
INFLUENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS ON APPRENTICESHIP FOSTERING IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic factors play major roles in empowering children worldwide. This study examines how socioeconomic factors influence foster care and how this relates to foster children's aspirations in Enugu State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling was used in the selection of 6 settlements, and 400 foster children were systematically interviewed through a well-structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that 89.5% of the children were sent into fosterage when they were less than 18 years old, with the majority being indigenes of Enugu North and living in high (60.5%) and low (65.5%) income households. The multiple regression result (R^2) indicates that the highest level of education obtained, foster parents' household wealth, household living arrangement, the foster child's age, and the foster parents' religion accounted for 56% of the variation in foster children's aspirations. However, only the foster child's age ($t = 3.275$, $p < 0.05$) and the foster parent's religion ($t = -3.253$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influenced children's aspirations. The study concludes that poor demographic and socioeconomic factors sustain apprenticeship fostering. Therefore, it is recommended that improvements in foster children's education, foster parents' household wealth, and foster children's living arrangements will promote greater aspirations in the study area.

Keywords: Foster Child, Fosterage, Empowerment, Aspiration, Apprenticeship

INTRODUCTION

Child empowerment is a major policy agenda for countries worldwide. Different parenting styles are used in various socio-cultural contexts to equip children with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their economic and social well-being. Apprenticeship has long served as a critical pathway for skill acquisition, employment, and economic empowerment in Nigeria, particularly in the informal sector. Apprenticeship fostering is a form of informal child fostering that offers a unique opportunity for economic empowerment aligned with cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems. It is an enduring cultural practice in Africa and prevalent among the Igbo people of Southeast Nigeria (Adekola, 2013; Cotton, 2021). While the Igbo system of boy-child fosterage has been seen as an indigenous entrepreneurship training for the development and sustenance of traditional entrepreneurship practices for the development of the Southeast in particular and Nigeria as a whole (Obunike, 2016; Nkamnebe & Ezemba, 2020; Ogbuja, 2022), the aspirations of children under the scheme have been largely understudied.

In Enugu State, the apprenticeship system plays a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurial development and self-reliance among youth (Aluu & Enudu, 2023; Meagher, 2010). However, the effectiveness and sustainability of this system are increasingly influenced by socioeconomic factors



such as income levels, education, urbanization, family background, and government policy (Nwachukwu & Onyenekwe, 2016). These factors shape not only individuals' ability to participate in apprenticeship programs but also master trainers' willingness and capacity to mentor apprentices over time. Households facing financial hardships send their children to more financially stable households to learn a trade or business (Onwuka, 2015; Oluwatobi & Abayomi, 2021). This is sometimes done without the child's full consent. Some studies have claimed that the system has become modern-day slavery (Okunola & Ikuomola, 2010). The boys are turned into enslaved people and used as domestic workers (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 1999). They are forced to do inhumane and undesirable jobs. Delays in settling the boys at the end of their service have become a concern in recent years due to market uncertainties (Nnonyelu & Onyeizugbe, 2020).

Socioeconomic disparities in the region have created unequal access to apprenticeship opportunities. For instance, low-income families may struggle to support their children through apprenticeship schemes, especially those requiring financial contributions or long training periods without remuneration (Ojide et al., 2025; Okolie et al., 2021). Conversely, affluent households might opt for formal education paths, thereby reducing their engagement in traditional apprenticeship systems. Moreover, socio-cultural expectations, gender roles, and rural-urban divides further shape participation rates and outcomes (Ezenwakwelu & Okolie, 2020).

Despite its potential to alleviate unemployment and develop young entrepreneurs, apprenticeship fostering is becoming less popular, though not extinct (Olewu, 2023). Young men's unwillingness to take over their fathers' businesses, a lack of interest in courses that would promote their growth, and apprentices' theft of their masters' money are key factors behind the scheme's decline (Callistus & Abijia, 2021). The increasing protests for the indigenous People of Biafra, kidnapping, political thuggery, human killings and all forms of insecurity bedeviling the Southeast by an army of youths from the region may have been fallout of the decline of the scheme. Another major setback is that the scheme is increasingly exposing children to risks and exploitation; studies have shown that the absence of supervision by caregivers has increased the risk of abuse and maltreatment of children (Olewu, 2023; Younas & Gutman, 2023). Young people below the age of 18 years are feared to sometimes be subjected to physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse (Olewu, 2023).

Studies have pointed out that informal kinship-based fostering seems to place children at risk in cultural contexts where the process of children's attachment to caregivers is in contrast with the Western child development model, and where communities are highly stratified along socioeconomic lines; exploitation of children is permitted (Leineweaver, 2014; Formella & Benedict, 2017). Chukwu et al. (2024) conducted a descriptive survey of apprentices in several major markets in Enugu Metropolis. The study examined both the challenges facing and the prospects for the Igbo apprenticeship system in the modern world. Among the challenges are issues tied to the economic capacity of apprentices (e.g. inability to pay for tools or "settlement" after training), and the economic expectations of apprentices versus what the master can deliver. Modern economic pressures (e.g., inflation, material costs) also make it harder for apprentices to complete their terms. Despite challenges, the system remains resilient because it is deeply embedded in Igbo culture, offers hands-on skill training, and enables access to trade for those who may lack formal education.

Aluu, Enudu, and Titus Okey (2023) studied auto mechanics in Enugu and how apprenticeship practices help apprentices acquire entrepreneurial and soft skills (business management, customer



care, team spirit). The study shows that apprenticeship contributes to skills development, which can help apprentices start or improve businesses—suggesting that apprenticeship fosters socioeconomic mobility. However, the discussion is less explicit about how parental income, poverty, or socioeconomic background affect entry, retention, or success in apprenticeship.

Ojide et al. (2025) investigated gender and recruitment decisions in apprenticeship in Enugu. Although the study focuses on gender, the findings imply that socioeconomic status interacts with gender norms; for example, decision-making about whether to take female trainees may be influenced by economic expectations, cultural norms, and the master-apprentice's capacity to “invest” in a trainee (provision of equipment or tools). Social perceptions of gender roles also have economic ramifications. Apprenticeship training and wealth creation in Southeast Nigeria (Onwuka & Nwaneri, 2024) found that expert trade knowledge and financial literacy are significantly related to business growth among apprentices in Southeast Nigerian markets. Igbo trade apprenticeship system and wealth creation in South East, Nigeria (Omede & Chukwu, 2024) found that apprenticeship reduces poverty and unemployment through wealth generation. These broader studies reinforce what is seen in Enugu, though they often do not disaggregate findings by Enugu or control for locality.

While the literature is growing, gaps and limitations remain in how socioeconomic factors are handled with respect to apprenticeship fostering in Enugu (or more generally among Igbo apprenticeship systems). Many studies do not include or robustly analyse variables such as parental income, household assets, access to credit, or education level of parents, which are powerful predictors of whether someone can enter apprenticeship, sustain through the training, or start a business afterward. For example, in the auto-mechanics study in Enugu (Aluu & Enudu, 2023), while skill outcomes are well documented, little is known about how apprentices from low-income households' fare compared with those from better-off backgrounds.

income households fare versus those from better-off backgrounds (Adekola, 2013; Callistus *et al.*, 2021). Relatively few studies have documented the socioeconomic characteristics children operate within and how these affect their life aspirations. This study aims to identify the aspirations of children under apprenticeship fosterage in Enugu State within their surrounding socioeconomic context. This information will help improve the scheme and build better child protection systems.

STUDY AREA

Enugu State is located in the southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria (Ministry of Information Enugu State, 2019). Its capital, Enugu, is located at the foot of Udi Hill (Nigeria Galleria, 2021). It is located between Latitude 05°56'N and 07°55'N of the Equator and Longitude 06°53'E and 07°55'E of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure1) (Okoroafor et al., 2020). Enugu State has an area of 7,161 Square kilometers (Ministry of Information Enugu State, 2019). It is bounded on the west by Anambra State, the South by Abia and Imo States, the northwest by Kogi State, the east by Ebonyi State and the northeast by Benue State (Ministry of Information Enugu State, 2019). Enugu State has 17 Local Government Areas and its major towns are Enugu and Nsukka.

Before the discovery of oil in Nigeria in commercial quantities, the main economy of Enugu State depended on coal (Nigeria Galleria, 2021; South East Region Economic Development Company-SEREDEC, 2022). Most inhabitants are farmers, specializing in yam tubers, palm produce, and rice (Nigeria Galleria, 2021). A small proportion of the population is also engaged in manufacturing, with

the most pronounced activity in Enugu, Oji, Ohebedim, and Nsukka (SEREDEC, 2022). The State has several markets, especially at each of the divisional headquarters, prominent among which are the Ogbete Main Market in the State Capital and the largest grains market East of the Niger, the OriëOrba Market, which plays host to most farmers from the North Central States of Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Plateau who use the market to deposit their produce for consumers in South-East and South-Southern Nigeria (SEREDEC, 2022).

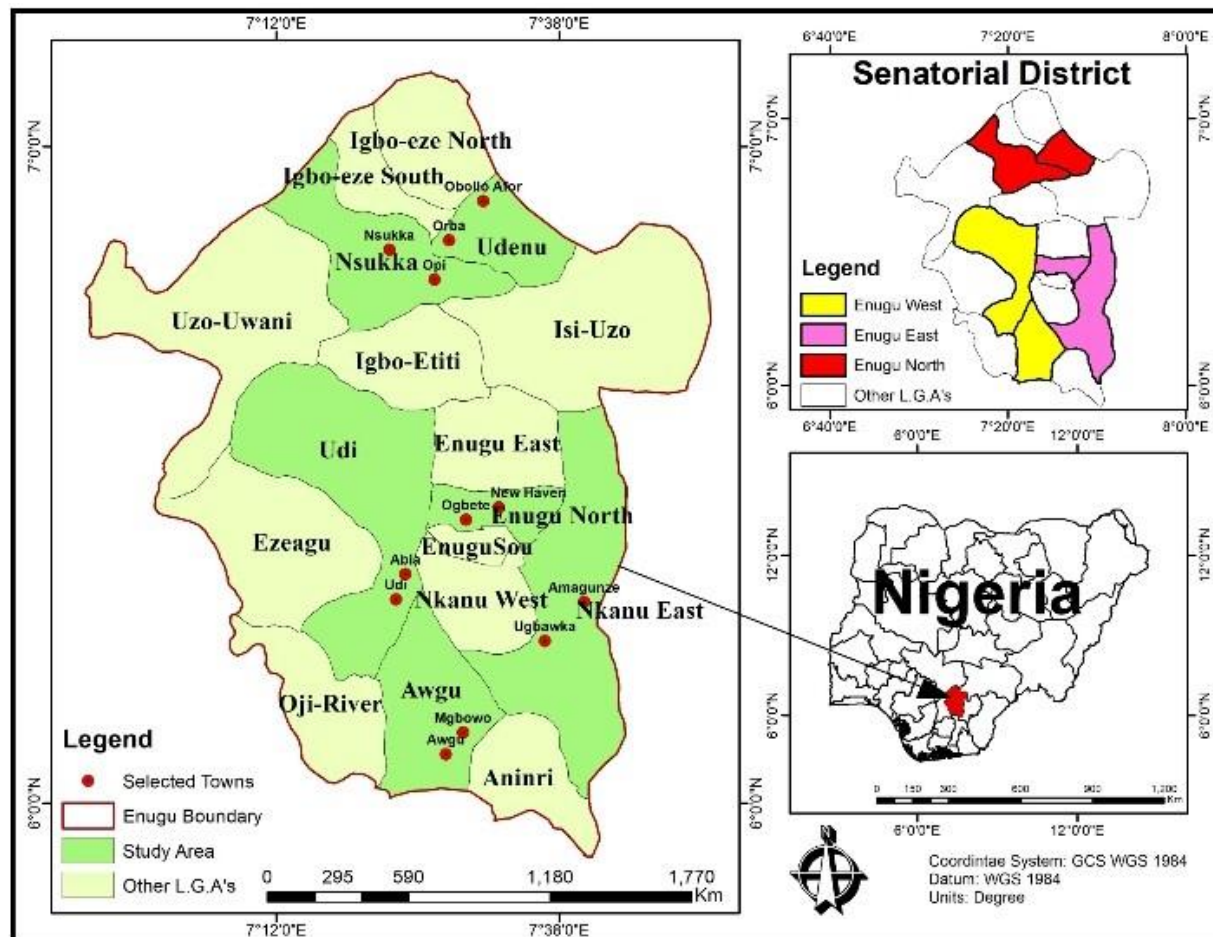


Figure 1: Enugu showing the selected towns in the LGAs of Study

Source: Adopted and modified from the administrative map of Nigeria, 2024.

Enugu State is blessed with so many industries that can satisfy both local and international needs. These industries include Nigergas Company Limited, Emene, Enugu Vegetable Oil Limited, Nachi, Sunrise Flour Mill Ltd, Emene, Aluminium Product Ltd, Ohebe-Dim, AmaBrewries, Enugu, Enugu Building Materials Limited, Ezzamgbo, Feedmill, Ngwo, Premier Cashew Industries Ltd, Oghe, Nigersteels Industries Ltd, Emene, amongst others. Investment opportunities exist in Enugu State; Enugu State is blessed with so many industries that can satisfy both local and international needs. These industries include Nigergas Company Limited, Emene, Enugu Vegetable Oil Limited, Nachi, Sunrise Flour Mill Ltd, Emene, Aluminium Product Ltd, Ohebe-Dim, AmaBrewries, Enugu, Enugu Building Materials Limited, Ezzamgbo, Feedmill, Ngwo, Premier Cashew Industries Ltd, Oghe,



Nigersteels Industries Ltd, Emene, amongst others. Investment opportunities exist in Enugu State in agribusiness, light manufacturing, healthcare, tourism, energy, and mining (Nwakanma, 2020). Enugu State leads the South East in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), both of which have continued to grow over the years.

Enugu State is a densely populated State and is rated at 460/km², which is regarded as one of the highest in Africa (Ministry of Information Enugu State, 2019). It has an estimated population of 4,690,100 (Brinkhoff, 2022). Heterogeneous relationships among clans, lineages, and villages make up Enugu State. Notable clans include Udi, Nkanu, Nsukka, and Agwu, among others. These clans use a democratic decision-making system, with every adult having a chance to contribute to discussions (Ministry of Information Enugu State, 2019).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data used for this study include data on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the foster children and that of their parents, such as age, education, birth order, number of siblings, religion, ethnicity, income, occupation, and marital status, which were collected through the administration of a questionnaire.

Data on entrepreneurial and life-skills engagements of the fostered boy-child, such as purchasing and supplying skills, stock taking and inventory, customer care relationship, risk taking and management, financial sourcing from commercial institutions and individuals, business proposal writing, identification of potential investment opportunities and business saving culture, were collected using a questionnaire.

Data on the prospects in child fostering were considered based on the building of young entrepreneurs, access to start-up capital, self-employment and employment of labour, increase in revenue generation, continuity in household or family business and remittances and the aspirations of children were centered on going to school, further education, owning a business and travel abroad. These data were collected using a questionnaire.

Data were also collected on the base map, which was adapted and modified from the Administrative Map of Nigeria and Enugu State to show the study area; GPS was used to collect the coordinates of various sample points (selected towns). This study used a multi-stage sampling method. In the first stage, the study area was divided into three Senatorial Districts. In the second stage, two LGAs were selected from each of the Senatorial Districts. The selected LGAs were Nsukka and Udenu for Enugu North Senatorial District; Enugu North and Nkanu East for Enugu East Senatorial District; and Udi and Awgu for Enugu West Senatorial District (Table 1). Thus, the study was centered on six LGAs. In the third stage, two towns were purposively selected from each LGA (one town from the core and one from the periphery). The core town represented the high-income areas, while the peripheral town represented the low-income areas. Thus, in the fourth stage, 400 copies of the questionnaire were systematically administered to children under fosterage in the households. From each selected town, houses for interviews were systematically picked (every fourth house) along the road transect. When no eligible respondents were available in a household, the next household was visited.

Table 1: Population Distribution of the selected LGAs

Senatorial District	LGA	Population Census 2006	Population projection 2024
Enugu North	Nsukka LGA	309,448	467,440
Enugu North	Udenu LGA	178,687	269,004
Enugu East	Enugu North LGA	242,140	365,770
Enugu East	Nkanu East LGA	153,591	231,025
Enugu West	Udi LGA	238,305	359,057
Enugu West	Awgu LGA	197,292	297,927
Total		1893,700	1,990,231

Source: National Population Commission, 2024.

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) based on the total population of the study area (1,990,231), yielding approximately 400 respondents. The distribution of the respondents is as shown in Table 2 below:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+N(e)^2)}$$

Where:

n = the sample size

N = the population under study

e = the margin error; 0.05

Getting the sample size:

Total population of study area (N) =1,990,231

e= 0.05

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution

S/N	Sample Area	Population	Selected Towns				
			High Income Households	Size	Low Income Households	Size	%
1	Nsukka	94	Nsukka	47	Opi	47	23.50
2	Udenu	54	Obollo-Afor	27	Orba	27	13.50
3	Enugu North	73	New Haven	37	Ogbete	36	18.25
4	Nkanu East	47	Amagunze	23	Ugbawka	24	11.75
5	Udi	72	Udi	36	Abia	36	18.00
6	Awgu	60	Awgu	30	Mgbowo	30	15.00
Total =		400		200		200	100.00

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024.

The data collected from the field were analysed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics include frequency distributions to show the number of cases, simple percentages to show percentages of occurrence, and bar graphs and pie charts to provide pictorial representations of the variables analysed. The inferential statistics include the chi-square test for association and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic and socioeconomic Characteristics of Boy Child under Fosterage

Table 3 shows respondents' ages both at present and at entry into fosterage. The ages of respondents in Table 3 show that respondents within the ages of 16 - 22 years accounted for the majority (68.5%), followed by those within the ages of 9 – 15 years with a percentage value of 16.5%, while those > 23 years are the least among the respondents (15.0%), respectively. These findings correspond partly with the report of the WHO (2011) study in Nigeria, which showed that 88.5% of the fostered children entered into fosterage before the age of 10, and between 11-15 years. Generally, findings from this research revealed that children entered into fosterage between the ages of 5-20 years. This result indicates that the majority of the children sent into foster care were underage and could be exposed to all forms of risk because they may not be able to make informed choices for themselves.

Table 3: Age of Foster Children

Present age	Number	%
9-15 years	66	16.5
16-22	274	68.5
23-29	59	14.7
Above 29 years	1	0.3
Total	400	100.0
Age at point of entry into fosterage		
<18Years	356	89.5
>18Years	44	10.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024.

Figure 2 shows that 64.5% of the children from high-income households were sent into foster care between the ages of 1 and 15 years, while 67.5% of the children from low-income households were sent into foster care in this age group. The proportion of children from low-income households placed in foster care is comparatively higher. This result indicates that low-income families send their younger children to be fostered earlier than those in high-income households, regardless of the risks involved.

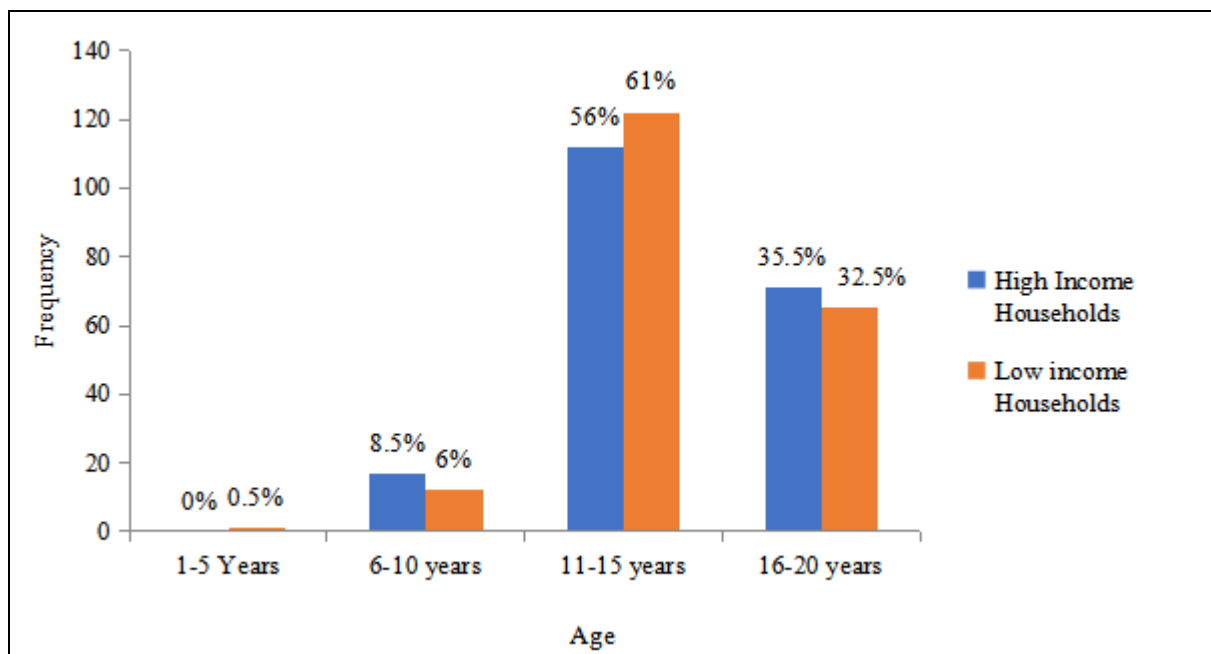


Figure 2: Foster Child Age at Entry in High and Low Income Households

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

Table 4 shows that Enugu North Senatorial District had the highest representation of children (46.7%) fostered between the ages of 5 and 10 years, followed by Enugu East Senatorial District (33.3%) and Enugu West Senatorial District (20.0%). The Table also revealed that 35.0% of children fostered aged 11-16 years were from Enugu West Senatorial District, while 34.7% migrated from Enugu North Senatorial District and 30.3% were from Enugu East Senatorial District. Also, 42.1% of children fostered who were aged 17 years and above were residents of Enugu North Senatorial District. Enugu West Senatorial District followed with 30.3% representation, and Enugu East with 27.6%.

Table 4 also shows that, by Local Government Area, Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu North Senatorial District had 30.0% representation of children who entered fosterage between the ages of 5 and 10 years. Enugu North Local Government Area in Enugu East Senatorial District followed, with 20.0% representation. Nsukka, Nkanu East, Udi and Awgu LGAs contributed the remaining 50% of children who are recruited into fosterage at the age of 5-10 years. Table 4 also reveals that 22.8% of children taken into fosterage between the ages of 11-16 years are from Nsukka Local Government Area in Enugu North Senatorial District. This is followed by Enugu North Local Government Area in Enugu East Senatorial District, with 18.0% representation, and Udi Local Government Area in Enugu West Senatorial District, with 17.7% representation. Other Local Government Areas have 41.5% of the children who entered foster care between the ages of 11 and 16 years. Also, 28.9% of children who entered fosterage at age 17 and above were fostered from Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu North Senatorial District, and 21.1% were from Udi Local Government Area of Enugu West Senatorial District. Also, 18.4% came from Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu East Senatorial District. This means that less than 35.0% of children taken into fosterage at age 17 and above came from the remaining three sampled Local Government Areas.

Table 4: Foster Children's Ages at Entry by Location

Senatorial Districts	LGAs	Towns	Ages of Foster Children						Total	%
			5-10 years		11-16 years		17 years and Above			
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
Enugu North	Nsukka	Nsukka	2	4.3	32	68.0	13	27.7	47	100.0
		Opi	3	6.4	35	74.5	9	19.1	47	100.0
	Udenu	Obollo-Afor	4	14.8	18	66.7	5	18.5	27	100.0
		Orba	5	18.5	17	63.0	5	18.5	27	100.0
Enugu East	Enugu	New Heaven	4	10.8	27	73.0	6	16.2	37	100.0
	North	Ogbete	2	5.6	26	72.2	8	22.2	36	100.0
	Nkanu	Amagunze	2	8.7	15	65.2	6	26.1	23	100.0
	East	Ugbawka	2	8.3	21	87.5	1	4.2	24	100.0
Enugu West	Udi	Udi	4	11.1	27	75.0	5	13.9	36	100.0
		Abia	0	0.0	25	69.4	11	30.6	36	100.0
	Awgu	Awgu	1	3.3	25	83.3	4	13.4	30	100.0
		Mgbowo	1	3.3	26	86.7	3	10.0	30	100.0
Total			30	7.5	294	73.5	76	19	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

Table 5 shows that fostered children's tenure in foster care also differs, reflecting their time of freedom. Fosterage tenure is determined by foster parents and, in most cases, depends on the children's ages when they enter foster care. Table 5 also shows that the highest years to be spent by the foster children in fosterage is 13 years and above, and the lowest time expected to serve is 5-9 years. However, more than 50.0% of children are expected to spend 10-13 years in fosterage; only 43.0% have a tenure of 5-9 years, and a negligible 6.5% are expected to serve more than 13 years, the highest. This shows that the younger the children, the longer their tenure in fosterage, and vice versa. Since over 89.5% of the foster children entered into fosterage at <18 years (see Table 3), a larger number of them are expected to spend more time in fosterage. The children would have utilized these periods to gain lots of experience in businesses, while some may have suffered many abuses and deprivation.

Table 5: Fostered Children's Tenure of Fosterage

Tenure	Number	%
5-9 years	172	43.0
10-13	202	50.5
above 13 years	26	6.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

The Chi-Square test was conducted to test if there is a statistically significant association between the ages of fostered children when taken into fosterage and their tenure of fosterage. Using a $p < .05$ level of significance, Table 6 shows $X^2(24) = 102.896$, $p < .001$. This indicates a statistically significant association between the ages of fostered children at entry and the length of time they have to serve. This result implies that the ages of fostered children at the point they were taken into fosterage are related to how long their fosterage would last. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test results on the relationship between age at entry and tenure of fosterage

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	102.896 ^a	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	81.465	24	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	54.840	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 20 cells (51.3%) have expected counts less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

As shown in Table 7, 70.0% of the fostered children have no formal education, and 30.0% attended pre-primary, primary, or secondary school, while none attended a tertiary institution. However, Table 7 also shows that 3.0% of the children are currently enrolled in school, either part-time or full-time. This result implies disparities in the opportunities available to fostered children. While a few children are being allowed to have formal education, the majority of them are denied access to Western education, and education deprivation is a form of social abuse. This result aligns with Adekola (2013), which reported that the Igbo apprenticeship scheme is generally believed to be meant for those who cannot do well in the formal education system or whose parents cannot afford to sponsor their education. In many cases, most fostered children are being denied formal education.

Table 7: Fostered Children's Level of Education and School Enrollment

	Category	Number	%
Highest level of education	Non-formal	280	70.0
	Pre-primary	2	0.5
	Primary	105	26.2
	Secondary	13	3.3
	Total	400	100.0
Current School Enrollment	Not enrolled	388	97.0
	Part-time	2	0.5
	Full-time	10	2.5
	Total	400	100.0

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

Table 8 shows that Enugu North Senatorial District has more children with no formal education (85.0%) than Enugu West Senatorial District (76.0%) and Enugu East Senatorial District (74.0%), respectively. Across the 3 Senatorial districts, pre-primary school enrolment for fostered children was very low (6.4%), with slight improvements in primary and secondary school enrolment ranging from 0.3% to 41.7% and 2.1% to 8.7%, respectively. Further analysis shows that Opi town in Enugu North Senatorial District has the highest percentage of fostered children with no formal education. Towns like Awgu in Enugu West Senatorial District followed suit with a high percentage of 76.7%, and Ugbawka in Enugu East recorded 58.0% of the children who did not attend any formal school.

Table 8: Highest Level of Education Completed by Fostered Children by Sample Towns

Highest Level of Education Completed by Fostered Children										
Senatorial Districts	Towns	Non-Formal		Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		Total
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Enugu North	Nsukka town	31	66.0	0	0.0	15	31.0	1	2.1	47
	Opi	40	85.0	0	0.0	7	14.9	0	0.0	47
	Obollo-afor	19	70.0	1	3.7	6	22.2	1	3.7	27
	Orba	20	74.0	0	0.0	6	22.2	1	3.7	27
Enugu East	New haven	23	62.0	1	2.7	10	27.0	3	8.1	37
	Ogbete	26	70.0	0	0.0	7	19.4	3	8.3	36
	Amagunze	16	69.6	0	0.0	6	0.3	1	4.3	23
	Ugbawka	14	58.0	0	0.0	10	41.7	0	0.0	24
Enugu West	Udi	24	66.7	0	0.0	11	30.6	1	2.7	36
	Abia	25	69.4	0	0.0	10	27.8	1	2.7	36
	Awgu	23	76.7	0	0.0	6	20.0	1	3.3	30
	Mgbowo	19	63.3	0	0.0	11	36.7	0	0.0	30
Total		280	70.0	2	0.5	105	26.3	13	3.2	400

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

Figure 3 shows that fostered children without a formal educational background were most represented in low-income households (72.0%) compared with high-income households (68.0%). The fact that more fostered children in low-income households are not enrolled in school may explain their entry into apprenticeship. This situation further deepens their educational deprivation and the acceptance of fosterage as the last resort. This means urgent educational intervention must be made available for children living in these areas, and it should be centered mainly on low-income households.

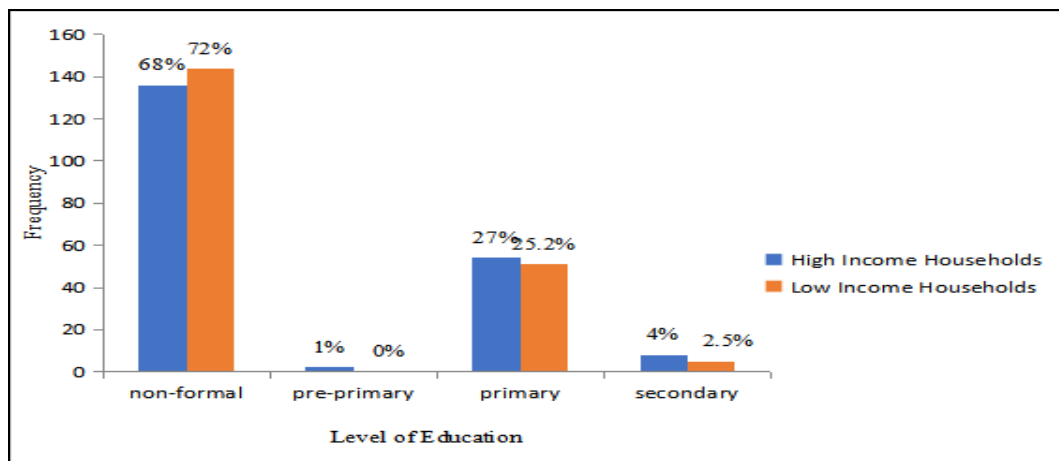


Figure 3: Fostee's level of education in high and low income households

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2023.

Table 9 shows a weak multiple correlation (.236) between demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and foster children's aspirations. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) indicates that 56% of the variation in the aspirations of foster children is accounted for by the

combination of the independent variables (highest level of education completed by foster child, foster parent's household wealth, household living arrangement, age of the foster child and religion of the foster child).

Table 9 further indicates that the foster child's aspiration is influenced by the highest level of education completed by the foster parent, the foster parent's household wealth, household living arrangement, the foster child's age, and the foster parent's religion ($p < 0.05$). This decision follows because the calculated F-ratio of 4.4645 is greater than the p-value of 0.000 at the 5% significance level with 5/394 degrees of freedom. With this, the null hypothesis that the aspirations of the fostered children are not influenced by the highest level of education completed by the foster parent, foster parent's household wealth, household living arrangement, age of the fostered child and religion of the foster parents is rejected.

Table 9a: Multiple Regression Summary Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error Estimate		
1	.236	.056	.044	.733		
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	12.493	5	2.499	4.645	.000 ^b
1	Residual	211.944	394	.538		
	Total	224.438	399			

a. Dependent Variable: foster child's aspirations

b. Independent Variable: predictors

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024.

Of the five predictor variables, only the foster child's age ($t = 3.275$, $p < 0.05$) and religion ($t = -3.253$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influenced children's aspirations. This result means that age directly influences aspirations, as aspirations among foster children tend to increase with increasing age. This suggests that the older the foster children, the higher their aspirations, and vice versa. The remaining variables are individually insignificant in influencing foster children's aspirations. The t-values for this set of variables are highest for foster children's level of education ($t = .283$, $p > .05$), fosterage household wealth ($t = .158$, $p > .05$), and household living arrangement ($t = 1.461$, $p > .05$).

Table 9b: Regression Results on Predictors of Foster Children's Aspiration

Predictor Variable	t-value	p-value	Significance	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Rank of Contribution
Age of Foster Child	3.275	< 0.05	Significant	0.161	1st
Religion of Foster	-3.253	< 0.05	Significant	Not provided	—
Household Living Arrangement	1.461	> 0.05	Not Significant	0.072	2nd
Education Level of Foster	0.283	> 0.05	Not Significant	0.014	3rd
Fosterage Household Wealth	0.158	> 0.05	Not Significant	0.008	4th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2024.

The strength of each predictor's contribution is ranked using the product of the standardized regression coefficients (Beta). The results show that the age of the fostered child has the greatest contribution (0.161) to children's aspirations, followed by household living arrangement (0.072), the highest level of education completed by foster (0.014), and fosterage household wealth (0.008). This further implies that a one-unit increase in the age of the fostered child, holding every other variable constant, will result in a 0.161 or 16.1%, unit increase in the aspirations of children; also, a unit increase in the household living arrangement of the fostered child, holding other variables constant, will result in .072 or 7.2%, unit increase in the aspirations of children and so on for predictor variables with positive signs. However, predictor variables with negative signs indicate an inverse relationship with the aspirations of fostered children. For instance, a unit increase in religion of the foster, holding every other variable constant, results in a -.160, or 16%, unit decrease in the aspirations of fostered children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Apprenticeship fostering creates a home away from home for most vulnerable boys in Enugu State, Nigeria. This practice equips boys with life-transforming skills to overcome poverty. The study highlights innovative cultures that can be mainstreamed into development agendas and policies for socioeconomic empowerment and sustainability. The study has expanded our understanding of indigenous ways of creating safe spaces for children, particularly boys, outside the conventional formal education system. This indigenous approach empowers boys socially and economically and should therefore be encouraged but strictly supervised.

The finding that children between the ages of 5 and 16 years are detached from their biological homes has expanded our understanding of child vulnerability. Based on the analysis, this study has shown that a low-income family background predisposes children to fostering, even if it encourages them to aspire higher (56.0%). This study also found that demography (male gender and age) is an important factor in apprenticeship fostering. The findings help identify the relative risk of young people, particularly boys, across population subgroups and guide interventions on workforce participation and social protection.

Recommendations are centered on the following:

1. There is a need for socioeconomic empowerment of low-income families by the government and non-governmental organizations so that the basic needs of family members, especially the children, can be met.
2. Giving grants by the government to foster parents to help boost their businesses, which will, in the long run, bring about improvement in their household wealth, thereby supporting the achievement of foster children's aspirations.
3. The regulation of all kinds of fostering by the government in terms of public-private partnerships to provide guidelines and supervisory roles, especially as regards the children's living arrangements and other welfare packages.
4. Since the age of the foster child is a significant motivation for greater aspiration, children should be given early childhood training and inculcation of wealth-oriented values, which is key to helping them achieve their full potential and become more useful to society.



5. The Child Rights Act already domesticated in the State should be used by the government to protect the children under this scheme from all forms of maltreatment.

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