



HOME BACKGROUND AND LITERACY AMONG ADOLESCENT INMATES OF NIGERIAN BORSTAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of home background – operationalised as parental educational level (literate versus illiterate homes) and parental socio-economic status (low, middle, high) – on the functional literacy needs and enrichment reading and writing interests of adolescent inmates in Nigerian Borstal Institutions. Three null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 alpha level using independent-samples t-test and One-way ANOVA on data from 498 purposively sampled inmates. Results showed that parental educational background (literate/illiterate home) did not significantly differentiate functional literacy needs ($t(496) = 0.14, p = .906$), enrichment reading interests ($t(496) = 1.64, p = .157$), or enrichment writing interests ($t(496) = 0.42, p = .724$). In contrast, parental socio-economic status (SES) significantly differentiated functional literacy needs ($F(2, 495) = 4.90, p = .008$), enrichment reading interests ($F(2, 495) = 7.94, p = .000$), and enrichment writing interests ($F(2, 495) = 5.56, p = .004$). Duncan's post-Hoc analyses consistently revealed that inmates from low SES backgrounds reported significantly lower scores than those from middle and high SES backgrounds. These findings suggest that SES, rather than parental literacy level, is the more powerful home background variable shaping literacy aspirations in the correctional setting. Recommendations include: identification and prioritisation of low SES inmates for intensive literacy support programmes; provision of additional literacy resources such as books, learning materials, and financial support to inmates from low SES backgrounds; psychosocial support to address the motivational deficits associated with economic deprivation; and, policy advocacy for improved welfare provisions in Borstal Institutions to bridge the SES-linked literacy aspiration gap.

Keywords: *Home background, Parental education, Socio-economic status, Functional literacy needs, Enrichment interests and Borstal institutions*

Introduction

The home environment has long been recognised as the earliest, deepest, and most sustained influence on a child's educational development (Lawal, 1999). Two principal dimensions of the home environment have attracted research attention: parental educational level and socio-economic status (SES). Both are theorised to shape children's literacy environments, attitudes toward education, and aspirations for academic and professional advancement. The Bio-Psychological Criminology Theory, which partly underpins the present study, posits that children from poorer families are disproportionately disposed toward delinquency, as they are less able to achieve their goals through legitimate channels (Farrington, 1994). This theory also hypothesises that children with low intelligence – often associated with inadequate home literacy environments – are more likely to fail in school and subsequently engage in delinquent behaviour. The conjunction of these factors makes the home background of Borstal inmates a theoretically salient variable for understanding their literacy orientations.



Despite the theoretical salience of home background, the specific influence of parental education and SES on the functional literacy needs and enrichment interests of adolescent inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities has not been empirically examined. This study addresses that gap using data from 498 inmates across three Borstal Institutions. Lawal (1999) posited that the child whose early experience at home is of the right type starts life at a distinct advantage, equipped with the ability to transform feelings, thoughts, experiences, and ideas into written words. Alokun, Osakinle and Onijeringin (2013) found that parents' educational background and the availability of study facilities at home significantly influenced the academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. Elijah (2011) similarly argued that a literacy-rich home environment is foundational to the development of children's literacy skills. Children from literate homes benefit from greater exposure to print materials, more literate role models, and greater parental support for educational engagement. Eze (2002) examined the effect of parental economic status on school achievement in English language, finding that SES exerted a significant influence on academic outcomes. Graetz (1995) argued that SES encompasses not only income but also parental occupation and educational attainment, all of which shape the literacy resources available to children. In the correctional context, Salinger (2010) noted that inmates with low literacy levels face significant economic disadvantages upon release, including unemployment and welfare dependence – a cycle that is often rooted in the low-SES home environments from which many offenders come.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the enrichment reading interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the enrichment writing interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background.

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was employed. All 498 available adolescent inmates in three Nigerian Borstal Institutions were purposively sampled. Home background was operationalised in two ways: (i) parental educational level (illiterate homes, n = 103, 20.7%; literate homes, n = 395, 79.3%) and (ii) parental SES (low, n = 105, 21.1%; middle, n = 305, 61.2%; high, n = 88, 17.7%). An independent sample t-test was used to compare literate versus illiterate home subgroups, while One-way ANOVA compared the three SES subgroups. Duncan's Post-Hoc analysis was used where ANOVA revealed significant differences. The overall instrument reliability was Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$.

Results

Adolescent inmates were asked to indicate their parents' highest educational status and parents' socio-economic status.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents Based on Home Background (N=498)

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Parental Education Status		
	Illiterate Homes	103	20.7
	Literate Homes	395	79.3
2	Socio-economic Status		
	Low	105	21.1
	Middle	305	61.2
	High	88	17.7

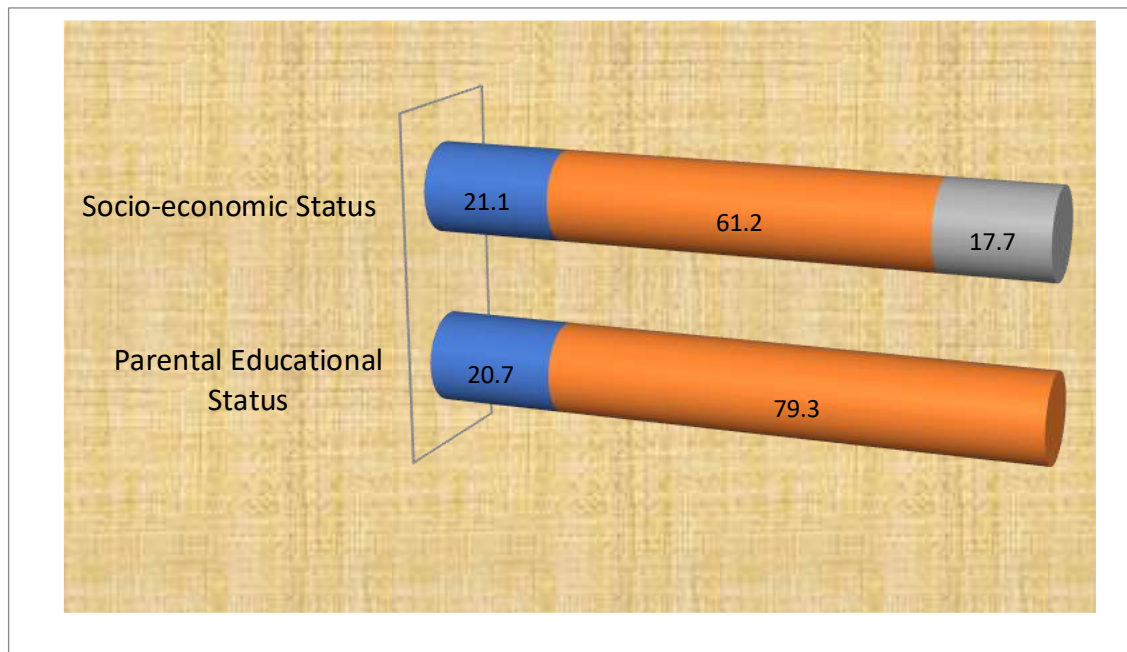


Chart 1: Demographic Data of Respondents Based on Home Background (N=498)

Table 1 and Chart 1 reveal that out of the 498 respondents that participated in the study, 395 (79.3%) were from literate homes while 103 (20.7%) were from illiterate homes. Similarly, 305 (61.2%) of them were from middle socio-economic status homes, 105 (21.1%) belonged to the low socio-economic status homes, while only 88 (17.7%) were from the high socio-economic status homes.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background

The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their functional literacy needs based on home background were compared using the independent sample t-test statistics.

Parental Educational Level (t-test):

Table 2: t-test on Functional Literacy Needs by Parental Educational Level (N = 498)

Family Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Illiterate Home	103	51.53	8.31	496	0.14	.906	Accepted
Literate Home	395	51.43	6.13				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 2 shows $t(496) = 0.14$, $p = .906 > .05$. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value ($0.906 > 0.05$), the hypothesis was thus accepted. It can be deduced that there was no significant difference between the functional literacy needs of adolescent inmates of the Borstal homes in Nigeria from literate and illiterate homes. The implication of this is that adolescent inmates from literate homes did not view the functional literacy needs differently from their counterparts from illiterate homes. The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their functional literacy needs based on home background were further compared using the One-way ANOVA statistics.



Table 3: One-Way ANOVA on Functional Literacy Needs by Parental SES (N = 498)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	425.06	2	212.53	4.90	.008	Rejected
Within Groups	21480.28	495	43.40			
Total	21905.34	497				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 3 shows $F(2, 495) = 4.90$, $p = .008 < .05$. The hypothesis was thus rejected since the p-value value 0.008 is less than the 0.05 alpha value ($0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background was thus rejected. The result tends to indicate that inmates significantly differed in their functional literacy needs based on their parents' socio-economic status. Duncan's Post-Hoc analysis was, therefore, carried out to locate the direction of the differences.

Table 4: Duncan's Post-Hoc Analysis on Functional Literacy Needs by Parental SES (N=498)

SES Group	N	Subset 1 ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Subset 2 ($\alpha = 0.05$)
Low Status	105	49.68	
High Status	88		51.71
Middle Status	305		51.99
Sig.		1.00	.73

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 4 reveals that adolescent inmates from low socio-economic status homes with a lower mean score of 49.68 in subset (1) is significantly different from the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes with higher mean scores of 51.70 and 51.99 respectively in the same subset (2) but which is different from subset (1) of the low status. Thus, the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes significantly differed in their functional literacy needs compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic status homes, with the former claiming significantly higher needs than the latter.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the enrichment reading interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background

The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their enrichment reading interests based on home background were compared using the independent sample t-test statistics.

Parental Educational Level (t-test):

Table 5: t-test on Enrichment Reading Interests by Parental Educational Level (N = 498)

Family Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Illiterate Home	103	50.72	9.14	496	1.64	.157	Accepted
Literate Home	395	49.34	7.14				

*Significance @ 0.05



Table 5 shows the t-test calculated value (496) = 1.64, while its p-value is 0.157 at alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value ($0.157 > 0.05$), the hypothesis was thus accepted. It can be deduced that there was no significant difference in the functional literacy needs of adolescent inmates from literate and illiterate homes. The implication of this is that adolescent inmates from literate homes did not view their enrichment reading interests differently from their counterparts from illiterate homes. The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their enrichment reading interests based on home background were further compared using the One-way ANOVA statistics.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA on Enrichment Reading Interests by Parental SES (N = 498)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Cal. F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	894.17	2	447.09	7.94	.000	Rejected
Within Groups	27888.61	495	56.34			
Total	28782.78	497				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 6 shows an F-value (2, 495) = 7.94 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. The hypothesis was thus rejected since the p-value value 0.000 is less than the 0.05 alpha value ($0.000 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the enrichment reading interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on parents' socio-economic status was thus rejected. The result tends to indicate that inmates significantly differed in their enrichment reading interests based on their parents' socio-economic status. Duncan's Post-Hoc analysis was, therefore, carried out to locate the direction of the differences.

Table 7: Duncan's Post-Hoc Analysis on enrichment reading interests by Parental socio-economic status (N=498)

Parents' socio-economic status	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Low Status	105	47.04	
High Status	88		50.13
Middle Status	305		50.37
Sig.		1.00	.80

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 7 reveals that adolescent inmates from low socio-economic status homes with a lower mean score of 47.04 in subset (1) is significantly different from the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes with higher mean scores of 50.13 and 50.37 respectively in a different subset (2). Thus, the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes significantly differed in what they considered as their choice of enrichment reading interests compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic status homes with the former group claiming higher enrichment reading interests than the latter.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the enrichment writing interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background

The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their enrichment writing interests based on home background were compared using the t-test statistics.

Parental Educational Level (t-test):



Table 8: *t*-test on Enrichment Writing Interests by Parental Educational Level (N = 498)

Family Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Illiterate Home	103	49.77	9.47	496	0.42	.724	Accepted
Literate Home	395	49.41	7.20				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 8 shows the *t*-test calculated value (496) = .42, while its *p*-value is 0.724 at alpha level of 0.05. Since the *p*-value is greater than the alpha value (0.724 > 0.05), the hypothesis was thus accepted. It can be deduced that there was no significant difference in the enrichment writing interests of adolescent inmates from literate and illiterate homes. The implication of this is that adolescent inmates from literate homes did not view the enrichment writing interests differently from their counterparts from illiterate homes. The responses of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria on their enrichment writing interests based on home background were further compared using the One-way ANOVA statistics.

Table 9: One-Way ANOVA on Enrichment Writing Interests by Parental SES (N = 498)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	650.18	2	325.09	5.56	.004	Rejected
Within Groups	28926.22	495	58.44			
Total	29576.40	497				

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 9 shows an *F*-value (2, 495) = 5.56 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. The hypothesis was thus rejected since the *p*-value value 0.004 was less than the 0.05 alpha value (0.004 < 0.05). The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the enrichment writing interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on home background was thus rejected. The result tends to indicate that inmates significantly differed in their enrichment writing interests based on their parents' socio-economic status. Duncan's Post-Hoc analysis was therefore carried out to locate the direction of the differences.

Table 10: Duncan's Post-Hoc Analysis on enrichment writing interests by Parental socio-economic status (N=498)

Parents' socio-economic status	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Low Status	105	47.28	
High Status	88		50.01
Middle Status	305		50.10
Sig.		1.00	.93

*Significance @ 0.05

Table 10 reveals that adolescent inmates from low socio-economic status homes with a lower mean score of 47.27 in subset (1) is significantly different from the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes with higher mean scores of 50.01 and 50.10 respectively in the same subset (2) but which is different from subset (1) Of the low status. Thus, the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes



significantly differed in what they considered as their choice of enrichment writing interests compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic status homes, with the former group claiming significantly higher enrichment writing interests than the latter.

Discussion of the Findings

There was no significant difference between the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria from literate and illiterate homes. The outcome of this study negated the assertion of Ogah (2009) that, where parents are literate, there are great tendencies that they will not mind going to any extent to ensure that their offspring acquire literacy skills early in life. The outcome of this study affirmed that even the illiterate homes, which, according to Ogah (2009), are famous for stifling children's curiosity and suppressing proper language development, appeared to be going the extra miles now in ensuring that their offspring too acquire literacy skills early in life. Similarly, the outcome of this study also contradicted those of Alokun, Osakinle and Onijeringin (2013) and Aliyu and Mohd. Isa (2016). As Aliyu and Mohd. Isa's (2016) finding established a relationship between parents' educational background and students' academic performance, so also did the earlier outcome of Alokun, Osakinle and Onijeringin (2013) find a significant correlation between parental education and students' academic performance. They attributed this to the fact that students from literate homes are usually provided with good and relevant instructional resources that could stimulate their interests in schoolwork. Although literate parents with many qualifications tend to be better enlightened in ways to provide needful assistance to their wards in every facet of their lives, this study has not confirmed it. Thus, this finding made room for speculations. First, that the Borstal home inmates are not like any other students in the mainstream because they are in restricted facilities which probably made one see the other as a comrade. In this regard, the institution seems to make adolescent inmates from literate homes view the functional literacy needs relatively similar to those of their counterparts from illiterate homes via the encouragement of a personal relationship between the Borstal Staff and the inmates through which the inmates are given progressive trust demanding personal decision, responsibility and self-control (Ogundipe, 2011). This move had probably gone a long way in neutralising the family status image the inmates brought into the institution. Besides, it must be noted that this assertion has no empirical backing yet. Second, this study was an indirect measure of the functional literacy needs of adolescent inmates of Borstal homes as it relied on self-report and some other subjective evaluations. In other words, it was not a direct measure of parents' educational background and students' academic performance like the studies of Alokun, Osakinle and Onijeringin (2013) and Aliyu and Isa (2016). This might be suggesting that a similar outcome would have been obtained that literate parent with many qualifications tend to be better enlightened in ways to provide needful assistance to their wards in every facet of their lives. It is however noteworthy that a parent with a low literacy level may not wish his/her child(ren) to suffer a similar fate. This might have dictated the outcome of this study where a relatively similar positive opinion was expressed by the adolescent inmates from literate homes and their counterparts from illiterate homes.

There was a significant difference in the functional literacy needs of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on adolescent inmates' parents' socio-economic status. In other words, inmates significantly differed in their functional literacy needs based on their parents' socio-economic status. Thus, the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes significantly differed in their functional literacy needs compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic status homes, with the former claiming significantly higher needs than the latter. This finding is in line with the statement of the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE, 2002) that students living in families with incomes below the poverty level have an increased likelihood of low literacy. Also, Bliss (2004) viewed that many students from low income homes respond incomprehensively to classroom teaching because their home environment has not exposed them to the kinds of materials used in schools. Furthermore, the outcome of Aliyu and Mohd. Isa's (2016) study which revealed that there is a positive relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' academic performance is a validation of the finding of the present study. They stressed that high-income parents do not only provide for their children's basic needs (such as food, shelter and clothing) but also throw their financial weight to empower them



(their children) academically. This, also, is in agreement with the findings of Checchi (2000) and Eze (2002). For instance, while Eze (2002) found that students' academic performances are influenced when they get proper care, encouragement and well-being through parents' socioeconomic status, Checchi (2000) averred that children from low socioeconomic homes do suffer from low academic performance simply because they tend to have lower levels of literacy, numeracy, and comprehension as well as lower participation rates in classroom activities. Lawal (1999) averred that children from such poor homes are often compelled to help towards their own upkeep by undertaking daily (after-school) and weekend jobs. He argued further that the socioeconomic status of the home is a crucial variable which can affect the child's social acceptance and educational development.

There was no significant difference in the enrichment reading and writing interests of adolescent inmates from literate and illiterate homes. This outcome indicated that a relatively similar positive opinion was expressed by adolescent inmates from literate and illiterate homes as regards their enrichment reading and writing interests. This finding made room for a speculation that the high number of adolescent inmates from literate homes (close to 80%) is part of a variable contributing to this outcome. Although, highly educated parents tend to provide needful assistance to their wards in every facet of their lives, it is noteworthy that a lowly educated may not wish his/her child(ren) experience same. After all, the solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency is the primary responsibility of the family (Obasanjo, 2015). He stressed further that since the home is the incubator of the society, seeking solutions farther along the line may be palliative and temporarily restraining, but not a permanent cure as no nation has ever risen higher morally, intellectually and spiritually than the families of which that nation was constituted. The outcome of this study is not in consonance with Aliyu and Mohd. Isa's (2016) finding which established a relationship between parents' educational background and students' academic performance. It also negated the assertion of Ogah (2009) that offspring of literate parents do acquire literacy skills early in life. A similar outcome that literate parents with high qualifications tend to be better enlightened in ways to provide needful assistance to their wards (Aliyu and Mohd. Isa, 2016) would have been obtained if this study had been a direct measure of parents' educational background and students' academic performance like the studies of Alokun, Osakinle and Onijangin (2013) and Aliyu and Mohd. Isa (2016).

There was a significant difference in the enrichment reading and writing interests of the adolescent inmates of Borstal homes in Nigeria based on parents' socio-economic status. The result indicated that inmates significantly differed in their enrichment reading and writing interests based on their parents' socio-economic status. Thus, the adolescent inmates from high and middle socio-economic status homes significantly differed in what they considered as their choice of enrichment reading and writing interests compared to their counterparts from low socio-economic status homes with the former group claiming higher enrichment reading and writing interests than the latter. This agreed with Bliss's (2004) view that many students from low income homes respond incomprehensively to classroom teaching because their home environment has not exposed them to the kinds of reading and writing materials used in schools. It is also in consonance with the finding of Checchi (2000) that children from low socioeconomic homes do suffer from low academic performance simply because they tend to have lower levels of literacy, numeracy, and comprehension as well as lower participation rates in classroom activities. Furthermore, the outcome of Aliyu and Mohd. Isa's (2016) study which revealed that there is a positive relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' academic performance is a validation of the finding of the present study. They maintained that high-income parents do not only throw their financial weight to empower their children academically but also provide for their children's basic needs (such as food, shelter and clothing). Thus, family income has become a reliable predictor of students' academic achievements. If they do not drop out of school completely, students entering school from poverty situations will most likely achieve at lower levels, compared to students from middle and upper-class home environments (Taylor, 2005). It has also been argued that families where the parents are advantaged socially, educationally and economically, do foster a higher level of achievement in their children. They also may provide higher levels of psychological support for their children through environments that encourage the development of skills necessary for success at school (Graetz, 1995). This view is corroborated by Lawal (1999) who suggested that children of high-income parents receive



better life chances than those of poorer parents. Often, academic achievement is disregarded within the culture of low socioeconomic status communities, and frequently poverty-stricken students who achieve are ridiculed. This in turn sends a message that success in school is not important. Therefore, children from low socioeconomic status families are more likely to exhibit the following patterns in terms of educational outcomes compared to children from high socioeconomic status families: have lower levels of literacy, numeracy, and comprehension; have lower retention rates; have lower participation rates; exhibit higher levels of problematic school behaviour such as truancy; and, are more likely to have difficulties with their studies and display negative attitudes to school (Graetz, 1995). In addition, several home conditions had been identified by Bridges (1927) as the indirect causes of delinquency. Among these are: unsanitary conditions; material deficiencies; excess in material things; poverty and unemployment; broken homes; mental and physical abnormalities of parents, or siblings; immoral and delinquent parents; ill-treatment by foster parents, step-parents, or guardians; stigma of illegitimacy; lack of parental care and affection; lack of confidence and frankness between parents and children; deficient and misdirected discipline; unhappy relationship with siblings; bad example; "superior" education of children (over those of the parents). In this light, Ojimba (2013) opined that societal growth is a reflection of the home as expressed through the academic performance of students.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that parental SES is a more powerful differentiator of literacy needs and enrichment interests than parental educational level among adolescent Borstal inmates. Low SES inmates consistently report lower literacy aspirations, suggesting the need for targeted literacy interventions for this subgroup.

Recommendations

Recommendations include:

1. Identification and prioritisation of low SES inmates for intensive literacy support programmes;
2. Provision of additional literacy resources such as books, learning materials, and financial support to inmates from low SES backgrounds;
3. Psychosocial support to address the motivational deficits associated with economic deprivation;
4. Policy advocacy for improved welfare provisions in Borstal Institutions to bridge the SES-linked literacy aspiration gap.

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