



Lived Experiences of Trauma, Identity, and Coping among Victims of Communal Conflicts in Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Communal conflicts remain a persistent source of psychosocial distress in many parts of Nigeria, yet the culturally grounded psychological experiences of survivors are underexplored.

Objective: This study examined the lived experiences of trauma, identity disruption, and coping among victims of communal crises from Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda in Ebonyi State from a cross-cultural psychological perspective.

Method: A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted. Participants were purposively selected 30 adult survivors of Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda communal conflict, and data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns across narratives.

Result: Findings reveal profound psychological trauma characterised by fear, grief, and emotional distress, alongside disruptions to personal and collective identity. Survivors employed culturally embedded coping strategies such as spirituality, communal support, economic engagement, and meaning-making to manage distress.

Conclusion: The study concludes that communal conflict produces enduring psychological and identity-related consequences, while culture plays a central role in shaping coping and resilience.

Unique Contribution: The study contributes culturally grounded empirical evidence to cross-cultural psychology by highlighting indigenous coping mechanisms among conflict survivors in the part of Nigeria investigated.

Key Recommendation: The study recommends that psychosocial interventions should be provided by mental health professionals and such interventions should be culturally sensitive, community-based, and integrated into post-conflict recovery frameworks.

Keywords: Resilience, Psychosocial impact, Displacement, Community support



INTRODUCTION

Communal conflict continues to constitute a major source of psychological and social disruption in Nigeria, particularly in areas where ethnic, religious, and land-related tensions intersect. Repeated episodes of violence have resulted in widespread displacement, erosion of trust within communities, and prolonged exposure to insecurity, all of which carry serious psychological implications for affected populations. Recent studies conducted in conflict-affected Nigerian communities demonstrate that exposure to communal violence is strongly associated with trauma-related distress and impaired psychosocial functioning (Awa et al., 2024; Ngomba et al., 2025).

Odoemelam and Nwafor (2012) explains that psychological trauma arising from communal conflict is not experienced in a uniform manner. Rather, the ways individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to traumatic events are shaped by cultural belief systems, social norms, and collective histories. Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa suggests that experiences of distress are frequently understood through social, spiritual, and communal frameworks that differ from dominant Western clinical models (Bovey et al., 2025). These culturally grounded interpretations influence not only how suffering is expressed, but also how individuals seek support and make meaning of adversity.

Within cross-cultural psychology, trauma is conceptualised as a culturally embedded phenomenon, inseparable from social identity and shared worldviews. In collectivist contexts such as Nigeria, communal bonds and group membership play a central role in shaping emotional responses and recovery processes following violence. Consequently, approaches that prioritize individual symptomatology alone may fail to capture the broader cultural and relational dimensions of trauma experienced by survivors of communal conflict.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although communal conflict remains a recurring feature of Nigeria's socio-political landscape, psychological research on affected populations (Awa et al., 2024; Nwangele et al., 2024; Alausa & Ojo, 2025). has been dominated by quantitative studies focused primarily on symptom prevalence and risk factors. While these studies have documented elevated rates of post-traumatic stress symptoms among conflict-exposed individuals (Mark Awa et al., 2024; Nwafor et al., 2023), they offer limited insight into how survivors themselves understand their experiences or navigate disruptions to identity and social belonging.

Furthermore, survivors' interpretations of trauma are often intertwined with communal narratives, spiritual beliefs, and collective memory, yet these dimensions remain underrepresented in existing research. The absence of in-depth qualitative inquiry restricts understanding of how culture shapes trauma, identity reconstruction, and coping following communal violence.



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of trauma, identity, and coping among victims of communal conflict in Akpoha, Amasiri and Edda of Ebonyi State using a cross-cultural qualitative approach.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore how victims of communal conflict in Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda of Ebonyi State describe and make sense of their traumatic experiences
2. To investigate how exposure to communal violence in Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda of Ebonyi State influenced survivors' sense of identity and belonging
3. To explore the coping strategies survivors in Akpoha, Amasiri and Oso Edda of Ebonyi State employ in response to communal conflict
4. To Determine how cultural beliefs, communal values, and shared meanings shape psychological adjustment following conflict

RELATED LITERATURES

Communal conflicts in South-Eastern Nigeria are recurrent phenomena with profound social, psychological, and economic consequences. Within Ebonyi State, studies have examined diverse dimensions of communal crises, including psychosocial impacts, governance failures, land disputes, and human security disruptions. However, there is limited qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of survivors, particularly in the context of Afikpo and Edda Local Government Areas. Understanding these experiences is essential for appreciating how trauma, identity, and coping are culturally mediated.

Psychosocial and Traumatic Impacts of Communal Conflict

A cross-sectional study conducted in conflict-affected communities in Cross River State reported a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms among adult residents, highlighting the enduring mental health impact of communal violence (Awa et al., 2024). Similarly, research among internally displaced persons in northern Nigeria indicates that trauma exposure is closely linked to emotional distress, with social support and resilience playing important moderating roles (Alausa & Ojo, 2025; Odoemelam et al., 2013).

Empirical work indicates that survivors of communal conflict often experience severe psychosocial distress, including grief, fear, and disruptions to social functioning. For example, Emma-Echiegu et al. (2018) studied internally displaced persons affected by the Ezza–Ezillo communal crisis and found that participants described profound emotional loss, feelings of emptiness, and interrupted daily routines. Coping strategies in this context were culturally informed, including reliance on religious engagement, rebuilding social networks, and participation in economic activities. These findings underscore the importance of exploring subjective experiences of trauma rather than solely relying on quantitative symptom measures.



Similarly, studies of human security in inter-communal conflicts such as the Effium–Ezza Effium clashes highlighted how violence disrupts both material and psychological aspects of life, including property loss, displacement, and social trust (Nwangele et al., 2024). While these studies illuminate consequences of conflict, they primarily focus on external impacts rather than how individuals interpret, internalize, and respond psychologically to these experiences.

Other studies by Eze et al (2024) who undertook a narrative content analysis on Ezza/Ezilo victims of communal crisis found that victims of the crisis used psychological trauma framework to explain their life experiences. The findings of the study further exposed salient psychological difficulties encountered by victims of the communal crisis with elements of suicide ideation as maladaptive ways of reacting to the conflict and meaning making (Eze et al, 2024). Beyond Nigeria, systematic reviews of qualitative research across Sub-Saharan Africa reveal that cultural interpretations of trauma frequently emphasize collective suffering, spiritual meaning-making and relational resilience rather than individual pathology (Bovey et al., 2025).

Structural and Governance Drivers of Communal Conflict

Research has also highlighted the structural and governance factors that exacerbate communal tensions. Aro et al. (2025) and Okoro and Nwafor (2015) analyzed state responses in Abakaliki and Ikwo LGAs and found that reactive government interventions, coupled with unresolved land and boundary disputes, contributed to repeated cycles of conflict. Abada & Omeh (2025) similarly argued that weak land governance and contested customary tenure systems create recurring points of tension. These studies provide crucial context for understanding the Afikpo–Edda crisis, where unresolved boundary and land disagreements continue to fuel violent confrontations. They also indicate that survivors’ trauma is embedded not only in violent experiences but also in structural injustices and perceived systemic neglect.

Cultural Context and Coping Mechanisms

Cross-cultural perspectives highlight that trauma experiences and coping strategies are culturally situated. Bovey et al. (2025) emphasize that cultural concepts of distress (CCDs) shape how individuals perceive suffering, express emotions, and seek social support. In Nigeria, and particularly in southeastern communities, communal values, kinship ties, and spiritual beliefs significantly influence coping responses to conflict. Emma-Echiegu et al. (2018) reported that displaced survivors drew on religious faith, mutual support networks, and collective action as culturally validated coping mechanisms. These findings are integrated in cross-cultural psychology frameworks, which posit that understanding psychological outcomes requires attention to culturally embedded beliefs, narratives, and practices.

Gaps in Previous Research

While prior research in Ebonyi State and South-Eastern Nigeria has highlighted psychosocial effects, structural drivers, and community-level coping mechanisms, critical gaps remain:

1. Lack of qualitative inquiry: Most studies rely on quantitative or descriptive approaches, which fail to capture the subjective meaning-making processes of survivors.



2. Limited attention to identity: Few studies explore how communal violence affects survivors' sense of self, belonging, and social identity, which are central to coping and resilience.
3. Underrepresentation of Afikpo–Edda LGA: Although research exists for other LGAs, the specific experiences of survivors in Afikpo and Edda remain unexamined.
4. Insufficient integration of theory: Past studies rarely apply cross-cultural psychology or cultural concepts of distress frameworks to interpret trauma and coping within Nigerian communal contexts.

These gaps justify the present study, which seeks to explore how survivors of communal conflict in Afikpo and Edda L.G.A understand their experiences, reconstruct identity, and employ culturally grounded coping strategies, thereby addressing both empirical and theoretical voids in the literature.

THEORETICAL LINKAGE

This literature review supports the adoption of cross-cultural psychology and cultural concepts of distress as theoretical frameworks. Cross-cultural psychology underscores that trauma and coping cannot be divorced from cultural and social context (Bovey et al., 2025). By integrating identity theory, this study also acknowledges that communal violence can disrupt social identity and belonging, which are key determinants of psychological adaptation and resilience (Tajfel & Turner, 2019). In this way, the study bridges existing empirical findings with culturally sensitive theory to provide a deeper understanding of survivors' lived experiences. Thus, this study is theoretically situated within cross-cultural psychology, which emphasizes that psychological processes are shaped by cultural contexts and cannot be fully understood in isolation from social and cultural environments. The study further draws on the framework of cultural concepts of distress, which recognises that experiences of suffering are articulated through culturally specific idioms, explanatory models, and social practices rather than universal diagnostic categories (Bovey et al., 2025). This framework provides a culturally sensitive lens for interpreting survivors' accounts of trauma and coping in Nigerian communal settings.

METHOD

Area of Study

This study was conducted in Afikpo Local Government Area (Akpoha/Amasiri) and Edda Local Government Area (Oso) of Ebonyi State, located in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria. Ebonyi State is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group and is characterized by strong communal ties, shared cultural traditions, and agrarian livelihoods. Social organization in the state is largely communal, with kinship networks, traditional institutions, and local leadership structures playing central roles in everyday life.

Afikpo and Edda LGAs have historically experienced episodes of communal conflict, often linked to disputes over land ownership, boundary demarcation, and inter-community relations. These conflicts have, at various times, resulted in loss of lives, displacement of residents, destruction of property, and prolonged tensions between neighboring communities. Such



episodes of violence have disrupted social cohesion and affected the psychological wellbeing of individuals and families within the affected areas.

Participants

The study recruited 30 adult survivors of communal violence from Afikpo North (Amasiri/Akpoha) and Edda (Oso) Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State communities using purposive and snowball sampling, which ensured that participants had direct experience of the conflict and could provide rich, relevant data. 10 participants were sampled in each of the three studied communities through purposive and snowballing techniques. Participants included men and women aged 25–60 years, reflecting a diversity of ages, genders, and roles within the community.

Inclusion criteria were: Direct exposure to violence or its consequences during the Akpoha–Amasiri or Amasiri–Oso/Edda conflicts, residency in the affected communities for at least five years, willingness and ability to provide informed consent and participate in telephone interviews. Exclusion criteria included individuals with severe psychological distress that could compromise their ability to participate safely in the study.

Instrument

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, developed based on cross-cultural psychological theory and trauma research. The guide included open-ended questions covering:

1. Traumatic experiences during communal conflict.
2. Impact on personal and social identity, including changes in self-concept and sense of belonging.
3. Coping strategies, including culturally grounded and community-based practices.
4. Perceived support systems, including family, community, and religious/spiritual resources.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through telephone interviews to ensure the safety and comfort of participants, particularly given the potential sensitivity of trauma-related experiences and logistical constraints in the conflict-affected communities. Prior to each interview, participants were contacted via phone to explain the study's purpose, scope, and ethical considerations, and to schedule a mutually convenient time for the call.

At the beginning of each session, the researchers obtained verbal informed consent, emphasizing voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants were encouraged to find a quiet and private space for the interview to maintain privacy and minimize interruptions. Interviews were conducted in English or Igbo, depending on the participant's preference, with the researchers able to switch languages seamlessly to facilitate comfort and clarity.



Interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, during which the researchers used a semi-structured interview guide to explore participants' experiences of communal conflict, impacts on identity, and culturally grounded coping mechanisms. Field notes were taken during and immediately after calls to record intonation, pauses, emotional reactions, and contextual details that could enrich data interpretation.

All interviews were voice-recorded with participants' consent, and recordings were later transcribed verbatim. For interviews conducted in Igbo, responses were translated into English while preserving participants' intended meanings and culturally specific expressions. To maintain ethical standards, participants were provided with contact information for local counseling and support services in case of emotional distress triggered by the interview.

Design

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of trauma, identity, and coping among victims of communal conflict in Afikpo North and Edda Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. Phenomenology is appropriate because it focuses on understanding participants' subjective experiences, the meanings they attach to events, and how these experiences shape their identity and coping processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A cross-cultural psychology lens informed the study, emphasizing that trauma and coping are culturally situated phenomena influenced by social norms, community values, and collective histories (Bovey et al., 2025). This design allowed for an in-depth examination of culturally mediated interpretations of communal conflict, rather than relying solely on symptom prevalence or quantitative measures.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns in textual data. Steps included: (a) Familiarization with the data: Transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly to capture initial impressions. (b) Generating initial codes: Meaningful segments were coded line-by-line to capture concepts related to trauma, identity, and coping. (c) Searching for themes: Codes were clustered into candidate themes representing shared experiences or culturally salient patterns. (d) Reviewing themes: Themes were refined, merged, or subdivided to ensure coherence and internal consistency. (e) Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined and labeled to reflect its essence in participants' narratives. (f) Producing the report: Thematic findings were contextualized with participant quotes, literature, and theoretical frameworks, emphasizing cultural and contextual interpretation. To ensure trustworthiness, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, including credibility (member checks with participants), transferability (thick description of context), dependability (audit trail of coding and theme development), and confirmability (peer debriefing with qualitative research experts).



RESULTS

Thematic analysis of the telephone interviews with 30 survivors of the Akpoha–Amasiri and Amasiri–Osso/Edda communal crises revealed three overarching themes: Trauma and Psychological Impact, Disruption and Reconstruction of Identity, and Culturally Mediated Coping Mechanisms. Each theme contained several subthemes, highlighting the lived experiences of participants within their cultural and communal context.

Trauma and Psychological Impact

Participants reported experiencing intense fear, grief, and emotional distress during and after the communal conflicts. Trauma was pervasive, affecting both daily functioning and interpersonal relationships.

(a) Fear and Insecurity

Many survivors described living in a constant state of fear due to ongoing attacks, destruction of property, and threats to personal safety.

“I could not sleep at night; every sound made me think someone was coming to attack our house. Even going to the farm became a risk. I was always tense.” (Female, 42, Amasiri)

(b) Grief and Loss

Participants recounted the loss of family members, neighbors, and material possessions, which compounded their emotional suffering.

“They burned my father’s farm and house. We lost everything. My uncle was killed during the clash. I still feel empty when I remember that day.” (Male, 37, Osso Edda)

(c) Psychological and Somatic Symptoms

Some survivors described physical manifestations of trauma, including sleeplessness, headaches, and persistent worry, consistent with culturally recognized expressions of distress.

“I often get headaches and my heart beats fast when I think about the fighting. I even feel weak and dizzy sometimes.” (Female, 50, Akpoha)

Disruption and Reconstruction of Identity

Communal violence also affected participants’ sense of self, belonging, and social identity. Identity disruption was particularly pronounced when communities were forcibly displaced or when trust in neighbors eroded.



(a) Loss of Social Identity

Several participants described alienation from community life and diminished social roles, especially when their homes were destroyed or they had to relocate.

“Before this fighting began especially the recent one, I was part of community meetings and farming groups but since the military invaded us, I felt like I no longer belonged anywhere.”
(Male, 45, Amasiri)

(b) Rebuilding a Sense of Self

Survivors employed various strategies to reconstruct identity, often relying on religious and communal frameworks.

“Even though our house was gone, I started helping neighbors and attending church activities. It reminded me that I am still part of this community.” (Female, 33, Oso Edda)

(c) Intergenerational Identity Concerns

Participants expressed worry about children’s socialization and identity, fearing that ongoing violence would shape negative perceptions of their heritage or community.

“My children now ask why people hate our village. I feel sad because I cannot explain everything. I worry they will grow up thinking our people are unsafe or unimportant.” (Male, 50, Akpoha)

Culturally Mediated Coping Mechanisms

Despite trauma and identity disruption, participants reported employing varied coping strategies, many rooted in cultural and religious practices, as well as social support networks.

(a) Spiritual and Religious Coping

Most participants relied on prayer, church fellowship, and religious rituals as a source of solace and resilience.

“I spend more time in church and pray every morning. I believe God will protect us and help us rebuild our lives.” (Female, 38, Oso Edda)

(b) Community and Family Support

Participants emphasized the importance of mutual aid, including sharing food, resources, and emotional support among neighbors and extended family members.



“Even though we find ourselves in this situation, my neighbors helped me feed my family and we share what we have since we cannot go outside the town to buy things. Without them, I would have felt hopeless.” (Male, 29, Amasiri)

(c) Engagement in Economic Activities

Engaging in farming, trading, and small businesses was described as a way to regain autonomy and normalcy after displacement.

“Although there are fears here and there, I started selling palm oil again to support my family. Doing this makes me feel useful and gave me hope for the future.” (Female, 40, Akpoha)

(d) Meaning-Making and Resilience

Many survivors interpreted their experiences as tests of endurance, drawing on cultural narratives that valorize survival, collective memory, and perseverance.

“We have faced hardship before, and our ancestors survived worse. I tell myself we must endure and teach our children how to stay strong.” (Male, 55, Oso Edda)

Summary of Findings

The results indicate that survivors of the Akpoha–Amasiri and Amasiri–Oso/Edda conflicts experience intense trauma, including fear, grief, and psychological symptoms, which are compounded by disruptions to social and personal identity. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrate resilience through culturally grounded coping strategies, such as spiritual engagement, social support, economic activities, and collective meaning-making. These findings highlight the interplay between trauma, identity, and culture, underscoring the relevance of a cross-cultural psychological perspective in understanding the lived experiences of communal conflict victims.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the lived experiences of trauma, identity disruption, and coping among survivors of the Akpoha–Amasiri and Amasiri–Oso/Edda communal conflicts in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The findings reveal the profound psychological, social, and cultural impacts of communal violence, highlighting the interconnection between trauma, cultural identity, and resilience mechanisms. The discussion integrates these findings with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, emphasizing implications for practice in post-conflict psychosocial support.



Trauma and Psychological Impact

Consistent with previous studies on communal crises in Ebonyi State (e.g., Nwangele et al., 2024; Emma-Echiegu et al., 2018), participants in this study reported persistent fear, grief, and psychological distress following violent encounters. Similar to findings from conflict-affected communities in Nigeria, survivors described sleep disturbances and heightened insecurity. However, while earlier studies largely emphasized security implications, displacement patterns, and socio-economic losses, the present study provides deeper qualitative insight into the subjective and culturally expressed dimensions of trauma, including somatic complaints and culturally framed interpretations of distress. This extends existing knowledge by demonstrating how trauma is experienced not merely as a clinical condition but as a socially and culturally embedded phenomenon. The prominence of somatic symptoms in participants' narratives may reflect local idioms of distress and limited access to formal psychological language, supporting cross-cultural research indicating that trauma expressions vary across sociocultural contexts (Bovey et al., 2025).

Disruption and Reconstruction of Identity

The findings regarding identity disruption align with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2019), which posits that threats to group belonging can destabilize self-concept. Participants' accounts of alienation, displacement, and erosion of communal roles mirror findings from other Nigerian communal conflict studies that report weakened social cohesion and mistrust among neighboring communities (Aro et al., 2025). However, this study advances prior work by foregrounding identity reconstruction processes, particularly through religious engagement and communal participation. While earlier research documented social fragmentation, the current findings show that survivors actively rebuild identity through culturally meaningful practices. This suggests that identity is not only disrupted by conflict but also dynamically reconstructed through community-based resilience mechanisms.

Culturally Mediated Coping Mechanisms

The reliance on spirituality and community support corroborates previous research in African conflict settings, where religion and communal solidarity are central coping resources (Odom et al., 2025). Similar to findings in other Sub-Saharan contexts, participants framed suffering within moral, spiritual, and ancestral narratives. Nevertheless, the present study extends existing literature by demonstrating how coping is intertwined with identity restoration and economic agency. Participants did not rely solely on spiritual coping; engagement in farming, trading, and rebuilding homes served as practical pathways to regaining autonomy and self-worth. This finding may reflect the agrarian and community-based economic structure of the study areas, where livelihood activities are closely linked to dignity, social recognition, and belonging. Thus, economic engagement functions not only as financial survival but also as psychological rehabilitation.

Integration with Existing Literature

The study's findings corroborate and extend previous research on communal conflict in Ebonyi State. While prior studies documented socio-economic impacts, displacement, and general human insecurity (Abada & Omeh, 2025; Nwangele et al., 2024), the current research provides



in-depth qualitative insights into survivors' subjective experiences of trauma and identity disruption, filling a notable gap in the literature.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that communal violence has intergenerational implications, as participants expressed concern about their children's socialization and future identity. This resonates with prior work emphasizing that unresolved communal conflicts can perpetuate cycles of fear, mistrust, and social fragmentation (Aro et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, this study concludes that communal conflict in Afikpo North and Edda LGAs produces not only immediate physical and economic losses but also deep, culturally mediated psychological and identity disruptions that require context-sensitive responses. The evidence demonstrates that trauma in these communities is experienced through emotional, somatic, social, and spiritual dimensions, making purely clinical or security-based interventions insufficient. Thus, the conclusion of this study is that psychological recovery in communal conflict settings is inseparable from identity restoration and community reintegration. Survivors do not merely seek relief from distress; they seek restoration of belonging, dignity, and social roles. This is evident in the central role of religious engagement, communal solidarity, and livelihood reconstruction as coping pathways.

Therefore, the study concludes that effective post-conflict intervention in South-Eastern Nigeria must move beyond emergency response models to incorporate culturally grounded mental health frameworks, community-driven reconciliation mechanisms, and socio-economic rebuilding initiatives. This conclusion is drawn from the convergence of participants' narratives, which consistently framed healing as collective, culturally embedded, and identity-centered rather than solely individual or clinical.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policy, practice, and future research:

1. Culturally Sensitive Psychosocial Interventions: Mental health practitioners should design interventions that integrate spiritual, communal, and narrative-based coping mechanisms. Programs should recognize local idioms of distress, facilitate storytelling and meaning-making, and leverage culturally sanctioned forms of social support.

2. Community-Based Resilience Programs: Communities should be supported to establish peer-support networks, religious fellowship groups, and local mentorship programs. Such initiatives can strengthen social cohesion, restore a sense of belonging, and enhance collective resilience after conflict.



3. Policy and Governance Measures: State and local governments must address structural drivers of conflict, including land disputes, boundary ambiguities, and governance gaps. Establishing transparent land adjudication processes and inclusive conflict-resolution mechanisms can prevent recurrent violence and its psychosocial consequences.

4. Youth and Intergenerational Support: Programs targeting children and adolescents should focus on identity reconstruction, trauma education, and conflict resolution. This will help mitigate intergenerational transmission of fear and mistrust and foster long-term community cohesion.

5. Future Research: Further research should adopt longitudinal qualitative or mixed-methods designs to examine the long-term psychosocial impacts of communal conflict, particularly in less studied LGAs. Investigating the effectiveness of culturally adapted interventions and documenting best practices can inform policy and mental health strategies across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest or bias.

Authors' Contributions

Eze Ogonnia conceived the study including the design. Prince Benedict Igwe, Chidiebere Ibe and Ekene Ezidigwe collated and transcribed the data. Eze Ogonnia handled the analysis and interpretation, while Ibe Chidiebere arranged and prepared the first manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request

Citation

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