



The Role of Home Economics in Reducing Poverty and Unemployment in Afghanistan: A Comparative and Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Home economics is a multidisciplinary field with the potential to address key socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment. In Afghanistan, where economic instability and limited formal employment opportunities persist, home economics offers a viable pathway for economic empowerment, particularly for women and marginalized communities. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating thematic analysis and comparative case studies to examine the role of home economics in reducing poverty and unemployment. By analyzing successful global models from countries like Bangladesh, India, Rwanda, and Pakistan, the study identifies best practices that can be adapted to Afghanistan's unique socio-economic and cultural context. Findings indicate that skills such as tailoring, food production, and household budgeting can significantly enhance economic self-reliance, promote small-scale entrepreneurship, and reduce household expenditures. However, challenges such as cultural restrictions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to financial resources hinder the widespread adoption of home economics programs. The study recommends capacity-building initiatives, microfinance support, policy integration, and enhanced market access as key strategies for effective implementation. By leveraging these insights, home economics can serve as a transformative tool for poverty alleviation and employment generation in Afghanistan, contributing to long-term community resilience and economic sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan continues to grapple with severe economic challenges, with more than half of its population living below the poverty line, a situation that disproportionately affects vulnerable groups such as women and youth (World Bank, 2021). These persistent issues have created a pressing need for innovative and sustainable solutions to poverty and unemployment. One promising avenue is home economics, a multidisciplinary field that encompasses practical skills such as food preparation, tailoring, budgeting, and small-scale entrepreneurship. These skills not only equip individuals with tools for self-reliance but also foster economic empowerment by creating opportunities for income generation and reducing household expenses (Mukherjee et al., 2020). For women, who often face significant barriers to formal employment, home economics offers an accessible pathway to economic participation and independence.

This study explores the potential of home economics to alleviate poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan by adapting globally successful strategies to the country's unique socio-economic context. The study is structured to first analyze the role of home economics, review global best practices, assess challenges specific to Afghanistan, and finally propose tailored strategies for sustainable implementation. By highlighting practical solutions and their relevance to Afghanistan's specific challenges, this research aims to contribute to sustainable economic development and community resilience.

Home economics holds immense potential for reducing poverty and generating employment in Afghanistan. By equipping individuals with practical skills and fostering entrepreneurship, it can empower families to achieve self-reliance and improve their economic conditions. While cultural and infrastructural challenges must be addressed, adapting globally successful strategies to Afghanistan's socio-economic context can lead to sustainable development and resilience at both the household and community levels.

4.1. Problem Statement

Afghanistan faces persistent economic instability and a lack of formal employment opportunities, leaving a significant portion of the population without sustainable income sources. These challenges are compounded by traditional gender roles that restrict women's participation in the workforce and inadequate infrastructure that limits access to training and resources. Addressing these issues requires innovative and practical approaches to create alternative income generating opportunities. This study aims to investigate how home economics, through skills such as food preparation, tailoring, and small-scale entrepreneurship, can empower individuals to improve their livelihoods, enhance economic self-reliance, and foster community resilience within Afghanistan's unique socio-economic context.

4.2. Significance of the Study

This study emphasizes the transformative potential of home economics as a practical solution to Afghanistan's socio-economic challenges. By equipping individuals, particularly marginalized groups such as women and youth, with essential skills like tailoring, food preparation, and budgeting, home economics can foster self-reliance and economic empowerment. The research underscores the importance of these skills in addressing poverty and unemployment while promoting community resilience. Additionally, it aims to guide policymakers, development organizations, and other stakeholders in adopting innovative, sustainable strategies for poverty alleviation and employment generation tailored to Afghanistan's unique socio-economic context.

4.3. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following three main objectives:

1. To assess the role of home economics in reducing poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan.
2. To explore global best practices in home economics and their applicability in Afghanistan.
3. To identify challenges and recommend strategies for effective implementation of home economics programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Home economics has proven to be a crucial tool in addressing socio-economic challenges, particularly in reducing poverty and generating employment. It integrates practical skills like tailoring, food production, and household budgeting, which contribute to income generation and economic independence. According to the World Bank (2021), home economics programs significantly improve household income and living standards, particularly in underdeveloped and developing nations. These programs are particularly impactful for women, enabling them to overcome barriers to formal employment and participate actively in economic activities (Smith & Smith, 2020).

Globally, several countries have demonstrated the effectiveness of home economics in poverty alleviation. In Bangladesh, women-led cooperatives focusing on textiles and handicrafts have not only boosted household incomes but also provided sustainable livelihood opportunities for communities (Rahman & Islam, 2019). Similarly, in India, home-based food production initiatives have empowered rural women by facilitating small-scale entrepreneurship, which contributes to poverty reduction and economic growth (Kumar & Singh, 2021). Rwanda has also successfully utilized home economics programs, particularly in tailoring and basket-weaving, which have strengthened women's economic roles and enhanced community resilience (Mukamana & Bryceson, 2019). In Nigeria, vocational education in home economics has been identified as a vital tool for self-reliance, providing individuals with the skills needed to improve their economic and social conditions (Alabi & Keswet, 2015). In Pakistan, home economics programs have gained attention as a viable strategy for improving economic conditions. Initiatives like vocational training in tailoring, culinary arts, and crafts have created avenues for women to contribute economically. These programs have had a measurable impact on reducing poverty among rural and urban households, demonstrating that home economics can serve as an effective poverty alleviation tool in South Asia (BBC News Pashto, 2015).

Despite its potential, implementing home economics programs in Afghanistan faces distinct challenges. Cultural barriers restrict women's participation in such programs, while inadequate infrastructure and limited access to resources hinder their success.

Furthermore, economic instability, fluctuating income levels, and a lack of access to credit pose significant obstacles to entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2021). Additionally, the absence of a comprehensive framework for integrating home economics into Afghanistan's national development strategy limits its potential impact (UNDP, 2020). To address these challenges, strategic interventions are necessary. Capacity-building programs focused on practical skills like tailoring, baking, and handicrafts can enhance the skills of women and youth. Providing microfinance support, such as small loans and grants, can help individuals start home-based businesses and overcome financial barriers. Additionally, fostering public awareness about the economic benefits of home economics and creating accessible platforms for market linkage are vital. Collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners is essential to ensure the successful implementation of these initiatives (Rao & Malik, 2020; Smith & Smith, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of home economics in reducing poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan. By integrating qualitative thematic analysis with comparative case study methods, the research ensures a comprehensive exploration of the subject while maintaining analytical depth. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes related to economic empowerment, employment generation, and social inclusion. The study examined successful home economics programs from countries such as Bangladesh, India, Rwanda, and Pakistan to assess their applicability to Afghanistan. Examination of reports from UNDP, World Bank, and other credible sources. The inclusion criteria focused on successful models that align with Afghanistan's socio-economic realities, particularly programs emphasizing women's empowerment, small-scale entrepreneurship, and vocational training.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Home Economics as a Tool for Economic Empowerment:

Enhancing Household Income: Home economics equips individuals, particularly women, with practical skills such as tailoring, baking, and handicrafts. These skills empower families to establish sustainable home-based businesses, providing an alternative source of income. For women who face barriers to formal employment, these opportunities are especially transformative, allowing them to contribute economically to their households while overcoming social and cultural restrictions (Kumar & Singh, 2021). However, challenges such as limited access to initial capital and marketing networks may hinder the establishment of such businesses, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Promoting Entrepreneurship: Through structured training programs in budgeting, resource management, and marketing, home economics fosters entrepreneurial initiatives. Small-scale enterprises, including food processing and handmade goods, thrive in local and regional markets when individuals are equipped with these essential business skills. These enterprises not only provide a pathway to financial independence but also stimulate community-level economic development by creating employment opportunities and encouraging innovation (Rahman & Islam, 2019). Despite these benefits, infrastructural barriers such as inadequate training centers and limited access to marketplaces could restrict the scalability of such enterprises in regions like Afghanistan.

Reducing Household Expenditures: By teaching cost-effective practices such as meal planning, waste reduction, and resource management, home economics helps families optimize their limited resources. These practices contribute to financial stability by minimizing unnecessary expenses and maximizing household efficiency. Families adopting such strategies experience an improved standard of living while building resilience against economic challenges (Smith & Smith, 2020). However, the adoption of such practices may face cultural resistance or require significant behavioral change, which could take time and targeted awareness campaigns to overcome.

This comprehensive approach to economic empowerment highlights how home

economics can address poverty and unemployment by enabling individuals and families to generate income, foster entrepreneurial skills, and maintain financial stability. While the potential benefits are significant, addressing barriers such as access to resources, cultural resistance, and infrastructural limitations is crucial for maximizing the impact of home economics programs in diverse socio-economic contexts, including Afghanistan.

4.2 Global Success Stories:

Global success stories in home economics demonstrate the field's transformative potential in addressing poverty and unemployment. By analyzing initiatives from various countries, this section identifies key strategies that can inform the implementation of home economics programs in Afghanistan.

Bangladesh: Women-led cooperatives in Bangladesh have significantly contributed to poverty reduction by focusing on textiles and handicrafts. Initiatives supported by organizations such as BRAC and Grameen Bank integrate skill-building with access to microfinance, enabling women to establish small businesses. These cooperatives have improved household incomes, empowered women economically, and strengthened community resilience (Rahman & Islam, 2019).

India: In India, home-based food production and catering services have created sustainable employment opportunities for women in rural areas. Programs initiated by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) provide training in food processing, packaging, and marketing. These efforts have enabled women to generate income, establish small enterprises, and access local markets. The integration of market linkages has been instrumental in sustaining these businesses (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Rwanda: Tailoring and basket-weaving programs in Rwanda have economically empowered rural women by providing essential skills and access to markets. Supported by NGOs, these initiatives have improved household livelihoods and contributed to community development. The cooperative networks established through these programs have also strengthened social cohesion and economic stability (Mukamana & Bryceson, 2019).

Pakistan: Vocational training programs in Pakistan, particularly those focusing on tailoring, embroidery, and handicrafts, have provided marginalized women with opportunities to start home-based businesses. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) combines cash transfers with skills training, enabling participants to overcome economic barriers and achieve social mobility. These programs have been effective in reducing poverty and empowering women in both rural and urban settings (BBC News Pashto, 2015).

Nepal: In Nepal, disaster-resilient home economics programs have trained women in producing marketable goods like woven textiles and handmade jewelry. These skills have provided income opportunities while enhancing community resilience against economic shocks caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. These dual-purpose initiatives highlight the versatility of home economics in addressing poverty and disaster recovery simultaneously (Shrestha et al., 2018).

Kenya: Agricultural home economics programs in Kenya have empowered women to transition from subsistence farming to profitable enterprises. Training in small-scale farming, food processing, and marketing has enhanced household incomes and improved food security. These initiatives, supported by government and NGO collaborations, demonstrate the potential of home economics to drive rural economic development (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2020).

4.3 Insights for Afghanistan:

The success of these global programs offers valuable lessons and adapting these strategies to Afghanistan's cultural, social, and economic context can foster empowerment, reduce poverty, and create sustainable employment opportunities.

1: Microfinance Integration: Programs in Bangladesh and Pakistan shows how linking skill development with microfinance can help women overcome financial barriers and establish sustainable businesses.

2: Market Access: India and Rwanda emphasize the importance of connecting small enterprises to local and regional markets to ensure profitability and growth.

3: Disaster Preparedness: Nepal demonstrates how integrating home economics with disaster resilience can help communities manage economic shocks.

4: Sectoral Diversification: Kenya's agricultural focus highlights the importance of tailoring home economics programs to address the diverse needs of urban and rural populations.

4.4 Challenges in Afghanistan:

Despite its potential, implementing home economics programs in Afghanistan faces several obstacles:

1: Cultural Barriers: Traditional gender roles may limit women's participation in training programs.

2: Lack of Infrastructure: Limited access to training centers and markets hinders the growth of home-based businesses.

3: Economic Instability: Fluctuations in income and limited access to credit pose challenges to entrepreneurship.

4.5 Strategies for Effective Implementation:

Effectively implementing home economics programs requires a multidimensional approach that addresses socio-economic challenges while tailoring solutions to Afghanistan's unique context. The following strategies, informed by global best practices, provide actionable steps to empower communities and foster sustainable development.

1: Capacity-Building Programs: Establishing well-equipped training centers is crucial for teaching practical skills like tailoring, baking, handicrafts, and food preservation. These centers should prioritize inclusivity by offering flexible schedules and culturally appropriate environments to encourage the participation of women and marginalized groups.

Global Example: In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has successfully created training programs to enhance entrepreneurial skills among rural women, enabling them to start small businesses (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Training centers in Afghanistan can incorporate local crafts and skills, aligning programs with regional traditions to ensure cultural relevance and greater community acceptance.

2: Microfinance Support: Providing small loans, grants, and financial literacy training is essential for individuals starting and sustaining home-based businesses. Microfinance institutions can collaborate with training programs to ensure that beneficiaries have both the skills and resources to succeed.

Global Example: Bangladesh's Grameen Bank has effectively used microfinance to empower women and reduce poverty by supporting small-scale enterprises (Rahman & Islam, 2019).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Targeted microfinance programs should address Afghanistan's vulnerable groups, such as widows and unemployed youth, with repayment plans designed to accommodate fluctuating economic conditions.

3: Public Awareness Campaigns: Raising awareness about the benefits of home economics is essential to garner societal support and encourage participation. Campaigns should focus on the economic and social impacts of home economics, targeting both men and women to foster a supportive environment.

Global Example: Rwanda's public outreach initiatives have highlighted the role of women's cooperatives in economic development, increasing societal acceptance of women-led enterprises (Mukamana & Bryceson, 2019).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Community workshops, radio programs, and social media platforms can be utilized to promote the importance of home economics, with an emphasis on its potential to improve family incomes and community well-being.

4: Market Access: Creating platforms to connect home-based businesses with local, regional, and international markets is vital for sustaining these enterprises. Facilitating market linkages through e-commerce platforms, trade fairs, and partnerships with larger businesses can enhance profitability.

Global Example: Kenya's agricultural programs have successfully linked small-scale producers to local and export markets, boosting their income and visibility (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2020).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Afghanistan can promote its unique handicrafts and agricultural products through digital platforms and export initiatives, connecting home-based businesses to broader markets.

5: Government Support: Integrating home economics into national development policies, vocational training programs, and educational curricula ensures long-term sustainability. Governments can provide subsidies for training centers, support cooperative formation, and streamline regulatory processes for small businesses.

Global Example: Nepal's government-backed initiatives have integrated home economics into disaster resilience programs, demonstrating its versatility in addressing economic and environmental challenges (Shrestha et al., 2018).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Policymakers should collaborate with international donors and NGOs to fund and scale home economics programs, aligning them with national development goals and addressing rural and urban needs.

6: Technological Integration: Leveraging technology to enhance access and efficiency in home economics programs can significantly improve outcomes. Mobile apps and online platforms can deliver training, financial resources, and market access.

Global Example: Pakistan's vocational programs have successfully used digital platforms to expand access to training for women in remote areas (BBC News Pashto, 2015).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Developing low-cost mobile applications for training and e-commerce can help overcome infrastructural challenges and expand the reach of home economics initiatives.

7: Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaboration between governments, NGOs, private sector organizations, and international partners is crucial for pooling resources and expertise. Public-private partnerships can address financial and infrastructural challenges while promoting innovation.

Global Example: In Rwanda, partnerships between NGOs and local governments have ensured the sustainability of women-led cooperatives (Mukamana & Bryceson, 2019).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Initiatives in Afghanistan should encourage

partnerships among local and international stakeholders, enabling resource-sharing and capacity-building.

4.6 Potential Impacts:

Home economics programs hold transformative potential for addressing poverty, unemployment, and community resilience in Afghanistan. The following impacts, supported by global examples and tailored to local contexts, highlight the broad socio-economic benefits of implementing these programs.

1: Reduction in Poverty: Home economics equips families with practical skills, enabling them to generate consistent income through home-based activities. This fosters self-sufficiency and reduces dependence on external assistance.

Global Example: In Bangladesh, women-led cooperatives focusing on textiles and handicrafts have significantly improved household incomes and reduced poverty levels (Rahman & Islam, 2019).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Similar cooperatives can be established in rural Afghan communities, focusing on local crafts and traditional skills, providing families with sustainable income opportunities while preserving cultural heritage.

2: Employment Generation: Training programs in home economics create job opportunities, especially for marginalized groups such as women, youth, and the unemployed. By equipping individuals with marketable skills, these initiatives open pathways to self-employment and local employment.

Global Example: India's home-based food production programs have enabled rural women to generate income and participate in the local economy (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: By integrating skill-building initiatives with microfinance support, Afghanistan can generate employment in sectors like tailoring, food processing, and handicrafts, addressing unemployment rates among vulnerable populations

3: Community Development: Empowered individuals contribute to stronger, more cohesive, and resilient communities. Home economics programs encourage collaboration, foster social cohesion, and stimulate local economies by enabling cooperative ventures and resource-sharing.

Global Example: Rwanda's basket-weaving and tailoring programs have strengthened community ties and enhanced economic resilience through cooperative networks (Mukamana & Bryceson, 2019).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Implementing cooperative-based programs in Afghanistan can enhance community cohesion, especially in regions affected by conflict, fostering mutual support and economic interdependence.

4: Improved Quality of Life: Home economics programs enhance household management skills, such as meal planning, waste reduction, and budgeting, leading to better resource utilization and financial stability. These practices improve living standards and promote healthier, more sustainable lifestyles.

Global Example: Kenya's agricultural home economics programs have improved household food security and increased incomes, significantly enhancing quality of life for rural families (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2020).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Promoting resource management skills in Afghanistan, particularly in underserved rural areas, can address food insecurity and improve household efficiency.

5: Strengthened Gender Equity: Home economics programs empower women by providing them with economic opportunities, boosting their confidence, and increasing their participation in household and community decision-making processes.

Global Example: Pakistan's vocational training programs have helped women overcome socio-economic barriers and achieve financial independence through home-based enterprises (BBC News Pashto, 2015).

Adaptation for Afghanistan: Programs targeting Afghan women can enhance their role in the economy and society, contributing to broader gender equity and economic development.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Home economics presents a transformative opportunity to address Afghanistan's socio-economic challenges, particularly poverty and unemployment. By equipping individuals especially women and marginalized groups with practical skills such as tailoring, baking, and handicrafts, home economics fosters self-reliance and entrepreneurship. The research, which employs a comparative and thematic analysis, demonstrates that these programs not only enhance household incomes but also contribute to broader community development and economic resilience. Global success stories, such as those from Bangladesh, India, Rwanda, and Kenya, demonstrate how tailored home economics programs, when integrated with microfinance, market access, and public awareness, can create sustainable livelihoods. For Afghanistan, adapting these proven approaches while respecting cultural norms and local economic conditions is critical. However, implementing these programs requires overcoming significant barriers, including cultural resistance, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to financial and technological resources. Addressing these challenges demands coordinated efforts from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners. Initiatives such as capacity-building programs, government policy integration, and enhanced market linkages are vital for ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of home economics programs. Strategic planning, informed by global best practices and supported by strong partnerships, is essential to maximize the potential of home economics in Afghanistan. By aligning these initiatives with Afghanistan's national development goals and socio-economic realities, home economics can empower individuals, strengthen communities, and create a foundation for sustainable development. With the collective commitment of stakeholders, home economics can become a cornerstone of Afghanistan's journey toward economic growth and social transformation.

6. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of home economics in reducing poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan:

1. Establish Vocational Training Centers for Home Economics: The government, NGOs, and private institutions should set up training centers focused on practical skills such as tailoring, food processing, handicrafts, and home-based entrepreneurship. These centers should be accessible to women and marginalized groups, offering flexible schedules and culturally appropriate learning environments.

2. Integrate Home Economics into Educational Curricula: Incorporate home economics as a subject in secondary schools and technical institutes to equip students with financial literacy, budgeting, and entrepreneurial skills. Develop short-term certification programs for unemployed youth, enabling them to gain employable skills quickly.

3. Expand Microfinance and Small Business Support: Provide low-interest microloans, grants, and financial literacy programs to support small-scale home-based businesses. Partner with Islamic finance institutions to offer Shariah-compliant microfinance options for interest-free loans.

4. Improve Market Access for Home-Based Businesses: Develop e-commerce platforms to connect Afghan home-based businesses with national and international markets. Organize local trade fairs and online marketplaces to promote Afghan handicrafts, food products, and textiles.

5. Address Cultural Barriers through Community Awareness Campaigns: Launch awareness programs targeting men and community leaders to promote women's participation in economic activities. Engage religious scholars and local influencers to support home-based entrepreneurship as an Islamic and socially beneficial initiative.

6. Strengthen Government and NGO Collaboration: Establish public-private partnerships to provide subsidized training, equipment, and financial support for home-based entrepreneurs. Develop national policies that integrate home economics into Afghanistan's poverty reduction strategy.

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