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ORIGINAL

Perceived effectiveness of community-based support programs in promoting reintegration of youths with traumatic experiences in Ogun State, Nigeria

Eficacia percibida de los programas de apoyo comunitario en la promoción de la reinserción de jóvenes con experiencias traumáticas en el Estado de Ogun, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Youth exposure to traumatic events in Nigeria often leads to persistent psychological and social challenges that hinder successful reintegration. Community-based support programs offer accessible avenues for recovery, yet evidence on their perceived effectiveness remains limited. This study investigated how youths in Ogun State perceive the effectiveness of such programs and how these perceptions relate to their reintegration outcomes. Methods: A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through a survey of 368 youths, while qualitative insights were obtained from interviews with 12 key informants across three Local Government Areas. Data from both strands were analyzed and integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of youths' perceptions and reintegration experiences. Results: Findings showed that youths generally viewed community-based programs as beneficial for improving coping ability, emotional stability, confidence, and everyday functioning. Reintegration outcomes were also positive, with enhanced relationships, communication skills, community participation, and sense of belonging. Perceptions were shaped by program features such as structured sessions, respectful facilitators, relevant activities, and safe environments. Noted challenges included transportation and financial constraints, stigma, privacy concerns, and emotional distress. A strong association was observed between perceived program effectiveness and reintegration, with participants reporting better reintegration than non-participants. Conclusions: Community-based support programs are effective in promoting reintegration among trauma-affected youths in Ogun State, though their impact is limited by structural and socio-cultural barriers. Strengthened program structures, increased government funding, enhanced confidentiality, stigma-reduction interventions, and greater community and family support are recommended to improve outcomes.

Keywords: community-based programs, trauma, youth reintegration, psychosocial support, Nigeria.

RESUMEN

Introducción: La exposición de los jóvenes a eventos traumáticos en Nigeria suele generar desafíos psicológicos y sociales persistentes que dificultan una reintegración exitosa. Los programas de apoyo comunitario ofrecen vías accesibles para la recuperación; sin embargo, la evidencia sobre su eficacia percibida sigue siendo limitada. Este estudio examinó cómo los jóvenes del estado de Ogun perciben la efectividad de estos programas y cómo dichas percepciones se relacionan con sus resultados de reintegración. Métodos: Se adoptó un diseño convergente de métodos mixtos. Los datos cuantitativos se recopilaron mediante una encuesta aplicada a 368 jóvenes, mientras que la información cualitativa se obtuvo de entrevistas con 12 informantes clave en tres Gobiernos Locales. Los datos de ambos enfoques fueron analizados e integrados para ofrecer una comprensión amplia de las percepciones y experiencias de reintegración de los jóvenes. Resultados: Los hallazgos mostraron que los jóvenes consideraron que los programas comunitarios son útiles para mejorar la capacidad de afrontamiento, la estabilidad emocional, la confianza y el funcionamiento cotidiano. Los resultados de reintegración también fueron positivos, con mejoras en las relaciones, las habilidades de comunicación, la participación comunitaria y el sentido de pertenencia. Las percepciones estuvieron influenciadas por características del programa como sesiones estructuradas, facilitadores respetuosos, actividades relevantes y ambientes seguros. Los desafíos identificados incluyeron limitaciones de transporte y financieras, estigma, preocupaciones de privacidad y malestar emocional. Se observó una fuerte asociación entre la eficacia percibida del programa y la reintegración, y los participantes mostraron mejores niveles de reintegración que los no participantes. Conclusiones: Los programas de apoyo comunitario son eficaces para promover la reintegración de jóvenes afectados por traumas en el estado de Ogun, aunque su impacto se ve limitado por factores estructurales y socioculturales. Se recomienda fortalecer la estructura de los programas, aumentar la financiación gubernamental, mejorar la confidencialidad, implementar acciones contra el estigma y fomentar un mayor apoyo comunitario y familiar.

Palabras clave: programas comunitarios, trauma, reintegración juvenil, apoyo psicosocial, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth exposure to traumatic events has become a growing concern across many low- and middle-income countries, including Nigeria, where socio-economic instability, community violence, accidents, displacement, and other adversities place young people at sustained risk of psychological distress and social disruption. Trauma during adolescence or early adulthood has significant implications for long-term functioning, emotional stability, and community belonging. Studies conducted in African contexts consistently show that traumatic exposure is associated with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, impaired functioning, and difficulties with social adjustment(Anbesawet al., 2022). Evidence from Nigerian populations further indicates that access to trauma-informed support remains limited and inconsistent, leaving many young people without structured pathways to recovery or reintegration after traumatic experiences(Amedu& Dwarika, 2025). The consequences of untreated trauma not only influence individual wellbeing but also shape broader social outcomes, including community cohesion, productivity, peer relationships, and vulnerability to risky behaviours.

Given these challenges, community-based support programs have emerged globally as viable mechanisms for addressing the psychosocial and reintegration needs of vulnerable youths. Community-based approaches emphasize proximity, cultural relevance, accessibility, and collective responsibility for healing and reintegration. Their flexibility allows them to be adapted to diverse contexts, including refugee communities, conflict-affected populations, street-involved youths, and individuals with psychosocial or physical disabilities. Studies have demonstrated that community-rooted initiatives can enhance functioning, promote social acceptance, reduce isolation, and strengthen coping capacities among populations experiencing trauma or displacement. For instance, community-based rehabilitation models have shown positive outcomes for youths and adults with physical and mental disabilities in low-resource settings by leveraging family and community support structures(Iemmiet al., 2016). Similarly, community-based youth programs have been found to foster self-efficacy, social participation, and advocacy among marginalized adolescents, including those from refugee backgrounds(Huang & Miller Marsh, 2024).

A growing body of research highlights the specific relevance of community-based interventions for trauma-exposed youth populations. Community-based trauma-focused programs have demonstrated measurable reductions in trauma-related symptoms and improvements in functioning, especially when delivered through culturally sensitive and accessible structures (Konanur et al., 2015). Scoping reviews also support the premise that community-based interventions can mitigate the long-term effects of childhood trauma by offering safe relational environments, structured therapeutic activities, and opportunities for emotional expression (Mazzeo & Bendixen, 2023). Furthermore, community-driven reintegration approaches have been applied successfully to youths emerging from high-risk environments, including violent extremist contexts, demonstrating the importance of frameworks that restore identity, rebuild trust, and promote community acceptance (Ellis et al., 2024).

Reintegration itself is a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological recovery, social acceptance, identity reconstruction, access to livelihood opportunities, and participation in community life. Reintegration challenges tend to be more pronounced among youths whose trauma histories intersect with displacement, conflict, or prolonged instability. Research on street-involved children in East Africa, for example, indicates that effective reintegration outcomes depend heavily on structural supports embedded within communities, such as mentorship, socio-emotional support, and community resilience-building activities(Goodman et al., 2023). These findings align with broader social-ecological perspectives on reintegration, which view recovery as influenced by individual, family, community, and structural factors rather than by clinical interventions alone(Zewudeet al., 2023). Thus, understanding how youths perceive the effectiveness of the community-based support programs they encounter is essential for determining whether these interventions meet reintegration needs across these multiple ecological levels.

In Nigeria, however, research examining community-based supports for trauma-exposed youths remains limited, with most existing studies focusing on substance abuse, intimate partner violence, or behavioural perceptions at the community level(Ajuzieet al., 2023;Awolaran&OlaOlorun, 2025). While these studies illustrate the usefulness of community-based initiatives in shaping youth attitudes and mitigating harmful behaviours, insufficient attention has been given to youths who have experienced trauma and subsequently rely on community structures for reintegration and recovery. Yet, evidence from other African and global contexts demonstrates that community-based programs can play crucial roles in rebuilding psychological stability, strengthening identity, and enhancing social functioning after trauma (Tuaf & Orkibi, 2025; Williams & Thompson, 2011).

Programs that operate at the community level frequently differ in structure, resources, and scope from psychosocial support groups, recreational and empowerment programs, and peer counselling initiatives to multisectoral community rehabilitation strategies. Their effectiveness therefore varies considerably, influenced by program design, cultural alignment, staff capacity, and the degree of community ownership. Studies examining program operations during challenging periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown that the functioning of community-based programs can be disrupted by resource constraints, movement restrictions, and weakened community networks(Ahmed et al., 2024). These disruptions reveal the vulnerability of community programs but also demonstrate their adaptability and continued relevance for vulnerable groups.

Given these realities, it becomes necessary to systematically examine the perceived effectiveness of community-based support programs for youths living with traumatic experiences in Nigeria. Youths' perceptions are critical indicators of program relevance, acceptability, and contextual fit. Their perspectives illuminate whether community programs truly address reintegration needs, foster meaningful participation, improve psychological well-being, and strengthen social belonging. Investigating these perceptions within Nigerian communities can generate context-specific evidence that supports program improvement, guides policy implementation, and contributes to trauma-responsive community development. This study, therefore, focuses on understanding how youths in Nigeria evaluate the effectiveness of community-based support programs in promoting their reintegration following traumatic experiences, situating these insights within the broader discourse on community-driven psychosocial support and youth recovery.

Unfortunately, it is observed that youths in Nigeria continue to experience a wide range of traumatic events, including community violence, domestic abuse, displacement, cult-related activities, kidnapping, and exposure to armed conflicts. These traumatic experiences often result in long-term psychological, social, and behavioural consequences that hinder healthy functioning and reintegration into society. Existing research has highlighted the burden of trauma among young people in Nigeria and the inadequate access to trauma-informed care (Amedu & Dwarika, 2025). Studies conducted in other low- and middle-income settings also demonstrate that post-traumatic stress symptoms remain significant among individuals who have experienced violence or crisis (Anbesaw et al., 2022). Evidence from previous studies indicates that community-focused models can help restore functioning and strengthen support networks when properly implemented (Mazzeo & Bendixen, 2023; Williams & Thompson, 2011). However, findings from other contexts cannot be assumed to translate directly into local Nigerian realities without empirical investigation.

In Nigeria, community-based programs are gradually expanding in areas such as substance abuse prevention, behavioural change, and domestic violence reduction, demonstrating that locally grounded interventions can influence attitudes and psychosocial outcomes(Ajuzie, Martin & Onwuka, 2023;Awolaran&OlaOlorun, 2025). Yet, despite the growing relevance of these initiatives, there is a notable lack of empirical evidence on the perceived effectiveness of community-based support programs specifically targeting the reintegration of youths with traumatic experiences. Moreover, reintegration after trauma is multidimensional, involving psychological recovery, social acceptance, re-engagement with family systems, participation in education or livelihood activities, and the rebuilding of self-efficacy. While international research on reintegration shows that community-based frameworks can enhance resilience, belonging, and psychosocial well-being(-Goodman et al., 2023; Huang & Miller Marsh, 2024), similar evidence is largely missing for Nigerian youth populations who face distinct sociocultural issues.

Therefore, the problem that this study seeks to address is the absence of empirical data on how effective community-based support programs are perceived to be in promoting the reintegration of youths with traumatic experiences in Nigeria. This knowledge gap limits policymakers, mental health practitioners, community organizations, and social workers' ability to design and implement evidence-based, culturally appropriate, and youth-centered reintegration strategies. This study is necessary to generate contextually grounded insights into the perceived effectiveness of these programs, identify strengths and limitations within existing community structures, and provide evidence that can guide program improvement and policy development. The study aims to contribute to a more informed, targeted, and effective reintegration framework for Nigeria.

Objectives

1. To assess youths' perceptions of the effectiveness of community-based support programs in Nigeria.
2. To determine the level of reintegration among youths with traumatic experiences who participate in community-based support programs.

3. To identify the specific features of community-based support programs that shape youths' perceptions of their effectiveness.
4. To examine the challenges that youths with traumatic experiences encounter when engaging with community-based support programs.
5. To explore community-related factors that influence how youths perceive the effectiveness of these support programs.

Hypotheses

H_1: There is a significant relationship between youths' perceptions of the effectiveness of community-based support programs and their level of reintegration.

H_2: Youths who participate in community-based support programs will report higher levels of reintegration than those with zero levels of participation.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods design using a convergent parallel strategy in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation(Ajuzieet al., 2023; Oh & Davis, 2023). The choice of a mixed approach reflected the nature of the research problem: perceived effectiveness of community-based support programs required quantifiable measurement of reintegration outcomes as well as in-depth exploration of personal experiences, contextual factors, and community-level dynamics that could not be captured through numeric data alone.

The study was conducted in Ogun State, Nigeria. To ensure adequate representation of the different socio-economic and cultural contexts of the State, a multistage cluster approach was applied. Three Local Government Areas, Abeokuta North, Ijebu Ode, and Odeda, were purposively selected because they contained active community-based support programs and reflected urban, peri-urban, and rural settings, respectively. Within each LGA, two communities with functional psychosocial or reintegration-focused programs were identified with assistance from local NGOs, community organizations, and LGA social development units. These communities served as the primary clusters from which participants were drawn.

The study targeted youths aged 15–35 years who had experienced a traumatic event and had taken part in a community-based support program in the selected communities within the past five years. Sampling proceeded through a combination of probability and purposive techniques. Program registers obtained from NGOs and community organizations constituted the primary sampling frame in communities where such records were available. Systematic random sampling was applied to these registers to select youth participants for the survey, thereby reducing selection bias and increasing representativeness. In communities where registers were incomplete or unavailable, eligible participants were identified through program staff and subsequently expanded through controlled snowballing to ensure coverage of youths who had participated but were not formally documented.

A total quantitative sample of 400 youths was targeted across the three LGAs, providing adequate statistical power for subgroup comparisons and multivariable modelling. This sample size accounted for the clustered nature of the design and allowed for potential non-response. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 12 key informants, including program facilitators, community leaders, and caregivers. The quantitative instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire containing six sections. Perceived effectiveness was measured using a Likert-scale instrument developed for this study. A pilot test was conducted in a non-study community in Ogun State, and necessary adjustments were made for clarity and cultural appropriateness. Internal consistency of the perceived effectiveness scale and other multi-item measures was examined and found satisfactory. Qualitative data were generated through semi-structured interviews. All sessions were audio-recorded with consent and complemented by field notes documenting non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and researcher reflections. Interviews typically lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

Quantitative data were entered into a secure database, cleaned, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics and patterns of perceived effectiveness. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson Correlation and t-Test independent samples were used to analyse the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. Transcripts were coded through an iterative process that combined inductive generation of themes with deductive application of concepts drawn

from reintegration theory and trauma recovery literature. Coding was conducted independently by multiple researchers, followed by consensus meetings to refine the codebook and ensure analytic rigor. Integration of quantitative and qualitative strands occurred during interpretation. Informed consent was obtained before respondents could access the questionnaire. Confidentiality of responses was ensured by anonymizing data and storing information securely, with access limited to the research team. No personally identifiable information was disclosed, and results were reported in aggregate form. These steps align with global ethical practices for social science research.

RESULTS

This section presents the analyses of respondents' demographic characteristics, the research questions, and the study's hypotheses. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic information of the respondents, while Tables 2 through 6 present the analyses addressing the research questions. Furthermore, the results of the hypotheses tested are reported in Tables 7 and 8. Of the 400 questionnaires administered, 368 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92%. In addition, 12 key informants participated in the interview phase of the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 368)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	15–17 years	42	11.4
	18–20 years	96	26.1
	21–23 years	118	32.1
	24–26 years	72	19.6
	27 years and above	40	10.9
Gender	Male	157	42.7
	Female	207	56.3
	Other / Prefer not to say	4	1.0
Education	No formal education	18	4.9
	Primary	36	9.8
	Secondary	132	35.9
	Tertiary (ND/NCE)	108	29.3
	Tertiary (HND/BSc)	74	20.1
Employment Status	Student	124	33.7
	Employed	68	18.5
	Self-employed	86	23.4
	Unemployed	63	17.1
	Apprenticeship/Training	27	7.3
Years in Community	Less than 1 year	29	7.9
	1–3 years	102	27.7
	4–6 years	138	37.5
	7 years and above	99	26.9
Participation in Programs	Yes	263	71.5
	No	105	28.5
Encouraged by	Family	121	32.9
	Friend	82	22.3
	Community leader	29	7.9
	Health worker	36	9.8
	Self-decided	100	27.2

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	Health worker	36	9.8
	Self-decided	100	27.2

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 368 respondents, showing a broad distribution across age, gender, education, and community background. Most of the youths fell between 18 and 23 years, indicating that the study captured participants within the developmental stage where trauma recovery and reintegration are most critical. The gender distribution was slightly skewed toward females (56.3%). A substantial proportion of respondents (71.5%) had participated in community-based support programs, and 67.4% reported experiencing trauma, confirming the suitability of the sample for assessing reintegration outcomes. The majority had lived in their communities for four years or more, suggesting adequate exposure to community structures and support networks. These demographic patterns establish a strong foundation for interpreting how community-based programs influence youths' recovery and social reintegration.

Table 2: Youths' Perception of the Effectiveness of Community-Based Support Programs

S/n	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	The community-based support program helps me cope better with my traumatic experiences.	142	168	44	14	3.19	0.78
2	The program provides guidance that is useful to my personal wellbeing.	150	160	46	12	3.22	0.76
3	The support I receive in the program meets my immediate emotional needs.	134	172	50	12	3.16	0.79
4	The program activities contribute positively to my recovery journey.	156	150	48	14	3.22	0.81
5	The program helps me feel more confident about my future.	128	166	60	14	3.11	0.84
6	The support sessions are helpful in improving my daily functioning.	140	164	52	12	3.17	0.79
7	The community-based support program is effective for people like me.	154	160	42	12	3.24	0.76

Table 2 shows youths' perceptions of the effectiveness of community-based support programs. The mean scores for all items ranged from 3.11 to 3.24, indicating generally positive perceptions. Respondents agreed that the programs helped them cope with trauma (M = 3.19), supported their wellbeing (M = 3.22), and contributed positively to their recovery (M = 3.22). The highest mean (M = 3.24) reflected overall endorsement of program effectiveness. From the qualitative findings, a program facilitator observed that "these youths start opening up and trusting again after joining the sessions." Another facilitator added that "the programs give them structure, direction, and a sense that someone cares." Community leaders also affirmed this, noting visible changes in youths' behavior and attitude. One leader explained, "We see them becoming calmer and more respectful; the support is working."

Table 3 reports the level of reintegration among youths with traumatic experiences, with mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 3.21. Respondents generally agreed that they felt accepted in their communities (M = 3.13), were rebuilding relationships (M = 3.21), and were regaining a sense of belonging (M = 3.19). Reintegration was also reflected in improved communication and participation in daily responsibilities. From qualitative findings, caregivers consistently described improvements at home. One caregiver said, "Before joining the program, he avoided everyone, but now he talks freely and even helps with chores." A community leader further emphasized, "The youths who take part in the program mix better with others; you can see they are adapting." Facilitators noted similar progress, particularly in social engagement: "Some of them were withdrawn at first, but now they volunteer for activities."

Table 3: Level of Reintegration Among Youths with Traumatic Experiences

S/n	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
8	I feel accepted by members of my community.	130	170	54	14	3.13	0.82
9	My relationships with people around me are improving.	148	160	48	12	3.21	0.78
10	I participate in normal community activities without fear.	120	168	62	18	3.06	0.87
11	I am able to communicate openly with others in my community.	138	162	56	12	3.16	0.81
12	I feel a sense of belonging in my community.	146	158	52	12	3.19	0.79
13	I can manage daily responsibilities without significant emotional difficulty.	134	168	52	14	3.15	0.81
14	I feel that I am gradually returning to a stable and productive life.	140	164	50	14	3.17	0.82

Table 4 identifies features of community-based programs that shape youths' perceptions of effectiveness. All items recorded high mean scores, ranging from 3.16 to 3.31. Youths agreed that programs offered structured sessions (M = 3.25), respectful facilitators (M = 3.31), a safe environment (M = 3.26), and opportunities for free expression (M = 3.22). These findings mirror qualitative reports, such as the facilitator who stated, "We try to create a safe space where nothing is forced." Caregivers praised the structured activities, saying, "They enjoy the group discussions and skill lessons; they look forward to it." Community leaders emphasized follow-up support: "The teams don't just do one program and disappear; they always check on the children."

Table 4: Features of Community-Based Support Programs That Shape Perceived Effectiveness

S/n	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
15	The program offers regular and well-structured support sessions.	160	150	46	12	3.25	0.78
16	The facilitators communicate clearly and respectfully.	178	138	40	12	3.31	0.77
17	The program provides activities that are relevant to my needs.	154	160	42	12	3.24	0.76
18	The program environment makes me feel safe and comfortable.	162	150	44	12	3.26	0.78
19	The program allows me to express my feelings freely.	150	160	46	12	3.22	0.76
20	The timing of the program sessions is convenient for me.	134	170	52	12	3.16	0.80
21	The materials and resources used in the program are helpful.	140	166	50	12	3.18	0.78

Table 5 outlines challenges faced by youths when engaging in community-based programs. Although means ranged from 3.00 to 3.19, indicating moderate agreement with the challenges listed. Youths acknowledged transportation issues (M = 3.00), financial constraints (M = 3.17), and privacy concerns (M = 3.19). In addition, qualitative data further validate these findings. One caregiver shared, "Some youths fear others will call them weak if they attend." Facilitators also noted emotional barriers: "The trauma is deep; some refuse to talk for weeks." Community leaders identified economic constraints: "Many want to come, but they have to work or help their families."

Table 5: Challenges Encountered by Youths in Engaging with Community-Based Programs

S/n	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
22	I find it difficult to attend sessions because of transportation issues.	120	154	70	24	3.00	0.93
23	I sometimes feel uncomfortable discussing my experiences in the program.	134	160	56	18	3.11	0.88
24	I face financial difficulties that affect my participation in the program.	146	152	54	16	3.17	0.86
25	I feel discouraged from attending due to negative attitudes from some community members.	128	158	62	20	3.07	0.91
26	The program schedule sometimes clashes with my personal responsibilities.	134	164	54	16	3.12	0.86
27	I have privacy concerns when sharing personal experiences.	156	144	50	18	3.19	0.89
28	I sometimes lack motivation to attend due to emotional stress.	142	150	56	20	3.13	0.91

Table 6 examines community-related factors influencing program perception. Most items had high mean scores (3.12 to 3.23), showing that community support, family encouragement, and trust in community settings positively shape youths' perceptions. However, stigma had the lowest mean score (M = 2.27), indicating that stigma remains a major negative factor. A community leader noted, "When families support the program, the youths stay committed." Another added, "Our community is beginning to understand trauma better, so youths feel safer." Facilitators observed that resource availability influenced participation: "Good venues and materials make a big difference in how seriously the youths take the program."

Table 6: Community-Related Factors Influencing Youths' Perception of Program Effectiveness

S/n	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
29	My community supports people who attend the program.	152	160	44	12	3.23	0.77
30	Stigma in my community affects how I view the program.	60	104	120	84	2.27	1.02
31	Encouragement from my family influences my perception of the program.	136	164	54	14	3.15	0.82
32	Community leaders show support for the program.	140	160	54	14	3.16	0.82
33	The community environment affects my willingness to participate in the program.	130	168	56	14	3.12	0.82
34	The general attitude of people in the community affects how I see the program's effectiveness.	142	162	52	12	3.18	0.78
35	I trust the community setting where the program operates.	148	158	50	12	3.20	0.77

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Between Perception of Program Effectiveness and Reintegration Level (N = 368)

Variables	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Perception of Program Effectiveness	3.19	0.78	0.62	0.000
Reintegration Level	3.16	0.82		

Table 7 presents the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation analysis examining the relationship between youths' perceptions of the effectiveness of community-based support programs and their level of reintegration. The table shows that the mean perception score (M = 3.19, SD = 0.78) and the mean reintegration score (M = 3.16, SD = 0.82) are both above the midpoint of the 4-point Likert scale. This indicates that, on average, respondents moderately agreed that community-based support programs were effective, and they also moderately agreed that they had achieved a reasonable level of reintegration. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$, $p < .001$) demonstrates a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. This implies that improvements in youths' perceptions of program effectiveness are associated with increases in their reintegration levels.

Table 8 displays the results of the independent samples t-test comparing reintegration levels between youths who participate in community-based support programs and those who do not participate. The table shows that participants recorded a higher mean reintegration score (M = 3.18, SD = 0.81) than non-participants (M = 2.91, SD = 0.89). Both means fall within the moderately high range, but the noticeable difference reflects that those engaged in the programs reported more positive reintegration experiences. The t-test result (t (366) = 3.42, p = .001) further confirms that this difference is statistically significant. The findings, therefore, suggest that youths who have access to counseling, mentorship, psychosocial support, skill-building activities, and community engagement platforms are more likely to achieve smoother reintegration compared to peers who do not engage in such programs.

Table 8: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Reintegration Scores of Participants and Non-Participants

Group	n	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Participants	263	3.18	0.81	366	3.42	0.001
Non-participants	105	2.91	0.89			

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrated that youths generally perceived community-based support programs as helpful and relevant to their recovery, describing improvements in emotional stability, coping ability, and daily functioning. These experiences were reinforced by facilitators and community leaders who observed that participants became more open, confident, and socially engaged over time. This aligns with earlier evidence showing that community-rooted interventions foster emotional expression, psychological safety, and relational support(Mazzeo & Bendixen, 2023;Konanuret al., 2015). The safe and supportive environments described in this study also reflect findings that adolescents value trust, openness, and culturally grounded engagement in community programs(Tuaf&Orkibi, 2025;Iemmiet al., 2016).

Reintegration outcomes were similarly positive, as many youths reported stronger social relationships, a renewed sense of belonging, and greater participation in community life. Caregivers confirmed these improvements through observations of increased communication and responsibility at home. These patterns are consistent with research showing that community engagement strengthens belonging and social adjustment among vulnerable youths(Goodman et al., 2023; Huang & Miller Marsh, 2024)and support arguments that reintegration is shaped by community norms, family involvement, and broader social acceptance(Zewudeet al., 2023; Williams & Thompson, 2011). The study further showed that structured sessions, respectful communication, relevant activities, and safe program spaces shaped youths' positive perceptions of effectiveness. Facilitators' efforts to build trust and maintain culturally responsive interactions reflect features already identified as essential for effective community programs (Hill et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025). This convergence between program design and user experience supports earlier observations that successful interventions depend on environments that meet youths' emotional and contextual needs (Middleton et al., 2022).

Despite these strengths, youths also identified barriers such as transportation difficulties, financial constraints, stigma, privacy concerns, and emotional distress. These challenges correspond with earlier work showing that community-based initiatives in low-resource settings often face structural and psychological barriers(Ahmed et al., 2024)and that fear of judgment discourages trauma disclosure(Amedu& Dwarika, 2025). Stigma in particular remains a persistent concern in many African contexts and can undermine program engagement(Sharpe et al., 2024;Ajuzieet al., 2023). However, community-related factors played a significant role, as family encouragement, community leadership, and trust in program settings improved youths' willingness to participate, while stigma discouraged involvement. These findings align with social-ecological perspectives emphasizing that reintegration success depends on supportive community norms and acceptance(Zewudeet al., 2023; Ellis et al., 2024). Research showing that community acceptance is vital for rebuilding identity among trauma-affected youths further strengthens this interpretation(Awada & Song, 2025).

The study also demonstrated a strong relationship between positive perceptions of program effectiveness and reintegration outcomes, a pattern supported by qualitative reports of improved confidence, functioning, and social connection. This reflects earlier evidence that trauma recovery and reintegration are mutually reinforcing and shaped by effective community support(Wallace et al., 2011; Oh & Davis, 2023). Finally, youths who participated in community-based programs showed better reintegration outcomes than non-participants, reporting greater emotional stability, improved social relationships, and stronger community belonging. This aligns with findings that structured community programs enhance resilience and wellbeing among marginalized youth(Goodman et al., 2023; Oh & Davis, 2023). Overall, the study's quantitative and qualitative findings converge to reinforce existing literature affirming the value of community-based support programs in promoting recovery and reintegration among trauma-exposed youths.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how youths with traumatic experiences in Ogun State perceive the effectiveness of community-based support programs and how these perceptions relate to their reintegration. The findings revealed that most youths considered the programs helpful in improving their emotional wellbeing, coping capacity, confidence, and daily functioning. Reintegration outcomes were similarly positive, as participants described stronger social relationships, increased community participation, and a renewed sense of belonging. Program features such as structured activities, respectful facilitators, relevant content, and safe environments further enhanced the perceived value of community-based support.

The study also highlighted significant challenges affecting participation, including transportation difficulties, financial barriers, emotional hesitations, stigma, and privacy concerns. Community-related factors played a major role: family encouragement, community leadership support, and trust in the program environment fostered active engagement, while negative attitudes and stigma discouraged it. A strong and positive relationship was found between perceived program effectiveness and reintegration, and youths who participated in programs demonstrated better reintegration outcomes than non-participants. Generally, the study concludes that community-based support programs are effective mechanisms for promoting recovery and reintegration among trauma-exposed youths, but their impact is constrained by structural, emotional, and socio-cultural barriers. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government agencies such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youths, and Local Government Councils should improve funding for community-based programs, provide transportation support, integrate trauma support into youth development policies, and implement community sensitization campaigns to reduce stigma and enhance youths' participation.
2. Community-based organizations and NGOs should strengthen program content with empowerment and life-skills components, ensure confidentiality and flexible schedules, expand outreach to youths facing emotional or logistical barriers, and create safe, youth-friendly environments that encourage openness and trust.
3. Program facilitators and mental health practitioners should adopt trauma-informed, youth-centered approaches, maintain respectful communication, offer individualized counselling for youths concerned about privacy, and consistently monitor participants' progress to improve engagement and reintegration outcomes.
4. Community leaders, traditional rulers, and religious leaders should openly promote program participation, mobilize community resources to support implementation, challenge stigma through public dialogue, and foster an inclusive environment that encourages reintegration and acceptance of trauma-affected youths.
5. Families and caregivers should encourage regular program attendance, participate in family counselling to strengthen home relationships, reinforce positive behaviours at home, and provide emotional and practical support that enables youths to reintegrate smoothly into their communities.

However, this study has some limitations. First, this study was limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may have been influenced by social desirability, especially given the sensitive nature of trauma. Some youths were hesitant to disclose personal experiences, which may have reduced the depth of information obtained. The study was also conducted within selected communities in Ogun State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with

different cultural or socio-economic contexts. In addition, the cross-sectional design does not allow for tracking long-term changes in reintegration or program effectiveness over time. Time constraints during interviews and the availability of participants also posed challenges, affecting the volume and richness of qualitative insights. Despite these limitations, the research provides meaningful evidence about how youths perceive community-based support programs and the factors that shape their reintegration.

However, future studies should consider using longitudinal research designs to explore changes in youths' recovery and reintegration over longer periods. Researchers could also expand the geographical scope to include multiple states or regions, allowing for comparisons across diverse cultural settings. Further qualitative-focused studies could explore in more depth the personal experiences of youths who are reluctant to participate in community-based programs, particularly those facing stigma or emotional resistance. Additionally, future research may examine the effectiveness of specific program components, such as counselling, skills training, or peer support, to determine which interventions contribute most to reintegration. Finally, studies involving families, program facilitators, and community leaders as separate respondent groups could provide a broader understanding of the social dynamics influencing trauma recovery.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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