

The Role of Guidance and Counselling Services in Promoting the Study of Home Economics in Senior High Schools in Bolgatanga Municipality

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Abstract

The study examined the role of guidance and counselling services in promoting the study of home economics in the Bolgatanga Municipality. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Simple random and proportional representation methods were used to select a sample size of 200 students from a total of 332. Questionnaire was used to obtain data from the students. The results revealed that, improvement of knowledge on nutrition, development of good home management skills and self-reliant skills are the benefits of home economics. In addition, the results indicated that high cost and misconception that home economics is for female students are factors that militate against the study of home economics. Besides, the study showed that guidance and counselling services promote the study of home economics by managing and dispelling misconceptions, equip students with effective study skills and encourage the use of excursions to stimulate students' interest in the study of home economics. The study recommended that cost of practical fees and equipment be provided by government to minimise the high cost associated with the study of home economics. Besides, counsellors should organize

career seminars at secondary school levels to dispel misconceptions and motivate male students to pursue home economics programmes.

Keywords: Guidance and Counselling Services, Perception of Students, Home Economics, Bolgatanga Municipality

Introduction

Babayaju and Obalowu (2013) view home economics as an education for living. To them, it is the study of all that relates to the home and family. It is the area of study that provides the necessary knowledge guiding and assisting human beings to be able to attain more self-reliance and fulfilled lives. They emphasised that home economics deals with all that aspect of family living drawing knowledge from many disciplines such as Biology, Physics, Social Studies and the Arts, and unifying the knowledge drawn to teach people how to determine the needs of individuals and families.

Goldstein (2012) outlined the benefits of studying home economics to include the following: First, home economics help students develop valuable skills that will be relevant and useful for the rest of their lives, second, assist students make informed decisions about what they eat, third, provide students with information about nutrition and how to prepare healthy meals, fourth, help students learn to manage their finances and avoid debt as independent adults.

In spite of the above benefits accrued to the study of home economics, Babayaju and Obalowu (2013) enumerated a number of factors that militate against the study of home economics in schools. Such factors include: misconception that home economics is for

females or academically weak students, lack of interest from students and support from parents to study home economics; high cost involved in the study of home economics, ignorance about career opportunities of home economics and the feeling that the study of home economics is time consuming. One cannot tell whether students in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality also exhibit the same perceptions and misconceptions about home economics. This is where the role of guidance and counselling services becomes crucial in the optimum educational delivery. Guidance and counselling services prepare students to assume increase responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices (Kauchak, 2011). This means that guidance and counselling can be used to address the negative perceptions and misconceptions associated with the study of home economics, hence the need for the study.

Despite the benefits of home economics, it continues to experience low enrolments in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality. There are those who think that senior high schools in the municipality do not have the requisite study materials and resources to make the study of home economics attractive. Also high cost involved in the study of home economics, lack of interest from students, misconception that home economics is for females; ignorance about career opportunities of home economics and the feeling that the study of home economics is time consuming bedevil the progress of the course.

Although a lot of studies have been done with regard to the topic, most of them are alien to the Ghanaian context. It appears no study has specifically targeted this topic in

the Bolgatanga Municipality. It is against this background that the study is deemed necessary. It sought to interrogate the role of guidance and counselling services in promoting the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality to ascertain the trend.

Objective of the Study

The study sought to address the following objectives:

- ❖ examine students knowledge on the benefits of studying home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality.
- ❖ interrogate factors that militate against the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality.
- ❖ explore the roles guidance and counselling services play in the promotion of the study of home economics in senior schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study. They include:

1. What knowledge do students have about the benefits of studying home economics in senior high school in the Bolgatanga Municipality?
2. What factors militate against the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality?
3. What roles do guidance and counselling services play in the promotion of the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality?

Research Design

The study covered three senior high schools (Zuarungu, Bolgatanga Girls & Zamse Senior High/Technical Schools) out of the four public senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality. The remaining school (Bolgatanga Senior High) was used for pilot study. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is a design that permits the researcher to describe the relationships that exist between non-manipulated variables. Since the researchers were not interested in manipulating variables, this design was considered appropriated. Also, since this study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information from students about guidance and counselling services and home economics, the descriptive design was the most appropriate for the study. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990) state that descriptive designs are appropriate in obtaining information concerning current status of phenomena.

Population and Sample Size

The population of the study was made of all second year students who pursue home economics programme in the 2015/2016 academic year in the four public senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality. These groups of students were preferred to the first and third year students in the sense that the first year students had not stayed long enough in the schools and may be handicapped in providing relevant information required for the study. Regarding the final year students, they were preparing for their West African Examination Certificated and may not be willing to participate in the

study due to inadequate time. Proportional representation and simple random methods were used to select 200 students from an accessible population of 332 from the three schools selected for the study. See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Size for Students

Name of School	Population	Sample
Zuarungu Senior High	107	64
Bolgatanga Girls Senior High	110	66
Zamse Secondary/ Technical	115	70
Total	332	200

Sub-sample of Students for Interview

With regard to the interview, ten (10) students comprising six (6) females and four (4) males were selected from the three sampled schools based on convenience, interest and willingness to participate. The interview sought information from students on the perceived benefits, militating factors against the study of home economics as well as the role guidance and counselling services play in promoting the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was close ended and rated on a five-point likert type scale stating from “Strongly Agree” (SA) with a score of 5 to “Strongly Disagree” (SD) with a score of 1. The content of the questionnaire was validated by two experts in the field of guidance and counselling (University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba) one expert each in the field of Home Economics and Measurement and

Evaluation (University for Development Studies). The test re-tests method was used using twenty (20) students from Bolgatanga Senior High School students who were not part of the sampled schools. These students shared similar characteristics with the students who were used for the study. The results of the test re-tests yielded a reliability coefficient score of 0.75. This implied that the questionnaire was reliable and therefore was used to gather data for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The questionnaire collected was coded and fed in SPSS Version 16 software package and analyzed descriptively. The data was organised into frequency counts and converted into percentages and presented in tables. This formed the basis for discussions. The interview data recorded was transcribed, coded and built into relationships. Themes then were developed from the relationships for discussion.

Analysis of Results

Bio-data of Students

The demographic data collected in the study included name of school and sex of respondents as presented below:

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Schools

School	Sample Population	Percent
Zuarungu Sec.	70	35
Zamse Sec/Tech.	64	32
Bolgatanga Girls	66	33
Total	200	100

Table 2 indicates that 70 respondents (35%) were from Zuarungu Senior High while 66 respondents representing 33% were from Bolgatanga Girls High. The remaining 64 respondents constituting 32% were from Zamse Secondary/Technical School. The differences in the population of the schools accounted for the variation of the sample size with Zuarungu Senior High having the largest sample size. The variation of sample size does not negatively affect the results of the study because proportional representation was used.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	20	10
Female	180	90
Total	200	100
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents 180 constituting 90% were females as compared to 20 respondents representing 10% minority males. It is clear from the above that females dominated home economics programmes in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality. Uju (2013) corroborated this by stating that male students are less represented in home economics programmes of study in Nigerian schools. The implication of this is that, men will be less represented in home economics related careers.

Research question 1: What knowledge do students have about the benefits of studying home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality? Students were presented with a list of statements about the benefits of studying home economics. They were required to indicate their opinion whether a particular statement is a benefit of studying home economics or not. For simplicity of analysis, the five likert scale was reclassified into a three point likert scale. Thus, “strongly disagree and disagree” were merged together as “disagree”. Similarly, “strongly agree and agree” were merged together as “agree” while not sure stood independently. See Table 4 below.

Table 4: Students Knowledge on Benefits of Studying Home Economics in Bolgatanga Municipality

Benefits of Home Economics	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Improves students’ knowledge about nutrition	11 (6)	2 (1)	187 (93)
Assist students develop good home mgt skills	9 (5)	6 (3)	185 (92)
Equip students with self-reliant skills for self-Employment	15 (7)	5 (3)	180 (90)
Equip students with occupational skills for public employment	18 (9)	5 (3)	177 (88)
Assist students with financial mgt skills	37 (19)	13 (6)	150 (75)

Table 4 indicates that, majority of the respondents (187: 93%) agreed that studying home economics help them improve their knowledge about nutrition. On the contrary, 11 respondents representing 6% disagreed to the statement while 2 respondents

constituting 1% were not sure whether the study of home economics improves their knowledge on nutrition or not. Also, majority of the respondents (187: 92%) opined that home economics assist them develop good home management skills as compared to 9 respondents representing 5% who disagreed. The remaining 6 respondents representing 3% could not indicate their opinion as to whether home economics could assist them develop good home management skills or not. As to whether home economics equips students with self-reliant skills for self-employment, 180 respondents representing 90% agreed while 15 respondents representing 7% disagreed. The remaining 5 respondents representing 3% were not sure. Besides, Table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents (177: 88%) were of the opinion that the study of home economics could equip them with occupational skills for public employment. On the contrary, 18 respondents representing 9% disagreed while 5 respondents representing 3% were not sure. On the part of home economics assisting students with financial management skills, 150 (75%) respondents agreed as compared to 37 (19%) respondents who disagreed while 13 (6%) respondents were not sure.

Research question 2: What factors militate against the study of home economics in senior high schools in Bolgatanga Municipality? Two hundred students responded to a list of items and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Factors that Militate against the Study of Home Economics in Senior High Schools in Bolgatanga Municipality

Militating Factors	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
High cost associated to the study of the subject	12 (5)	8 (4)	180 (90)
Misconception that home economics is for female students	22 (11)	--	178 (89)
Perception that home economics is for academically weak students	15 (8)	10 (5)	175 (87)
Students perception that studying home economics is time consuming	31 (16)	24 (12)	145 (78)
In adequate teaching and learning materials	32 (16)	12 (6)	156 (72)

Table 5 reveals that majority of the respondents (180: 90%) were of the view that high cost was a factor that militate against the study of home economics. On the contrary, 12 (5%) respondents disagreed while 8 (4%) respondents were not sure. Regarding the misconception that home economics is for female students, 178 (89%) respondents agreed as compared to 22 (11%) respondents who disagreed. With reference to the perception that home economics is for academically weak students, 175 (87%) respondents agreed as compared to 15 (8%) respondents who disagreed while 10 (5%) respondents were not sure. On the item that students perceive the study of home economics as time consuming, 145 (78%) respondents agreed as compared to 31 (16%) respondents who disagreed while 24 (12%) were sure. With reference to inadequate

teaching and learning materials, 157 (72%) of the respondents agreed while 32 (16%) respondents disagreed. The remaining 12 (6%) respondents were not sure.

Research question 3: What roles do guidance and counselling play in promoting the study of home economics in senior high schools in Bolgatanga Municipality? The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Promoting the Study of Home Economics in Senior High Schools in Bolgatanga Municipality

Role of Guidance and Counselling	Disagree Freq. (%)	Not sure Freq. (%)	Agree Freq. (%)
G& C services help home economics students manage and dispel misconceptions and negative perceptions about home economics.	6 (3)	9 (5)	185 (92)
G& C services assist home economics students develop effective study skills.	21 (10)	22 (11)	160 (80)
G & C services assist home economics students manage and cope with examination anxieties, stress and fears.	28 (14)	27 (13)	145 (73)
G& C encourages the use of field trips/excursions to promote the study of home economics.	25 (12)	37 (19)	138 (69)
G& C encourages the formation of home economics clubs.	36 (18)	30 (15)	134 (67)

Table 6 indicates that, majority of the respondents (185: 92%) opined that guidance and counselling enable them manage and dispel misconceptions and negative perceptions about the study of home economics. On the other hand, 6 (3%) respondents disagreed to the statement while 9 (5%) respondents were not sure. On the item, that guidance and counselling assist home economics students develop effective study skills, 160 (80%) respondents agreed as compared to 21 (10%) respondents who disagreed while 22 (11%) respondents could not indicate their opinion. Regarding how guidance and counselling services assist home economics students manage and cope with examination anxieties, stress and fears, 145 (73%) respondents agreed as compared to 28 (14%) respondents who disagreed while 27 (13%) respondents were not sure. With reference to guidance and counselling encouraging the use of field trips/excursions to promote the study of home economics, 138 (69%) respondents agreed as compared to 25 (12%) respondents who did not agree while 37 (19%) respondents were undecided. On the item that guidance and counselling encourages the formation of home economics clubs as part of promoting the study of home economics, 134 (67%) respondents agreed as compared to 36 (18%) respondents who disagreed while 30 (15%) respondents were not sure.

Discussion of Results

Table 4 provides results on students' knowledge about the benefits of studying home economics. First, the study revealed that, home economics improve students' knowledge about nutrition. In a similar vein, some students made comments during the interview that support the notion that the study of home economics improves their

knowledge on nutritional components of foods. One of such comment is indicated: as follows:

“Everything of human beings well-being and health is centered on the kind of food they eat. Knowledge in nutrition helps us maintain balanced diet by adopting healthy eating habits. This helps boost immune system and minimise disease. Besides, nutritional knowledge enables us to prepare food for people with special dietary needs to avoid obesity and health complications”.

Nutrition refers to the process of obtaining and providing food necessary for health and growth. Having good knowledge in nutrition implies that students will make the right choices about the food to eat that can help them achieve optimum health in life. This finding is in tandem with other researchers. For instance, Jannuzzi (2001) concluded in a study that home economics help students learn about nutrition and how to prepare healthy meals to prevent medical problems later in life, such as diabetes, heart attacks and obesity. Similarly, Fawzi, Msamanga, Spiegelman and Hunter (2005) found that home economics equip individuals to become future dietitians and nutritionists and be able to advice individuals about healthier dietary habits. Also, the study revealed that home economics assist students develop good home management skills. This means that through home management skills, students can organize and take proper care of their homes and possessions. This finding shares similar view with that of Goldstein (2012) who revealed that home economics equip students with skills in consumer education, interior design, home furnishing, cleaning, handicrafts, food preservation, hygiene, child development, managing money and family relationships. Equipping students with self-reliant skills was another finding of the study. Similarly, expressions

made by some students during the interview session indicated their agreement that home economics equip them with self-reliant skills for self-employment. One of such expression is as follows:

“Home economics is practical oriented and gives you both employable and self-reliant skills. It exposes you to the job market as well as equips you with functional and life skills which you can do things on your own. You can start your own business. You will get something to do after completing senior high school as compared to other programmes. For instance, you can establish a restaurant or chop bar and become an employer or work in a restaurant as an employee”.

By this it means, students are equipped with practical skills to make them self-reliant and entrepreneurs for self-employment. Affirming this finding, Nwankwo (2005) described home economics as a skill-oriented course as well as a vocational subject that equip students with relevant knowledge and skills for self-employment and self-reliance. In another breath, Chonogor and Onyebueke, (2003) state that home economics is a vocational subject, which enables students to be gainfully employed and self-reliant.

Table 5 provides results on factors that militate against the study of home economics in the Bolgatanga Municipality. Some of such factors are high cost associated with the study of home economics. Apart from paying school fees and practical fees, home economics students have to spend extra money in buying ingredients and fabrics for their practical work. These increase their financial burden as compared to the General Arts and Business programmes students. Sharing similar view with this finding, Nelson and Zeratsky (2009) reported in a study that the cost associated with the study of home economics was identified as a hindrance to the study of the subject in schools. Cimbaro

(2008) and Arubayi and Obunadike (2011) observed that lack of funds for the purchase of materials for home economics practicals hinders the effective teaching and learning of these subjects. In addition, a misconception that home economics is for female students is another militating factor against home economics. Similarly, comments from some students during the interview supported this assertion. This is what one of the students said:

“There are some students and parents who think that home economics is for females. Male students who pursue home economics are mocked at or teased. Some say male students will be cooks for their future wives. Also, some parents prefer their male wards to study science, general arts and business but have no problem with their daughters studying home economics”.

It is worrisome for students to have the misconception that home economics programmes in the senior high school are for females. This misconception has the tendency to limit male students’ interest and choices of home economics related careers. This finding corroborates other findings. For example, Nwankwo (2004) found that societal misconception and negative peer attitude, community attitude, and parents’ attitude among others constitute barriers to male students studying home economics. Also, Uju (2013) asserted that most male students perceive the study of home economics as beneficial to only girls. Again, the perceptions that studying home economics is time consuming constitute another militating factor. Apart from time spent in class for lessons, home economics students undertake practicals which mean they have to spend extra time going to the market to purchase ingredients needed for the practical work in food, clothing and textiles in their practical halls. This finding is consistent with that of

Nelson and Zeratsky (2009) who reported that time consuming is associated to the study of home economics. In another study, Kunkwenzu (1997) affirmed that students have perception that the organization of the practicals aspect of home economics subjects is time consuming. In-adequate teaching and learning materials were identified as militating factors. The inadequate teaching and learning materials means teachers teach abstract terms. This largely undermines the quality and the delivery of home economics as a practical oriented subject. Affirming this finding, Aroboya (2010) concluded in a study that lack of teaching and learning materials lead to poor quality teaching which in turn have negative effects on learning abilities, poor motivation and frustration on the part of the students studying home economics.

Table 6 provides results on the role of guidance and counselling services in promoting the study of home economics in senior high schools in the Bolgatanga Municipality. First, the study revealed that guidance and counselling services assist home economic students manage and dispel misconceptions and negative perceptions about home economics. Here are comments from two students justifying the role of counselling in promoting the study of home economics: These are comments from three students during the interview session justifying the role of counselling in promoting the study of home economics:

- i. *“Counselling plays a major role in supporting students study home economics. I went through it myself before I changed my programme from general arts to home economics. I was admitted into the general arts class but when I told my parents that I wanted home economics, they asked me to see the school counsellor. After series of discussion with the counsellor, I took the decision to do home economics”.*

“Some students in the home economics class did not choose home economics as a programme. So, they don’t want other students to know that they are in home economics class. They wish they should have pursued science and other programmes than home economics. Such students are not happy, so they really need counselling to develop their interest. Also, most of the male students are not comfortable with practicals, so they avoid them. I think counselling will help a lot to stimulate and arouse these students interest positively towards home economics”.

- ii. *“I can say most people do not value home economics. Some think that those who pursue home economics are academically weak. Others think home economics is self-taught at home. Therefore, there is no need spending time and money studying it in school. Besides, others think it is a normal duty for women to cook and manage the home. As a result, they have been taught right from childhood. So, they don’t need to study their duties in school again”.*

It is clear from the comments of the respondents that some students, teachers, parents and the general public have the negative perception that home economics is a profession for females. Others say it is for those who are not academically bright. This situation is worrisome in the sense that it can discourage male students from perusing the programme in schools. However, through guidance and counselling services students are assisted to minimize or dispel these perceptions. Corroborating this finding Igwenagha (2007) concluded in a study that due to the misconception that home economics is for women, the use of guidance and counselling services right from primary schools will go help correct this misconception. Also, guidance and counselling services help home economic students acquire and develop effective study skills. Home economics students who seek for guidance and counselling services will be assisted to develop good study skills like notes taking skills, time management skills, reading strategies, among others. This could help improve their academic performance in the

discipline. Sharing a similar view with this finding, Abid (2006) found out in a study that, school guidance and counselling programs had significant influence in improving and fostering positive study habits and study skills of students, which enhanced their academic achievements. Additionally, the study revealed that, guidance and counselling services encourage the use of field trips/excursions to promote the study of home economics. Corroborating this finding, Beale (2000) posits that field trips are action-involvement oriented career activities readily available to counsellors and teachers that enable students to experience the world of work first-hand. Ovule (2001) stresses the need for home economics students to be taken for excursion to various home economics establishments such as Clothing and Textiles Industries, Home Management and Food and Nutrition as a way of motivating students to study home economics. According to Uju (2013), field trips and excursion to hotels, tourist centers, food and beverage industries and breweries stimulate interest and attract students to study home economics.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the benefits of studying home economics are varied. They include: the improvement of students' knowledge about nutrition, the development of good home management skills, equipping students with self-reliant skills and financial management skills.

Also, the study established that high cost associated with the study of home economics, misconception that home economics is for female students, perception that studying

home economics is time consuming and inadequate teaching and learning materials are factors that militate against the study of home economics in the Bolgatanga municipality.

Finally, the study concluded that, guidance and counselling services play diverse roles in promoting the study of home economics. These include managing and dispelling misconceptions and negative perceptions about home economics, helps home economics students acquire and develop effective study skills and encourage the use of field trips/excursions to stimulate students' interest in the study of home economics.

Recommendations

1. Cost of practical fees and equipment should be borne by government to minimise the high cost associated with the study of home economics.
2. Also, Government and Parent Teacher Association should collaborate to provide funds for the purchase of teaching and learning materials to enhance the study of home economics.
3. Besides, counsellors should organize career seminars and talk shows at secondary school levels to dispel misconceptions and motivate male students to pursue home economics programmes.

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