

Pastoral Care for the Marginalised: A Study of Faith-Based Initiatives in Takum, Taraba State

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Many people are marginalised for several reasons in this contemporary world. These include: tribal, political, religious, and others. This paper investigated the impact of pastoral care and faith-based inclusion of the marginalised in Takum. The problem of this study was the marginalisation of communities in Takum. The aim was to explore the role of pastoral care in promoting faith-based inclusion of the marginalised in Takum. Four objectives guided this investigation: to assess social exclusion in Takum and how pastoral care programmes addressed these needs. To evaluate the effectiveness of faith-based inclusion of pastoral care programmes in promoting the holistic well-being of the marginalised through biblical standards. To identify best practices and challenges in delivering pastoral care to the marginalised through faith-based inclusion, and to explore the relationship between pastoral care and community development in the context of faith-based inclusion. The method used is qualitative, which employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The study revealed that pastoral care programmes can play a vital role in promoting social inclusion. The study proposed a faith-based approach to addressing marginalisation. This research contributes to the understanding of the intersection of faith and social inclusion in its context. The study concludes that pastoral care can be a powerful tool for promoting faith-based inclusion of the marginalised in Takum.

Keywords: Pastoral Care, Marginalised, Faith, Inclusion.

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Introduction

Pastors assume a crucial and often tricky duty when it comes to sewing up the torn fabric of a particular society whenever conflict erupts. Takum is widely celebrated for its rich, dark soil and bumper crops—yams, cassava, mangoes, oranges, and others that fill local markets and kitchens. Yet the same patchwork of ethnic groups that colours everyday life has sometimes ignited violent clashes, forcing some households to retreat or stand alone. This article examines how such faith-driven work, backed by the

pastor's authority and local network, weaves stronger bonds between divided neighbours and carves a hopeful road toward lasting peace and inclusion.

Takum sits within Taraba State Southern Senatorial District, a location that places it squarely in Nigeria's North-east geopolitical zone and frames its local identity. Ethnic groups often clash over land, chieftaincy, and political posts, and those contests spiral into violence and broad marginalisation. In these contexts, marginalised individuals include



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displaced persons, people singled out because of their ethnic background, and anyone struggling economically (Hurst, 2022). Such exclusion brings not only a lack of money or shelter but also a painful break in community ties that damages mental health and everyday dignity.

Pastors in Takum carry a job that reaches far beyond standing in the pulpit on Sunday morning. They become listeners who sit with people haunted by loss, negotiators who ease tensions between rival ethnic groups, and outspoken defenders of those left voiceless. All this springs from a deep belief in pastoral care that mixes spiritual teaching, steady emotional backing, and hands-on work that restores basic dignity to the poor and forgotten.

In Takum, where people may doubt government bodies stained by political meddling or graft, the church still inspires confidence. Pastors exploit that confidence to heal rifts, preaching from the pulpit against ethnic bias and in favour of togetherness. Their messages often stand in stark contrast to the angry narratives that spark violence, highlighting shared dignity and biblical themes of love and justice. Beyond preaching, pastors also step in as neutral arbiters, steering frank talk that aims to settle old grievances.

Considering the pastoral care for the marginalised and faith-based initiatives in Takum, the paper is divided into six major parts: the introduction; definition of terms, followed by the missing link, which is meant to figure out the lacuna that necessitated this research. Part four focuses on the biblical bases for the marginalised and social integration as a key to unlocking community potential. The impact of pastoral functions in integrating the marginalised in Takum, as well as the challenges of integrating the marginalised in the church, while the last two parts focus on the way forward, conclusion, and recommendations, respectively.

Definition of Terms

Pastoral Care: In the context of this study, ‘pastoral care’ is used to mean the systematic and deliberate ways in which pastors offer religious, psychological, and community support to their members and host

communities. Pastoral care is claimed from Christian theology and founded on the range of mercy, direction, and support of the individual’s complete health (Campbell et al., 2023). It therefore covers the social and spiritual model of case management, or such services as counselling, teaching, preaching, evangelism, and outreach programs, with a goal of supporting faith, strengthening, providing guidance, and encouraging hope to people in need, caring for their needs both spiritually and practically.

Marginalised: These are people or whole groups pushed to the fringes because of their ethnic background, poverty, disability, or links to earlier conflicts (Menampampil 2022). In Takum, this label covers camp residents, stigmatised ethnic minorities, and others sidelined by violence or struggling economies. The document warns that such isolation robs them of basic support, everyday talk, and public recognition, hurting their mental health and slowing the wider community’s return to unity.

Social Exclusion in Takum

Chieftaincy Crisis and Violence: In Takum, ongoing battles over chieftaincy titles-branded as ethnic rivalry-stand out as a clear engine of social exclusion. These quarrels pitch one group against another, unleashing waves of violence that shake the region to its core. The study notes that the clashes tear apart communities once joined by shared history and common interest. When rival factions race for a throne, the fallout drives families away, ruins farms and small businesses, and leaves supporters of the defeated side branded as outcasts (Iida, 2022). These people are treated as strangers on land they once called home, barred from meetings, festivals, and everyday exchanges. The aftershocks hollow out local networks, isolating individuals and cutting off the safety nets that usually cushion loss or hardship. As fighting keeps reigniting, ethnic lines harden further and distrust deepens, trapping the region in a loop that blocks genuine healing and reunion.

Political Marginalisation: Within Takum, political power is held almost exclusively by one ethnic group (with godfatherism), leaving larger communities on the sidelines and deepening their sense of alienation. The concentration of authority shows up in uneven

access to money, political representation, and the very process of making decisions. Because they are usually pushed to the edge of public life, this group of people cannot influence the policies that touch their daily lives and so remain helpless against long-standing inequalities (Fuerst, 2023). The same study notes that this exclusion breeds disenfranchisement among those seen as outsiders, who feel their opinions go unheard and their basic needs ignored. When development plans or state aid are handed out, dominant factions receive the lion's share, while other residents are left with crumbling roads, scant clinics, and limited school places. Such unfair-minded distribution deepens the gulf of difference and locks the excluded into the status of social outcasts already defined by ethnicity or thin wallets (Doyle et al., 2022). Without real political inclusion, the pattern repeats itself, trapping these communities in a cruel loop of neglect and powerlessness.

Economic Marginalisation: Although Takum is widely praised as a food-basket region that grows plenty of yams, cassava, and maize, and offers business prospects. Those branded as outcasts-the very poor, internally displaced people, and ethnic majorities-often confront high walls when they try to enter local markets. Research indicates that these groups are routinely blocked from getting work, owning land, or securing loans, all of which are vital for standing on their own feet (Benassi & De Falco, 2025). For example, families uprooted by ethnic violence and forced off their farms find it almost impossible to start again, since agricultural trade and credit are tightly controlled by long-established clans. In much the same way, low-income applicants are passed over in hiring simply because prejudice awards job slots to members of the dominant ethnic bloc. Such exclusion not only freezes these families in poverty but also deepens the stigma that marks them as outsiders. When economic power stays just out of reach, their energy and skills remain unrecognized, locking the region into a cycle of marginalization that harms everyone.

Cultural Marginalisation: The long-standing cultural habits and biases help keep several groups on the margins in Takum. People who are linked, even indirectly, to earlier conflicts are quickly branded as

troublemakers or outsiders, no matter what they personally do. This paper notes that such attitudes build a harsh atmosphere, where the branded are blocked from simple friendship or full membership. For instance, local rules may insist that entire ethnic groups lack the honor or skill needed for public offices or festive rites, deepening their second-class image (Okyere, 2024). Old grievances, especially those tied to chieftaincy squabbles, are woven into community stories and keep stereotypes alive that make exclusion seem normal. The same logic spills over to people with disabilities, widows, orphans, who too often are seen as drains on resources instead of respected neighbours. Cultural exclusion, then, works quietly but forcefully, undercutting any real push toward openness and mutual respect among Takum's many peoples.

Biblical Basis for Integrating Marginalised

Research on pastoral care in Takum, Taraba State, reveals a robust biblical foundation for welcoming social outsiders and uses this theology to confront exclusion within local congregations. Rooted in God's own words and actions (through Jesus Christ), the approach emphasises compassion, justice, and a readiness to embrace people who have been sidelined (Yutang, 2022). The study highlights some key biblical passages like Exodus 12:18-19; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; Isaiah 58:6-7, 60:1-3; Ezekiel 18:16; John 4; Acts 6; Galatians 3:38; Mark 2:15-17, Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 13:10-17, which God directly commands attention to migrants, orphans, widows, the poor, and persons with disabilities. When read in light of the larger narrative of Christ's ministry, these texts strengthen the Takum framework and point toward restoring dignity and forging peace among those overlooked.

In Mark 2:15-17, Jesus sits at a table filled with tax collectors and outsiders, declaring, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. By doing so, He purposely moves toward those whom polite society exiles, topples its rankings, and offers a model of open community. For pastors in Takum, the scene therefore becomes a call to welcome people marked by ethnicity, poverty, or past conflict and to include them fully in church life (Wood, 2023). Similarly,

Mark 10:13-16 portrays Jesus welcoming children-people the ancient world mostly overlooked-affirming their worth and urging His followers to mirror that wide embrace. The same principle now guides ministries in Takum, as leaders try to place those on the margins front and centre, insisting that value does not hinge on social rank. Luke 13:10-17 deepens the message when Jesus heals a hunched woman on the Sabbath, prioritising her dignity over rigid rules. That act thus encourages Takum pastors to confront entrenched prejudices and to speak boldly for the forgotten, aligning their service with Christ's healing and restorative mission.

The report recalls Jesus' vivid image of the Good Shepherd, who goes in search of each lost sheep as described in John 10:11-16. That picture inspires the Takum model of pastoral care, which offers not only spiritual guidance but also tangible help, such as income-generating projects and mediation in local disputes. By serving in this shepherding way, pastors aim to rebuild broken trust and foster peace among ethnic groups shattered by violence (Kilonzo, 2024). The command to love one's neighbour, repeated in Mark 12:31, deepens the church's obligation to stand as a clear sign of justice and calm in a region shaken by ethnic and religious conflict.

The study links the scriptures to daily life in Takum, where chronic problems, such as chieftaincy quarrels and stark wealth disparities, push many citizens to the social margins. When the church hears Jesus say, whatever you do for the least of these. (Matt. 25:40), The word automatically drives members toward projects that build the town and foster lasting peace, and it does so by pulling everyone into the same circle. Pastors thus quote the passage to challenge tribal prejudice, mediate clashes, and lift up the ignored, thereby reflecting Christ's broader mission of healing both body and soul. Grounded in those scriptural themes, Takum clergy now demonstrate that faith-fuelled action can heal deep social wounds while still honouring each person's God-given dignity. Such work keeps the church answerable to God and to the community, ensuring its public witness mirrors the fearless mercy and equity Jesus exemplified.

Social Integration: A Key to Unlocking Community Potential in Takum

In Takum, a town long marked by ethnic strife and acute social divides, welcoming those usually branded as outcasts not only meets the Christian call to love the neglected. Led by pastors in Takum, this work echoes scriptural commands and answers the urgent demand for greater unity in a region already burdened by conflict and exclusion (Labuschagne & Steenkamp, 2023). Seen through the church's own spiritual lens, welcoming outsiders rests on biblical ideas about mercy and fairness for those at the edges. Passages like Mark 2:15-17 and Luke 13:10-17 call believers to stand with migrants, orphans, widows, and the poor, showing that God notices who society ignores. The church carries a moral duty to live out these lessons, treating every person with respect and defending their rights. By opening its doors, the community not only meets its spiritual obligation but also becomes a visible sign of hope and healing, sparking renewal for the outcasts and the wider flock alike (Magdy Ahmed et al., 2024).

At the societal level, welcoming outcasts openly signals that each person possesses unique value and the capacity to help drive Takum's growth. The marginalized, often uprooted, stigmatized, or struggling to meet basic needs-face rejection that erodes belonging and self-esteem. When the church arranges practical openings, whether through income-generating workshops or inter-tribal meetings, these individuals gain concrete tools like training and the vital backing of a caring network. Such involvement nurtures a sense of control, enabling outcasts to see themselves as active contributors instead of burdens. In turn, the rise in confidence and public regard sparks a positive loop, as empowered members form give-and-take ties that deepen trust and mutual respect throughout the community (Li & Lu, 2023).

In Takum, where long-standing ethno-religious tensions and chieftaincy disputes have repeatedly torn the community apart, including social outcasts, it now works as a vital spark for lasting peace. Church leaders, mainly pastors, set up honest talks and reconciliation meetings that slow the social breakdown, feeding anger and violence. Welcoming

outcasts back into Takum life is not simply an act of short-term charity; it reflects a long-term commitment to integrate gospel principles into daily social practice. This approach uplifts marginalized people and interlinks the wider community, gradually breaking down the barriers that keep them apart. By living out biblical justice and love, the church responds to its divine call and positions itself as a key player on Takum's journey toward lasting peace, unity, and steady development, thereby opening real space for every citizen, ranked or not, to flourish (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Strategies for Integrating the Marginalised in Takum

Identification of Outcasts: Pastors visit different camps for the displaced while watching from men to women set apart by ethnicities, poverty, or injuries from the past violence by mapping all these hidden groups, and lay all the groundwork for aid that will fit each person's needs.

Personalised Healing and Reintegration: pastors bring healing through counselling to help deliver their trauma and gentle spiritual guidance, while trying to rebuild all the shattered confidence, and sketch steps towards their daily life while treating outcasts as spiritual beginners.

Inter-Tribal Dialogue: Pastors help to lead carefully steered meetings where there are opposing groups sit shoulder to shoulder, speak truthfully, and even pray for open hearts. These sessions sift old complaints and slowly help mend their trust among the ethnicities, all grounded in the scripture that calls for love, justice, and forgiveness.

Inclusive Church Policies: Church leaders now help to clear out rules that open committees and vestry rooms to people once locked out. Such that the policies rebuff the outside prejudice, and also welcome full participation, and plant a sense of ownership in different members who had long sat at the back.

Mentorship Programs: Whenever a newcomer is paired with an elder who mainly walks beside them in prayer, counsel, and even gentle correction, helping them will root deeper in faith and service.

The Impact of Pastoral Function in Integrating the Marginalised in Takum

The work of pastors in bringing social outcasts into the fold shows how spiritual guidance can also drive real social change. Within Takum, leaders have rolled out careful pastoral-care initiatives that promote inclusion, healing, and tighten community bonds in an area long troubled by ethnic conflict and exclusion (Okoye, 2024). As a result, both the church and the wider Takum community now bear visible signs of this change. One clear sign is the steady rise in church attendance. By deliberately opening the doors to displaced persons, marginalized, and those struggling financially, pastors have widened the congregation (Campbell et al., 2023).

This posture of welcome turns the church into a refuge for people seeking a place where social borders do not apply. The report also notes that such visible outreach has attracted extra funding, with neighbours and even distant partners willing to support a cause that clearly seeks the common good. An impressive spirit of cooperation has begun to emerge among the churches in Takum. Working together in this way magnifies their voice, giving them the strength to confront tangled social problems that no single church could solve alone. Community drive-through clinics, book fairs for displaced families, and open interfaith talks, for example, have cemented the image of the church as a bridge rather than a barrier (Smits & Knoppers, 2023).

At the heart of these efforts lies the deep trust pastors have earned by responding to both urgent and long-term needs. When they sit with survivors of conflict or families forced to flee, offering sound counsel and prayer, the healing is both emotional and spiritual. Such one-on-one care helps many feel whole again, reclaiming lost dignity and renewed hope. Pastors do not stop there; they follow up with practical programs, running skill workshops, and linking participants to small loans. Menampampil (2022) notes that this all-around attention clearly shows the church's heartfelt concern for the weak, a fact that grows trust in the wider community and reinforces the church's pastoral calling.

Their public defence of the marginalised reinforces the church's role as a major player in Takum's daily life. By demanding fair access to resources and publicly opposing unjust norms, pastors show that faith can drive development. This visible fight for justice mirrors Christ's calls to love and serve, striking a chord with members and outsiders alike. As neighbours see the church's work change lives, they, in turn, feel encouraged to rethink their own attitudes and habits (Collins, 2024). Taken together, these actions show that pastoral care moves beyond simple religious counsel; it actively spurs social change. By promoting inclusion, settling disputes, and lifting sidelined groups for lasting peace and unity.

Challenges of Integrating the Marginalised in the Church

The paragraphs below explain five major roadblocks, drawing on detailed findings from a study of pastoral care projects across Takum.

Tribal Prejudices: Takum's rich ethnic mix, though a source of local pride, fuels powerful biases that block outcasts from being accepted. Old rivalries, layered stereotypes, and memories of past conflicts stir mistrust in pews as soon as a stigmatized person arrives. Repentant armed robbers or members of some clans are especially watched, turning pastors' task of building trust into a minefield. Because these attitudes come from deep cultural stories, breaking them needs slow, steady work that pushes pastors to critique bias while still keeping the church community together.

Pastoral Burnout: Pastors who try to bring outcasts into church life pay a high emotional and time price. Personal counselling, conflict mediation, and outreach events pull them thin, especially when they still have to preach and run the budget. Carrying the trauma stories of newcomers and facing pushback from longtime members wears them out. Without solid help-such as trained lay leaders or simple self-care tools, their energy drops, and so do the integration programs (Hasibuan et al., 2023).

Limited Resources: Tight finances cripple the congregation's ability to run meaningful welfare work. Without steady funding, plans for job training

or small loans-fundamental steps toward bringing outcasts back into daily life, quickly stall. The research shows that churches in Takum seldom can open full ministries for social integration, so pastors default to makeshift programs.

Political Interference: Ethnic rivalry in Takum local politics deepens the crisis and complicates pastors' peace-making. Election-hungry leaders court votes by widening divides, fiercer hostilities emerge, and the church's search for calm is set back. When political gains set the agenda, even sincere reconciliation events can be painted as party projects. Clergy thus walk a tightrope, trying to build a shared future while powerful outsiders chase short-term wins and question their honesty (Sanders-Cepeda, 2024).

Security Threats: Armed groups and street bands now frequently shadow church leaders who urge inclusion, turning a volunteer ministry into a risky job. The study shows fear shrinks attendance, stalls joint projects, and chips away at the church's premise to shelter the whole community. In short, insecurity endangers bodies and futures, turning holy spaces into sites of caution rather than welcome.

Way Forward

To bring social outcasts into the heart of Takum, pastors will first need to step outside the pulpit, listen to local struggles, and use their moral sway to welcome everyone. The report then sets out down-to-earth steps that match this goal with the church's age-old task of mending rifts and building peace. By weaving their own lives into daily routines-work, markets, and festivals-pastors can multiply their good reach, giving marginalized people a friendlier, stronger neighbourhood (Warren & Ryberg, 2022).

The first step is to partner with local groups. When pastors join forces with schools, NGOs, and village clubs, they can share money, time, and ideas to tackle urgent problems like schooling, health care, and jobs. These partnerships turn church goodwill into practical support for displaced families and stigmatized ethnic communities by offering clear, steady programs that teach skills and build respect.

Secondly, when pastors speak out for social justice, causes like reducing poverty and widening educational access, they step into moral leadership roles. By naming and contesting deep-rooted inequalities, they can shift local policy debates and question cultural attitudes that push the marginalized aside. Such a witness stretches the church's work beyond prayer and preaching, turning it into a spark for real social change.

Thirdly, being visible in everyday situations gradually builds trust. Whether they chair a market day, drop by a neighbourhood shop, or simply chat with residents, pastors appear less as distant authority and more as relatable neighbours (Dike & Amucheazi, 2021). That everyday presence signals to outcasts that the church truly wants everyone included, nudging them to join public life. Finally, concrete projects—food drives, inter-tribal discussion forums, and the like—show care in practical terms. These actions pull together different groups, nurturing patience, dialogue, and shared respect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the dramatic change pastors have sparked in Takum, showing how they keep reaching out to people on the fringes—penniless, sick, or openly ignored—through projects built on plain biblical ideas. The report explains how many trying days even clergy have quietly stepped in as calm intermediaries, which are tense talks, patient listeners in some personal crisis, and even visible stewards at public events, slowly repairing the torn trust between some rival ethnic groups and the people who had also been pushed aside. By preaching sermons that will challenge fear-filled stereotypes and tighten social ties in a region often ripped apart by quarrelling. Their messages prove that all the faithful leadership can turn places on the blink of an eye and bring lively centres of peace and shared purpose. The study concludes that pastors should organise or support community events, service projects, and charitable initiatives, demonstrating the church's commitment to social responsibility and care. They should participate in local councils or committees, contributing a faith-based perspective to community discussions and decisions.

Recommendations

To expand the pastor's current ministry for the marginalized in Takum, the following measures are proposed.

- **Formal Training:** The report observes that ethnic-religious violence in Takum leaves serious emotional wounds among outcasts. Equipping ministers with these mediation and healing skills will enable them to address those wounds, fostering restoration and reconciliation throughout the larger community.
- **Dedicated Ministry:** Creating a social-integration unit within the Takum church will offer a clear space to steer inclusion work. The report stresses that outcasts need steady, organized support. A stand-alone team can map pastoral programs, run regular outreach, and speak persistently for people pushed to the edges.
- **Partnerships:** Working hand-in-hand with NGOs and public offices is vital for extra funding and shared resources. The report candidly says church budgets are thin, which stalls many welfare projects.
- **Inclusive Policies:** By appointing leaders from all ethnic groups, the church leadership will mirror Takum's mixed communities. The report highlights how long-standing tribal bias keeps many away from office. Fair policies will let sidelined people speak and join, building trust and wider attendance at services.
- **Community Initiatives:** Involving outcasts, elders, and local chiefs in peace-making work will knit the parish closer. The report also urges open cross-tribal talks to settle disputes before they spread. Shared projects among varied partners will teach respect and joint duty for harmony.

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