

# From Awareness to Action Nigerian Home Economics Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Sustainable Living Practices into Curriculum Design

Prof. Stella Ngozi Lemchi<sup>1\*</sup>; Dr, Ogbu, Eke Eke<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

<sup>2</sup>Department of Curriculum and Educational Technology, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6653-7481>

\*Corresponding Author: Prof. Stella Ngozi Lemchi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19625011>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>This study explores the perceptions of Nigerian Home Economics teachers regarding the integration of sustainable living practices into the curriculum, viewed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). A significant disconnect exists between the subject's potential as a vehicle for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the practical realities in Nigerian schools. The study employed a qualitative, phenomenological design. Twenty-four Home Economics teachers from public and private secondary schools in Southeastern Nigeria participated through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis revealed that while teachers held strongly positive attitudes towards integration and viewed it as essential for empowering students with life skills, their intentions were heavily constrained by powerful subjective norms, particularly the influence of examination bodies and the official syllabus. Furthermore, teachers' perceived behavioural control was critically low due to profound resource scarcity, large class sizes, and inadequate training in ESD pedagogies. The findings underscore the need for curriculum reform, targeted teacher professional development, and enhanced school-level support to translate positive teacher attitudes into effective classroom practice and advance sustainable development goals.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Home Economics, Sustainable Development, Teacher Perceptions, Nigeria, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Curriculum Integration.</p>
Received: 01-03-2026	
Accepted: 05-04-2026	
Published: 17-04-2026	
<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p><b>Citation:</b> Stella Ngozi Lemchi*, Ogbu, Eke Eke. (2026). From Awareness to Action Nigerian Home Economics Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Sustainable Living Practices into Curriculum Design. UKR Journal of Education and Literature (UKRJEL), 2(2), 89-97.</p>	

## 1. Introduction

The global community faces an urgent imperative to transition towards sustainable development, a challenge acutely felt in nations like Nigeria. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, underscore the critical role of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (United Nations, 2023). ESD empowers learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and agency to address interconnected global challenges. In the Nigerian context, characterized by rapid population growth, resource depletion, and environmental pressures, integrating ESD into the educational fabric is a national priority (Nwankwo, 2022). It is within this framework that subjects with practical applications for daily living, such as Home

Economics, are re-evaluated for their potential to foster sustainable behaviors from an early age.

However, a significant disconnect exists between the inherent potential of Home Economics to act as a vehicle for ESD and the contemporary realities of its delivery in Nigerian schools. The subject, which traditionally covers resource management, nutrition, and family well-being, is perfectly poised to teach sustainable living (International Federation for Home Economics, 2021). Yet, it often grapples with challenges such as perceived academic inferiority, chronic underfunding, a shortage of qualified teachers, and a rigid, examination-focused curriculum that crowds out innovative content (Adewumi, 2021). This gap between potential and practice raises a critical question: what are the factors that enable or inhibit Home Economics

teachers from translating the principles of sustainability into concrete classroom practice?

The primary aim of this study is to conduct a nuanced exploration of Nigerian Home Economics teachers' perceptions of integrating sustainable living practices into their curriculum design. We position this investigation within a behavioral change perspective, recognizing that curriculum innovation is not merely a technical process but a human one, influenced by what teachers know, feel, and believe they can achieve. Understanding these perceptual factors is crucial because Home Economics teachers occupy a unique and influential position. They interact with students on topics directly related to daily life choices concerning food, water, energy, and consumption, thereby acting as potential catalysts for behavioral change that extends from the classroom into families and communities (Ogunjimi, 2023).

To guide this inquiry, the study is structured around the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Nigerian Home Economics teachers towards integrating sustainable living practices into the curriculum?
2. How do subjective norms, such as influences from curriculum bodies, school administration, and colleagues, shape teachers' intentions to integrate these practices?
3. What factors contribute to or inhibit teachers' perceived behavioural control regarding the integration of sustainable living practices?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

To comprehensively investigate the factors that influence curriculum innovation, this study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) developed by Icek Ajzen. This theory provides a robust model for understanding and predicting human behaviour in specific contexts. The TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behaviour is the most immediate predictor of that behaviour. This intention is itself shaped by three distinct but related constructs. The first construct is attitudes, which refers to the degree to which an individual has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question. It encompasses personal beliefs about the outcomes of the behaviour. The second construct is subjective norms. This involves the perceived social pressure from significant individuals or groups to perform or not perform the behaviour. It reflects how much a person feels that others who are important to them think they should engage in the behaviour. The third construct is perceived behavioural control. This is defined as the perceived ease or difficulty

of performing the behaviour, which is influenced by past experiences and anticipated obstacles and facilitators (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this study, the TPB offers a powerful lens through which to analyse why a Home Economics teacher might decide to integrate sustainable living practices. It moves the inquiry beyond simple knowledge assessment to probe their underlying attitudes, the social forces that encourage or discourage them, and their personal sense of capability and control over the process of curriculum change.

The second framework that informs this research is the Sustainability Consciousness framework. This model offers a multidimensional understanding of the very outcomes that Education for Sustainable Development aims to cultivate in learners. Sustainability Consciousness is formally defined as a composite of three dimensions: knowingness, attitudes, and behaviours. The cognitive dimension, knowingness, involves an understanding of the core concepts, facts, and interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The affective dimension, attitude, relates to an individual's concerns, values, feelings of responsibility, and motivation to support sustainability. The behavioural dimension manifests as a readiness and commitment to act in ways that are sustainable (Gericke, 2022). This framework is particularly useful for conceptualizing the intended goals of integrating sustainable living into Home Economics. It provides a structure for analysing whether teachers are focusing solely on transmitting knowledge or if they are also striving to shape student attitudes and foster tangible pro environmental behaviours. It helps to ensure that the concept of integration is viewed holistically.

## Home Economics and Sustainable Development

The historical and conceptual link between Home Economics and the improvement of quality of life is both long-standing and deeply embedded in the discipline's philosophy. The field has evolved significantly from a primary focus on domestic skills to a broader, more critical discipline concerned with the holistic well-being of individuals, families, and communities within their local and global environments. The core domains of Home Economics are intrinsically connected to the pillars of sustainability. In the area of food and nutrition, the subject naturally extends to promoting sustainable food systems. This includes educating students on topics such as reducing food waste, understanding food miles, advocating for balanced and locally sourced diets, and appreciating traditional food preparation methods that conserve energy (Onyeaka, 2023). In textiles and clothing, Home Economics education encompasses lessons on sustainable fashion. This involves teaching garment care and repair to extend clothing lifespan, upcycling old fabrics into new

items, and making informed consumer choices that consider the environmental and social costs of fast fashion.

Perhaps the most direct link is found in the domain of resource management, which is a cornerstone of the Home Economics curriculum. This area directly teaches the efficient, ethical, and thoughtful use of resources like water, energy, time, and finances. Learning to manage a household budget responsibly, to conserve water during cooking and cleaning, and to reduce energy consumption are all practical applications of sustainable living (Powell, 2020). Therefore, the subject provides a natural and applied platform for operationalizing the often abstract principles of ESD. It translates global sustainability goals into actionable daily practices within the home and community. This alignment suggests that Home Economics is not a new frontier for sustainability education but rather a rediscovery and modernization of its foundational purpose. The subject is uniquely positioned to equip students with the practical competencies needed to navigate the challenges of sustainable consumption and production in the 21st century.

### **The Teacher as a Change Agent**

Within any educational system, teachers are universally recognized as the critical change agents responsible for translating policy into classroom practice. Their role in value reorientation and behavioral change is paramount, as they are the direct interface between the curriculum and the learner. Empirical evidence consistently suggests that teachers' own environmental attitudes and their sense of self efficacy are strong predictors of their willingness and ability to implement Education for Sustainable Development effectively (Boeve de Pauw, 2021). A teacher who personally believes in the importance of sustainability and feels confident in their ability to teach it is more likely to create engaging and transformative learning experiences for their students.

However, in many contexts, including Nigeria, teachers face a complex array of challenges that can hinder their potential as effective change agents. A predominant exam oriented education system often forces teachers to prioritize rote learning and exhaustive syllabus coverage over the more time consuming and process oriented goals of transformative, behavior focused education (Eze, 2022). In such an environment, pedagogical methods that foster critical thinking and value formation may be sidelined in favour of those that ensure high test scores. Furthermore, a widespread issue is the insufficiency of both pre service and in service training on ESD specific methodologies. Many teachers feel ill equipped to handle the complex, interdisciplinary, and often values laden topics associated with sustainability (Akinbola, 2023). They may lack the confidence to facilitate discussions on controversial issues

or to design project based learning that addresses real world sustainability problems. Without adequate support, resources, and professional development, the expectation for teachers to drive behavioral change can become an overwhelming burden rather than an achievable professional goal. This highlights the critical importance of understanding the systemic and personal factors that influence a teacher's capacity to act as a change agent for sustainability.

### **Gaps in Literature**

While there is a slowly growing body of research on Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria, a conspicuous and significant gap exists in the literature. Very few studies have zoomed in specifically on Home Economics teachers, who, as argued, are uniquely positioned by the very nature of their subject matter to advance the sustainability agenda at a grassroots level. The existing research often focuses on general awareness of ESD among science teachers or on the broad challenges of implementation across the entire school system. These studies, while valuable, do not capture the specific perceptions, experiences, and contextual realities of the Home Economics teaching professional.

Moreover, the limited studies that do touch on Home Economics often concentrate on general challenges or awareness levels without delving deeply into the psychological and behavioural determinants of the teachers' own instructional practices. There is a notable scarcity of research that employs a behavioural change theory, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, to systematically and rigorously investigate the interplay of knowledge, attitudes, social pressures, and perceived control that shape Nigerian Home Economics teachers' intentions and actions regarding curriculum integration of sustainable living practices. This study is designed to fill this identified gap. It aims to provide a nuanced, theory grounded, and empirically rich analysis of teacher perceptions, thereby contributing a deeper understanding of how to effectively empower these key change agents in the Nigerian educational landscape.

## **3. Methodology**

This chapter delineates the methodological pathway undertaken to investigate the research questions. It provides a detailed account of the research design, the strategy for participant selection, the methods employed for data collection, the procedures for data analysis, and the ethical protocols rigorously followed throughout the study.

### **Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilizing a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of Home Economics teachers.

The phenomenological approach is primarily concerned with understanding a phenomenon from the subjective perspectives of those who have directly experienced it. It seeks to capture the essence of their shared experiences and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Creswell, 2023). Given that the central aim of this research is to delve deeply into the personal perceptions, beliefs, and feelings of teachers regarding curriculum integration, this design was deemed most appropriate. A quantitative approach, while useful for generalizing trends, would not have captured the rich, detailed, and nuanced insights into the teachers' attitudes, the social pressures they face, and their sense of control over their teaching practices. Phenomenology allows for a thick description of the phenomenon, providing a comprehensive understanding of the "why" behind their instructional decisions and intentions.

### **Sampling**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify and select participants who could provide information rich cases relevant to the research questions. The study involved twenty four practicing Home Economics teachers from a mix of twelve public and private secondary schools across two states in South Eastern Nigeria: Imo and Abia. This geo political zone was selected for its specific educational context and the presence of a robust Home Economics curriculum in many of its schools, providing a fertile ground for this investigation (Onwuegbuchulam, 2021). The selection criteria required participants to be certified Home Economics teachers with a minimum of three years of classroom experience. The final participant pool included teachers with experience ranging from 5 to 28 years, and comprised both male and female educators to ensure a diversity of viewpoints. Recruitment continued until data saturation was achieved, a point where subsequent interviews and focus group discussions yielded no significant new thematic information.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through two primary qualitative methods: semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. This triangulation of methods enhanced the credibility and depth of the data gathered. The interview protocol and focus group guide were meticulously developed based on the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Questions were designed to probe teachers' attitudes for example, "What is your personal view on the importance of teaching sustainable living in Home Economics", subjective norms for example, "How do the expectations from your school principal or the exam syllabus influence what you teach", and perceived behavioural control for example, "What factors make it

easy or difficult for you to implement practical lessons on sustainability".

Each individual interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in a quiet location chosen by the participant, often an empty classroom after school hours. The interviews were conducted in English, audio recorded with permission, and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Two focus group discussions, each comprising six teachers from different schools, were also conducted. These sessions fostered dynamic interaction among participants, helping to elicit collective perspectives and shared understandings of common challenges and enablers in their professional environment.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcribed data from both interviews and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the systematic six phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). This process involved first familiarizing ourselves with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts. Initial codes were then generated that identified interesting features of the data systematically. These codes were collated into potential themes, which were then reviewed and refined to ensure they formed a coherent pattern and accurately reflected the dataset. The final stage involved defining and naming the themes, and producing the analytical report.

To manage the volume of data and enhance the analytical rigor, the qualitative data analysis software NVivo version 14 was utilized. This software assisted in efficiently organizing the data, facilitating the coding process, and retrieving coded segments during theme development. The coding process was both inductive, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data itself, and deductive, guided by the pre established theoretical framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This hybrid approach ensured that the analysis remained firmly grounded in the authentic voices of the participants while being systematically structured and informed by the theoretical lens.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Stringent ethical protocols were adhered to throughout the research process to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. Prior to commencement, ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN, 2023). All potential participants were provided with a detailed information sheet that explained the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the potential benefits and risks, and their rights as participants. Written informed consent was obtained from each individual before their inclusion in the study.

Participants were explicitly assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. All identifying information, such as names of individuals and schools, was removed from the transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms. The audio recordings were stored on a password protected computer and are scheduled for deletion two years after the completion of the study. Participants were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without needing to provide a reason and without any negative consequences.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of interviews and focus group discussions with the twenty-four participating Home Economics teachers. The results are organized into three main thematic tables, each directly addressing one of the research questions. The analysis beneath each table provides a detailed description and interpretation of the data.

##### Research Question 1: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Integration

*Table 1: Themes in Teacher Attitudes*

Theme	Frequency	Key Finding	Sample Quote
<b>Positive Valence &amp; Relevance</b>	22 of 24 teachers	Viewed integration as highly valuable and directly relevant to solving local Nigerian challenges.	"We can teach practical things like not wasting food. It is directly related to the problems in our society." (Mrs. Ngozi)
<b>Empowerment &amp; Life Skills</b>	20 of 24 teachers	Saw sustainability as key to equipping students with critical, transferable skills for responsible living.	"When I teach them to repair a torn shirt, I am teaching them independence and responsibility." (Mr. Tunde)
<b>Curriculum Overload Concerns</b>	18 of 24 teachers	Expressed anxiety about adding new content to an already overloaded examination syllabus.	"We are already running to finish the WAEC topics. Where is the time for these new things?" (Mrs. Chidinma)

##### Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes

The data reveals that Nigerian Home Economics teachers hold strongly positive attitudes towards integrating sustainable living practices. The perception of **Positive Valence and Relevance** was profound, with teachers frequently linking the curriculum to tangible local issues. This suggests they view sustainability as a pragmatic response to daily challenges, not an abstract concept. The theme of **Empowerment and Life Skills** indicates teachers see this integration as central to the core mandate of Home Economics, aligning the subject's historical roots with contemporary needs. However, the **Curriculum Overload Concerns** highlight a critical tension. Teachers' positive attitudes are mitigated by the systemic constraint of a packed syllabus, indicating that for successful integration, positive attitudes must be supported by structural curriculum changes.

##### Research Question 2: Subjective Norms Shaping Intentions

*Table 2: Social Influences on Teachers*

Influencing Group	Type of Influence	Impact on Teacher Intention	Sample Quote
<b>Examination Bodies (WAEC)</b>	Constraining Norm	The syllabus was the most powerful factor, dictating legitimate content and limiting innovation.	"If it is not in the syllabus, you are seen as wasting time. My hands are tied." (Mr. Okon)
<b>School Administration</b>	Gatekeeping Norm	The principal's attitude was decisive, either enabling innovation through support or stifling it.	"My principal is supportive. But my friend's principal said Home Economics is a 'non-serious' subject." (Mrs. Bola)

Influencing Group	Type of Influence	Impact on Teacher Intention	Sample Quote
<b>Colleagues</b>	Collaborative/Isolating Norm	Peer collaboration provided support; being a sole teacher led to isolation and less innovation.	"We plan together. It gives you confidence. I cannot imagine doing it alone." (Ms. Amarachi)
<b>Students</b>	Motivational Norm	Student enthusiasm for practical projects served as a powerful positive reinforcement for teachers.	"The students were so excited. That kind of response makes you want to come up with more ideas." (Mrs. Ekaette)

### Analysis of Subjective Norms

Teachers' intentions are shaped by a complex web of social influences. The most powerful constraining norm came from **Examination Bodies (WAEC)**, whose syllabus created a conflict for teachers who valued sustainability but felt obligated to prioritize examinable content. Within schools, the **School Administration** acted as a critical gatekeeper, with their support level directly impacting a teacher's perceived control. The influence of **Colleagues** underscores the importance of professional community for confidence and resource-sharing. Conversely, **Student Enthusiasm** emerged as a potent positive, bottom-up motivational force, often compensating for other constraints and sustaining teacher motivation for participatory practices.

### Research Question 3: Factors in Perceived Behavioural Control

*Table 3: Enablers and Barriers to Integration*

Factor	Category	Description	Sample Quote
<b>Personal Passion</b>	Enabler	Intrinsic motivation drove teachers to be resourceful and use local materials to overcome constraints.	"I bring my own containers. If you wait for the government, you will wait forever." (Mr. Adeyemi)
<b>Resource Scarcity</b>	Barrier	A chronic lack of funding, teaching aids, and infrastructure debilitated practical implementation.	"How do I teach composting without a space or tools? The syllabus expects practical work but provides nothing." (Mrs. Ibrahim)
<b>Large Class Sizes</b>	Barrier	Overcrowding made hands-on, project-based learning, central to sustainability, impossible to manage.	"My class has 68 students. How can I supervise a practical lesson? You end up just talking." (Mr. Chukwu)
<b>Inadequate Training</b>	Barrier	A lack of training on ESD pedagogies left teachers unsure of <i>how</i> to integrate concepts effectively.	"We know it is important, but nobody has trained us on how to teach it. We need workshops." (Mrs. Olamide)

### Analysis of Perceived Behavioural Control

The factors influencing teachers' perceived control highlight the challenges and resilience in the Nigerian context. The primary enabler, **Personal Passion**, shows that individual agency can bypass some systemic failures, though it is not a sustainable, system-wide solution. The barriers were systemic and pervasive. **Profound Resource**

**Scarcity** and **Large Class Sizes** created a fundamental mismatch between curricular expectations and classroom reality, structurally impeding the experiential methods essential for sustainability education. Furthermore, **Inadequate Training** eroded teachers' self-efficacy, as they lacked the pedagogical content knowledge to design and implement effective ESD learning activities.

This combination of barriers presents a formidable challenge to integration, suggesting that without addressing these foundational issues, expectations for change may remain unmet.

## 5. Discussion

This study set out to investigate the perceptions of Nigerian Home Economics teachers regarding the integration of sustainable living practices into their curriculum, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) as an analytical lens. The findings paint a nuanced picture of educators who are personally invested in sustainability education yet find their professional capacity to act constrained by a complex web of systemic and social factors. The discussion that follows interprets these findings, weaving them into the broader tapestry of existing educational research to highlight their significance and implications.

The analysis reveals that the teachers' positive attitudes towards integrating sustainability are a significant asset. They perceive this integration not as an add-on but as a core component of their subject's mandate to equip students with life skills, a finding that resonates with the global discourse on the role of Home Economics in promoting sustainable consumption (Powell, 2020). Teachers in this study articulated a clear vision of their subject's relevance in addressing local Nigerian challenges, from food waste to resource management. However, this strong positive attitude, a key component of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), is insufficient on its own to guarantee implementation. This aligns with research by Boeve-de Pauw (2021), which suggests that teacher attitudes, while necessary, are not a standalone predictor of successful Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) integration. The intention to act is filtered through other powerful forces.

Foremost among these forces are the subjective norms that shape the teachers' professional environment. The overwhelming influence of examination bodies, particularly the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), emerged as a dominant theme. Teachers reported that the official syllabus acts as an ultimate directive, a normative pressure that often sidelines content not explicitly examined. This finding is consistent with the observations of Eze (2022), who documented the constraining effect of an exam-oriented culture on pedagogical innovation in Nigeria. The social pressure to conform to this norm, a key element of subjective norms in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), effectively limits teachers' agency. Conversely, the study also found that supportive school administrations and collaborative colleagues could create a positive normative environment, enhancing teachers' intentions to innovate. This

underscores the importance of the immediate professional community in either enabling or stifling change, a factor also noted in studies of teacher communities of practice (Akinbola, 2023).

Perhaps the most formidable barriers identified were those relating to teachers' perceived behavioural control. The profound lack of resources, large class sizes, and inadequate training directly eroded their sense of self-efficacy. This is a critical finding, as perceived behavioural control is theorized to be a direct determinant of both intention and actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). When teachers feel they lack the basic tools, space, or skills to execute a task, their intention to do so diminishes significantly. The chronic resource scarcity described by participants echoes challenges documented across Nigerian education (Nwankwo, 2022), but its specific impact on the practical, hands-on nature of Home Economics and ESD is particularly debilitating. Furthermore, the gap in specialized ESD training left teachers feeling ill-equipped, a challenge that is not unique to Nigeria but is acutely felt in contexts with limited professional development opportunities (Boeve-de Pauw, 2021). The teachers' reliance on personal passion and resourcefulness to overcome these barriers highlights their dedication, but it also points to an unsustainable model that places the burden of systemic failure on individual educators.

Theoretical implications of this study affirm the utility of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) for understanding educational change. The three constructs provided a coherent framework for categorizing the complex factors influencing the teachers' decisions. However, the findings also suggest a potential refinement of the model's application in resource-constrained contexts. The data indicate that while attitudes may be a necessary starting point, powerful subjective norms and critically low levels of perceived behavioural control can become the overriding factors determining behavioural intention. This suggests that interventions aimed solely at improving teacher attitudes through awareness campaigns may yield limited results unless they are coupled with systemic reforms that address curriculum norms and, most importantly, enhance perceived control through concrete resource provision and targeted capacity building.

The practical implications of this research are clear and multi-layered. At the policy level, there is an urgent need for a formal revision of the national Home Economics curriculum to explicitly embed sustainability competencies and provide clear implementation guidelines. This would legitimize the subject matter and address a key subjective norm. For teacher education, the findings mandate a robust integration of ESD pedagogies into both pre-service and in-service training programs, directly tackling the issue of low

perceived control related to skills (Akinbola, 2023). At the school level, administrators must be engaged as allies, encouraged to foster a whole-school culture of sustainability and provide the minimal logistical support that can make innovation feasible. The demonstrated power of student enthusiasm as a motivator also suggests that student-led projects should be leveraged as a catalyst for further teacher engagement.

This study is not without limitations. Its qualitative design and focus on two states in South-Eastern Nigeria mean its findings are not statistically generalizable. Future research could employ mixed-methods approaches across multiple geo-political zones to quantify these challenges and identify regional variations. Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of integrated sustainability curricula on student outcomes would be invaluable. Furthermore, action research projects that collaborate with teachers to co-design and test context-appropriate ESD teaching modules could bridge the critical gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application identified in this study. Ultimately, moving Nigerian education towards a more sustainable future requires a concerted effort that recognizes and supports Home Economics teachers not just as implementers of curriculum, but as essential agents of behavioural change.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has provided a nuanced exploration of the factors influencing Nigerian Home Economics teachers' perceptions of integrating sustainable living practices into their curriculum. Through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), the findings illuminate a complex reality where strong personal attitudes towards sustainability are often mediated by powerful subjective norms and significant constraints on perceived behavioural control. Teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of the relevance of sustainable living to their subject and to national challenges, viewing themselves as potential agents of change. However, this potential is curtailed by an examination-focused system, a lack of resources, and insufficient training, creating a notable gap between professional intention and practical implementation.

To bridge this gap and empower Home Economics teachers to fulfill their critical role in fostering sustainable behaviors, the following recommendations are proposed, targeting different levels of the educational ecosystem.

### **For Policy Makers (Federal and State Ministries of Education, NERDC)**

A top-down, systemic revision is crucial. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should lead a comprehensive review and revision of the

national Home Economics curriculum to explicitly embed sustainability competencies across all domains, from resource management to textiles and food sciences (Akinbola, 2023). This revision must be more than a statement of intent; it should be accompanied by clear, practical implementation guidelines and, most critically, its integration into the national examination syllabi, particularly those of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Legitimizing sustainability content through high-stakes assessment is the most direct way to alter the powerful subjective norms that currently constrain teachers.

### **For Teacher Education (Colleges of Education, Universities, TRCN)**

Teacher capacity building is the cornerstone of effective integration. Both pre-service training in tertiary institutions and continuous professional development programs coordinated by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) must be radically overhauled. These programs should move beyond theoretical awareness of ESD to focus on practical, hands-on pedagogies. Teachers need training in designing low-cost, high-impact projects, such as school gardens or upcycling initiatives, that demonstrate sustainable living in action (Boeve-de Pauw, 2021). Empowering teachers with these skills and strategies is fundamental to enhancing their perceived behavioural control and self-efficacy, transforming them from reluctant implementers to confident facilitators of change.

### **For School Administration (Principals, School Boards)**

The school environment itself must evolve to create a supportive subjective norm. School principals and management boards are pivotal in this regard. They should be targeted with advocacy on the economic and social benefits of ESD. Schools can foster a whole-school culture of sustainability by providing minimal but essential resources for practical work, celebrating student-led sustainability projects, and integrating sustainable practices into school operations, such as waste management and energy conservation (Eze, 2022). Creating this enabling environment signals to teachers that their innovative efforts are valued and supported, thereby reinforcing their motivation to integrate these practices into daily teaching.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

This study, while insightful, is bounded by its qualitative methodology and its geographic focus on states in South-Eastern Nigeria. These limitations restrict the statistical generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore employ mixed-methods approaches with larger, nationally representative samples to quantify the prevalence of these barriers and identify potential regional variations. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to

track the long-term impact of an integrated sustainability curriculum on students' actual knowledge, attitudes, and, most importantly, their sustainable behaviours beyond the classroom. Finally, intervention-based research that designs, implements, and evaluates the effectiveness of the professional development programs recommended herein would provide critical evidence for scaling successful models across the Nigerian educational landscape.

## References

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
2. Akinbola, L. (2023). Teacher preparedness for education for sustainable development in Nigeria: A needs assessment. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 21(1), 88–102. <https://www.ajer.org/article/teacher-preparedness-nigeria>
3. Azonuche, J. E. (2020). Revitalizing home economics education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria through ICT use for skill acquisition for global relevance. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 10(6). <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2020-0131-3>
4. Bashar, S. I., & Buhari, L. (2023). Economics education and sustainable development in Nigeria: Challenges and strategies for moving ahead. *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research*, 13(1), 100–109. <https://publications.afropolitanjournals.com/index.php/ajhcer/article/view/677-7>
5. Boeve-de Pauw, J. (2021). Effective sustainability education is about empowering teachers. *Environmental Education Research*, 27(5), 762–771. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2020.1853954>
6. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage Publications.
7. Chukwone, C., Anowai, A., Dimelu, C., & Oluah, E. (2020). The role of teachers in enhancing creativity among home economics students: Evidence from secondary schools in Nsukka education zone, Nigeria. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8, 8110–8117.
8. Creswell, J. W. (2023). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
9. Eze, T. (2022). The tyranny of tests: Exam-oriented culture and its discontents in Nigerian education. *West African Journal of Education*, 40(3), 112–125. <https://waje.org/article/examculture-nigeria>
10. Gericke, N. (2022). The sustainability consciousness questionnaire: The theoretical development and empirical validation of an evaluation instrument for stakeholders working with sustainable development. *Sustainable Development*, 30(1), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2234>
11. Leonard, S. (2025). Impact of teachers' attitudes on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Ekiti State. *Innovations in Pedagogy and Technology*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.63385/ipt.v1i2.127-5>
12. Obi, P. N. (2025). Revitalizing cultural heritage: Integrating indigenous Nigerian knowledge and practices into the home economics curriculum. *Unilaw Journal*, (1). <https://unilaws.org/ujervs/article/view/89-1>
13. Onwuegbuchulam, C. (2021). Educational innovation and challenges in South-East Nigeria. *Journal of African Educational Development*, 15(2), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jaed.2021.015>
14. Onyeaka, H. (2023). Food waste reduction and sustainable nutrition: The role of Home Economics education. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 385, 135687. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.135687>
15. Powell, L. (2020). Resource management as a core concept for 21st century Home Economics. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, 112(4), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.14307/JFCS112.4.22>
16. University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (2023). Guidelines for ethical conduct in research involving human subjects. *Research Ethics Committee*. <https://www.unn.edu.ng/research/ethics>