

IMPACT OF UBE ON BASIC EDUCATION IN JALINGO AND TAKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF TARABA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme on basic education outcomes in Jalingo and Takum Local Government Areas of Taraba State, Nigeria. Despite two decades of UBE implementation, significant sub-national disparities in educational access, retention, quality, and infrastructural development persist across Nigeria's geopolitical zones. The broad objective of this study is to examine the differential impact of UBE on basic education outcomes between an urban state capital LGA (Jalingo) and a rural, conflict-affected border LGA (Takum), and to analyse the socio-economic and security-related factors explaining these variations. Specifically, the study investigates access and enrollment rates, retention and completion levels, quality indicators, infrastructural development, and the mediating roles of governance capacity, community participation, poverty, and insecurity. The study adopts a descriptive qualitative research methodology, drawing on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary data from UBEC annual reports, Taraba State Ministry of Education records, and international organization reports. The Educational Policy Implementation Theory, complemented by State Fragility Theory, serves as the theoretical framework, positing that policy implementation success is contingent on resources, inter-organizational communication, enforcement mechanisms, socio-economic conditions, and implementer disposition variables that vary significantly between stable and fragile local governance contexts. Findings revealed stark disparities: Jalingo LGA demonstrates measurable gains in access, retention, teacher quality, and functional community participation, while Takum LGA experiences chronic infrastructural neglect, acute teacher shortages, non-functional School-Based Management Committees, and severely depressed enrollment and completion rates. Recurrent farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, political marginalization, pervasive poverty, and weak state presence emerged as the primary barriers to UBE implementation in Takum. The study recommends that the Taraba State Government establish a Conflict-Sensitive Education Task Force for high-risk LGAs, implement a Rural Teacher Incentive Scheme including hazard allowances and secure housing, and adopt community-embedded, context-specific implementation strategies to fulfil the promise of universal basic education for conflict-affected rural populations.

Keywords: Universal Basic Education, Educational Disparities, State Fragility, Conflict-Sensitive Education

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, established by the Nigerian Federal Government in 1999, represents a flagship policy intended to provide free, compulsory, and universal education for all children of school-going age. As a direct response to the global Education for All (EFA) movement and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UBE Act sought to eradicate

illiteracy, reduce regional disparities in educational access, and equip Nigerian youth with foundational skills for national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Obanya, 2011). Two decades after its inception, the programme's impact remains uneven, with significant variations in implementation fidelity, resource allocation, and learning outcomes across the country's diverse geopolitical zones. While research has extensively documented the UBE's challenges in northern Nigeria including inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and cultural barriers (Adeyemi & Ajayi, 2018; Musa & Bello, 2020) there exists a critical gap in understanding how sub-national, intra-state dynamics shape the programme's effectiveness at the local government level, particularly in states like Taraba, where socio-political complexities often mask grassroots educational realities.

Taraba State presents a unique yet underexplored context for evaluating the impact of UBE. Unlike the more frequently studied hotspots of educational decline in Borno or Yobe (where insurgency dominates the narrative), Taraba experiences a different configuration of challenges: perennial farmer-herder conflicts, ethno-religious tensions among over 80 indigenous groups, and persistent infrastructural neglect in rural peripheries (Okoli & Luka, 2019; Alheri, 2021). Within this state, Jalingo and Takum Local Government Areas (LGAs) offer contrasting case studies. Jalingo, the state capital, has benefited from relative urban centrality, greater political attention, and better-concentrated educational infrastructure. In contrast, Takum, a predominantly agrarian and border-adjacent LGA in the southern senatorial district, has historically suffered from chronic marginalization, inter-communal violence, and weak state presence factors that potentially undermine the delivery and outcomes of the UBE programme (Taru & Ayuba, 2022).

Scholars have argued that the success of universal education policies in Nigeria is contingent not merely on federal funding but on the interplay of local governance capacity, community participation, and the absence of conflict-induced disruptions (Ogbonnaya, 2020; Akinfolarin & Ehinola, 2019). Yet, most existing studies on UBE adopt a macro-level or state-wide lens, thereby obscuring the granular realities of how basic education is experienced, resisted, or transformed in distinct LGAs within the same state. As noted by Edward et al. (2021) and Ejiofor (2022a), the failure to disaggregate local government-level data often results in policy prescriptions that are both spatially blind and ineffective. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this lacuna by systematically examining the impact of the Universal Basic Education programme on basic education outcomes in Jalingo and Takum LGAs of Taraba State. Specifically, it investigates the differential levels of access, retention, quality, and infrastructural development between the two LGAs, and analyse the socio-economic and security-related factors that explain these variations.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Review

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The concept of Universal Basic Education refers to a policy framework designed to provide free, compulsory, and uninterrupted education for children from primary through junior secondary school levels. According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2012), UBE encompasses formal and non-formal educational interventions aimed at equipping learners with foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills. Feder (2007) defines UBE as a state-led initiative to democratize educational access and bridge disparities between demographic groups. In the Nigerian context, the UBE Act of 2004 mandates the federal, state, and local governments to contribute to its funding and implementation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). However, scholars like Obanya (2011) and Akinfolarin and Ehinola (2019) note that conceptual clarity around UBE has not translated into implementation fidelity, as structural, financial, and socio-cultural barriers persistently undermine its goals.

Basic Education Outcomes

Basic education outcomes refer to measurable indicators that reflect the effectiveness of educational interventions. These include access (enrollment rates), retention (completion and dropout rates), quality (learning achievement, teacher qualification, pupil-teacher ratios), and infrastructural development (classroom availability, furniture, water and sanitation facilities, instructional materials) (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2019). In this study, basic education outcomes serve as the dependent variable, while UBE implementation factors constitute the independent variables.

UBE Implementation in Northern Nigeria: Challenges and Variations

The implementation of UBE in northern Nigeria has been characterized by significant regional disparities. Research by Adeyemi and Ajayi (2018) found that states in the North-East and North-West zones consistently lag behind their southern counterparts in enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes. Factors identified include insurgency (Borno, Yobe), banditry (Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna), farmer-herder conflicts (Benue, Taraba, Plateau), cultural barriers including early marriage and child labor, and chronic underfunding (Musa & Bello, 2020; Ogbonnaya, 2020). Within the North-East, Taraba State has received comparatively less scholarly attention, with most studies focusing on Borno and Adamawa where Boko Haram insurgency is most acute. This gap justifies the present study's focus on Taraba, where a different configuration of challenges ethno-religious diversity, border porosity, and rural marginalization shapes educational outcomes.

The Role of Local Government Areas in Educational Delivery

Local Government Areas are constitutionally designated as the third tier of Nigeria's federal system and bear significant responsibility for primary education delivery (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). However, scholars have documented that LGAs vary widely in their administrative capacity, financial autonomy, and political will to implement UBE effectively (Akinfolarin & Ehinola, 2019; Taru & Ayuba, 2022). In Taraba State, LGAs like Jalingo benefit from state capital status, attracting more resources and oversight, while LGAs like Takum are geographically peripheral and suffer from neglect. This study builds on this literature by directly comparing two LGAs with divergent characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Educational Policy Implementation Theory, specifically drawing on the work of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) and Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), with recent refinements by O'Toole (2022) and Ajayi and Adeyemi (2023). This theoretical framework posits that policy implementation success is contingent on six key variables: policy standards and objectives, resources, inter-organizational communication, enforcement mechanisms, economic and social conditions, and the disposition of implementers. The theory assumes that policies are more likely to succeed when implementers have clear guidance, adequate resources, supportive socio-economic environments, and positive attitudes toward the policy.

The theory is complemented by insights from State Fragility Theory (Rotberg, 2003; Carment et al., 2021), which argues that weak state capacity, loss of legitimacy, and inability to deliver basic services create conditions where policy implementation fails. In fragile states or sub-national regions, the state's inability to maintain security, enforce laws, and provide public goods (including education) leads to governance vacuums that non-state actors fill (Edward et al., 2024; Nwangwu, 2023). This theory is particularly relevant for understanding UBE implementation in Takum LGA, where weak state presence and insecurity have undermined educational delivery.

Application of the Theory

In Jalingo LGA, the state's relative capacity and legitimacy facilitate UBE implementation: policy standards are communicated, resources are (relatively) available, inter-organizational coordination occurs, and implementers (teachers and administrators) are present and motivated. In contrast, Takum LGA exemplifies state fragility at the local level: weak enforcement, chronic resource scarcity, poor inter-organizational communication, adverse socio-economic conditions (poverty, conflict), and low implementer morale due to insecurity and neglect. By applying this integrated framework, the study explains why the same national UBE policy produces vastly different outcomes in two LGAs within the same state.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to examine the impact of the UBE programme on basic education outcomes in Jalingo and Takum LGAs of Taraba State from 2015 to 2024. Data were collected through three primary methods: Interviews: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 32 participants recruited via purposive and snowball sampling based on thematic saturation. Participants included headteachers (6), classroom teachers (10), parents (8), Local Education Authority officials (4), community leaders (4), and school-based management committee members (6). Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes and were conducted in local languages (Hausa and Jukun) where necessary, with translation support. Focus Group Discussions: Four FGDs were conducted (two per LGA), each with 8–10 participants, including parents, community elders, and out-of-school youth. Observation: Direct field observations were conducted in twelve schools (six per LGA) using a structured observation checklist covering infrastructure, sanitation facilities, classroom conditions, availability of instructional materials, teacher presence, and student engagement. Observations were conducted on multiple days between September and November 2025. Secondary data were sourced from UBEC annual reports (2020–2024), Taraba State Ministry of Education records (2021–2024), National Bureau of Statistics education reports (2022–2024), UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Reports (2022, 2023, 2024), World Bank Nigeria Education Reports (2022, 2023, 2024), and academic publications from 2020 to 2025. Data analysis combined thematic analysis of primary data using NVivo 14 software, and content analysis of secondary documents to triangulate findings.

Presentation of Data and Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: Differential levels of access, retention, quality, and infrastructural development of the UBE programme between Jalingo and Takum LGAs.

Access and Enrollment

Findings revealed stark disparities in access to basic education between Jalingo and Takum LGAs. Secondary data from the Taraba State Ministry of Education (2024) showed net enrollment ratios (NER) for primary school-aged children as 78% in Jalingo LGA compared to only 34% in Takum LGA. Gender parity indices stood at 0.96 in Jalingo (near parity) but 0.54 in Takum (severe female exclusion).

An in-depth interview with the Headteacher of Central Primary School, Jalingo, provided a detailed account of enrollment dynamics:

"I have been the headteacher here for eleven years, and I can tell you that the change has been remarkable. In 2015, we had perhaps 450 students. Today, we have over 1,200. What caused this?

First, the school feeding programme when parents realized their children would get one nutritious meal a day, they started sending them. Second, the removal of all levies no more 'development fees,' no more 'PTA dues' that poor families could not afford. Third, our community sensitization we go door-to-door, especially to families with girls, explaining the long-term benefits. However, I must be honest: we are now overwhelmed. Our classrooms were built for 300 students, not 1,200. Children sit three to a desk meant for one. Some classes hold sessions under trees because the classrooms are too small. We are grateful for the progress, but success has brought its own crisis of overcrowding." (Interview, Headteacher, Central Primary School, Jalingo LGA, 12th October 2025)

In contrast, the situation in Takum LGA was described by a Local Education Authority official with visible distress:

"Where do I begin? Our enrollment figures are not just low; they are collapsing. In Gidan Waya Primary School, which historically enrolled 250 children, we now have 68. In Tse Gahu, the school has been empty for eight months because the community was attacked and nobody has returned. The problem is not that parents do not value education they do. The problem is that they fear for their children's lives. Just last month, a child was abducted on the road to school. Another was killed when a stray bullet hit him during a clash. Parents tell me: 'If I send my child to school and he dies, what have I gained?' I have no answer for them. I cannot promise safety because I cannot provide it. The UBE policy assumes a stable environment, but we do not have one." (Interview, LEA Education Secretary, Takum LGA, 18th October 2025)

These findings align with recent research by Ogbonnaya and Nwankwo (2023), who documented that conflict-induced displacement reduces school enrollment by an average of 45% in affected Nigerian LGAs. Similarly, Musa and Ibrahim (2024) found that security-related fear is the single strongest predictor of non-enrollment in rural Taraba, exceeding even poverty.

Observation Data on Enrollment and Classroom Conditions

Retention and Dropout Rates

Secondary data from UBEC (2024) indicated that Jalingo LGA has a primary school completion rate of 82%, compared to 41% in Takum LGA. Dropout rates in Takum peak between Primary 4 and Primary 6, with girls dropping out at three times the rate of boys.

An in-depth FGD with parents in Takum LGA revealed the complex reasons behind these statistics:

Participant 1 (Mother of five, three out of school): "My daughter Amina stopped school when she was in Primary 5. She is now 14 and married. The man who married her paid a bride price that fed our family for two months. Do you think I am proud of this? I cry at night. But when

your husband has no work, when the farm gives nothing, and when there is no food what choice do you have? The government says education is free, but school requires uniforms, shoes, books, pens. I cannot afford these for five children. So I choose. The boys stay longer because they can become something. The girls will marry anyway."

Participant 2 (Father, two boys out of school): "My boys dropped out last year when the mining came. They can earn 3,000 to 5,000 naira a day carrying gold-bearing rocks. That is more than I earn in a week from farming. They see me struggling, they see the school has nothing to offer them no computer, no workshop, no skill that will give them a job. They say, 'Baba, why should we sit in a broken classroom learning things we will never use, when we can make money now?' I have no answer. The school does not connect to their lives. The UBE has not created jobs. So they choose the mines." (FGD, Takum LGA, 22nd October 2025)

In contrast, a PTA chairman in Jalingo LGA offered a more optimistic perspective:

"We have worked very hard to reduce dropouts. Our strategy is threefold: first, the SBMC identifies any child who misses school for three consecutive days and visits the home. Second, we have a girls' mentorship programme where female teachers and university volunteers speak to girls about staying in school. Third, we have a small bursary fund just 5,000 naira per term for the poorest families to buy uniforms and supplies. It is not much, but it shows them we care. Our dropout rate has fallen from 18% in 2018 to 8% this year. It is possible, but it requires community ownership, not just government policy." (FGD, Jalingo LGA, 5th November 2025)

These findings corroborate research by Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi (2022), who found that community-based retention strategies are significantly more effective than government-mandated policies alone. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) reports that opportunity costs (lost labor income) and direct costs (uniforms, supplies) remain the primary drivers of dropout in sub-Saharan African rural communities.

Quality of Education

Quality indicators showed dramatic variation. Data from the Taraba State SUBEB (2024) indicated that in Jalingo LGA, 87% of teachers held the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or higher, with a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 1:38. In Takum LGA, only 41% of teachers were NCE-qualified, and the PTR was 1:79 (rising to 1:112 in some schools).

An interview with a teacher in Takum LGA provided a harrowing account of working conditions:

"I am the only teacher for Primary 4, Primary 5, and Primary 6. That is three classes, 147 students, and one me. I rotate: Primary 4 gets me from 8 to 9, Primary 5 from 9 to 10, Primary

6 from 10 to 11. For the rest of the day, they sit in their classrooms unsupervised, copying notes I write on the board before I leave. Some days I am so exhausted I cannot speak. My salary when it comes, which is not every month is 38,000 naira. That is less than a miner makes in a week. Why do I stay? Because I believe in these children. But I am burning out. Last term, three teachers left this school for mining work. They said, 'At least we will eat.' I am considering the same. Something must change." (Interview, Classroom Teacher, Takum LGA, 25th October 2025)

A headteacher in Jalingo LGA described a very different reality:

"I have 24 teachers for 930 students. That is acceptable. All but two are NCE-holders, and four have university degrees. We have regular in-school training—every first Friday of the month is staff development. Our teachers are not rich, but they are paid monthly, and we have a welfare scheme that gives small loans and support for emergencies. This matters. A teacher who is not worried about rent can focus on teaching. The UBE has worked here because the state government has prioritized us. I wish every school had what we have." (Interview, Headteacher, Model Primary School, Jalingo LGA, 15th October 2025)

Recent studies by Ajayi and Adeyemi (2024) confirm that teacher qualification and consistent salary payment are among the strongest predictors of learning outcomes in Nigerian primary schools. Additionally, Oyewole (2023) found that the absence of qualified teachers in rural LGAs is directly linked to political neglect and the inability of SUBEB to enforce posting policies.

Infrastructural Development

An interview with a Village Chief in Takum LGA captured the community's frustration:

"This school was built in 1978 by the old Gongola State government. Since then, nothing. The roof leaks, the walls are cracking, the floor is dirt. We have reported to the LEA chairman many times. He came once, in 2019, walked around, made notes, promised help. Nothing came. In 2022, we collected money ourselves 15,000 naira from each household to repair one classroom. That is how we got the roof on the P3 room you saw. But we cannot do everything. The government collects taxes from us. Where does that money go? Not to our children's school. We are tired of begging." (Interview, Village Chief, Takum LGA, 28th October 2025)

Secondary data from UBEC (2024) confirms that Taraba State's utilization of UBEC matching grants was only 47% between 2020 and 2024, with most funds allocated to urban-centered projects. The World Bank (2024) similarly reported that rural LGAs in Nigeria's North-East receive less than 30% of per-capita education spending compared to state capitals.

Objective 2: Socio-economic and security-related factors explaining variations in UBE implementation.

Chronic Marginalization and Governance Neglect

Multiple respondents in Takum identified political marginalization as the root cause of educational disparities. An LEA official with 20 years of experience provided a detailed analysis:

"Let me be direct: Takum is not politically important. The governor is from the northern zone of Taraba. The commissioners, the permanent secretaries, the powerful officials they are from Jalingo, from Bali, from Gassol. Takum produces no votes that matter. So when budget is allocated, Jalingo gets the new schools, the renovations, the laptops for teachers. Takum gets promises. I have attended budget planning meetings where I proposed specific projects for our 34 primary schools. Each year, my proposals are approved on paper. Each year, the funds are 'reallocated' to something else. Last year, we requested 15 million naira for school repairs. We received 1.2 million. That is not a budget shortfall; that is deliberate neglect." (Interview, LEA Official, Takum LGA, 20th October 2025)

This testimony aligns with research by Edward et al. (2024) on "geopolitical marginalization" in Nigeria's federal structure, where peripheral LGAs suffer chronic underfunding as a function of vote-buying calculations. Similarly, Nwangwu (2023) found that education funding in Nigeria follows political patronage rather than need-based formulas.

Inter-Communal Violence and Insecurity

Recurrent farmer-herder conflicts and bandit attacks in Takum LGA emerged as the most direct barrier to UBE implementation. A parent described the lived reality of insecurity with painful detail:

"On the 14th of March this year, at about 8 PM, armed men came to our village. They were many maybe 40 or 50. They shot into the air, burned three houses, and took six people including our school's headteacher. The headteacher, Mallam Sani, is still missing. His family has not heard from him. The school was closed for six weeks. When we reopened, only 30 of the 120 children returned. Some families fled to Benue State. Some sent their children to live with relatives in the city. Some simply decided that school is too dangerous. Every morning, when my child leaves for school, I pray she returns. That is not a way to live. And it is not a way to learn." (Interview, Parent, Takum LGA, 30th October 2025)

A community leader added:

"The military came after the attack. They stayed for two weeks, then left. We asked them to stay, to protect the school at least. They said they had no orders. The police station in our

district has three officers for 14 villages. Three officers! How can they protect us? The state government says 'we are working on security.' We have heard this for ten years. Meanwhile, schools close, children die, and the future of our community is destroyed. I have grandchildren who have never attended a full term of school without interruption. They are ten years old and can barely write their names. This is not the UBE's fault alone. But the UBE cannot work without security." (Interview, Community Leader, Takum LGA, 31st October 2025)

Recent security data from ACLED (2024) documented 47 separate violent incidents affecting educational infrastructure or personnel in Taraba State between 2020 and 2024, with 32 of these occurring in Takum and its neighboring LGAs. Ejiofor and Okoli (2024) argue that Nigeria's security architecture has failed to adopt "school safety" as a strategic priority, leaving educational institutions unprotected in conflict zones.

Poverty and Household Livelihood Strategies

Poverty emerged as a pervasive mediating factor. Secondary data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) indicated that Takum LGA has a multidimensional poverty index of 0.68 (where 0 is least poor, 1 is most poor), compared to Jalingo LGA's 0.31. Household consumption expenditure in Takum is less than half of that in Jalingo.

An extended interview with a widow and mother of six in Takum provided a detailed account of poverty's impact on schooling:

"My husband died in 2021. He was a farmer. Since then, I have been the only provider. I sell firewood and cassava at the market. On a good week, I earn 4,000 naira. That must feed six children, buy soap, pay for kerosene, and cover any medical needs. School is 'free' but my children need uniforms 2,500 naira each. Shoes 1,800 naira each. Books 500 naira each. Pens, bags, all of it. I have four children of school age. To equip all four would cost over 20,000 naira. That is five weeks of my income. I cannot do it. So I chose two. My eldest boy and my middle girl go to school. The other two stay home. They help me fetch water and sell firewood. Every day, my daughter who does not attend school watches her sister leave with a uniform and cries. She asks me, 'Mama, why not me?' I have no answer. The UBE says education is free. But for me, it is too expensive." (Interview, Parent, Takum LGA, 2nd November 2025)

This testimony powerfully illustrates the hidden costs of "free" education. The World Bank (2023) reports that in Nigeria's poorest households, direct costs (uniforms, supplies, transport) account for 35-50% of the total cost of schooling, while indirect costs (foregone child labor) add another 40%. Oyewole and Ogunyemi (2024) argue that without accompanying social protection programmes, UBE cannot achieve universal access.

Community Participation and School-Based Management

In Jalingo, active School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) emerged as a positive factor supporting UBE implementation. An SBMC chairperson explained:

"Our SBMC is not just a name on paper. We have 15 members parents, teachers, the headteacher, a community elder, a religious leader, and a youth representative. We meet every last Thursday of the month. We keep minutes. We have a bank account. We raise small funds each family contributes 200 naira per term, voluntarily, not forced and we use that for emergency repairs and buying chalk, brooms, and other supplies the government does not provide. We also monitor teacher attendance. If a teacher is absent without permission, we report to the LEA. This accountability matters. Our school works because the community has taken ownership. The government gave us a policy. We made it real." (FGD, Jalingo LGA, 5th November 2025)

In contrast, SBMCs in Takum were largely non-functional. A community member explained the reasons:

"We have an SBMC, yes. There is a list of names filed somewhere in the LEA office. But I have never seen a meeting. The chairman, I am told, moved to Jalingo five years ago. The secretary is a teacher who transferred away. The community does not know who the members are. Why? Because the government did not involve us in creating it. They appointed people without consulting us. Then they expected us to support it. When we tried to revive it last year, the LEA said we needed 'approval' to change members. That approval never came. So nothing happens. We have no one to hold the school accountable. When teachers do not come, we complain to the chief, the chief calls the LEA, the LEA promises action, nothing happens. The cycle repeats. Without a real SBMC, the community feels the school is not ours. It is the government's problem. And the government does not care." (FGD, Takum LGA, 8th November 2025)

Research by Akinfolarin and Ogunyemi (2023) and Ogbonnaya (2024) confirms that functional SBMCs are associated with a 25-40% improvement in school performance indicators. However, as Taru and Enamhe (2022) note, SBMC effectiveness is contingent on genuine community empowerment, not tokenistic appointments.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study reveal that the impact of the UBE programme on basic education in Taraba State is highly uneven, with Jalingo LGA experiencing measurable gains in access, retention, quality, and infrastructure, while Takum LGA remains deeply disadvantaged. This disparity is not

accidental but is systematically produced by the interplay of governance neglect, insecurity, poverty, and weak community participation.

Comparing these findings to the broader literature, it is evident that Takum LGA exemplifies the "governance gap" documented by Ogbonnaya and Nwankwo (2023) and Edward et al. (2024), where state fragility at the local level undermines national policy objectives. The study confirms, consistent with Ejiofor (2023) and Okoli and Ngom (2023), that security is a prerequisite for educational development; without it, no policy intervention can succeed. This finding challenges the assumptions of the UBE framework, which largely treats education as a technical intervention separate from security and governance contexts.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the federal and state governments have failed to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches to UBE implementation. In Takum, schools are treated as if they exist in a stable environment, yet they are located in active conflict zones. Emergency protocols, school safety plans, and psychosocial support for traumatized children are conspicuously absent. Oyewole (2024) argues that this represents a policy failure that requires urgent rectification.

The study also highlights the vicious cycle of marginalization documented by Nwangwu (2023): Takum's poor educational outcomes limit its human capital development, which perpetuates poverty and weakens community resilience, which in turn makes the area more susceptible to conflict and further neglect. Breaking this cycle requires targeted, sustained, and context-sensitive interventions.

Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that the impact of the Universal Basic Education programme on basic education in Taraba State is not uniform but is profoundly shaped by local governance conditions, security contexts, and socio-economic realities. In Jalingo LGA, where state presence is stronger, insecurity is lower, and community participation is active, the UBE programme has achieved moderate success in improving access, retention, and infrastructure. In Takum LGA, however, chronic marginalization, recurrent inter-communal violence, pervasive poverty, and weak state capacity have rendered the UBE programme largely ineffective. The study concludes that the UBE policy framework, while well-intentioned, suffers from a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to account for sub-national variations. Until the federal and state governments adopt conflict-sensitive, context-specific, and community-embedded implementation strategies, the promise of universal basic education will remain unfulfilled for millions of children in rural, conflict-affected areas like Takum. The disparity documented in this study is not merely an educational problem but a governance crisis that demands urgent and sustained attention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. The Taraba State Government, in partnership with UBEC, should establish a Conflict-Sensitive Education Task Force specifically for high-risk LGAs like Takum, Sardauna, Donga, and Gashaka. This task force should integrate educational delivery with security risk assessments, school safety protocols (including early warning systems and evacuation plans), and rapid response mechanisms for conflict-induced displacement.
- ii. The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should implement a Rural Teacher Incentive Scheme offering hazard allowances (50% salary supplement), secure housing within fortified school compounds, and guaranteed career progression (priority for promotion after three years of rural service) for teachers posted to conflict-prone and marginalized LGAs. This scheme should be modeled on successful rural posting initiatives in Mali, Niger, and Rwanda

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