

TACKLING POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC CHALLENGES THROUGH HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION FOR FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY

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Lead Paper presented at the 12th National Conference of Home Economics Professional Association of Nigeria (HEPAN) held at College of Education (Technical).

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The origin of the coronavirus is said to have been traced to the Wuhan seafood market in Wuhan, China in late 2019 (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The outbreak *was* declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and on 11th of February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 as the name of this new disease.

On March 11 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) officially declared a global pandemic. Since then, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a dramatic effect, not least of which is the clear demonstration of the fragility of human life, with more than 170 million infections and 3.5 million deaths in just over a year (Worldometer, 2021) and with no end in sight. The advent of this global pandemic is not without precedent, with many pandemics changing the course of human history over centuries, including leprosy; the Black Death, plagues, cholera, measles, the Russian, Spanish and Asian flus, HIV/AIDS and, in the 21st century, SARS (History.com, 2020). One of the key strategies for reducing the spread of the virus has been to maintain a safe distance from others to avoid transmission, and to that end, since the pandemic was declared, most people around the world have been directed to isolate at home for a period, alongside employing personal protective behaviours such as wearing masks, washing hands frequently, and avoiding crowds for the individual and family safety.

Family: Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption and often characterized by common residence and economic cooperation. The family exists in a society. Society, however, is changing in various ways as a result of globalization, Covid 19 pandemic and related challenges. The family is also changing and facing

many challenges too. All the changes and challenges have implications for individuals and family as they manage scarce resources to meet their ever increasing needs. It is true that the heart of Home Economics is individuals, the family and the society. Home Economics is so intricately interwoven with the family and the society at large that they cannot be separated. All the problems facing the family today have themes for Home Economics. How effective then are we as home economists? Are we meeting the mandates of Home Economics? Or we just watching the world pass us by. Kim (1996) stressed that Home Economics in a modern society must systematically investigate humankind with regard to the idea of cooperative responsibility. How do we fit into this as Home Economics?

Home Economics has as its area of activity, the development, use and management of human and materials resources, for the greater welfare of individuals, families and human society in its entirety (Anyakoha, 2008). It strives to solve the most pressing problems that challenge the families presently, as well as those that are possibly going to emerge in the future. Today, there are many issues and problems that pose various forms of challenges to individuals and families these include environmental degradation, poverty, human right violation (including child abuse), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), information technology, food scarcity, various economic reform measures, inflation, globalization and urbanization, privatization, Covid-19 Pandemic among others. These issues and problems impact directly or indirectly on the family and therefore have implications for Home Economics.

A futuristic vision requires that you are certain about the past and the present. We must know where we are coming from, where we are now, and where we want to go from where we are now. If we don't know where we are going, how will we will know how and where to turn to? Knowing the past will clarify the

present and set pace for the future. Projecting the future, gives us a kind of lens for viewing our times and our current dilemma in Home Economics. It is when we look at the past and the present critically that we can be challenged to straighten up, record priorities and put the house in order.

Reflections on the past are important that we know our history, the developments, the ups and downs the strength and the weaknesses to be able to move on. Since the Lake Placid conference over 100 years ago, the major goal of Home Economics has remained to achieve optional and sustainable living for individuals, families and the society at large. Home Economics consistently draws from a range of multiple disciplines. The capacity to synthesize through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry is a great strength for Home Economics and demonstrates diverse interlinks. The ethics of the professions is based on the value of caring, justice, communicating, reflection and visionary insight.

COVID-19 Challenges on Families.

Pervasive Poverty and Poor Healthcare

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating, tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million, could increase by up to 132 million by the end of the year (ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO, 2020)

Workforce

Millions of enterprises faced an existential threat. Nearly half of the worlds' 3.3 billion global workforce are at risk of losing their livelihoods. Informal economy workers are particularly vulnerable because the majority lack social protection and access to quality health care and the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many are unable to feed themselves and their families. For most, no income means no food, or at best less food and less nutritious food.

Cash Flow Shortages as A Result of Business Failure and Job Loss

COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has forced many small and large businesses to fold up due to the lockdown, and other relative factors such as cash flow challenges stemming from unprecedented decline in sales, small business operational difficulties due to COVID-19 restrictive measures, Entrepreneurs non-access to working capital or interest free soft loans due to reduced lending by financial institutions, disruption of commerce and other trade activities in most industrial sectors in Nigeria.

This is more as micro, small and medium business establishments in Nigeria are known to be more vulnerable to crisis events due to resource constraints, weak market positioning, and several other factors. These situations are believed to apply as well to other developing countries and a few developed countries globally during pandemic crisis.

Increased Stress and Worry

Rates of trauma stress, anxiety, and depression have increased because of the pandemic where every aspect of our lives has been impacted and we are still figuring out what the priority consequences will be (O'Connor et al., 2020). For example, it is becoming apparent that the prevalence of burnout, hypervigilance and dissociation has had serious mental health consequences for frontline health workers (Miguel-Puga et al., 2021). All of the rapid changes and confronting scenes have complex consequences for individuals and families. We may not truly understand the consequences for years to come.

Difficulties In Families Supply Chain Operations

Border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures have been preventing farmers from accessing markets, including for buying inputs and selling their produce, and agricultural workers from harvesting crops, thus disrupting domestic and international food supply chains and reducing access to healthy, safe and diverse diets. This had made many households resort to stringent coping strategies, such as skipping of food, reducing food consumption, engaging in low-nutrient food and

excessive borrowing (debt) to buy food (Devereux 2018).

Difficulties In Coping With COVID-Related Death of Family Members

The impact of COVID-19 on everyday life has forced change onto the whole human population. As the pandemic unfolds, people are experiencing grief and loss, not only for loved ones who have the disease, but grief and loss of “normal” everyday life. Close interpersonal contact with other humans is a fundamental requirement for positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Isolation is known to cause, perpetuate and exacerbate mental health issues

According to World Health Organization (2020b) report, “the pandemic is increasing demand for mental health services. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Many people may be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, and anxiety.

Post Covid-19 Global and family challenges

1. **Environmental:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had impact on the environment with changes in human activities.

Some of the positive impact includes;

- Lessened water pollution and noise
 - Reduced transport and industrial activities led to improved quality of air.
 - Reduced resource consumption and waste disposal reduced pollution and improved water quality.
 - However, the increased use of personal protective equipment such as face mask, hand gloves, gowns, goggles, face shields etc and their haphazard disposal creates environmental burden
 - Increased municipal waste will lead to air, water and soil pollution.
 - It also lessened the recycling activities which increased environmental pollution (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> retrieved 22/10/22).
2. **Economy:** inequality of wealth distribution, devalued currencies, lower relative buying

power, especially among middle- and low-income populations, and unemployment crisis. The drastic lockdown measures came with a significant economic and social cost. Crime and domestic violence reportedly increased during the period (UNDP, 2020) and many people were unable to exercise their usual income-generating activities with effects most pronounced on vulnerable populations and those living in poverty (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics and The World Bank, 2020).

3. **Technology:** Advancements in technology have strong influence on all the areas of the society. It affects the way the children and parents perceived each other. One can highlight how the reach of technology is breaking barriers between parents and kids and however on the other side the technology is creating a family divide. Parenting in digital age has now become more challenges than ever before! (Richa, 2019). Technology has led to unequal distribution and digital divide, new types of weapons, dangers of Artificial Intelligence (AI), nanotechnology, biotechnology, and big data. The pandemic also cause a huge turn around in the tech world.
4. **Social and Economic Change:** The ways in which the world is changing, in social and economic terms, has major implications for population health, and for health systems. In many regions, the processes of industrialization and urbanization are proceeding at remarkable speed. Profound economic and social changes are happening in a decade, which in the early industrialized world took a century. One consequence is that some countries find themselves addressing the health needs of populations whose social conditions range from the most primitive and economically deprived, to the most advanced and affluent. The speed of industrialization and urbanization can leave health systems, and especially primary health care struggling to adapt infrastructures and capacity to meet new needs leading to continuous struggles in adapting to changes Furthermore there is increasing participation of the private sector and nongovernmental organizations, increasing population mobility, increasing marketing of non-healthy products such as tobacco, alcohol, sugary products and over-processed food

- 5. Changing Health Issues:** There is now a double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases including injuries. From TB, SARs, HIV, Ebola, Lassa fever to obesity, cardiovascular diseases, Diabetes mellitus, mental health issue due to life style or exposure, Corona virus disease (COVID-19). Road traffic-specific death rates in the African Region are persistently higher than the global averages and indeed steadily on the rise. Domestic violence and armed conflict also contribute significantly to the deaths in the African Region

Role of Home Economics in tackling Post Covid-19 family challenges

Home Economists are frontline workers and because we work closely with individuals and families, we will bear witness to the impacts of the pandemic. While uncertainty can cause fear; crises can also form the basis of hope (Deagon & Pendergast, 2014). The multidimensional and multidisciplinary lenses that we utilize in home economics may enable us to identify innovative solutions to support people through this transition phase to the new normal. There have been many moments during the pandemic when people felt the need to contribute in positive ways. For example, social media posts with altruistic messages that wearing face-masks are a part of being in a civil society where it is everyone's responsibility to look after those who are elderly or immune compromised face- in high demand. In response, sewing of face-masks and home economics skills became a news feature (Smith, 2020). Home economics conversation enjoyed a spotlight, with people confined to home and with newfound time reverting to activities such as baking sourdough and sewing, and in so doing conversations about the values and the value that underpins Home Economics (Brady & MacCallum, 2021; de Zwart, 2020). While home economics curriculum differs around the world (Pendergast, 2012), there is a shared theoretical and philosophical base and set of core practices that bind home economics curriculum globally (Pendergast et al., 2013). In 2008 the *IFHE Position Statement—Home Economics in the 21st Century* (IFHE, 2008, p. 1) explicated this global framing of the profession by the position that as a curriculum area, home economics facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional

decisions and actions or preparing them for life. This therefore means that by engaging in home economics curriculum, individuals are enabled to develop capabilities to enhance personal empowerment to act in daily contexts. These contexts are diverse and may include: food, nutrition and health; textiles and clothing; shelter and housing; consumerism and consumer science; household management; design and technology; food science and hospitality; human development and family studies; and, education and community services (IFHE, 2008).

Food and Nutrition

- Good background knowledge of food and nutrition provides information on healthy eating habits, nutritional deficiency, disease prevention, appropriate food choices, food processing, food hygiene practices for healthy living of families.
- Skill acquisition by family members in Dietetics, Nutrition, Food service, Catering, Hotel Management, Teaching, Research, Food Technology will guarantee increased earnings of families for improved standard of living and ability to build resilience to post-COVID shocks.

Clothing and Textile

- Acquisition of saleable skills in Designing, Pattern illustration, Beauty care and Hair Dressing, Dressmaking, Dry Cleaning laundering services, Modelling, Fashion Merchandizing, Weaving, Fabric Dyeing and teaching will provide self or paid employment for individual members of families for income as security to build resilience in times of economic crisis.

Home Management

Home management is the process of using the family's resource to meet the family's needs or goals

- Home management skills in Interior Decoration, Designing, Housekeeping, Advertising and Promotion, Child care, Social Welfare Work are linked with values, standards and goals that give meaning to human lives.

- Therefore, no family can effectively build resilience in the current post-COVID pandemic without quality home management effort.
- The Home Management curriculum at all levels of education needs to be continuously reviewed to include emerging knowledge, skills and attitudes which can equip youth and adults alike to identify and use their resources effectively, evolve and imbibe problem solving and entrepreneurial skills so as to be job creators and not job seekers so that they can be self reliant.

Sustainable lifestyle for families in post Covid-19

Ultimately, sustainable living simply means **making choices and developing habits that are good for the environment**. By making intentional choices that are earth-friendly, your goal is to lower your family's carbon footprint.

Most families want to make environmentally-friendly choices, but they don't know how. Sustainable living doesn't have to be overwhelming; making a few small changes in your family's lifestyle will make a big impact on your family's carbon footprint.

This can be done through the use of 3 R's, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

Your goal should be to reduce waste by making earth-conscious decisions. Similarly, you should choose to reuse items rather than buy something new, and you should recycle whenever and however possible. The **3 R's** are a great guide for making environmentally-friendly decisions for your family.

Some of the Sustainable Lifestyle Tips for Families include:

Conserve energy. Teach your children to turn off lights and electronics when not in use. Make it a habit to use natural light in your home as often as possible. You can also conserve energy by wearing extra clothing layers before you turn the heat on.

Purchase a travel mug and a travel water bottle. Invest in reusable drink containers instead of buying plastic water bottles that will end up in landfills. When you purchase drink, use your own refillable mug.

Reduce your carbon footprint. Vehicle emissions cause major damage to the environment. Therefore, look for opportunities to walk or bike when possible. When you do need a vehicle, carpool to go green

Grow your own food. Creating a family garden will be well worth it. Not only will you have fun, but your children will also learn the value of growing their own food. When shopping for groceries, buy local food to support your local farming community and avoid shipping.

Upgrade your lights. If you have not already upgraded your home with LED lights, the time is now. LED lights use less energy, which means they demand less from power plants. Hence, they are better for the environment.

Conserve water. Talk to your children about the importance of conserving water and make it part of your family's lifestyle. For instance, teach them not to waste water by turning the water off while they brush their teeth or by taking shorter showers. Not leaving your tap on while not being used. Turn it into a family competition to see who can keep the rules.

Avoid disposable, single-use items. When you shop, avoid making the easy, convenient choice at the moment, which will have longer-lasting impacts on the environment. For instance, avoid plastic bags and take your own reusable bags. Stores that sell **Whole Foods** should encourage consumers by not providing plastic bags. Also, avoid purchasing items that are designed for single-use only, such as fruit, snacks and juice boxes. Instead, buy in bulk and use your own reusable containers.

Shop for clothes responsibly. As a family, choose to purchase durable clothing from sustainable sources. Or, choose to shop second-hand at thrift stores.

Recycle as a family. Make recycling a family habit. Set up a family recycling station in your home and teach your children how to identify recycling symbols. Starting to compost will help your kids learn about plants and biology as a plus! Compost food scraps and yard waste.

Buy items made of recycled content, and use and reuse them as much as you can. For instance, use both sides of every page of a notebook before

moving on to the next clean notebook. Use unneeded paper you have printed on as a scratch pad—and for your kids’ drawing supplies.
<https://www.gokid.mobi/top-10-sustainable-lifestyle-and-green-living-tips-for-families/>

Conclusion and Recommendations

The world is changing so fast as a result of Covid-19 pandemic and is becoming more complex to live in. There is need to prepare people both for today and the future in order to survive. Just as we need sustainable families we need sustainability citizens’ people who understand the complex world in which we live, people who can collaborate, advocate and act for positive change. Sustainable citizens make up sustainable families.

Home Economics competency-based curriculum in line with education for sustainable development is advocated to equip learners with the required skills for self and paid jobs to earn decent and sustainable living in the face of COVID-induced global economic crisis.

Using Home Economics Education in harnessing human and materials resources has a whole lot to offer in building sustainable families in post-COVID-19 in Nigeria and other parts of the globe.

Family policies are the main stay of national policies on which interventions for family well-being are based. How many professional Home Economics are involved in Policy Decision Making in Nigeria? How do we get there? Food for thought for all of us

It is very obvious from literature search that there are very few studies in family sustainability and survival in Nigeria. As professional in Home Economics, this is one area of research to explore.

As professionals we also ought to be role models to those we train. Continuous update of our skills and knowledge will go a long way.

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