

Awareness and Perception of Home Economics among Selected Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Home economics (HE) is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on family and resource management, however, misconceptions and limited public awareness of it continue to persist. This study aimed to describe the awareness and perception of selected senior high school (SHS) students on HE as a subject and degree program, and determined its influencing factors. A descriptive mixed-methods design was used, which involved a survey on HE awareness of 320 randomly selected students using cluster sampling. Among these respondents, an in-depth open-ended interview was conducted with 21 of them to describe their current perceptions and identify the factors influencing these. Results showed that SHS students had limited awareness of HE and often confuse it with allied fields' contents. They also had limited knowledge of HE's presence as an undergraduate program. Students perceived HE as a subject about cooking, household tasks, the service industry, self-sufficiency, and skills training. They found it important for teaching real-life content, creating job opportunities, and developing capable citizens. Individuals in the HE field were viewed as similar to peers in interests and motivation but different in creativity and work ethic. These perceptions were influenced by various factors: school-related, peer-related, media-related, and home-related experiences. The name HE was also seen to positively reflect the discipline's focus. Given these findings, it is necessary to devise accurate representation of HE with the help of curriculum developers, teachers, home economists, and the education department in the country.

Keywords: home economics, mixed-methods research, senior high school students, awareness and perception, in-depth interviews, technical-vocational strand

Introduction

Home economics (HE) has come a long way since its emergence in the late 19th century. From being a coursework for women and motherhood, it has transformed into a core subject that supports the society to its optimal well-being. The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) (2008) defined it as a study that draws from multiple disciplines that help individuals, families, and communities achieve “sustainable and optimal” living (p.1). The discipline tackles household resource management, consumer education, family life, child development, food safety, food production, management, and entrepreneurship (Chua, 2018; Gabriel, 1998; Gabriel et al., 2017). However, this understanding of the discipline is not universal; people in different countries have their own stereotypes (IFHE, 2008) and limited perceptions based on their experiences with HE (McGregor, 2010).

With the challenges faced by HE, in 2008, the IFHE released a position statement articulating that Home Economics in the 21st century describes the positions and status of HE in the modern times. The organization fortified the relevance of HE in the 21st century and the steps the discipline intends to take to keep evolving through the four areas of practice: academic discipline, everyday living, curriculum area, and societal arena to influence and develop policy. In response to it, plenty of home economists wrote their takes to further the relevance of HE. For instance, Benn (2008) said that the scope of HE in Denmark still stays as an “essential” material in people’s lives (p.8). Furthermore, Davis (2008) stated that any country’s “national development would have been impossible” in the absence of the core of HE education, and emphasized that HE is needed especially in the context of generally “less stable” families, which is true up to this date (p. 11).

Home economists from around the world have made steps to reverse and change the limited perception and stereotypical image of the discipline. They made efforts for rebranding and redefining HE as a response to the position statement. However, discrimination and misconceptions are still present with HE as a topic in many countries. For instance, Australia and the United States still relate the field with domestic tasks such as cooking and sewing (Pendergast, 2015). In Nigeria, gender stereotypes also continue to influence people’s view of HE as low-status and female-oriented (Azubuike, 2012). This

is also true in the Philippines. A study revealed that gender stereotypes affect participation and engagement in HE, particularly among male students (Bantic et al., 2024). In addition, last 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, a senator issued a suggestion to provisionally remove HE, and focus on “key” subjects in this pandemic (Mateo, 2020). Despite the essential skills and values HE offers that are especially relevant to crises (Chua et al., 2023), he still viewed it less valuable than other subjects like Math, Science, English, etc. The University of the Philippines–Diliman (UPD) College of Home Economics (CHE) released a statement condemning the position of the senator (UP Diliman Information Office [UPDIO], 2020) to affirm the importance of HE in the pandemic as it teaches the necessary skills individuals and families need in times of crises. While the statement from CHE is accurate, it still is a fact that there is a clear poor perception laid out on HE (Gara & Galco, Jr. 2024; Mateo, 2020), as evidenced by the low enrollment in HE classes.

The low number of enrollees at the tertiary level was evident at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria, as reported by Ode et al. (2013). Similarly, Enkali (2019) found that Nigerian men remain hesitant to enroll in HE programs, and this indicates that perception and awareness issues continue to challenge the field. In the Philippines, at UPD, the Bachelor of Science in HE has also experienced low new enrollment figures in recent years, with an average of only 24 to 25 students annually (L.V. Avila, personal communication, July 20, 2024). Some entered the program with misconceptions and only discovered the true scope and relevance of HE after starting the coursework (A.M. Garcia, R. Laylo, & J.A. Licerio, personal communication, 2021). Despite this, some institutions still have shown good enrollment statistics., such as Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology which had 68 first-year students, and Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University which reported 81 new students (J.R. Bantang, personal communication, June 27, 2023).

The implementation of the K to 12 curriculum in 2013 seemed to have influenced changing perceptions of HE, which could have caused increased tertiary program enrollments in some institutions. Under the K-12 program, HE became part of the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track. According to Department of Education (DepEd) (2022) statistics, HE accounted for about 11% of all senior high school enrollees, which was comparable to academic track strands, and it

made up 41% of all TVL students. This trend reflects a good image for HE. However, it also carries a potential drawback: by framing HE mainly as a vocational course, it may reinforce a narrow view of the discipline that minimizes its academic dimensions.

Benn (2008) emphasized the importance of strengthening HE as an academic discipline. However, the current framing of HE in the Philippines primarily as vocational could make attaining the objective difficult. In addition, the lack of recent local research limits the ability of Filipino home economists to fully understand and address current perceptions of the discipline. Related studies were conducted in the past, but they focused more on attitudes of high school students on HE (Metrio, 2017) and perceived life skills among TVL students (Torio, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to conduct studies on current awareness and perception of HE in the country. Such research can provide useful insights for future interventions and inform policy to ensure that HE is recognized and represented appropriately. As the primary learners exposed to TVL-HE curricula, senior high school (SHS) represent a key group whose perceptions can provide an understanding of the image of the HE field (Llige, 2021; Torio, 2019). Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the awareness and perception of selected SHS students on HE as a discipline. Specifically, it aimed to: determine the awareness of SHS students of HE in terms of its scope of topics and competencies, and presence at the tertiary level; discuss the perception of SHS students on HE as a discipline; and identify the factors that influence their perceptions of HE.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive, mixed-methods design to examine the awareness and perception of SHS students regarding HE, as well as the factors influencing these perceptions. Quantitative data were collected through a structured survey, while qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured interviews. The survey focused on students' awareness of HE's topical scope, and its presence at the tertiary level. The interviews were designed to expand on the survey findings and explore how students formed their perceptions. The semi-structured format was chosen to encourage depth in responses while minimizing researcher influence (Cohen et al., 2018). The integration of the quantitative and qualitative data was conducted during the interpretation phase through triangulation, where

interview themes were compared with survey results to confirm, clarify, and/or explain emerging patterns.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample consisted of 320 Grade 12 students from both public and private senior high schools in Bulacan. Grade 12 students were selected since, as graduating students, they were expected to have broader exposure to the K to 12 curriculum and thus more capable of articulating their views on the HE strand and other academic tracks. Bulacan was selected as the research site due to its large student population and its location in a region not previously covered by related studies, which had focused on areas in the National Capital Region (Metro, 2017) and Region IV-A (Torio, 2019). This choice helped expand the geographic scope of HE-related research and ensured population diversity.

Three schools were purposively selected and profiled: a public national high school (School A), a public high school (School B), and a private high school (School C). Selection criteria included population size and the range of SHS strands offered. Cluster sampling was applied by treating strands as clusters, with one section randomly selected per strand from each school. This sampling strategy aimed to gather at least 10 respondents per strand, ultimately generating 320 survey responses. For the qualitative phase, 21 interview participants were selected through multistage sampling—three students per strand—to ensure strand representation and to deepen discussion of survey findings. Only students who had completed the survey were considered for interviews, which ensured consistency across data sets.

Instrument

To collect data from the samples, two instruments were employed: a 35-item nominal yes/no online checklist created via Google Forms and a semi-structured interview guide. The researchers-made checklist, which asked participants “Which of the following do you think is taught through home economics as a course in the tertiary level?”, assessed students’ awareness of HE content and was constructed based on core competencies from HE programs at tertiary level, and the DepEd Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) curriculum. Items unrelated to HE but commonly confused with it (e.g., agriculture and electronics)

were also included to determine possible misconceptions. The interview guide was designed to align with the study objectives and literature and included probing questions to explore factors influencing awareness and perceptions. The questions were also intentionally designed to ask how students define HE, what topics and skills they associate with it, and how they perceive its importance and people in the field. Revisions to the guide were made after pilot testing, which revealed the need for a more structured approach to help reserved students engage more openly. To further ensure the quality of the instruments, content validity was established through expert review by two experts in HE Education from the University of the Philippines.

Data Collection

Data collection involved coordination with school heads and teachers, who facilitated survey distribution of the survey, and scheduling of interviews. Informed consent was obtained electronically. Interviews were conducted online using Facebook Messenger while respecting student availability and class schedules. Each session lasted approximately 35 minutes. Participants were reminded of confidentiality and were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences. Interview responses were recorded and analyzed thematically.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with frequencies and percentages computed for each item to describe awareness. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis that follows the process of Clarke and Braun (2013):

1. Data familiarization – reading and re-reading transcripts for an overall understanding
2. Code generation – systematic labeling of features of the data
3. Theme generation based on codes – grouping related codes to identify patterns
4. Theme review – checking alignment of themes with the data set
5. Determination of theme significance – assessing the theme’s relevance to the research question

6. Results reporting – presenting themes clearly with supporting evidence

The quantitative and qualitative data enabled the identification of patterns, consistencies, and differences in student awareness and perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, the study obtained permission from school heads and adhered to informed consent procedures. Participants were informed of the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any point. No personally identifying information was disclosed in the study reporting, and all data were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers

Results and Discussion

Awareness of SHS Students on Home Economics

Table 1 shows the number of students per strand who answered that they believed the following topics were taught in HE subjects. On the other hand, Table 2 shows the same statistics on associated topics to HE in terms of its related areas. For topics under HE, results show that students agreed most on cooking skill (93.44%), home management (93.44%), food and nutrition (88.44%), household resource management skill (86.56%), and food technology (79.69%) as topics and competencies taught in home economics, while they agreed least on research theories (39.06%), computer literacy (40.31%), early childhood theories (42.19%), research skills (44.69%), and teaching skills (48.13%). On the other hand, respondents associated HE with topics and competencies from allied fields. Graphic arts had the lowest rank, with 38.75% of the respondents agreeing that the content area was related to HE. Meanwhile, agriculture-related skills (71.25%), hairdressing skills (61.25%), and agriculture theories (57.5%) were the topics that more respondents associate with home economics among the choices.

Results emphasize that foodservice and household-related topics dominate students' awareness of HE. This is consistent with interview findings, where cooking and household tasks were the most frequently mentioned competencies taught in school. Many respondents also recognized topics associated with TLE and the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Home Economics (TVL-HE) strand,

Table 1*SHS Students' Awareness of Home Economics Topics and Competencies*

	Total (n=320)	%	Rank
cooking skills	299	93.44%	1.5
home management skills	299	93.44%	1.5
food and nutrition	283	88.44%	3
household resource management skills	277	86.56%	4
food technology	255	79.69%	5
hospitality management skills	253	79.06%	6
bartending skills	243	75.94%	7
management skills	236	73.75%	8
food microbiology	227	70.94%	9.5
sewing skills	227	70.94%	9.5
events planning skills	223	69.69%	11.5
consumer education	223	69.69%	11.5
entrepreneurial skills	218	68.13%	13
childhood and child development	192	60.00%	14
family relation strategies	192	60.00%	15
entrepreneurial theories	189	59.06%	16
childcare skills	179	55.94%	17
design and art principles	163	50.94%	18
technical drafting skills	162	50.63%	19
teaching skills	156	48.75%	20
research skills	143	44.69%	21
early childhood theories	139	43.44%	22
computer literacy	129	40.31%	23
research theories	125	39.06%	24

Note. multiple responses

Table 2*SHS Students' Awareness of Topics and Competencies from HE-Allied Fields*

	Total (n=320)	%	Rank
agriculture-related skills	228	71.25%	1
hairdressing skills	196	61.25%	2
agriculture theories	184	57.50%	3
carpentry	171	53.44%	4
fishery art skills	161	50.31%	5
fishery art theories	148	46.25%	6
electronics	143	44.69%	7
plumbing skills	141	44.06%	8
graphic arts	124	38.75%	9

Note. multiple responses

which suggests that student awareness is shaped largely by their exposure to these areas. For instance, the high awareness of bartending (75.94%) and hospitality management (79.06%) shows the influence of the vocational framing of HE. However, this result also points to a limited—and at times misdirected—awareness, as students are only introduced to content aligned with the practical aims of their subjects or strands.

While TLE and TVL-HE increase awareness of HE, they present it mainly as a vocational discipline, compromising core areas like family studies. As Llige (2021) noted, this shift is driven by DepEd's (2019) policy aligning TLE with TESDA regulations, which emphasizes livelihood content. Although the policy defines HE graduates as individuals capable of caring for themselves and their communities, family-related competencies appear less prominent. This lack of focus, in addition to the absence of a clear introduction to HE, leaves students unaware of the broader scope of the discipline. Additionally, only a few respondents associated research with HE, possibly due to the teaching of research as a general requirement rather than a disciplinary foundation in the TVL curriculum. This hinders HE's growth as an academic field, as emphasized in IFHE's (2008) position paper.

Awareness of Home Economics as a Degree Program

From the interviews, only four out of the 21 student participants were aware of the existence of HE as a college degree. These few shared that they only encountered the course while browsing through college application primers or course lists, but had no actual understanding of what the program entails. As Respondent no. 20 mentioned,

[...] nakita ko lang po siya [BS Home Economics] sa parang choice [ng courses] po before [...] parang di ko po talaga siya alam. (I only saw it [BS Home Economics] in the course options before [...] but I really don't know what it is.)

Even students enrolled under the TVL-HE strand echoed the same thoughts.

These responses indicate a clear lack of awareness not just of the existence of HE as a tertiary degree, but also of what the discipline actually covers. This could be due to the limited promotion that home economics receives, both nationally and globally—an issue similarly pointed out by Davis (2008). It also shows how little effort is put into disseminating accurate information about the course, as similarly experienced by Ode et al. (2013) at the University of Illinois.

Interestingly, after being told what the HE degree actually includes, many students, especially those from the TVL-HE strand, expressed genuine interest in pursuing it. This implies that the course is often overlooked, not because of disinterest, but due to lack of awareness about it. As Respondent no. 1 noted, “No joke, it really is my first time hearing that home economics is like that [a course about family, entrepreneurship, teaching, training, etc.] [...] If only I had known, I would have considered taking it [in College].”

The placement of HE under the TVL track may also contribute to the lack of recognition of an HE degree as a college option. Academic strands like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) or Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) are generally associated with specific college programs and are marketed as preparatory tracks. HE, however, is found under the vocational strand, which in the Philippine context is typically intended for students who aim to work right after senior high school. This vocational framing may have shaped the view that HE does not extend to college-level study. While historically tied to inductive reasoning (East, 1980), the discipline has evolved into more

complex models like the contextual paradigm (McGregor, 1997), critical science approach (Vicenti & Smith, 2004), and Home Economics Literacy Model (Pendergast, 2015) that embrace broader philosophical support and a more holistic focus on individuals and families.

Beyond the issue of awareness, some respondents openly admitted they knew little or nothing about the discipline. As Respondent no. 4 stated,

Hindi ko naman po sa mamaliitin [kung] ano makukuha mo sa BSHE [...] parang hindi ko po nakikita sa kanya yung tagumpay. Siguro po kasi parang limitado po siya. (Not to belittle what one can get from BSHE [...] but I don't see success in it. Maybe because it seems limited.)

The perceptions present similar themes found in earlier studies (Enkali, 2019; Ode et al., 2013; Uwameiye, 2015), where students demonstrated limited knowledge of the career opportunities offered by HE. This reflects a prevailing notion that students are unaware of the discipline's full scope and potential. The present study makes it clear that much effort is still needed in promoting a fuller, more accurate picture of HE as a viable and meaningful academic and professional pathway.

Perception of Senior High School Students on Home Economics

Through a comprehensive analysis of interview responses, the perceptions of SHS students regarding HE were categorized into three major areas: its perceived content, importance, and image. The findings reveal both enduring misconceptions and evolving understandings of the discipline.

Perceived Content of Home Economics

A Discipline Focused on Cooking. The most dominant perception of HE among students is its strong association with cooking. Many identified it primarily as a subject that teaches kitchen skills, food preparation, and cooking techniques. They often relate it with the TLE cookery specialization. The results show how the foodsphere still dominates the perception of people when it comes to HE, consistent with recent literature by Enkali (2019), Uwameiye (2015), and Ode et al. (2013). This perception, however, is not surprising as the TLE curriculum, as well as the TVL-HE curriculum, gives focus to aspects of cookery among other

things as shared by the respondents. While this perception is not wrong, it presents limitations to the discipline. It, then, might become worrisome if HE continues to be viewed largely with this lens only.

A Discipline for the Service Industry. Students, particularly from School A offering the TVL-HE strand, described home economics as a discipline preparing learners for service-oriented industries such as hospitality, tourism, and food service. They cited skills in bartending, food and beverage services, hotel management, and front desk operations. Respondents from School B and School C, on the other hand, mentioned topics related to the self, cooking, and household matters. For those who mentioned service-related perceptions, they either had a peer from the TVL-HE strand that influenced them, or they have seen advertisements about the HE strand on the internet. These results reflect a curriculum-driven perception, as well as the influence of media and peer networks. However, the views suggest a vocational leaning on how HE is presented, which align with the findings of Llige (2021) and Ode et al. (2013) that noted strong associations between HE and technical-vocational education.

A Discipline Concerning Self-Sufficiency. Another perception of some SHS students was the discipline's role in equipping students with life skills for independence and self-management. Skills such as decision-making, budgeting, communication, and handling personal responsibilities were cited. These students appreciated the subject's real-life application and its contribution to personal growth. Self-sufficiency has been a long existing perception in HE. This is consistent with Graham (2013) who expressed how HE teaches people the practicality of life, specifically by teaching them life skills. Enkali (2019), LeBleu (1991), and Torio (2019) also reported similar findings that HE is believed to teach life skills that lead to self-governance and independence. Although individualistic, this perceived content is considered a positive view for HE. As Gabriel et al. (2017) wrote, HE encompasses life skills that can help people with the demands of their lives. Furthermore, this specific perception helps people realize the importance of discipline. However, as results found the perceived importance to be too individualistic, it is still imperative for the discipline to continue raising contents that are also focused on their other primary stakeholders—the families.

A Discipline Focused on Household Matters. Many respondents described home economics in terms of domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare,

and sewing. Household and family management, including budgeting and resource allocation at home, were also frequently mentioned. While students recognized HE as teaching practical household skills, their explanations rarely extended to why such skills matter for family well-being. As Respondent no. 6 shared, HE teaches skills that are “*ginagawa sa bahay araw-araw* (done every day at home).” Similarly, Respondent no. 8 expressed, “[*ang naiisip ko*] ‘*pagka-home economics, household chores mga luto, linis, ta’s yung mga pagtatahi* [...] ([when I hear] home economics, what comes to mind are household chores like cooking, cleaning, sewing [...]).” This perception parallels the findings by Ode et al. (2013) and Azuibuiki (2012), who noted that students often reduce home economics to homemaking and domesticity. Although not inherently negative, this view becomes limiting when students fail to connect these skills to the broader goal of improving family quality of life (Gabriel et al., 2017).

A Skills-Focused, Practical Subject. HE was widely seen as a skills-based subject with numerous performance tasks and laboratory sessions. Students appreciated its hands-on, experiential nature over traditional theoretical instruction. This emphasis on skill enhancement over conceptual understanding suggests a growing perception of HE as practical and vocational. The result is further supported by the findings of Llige (2021) and by Ode et al. (2013) which revealed that HE is strongly associated with this specific education. Unlike earlier generations, many students today no longer associate the subject with sewing, which had long been a staple (LeBleu, 1991; Enkali, 2019; Ode et al., 2013). This shift suggests the strong influence of the K to 12 program to the perceived content of HE. The new curriculum gears students to be work-ready by equipping them with skills under the technical vocational and livelihood track. However, it fails to realize the importance of introducing the discipline and its connection to the competencies to be taught, instead of merely focusing on the skill part.

Given all the perceived contents of HE, unlike previous studies (Enkali, 2019; Ode et al., 2013; Uwameiye, 2015), current findings also reveal that students no longer associate HE with a particular gender. The outdated view of the discipline as “training for wives-to-be” (East, 1980) appears to have faded. This shift aligns with the evolving goals of the field, including its support for gender equality as stated by the IFHE (2019) in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 Gender Equality.

When asked whether HE is multidisciplinary, most respondents provided shallow interpretations; they would link it to math through measurement in recipes or to business through entrepreneurship. While technically correct, these responses fail to grasp the discipline's true nature of drawing from diverse fields—such as nutrition, psychology, economics, and food technology—to improve family and community well-being. As illustrated in the study, this integrated, holistic perspective is yet to be fully realized by SHS students.

Perceived Importance of Home Economics

SHS students recognize HE as a discipline of significance, largely due to its practical relevance, its role in economic sustainability, and its potential to produce capable and self-reliant citizens. These themes emerged from their reflections on HE's contribution to individuals, families, communities, and the nation.

Delivering Real-Life Content. The most prominent perceived value of HE is its capacity to teach real-life content. As Respondent no. 8 noted,

Kasi po paglabas natin [mga mag-aaral] ng school 'yung home economics po, 'yung mga learnings po natin sa home economics is pwede po natin ma-apply sa totoong buhay o sa daily life natin. (Once students leave school, home economics or our learning in home economics is something we can apply in our daily lives.)

Students consistently emphasized HE's relevance to everyday needs, such as cooking, budgeting, and making informed decisions. These are perceived as essential for daily survival and independence, with Respondent no. 13 contrasting HE with other subjects: "*Kasi po pagka-calculus po at chemistry, hindi mo naman siya magagamit sa pang-araw-araw na buhay. 'Di po katulad ng HE na magagamit [sa araw-araw].*" ("Unlike calculus and chemistry, the application of home economics can be done everyday.").

Beyond ordinary routines, HE was also seen as vital in times of crisis, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent no. 5 shared, "Home economics is important as it teaches us skills that we can use at home especially when the pandemic hit," while Respondent no. 11 emphasized that survival relied on "the skills we know and own." The discipline was also viewed as providing livelihood support during unemployment, which spiked to 17.6% in 2020

(Crismundo, 2022). According to Respondent no. 11:

[...] lalo na po pag[ka]tapos nung pandemic, marami po [ang] nawalan [ng] trabaho. Tingin ko po doon makakatulong 'yung home economics po. (Many people lost their jobs especially after the pandemic. I believe home economics can help in this case.)

These findings echo the work of Enkali (2019) and LeBleu (1991), who identified HE as a subject grounded in life skills education. They also support Torio's (2019) claim that HE instills more practical competencies than other K-12 strands. As noted by the faculty of the University of the Philippines' Department of Home Economics Education, HE “integrates fundamental skills into real-life lessons” and teaches “essential life skills for survival and recovery” (Chua, et al., 2023).

Creating Employment Opportunities. Another theme emphasizes HE's role in employment and livelihood creation. Students viewed the discipline as a pathway to job-readiness and economic contribution, especially in sectors like food service and hospitality. Respondent no. 3 shared,

Importante nga po siya [HE] dahil [...] majority po, [...] ng jobs sa home economics po umiikot. Like [...] sa restaurants po, chefs po ganun or waiter [ang kailangan]. If mawawala po siya [HE], [...] mawawala po sila sa economy [at] maapektuhan po 'yung economy. (Home economics is important because jobs revolve around it—like in restaurants, chefs and waiters. If HE is gone, they're gone, and the economy will be affected.)

HE was also perceived to empower students from low-income backgrounds or those unable to pursue higher education. It is believed to offer skills relevant to both domestic and overseas employment, including cooking, sewing, restaurant management, and customer service. These competencies are seen as foundational to building the country's human capital. Respondent no. 14 stated, “As a third-world country, we need skilled workers,” while Respondent no. 13 added that “the Philippines is wealthy in terms of manpower.”

Some students also considered HE as a tool for entrepreneurship, especially for those aiming to start small businesses. Respondent no. 15 noted, “The skills developed through home economics [...] can help create many businesses.” However, Respondent no. 14 expressed a critical view, that much of what is

taught in HE is “one search away from YouTube.” Despite this, the student acknowledged HE’s value in training skilled workers, which suggests that digital access does not fully replace structured learning.

Producing Capable Citizens. HE was also seen as a discipline that supports the development of responsible, self-sufficient citizens. As Respondent no. 8 explained, “Home economics is a factor to bring up a good citizen and a well-rounded citizen of a country [...] Good citizens can lead to a good country.” This perception, though positive, tends to revolve around individual household competence rather than civic engagement or policy participation.

Students identified resource management as another critical component of HE, though only one respondent highlighted this explicitly. Respondent no. 6 emphasized the discipline’s value in teaching people how to manage resources during inflation and such skill can benefit the national economy by molding responsible citizens.

Despite its multidimensional focus, most students still perceive HE primarily through a vocational lens that focuses on service-related roles. This mirrors earlier findings (Ode et al., 2013; Llige, 2021) and reveals a lingering misconception that HE is purely skills-based. Respondent no. 12 said that not all people should be professionals like teachers or doctors,” and this response reflects the belief that vocational work is a worthy alternative. However, this still limits the discipline’s image as an academic field.

Such narrow views pose challenges for the broader goals set by organizations like the IFHE, which advocates for HE as both a curricular area and a policy-influencing academic discipline (Pendergast, 2008). The TVL-HE strand’s current structure appears to reinforce the vocational direction, which restricts HE’s evolution into a more holistic field of study. Furthermore, IFHE identifies HE as a platform for enhancing well-being and promoting sustainable living, yet students’ understanding of these functions remains shallow (Pendergast, 2008).

Students perceived HE as highly relevant due to its role in nurturing responsible citizenship. However, this perception remain largely limited to household and vocational skills, which decreases HE’s academic depth and policy relevance. While students value the discipline, its identity is often reduced to a technical subject rather than a field that addresses family well-being, social

transformation, and national development (Gabriel et al., 2017; Roldan, 2018).

Perceived Image of Individuals in the HE Field

The study also explored how SHS students perceive individuals taking or working within the field of HE. Findings reveal three major themes: students in HE are seen to have similar motivation as their peers, possess unique personal qualities, and pursue careers related to food and hospitality services. These perceptions, however, remain largely shaped by the vocational orientation of the HE strand.

Similar Motivation and Experience as Peers. Students enrolled in HE are perceived to be motivated by personal interest, particularly in cooking, restaurant, and hospitality management. Respondents commonly described HE students as making intentional choices based on what they enjoy and where they feel they can excel. Respondent no. 5 remarked, “*I believe pinili nila [ang] HE kasi nandun yung interes nila [...].*” (“I believe they chose HE because that is where their interests lie [...].”)

The choice of HE is also tied to students’ future academic or career goals, although these goals are still often limited to fields like hotel and restaurant management and culinary studies. Respondents also shared that HE students chose the strand because of its practical application in life, with Respondent no. 18 explaining,

Pagdating po sa pagiging estudyante, parang normal lang naman po sila tulad namin [...]. I believe po nandun sila kasi ‘yung nakikita nilang magagamit nila. (They are normal like us. I believe they’re in HE because they see it as useful. They picked the strand they believe would be useful for them.)

The perception of HE students as determined to excel in their field was also consistent across responses. As Respondent no. 19 put it:

Walang madaling course or strand. Tingin ko po nandun sila [...] kasi nandun yung skills nila [...] doon [...] nila gusto mag-excel. (There’s no easy strand. I think they’re in HE because their skills are there and that’s where they want to excel.)

Similarly, Respondent no. 12 shared, “*Kaya po siguro sila nag-HE kasi alam nilang doon po sila mag-e-excel.*” (“Maybe they study HE because they know they will excel there.”)

These insights point to a growing respect for students' intention and self-awareness when choosing the HE strand, which contradicts the outdated notion of HE as a fallback or "easy" choice (Enkali, 2019; LeBleu, 1991).

Hardworking and Creative. Students in HE are viewed as having distinct personal qualities, especially creativity and diligence. They are admired for thriving in hands-on activities such as cooking, bartending, and food preparation—tasks perceived as both technically demanding and artistically expressive. Respondent no. 19 described HE students as,

Hardworking and creative because home economics has a different take on learning [...] like bartending; hindi po siya madaling gawin [...] cookery also. Kaya tingin ko po sobrang creative nila. (They are hardworking and creative because HE has a different take on learning. Bartending isn't easy [...] They go through a lot of these activities, cookery also. That's why I think they are very creative.)

Other respondents noted that HE students develop their competencies through frequent practical training, immersion, and physical work. As Respondent no. 12 stated,

Lagi niya [friend in HE] po kinukwento 'yung mga ginawa niya po sa bartending, [at] 'yung mga ginagawa po nila [na] pagluluto [...] Kaya mukha po talaga silang hardworking. (My friend in HE always talks about their bartending and cooking classes [...] they really look hardworking.)

Creativity is also seen in how HE students can execute specialized tasks like food styling or drink mixing—skills perceived as beyond the capabilities of their peers in other strands. These observations support the idea that HE produces skilled and specialized students, yet still within a technical-service framework (Llige, 2021; Ode et al., 2013).

With a Career Orientation Toward Food and Hospitality. HE students are consistently associated with career paths in the food, beverage, and hospitality sectors. Respondent no. 1 shared that HE students are usually seen as people who love cooking and are interested in becoming chefs, working in restaurants,

or entering the bartending profession. Others described HE students as aspiring to enter hotel and restaurant management, who often choose the strand to understand how the service industry operates. These perceived career goals match the hands-on competencies taught in TVL-HE, such as food preparation, customer service, and restaurant operations.

Respondents also associated HE students with visible characteristics in immersion activities, such as those “wearing white long sleeves” (Respondent no. 5) and learning how to “serve customers” (Respondent no. 14). While these roles are valid career aspirations, they strengthen the idea of HE as a service-oriented or “blue-collar” fields, which often overlook its academic and theoretical dimensions (Gabriel et al., 2017; IFHE, 2008).

Based on the results, encouragingly, some outdated biases such as the association of HE with low intellect or gender stereotyping were no longer present. Unlike in Uwameiye’s (2015) study, where male HE students were derogatorily labeled, none of the current respondents expressed similar views. Moving forward, enhancing the image of HE requires not only strengthening its vocational relevance but also expanding public understanding of its contributions to education, sustainability, and social development (Pendergast, 2008).

Factors Affecting the HE Perceptions of SHS Students

By probing into the experiences and observations of students, several factors were identified as shaping senior high school students' perceptions of HE: school-related experiences, peer-related experiences, media-related exposure, home-related influences, and the name of “home economics” itself.

School

School experiences had the greatest influence on students’ perceptions of HE. These included their experiences with the TLE and Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan (EPP) subjects, the lack of a formal introduction to HE, the limited topics and competencies covered, the presence of the TVL-HE strand, and the absence of HE in specialized curricula.

Many students based their perceptions on their experiences in EPP in elementary school, and in TLE in junior high school. As Respondent no. 7 shared, “[My perception is] based on my experiences from elementary EPP [...]”

and high school TLE.” Most respondents also agreed that TLE shaped their perception of HE; specifically, the activities and lessons they recalled from the subject.

The lack of an explicit introduction to HE also contributed to students’ limited understanding of the subject. Respondent no. 14 recalled:

Ang tanda ko po parang nakalagay naman po na home economics na po siya [sa module] tapos nandun po ‘yung mga [topics na] baking po tapos po cookery. (From what I recall, home economics was written in the module titles, with topics like cookery and baking.)

When asked if HE was properly introduced in class, many respondents shared that the concept was neither defined nor explained. Some did not realize they were already learning HE. Others mistakenly associated unrelated subjects like agriculture and fisheries with HE due to their inclusion in the TLE umbrella. This reflects previous findings by Ode et al. (2013), Uwameiye (2015), and Enkali (2019), which highlighted the lack of emphasis on HE in secondary education that leads to limited student perceptions.

Students also cited the narrow scope of topics covered in EPP and TLE. Though the curriculum includes modules like cookery, bartending, childcare, customer service, and cleaning, topics related to family, resource management, and consumer education are largely missing or overshadowed. As previously discussed, this is consistent again with Llige’s (2021) analysis, which emphasized the dominance of vocational skills and the minimal focus on family and consumer issues. Household management, when recalled by the respondents, was often reduced to chores, which leaves out deeper competencies in resource optimization, financial literacy, and family well-being. This narrow lens is partly a result of TESDA’s vocational focus, which heavily shapes the HE curriculum in secondary education. Since TESDA centers on skills for employment, HE has been molded into a vocational subject, with competencies aligned with national certifications. While valuable, this skews the discipline’s broader goals, i.e. helping families and individuals manage social, economic, and resource-based challenges. As Gabriel (1998) and Gabriel et al. (2017) noted, HE plays a vital role in helping families adapt to limited resources. However, its minimal representation in the curriculum is a disservice to both the discipline and the communities it seeks to serve.

Another important factor is the TVL-HE strand itself. Students who observed or interacted with TVL-HE learners associated the subject with food service and hospitality. For example, immersion in food service-related industries, a requirement in TVL-HE, shapes the view that HE is mainly about cooking or serving. Also noteworthy is the absence of TLE/Home Economics in special programs like SPA (Special Program in the Arts), STE (Science, Technology, and Engineering), and SSC (Special Science Classes). Unlike values education or physical education, TLE is excluded from these programs, which implies a perceived lesser importance in the Philippine educational system. This lack of exposure contributes to students' limited or inaccurate perceptions of the discipline.

Peers

Peers also played a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of HE. Students often relied on secondhand accounts and visual observations from classmates or friends enrolled in the TVL-HE strand. These informal sources of information became a basis for how they understood the nature and scope of the subject and even the discipline.

For many, peer influence came in the form of shared experiences—stories about lessons, practical activities, or immersion work. As Respondent no. 11 mentioned, “[...] *from friends po na may subject po na TLE [nakuha ang perception]. Sila po nagsasabi [ng mga kwento] [...]*” (“I got my perception from friends who take TLE. They share stories about their experiences.”). This demonstrates how even those who are not directly enrolled in HE courses still form opinions based on peer narratives, which may or may not reflect the full scope of the discipline. Aside from obtaining peers' accounts, observation was another source. As mentioned in the previous section, some students described seeing their friends wearing chef uniforms or server attire and performing tasks like cooking or bartending, which are highly visible and vocational activities. These observations strengthen the idea that HE covers food preparation and service-related skills. While these competencies are certainly part of the curriculum, for some, these contribute to narrow impressions that overlook the broader philosophy of HE, which includes family living, resource management, and consumer education.

This peer-driven perception is important to highlight because it reveals how indirect exposure, without proper context, can lead to a limited view of the discipline. If students only hear or see vocational components through friends, it limits their understanding and appreciation of HE's full academic and practical value. It also implies that students without direct access to HE courses rely heavily on social learning, which makes peer narratives a strong but potentially misleading source of information.

Media

Students also cited media, particularly social media, as influencing their perceptions of HE. Respondent no. 19 recalled how a Facebook post showed students flipping pans and mixing drinks, which strengthens the idea for him that HE is primarily about the food and beverage industry. On the other hand, some students noted the lack of HE visibility in the media, which led to frustration. As Respondent no. 8 said, HE is “not recognized as much as it should be,” calling this lack of awareness “unfortunate.”

This mismatch between media representation and the true philosophy of HE presents a clear problem. Due to the curriculum's focus on vocational competencies, advertisement materials follow suit to highlight these. Marketing strategies only emphasize what the curriculum entails. Thus, as long as home economics curricula follow an inaccurate representation of home economics, publicity materials may stay inaccurate. Social media posts by home economics organizations, and curriculum revisiting are some steps the discipline may undergo to disseminate a more accurate content.

Home

Some students cited home-based experiences as a factor that influenced how they perceive HE. Respondent no. 12 shared how their mother scolded them for not knowing how to do household tasks due to not having studied TLE or HE: “[...] *pinagalitan po ako ng nanay ko [...] wala raw po akong [inaral na] TLE at HE.*” (“I was scolded by my mom for not knowing how to manage the household since I didn't study TLE and HE.”). Other students also had parents who were TLE teachers who would share materials or activities with them, such as visual aids about kitchen tools, which helped shape the students' views of HE.

The responses show that students' understanding of HE is not solely formed within the classroom but is also influenced by lived experiences at home. For example, Respondent no. 12's account reveals how a lack of exposure to HE led to criticism from a parent, and this emphasizes the idea that household competence is expected and that HE is a key source for learning such skills. This indicates that for some students, the value of HE is internalized through familial expectations rather than formal instruction alone. Moreover, students with parents who are TLE teachers benefit from early exposure to HE content, such as learning tools and techniques at home. These instances imply that parents could act as informal educators who could strengthen HE understanding outside school.

The Name “Home Economics”

The name of the subject itself, “Home Economics,” influenced students' perceptions of it. Respondent no. 16 shared:

Wala po [influence] kasi po pinagbasehan ko lang po talaga 'yung word na home economics po [...]. Nasabi ko lang po 'yung about family po at decision making kasi nga po home po tapos po economics po. (I don't have any influencing factor. I just based my idea on the term 'home economics'—I thought of family and decision-making because of the words 'home' and 'economics.'”)

Findings from this study show that the name of the discipline continues to influence student perceptions. Respondent no. 16 shared that they had no direct exposure to the subject but derived their understanding from the literal interpretation of the term home economics, which led them to associate it with family life and decision-making. This indicates that names carry semantic weight and affect how students conceptualize a discipline, especially in the absence of clear definitions or structured orientation. Interestingly, such interpretations can be both limiting and enlightening; they can limit the subject to household tasks, but they may also highlight the discipline's core focus—family, resource use, and decision-making. In relation to this, the recent renaming of HE to Family and Consumer Science (FCS) was intended to better reflect the discipline in terms of the following contents: home management, food preparation, garment construction, and health and wellness (DepEd, 2023). However, as this study shows, if students are not made aware of the nature and depth of scope of the discipline, then the change in nomenclature alone is insufficient in shifting or clarifying perceptions.

While previous research argues that the term HE contributes to students' reluctance to engage with the discipline (Ode et al., 2013), this study proposes that name alone is not the primary driver of perception. Instead, students' direct and indirect experiences through school curricula, peer influence, and media, have more influence in how they view the subject. Renaming to FCS could be considered by DepEd (2023) as a step in the right direction, but it must be supplemented with intentional efforts in orientation, curriculum design, and public awareness campaigns, since without these, the change remains symbolic rather than transformative.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, SHS students have varied awareness and perceptions of HE, which are rooted in a variety of factors. Foodservice and household management-related topics and competencies dominated the awareness of students. However, students also demonstrate misconceptions about HE. Some confuse HE with other HE-allied fields, such as agriculture and hairdressing, which indicates a lack of clarity about the scope of the discipline. Many other students are also unaware of the presence of HE programs at the tertiary level due to limited exposure to higher education information. To note, students who revealed awareness only know of the program as they saw it in university primers.

The perception of students, on the other hand, may be described as varied but limited. Results showed different perceived content, importance, and images of individuals under the discipline. The students see HE as a discipline focused on content, such as cooking, the service industry, self-sufficiency, household matters, and skills development. This perception is partly correct, as these areas are indeed core components of HE, which reflect the discipline's practical relevance in everyday life. However, the understanding on the multidisciplinary of HE and its role to improve family living is still lacking. Nevertheless, they believe that HE is important to be learned because it could deliver real-life content, sustain the economy, and produce capable citizens. Their recognition of HE's contribution to real-life skills and economic sustainability aligns with the discipline's broader goals of promoting personal and societal well-being. Lastly, they perceive individuals taking home economics to have similar drive and experiences with their peers, such as being motivated by interest, striving for excellence, and picking a course due to its relevance in their lives; having career choices related

to food and beverage service, and being hardworking and creative. These perceptions show a correct understanding among SHS students, that HE develop practical skills, creativity, and career readiness. Overall, the SHS students' perceptions were found to be limited as they perceive HE as a discipline that highly focuses on vocational topics and competencies.

The SHS students' limited perceptions and misconceptions about HE may be attributed to multiple factors: the general emphasis on vocational skills in secondary school TLE curricula, limited career guidance, minimal media representation of HE as a tertiary field, and the influence of informal knowledge from peers and family. Additionally, the words "home" and "economics" in the discipline's name may lead students to assume that it only deals with household chores or financial management, which contribute to their narrow perceptions.

Similarly, the correct perceptions on HE are also influenced by factors, including school, peers, media, and home-related experiences. These influences reveal that students' perceptions of HE are shaped by both formal and informal learning environments. School-based instruction provides foundational knowledge, while personal and home contexts play a role in shaping how students define and value the subject.

Recommendations

In light of the findings that HE modules often lack introductory content, this study recommends that curriculum developers incorporate foundational lessons that define and explain the nature of HE along with other TLE areas. Providing this clarity at the outset would allow students to better link their lessons to the broader philosophy of HE, which could enable a deeper understanding of its holistic nature. The TVL-HE curriculum under the basic education program should also be revisited. A dedicated course—whether a specialized subject, a major course, or even a brief introductory module—should be integrated to orient students on the purpose and coverage of their strand. This should explain why their competencies fall under the HE umbrella. Including introductory lessons on the philosophy of HE would help learners grasp its true scope that extends from vocational skills to a comprehensive, life-relevant discipline.

Considering that students in this study demonstrated limited awareness and understanding of HE, it is suggested that SHS HE teachers intentionally emphasize the connection between the discipline and the specific lessons or activities they deliver. These teachers are also encouraged to talk about the field to their peers, students' families, and the broader school community, particularly those who are unfamiliar with what the discipline truly offers. In addition, given the students' feedback that their practical research subjects are not required to relate to their strand, this study recommends that TVL-HE research teachers encourage or mandate the selection of HE-related topics. Doing so not only deepens the students' appreciation of the discipline but also supports its long-term goals by involving learners in studying its diverse dimensions.

To further address the lack of awareness and understanding of HE, this study strongly urges home economists to design a targeted program that raises the visibility of the discipline among students. Such initiatives could involve school visits by professional HE practitioners who present accurate information and encourage enrollment in the field especially in tertiary education. Collaborating with schools to produce engaging and informative printed materials is another strategy. These awareness efforts may be coordinated with school guidance counselors, DepEd, and other education authorities to effectively promote the discipline beyond its vocational label and highlight the wide array of career opportunities it provides. In addition to awareness campaigns, this study proposes that HE professionals advocate for the inclusion of the discipline under a defined academic strand. This alignment should be thoughtfully assessed to best reflect HE's identity as an academic and professional field. Consequently, this supports the broader objective of the IFHE, which emphasizes the advancement of HE in both its academic and curricular areas of practice.

Considering that the current TLE and TVL-HE curricula lack comprehensive content about HE, further research is encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of selected HE learning materials in accurately communicating the discipline's scope. Investigations may also focus on how HE is taught and understood in schools with SHS TVL-HE programs. These efforts could reveal whether limited perceptions of HE still persist. An action research project may be undertaken to increase the visibility of HE programs at the tertiary level. Studies focusing on understanding students' misconceptions about HE are also recommended to be taken.

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