

GENDER-RELATED BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN HOME MANAGEMENT VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the gender-related barriers and opportunities in home management vocational programmes in technical colleges in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study identifies gender-related barriers affecting enrolment, examine factors responsible for gender disparities, and determine strategies for promoting gender inclusivity. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 512 respondents (480 students and 32 teachers) from eight state-owned Technical Colleges. Due to the manageable size, the whole population was utilized. Data were collected using a validated 42-item structured questionnaire titled "Gender Barriers and Opportunities in Home Management Questionnaire" (GBOHMQ), designed on a 4-point response. Data analysis was performed using Mean and Standard Deviation. Findings revealed that significant barriers to enrolment include cultural beliefs ($\bar{X}=3.32$), gender stereotypes ($\bar{X}=3.40$), and the perception of Home Management as a female-oriented field ($\bar{X}=3.45$). Factors such as unequal access to resources, institutional gaps, and restrictive cultural norms were identified as primary drivers of gender disparity. However, the study identified potent opportunities for improvement, with respondents strongly agreeing that financial support ($\bar{X}=3.55$), awareness campaigns ($\bar{X}=3.50$), and the integration of technology ($\bar{X}=3.48$) are effective strategies for fostering equity. The study concludes that achieving gender inclusivity requires a multi-faceted approach to challenge societal norms and strengthen institutional frameworks. Recommendations include implementing comprehensive sensitization campaigns, providing scholarships to reduce economic burdens, and redesigning curricula to be gender-sensitive.

Keywords: Home Management, Vocational Education, Gender Disparity, Technical Colleges, Enugu State

Introduction

Home Management vocational education, is one of the core components of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which equips individuals with practical skills in different areas like clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, child care and development, hospitality management and family resource management. These competencies help in improving household well-being, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing sustainable livelihoods (Onyishi & Salami, 2023). These programmes are designed to prepare male and female learners for productive roles in society by equipping them with practical skills,

vocational competencies, entrepreneurial abilities, and knowledge in home management, family living, resource management, food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and other life-enhancing occupations necessary for self-reliance, employment, and sustainable development. According to McGregor (2019), Home Economics is a practical and transformative field that prepares individuals and families to manage resources effectively for sustainable living and improved quality of life. Similarly, the International Federation for Home Economics (2020), defined Home Economics as a field of study and professional practice that empowers individuals, families, and communities to achieve sustainable and healthy living through practical life skills and resource management. The National Board for Technical Education (2020), explained vocational programmes as skill-oriented educational programmes designed to prepare learners for employment, self-reliance, and occupational competence in specific trades and professions.

Therefore, Home Management Vocational Programme can be defined as skill-based educational training offered in technical colleges to equip male and female students with competencies in home and family management for employment and self-reliance. Home Management vocational programs likened genders to male and female students participating in skill-based education related to home management. However, despite the inclusive intent of educational policies, gender disparities continue to influence participation, access, and outcomes in vocational education in Home Management (Okoye & Bakare, 2021). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), was designed to equip learners with practical and employable skills irrespective of gender. Gender, include socially constructed roles, expectations, and power relations that influence access, participation, and outcomes in education.

Traditionally, Home Management has been socially constructed as a female-dominated field, which often discourages male participation due to societal stereotypes and cultural expectations (Ayonloge et al., 2022). Conversely, female learners also face systemic and structural barriers such as limited access to resources, institutional structures and policies, digital and information access, financial constraints, and socio-cultural constraints that affect their full participation and achievement (UNESCO, 2023). These challenges highlight the broader issue of gender inequality in education, which remains a concern. Barriers to gender participation in Home Management vocational programmes can be defined as the social, cultural, institutional, and economic factors that hinder equal access, participation, and success of learners based on their gender. These barriers include gender stereotypes, lack of role models, inadequate instructional materials or limited access to resources, biased curriculum

content, poor guidance and counseling, institutional structures and policies, digital and information access, employment and career, gender stereotypes, financial constraints, socio-cultural constraints and limited opportunities for skill application (Agbulu & Nwoke, 2021). For instance, female learners often face financial constraints, early family responsibilities, and limited access to resources, while male learners encounter social stigma when enrolling in Home Management-related courses. These barriers collectively hinder effective participation and skill acquisition among both genders. In some cases, societal perceptions label certain vocational skills as inappropriate for a particular gender, thereby restricting learners' choices and career aspirations, institutional challenges such as insufficient funding, lack of trained instructors, and poor infrastructure disproportionately affect one gender over the other.

Opportunities refer to the enabling factors and prospects that promote gender inclusion, equity, and empowerment in Home Management vocational programmes. These opportunities include policy support for gender equality, increased awareness of the economic value of vocational skills, integration of modern technologies, and the promotion of entrepreneurship education (Edeh et al., 2024). Initiatives aimed at encouraging both male and female participation in non-traditional fields can help break down stereotypes and foster a more inclusive learning environment. However, there has been a growing recognition of the need to promote gender inclusivity and equity in vocational education systems. This is because unequal access to vocational skills limits national development and leads to the underutilization of human capital (UNESCO, 2023). Furthermore, the growing emphasis on skill acquisition and self-employment in Nigeria's economy presents significant opportunities for learners in Home Management to contribute meaningfully to national development.

In Enugu State, where vocational education institutions help in youth empowerment and skill development, the issue of gender disparity in Home Management programmes is particularly significant. Despite the availability of vocational training opportunities, gender-based challenges continue to affect enrolment patterns, learning experiences, and career outcomes of students. Cultural norms, economic conditions, and institutional practices within the state either hinder or promote gender inclusivity in these programmes. Therefore, addressing the barriers while maximizing the opportunities for gender learners in Home Management vocational programmes is essential for achieving equitable and sustainable educational development. Promoting gender equality in vocational education not only enhances individual potential but also contributes to broader socio-economic growth. This study, therefore, focused on examining the barriers and opportunities for gender learners in Home Management vocational programmes in Enugu State, Nigeria. It sought to identify the

factors influencing gender participation, analyze existing challenges, and propose strategies for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment that empowers all learners irrespective of gender.

Statement of the Problem

Home Management vocational programmes are expected to promote self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and inclusive participation among learners regardless of gender. However, in Enugu State, there are growing concerns that gender-related barriers are limiting the full participation and benefits of these programmes for both male and female learner's enrolment as they are often gender-skewed, with a significantly higher number of female students compared to their male counterparts. Male learners tend to show low interest and participation, largely due to societal perceptions that associate Home Management with feminine roles. This stereotype discourages male students from enrolling or actively engaging in such programmes, thereby limiting their opportunity to acquire essential life and vocational skills. Also, female learners, although more represented, also face challenges such as limited access to advanced resources, inadequate encouragement to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, and societal expectations that confine them to traditional domestic roles rather than professional advancement.

These issues contributing to this problem is the persistence of cultural norms and gender stereotypes that influence subject choice and career pathways. Many parents, peers, and even educators perceived Home Management as a female-oriented field, while technical and industrial trades are considered more suitable for males. Additionally, there is evidence of inadequate gender-sensitive policies and teaching approaches within vocational institutions, which fail to actively promote inclusivity and equal participation. Many learners, especially males, do not fully understand the relevance of these skills in modern society, including opportunities in catering, fashion design, interior decoration, and family consultancy services. The absence of role models, mentorship programmes, and career guidance further reduces motivation among learners to explore the field beyond traditional expectations.

Institutional factors also create these barriers such as lack of instructional materials that reflect gender inclusivity, insufficient training of teachers on gender-responsive pedagogy, and weak implementation of policies that promote equal opportunities in vocational education. Despite these barriers, there exist significant opportunities within Home Management vocational programmes that can be harnessed to promote gender equality and economic empowerment. The increasing demand for skills in food services, fashion, home care, and

family welfare present viable career pathways for both male and female learners. However, these opportunities remain underutilized due to the prevailing challenges. It is against this background that this study investigated the barriers and opportunities for gender learners in Home Management vocational programmes in Enugu State, identify the underlying causes of gender disparities, and explore strategies for promoting inclusive participation. The study provided evidence-based recommendations that enhance gender equality, improve skill acquisition, and support the overall development of vocational education in Nigeria.

Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine gender-related barriers and opportunities in home management vocational programmes in technical colleges in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the gender-related barriers affecting the enrolment of learners in Home Management vocational programmes in Technical Colleges in Enugu State.
2. Identify the factors responsible for gender disparities among learners in Home Management vocational education.
3. Identify strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and enhancing equal participation of learners in Home Management vocational programmes.

Methodology

Design of the Study: This study adopted survey research design. This design is most appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large group of people enrolled in or teaching Home Management Vocational Programs in technical colleges in Enugu State.

Area of Study: This study was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu State was chosen because it has a robust network of Government Technical Colleges (GTCs).

Population for Study: The population consists of 512 respondents, comprising 480 students and 32 teachers currently enrolled in or teaching Home Management Vocational Programs in technical colleges in Enugu State. Gotten from Enugu State Science, Technical, and Vocational Schools Management Board (STVSMB). The population consist of twenty-one (21) male students and four hundred and fifty-nine female students 459, four (4) male teachers and twenty-eight (28)

Sample and Sampling Technique: the whole population was used because the population was manageable.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire titled Gender Barriers and Opportunities in Home Management Questionnaire (GBOHMQ) was used. It was designed on a 4-point response Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was divided into three sessions, session A identified the gender-related barriers affecting the enrolment of learners in Home Management vocational programmes in Technical Colleges in Enugu State with 14 items, session B examined the factors responsible for gender disparities among learners in Home Management vocational education with 13 items and session C determined strategies that can be used for promoting gender inclusivity and enhancing equal participation of learners in Home Management vocational programmes with 15 items

Validation of Instrument: The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, Faculty of Vocational Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Method of Data Collection: five hundred and twelve copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by hand with the help of three research assistants and on spot collection was used to retrieve the questionnaire. 100% returned rate collections was achieved.

Method of Data Analysis: Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Any item that has a mean score 2.50 above were taken as agreed, while, any item that falls below 2.50 was regarded as disagreed.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings of Gender-Related Barriers Affecting Enrolment in Home Management Vocational Programmes

S/n	Social Media Platforms commonly used among Households	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Cultural beliefs discourage male enrolment in Home Management programmes.	3.32	.81	A
2	Home Management programmes are perceived as female-oriented fields.	3.45	.76	A
3	Social stigma affects male participation in Home Management education.	3.28	.84	A

4	Family expectations limit female enrolment in vocational programmes.	3.10	.88	A
5	Gender stereotypes influence programme selection.	3.40	.79	A
6	Lack of awareness reduces enrolment across genders.	3.05	.90	A
7	Financial constraints affect enrolment of female learners.	3.22	.85	A
8	High cost of learning materials discourages participation.	3.30	.80	A
9	Limited institutional support affects enrolment rates.	3.18	.87	A
10	Inadequate facilities discourage student enrolment.	3.25	.82	A
11	Peer influence affects enrolment decisions.	3.00	.91	A
12	Negative societal attitudes reduce interest in Home Management programmes.	3.36	.78	A
13	Gender bias in career guidance affects enrolment.	3.14	.86	A
14	Lack of role models affects gender participation in the programme	3.27	.83	A
Overall		3.24		A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of Respondents; A = Agree; D = Disagree.

Table 1 revealed that the mean and standard deviation ratings of the respondents ranged from 3.00 to 3.45 indicates that respondents agreed that multiple gender-related barriers significantly affect enrolment. Among which are Cultural beliefs $\bar{x}$ = 3.32, stereotypes $\bar{x}$ = 3.40, and societal attitudes $\bar{x}$ = 3.36 were identified as major constraints.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on Factors Responsible for Gender Disparities Among Learners in Home Management Vocational Education

NB	Social Media Platforms commonly used among Households	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Unequal access to learning resources exists among genders.	3.21	.84	A
2	Teaching methods favour one gender over another.	2.95	.92	A
3	Curriculum content reflects gender bias.	3.05	.89	A
4	Participation in practical activities differs across genders.	3.18	.85	A
5	Gender differences exist in classroom engagement.	3.00	.90	A
6	Economic background influences gender participation.	3.26	.80	A
7	Parental support varies between male and female learners.	3.10	.88	A
8	Institutional policies do not adequately address gender equality.	3.08	.86	A
9	Cultural norms influence learning outcomes.	3.33	.79	A
10	Access to digital tools differs between genders.	3.15	.87	A
11	Gender-based discrimination affects academic performance.	3.20	.83	A
12	Confidence levels differ between male and female learners.	3.12	.88	A
13	Opportunities for skill development vary across genders	3.18	.84	A
Overall		3.14		A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of Respondents; A = Agree; D = Disagree.

Table 2 revealed that the mean and standard deviation ratings of the respondents ranged from 2.95 to 3.33 shows that gender disparities exist due to unequal access, cultural norms 3.33, and institutional gaps 3.08, among others.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on Strategies for Promoting Gender Inclusivity and Equal Participation in Home Management Vocational Programmes

S/n	Social Media Platforms commonly used among Households	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	Awareness campaigns can improve gender participation.	3.50	.70	A
2	Gender-sensitive curriculum enhances inclusivity.	3.42	.75	A
3	Provision of adequate learning facilities promotes participation.	3.38	.78	A
4	Financial support encourages enrolment across genders.	3.55	.68	A
5	Equal access to resources improves learning outcomes.	3.47	.72	A
6	Teacher training on gender equality enhances classroom practices.	3.36	.80	A
7	Inclusion of role models promotes gender balance.	3.40	.76	A
8	Career guidance programmes reduce gender bias.	3.33	.81	A
9	Policy implementation improves gender inclusivity.	3.37	.79	A
10	Encouraging male participation reduces stereotypes.	3.45	.74	A
11	Community sensitization promotes acceptance of all genders.	3.41	.77	A
12	Use of technology enhances equal learning opportunities.	3.48	.71	A
13	Supportive learning environments improve participation.	3.43	.75	A
14	Monitoring gender equity improves programme effectiveness.	3.39	.78	A
15	Collaboration with stakeholders enhances inclusivity.	3.44	.73	A
Overall		3.42		A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of Respondents; A = Agree; D = Disagree.

Table 3 revealed that the mean and standard deviation ratings of the respondents ranged from 3.36 to 3.55 indicates strong agreement that policy 3.37, financial support 3.55, awareness 3.50, and technology 3.48, among others are effective strategies for promoting gender inclusivity.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings on table 1 on the gender-related barriers affecting the enrolment of learners in Home Management vocational programmes in Technical Colleges in Enugu State revealed that cultural beliefs significantly discourage male enrolment in Home Management vocational programmes. This suggests that socio-cultural norms continue to define certain occupations as gender-specific, thereby limiting participation. In many societies, including Nigeria, domestic-related skills are traditionally associated with women, which discourages male involvement. This finding aligns with UNESCO (2022), which emphasized that cultural norms and traditional gender roles remain major impediments to equal participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Similarly, World Bank (2021) reported that occupational segregation driven by cultural expectations continues to influence educational choices across developing countries. The implication is that without deliberate cultural reorientation, male participation in Home Management programmes will remain limited. Home Management programmes are widely perceived as female-oriented fields, and that social

stigma affects male participation. These findings reinforce the persistence of gender stereotyping in vocational education. The perception of certain disciplines as female domains discourages males from enrolling due to fear of ridicule or social exclusion. This supports International Labour Organization (2020), which found that gender-based occupational stereotypes significantly shape career pathways and reinforce labour market inequalities. Okorie and Ezeji (2023) have also shown that societal labeling of vocational trades affects students' willingness to participate, especially among males. The convergence of these findings indicates that social perception is a powerful determinant of enrolment behaviour.

The study further revealed that gender stereotypes and negative societal attitudes significantly influence programme selection and reduce interest in Home Management education. This means that beyond individual preferences, societal validation plays a critical role in shaping educational decisions. Negative attitudes towards vocational education, particularly those associated with domestic roles, undermine its attractiveness. This finding is consistent with UNICEF (2021), which noted that societal perceptions of low-status vocational fields often discourage both male and female learners from enrolling. Additionally, Aina (2022) observed that stereotypes not only affect enrolment but also influence learners' self-concept and career aspirations. Therefore, addressing societal attitudes is essential for improving enrolment rates. Finding showed that family expectations limit female enrolment, while financial constraints disproportionately affect female learners. This highlights the intersection of gender and socio-economic factors in shaping access to vocational education. In many households, limited financial resources are often allocated preferentially, sometimes disadvantaging female children. This finding corroborates UN Women (2022), which emphasized that economic barriers and patriarchal family structures often restrict girls' access to education and skill acquisition opportunities. Similarly, the World Bank (2023) noted that financial hardship remains a significant barrier to female education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The implication is that interventions must address both economic and gender-related inequalities simultaneously.

The findings also indicated that lack of awareness reduces enrolment across genders, while high cost of learning materials and inadequate facilities discourage participation. These structural barriers point to systemic weaknesses within the educational system. When prospective learners are not adequately informed about programme benefits or career opportunities, their likelihood of enrolment decreases. This aligns with OECD (2021), which highlighted that awareness and accessibility are critical determinants of participation in vocational education. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure and costly materials create

additional barriers, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds. Adeyemi (2022), have similarly identified poor facilities and high training costs as major constraints in TVET institutions. In addition, the study found that limited institutional support, gender bias in career guidance, and lack of role models affect enrolment patterns. These findings underscore the role of institutional frameworks in either promoting or hindering gender inclusivity. Career guidance that reinforces stereotypes can mislead students into making gender-biased choices. The absence of visible role models further limits learners' ability to envision themselves in non-traditional roles. This is supported by UNESCO (2023), which emphasized the importance of mentorship and gender-sensitive counselling in promoting equitable participation in education. The implication is that institutional reforms are necessary to create a more inclusive learning environment.

The findings on table 2 on gender disparities revealed that unequal access to learning resources exists among genders, alongside differences in participation, classroom engagement, and access to digital tools. These disparities suggest that even when enrolment occurs, the learning experience is not always equitable. This supports the findings by World Economic Forum (2022), which reported that digital and resource inequalities continue to widen gender gaps in education. Nwankwo, (2023), explained that digital divide issues have been particularly pronounced, affecting female learners disproportionately. These disparities can lead to differences in academic performance and skill acquisition, ultimately affecting employability. Furthermore, the study revealed that cultural norms, economic background, and parental support significantly influence gender participation and learning outcomes. This finding reflects the broader socio-economic environment within which education operates. Cultural expectations may prioritize certain roles for males and females, while economic constraints limit access to resources. Parental support, which is critical for academic success, may also vary based on gender preferences. This aligns with UNICEF (2022), which emphasized that family and community contexts are key determinants of educational outcomes. The implication is that interventions must extend beyond schools to include families and communities. The findings also indicated that institutional policies do not adequately address gender equality, and that gender-based discrimination affects academic performance and confidence levels. This suggests that systemic issues within educational institutions contribute to persistent gender disparities. When policies are not effectively implemented, inequalities remain unaddressed. This finding is consistent with UN Women (2023), which highlighted the gap between policy formulation and implementation in achieving gender equality in education. Confidence

differences between male and female learners further reflect internalized stereotypes and unequal learning experiences.

The results on table 3 showing the strategies for promoting gender inclusivity revealed strong agreement on the effectiveness of awareness campaigns, financial support, and the use of technology. Awareness campaigns can challenge stereotypes and reshape societal perceptions, thereby encouraging participation. Financial support reduces economic barriers, making programmes more accessible to disadvantaged groups. The use of technology enhances learning opportunities and bridges resource gaps. These findings are supported by World Bank (2022), which emphasized that financial incentives and digital tools are effective in improving educational access and equity. Closely related to this is the finding that gender-sensitive curriculum, teacher training, and inclusion of role models enhance inclusivity. A curriculum that reflects gender equality promotes balanced representation and reduces bias. Teacher training ensures that educators adopt inclusive teaching practices, while role models provide inspiration and challenge stereotypes. This aligns with UNESCO (2022), which advocated for gender-responsive pedagogy and curriculum reform as key strategies for achieving inclusivity in education.

The study also found that career guidance programmes, community sensitization, and supportive learning environments are critical for reducing gender bias and improving participation. Career guidance helps students make informed and unbiased choices, while community sensitization addresses societal attitudes. Supportive learning environments foster confidence and engagement among learners. This is consistent with International Labour Organization (2021), which emphasized the role of community engagement and guidance services in promoting equitable access to vocational education. Finally, the findings showed that policy implementation, monitoring gender equity, and collaboration with stakeholders enhance programme effectiveness. Effective policies provide a framework for action, while monitoring ensures accountability. Collaboration among stakeholders, including government, institutions, and communities, strengthens implementation efforts. This supports the position of OECD (2022), which highlighted that multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for sustainable educational reforms.

Conclusion

The study concluded that gender-related barriers significantly influence enrolment, participation, and learning experiences in Home Management vocational programmes in technical colleges in Enugu State. The findings revealed that cultural beliefs, gender

stereotypes, societal attitudes, financial constraints, inadequate facilities, and weak institutional support negatively affect both male and female students in different ways. The study also found inequalities in access to learning resources, practical activities, and digital tools, which contributed to differences in students' participation and skill development. However, the findings showed that strategies such as awareness creation, financial support, gender-sensitive teaching, improved facilities, and technology integration can promote equal participation and inclusiveness in Home Management vocational programmes. Therefore, the study concluded that effective institutional support and deliberate efforts toward gender equality are necessary to improve enrolment, participation, and skill acquisition among students in technical colleges.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have several important implications for policy makers, practice, and future research.

1. The findings imply that cultural beliefs, gender stereotypes, and negative societal attitudes continue to discourage equal enrolment and participation of male and female students in Home Management vocational programmes.
2. The study implies that unequal access to learning resources, gender-biased teaching methods, and institutional gaps contribute to gender disparities in classroom participation, skill development, and academic performance among learners.
3. The findings suggest that inadequate facilities, lack of awareness, and financial constraints reduce students' interest and access to Home Management vocational education in technical colleges.
4. The study implies that strategies such as awareness campaigns, financial support, gender-sensitive curriculum, teacher training, policy implementation, and technology integration can promote gender inclusivity and equal participation in Home Management vocational programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Ministry of Education, school administrators, and community leaders should implement awareness campaigns to reshape societal perceptions of Home Management vocational programmes.

2. Government and educational stakeholders should provide financial support mechanisms such as scholarships, grants, and subsidies to reduce the economic burden on learners.
3. Educational institutions should review and redesign their curriculum to ensure it is gender-sensitive and inclusive.
4. Technical Colleges Board and teacher training institutions should provide continuous training and capacity building for teachers and career guidance counselors on gender-responsive teaching practices.
5. Institutions and policymakers should invest in improving learning facilities, providing adequate instructional materials, and integrating technology into vocational education.
6. Ministry of Education and school management authorities should establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure gender inclusivity and accountability in policy implementation.

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