

Students' Attitude towards Home Science Subject in Selected Secondary Schools: A Case of Elgeyo Marakwet County

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Abstract

Upon entry into an institution of learning, students would come with the willingness and enthusiasm to learn. A learner with a sincere interest and zeal in a given subject has a tendency of being motivated towards studying that particular subject. This is because a students' attitude is a key component of learning and where there is a negative attitude, it is most certain that no learning would take place, therefore, there will be no acquisition of any new knowledge or skill. Among other factors, the environment under which learning takes place may contribute towards a positive or a negative attitude in the learner's mind. This study sought to establish students' attitude towards Home Science subject and its effects on enrolment in selected secondary schools in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Descriptive survey design was adopted, and purposive sampling technique was used to select all the six county secondary schools offering Home Science subject. This study comprised a sample of 178 respondents (116 Home Science students, 50 students who had dropped Home Science subject, 6 Home Science teachers and 6 principals of the sampled schools). Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interview schedule. They were then analyzed descriptively and presented using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation distribution tables, and charts. This study established that students had a positive attitude towards Home Science subject and there was a positive correlation to enrolment. Also, this study found out that students had been introduced well to the subject while in form one. Based on the findings of this study, students' positive attitude should be reinforced by offering the necessary learning resources and more practicals especially in Clothing and Textiles which will positively impact on the learners' confidence in handling them thus increasing enrolment.

Keywords: *Students' attitude, Home Science subject, enrolment*

Introduction

Students may develop an attitude towards a subject which may be positive or negative. Serem (2011) stated that attitudes are 'dislikes, likes and feelings for and against something or somebody'. In general view, a negative attitude towards a subject may lead a student to have no interest in it and when such a subject is made optional, many students would then avoid such a subject totally. Contrary

to this, when a student develops a positive attitude towards the subject, there is a tendency of liking it and this automatically leads to the choice. This view is in line with Oriahi, Uhumuavbi, and Aguele (2010).

Several studies have been carried out to investigate the roles played by definition of personal goals. This was attributed to the fact that students had been made aware of the importance of defining their personal goals. Similar study by Cooperstein and Schwartz (1992) reveals important factors like variety, challenge and the ability to define personal goals as leading factors in the choice of a career.

Osocki, Morago, and Van Sickle (2006) further reveal that some students perceived teaching profession as being attractive as it enables one to live in their region and play an important role in their country where a person is able to derive satisfaction and enjoyment as they work with children whom they could positively influence. This aspect is further elaborated by Hargreaves and Low (2000) who believe that an educator plays a vital role of shaping the learners by giving them tools needed to continue with the learning process the rest of their lives. They continue to affirm that teaching is one profession aimed at creating the human skills and capabilities which will see the society succeed in this age.

A study by Serem (2011) revealed that some Home Science students liked the subject because of the units being offered in Home Science. For instance, Foods and Nutrition was the most liked unit (47.2%) followed by Home Management (21%) and thirdly Clothing and Textiles. Among the reasons given for liking Clothing and Textiles were that “they found it easy to understand and they loved learning it”. Another study done by Risser and Laskin (1996) did some analysis on the factors which attracted women to a certain field. They did report that they had a strong excitement and enthusiasm for the chosen profession. In addition to this point, a study by Kerka (2003) highlights enthusiasm, self- motivation and interest as being strong factors that affect their careers. Contrary to this, Ode, Babayeju and Obalowu, (2013) found out that low enrolment in Home Economics programme was attributed to lack of interest in the subject by the students which may have been occasioned by lack of funds to run the subject.

A study by Young, Fraser, and Woolnough (1997) showed that a person is more likely to select a career in science and engineering if they did strongly believe in themselves to have the personality for the particular courses. Works of De Almeida, Leite, and Woolnough (1998) report that individuals who had classified themselves as intelligent did aspire careers related to science and engineering. This study also reported that future scientists perceived themselves as being more sufficient in their future lives as engineers. What informed this study was that many schools were not offering Home Science subject and in the event of offering it, very few students choose the subject. Therefore, this study sought to determine the respondents’ attitude towards Home Science subject.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design and it involved the identification of the characteristics of observed phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). This study was conducted in Elgeyo Marakwet County in the Rift Valley region of Kenya. The study population comprised eight (8) County schools offering Home Science subject in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The criterion for selecting the county schools was based on the fact that county schools were many.

Non-probability sampling methods were utilized to obtain the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select all county secondary schools taking Home Science subject in EMC. Purposive sampling is selecting a sample on the basis of knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of research aims (Babbie, 1990; Voicu, 2011). Snow ball sampling was used to select some of the students who had dropped Home Science subject as they were the viable group with information pertaining to the study. According to Henry (1990) and Kurant, Markopoulou, and Thiran (2011) snow ball sampling technique relies on identified group of members who identify others who may share the same characteristics. These two non-probability sampling techniques allowed the researcher to use cases which had the required information. The sample narrowed down to six schools since they offered Home Science in form Four. Purposive sampling was used to select one hundred and sixteen (116) students in form four taking Home Science subject and Snow ball sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) form four students who dropped Home Science subject. Six (6) Home Science teachers were also purposively selected together with the six (6) Principals of the sampled schools. This study had a sample of one hundred and seventy-eight (178) respondents.

This study used questionnaires and interview schedule. Questionnaires were preferred because they are capable of eliciting information. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), questionnaires can be used to cover a wide area and there is no bias on the side of the researcher and respondents. The questionnaire comprised mainly closed-ended items. Questionnaires were also used because they were able to measure many variables (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005). The interview sessions were organized for the Principals of the schools who were purposively selected. This was done after the administration of the questionnaire so as to gain more insights into the study. The interview schedule entailed the use of structured questions.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics whereby frequencies and percentages were used to present data that was obtained from closed-ended items in the questionnaire. According to Kothari (2004), descriptive statistics provides meaningful distribution of scores using statistical measures of central tendencies, dispersion, and distribution. Qualitative data from the interview schedule was analyzed and presented thematically.

Findings

This study found that out of the 166 student respondents, 116 (69.9%) were taking Home Science and the rest 50 (30.1%) had dropped the subject. The next item was to find out how the respondents were introduced to Home Science while in form one and their responses were as follows; well introduced 143 (86.1%); Fairly introduced 22 (13.3%) and not introduced 1 (0.6%). Well introduced signifies that the students were well taken through the objectives of the subject and were made to understand it in depth. Fairly introduced signifies that the respondents were not taken through the objectives to their full understanding whereas not introduced signified that they were not taken through at all. From the results, it clearly indicates that majority of the students were well introduced to the subject in form one and therefore had the basic knowledge of the subject in totality.

Table 1 *How the Students Were Introduced to Home Science in Form One*

	Frequency	Percent
Not introduced	1	.6
Fairly introduced	22	13.3
Well introduced	143	86.1
Total	166	100.0

Several statements pertaining to Home Science subject were presented to determine attitude of the respondents towards the subject. From the study findings, it was noted that both teachers and students had a very positive attitude towards Home Science as shown in Table 2. For instance, all the students (166) strongly agreed to the statement “Positive attitude towards Home Science makes me more focused on the subject” scored a mean of 4.75 ± 4.275 and that of “Home Science is a very interesting subject” also had a very high mean of 4.52 ± 0.801 . Also, from this study, majority of the students (4.53 ± 2.421) indicated that “it is very easy to study and pass Home Science” yet very few students choose the subject. The results showed that students attitude was positively ($p=0.04$) correlated to enrolment.

Table 2 Students' Attitude towards Home Science

Statement	Mean	SD
Home Science is one of the most useful subjects	4.47	0.932
Everybody should have the basic Home Science knowledge	3.96	1.103
My attitude about my Home Science teacher has a potential for developing an open-minded attitude about the subject	4.3	0.99
Positive attitude towards Home Science makes me more focused on the subject	4.75	4.275
It is very easy to study and pass Home Science	4.53	2.421
Home Science is a very interesting subject	4.52	0.801
Mean	4.42	1.754

The findings of this study concur with that of Ozioma (2011); Ongang'a, Nkurumwa and Koyanga (2014); and Ndalichako & Komba, (2014) that revealed that the level of interest in the study of vocational subjects was high because interests of the students were aroused through practicals done in the laboratories.

They further echoed their sentiments that teachers play a critical role in ensuring that students have positive attitude as a result of their positive attitude towards the students. In addition, teachers 4 (67%) did rate their students as having a strong positive attitude towards Home Science. Fairly positive means having a positive attitude to a moderate extent whereas strong positive means having a very positive attitude.

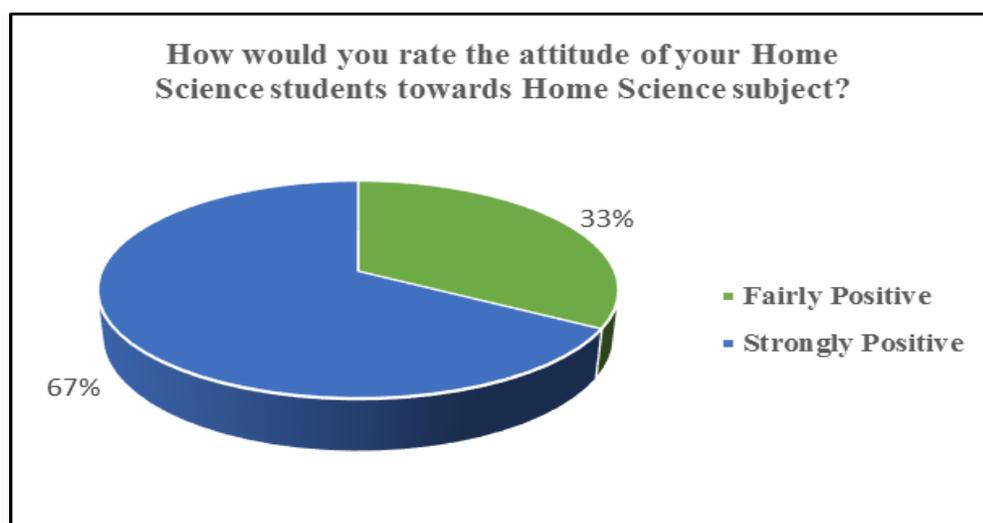


Figure 1: Attitude of Students on Home Science as Rated by Teachers

Oriahi et al., (2010) opined that attitude of students to sciences affects their choice and with a negative attitude, disinterest sets in and eventually students drop the subject when a chance is accorded to them. They further affirm that there is need to put measures to improve students’ attitude towards sciences. Also, Kamau and Orodho (2014) in their study revealed that 80% of their student respondents affirmed that learning Agriculture was not difficult as good results could easily be achieved; thus, implied that students taking Agriculture subject had a positive attitude. Also, Mwangi, Gongera, and Thinguri (2013) in their study confirmed that girls had a positive attitude towards Physics especially girls in single sex schools and that low enrolment had nothing to do with attitude factor. Serem, Mukwa, and Kafu (2010) and Serem (2011) also found similar results as they established that majority of students had a positive attitude towards Clothing and Textiles unit in Home Science since they felt that the unit was useful later on in life. Mbaabu, Gatumu, and Kinai (2011) also had similar results where they established that secondary school students in Imenti South District had a positive attitude towards physics, where 52.5% of their sample indicated so.

The present study therefore found out that students had a positive attitude towards Home Science subject. From the teacher respondents, a statement was asked to determine the kind of study habits the Home Science students exhibited in studying Home Science. This is because if a student has positive attitude towards a subject, they tend to spend more time studying the subject therefore can affect enrolment. This study found out that majority 4 (67%) of the teachers felt that their Home Science students lacked commitment; 1 (16%) teachers indicated that students spend little time studying Home Science and another 1 (17%) felt that students dedicate most of their time to studying Home Science.

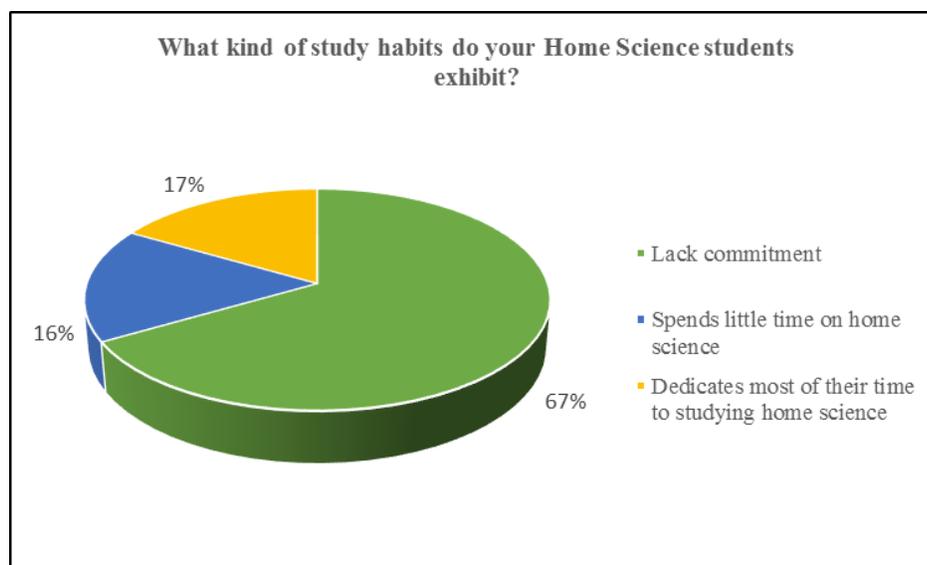


Figure 2: Study Habits Exhibited by Students as Rated by Teachers

This study differs with that by Mbithe (2012) who found out that 6 (50%) of the teachers rated their students to have a poor attitude towards Physics subject

simply because they were not inspired by their teachers. When teachers employ poor teaching methods and they couple it with attitude towards their students, they end up influencing their students whether to choose a subject or not (Akintade, 2012). In comparison to that of Mbithe (2012), this study found out that 263 (30%) students in Kangundo district perceived physics to be more difficult than other subjects making a small number of students to choose Physics. Aina and Adedo (2013) also had dissimilar results in their study where they established that 77.5% of students had no interest in science and 50% of the students lacked motivation and they therefore concluded that interest and motivation had an effect on enrolment in science.

Conclusion

From this study, the students taking Home Science had been introduced well to the subject while in form one and therefore had basic knowledge. Their choice of the subject also indicates that they liked the subject. Also, the respondents had positive attitudes towards Home Science in secondary schools which could be attributed to the interest depicted by the students in the practicals and the usefulness of the subject in equipping one with life skills thus had nothing to do with enrolment. However, a bigger percentage of students had no commitment towards studying the subject possibly due to its wide scope and the fact that it is more demanding in terms of time. This study concludes that if students were accorded a chance to enroll in the subject and adequately supported, enrollment level would go up.

Recommendations

The schools should provide necessary learning resources so that more practicals can be done to enhance students' positive attitude towards Home Science subject. Further, the attitude of Clothing and Textiles unit can be enhanced when the learners are given more exposure to practicals. This will make the students be at ease with the subject and this will positively affect the enrolment level in the Home Science subject.

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