



COMPETENCY NEEDS IN HOME ECONOMICS FOR GAIN FULL EMPLOYMENT OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRL-CHILD IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

Dr. Shittu Fatima

Department of Home Economics,
Federal University of Education, Kontagora,
Niger State, Nigeria

Abstract

The rising population of out-of-school girls in Nigeria represents a significant socio-economic crisis that hinders national productivity and gender equity. This empirical study investigated the competencies need in Home Economics for gainful employment of out-of-school girl-children in Niger State, Nigeria. This study was guided by three research objectives and research questions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted with a population of 450 stakeholders, from which a sample of 210 was drawn. Data collection utilized a structured 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, validated by experts with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.86. Data were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. Findings revealed that Catering and baking, Food Preservation, Clothing construction and Textiles, interior decoration and Entrepreneurial Management competencies are highly needed for gainful employment. The study concluded that equipping out-of-school girls with these specialized Home Economics competencies is a vital strategy for reducing economic vulnerability.

Keywords: competencies need, Home Economics, out-of-school girl child, gainful employment.

Introduction

Home Economics as a Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) course of study encompasses a wide range of skills, knowledge and attitude known as competency needs in Home Economics. Competency needs in Home Economics according to (Adeyemo, 2016) refer to the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for individuals to effectively manage their homes, resources and personal well-being. In Nigeria, the discipline is increasingly recognized as a strategic tool for addressing the burgeoning crisis of out-of-school children, particularly the girl-child. According to Anyakoha (2015), Home Economics is unique in its ability to provide "lifelong skills" that translate directly into household and industrial resource management. However, UNESCO (2022) Reports indicate that over 20 million children remain excluded from formal education, with

a significant majority being girls in Northern Nigeria. The girl-child in Nigeria particularly in Niger State faces numerous challenges that hinder her educational and economic opportunities, according to recent statistics, over 2 million children are out of school in Niger State, with girls disproportionately affected due to socio-cultural and economic barriers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The challenge in Niger State is compounded by socio-economic pressures and factors such as poverty, early marriage, cultural beliefs that force girls into Subsistence Street trading without formal training (UNICEF, Report, 2020).

Studies conducted by Home Economics experts highlight that the lack of specialized competencies is a primary driver of unemployment among these girls. Eze and Udoh (2019) argued that the traditional



curriculum must be repositioned to meet the practical demands of the informal economy. For the out-of-school girl-child in Niger State, the acquisition of competencies in areas such as catering and baking, garment construction provides a bridge from domestic dependency to economic agency. Furthermore, Wilfred-Bonse (2020) emphasized that tapping the potential of the female child requires a deliberate blend of saleable vocational skills, entrepreneurship education competency needs in Home Economics to revamp the unemployment trend. Chukwuka and Apaokueze (2024) noted that entrepreneurial competencies in Home Economics are essential for national development, as they empower individuals to sustain micro-enterprises. Food-based vocational skills offer the most immediate pathway to self-reliance due to constant market demand. Adeyemo (2016) reiterated that Home Economics provides essential skills in cooking, baking, food preservation, budgeting, textiles, garment construction, child development, interior decoration and home management. These competencies enable individuals to manage their households effectively and can lead to employment opportunities in catering and out-door services, production and sales of snacks, interior design, production of toys, production of soft furnishings, production of tie-dye materials and batiks, production of liquid soaps, creams, and disinfectants. Ojo (2018) also asserted that food-based vocational skills offer the most immediate pathway to self-reliance due to constant market demand; Akintola (2019) opined that competency in areas like sewing, food production and entrepreneurial management can provide economic opportunities for out-of school girls, skills gained from these areas can enable them to start and manage small businesses or engage in income- generating activities while Zongoro and Msheliza (2021) argued that garment construction skills are

fundamental to youth empowerment in Nigeria. Therefore, this study identifies the specific competency needs in Home Economics that are essential for the gainful employment of out-of-school girls.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing number of out- of- school girl-children in Nigeria, particularly in Niger State has become a major concern and a serious socio- economic challenge. Many of these girls lack access to formal education and employable vocational skills needed for self- reliance and sustainable livelihood. Although Home Economics Education provides practical skills for employment and entrepreneurship, many out –of-school-girls in Niger State have not acquired the necessary competencies in areas such as catering and food preservation, clothing and textile construction and entrepreneurial management. In addition, existing vocational programmes in Niger State appear inadequate in equipping out- of -school girls with relevant market-driven and entrepreneurial skills for gainful employment. It is against this backdrop that this study is set to identify the specific competency needs in areas such as catering and food preservation, clothing and Textile construction and entrepreneurial management for gainful employment of out-of-school girls in Niger State.

Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study was to investigate the competency needs have out-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the catering and food preservation competencies needed by out- of- school girl- children for gainful employment in Niger State.
2. Identify the clothing and textile construction competencies needed by



out- of- school girl- children for gainful employment in Niger State.

3. Assess the entrepreneurial management competencies needed by out- of- school girl- children for gainful employment in Niger State.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions

1. What are the Catering, baking and food preservation competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?
2. What are the Clothing construction and Textiles competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?
3. What are the Entrepreneurial Management competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design allows for the systematic collection of data from a representative sample to describe the specific competency needs of the target population

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population consisted of 450 stakeholders in Niger State, including Home Economics instructors, Ministry of Education officials, and NGO coordinators. A sample of 210 respondents was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure geographic representation across Niger State. The instrument was a self-structured 4-point Likert scale questionnaire titled "Home Economics Competencies for Gainful Employment Questionnaire (HECGEQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in Home Economics and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.86, indicating high reliability. Data Collection and Analysis: Data were collected personally and through assistants. Analysis was performed using Mean and Standard Deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision-making.

Results

The results of the study were presented in Tables 1 to 3.

Research Question One

What are the Catering, Baking and Food Preservation competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Catering, Baking and Food Preservation Competencies

S/no	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Ability to preserve local seasonal fruits/vegetables.	2.87	0.78	Needed
2.	Proficiency in standard hygienic food handling, sanitation, and safety protocols for public consumption.	3.72	0.48	Needed
3.	Competency in commercial baking and confectionery production (bread, cakes, and local snacks).	3.58	0.61	Needed
4.	Skills in large-scale meal planning, portion control, and event catering logistics for social gatherings.	3.41	0.7	Needed
5.	Knowledge of modern food packaging, labeling, and branding techniques to enhance market appeal.	3.49	0.55	Needed
6.	Ability to utilize traditional and modern equipment for bulk food processing and storage.	3.55	0.58	Needed
4.	Proficiency in the production of local drinks and juices using indigenous healthy ingredients.	3.38	0.64	Needed

5. Competency in calculating food costs and setting competitive prices to ensure business profitability.	3.60	0.50	Needed
Construct Mean	3.34	0.78	Needed

The results from Table 1 indicate a strong consensus that food-related competencies are essential, as evidenced by the Construct Mean of 3.34. Proficiency in standard hygienic food handling achieved the highest individual mean (3.72), followed by competency in calculating food costs and setting competitive prices (3.60) and commercial baking (3.58). While the preservation of local seasonal fruits recorded a lower mean of 2.87, it remains significantly above the 2.50 threshold, indicating that stakeholders view the entire spectrum of food

science as necessary for market entry. The high rating for hygienic protocols implies that vocational training must transition from domestic "cooking" to professional "food safety," as certification in hygiene is the primary factor that will allow out-of-school girls to access formal catering contracts.

Research Question Two

What are the Clothing construction and Textiles competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Clothing Construction and Textile Competencies

S/no	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Proficiency in the identification, selection, and handling of various fabric types (cotton, lace, Ankara) based on garment utility.	3.55	0.58	Needed
2.	Ability to take accurate body measurements and translate them into garment specifications.	3.62	0.49	Needed
3.	Competency in free-hand cutting and the interpretation of basic clothing patterns for various female attires.	3.52	0.58	Needed
4.	Proficiency in the operation, threading, and routine maintenance of manual and industrial sewing machines.	3.68	0.5	Needed
5.	Ability to execute various sewing stitches and seam finishes (plain, French, and overcasting) for garment durability.	3.59	0.51	Needed
6.	Skills in fabric decoration techniques such as tie-dye (Adire), batik, and traditional embroidery.	3.44	0.63	Needed
7.	Competency in garment detailing, including the attachment of zippers, buttons, hooks, and neck finishes.	3.6	0.47	Needed
8.	Knowledge of clothing repair, alterations, and the creative "upcycling" of old garments for resale.	3.35	0.69	Needed
9.	Proficiency in the use of pressing equipment and steam irons for professional garment finishing and presentation.	3.48	0.55	Needed
10.	Ability to estimate fabric yardage and calculate the total cost of production for different clothing designs.	3.64	0.52	Needed
	Construct mean	3.55	0.55	Needed

The interpretation of the second research question reveals that technical mastery of industrial equipment and precision in garment finishing are perceived as indispensable vocational assets, yielding a robust Construct Mean of 3.55. The highest mean in this category was for the operation and maintenance of manual and industrial sewing machines (3.68), followed by estimating fabric yardage and calculating production costs (3.64). Other technical areas, such as garment detailing (3.60) and taking accurate body measurements (3.62), also showed high levels of agreement among

respondents. The dominance of machine maintenance and industrial operation in the results implies that existing training centers in Niger State may be obsolete if they rely solely on manual machines. To ensure gainful employment, there is an urgent implication for the government to invest in industrial-grade technology.

Research Question Three

What are the Entrepreneurial Management competencies needed by out-of-school girl-children for gainful employment in Niger State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Entrepreneurial Management Competencies

S/no	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Ability to develop a simple business plan and set realistic financial goals for a Home Economics micro-enterprise.	3.55	0.56	Needed
2.	Proficiency in basic record-keeping, including the documentation of daily sales, expenses, and profit margins.	3.7	0.44	Needed
3.	Skills in digital marketing and the use of social media platforms to promote vocational services to a wider audience.	3.48	0.62	Needed
4.	Competency in customer relationship management, effective communication, and business ethics.	3.62	0.49	Needed
5.	Ability to identify local market gaps, analyze competitors, and source quality raw materials cost-effectively.	3.57	0.54	Needed
6.	Proficiency in time management and the organization of work schedules to meet customer deadlines.	3.51	0.59	Needed
7.	Knowledge of basic credit management and how to reinvest profits back into the growth of the business.	3.66	0.47	Needed
Construct mean		3.56	0.86	Needed

The analysis of the third research question yielded the highest Construct Mean of 3.56, proving that stakeholders believe a vocational skill is only as valuable as the business logic supporting it. Proficiency in basic record-keeping, including the documentation of sales and profit margins,

achieved the highest mean (3.70), followed by knowledge of credit management and reinvestment (3.66). The ability to identify market gaps (3.57) and maintain customer relationships (3.62) also highlighted the critical nature of professional "soft skills" in the informal economy. The high ratings for



financial literacy (record-keeping and credit management) imply that the "death" of small businesses among youth is primarily due to a lack of financial discipline rather than a lack of craft. This implies that any vocational intervention that excludes entrepreneurial management is likely to fail. There is a clear implication that training must include modules on how to separate personal funds from business capital.

Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that stakeholders view Catering, baking and Food Preservation as a critical competency need (Mean = 3.65). This finding is strongly supported by Ojo (2018), who asserted that food-based vocational skills offer the most immediate pathway to self-reliance due to constant market demand. Furthermore, the emphasis on hygienic handling and safety aligns with the observations of Anyakoha (2015), who noted that professionalizing domestic skills through scientific standards is necessary to transform them into "gainful" employment rather than mere subsistence labor.

The findings show that Clothing construction and Textiles competencies are highly needed (Mean = 3.55). This result corroborates the study by Zongoro and Msheliza (2021), who argued that garment construction skills are fundamental to youth empowerment in Nigeria and require modern pedagogical approaches to remain competitive. Additionally, the need for pattern drafting and fabric dyeing competencies mirrors the research of Eze and Udoh (2019), which highlighted that specialized technical skills in textiles are the primary drivers for reducing the vulnerability of marginalized girls by providing them with a saleable craft.

The results highlight Entrepreneurial Management as a core necessity (Mean = 3.58). This supports the position of

Chukwuka and Apaokueze (2024), who argued that entrepreneurial competence is the defining factor between business sustainability and enterprise mortality. Moreover, the finding regarding digital marketing and record-keeping aligns with the research of Wilfred-Bonse (2020), who maintained that for vocational training to revamp the unemployment trend, it must be integrated with robust entrepreneurship education to allow the female child to manage her own micro-enterprise successfully.

Conclusion

The analysis of the data collected for this study revealed several key outcomes. First, it established that competencies in local food preservation, commercial baking, and hygienic handling are critical requirements for out-of-school girls, serving as the most immediate pathways to economic entry in Niger State. Second, findings showed a high demand for technical competencies in industrial machine operation, pattern drafting, and fabric dyeing, which stakeholders identified as the primary drivers for transitioning from unskilled labor to professional fashion entrepreneurship. Third, the study indicated that vocational skills alone are insufficient without management competencies, as proficiency in record-keeping, digital marketing, and business planning are essential for preventing enterprise mortality. Based on these outcomes, it was concluded that Home Economics is not merely a domestic field of study but a strategic economic intervention essential for the socio-economic re-integration of out-of-school girl-children in Niger State. The findings provide empirical evidence that Catering, baking and Food Preservation, Clothing construction and Textiles, and Entrepreneurial Management represent the "triad of empowerment" necessary to transition marginalized girls



from a state of economic dependency to one of self-reliance. Furthermore, the study concludes that when vocational training is aligned with the practical demands of the local informal economy and reinforced with business management skills, the prospects for gainful employment increase exponentially. Ultimately, the systematic acquisition of these Home Economics competencies serves as a vital tool for reducing female unemployment, curbing social vulnerability, and fostering a sustainable culture of entrepreneurship among the out-of-school population in Niger State.

Recommendations:

The study recommended that

1. Government should provide industrial equipment to training centers.
2. Resource personnel should integrate mandatory business incubation in training.
3. Government should provide startup kits (sewing machines, ovens) to graduates.

References

Adeyemo, S, A. (2016). Home Economics Education: A Tool for Sustainable Development. *Internional Journal of Home Economics*, 9 (2), 163-170.

Akintola, O. (2019) Empowering Out- of School Girls through Vocvational Home Economics Education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 66(1)56-61.

Anyakoha, E. U. (2015). Home Economics for Schools and Colleges. Onitsha: African-FEP Publishers.

Chukwuka, E. J., & Apaokueze, T. N. (2024). Entrepreneurial competencies in Home Economics education. *British Journal of Contemporary Education*, 5(2), 1-13.

Eze, T. O., & Udoh, E. P. (2019). Home Economics as a tool for national development. *Nigerian Journal of Home Economics Education*, 15(4), 22-34.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Nigeria Report (2022). Labour Force Statistics: Unemployment and Underemployment. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com>.

Ojo, A. (2018). Home Economics Curriculum as a Tool for Women Empowerment in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Home Economics*, 16 (2)101-110.

UNESCO (2022). New estimation of out-of-school children in Nigeria. UNESCO Publishing.

UNICEF Report (2020). Promoting Gender Equality and Youth Development in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com>

Wilfred-Bonse, K. U. (2020). Tapping Potentials of the Female-Child. *Journal of Technology and Industrial Studies*, 3(22), 248-255.

Zongoro, A., & Msheliza, E. A. (2021). Reformation of Home Economics curriculum. *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research*, 5(4), 40-45.