance and Counseling services in Colleges of Education influence Home Economics students' preference of subject area.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between students' interest and their subject area preference.

Table 3.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between students' interest and their subject area preference

Variables	N	Pearson (r)	Sig (p-value)	Decision
Students' Interest	381			
Subject Area Preference	381	.137	.007	Ho ₁ is Rejected

$\alpha = .05$

Table 3 showed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between students' interest and their subject area preference. It showed a correlation value (r) = .137 and a p-value of .007. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between students' interest and their subject area preference.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between counseling services and student subject area preference.

Table 4.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between counseling services and student subject area preference

Variables	N	Pearson (r)	Sig (p-value)	Decision
Counseling Services	381			
Subject Area Preference	381	.301	.000	Ho ₂ is significant

$\alpha = .05$

Table 4 showed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between counseling services and students' subject area preference. It showed a correlation value (r) = .301 and a p-value of

.000. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between counseling services and student subject area preference.

Discussion of findings

Results showed that there is a significant relationship between students' interest and their subject area preference. This implies that students' interest has influence on subject area preference of Home Economics students in College of Education in Delta State. This is in consonance with research carried out by Risiro (2014) who stated that the learner's interest must be considered while teaching because interest and ability are highly related. In teaching, the interest of the student can be aroused through positive motivation, questioning and active involvement of the student during the period of teaching. In the same vein, Renninger and Hidi (2015) noted that students who discover academic interest in high school and colleges are better prepared for satisfying career and opined that interest is both a psychological state characterized by increased attention, effort and effect, experienced in a particular moment. The findings also affirm Pahl and Tschiesner (2023) finding that student's interest greatly influences vocational interests and teaching preferences.

Results from this study also showed that students counseling services has influence on Home Economics Students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. This is related to a study carried out by Michael and Modebelu (2020) who state that career guidance and counseling is key to the delivery of Vocational-Technical Education and will help individual s acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to identify options, explore alternatives and succeed in society. In the same vein, Nweze and Okolie (2014) believed that college and career guidance and counseling programmes aim to help students make more informed and better educational and career choices. Among other things, programmes offer information on high school course offerings, career options, the type of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace, and posts associated with their field of interest. Nevertheless, a career guidance and counseling programme develops an individual's competencies in self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has delved into the intricate interplay of students' interests and counseling services in shaping subject area specialization preferences among Home Economics students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The findings underscore the significant role that students' interests play in influencing their choices, reaffirming the importance of aligning educational offerings with individual passions and aspirations. The impact of counseling services has been evident, shedding light on the positive correlation between effective guidance and informed decision-making in subject specialization. This aligns with the broader understanding that quality counseling services contribute to students' clarity, confidence, and satisfaction in their academic pursuits. The comparison of subject area preferences across different colleges provides valuable insights into potential variations in counseling effectiveness and students' interests. While the study does not specifically delve into regional disparities, it opens avenues for future research to explore nuanced factors that may influence subject preferences in Home Economics across diverse educational institutions in Delta State.

Practical implications of this study extend to educators, counselors, and policymakers involved in shaping the educational landscape. Acknowledging the pivotal role of students'

interests, there is a call for a more student-centric approach to curriculum development and counseling services. By tailoring educational offerings to resonate with individual passions, institutions can enhance student engagement and satisfaction. The findings also underscore the need for continuous improvement in counseling services. Ensuring that counselors are well-equipped to guide students effectively is paramount. Professional development programs for counselors, focusing on understanding evolving career landscapes and effective communication strategies, can contribute to more informed and supportive guidance

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