

Contemporary Family Challenges in The Light of Vision 2030: Imperative for Home Economics at Fifty in Alexandria University

Elizabeth Mngusen Kembe

Professor of Home Science and Management,

Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State -Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Home Economics as a field of study needs to continually connect to the social, political, economic and technological trends of the society in the 21st century. It is a profession that impacts on family and community well-being and will continue to show concerns over issues in the society that directly affects individuals and family.

Home Economics is a broad field of study that is concerned with the welfare of families and communities and seek to improve family lifestyle and enhance the potentials of families and consequently of the communities and societies. Home Economics is a field of study and profession situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities (IFHE, 2008). The multidisciplinary dimensions of Home Economics as a course of study have placed professionals in the competency of impacting positively on vision 2030. This paper will therefore address the contemporary challenges of present-day families and consequently communities and the society across the African continent, examine the vision 2030 goals and the connection between Home Economics and vision 2030.

CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND THE SOCIETY

Throughout human history, one common phenomenon among humanity is the membership of everyone to a family, which is the basic unit of social life. Barnard (2021), defined family as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with one another in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, parents, children, and siblings. Family varies in form across different cultures, but it performs basically the same fundamental function. Labial (2019) stated that family is a place of refuge and security where love and support are sufficient to meet the needs of members of the family. A family is described based on its conjugal and consanguineal rights and responsibilities. Therefore, a family may be composed of parents and their children for the nuclear

family which every individual comes from and may be extended to a compound family made up of complex relationships of extended family members from both sides of the parents.

The African family is uniquely organized to include large group of people with diverse relationships which relate to shared residence, economic and social ties. It is unique in the sense that one person's challenge is everybody's challenge. This is the traditional family description before the influence of education, urbanization and mobility. The family is no longer a concept that can be contemplated within an essentialist notion, rather the concept of the contemporary family has evolved into a fluid ideology that is constantly shifting and changing throughout society Damond (2008). The 'family' is no longer a monolithic notion of a strict structure of a mother, father, children and extended conjugal and consanguineal relationships rather this has been replaced with a structure of families that is fluid and changeable. Contemporary families are inclusive of single parent families, blended families, stepfamilies, homosexual and surrogate families. There are new variants of alternate family structure, and this transcends to the complexity in the society affecting families and communities.

The contemporary family is characterized by high mobility, higher level of education, professional careers, income and a higher social stratum than it used to be in the past, societal demands of work, social ties and a fast paced of urban life including the effect it has on the children growth, value system and choices in life. Contemporary families have witnessed diverse changes especially in the last decade in health, pattern of education, living conditions, social exclusion, parenting challenges, prevalence of crime, decadence in the family and community values, witnessing gradual disintegration of family norms, values and cohesion and incessant crises. The causes according to George (2009) can be ascribed to both internal and external factors which have significantly increased over time.

The pattern of education and even the emphasis on education has been challenged. In some regions, the girl-child is deprived from quality education because of early marriage and unplanned pregnancy, rape and abuse.

Where the girl-child is allowed to go to school in some cases, the boy child is ushered into an early life of business at the neglect of schooling. # Gender discrimination and inequality especially concerning training of girls in (STEM). Global concerns point to the fact of the low representation of women in STEM, (Quinn, 2012). Participation of women in Science and Technology is still low around the world, though it is increasing in the 21st Century (British Council, 2001). While the number of women scientists today seem to be higher than it used to be in the past, women make up 30% of researchers around the world, (UNESCO, 2021). The concern about the low population of women in Science and Technology has social and environmental implications. Women contribute 50% of the nation's population, therefore, a low representation in sciences means, women are excluded from leadership positions requiring knowledge of the sciences, and most importantly is that the opportunities to benefit from scholarship and employment may be underutilized because of low representation. The gender parity index is low in most African countries, out of 54 African Countries on the Global Gender Parity Index (GPI), Namibia has the highest GPI with the most recent value of 1.49. Guinea Bissau has the lowest GPI with the most recent value of 0.06., Nigeria is ranked 25th with an index of 0.69, while Egypt is ranked 11th with 1.04. The implication is that there is disproportionate representation of the gender in favor of the boys in most African countries.

Covid -19 pandemic has created the largest disruption experienced in the educational system. UNESCO (2020) revealed that nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents in the globe are affected by this pandemic. Education has been hit particularly hard by the Covid -19 pandemic with over one billion, five hundred learners out of school impacting 87.6% of the world's total enrolled learners (UN,2020). Before the pandemic, progress in education was already too slow to achieve Goal 4 by 2030. One year into the crisis, two in three students were still affected by full or partial school closures. One hundred million more children than before fail to demonstrate basic reading skills. The poorest and most vulnerable children are bearing the brunt of the crisis, exacerbating longstanding inequalities. Many risk never returning to school; some are forced into child marriage or child labor. Special efforts are required to recover learning losses caused by COVID-19

Poverty has been defined as the inability to attain a minimal standard of living (World Bank, 2021). The growing incidence of poverty in most families, makes it difficult for many families to satisfy their basic needs on daily basis. The poorest of the poor are people who

cannot afford goods including food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education to support life. Such person(s) is characterized by extreme conditions of lack, needy and impoverished of the necessities of life. In this category are people of the street and people on the street, some of which make their daily living from the streets and others who virtually live on the street for shelter, (Okonkwo and Kembe, 2018), others include destitute, homeless, beggarly and in some cases the physically challenged and the aged.

The world population is about 7.9 billion people and projected to be 8 billion by the end of 2022 or early quarter of 2023. About 9.2% of people in the world live in extreme poverty or less than \$1.90 a day, that is about 687 million people, living in extreme poverty globally, (ILO,2020). Extreme poverty is not a condition of the developing countries or the 3rd world countries, but it is a global problem that attacks the developed world or the "superpowers" and the developing nations. For example, in the United States of America, 34 million people (10.5 %) of the population live below the poverty line, (World bank, 2021). These numbers are likely to increase due to the impact of Covid -19 on businesses and global insecurity crisis causing unemployment. Parents cannot fulfill the social and economic obligations to children and other dependents because of poverty. Such situation causes stress, frustration, anguish and conflict in families. Some men are said to have abandoned their families because of their inability to fend for them (Dean, 2021). This has consequences for the family in several ways, including health, education and living shelters. Furthermore, poverty is a predisposing factor to several other of the crime and accelerated anti-social activities witnessed in the society. Drug use, cultism, alcoholism, trafficking in women and children, school dropout and teenage marriage are not unassociated to poverty, (Kembe, 2015).

Health and food security challenges includes the most recent Corona 19 Virus and its attendant consequences. The world woke up to a global pandemic in the last quarter of the year 2019. The Coronavirus Pandemic is one of the biggest shocks the world has ever experienced of recent. The family has witnessed an unprecedented level of death resulting from Covid 19 and the different variants associated with this pandemic resulting to adjustments at both family and community levels. Families are confronted with new lifestyle changes of being locked down to stay safe. At this stage, family relationship is crucial to family stability, harmony, development and peace. According to Gromada, Richardson & Rees (2020), lock- down has shown negative and positive consequences for families. In some families, violence has increased, especially

against women and girls. Increased acts of violence occur as lockdown keep victims inside with their abusers, most affected are women and girls. United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA, 2020) revealed that the economic and physical disruption caused by the disease has vast consequences for the health of the family members. In addition, COVID-19 is expected to exacerbate all forms of malnutrition, particularly in children, due to a loss of household income, a lack of available and affordable nutritious food, reduced physical activity and disruptions in essential nutrition services. Even discounting the effects of COVID-19, around 230 million children suffer from malnutrition. Urgent short-term actions are needed to avert rising hunger, and a transformation of food systems is required to achieve a healthy and sustainable food future for all. The prevalence of undernourishment increased from 8.4 per cent in 2019 to 9.9 per cent in 2020. Hunger affects 21.0 per cent of the population in Africa, compared with 9.0 per cent in Asia and 9.1 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. More than half of the world's undernourished are found in Asia (418 million) and more than one-third in Africa (282 million). Achieving food security goes beyond the eradication of hunger. Nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2020, an increase of almost 320 million from 2019. Such levels indicate that people are unable to eat a healthy, balanced diet on a regular basis, or that they run out of food and, at worst, go a day or days without eating. The highest levels of food insecurity were found in sub-Saharan Africa (66.2 per cent), while prevalence rose fastest in Latin America and Caribbean – from 24.9 per cent in 2014 to 40.9 per cent in 2020. The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity being 10 per cent higher among women than men in 2020.

The family has also witnessed challenges in living shelters in terms of cost of housing, affordability, living in slums, homelessness, antecedents of urbanization such as over-crowding, unemployment, urban insecurity and urban crime. On the aspect of social exclusion, individuals and groups of persons have been isolated from participating and benefiting from healthy livelihoods either by government unfulfilled policies and /or socio-cultural inhibitions. These group of people include the aged, retirees, physically challenged people, people living in the internally displaced camps because of insurgency and discrimination of persons because of gender and gender discrimination. For the aged, a decrease in the ageing illment and aging effects results from improved medical advancement leading to higher survival rate of the aged; there is also the issues surrounding retirement and level of preparedness to

retirement and the mentally or physically disabled persons. Caring for an elderly or disabled family member can be very costly and extremely stressful. A full-time care giver often must sacrifice career and cope with a range of physical and mental challenges which in turn affect family finances, emotional stability and family goals.

Parents have a huge responsibility for the welfare and development of children. **Poor or neglectful parenting**, either through ignorance or abuse, can create an impact on the child growth, development and later life behavior. Children of abusive or neglectful parents are more likely to develop mental health challenges. (Alannia Resorts, 2017).

In contemporary families, it's common for both parents to work. This is good for family finance, but it impacts negatively on the family if managed poorly. With chores, schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and social events, it can be hard to find a healthy balance between work and family. The increasing break-down of sociomoral values and the consequent rise in the incidences of children's delinquency has resulted in social disorganization of many families. In such circumstance, parents often resort to accusations and recriminations against one another. Moreover, serious acts of delinquency committed by children may erode the stability and harmony on families. Okojie (2010) stated that the seed of juvenile delinquency is planted at home, watered at school and harvested in the society. Values and morals must be properly inculcated in children to avoid delinquencies. Contemporary family experiences the effects of globalization and post-modernity such as: decadence of moral norms and values, unclear social situations, loss of parental and institutional authorities, governmental stability, and frequent and irregular change, (Józefa & Krystian, 2018).

Commuter marriage and families occurs when a spouse lives separately from the family because of work and mobility. It can be a strain on an otherwise healthy relationship. And for kids, its a challenge to their upbringing and family bond. This has also expose couples to infidelity which can destroy the family, (Okoji 2010) defined. The pressure at work may be so daunting that a worker may devote more time and energy to his or her job to the detriment of the family. For instance, a husband may be dubbed a 'deadwood' by his wife if pressure at the workplace constantly overwhelms him and saps his energy. Similarly, a housewife may be accused of being frigid if her daily work constantly overwhelms her and saps her energy and desires for love relationship with her spouse. This is

one of the factors that contribute to serious problem in the family (Dean,2019).

Domestic violence is a major factor leading to the collapse of many families in contemporary Nigerian society. Some couples are known to engage in fight which, in most cases, results in wife battering, and traumatic experience to the children. Okoji, (2010) observed that there are many women who are constantly battered by their husbands but cannot leave because they are financially dependent on their husbands, and they have no one to turn to for help. She stated that the passage of the bill on domestic violence is laudable but insisted that what will reduce violence in homes is an orchestrated campaign at different places denouncing such a dehumanizing destructive practice. Nearly one in three women (736 million) have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15, usually by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence starts early. Among girls and women who have ever been married or had a partner, nearly 24 per cent of those aged 15 to 19 years have been subjected to such violence, as have 26 per cent of those aged 20 to 24.

Disparities in intimate partner violence are found across regions, with consistently higher prevalence in low- and lower-middle-income regions compared with high-income regions. These variations are likely to reflect the challenges that women often face in leaving abusive relationships, such as insufficient economic resources, limited availability and access to formal support services, weak social support networks, and fear of repercussions associated with social stigma. The current pandemic has heightened the challenges of women in abusive relationships.

Issues of divorce and remarriage present new difficulties for families and individuals. Marital conflict (labial, 2019) does not provide an ideal childrearing environment since going through a divorce can be damaging for the children. Subjecting them to confusion and fright due to the threat of family security. Violence and abuse are among the most disconcerting of today the challenges families face those results in the separation of the couples. This brings us to having a single parent bringing up children on their alone which affect the Childs' future and setting in life. Some of the children might become part of a blended family if one of their parents remarry. These family challenges can be distressing for all members of the family. In a blended family, compromised are inevitable, mesh parenting styles which might not be effective, and combine efforts to manage complex households (Labial, 2019).

Social and political changes within the current socio-economic situation have had impact on the living

conditions of the entire society as well as of individual families. The functioning of the contemporary family relates to influences of various economic and socio-political factors, most often, these involve dysfunctions in fulfilling material and economic functions, connected to unemployment of one or two parents. Such situation causes emotional tensions and stress that can lead to family disintegration.

A further complication facing the family is the effect of climate change and its consequences on the environment. Climate change refers to an increase in average global temperatures caused by natural events and human activities, which are believed to be contributing to an increase in average global temperatures. Unpredictable rainfall variation, heat stress and drought can adversely affect food production and result in food shortages (Haider, 2019 and Abdulkadir et al., 2017). Adaptation is a widely accepted action in addressing climate change. Adaptation seeks to reduce the harmful consequences and harness any beneficial opportunities arising from the changing climate (Carlo et al 2015). Adaptation to climate change is at the intersection of science and technology at the household and community levels. This is influenced by social issues, financial, political and public awareness, (Carlson and McCormick 2015). Women are known to be the most hit by climate impact. This is due to differences in the ownership of economic resources, and to entrenched cultural norms and beliefs and socio-political discriminations that work against women (William et al 2019, Eastin 2018). Also, the generally high poverty levels among women also predisposes them to severe climate change impact and reduce their adaptive capacities (William et al 2019). The implication is that climate change and its associated shocks and disasters could worsen existing gender inequalities, especially due to a decline in women's economic and social rights. Climate adaptation, rather than climate mitigation, is important to provide short term and localized benefits from climate shocks to households, (McKune *et al* 2015, Eastin 2018, Adzawla and Kane 2019). This therefore makes climate adaptation an effective strategy for households. Thus, a concern for Home Economics as a field of study in household family resource and family living.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN VISION 2030 AND THE FIELD OF HOME ECONOMICS

In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the vision 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a set of seventeen sustainable global goals that plans to transform the world from a state of poverty and

inequalities to where good healthcare and education are available for all and where economic growth is evenly accessed by families and communities.

The vision 2030 goals came on the heels of the (MDGs) which was initiated in 2000 by 189 nations across the globe, with the sole mandate to eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger, Achieve Universal Basic Education, Promote Gender Equality and Empower women, Reduce Child Mortality, Improve Maternal Health, Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and Ensure Environmental Sustainability. All the development goals' mandate are central to the issues being addressed by Home Economics throughout the world. Sustainable development goals are central to family wellbeing, survival and sustainability in the basic survival necessities of life including food, shelter, water and environment, security, gender equality, sustainable livelihoods.

Poverty is central to the initiation and motivation of both the MDGs and the vision 2030 goals which both targets to improve the lives of the poorest poor. Poverty constitutes the biggest anti-survival problem of individuals and nations. Therefore, to eradicate poverty and place humanity on the threshold of sustainable living continue to form the agenda of all nations, especially nations that are signatory to the MDGs and now the SDGs vision. The vision 2030 is the same as the sustainable development goals, which came into being at the close of the millennium development goals ending in 2015. The vision 2030 runs from 2015 – 2030 and it is expected to achieve all the 17 targets for families and communities on the basic threshold of sustainable living.

These 17 sustainable goals include:

- **No poverty**
- **Zero hunger**
- **Good health and well-being**
- **Quality education**
- **Gender equality**
- **Clean water and sanitation**
- **Affordable and clean energy**
- **Decent work and economic growth**
- **Industry, innovation and infrastructure**
- **Reduced inequality**
- **Sustainable cities and communities**
- **Responsible consumption and production**
- **Climate action**
- **Life below water,**
- **Life on land**
- **Peace, justice and strong institutions**
- **Partnership to achieve the goals.**

As lofty as these goals may seem, it hinges on the family and community wellbeing which is the kernel to

the study and field of Home Economics. The ability to develop a framework for the future depends on the capacity of institutions and professionals to appreciate the complexity and requirements of Home Economics in the society.

Generally Home Economics functions in four major areas, **as an academic discipline**, it is involved in cutting-edge research, impacting education and creating new knowledge. It is also an **arena for everyday living** in households' family and communities by identifying potentials for meeting human needs. It also functions around **curriculum matter** by helping students to discover and develop their professional careers and actions. It functions in the **societal arena** by influencing and developing policies that will advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and well-being to use transformative practices and facilitate sustainable features (IFHE, 2008). In as much as the four mega trends in Home Economics can be applied universally, there are regional variations in its application and relevance. The major area of focus in one region may not necessarily be the same in other regions, besides the level of attainment of the SDG vision may not cut across in all regions. For example, in Nigeria the major concern of Home Economics is on area of insecurity (food, living shelters, lives and property), gender inequality and gender biases. Government of its contributions to policy, advocacy for government welfare programs and implementation of Government laws at different levels (Moloku and Kembe, 2018). Recently professional Home Economists in Nigeria are concern with rebranding the brand of Home Economics to increase students' enrollment and retain students for further studies in post graduate work and for the students in the secondary school to develop interest and use the course for skill acquisition in future employment. The concern is to help students make informed decisions on career choice in the various areas of Home Economics for university admissions.

In addressing unemployment challenge, which is a recurring challenge in most countries, the place of skill educational training in such a way that people will develop saleable skills to earn a living and grow businesses is important. That is why, Technical and vocational education of which Home Economics is associated with, involves the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life (FGN, 2004). Home Economists are trained personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators, and implementers of technological development of a nation. Gone are the days when a display of a certificate will automatically earn one employment, the rate of

unemployment in the world has clearly shown that the acquisition of certificates without a commiserate skill acquisitions for the job market is what is required now to address unemployment. This places the study of Home Economics in high demand to address the challenge of unemployment, therefore in the arena of training and in combination with the curriculum matter, there is the emphasis on knowledge and skills that will make graduates to be self-reliant without expecting the government to provide job opportunities.

There is an urgent need for attention to be redirected towards self-reliant and sustainable means of livelihood which vocational and technical education provides. Most employers of labor demand more skills than they did in the past (Yang, 2008) and the acquisition of certificates without skills is not sufficient to put bread on the table.

Eradicating poverty requires the initiation of startups and cottage businesses in confectionaries, food industries importing and exporting raw materials for food products, clothing enterprise, daycare and nurseries establishment for young children, textile dyeing and production, interior decoration and event management. These skills are inculcated to students while in training and there is no need for graduates to be job seekers but job providers. Okoye (2016) demonstrates that vocational and technical education is concerned with qualitative technological human resource development directed towards a national pool of skilled and self-reliant craftsmen, technicians, and technologists.

The role of Home Economists is for the improvement of quality of life by influencing the Social, Health, Economic and Environmental conditions which affects every human being. Home Economics is concerned with the way in which the quality and content of individual and family life can be enhanced through the optimal utilization of its human and material resources, it is a profession that deals with family values, ideals and goals UNESCO 2009 explained the three pillars of sustainable development focuses on the environment, society and the economy and the general objectives is to help people develop the right attitude, knowledge and skills to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others now and in the future. The different partnerships that professionals have impacted in the community and society points to the goal of strengthening quality of life which is the philosophy behind the study of home economics. For example, the International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) is partner to FLIP, a global non-profit collaboration that aims to develop food literacy education across the life span. The research project aims to develop people's capacity to act in ways that support

sustainable consumption and equitable access to food. Various workshops and extension services during conferences in HERAN, HEPAN, SHEN targets research outcomes to sustainable living of households and these findings are disseminated through the curriculum matter in teaching the multitude of students at the levels of higher education and in the everyday living of people through extension work by professional Home Economists.

Home Economics plays a crucial role in the environment, water and sanitation since its major concern is with the wellbeing of the family. Issues arising from the environment which negatively impact families will therefore become a major concern. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

There is a whole lot of activities, programs, changes and strategies that home economists can contribute to ensuring sustainable development goals for families and this will be addressed in the four major areas that home economics impacts the society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Home Economics is the acceptable form of education in the present-day challenges, a profession that directly impact on family life and value system cutting across all the issues and concerns of the family. The challenges of the contemporary family have been identified against the backdrop of the sustainable development goals and the vision 2030. The importance of job creation, skill acquisition, policies on family wellbeing and impartation of the right societal values are inherent in addressing the challenges of contemporary families. Based on this conclusion, the following recommendations are made.

1. The study of Home Economics should be entrenched in the school curriculum and made compulsory at all levels from the primary to the secondary school and made a GST for the university level.
2. Professionals should move from the theoretical standpoint with no action and impact communities and the society with programs and activities which will meaningfully be appreciated, and the profession made more significant. This can be made possible by establishing a Home Economics village where informal education on skills can be learnt and an industrial layout/ market where products can be produced and sold. The multidisciplinary nature of the profession should be harnessed, where professionals can relate with other fields of study to translate the best practices of doing things. This can be adopted as a strategy for eliminating poverty.

3. Government intervention is important in ensuring that the profession takes the place of pride in the school listing of core courses at all levels.
4. Programs must significantly target gender-based issues.

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