

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RECURRING TERRORIST ATTACKS
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE
IN SOUTHERN KADUNA**

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to explore how young people in Southern Kaduna narrate the effects of recurring terrorist attacks on their psychological well-being. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry design, the article draws on six composite narrative accounts from young people aged 18 to 35 across selected conflict-affected Local Government Areas in Southern Kaduna. The narratives were examined thematically, with attention to fear, grief, displacement, disrupted education, altered relationships, coping, faith and resilience. Findings suggest that recurring attacks are not experienced only as security events but as continuing psychological conditions that shape sleep, movement, trust, schooling, belonging and future planning. The article argues that casualty figures and displacement statistics, while important, cannot fully capture the emotional injuries carried by young people in affected communities. It recommends community-based psychosocial support, school counselling, youth-sensitive trauma education and faith-sensitive referral pathways for young people living with the psychological consequences of repeated violence.

Keywords: Recurring Terrorist Attacks; Psychological Well-Being; Young People; Southern Kaduna; Narrative Inquiry; Trauma; Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Recurring terrorist attacks in Southern Kaduna have continued to affect community life, family stability, education, livelihood and the ordinary sense of safety among young people. While public discussions often focus on the number of deaths, destroyed houses, displaced families and security responses, less attention is given to how young people personally live with fear, grief, uncertainty and disrupted life plans. For many of them, an attack does not end when the attackers leave; it continues through sleepless nights, fear of rumours, loss of concentration, painful memories and anxiety about whether life can ever return to normal.

Studies in Northern Nigeria have shown that violent conflict and displacement can produce serious psychological consequences. Sheikh et al. (2014) found post-traumatic stress symptoms among internally displaced persons in Kaduna, while Sheikh et al. (2016) showed that children and adolescents displaced by violent conflict in Kaduna experienced psycho-trauma and psychological distress. Similarly, Kaiser et al. (2020) reported substantial mental-health and psychosocial support needs among persons displaced by Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Olufadewa et al. (2022) found that

young internally displaced persons in Northern Nigeria narrated depression, fear, grief and poor access to mental-health support after exposure to terrorist violence.

This article argues that the psychological well-being of young people in Southern Kaduna cannot be fully understood through casualty figures or displacement statistics alone. Such figures are important, but they do not fully show how recurring violence enters daily life, weakens confidence in the future, alters social relationships and reshapes young people's sense of belonging. A narrative approach is therefore useful because it allows young people's accounts to reveal the emotional and social meanings of recurring attacks. The objective of the study is to explore how young people in Southern Kaduna narrate the psychological effects of recurring terrorist attacks on their well-being. The article explores the lived experiences of recurring terrorist attacks and psychological well-being among young people in Southern Kaduna, with particular attention to fear, grief, disrupted education, loss of safety, coping, faith, family support and resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies on terrorism, violent conflict and psychological well-being in Nigeria have increasingly shown that insecurity does not only produce physical destruction; it also creates deep emotional, social and developmental consequences for affected populations (Sheikh et al., 2014; Olufadewa et al., 2022). In Northern Nigeria, repeated exposure to attacks, killings, displacement, rumours of further violence and loss of livelihood has been linked with psychological distress, depression, anxiety, trauma symptoms and weakened social functioning (David et al., 2023). More recent Nigerian-led evidence strengthens this point: Otokpa, Onifade, and Otokpa (2024) warned that displaced young people in Nigeria face an urgent mental-health burden, while Otokpa, Otokpa, Olaniyan, and Adebola (2024) found in a scoping review that conflict-displaced children and young people commonly experience post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression and barriers to care. However, many discussions of insecurity still privilege visible losses such as deaths, destroyed homes and displaced households, while the less visible psychological injuries of young people receive limited attention.

Evidence from Kaduna State is particularly relevant to this study. Sheikh et al. (2014), in their study of internally displaced persons in Kaduna, found that exposure to violent conflict was associated with post-traumatic stress symptoms and psychosocial adjustment difficulties. In a related study, Sheikh et al. (2015) reported probable and definite depression among internally displaced persons after post-election violence in Kaduna. Their findings are important because they show that violent conflict in Kaduna has measurable psychological consequences, especially when people experience repeated traumatic events, bereavement, displacement and poor living conditions. Similarly, Uchenna and Bahago (2019) found that children and adolescents displaced by violent conflict in Kaduna experienced psycho-trauma and psychological distress. These Kaduna-based studies provide a useful local foundation for the present article, although they focus more on displaced populations and clinical symptoms than on the everyday narratives of young people living within conflict-affected communities.

The broader Nigerian literature supports this concern. Kaiser et al. (2020) found significant mental-health and psychosocial support needs among people displaced by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Olufadewa et al. (2022), using the narratives of young internally displaced persons in Northern Nigeria, showed that exposure to terrorist violence was associated with fear, depression, grief, poor access to support and continuing emotional pain. David et al. (2023) also reported that displaced adolescents in North-East Nigeria experienced psychological symptoms such as sadness, worry, anger, sleep difficulties, flashbacks and nightmares, while also relying on coping strategies such as prayer, religious activities and social support. These studies suggest that young people affected by violence do not experience insecurity only as an external social problem; they carry it within their emotions, relationships, memory and expectations of the future.

Nevertheless, the literature should not reduce psychological well-being to trauma symptoms alone. Psychological well-being includes the ability to maintain positive relationships, develop purpose in life, exercise some control over one's environment, experience self-acceptance and continue growing despite adversity (Ryff, 1989). In a place where terrorist attacks recur, these dimensions can be seriously weakened. A young person may not meet the full clinical threshold for post-traumatic stress disorder, yet still live with fear, anger, helplessness, emotional withdrawal, poor concentration and uncertainty about the future. This distinction is important because the psychological burden of recurring violence may be underestimated when researchers focus only on diagnosable disorders.

The educational and developmental implications are also significant. Shockden et al. (2023), in their study of secondary school students exposed to life-threatening collective violence in Northern Nigeria, found that well-being was connected to students' academic attitudes, engagement and persistence. This indicates that recurring violence can affect not only emotional health but also young people's commitment to schooling and their belief that education remains meaningful. For young people in Southern Kaduna, attacks may therefore disturb both present functioning and future orientation. Fear of attack, loss of relatives, displacement, economic hardship and uncertainty can weaken concentration, delay schooling, interrupt livelihood plans and reduce confidence in long-term aspirations.

A central argument in this article is that recurring terrorist attacks should be understood as a continuing psychological condition, not merely as repeated security events. A single attack may produce immediate shock, but repeated attacks create a more enduring atmosphere of fear. In such a context, young people may begin to monitor sounds at night, avoid certain roads, distrust unfamiliar people, fear rumours and imagine danger even during quiet periods. The psychological injury, therefore, does not end with the physical event. It is carried forward through memory, anticipation and altered daily behaviour. This is why a narrative approach is useful: it allows young people to explain how violence is lived, remembered and interpreted in ordinary life.

The study is guided by Trauma Theory and Resilience Theory. Trauma Theory, particularly in the works of Herman (1992) and Caruth (1996), is useful because it explains how exposure to violent and life-threatening events can disturb memory, emotion, safety, sleep, trust and normal functioning. In the context of Southern Kaduna, trauma is not only an individual psychological response; it is also connected to collective loss, community insecurity and repeated exposure to fear. The theory helps this study interpret participants' accounts of sleeplessness, sudden fear, grief, anger, emotional numbness and difficulty trusting the environment.

However, Trauma Theory alone may present young people only as damaged victims. This is why Resilience Theory is also relevant. Resilience Theory, particularly in the work of Masten (2001), explains that resilience is not an extraordinary quality possessed by only a few people, but an ordinary process through which individuals draw on personal strength, supportive relationships and social resources to continue functioning despite adversity. Bonanno (2004) also maintains that people exposed to loss and extreme hardship may still show patterns of recovery and continued functioning, although this does not mean that their suffering is absent or insignificant. In this study, Resilience Theory helps explain how young people in Southern Kaduna cope through faith, family support, communal solidarity, hope and the effort to continue life after repeated attacks. This does not idealise suffering. Rather, it recognises that young people may be psychologically wounded and still actively searching for ways to survive, rebuild meaning and protect their future.

Taken together, the literature shows that violent conflict in Northern Nigeria has serious psychological consequences, but it also reveals a gap. Many studies focus on internally displaced persons, clinical symptoms or quantitative measures of distress. Fewer studies give sustained attention to the lived narratives of young people in Southern Kaduna and how recurring attacks shape fear, grief, safety, belonging, education, faith, coping and hope. This article responds to that gap by foregrounding young people's narrated experiences as a way of understanding psychological well-being in a local context of recurring terrorist violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Narrative inquiry was considered appropriate because the study was concerned with how young people make meaning of recurring terrorist attacks through personal accounts, memories and reflections. Rather than measuring psychological well-being statistically, the study focused on how participants narrated fear, grief, disrupted education, altered sense of safety, coping and resilience within the Southern Kaduna context. This design is consistent with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) view that narrative inquiry is useful when research seeks to understand experience through story, memory and meaning-making.

The study focused on six young people between the ages of 18 and 35 from selected conflict-affected Local Government Areas in Southern Kaduna, namely Zangon Kataf, Kaura, Jema'a, Sanga, Kauru and Kachia. One participant was drawn from each Local Government Area to provide situated narrative insight across different parts of Southern Kaduna. The sample size was considered appropriate for narrative inquiry because the aim was to develop detailed, experience-based accounts rather than statistical representation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Participants were selected because they had either directly experienced attacks, lost relatives or neighbours, been displaced, or lived under repeated fear of attacks.

Data were generated through one narrative conversation with each participant. Each conversation lasted approximately 35 to 55 minutes and took place in a quiet, private and safe setting agreed with the participant. Conversations were conducted in English, Hausa or a familiar local language, depending on the participant's preference, and locally expressed meanings were translated into English during analysis where necessary. The conversations focused on personal memories of

attacks, emotional reactions, changes in daily life, educational and economic disruptions, family and community support, coping strategies and hopes for the future. The narratives were examined thematically, with attention to repeated patterns of fear, loss, trauma symptoms, disrupted life plans, faith, social support and resilience. Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis was useful because it allowed the narratives to be organised into meaningful themes without removing the personal character of the accounts. The reporting of the qualitative procedure was also checked against relevant elements of the COREQ guidance for qualitative research (Tong et al., 2007).

Ethical care was important because the study dealt with painful and security-sensitive experiences. Formal ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional research ethics committee before field engagement, and informed consent was obtained from each participant before the conversation began. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw or decline to answer any question that caused discomfort. Participants' real names and exact communities were not disclosed. Pseudonyms such as "Musa," "Grace" and "Rebecca" were used to protect identity while preserving the human quality of the narratives. The accounts were also presented as composite narrative reconstructions where exact words were not retained. This means that the narratives preserved the central meanings expressed by participants but were written in a way that reduced the risk of exposing individuals or communities. Participants' dignity, emotional safety and confidentiality were therefore prioritised throughout the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented thematically, using composite narrative reconstructions to preserve the human quality of participants' accounts while protecting their identities. The narratives are not treated as isolated personal stories, but as situated accounts through which broader psychological experiences of recurring terrorist attacks in Southern Kaduna can be understood. Five major themes emerged from the narratives: living with fear and uncertainty; grief, loss and emotional distress; displacement and disrupted life plans; altered relationships and loss of belonging; and coping through faith, family support and resilience.

Because exact words were not retained in all cases, the statements presented in quotation marks should be read as reconstructed narrative excerpts rather than verbatim transcript quotations.

Living with Fear and Uncertainty

One of the strongest issues in the narratives was the normalisation of fear. Participants did not describe fear only as an immediate reaction during an attack. Rather, fear appeared as something that continued afterwards and gradually entered ordinary life. This supports the argument that recurring terrorist attacks should not be understood only as repeated violent events, but as a continuing psychological condition that affects how young people sleep, move, interact and interpret their environment.

Musa, 24, from Zangon Kataf LGA, described fear as something that remained even when there was no attack taking place:

“You can be sitting outside with people, but your mind is not there. You are listening for any strange sound. Even when nothing is happening, you are afraid because you remember what has happened before.”

Musa’s account shows how repeated attacks alter the sense of safety. His fear is not tied only to the moment of danger; it is also tied to memory and anticipation. This is psychologically important because the expectation of another attack can keep the mind in a state of alertness. In such a condition, silence may no longer feel peaceful, and ordinary sounds may be interpreted as possible signs of danger. This kind of fear can affect sleep, concentration and emotional regulation.

This finding agrees with Sheikh et al. (2014), who found that exposure to violent conflict among internally displaced persons in Kaduna was associated with psycho-trauma and post-traumatic stress symptoms. It also relates to Sheikh et al. (2016), whose study of children and adolescent internally displaced persons in Kaduna showed that violent conflict produced psychological distress. Although the present article focuses on young people’s narratives rather than clinical diagnosis, Musa’s account suggests that recurring attacks can produce a form of psychological insecurity that remains active even after the immediate physical threat has passed.

Grief, Loss and Emotional Distress

Another major theme was grief. Participants described the loss of relatives, neighbours, friends, homes and familiar community life. However, the narratives suggest that grief was not always openly expressed. In many cases, young people appeared to continue with daily life while carrying sadness, anger and emotional tiredness internally. This is important because psychological distress in conflict-affected settings may not always appear as formal illness. It may appear through withdrawal, irritability, poor sleep, sudden crying, loss of motivation or silence.

Grace, 27, from Kaura LGA, narrated her experience as one in which physical survival did not automatically mean emotional recovery:

“People think that once you escape, everything is over. But sometimes, the body escapes, and the mind remains there.”

Grace’s statement captures a central problem in the psychological understanding of terrorism and violent conflict. Public attention often moves on after an attack has ended, especially once casualties have been counted and displaced persons have been relocated. However, for survivors, the emotional experience may continue for years. Grace’s account suggests that the mind may remain attached to the scene of violence through memory, grief and repeated imagination of what was lost.

This finding is consistent with Olufadewa et al. (2022), who reported that young internally displaced persons in Northern Nigeria narrated depression, fear, grief and poor access to mental-health support after exposure to terrorist violence. It also reflects Kaiser et al. (2020), who found substantial mental-health and psychosocial support needs among people displaced by Boko Haram in Nigeria. The present narratives extend this concern to Southern Kaduna by showing that young

people's psychological well-being is affected not only by direct injury or displacement, but also by the emotional burden of remembering violent loss while trying to continue life.

The grief described by participants also connects to Ryff's (1989) understanding of psychological well-being. If well-being includes positive relationships, purpose in life, environmental mastery and personal growth, then recurring attacks threaten more than emotional calmness. They disturb the social and developmental conditions that allow young people to feel secure, connected and hopeful.

Displacement, Education and Disrupted Life Plans

The narratives also showed that recurring attacks disrupted education, work, family plans and future expectations. Participants described schooling delays, fear of travelling, inability to concentrate, loss of family income and uncertainty about whether long-term goals were still realistic. This theme is important because it shows that psychological well-being is not only an inner emotional state. It is also shaped by the social conditions that allow young people to plan and pursue meaningful lives.

Esther, 21, from Kachia LGA, described how insecurity affected her concentration and academic life:

"You may be in school, but once you hear that something is happening around your area, your mind leaves the classroom immediately."

Esther's account shows that education can be interrupted even when a young person remains physically present in school. Her body may be in the classroom, but her attention has shifted to family safety, rumours of attacks and fear of receiving bad news. This kind of divided attention can weaken academic confidence and motivation. It also makes schooling emotionally unequal, because young people from conflict-affected communities may carry burdens that their classmates and teachers do not easily see.

This finding agrees with Shockden et al. (2023), who found that young people living in contexts of life-threatening collective violence in Northern Nigeria experienced effects on well-being and academic attitudes. The relevance of that study to the present article is that recurring violence can weaken not only mental health but also students' engagement, persistence and sense that education is valuable. For young people in Southern Kaduna, education may still be seen as important, but insecurity can make the future feel unstable and difficult to trust.

Daniel, 29, from Kauru LGA, connected insecurity to livelihood and delayed adulthood:

"You want to build your life, but everything looks uncertain. Today you are thinking of farming, tomorrow you are thinking of running. It makes you feel as if life is standing still."

Daniel's narrative suggests that recurring attacks can delay young people's movement into stable adulthood. Farming, schooling, business, marriage and family responsibilities may all become

uncertain when communities are repeatedly attacked or threatened. This is not only an economic problem; it is also psychological. When young people feel that life is “standing still,” they may experience frustration, helplessness and reduced confidence in the future.

Altered Relationships and Loss of Belonging

Participants also narrated changes in relationships, trust and belonging. Recurring attacks affected how young people related to strangers, neighbouring communities, security actors and even members of their own families. Some described becoming suspicious, easily irritated or emotionally withdrawn. Others explained that displacement made them feel dependent, embarrassed or disconnected from the places that once gave them identity.

Rebecca, 25, from Sanga LGA, narrated displacement as an emotional loss, not merely a change of residence:

“When you leave your home suddenly, you don’t carry everything. You leave some part of yourself there.”

This account is significant because it frames home as more than a physical structure. Home represents memory, dignity, family history, social identity and belonging. When young people are forced to leave suddenly, they may lose privacy, familiar routines, community networks and a sense of control. Even when they are received by relatives or host communities, the experience of depending on others can affect confidence and self-worth.

Yakubu, 22, from Jema’a LGA, described the emotional pressure placed on young men in affected communities:

“Sometimes you feel angry, but you don’t even know where to put the anger. You cannot fight, you cannot sleep well, and you cannot pretend that everything is normal.”

Yakubu’s account reveals a form of psychological distress expressed through anger and helplessness. In many conflict-affected communities, young men may be expected to appear strong, protect family members or remain emotionally controlled. Yet recurring attacks may place them in situations where they feel responsible but powerless. This tension can lead to frustration, irritability and emotional suppression. It also shows why mental-health discussions in affected communities must pay attention to gendered expectations, not only clinical symptoms.

For young women, the burden may also be layered. Rebecca’s narrative suggests that displacement can affect dignity, privacy and safety, while Grace’s account reflects the pressure to continue functioning despite grief. These experiences indicate that recurring attacks do not affect all young people in exactly the same way. Age, gender, family role, education, economic condition and location may shape how psychological distress is experienced and expressed.

Coping through Faith, Family Support and Community Resilience

Despite the fear and distress reported in the narratives, participants did not present themselves only as helpless victims. They also described ways of coping, especially through faith, family support, community solidarity and the desire to rebuild life. This does not mean that the psychological effects of attacks are minor. Rather, it shows that young people may experience trauma and resilience at the same time.

Daniel, 29, from Kauru LGA, described faith and social support as important to his survival:

“There are times you feel broken, but when people gather around you, pray with you, or just sit with you, you remember that you are not alone.”

Daniel’s statement shows that coping in Southern Kaduna is often communal. Emotional support may come through prayer, church gatherings, family presence, neighbours, youth groups and shared mourning. These forms of support are important because they reduce isolation and help young people interpret suffering within a wider moral and spiritual framework. However, the narratives also suggest that faith should not be used to silence distress. Spiritual encouragement may provide strength, but it cannot replace the need for structured psychosocial support, counselling and trauma-informed community intervention.

This finding aligns with David et al. (2023), who reported that displaced adolescents in North-East Nigeria relied on coping mechanisms such as prayer, religious activities and social support while dealing with psychological symptoms. It also supports Bonanno’s (2004) view that people exposed to extreme adversity may still show resilience. However, resilience should be interpreted carefully. It should not be used to suggest that young people are unaffected by violence simply because they continue living, schooling, worshipping or working. In this study, resilience means the effort to continue despite psychological injury.

Esther’s narrative also reflected hope, although it was cautious:

“I still want to finish school. I still want to do something meaningful with my life. But sometimes, you are hopeful and afraid at the same time.”

This statement captures the emotional complexity of young people’s experiences. Hope is present, but it is not simple or secure. It exists beside fear. This is why the psychological well-being of young people in Southern Kaduna must be understood beyond the language of trauma alone. They are not only wounded; they are also trying to imagine life beyond violence. At the same time, their resilience should not be used to minimise their suffering because personal strength cannot substitute for safety, justice, mental-health care and social stability.

Discussion of the Overall Findings

Taken together, the findings show that recurring terrorist attacks affect young people's psychological well-being through several connected pathways. First, the attacks create fear and uncertainty, making young people feel unsafe even during periods of calm. Second, they produce grief and emotional distress, especially where young people have witnessed violence, lost relatives or lived with repeated rumours of attack. Third, they disrupt education, livelihood and future planning, thereby weakening young people's sense of purpose and control. Fourth, they alter relationships and belonging by producing suspicion, displacement, dependency and emotional withdrawal. Finally, the narratives show that young people cope through faith, family and community support, although these should be strengthened by formal psychosocial interventions.

The findings support the central argument of this article: recurring terrorist attacks should be understood as a continuing psychological condition, not only as repeated security events. For young people in Southern Kaduna, violence is not limited to the moment of attack. It continues through memory, fear, disrupted routines, educational uncertainty, altered relationships and unstable hope. This is why casualty figures and displacement numbers, while important, cannot fully capture the lived psychological realities of affected young people.

The findings also extend existing Nigerian literature. Previous studies in Kaduna and Northern Nigeria have established the presence of trauma, psychological distress, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms and psychosocial needs among conflict-affected or displaced populations (Kaiser et al., 2020; Olufadewa et al., 2022; Sheikh et al., 2014, 2015, 2016). The present article adds a narrative dimension by showing how these psychological effects are described in everyday language: fear of strange sounds, the mind remaining at the scene of violence, loss of belonging after displacement, anger without direction and hope mixed with fear.

The findings also raise a theoretical issue about the use of trauma frameworks developed largely outside African communal settings. Herman (1992) and Caruth (1996) are useful for explaining intrusive memory, fear and the continuing presence of violence in the mind, but their frameworks do not fully capture how distress may be carried and expressed through family duty, religious language, communal mourning and social silence. In Southern Kaduna, psychological pain is not always narrated as a clinical symptom; it may appear as watchfulness at night, withdrawal from community life, anger without expression, prayerful endurance or uncertainty about the future. This does not make the distress less psychological. Rather, it shows that trauma theory must be read alongside local social, cultural and spiritual meanings if young people's experiences are to be understood responsibly.

A further implication is that mental-health responses in Southern Kaduna should not focus only on those with visible symptoms or formal diagnoses. Many young people may continue to function outwardly while carrying emotional pain internally. Community-based psychosocial support, school-based counselling, youth-focused trauma education, faith-sensitive mental-health interventions and referral pathways for severe distress are therefore necessary. Without such support, recurring attacks may continue to shape the emotional development, educational progress and future orientation of young people in affected communities.

Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations. First, it relied on a small purposive sample of six young people, so the findings should be understood as situated narrative insights rather than statistically generalisable evidence. Second, the analysis was conducted by a single coder, which may have limited opportunities for independent comparison of themes. Third, the accounts were presented as reconstructed narrative excerpts rather than verbatim transcript quotations; while this protected participants' identities and reduced security risks, it also means that the excerpts should be interpreted as meaning-preserving narrative reconstructions. These limitations do not weaken the value of the study, but they define the level at which its findings should be read.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article explored the lived experiences of recurring terrorist attacks and psychological well-being among young people in Southern Kaduna. The narratives show that recurring attacks affect young people beyond the immediate moment of violence. Fear, grief, sleeplessness, anger, displacement, interrupted schooling, loss of belonging and uncertainty about the future all emerged as important psychological and social consequences. The findings support earlier Nigerian evidence that violent conflict and displacement are associated with trauma, distress and psychosocial needs (Kaiser et al., 2020; Olufadewa et al., 2022; Sheikh et al., 2014, 2016). However, this article adds that the psychological effects of recurring attacks are better understood when young people are allowed to narrate how insecurity enters ordinary life. Because the study drew on six purposively selected narrators, the findings cannot be generalised statistically beyond the participants and Local Government Areas considered; instead, they offer context-rich insight into how recurring attacks are psychologically lived and narrated.

The central argument of the article is that recurring terrorist attacks should not be treated only as security incidents or humanitarian emergencies. They should also be understood as continuing psychological conditions that shape how young people sleep, learn, relate, worship, work and imagine their future. Although some participants showed resilience through faith, family support and community solidarity, such resilience should not be idealised. Personal strength cannot replace safety, justice, counselling, stable education and structured psychosocial support.

Based on the findings, the article recommends that community-based psychosocial support should be strengthened in conflict-affected areas of Southern Kaduna. Mental-health professionals, faith leaders, youth leaders and community organisations should work together to provide safe spaces where young people can speak about fear, grief and trauma without shame. Schools in affected communities should also provide basic counselling and referral support for students whose concentration, attendance and emotional stability have been affected by recurring attacks.

Government and humanitarian agencies should include youth-focused mental-health services in their responses to insecurity, rather than limiting support to food, shelter and material relief. Special attention should be given to displaced young people, bereaved families, students, young women and those who continue to live in communities exposed to repeated threats. Finally, further qualitative studies should be conducted across different communities in Southern Kaduna to

document young people's experiences more deeply and to guide trauma-informed interventions that are sensitive to local realities.

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