

## Perception of Girls and Their Parents Towards Home Science as a Subject

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**ABSTRACT** The present paper aims to find the reasons for decline in popularity of Home Science as a subject and to assess the perception of 10<sup>th</sup> grade girls and their parents regarding it, its objectives, and curriculum and future options. The purposive sampling procedure was used for data collection. Five government schools and five private schools were selected for the study. Only tenth grader 130 female students and their parents were selected for the study. Questionnaires were used for the girls and their parents and the tool was developed in Hindi in the light of objectives for easy understanding. Results depicts that girls have less interest in Home Science because of less career options and weaning interest, which are the reasons for its deteriorating popularity. More girls have a clear understanding regarding the objectives of the subject, future options and the curriculum than parents.

### INTRODUCTION

Home Science, also known as Home Economics is losing its sheen in colleges and universities in India and no more do the meritorious students wish to pursue it for their higher studies, and as a result, at places concerned authorities have decided not to offer it anymore and others are in the process of doing so. Few school boards who offered Home Science as a separate subject at higher secondary level have also removed it from the scheme. The Board of Secondary Education in Rajasthan is one such example. One needs to revisit the conception of this subject, which is few years older than a century at the global level and even in India it is seven to eight decades since the pioneer universities had been offering Home Science.

The Morrill Act of USA 1862 initiated women's education and focused on more hands-on and skill based practices aimed to teach management of the home and family through a more scientific approach. This was the beginning of the home economics discipline. Ellen Richards, Isabel Bevier and others at the first Lake Placid Conference in 1899 coined the nomenclature and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 1909 designed the curriculum and finally established the American Home Economics Associations (AHEA), currently the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). At present, AAFCS in its second century has come

up with a new tagline: *Connecting Professionals, Touching Lives.*

International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), which is the only worldwide organization concerned with Home Economics and Consumer Studies was founded in 1908 to serve as a platform for international exchange within the field of Home Economics. IFHE is an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO), having consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, and UNICEF) and with the Council of Europe. In 2008 the federation celebrated its hundred years and invited responses to the "IFHE Position Statement: Home Economics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" prepared by the Think Tank Committee headed by Donna Pendargast. The Federation is committed to re-branding and repositioning, not renaming the profession and also is working for global recognition for Home Economics.

Thus, even at the international platform, the organizations are struggling for the recognition of the subject. The same scenario exists in India where many old universities are finding it difficult to get full admissions and the new universities cannot continue the subject. These days the school boards like Central Board of Secondary Education and various State Boards have added almost all of the elements of what constitute Home Science in school subjects like health, hygiene and sanitation, physiology, basics of foods and nutrition, textiles and clothing, re-

source management and many others to the course content of primary classes to secondary level.

Here, the goal and the content of Home Science need to be reviewed. Home Science, or the science of a home, includes all the things that concern the person, home, family members and resources. Home Science means the art of managing one's resources efficiently and the science of achieving a healthy and happy home as well as successful career. It is the education for a "better living" and the core of this education is the family ecosystem. It also deals with reciprocal relations between the family and its natural and manmade environments. Home Science also means 'application of scientific knowledge in a systematic manner towards improving the quality of home and family life'.

During the first All India Women's Conference, which was held in 1932 at Lady Irwin College, New Delhi, Home Science was defined "as a practical science, which makes the students lead their family life successfully and solve social and economic problems easily".

### Objectives

The objective of the research is to assess the area of interest of the girls and their parents in the subject selection for pursuing further studies after secondary education. It also examines the knowledge and perception of 10<sup>th</sup> grade girls and their parents regarding Home Science subject programs available, the goal of studying Home Science, future career options it offers and the curriculum it entails. It is assumed that there is no difference in the perception of parents and their wards about understanding the meaning of Home Science, the careers that can be pursued in this field and curriculum.

### METHODOLOGY

The purposive sampling procedure was used for data collection. Five government schools representing state board and five private schools representing central board were selected for the study within 8 to 10 kilometers from the city center. Only 130 tenth grader female students and their parents were selected for the study. Questionnaire method was used for the study and the self-made tool was developed in Hindi in the light of objectives for easy understanding.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nowadays more and more girls from high to middle income strata want to be economically independent and pursue careers, which pay them more and for this they prepare themselves by opting for professional courses. Adolescent girls' economic empowerment can also have positive multiplier effects across their families and communities (World Bank 2010). Keeping this in mind the upcoming generation, even girls, is conscious to take up those subjects, which help them in economic empowerment. The results of the study are divided into two sections.

### Section 1

This section deals with the preference of parents and their wards for subject selection and the reasons behind the preference. Further the awareness among parents and their wards about the courses and subjects offered in the field of Home Science is also explored.

Table 1 reveals that more than eighty percent parents were familiar with Home Science, but the percentages was less in case of girls, as only sixty-seven percent girls were familiar with the Home Science subject. Table 2 depicts that more than one third of the girls themselves and their parents want them to choose commerce subjects after tenth standard.

**Table 1: Familiarity to Home Science word (n=130)**

S. No.	Familiarity to Home Science word	Yes	No
1	Girls	87 (67)	43 (33)
2.	Parents	107 (82)	23 (18)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

Table 2 depicts that after commerce, preference is seen for (21% and 18%) arts, followed by (15% to 18%) science and math, and (16% to 10%) science and biology among girls and their parents, respectively. Data shows that Home Science is the last choice (13%) for the parents and their wards to opt in 11<sup>th</sup> standard. Shakya and Singh's (2013) study support these results. They conducted a study in Kanpur city on 300 adolescents (137 boys and 163 girls) randomly selected from six degree colleges to assess their carrier preferences using a standard career test. Data on career preferences revealed that educa-

**Table 2: Preference of parents and their daughter's for subject selection (n=130)**

S.No.	Subject preference	Girls student 130	Parents130
1	Science Biology	22 (16.12)	14 (10.76)
2	Arts	28 (21.15)	24 (18.47)
3	Science Math	20 (15.38)	23 (17.69)
4	Commerce	<b>43 (33.07)</b>	<b>51 (39.24)</b>
5	Home Science as a subject(Arts)	17 (13.08)	18 (13.85)
<i>Reasons for Not Opting Home Science</i>			
1	No interest	58 (44.72%)	45 (34.6)
2	No job opportunities	25 (19.34%)	60 (46.15)
3	One learns house hold course	11 (8.56%)	0 (0)
4	No answer	36 (28.38%)	25 (19.23)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

tion and science and technology were the most preferred career for adolescents and agriculture as least preferred career. Girls preferred medical, mass media, journalism, art and designing while boys had more of a preference for science, technology, commerce and management.

Further, the reasons for not preferring Home Science were explored and it was found that lack of job opportunity in Home Science was the main concern for (46%) parents but around forty-five percent girls said that they had no interest in the Home Science subject, and one-fifth felt there is no job opportunity in this subject. It is due to the lack of job opportunities in this field, because of which the students' interest has weaned out. In order to investigate whether parents leave the decision of subject selection on their wards or they decide themselves, their views were recorded.

Table 3 reveals that more than eighty percent parents think that they will help and advice their wards in subject selections. More than fifty-five percent parents felt that their wards were

**Table 3: Involvement of parents for their daughters in subject selection (n=130)**

S. No.	Decisions regarding subject selection	Yes	No
1	Will you take decision about subject selection after 10 standard	87 (66.93)	43 (33.07)
2	Is your child capable of choosing the subject	73 (56.15)	57 (43.85)
3	Will you help your child in subject selection	112 (86.16)	18 (13.84)
4	Will you give advice to your child from time to time	109 (84)	21 (16.16)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

capable to choose subjects for further studies. But still they (84% - 86%) want to help their wards and give advice. Above all even knowing that more than fifty-five percent children are capable of choosing the subject, sixty-seven percent of parents want to decide themselves the subject to be selected by their children. Further information and knowledge of parents and their wards regarding Home Science subject was explored and Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4 depicts that one third of parents and girls know that at undergraduate level Home Science can be studied as a subject and equal number knows about Home Science availability at all levels. About one-fifth girls were aware about B.Sc. Home Science but very few were aware about the postgraduate program in Home Science.

**Table 4: Awareness about degree courses and subjects in the field of H.Sc (n=130)**

S. No.	Degree courses	Girls	Parents
1	Under graduation (B.Sc. Home Science)	26 (20)	22 (16.8)
2	B.A. (Home Science as a subject)	42 (32)	43 (33.6)
3	Post-Graduation (M.Sc. Home Science)	5 (4)	18 (13.6)
4	PhD	14 (11)	5 (3.2)
5	All above	43 (33)	42 (32.8)
<i>Subjects</i>			
1	Food's and Nutrition	102(78.4)	85 (67.2)
2	Recourse Management	64 (49.2)	63 (49.6)
3	Clothing and Textile	80 (61.5)	75 (59.2)
4	Human Development	57 (43.8)	51 (40)
5	Extension Education	51 (39.1)	27 (20.8)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

Regarding the awareness about the subject composition of Home Science, more than seventy-five percent of girls said that they know that Food and Nutrition topic was a part of Home Science subject. In case of parents the percentage was less (67%). Next known subject to parents and girls was (around 60%) Clothing and Textiles followed by (around 50%) Resource Management and (40%) Human Development. According to the data, results reveal that girls had better awareness about Home Science subjects as compared to parents. A study conducted by Siddique et al. (2001) on Students' Perception of Home Economics Undergraduate Curriculum reveals that the respondents indicate that the majority of the students perceive subjects related to major areas of Home Economics like Food and Nutrition, Clothing Textile and Home Management as the most interesting, meaningful, pertinent and applicable in everyday life. However they wanted to maintain balance in the practical and theoretical work of these subjects.

## Section 2

Seeing the downfall of the subject it is necessary to know the perception of the students

and their parents towards Home Science subject, career options and the content. This will help give an insight into perception of the society in the generalized manner.

Table 5 reveals that majority of the girls (68% - 70%) strongly perceived that one can get relevant knowledge of household work, Home Science can improve quality of life, individual and community and one can have a healthy, happy home and build a career. A substantial number of girls (43% - 48%) felt that under this subject they could learn skills to decorate the home, to cook food and stitch clothes and to perform household works skillfully.

Looking at the parental data, forty-five to sixty-one percent parents strongly agreed that through Home Science one can get relevant knowledge of household work, can improve quality of life, individual and community and one can get a healthy, happy home and build a career. Around thirty-two to thirty-nine percent of parents felt that under this subject their daughters could learn skills to decorate home, to cook food and stitch clothes and to perform household works skillfully.

**Table 5: Perception of parents and girl's students toward the goal of Home Sc. Education (n=130)**

S.No.	Perception of parents and girls	Agree		Uncertain		Disagree	
		G	P	G	P	G	P
1	To gain healthy and happy home and build a career	88 (67.69)	58 (45)	20 (15.38)	33 (25)	22 (16.92)	39 (30)
2	Get relevant knowledge of household work	91 (70)	80 (61)	13 (10)	23 (18)	26 (20)	27 (21)
3	Handling resources skillfully	83 (63.8)	70 (54)	19 (14.63)	24 (18.4)	28 (21.53)	36 (27.6)
4	Improving quality of life, individual and community	90 (69.24)	65 (50)	23 (17.69)	33 (25.3)	17 (13.07)	33 (25.3)
5	Skills to decorate home	62 (47.69)	51 (39)	31 (23.85)	31 (24)	37 (28.46)	48 (37)
6	Do cooking and stitching	65 (46.93)	42 (32)	19 (14.61)	26 (20)	50 (38.46)	62 (48)
7	Do household work	56 (43.07)	48 (36)	30 (23.09)	41 (32.5)	44 (33.08)	41 (32.5)

Figures in parentheses show percentages (G- Girls and P- Parents)

**Table 5a: Perception of parents and girl's students toward the goal of Home Science subject (n=130)**

S. No.	Perception of parents and girl's students toward the goal of Home Science subject	Mean		S.D.		z- value
		G	P	G	P	
1	To gain healthy and happy home and build a career	2.507	2.146	0.770	0.854	4.01(**)
2	Improving quality of life, individual and community	2.561	2.246	0.715	0.835	3.93(**)
3	Do cooking and stitching	2.146	1.846	0.915	0.885	3.00(**)
4	Get relevant knowledge of household work	2.5	2.407	0.809	0.813	0.93
5	Handling resources skillfully	2.423	2.261	0.824	0.867	1.62
6	Skills to decorate home	2.192	2.023	0.854	0.875	1.69
7	Do household work	2.092	2.053	0.875	0.828	0.39

Analyzing both the data, it is evident that the wards' perception follows the same trend as of their parents'. The difference lies in number of parents being affirmative about the particular option is less than that of students, but the trend seems same. According to data, results showed that parents and girls strongly perceived and so percentages were high on following statements like, getting relevant knowledge of household work, handling resources skillfully, and improving quality of individual and community and to gain a healthy and happy home and build a career as compared to the statements where the meaning relates to household chores like cooking, stitching and decorating home. This perception is seen in the entire community and reflections of this are faced by Home Science professionals. To compare the perception of parents and girls z test was applied. Table 5a shows the mean score, standard deviation and z-value on the perception of parents and girls regarding Home Science subject.

Results indicate that on first three statements the z-value is significant, which shows that there is a significant difference in the perception of parents and their female wards on grounds that (4.01) Home Science subject would help gain healthy happy home and build a career, (3.93) it improves quality of life of an individual and community and it (3.00) means doing cooking and stitching. In all these cases the girls' mean scores are higher than parents', and thus the girls' perception is more pronounced that Home Science deals with the accomplishment of above goals.

On the rest four statements, the hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 percent level of significance that there is no difference in the perception of parents and their female wards on the fact that Home Science deals with imparting knowledge about household work, handling resources skillfully, and skills to decorate home and do household chores.

Table 6 reveals the perception of parents and wards regarding future options. More than seventy-five percent of the girls and more than fifty percent of the parents agree that girls can handle home and job together. More than seventy percent girls and forty-eight percent of parents perceived that after studying Home Science subject girls could establish their own business/enterprise. At the same time only forty to forty-five percent parents perceived that after getting this education girl can become self-dependent, have good personality, get a respectable and good job, becomes a good parent, and studying the subject one can handle home and become a good homemaker too. Whereas sixty to sixty-six percent girls felt that through the subject girls could get education, become self-dependent and become a good parent.

Only thirty-eight percent parents and fifty-four percent wards know that boys could also make their career in Home Science subject. Around forty-three percent parents and fifty-two percent girls know that there are career options in this subject. Sandhu and Gupta (2014) reported similar results. They conducted a study to examine the awareness of rural girls about

**Table 6: Perception of girls and their parents regarding future options in Home Sc. (n=130)**

S.No.	Perception of girls regarding future options of Home Science subject	Agree		Uncertain		Disagree	
		G	P	G	P	G	P
1	Girls can establish their own business/ enterprise	96 (73.85)	62 (47.6)	21(16.15)	31 (24)	13 (10)	37 (28.4)
2	Become a good home maker	93 (71.05)	58 (44.6)	18 (13.08)	38 (29.2)	19 (14.07)	34 (26.1)
3	Handle home and job together	100 (78)	69 (53)	14 (10)	23 (18)	16 (12)	38 (29)
4	Educate women and become self-dependent	86 (66.3)	52 (40)	20 (15.3)	35 (27.2)	24 (18.04)	43 (32.8)
5	Helps to make good personality	91 (70)	58 (44.6)	21 (16.02)	38 (29.2)	18 (13.08)	34 (26.1)
6	Get respectable and good job	77 (69.03)	55 (42)	24 (18.04)	49 (27)	29 (22.03)	35 (31)
7	Helps to becomes a good parents	79 (60.07)	52 (40)	20 (15.05)	36 (28)	31 (23.08)	42 (32)
8	Studying this subject one can handle home	72 (55)	52 (40)	16 (12)	35 (26.9)	42 (33)	43 (33.0)
9	*No career options in this subject	47 (36)	37 (32.8)	16 (12)	31 (24)	67 (52)	56 (43.2)
10	*Only girls can make their career	42 (33)	60 (46)	17 (13)	21 (18)	71 (54)	49 (38)

Figures in parentheses show percentages  
\*Negative items

**Table 6a: Perception of girls and their parents regarding future options of Home Science subject (n=130)**

S. No.	Perception of girls and their parents regarding career options of Home Science	Mean		S.D.		z- value
		G	P	G	P	
1	After getting this education girls can establish their own business/ enterprise	2.2	2.1	0.9	0.9	1
2	Those girls who get Home Science education become a good home maker	1.7	2	0.9	0.9	0.33
3	Handle home and job together	2.6	2.1	0.6	0.8	0.14
4	Educate women and become self-dependent	2.6	2.2	0.6	0.8	1.17
5	This subject helps to make good personality	2.3	2.2	0.8	0.7	0.8
6	Get respectable and good job	2.5	2.1	0.7	0.8	0.2
7	Helps to becomes a good parents	2.6	2.1	0.6	0.8	0.14
8	Studying this subject one can handle home	2.4	2	0.7	0.8	0.017
9	No career options in this subject	1.6	1.9	0.8	0.8	0.2
10	Only girls can make their career	2.1	2.1	0.9	0.8	0

\*Negative items

Home Science education. An exhaustive list of income generating avenues (of Home Science education) was prepared and used as a tool to educate masses and lectures were arranged. Results indicate that none of the target groups had any knowledge of career options of home science education in industry, freelancing, self-help groups, profit generating networks and agencies like NGOs and KVKs.

To compare the parents' and girls' perception for future career options the mean values of girls' and parents' were calculated and the z-values show (Table 6a) that there is no significant difference in the perception of girls and their parents regarding career options. Hence, both feel alike for career and these days one finds that fewer girls opt for Home Science.

Table 7 depicts the perceptions of girls and their parents towards Home Science curriculum, and the data reveals that sixty-four to sixty-sev-

en percent girls felt that curriculum of Home Science subject is easier than other subjects, it teaches about mental, physical, social and family development and also teaches about utilization of resources skillfully. But at the same time sixty-five to fifty-nine percent parents strongly agreed with these statements. Regarding cooking and stitching, not much difference is seen in (43%) parents' and their (45%) wards' perceptions and around thirty-five percent disagree that home science would have cooking and stitching. Only twenty-four percent parents agreed that in the curriculum of Home Science there is incorporation of both arts and science subjects. Siddique et al. (2002) examine the validity of curriculum in vogue in College of Home Economics, Lahore at undergraduate level. The survey was carried out to assess "The perception of Home Economics students about their undergraduate curriculum" on 200 students. The

**Table 7: Perception of girls and their parents towards Home Science curriculum (n=130)**

S.No.	Perception of girls and their parents towards Home Science curriculum	Agree		Uncertain		Disagree	
		G	P	G	P	G	P
1	Easier than other subjects (curriculum)	83(64)	75(59)	16(12)	27(21)	31(24)	28(21)
2	Teach about mental, physical, social, and family development	84(65)	59(45)	21(16)	38(29)	25(19)	33(26)
3	Teach skillfully utilization of time, money and energy	87(67)	64(49)	19(15)	31(24)	24(18)	35(27)
4	In Home Science only cooking and stitching is taught	58(45)	50(43)	26(20)	32(25)	45(35)	45(35)
5	Incorporation of both art and science in Home Science curriculum	85(65)	55(43)	26(20)	44(34)	19(15)	31(24)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

**Table 7a: Means and S.D. of perception of girls and their parents towards Home Science curriculum (n=130)**

S. No.	Perception of girls and their parents towards Home Science curriculum	Mean		S.D.	
		G	P	G	P
1	Easier than other subjects (curriculum)	2.4	2.3	0.8	0.8
2	Teaches about mental, physical, social, and family development	2.4	2.2	0.7	0.8
3	Teaches skillfully utilization of time, money and energy	2.5	2.2	0.7	0.8
4	In Home Science only cooking and stitching is taught	2	2	0.8	0.8
5	Incorporation of both art and science in Home Science curriculum	2.5	2.1	0.7	0.7

research study conclusively proved that students regarded the subjects relating to major areas of Home Economics as most relevant, meaningful, interesting and applicable in everyday life. According to Table 7a, results reveal that the perception of parents and their wards towards Home Science curriculum was almost the same as much difference is not there in mean and standard deviation.

### CONCLUSION

The study results indicate that girls themselves and their parents keep Home Science at the last priority during subject selection, as parents found no career and girls said their lack of interest is the primary reason for not selecting it. This is the reason that the popularity of Home Science is going down. Popular subjects known to girls and parents were Foods and Nutrition, Clothing Textiles and Resource Management. Though girls have less interest in Home Science but more girls have clear understanding regarding the objectives of the subject, future options and the curriculum than parents.

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