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IMPACT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS ON REHABILITATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS IN SUPPORT HOMES IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA, NIGERIA

***Helen Musa Runde, PhD[1], Akor Augustine, PhD[2], Levi Terzungwe Meyange[3] & Christiana Ladi Abeshi[4]**

[1]*Directorate of Counselling and Career Development, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, FCT*

[2]*Guidance and Counselling Unit, Margaret Lawrence University, River Park Estate, Lugbe, Abuja, FCT*

[3,4]*Department of Guidance and Counselling, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria*

***Corresponding author:** musahelen740@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of psychosocial support interventions on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions and three objectives. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. An ex-post-facto survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 106 respondents was drawn from population of 126 human trafficking survivors using purposive sampling technique. Two structured questionnaires titled: "Psychosocial Support Interventions Scale (PSIS)" and "Rehabilitation of Human Trafficking Survivors Scale (RHTSS)" developed by the researchers were used for data collection in this study. The instruments were validated by two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Validity indices of 0.80 and 0.83 were obtained for PSIS and RHTSS, respectively. To determine the internal consistency of the instruments, Cronbach alpha reliability technique was used, and reliability coefficients of 0.81 and 0.86 were obtained for PSIS and RHTSS, respectively. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while Chi-Square goodness of fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that individual counselling, group therapy, and emotional support have significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended among others that support homes should ensure that every survivor has regular access to qualified counsellors who provide individualised therapeutic sessions tailored to their personal experiences, trauma levels, and recovery needs, in order to facilitate emotional healing and personal empowerment.

Keywords: Psychosocial support interventions, Rehabilitation, Human trafficking survivors, Support homes

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights and a global challenge that affects millions of people, particularly women, children, and vulnerable adults. It involves the illegal trade of humans for exploitation in various forms, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, and domestic servitude. According to ILO/Free Walk (2017), an estimated 40.3 million people are victims of human trafficking worldwide, with Nigeria being one of the major countries of origin, transit, and destination for trafficking victims. In Nigeria, human trafficking is often driven by factors such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and cultural practices, which leave many individuals susceptible to exploitation (UNODC, 2016). According to Busch-Armendariz et al., (2017), human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat of use of force, abduction, fraud, deception or the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation. Victims of human trafficking span all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic brackets.

In Nigeria, support homes play an essential role in providing shelter, safety, and rehabilitation for trafficking survivors. These facilities offer a range of services, including psychological counselling, skills training, and legal aid, aimed at promoting the physical and emotional recovery of survivors. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, serves as a significant centre for both trafficking operations and the provision of rehabilitation services (Bello, 2022). Survivors of human trafficking often endure severe psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and emotional distress as a result of their exploitation (Oram, et al, 2021). Consequently, effective rehabilitation for these survivors requires addressing not only their physical health needs but also their psychological well-being. Rehabilitation for human trafficking survivors typically involves addressing both the immediate physical needs, such as medical care and legal protection, and the long-term psychological and emotional needs. Oram et al., (2021) submit that survivors of human trafficking require targeted psychological interventions to heal from the emotional and psychological scars left by their exploitation. Psychosocial support interventions, which include individual counselling, group therapy, emotional support, social reintegration programmes, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), trauma-focused therapy, mindfulness and stress-reduction techniques, and peer support programmes are crucial in helping these survivors recover from the trauma of trafficking. These interventions are designed to help survivors regain their dignity, self-esteem, and social functioning, and to assist them in reintegrating into society.

Individual counselling is a therapeutic intervention designed to provide survivors of human trafficking with a private and supportive space to process their personal issues, confront trauma, and work through the emotional aftermath of their experiences. The process involves a one-on-one interaction between a trained counselor or therapist and the individual seeking support. This counselling approach allows survivors to delve into their emotions in a confidential environment, where they can freely explore their thoughts and feelings without judgment. Trained counselors, typically with expertise in trauma and recovery, use this space to guide survivors in identifying unhealthy thought patterns and behaviours that have developed as a result of the trauma they experienced (Thompson, 2021).

Umberson and Reczek (2017) asserts that the essence of individual counselling lies in the personalised nature of the intervention. Survivors can work at their own pace, with tailored therapeutic strategies, to examine how their past trauma may have affected their behaviour and emotional responses. For example, a survivor may have developed maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as dissociation or avoidance, which can prevent them from fully healing.

Through counselling, survivors can become aware of these patterns and work toward modifying them. One critical aspect of individual counseling is that it allows survivors to restore a sense of agency. Given that trafficking survivors often feel powerless due to their exploitation, individual counseling empowers them to regain control over their emotional lives, rebuild their self-esteem, and develop a healthier self-concept. By working through their trauma and reframing their past, survivors can focus on rebuilding their future, with the support of a therapist who provides a structured environment for personal growth (Hossain et al., 2010).

Group therapy offers survivors the opportunity to engage with others who have experienced similar forms of trauma. Unlike individual counseling, group therapy creates a communal healing space, where survivors can share their stories, express emotions, and listen to the experiences of others. According to Ibrahim (2020), this type of therapy can significantly reduce feelings of isolation and alienation that survivors often face, as they realize they are not alone in their struggles. The power of group therapy lies in its capacity to foster peer support, allowing survivors to give and receive encouragement, validation, and empathy from people who understand their trauma firsthand. Oram et al., (2021), submit that through group therapy, survivors can also learn coping strategies from one another. These shared insights are valuable because they create a sense of mutual healing and collective empowerment. When survivors share coping mechanisms that have worked for them, others in the group can adopt similar approaches to managing their distress. Furthermore, group therapy encourages social connectedness, helping survivors rebuild their social networks in a safe, supportive environment. It allows them to bond with others who are walking similar paths of recovery, and this can help survivors rebuild trust in others, which is often deeply impacted by trafficking.

Another psychosocial support intervention is emotional support which is a crucial intervention that focuses on validating the feelings and emotional needs of survivors. According to Eze (2021), emotional support is a form of support that can be provided by counsellors, social workers, caregivers, and peers within support homes. Emotional support does not require formal therapy; instead, it involves empathetic listening, encouragement, and offering a safe space for survivors to express their emotions. This form of support helps survivors feel understood and nurtured, counteracting the sense of helplessness and disconnection that often follows trauma. For trafficking survivors, emotional support can help rebuild their self-esteem and restore their sense of worth. Given the degradation and abuse survivors may have experienced, receiving consistent emotional support is crucial for their healing process. Survivors who feel heard and valued are more likely to engage with other therapeutic interventions and move forward in their recovery. Zimmerman et al., (2011) state that emotional support also provides a foundation for survivors to engage with more structured therapies like CBT or trauma-focused therapy. By fostering trust and rapport**,** emotional support ensures that survivors feel safe, enhancing their willingness to engage in more in-depth healing processes.

Due to the global rise in the number of affected persons and the associated challenges they face, there has been a corresponding increase in shelters established to assist them. Upon their rescue or repatriation, many victims exhibit clear signs of trauma and require immediate intervention. One of the most effective forms of assistance or rehabilitation offered to such victims in shelters is psychosocial support (Shandro, Chisolm-Straker & Duber). This type of intervention is particularly relevant to all individuals affected by trafficking as it encourages them to re-engage with daily routines and activities. It is against this background that this study investigated the impact of psychosocial support interventions on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

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Statement of the problem

Human trafficking remains a pervasive issue globally, with Nigeria being one of the countries most affected by this crime. Survivors of human trafficking often endure severe physical, emotional, and psychological trauma, which can hinder their ability to reintegrate into society. While immediate rescue and shelter are provided in support homes, the process of rehabilitation is complex and multifaceted, requiring more than just physical care. Psychosocial support interventions, which address the psychological and emotional needs of survivors, play a critical role in the healing process. However, the effectiveness of these interventions in the rehabilitation of trafficking survivors within Nigerian support homes, particularly in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Despite the efforts made by various governmental and non-governmental organisations, there is limited empirical research on how psychosocial interventions influence the recovery and reintegration of trafficking survivors in Nigeria. Additionally, there is a lack of standardized approaches or evidence-based strategies in the current rehabilitation frameworks. Without a clear understanding of the impact of these psychosocial interventions, it becomes challenging for policymakers, social workers, and counsellors to design and implement effective rehabilitation programs tailored to the specific needs of trafficking survivors.

This study sought to address these gaps by assessing the impact of psychosocial support interventions on the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes within the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of psychosocial support interventions on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

i. Investigate the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
ii. Assess the impact of group therapy on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
iii. Examine the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?
ii. How does group therapy impact rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?
iii. What is the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

i. Individual counselling has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
ii. Group therapy has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.
iii. Emotional support has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Methodology

An ex-post-facto survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consists of 126 human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The sample size of the study is 106 respondents; purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the participating facilities and respondents based on their relevance to the objectives of the study. Out of the five identified support homes in the FCT, Abuja, four were selected for the main study, while the fifth home was used for the pilot study. The decision to exclude the fifth home from the main study was informed by the need to maintain a clear distinction between the pilot testing and the main data collection phases and to minimise the potential influence of prior exposure to the research instrument on respondents' answers.

Two structured questionnaires titled: "Psychosocial Support Interventions Scale (PSIS)" and "Rehabilitation of Human Trafficking Survivors Scale (RHTSS)" developed by the researchers were used for data collection in this study. The instruments were validated by two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Validity indices of 0.80 and 0.83 were obtained for PSIS and RHTSS, respectively. To determine the internal consistency of the instruments, Cronbach alpha reliability technique was used, and reliability coefficients of 0.81 and 0.86 were obtained for PSIS and RHTSS, respectively. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while Chi-Square goodness of fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The study revealed that individual counselling, group therapy, and emotional support have significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
Rehabilitation of Human Trafficking Survivors	106	30.253	3.265	Agree
Individual Counselling	106	11.412	2.437	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		**20.832**	**2.851**	**Agree**

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The table reveals the cluster mean of 20.832 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.851. Since the cluster mean of 20.832 is above the benchmark of 2.50, it implies that the respondents agreed that individual counselling has an impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

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Research Question 2: How does group therapy impact rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of group therapy on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
Rehabilitation of Human Trafficking Survivors	106	30.253	3.265	Agree
Group Therapy	106	12.816	1.924	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		**21.534**	**2.594**	**Agree**

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of group therapy on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The table reveals the cluster mean of 21.534 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.594. Since the cluster mean of 21.534 is above the benchmark of 2.50, it implies that the respondents agreed that group therapy has an impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
Rehabilitation of Human Trafficking Survivors	106	30.253	3.265	Agree
Emotional Support	106	10.864	2.301	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		**20.558**	**2.783**	**Agree**

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The table reveals the cluster mean of 20.558 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.783. Since the cluster mean of 20.558 is above the benchmark of 2.50, it implies that the respondents agreed that emotional support has an impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: Individual counselling has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

The table below provides answer to the above hypothesis.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of the Significant impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	*P*	Df	$\chi 2$	Decision
SA	42	52				
A	36	52	0.000	3	17.731a	Sig.(HO Rejected
D	18	52				
SD	10	52				
Total	**106**					

x2cal = 17.731a, **df=3, P=0.05>0.000**

Table 4 reveals the Chi-square value of the impact of individual counselling on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The calculated value of Chi-square ($\chi 2$) = 17.731a at df = 3 and P = 0.000. Since P < 0.05, the result is significant therefore, the null hypothesis which states that individual counselling has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that individual counselling has significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Group therapy has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

The table below provides answer to the above hypothesis.

Table 5: Chi-Square Analysis of the Significant impact of Group therapy on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	*P*	Df	$\chi 2$	Decision
SA	32	52				
A	48	52	0.000	3	47.577a	Sig.(HO Rejected)
D	20	52				
SD	8	52				
Total	**106**					

x2cal =47.577a **df=3, P=0.05>0.000**

Table 5 reveals the Chi-square value of the impact of group therapy on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The calculated value of Chi-square ($\chi 2$) = 47.577a at df = 3 and P = 0.000. Since P < 0.05, the result is significant therefore, the null hypothesis which states that group therapy has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that group therapy has significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: Emotional support has no significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

The table below provides answer to the above hypothesis.

Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis of the Significant impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Responses	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	*P*	Df	$\chi 2$	Decision
SA	26	52				
A	58	52	0.000	3	45.269a	Sig.(HO Rejected)
D	15	52				
SD	7	52				
Total	**106**					

x2cal = 45.269a**, df=3, P=0.05>0.000**

Table 6 reveals the Chi-square value of the impact of emotional support on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The calculated value of Chi-square ($\chi 2$) = 45.269a at df = 3 and P = 0.000. Since P < 0.05, the result is significant therefore, the null hypothesis which states that emotional support has no significant impact on

rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that emotional support has significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study are discussed based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Findings from research question one revealed that individual counselling has positive impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis for the research question revealed that individual counselling has a significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. This implied that, if human trafficking survivors in support homes receive individual counselling, it may enhance their rehabilitation. This finding is consistent with the finding of Anderson and Miller (2021) that conducted a study on the effectiveness of individual counseling in the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in the United Kingdom and found that individual counselling significantly reduced trauma symptoms and improved coping mechanisms among the survivors, leading to better rehabilitation outcomes. The finding is also in agreement with the finding of Smith (2019) who conducted a study on the impact of individual counselling on the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in the United States and found that individual counseling significantly improved emotional well-being, self-esteem, and social reintegration among survivors. Furthermore, the survivors reported greater trust in their ability to cope with the challenges of reintegration into society. Shamsudeen et al. (2024) also conducted a study on the impact of individual counselling using Kid-NET on rehabilitation-relevant trauma symptoms among adolescent survivors of human trafficking in South India and revealed statistically significant improvements for the Kid-NET group versus wait-list on overall PTSD severity and multiple symptom clusters, as well as reductions in psychological distress, depression, and anxiety, supporting the effectiveness of individual counselling with Kid-NET for trafficked adolescents.

Findings from research question two revealed that group therapy has a positive impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis for the research question revealed that group therapy has a significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The implication is that, if human trafficking survivors in support homes receive group therapy, it may enhance their rehabilitation. This finding is in line with the finding of Williams and Lee (2022) who conducted a study titled "Effectiveness of group therapy in the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in the United States", focusing on the role of group therapy in the rehabilitation process and found that survivors who participated in group therapy showed significant improvements in trauma symptoms, coping strategies, and interpersonal relationships compared to those who did not. The finding is also in line with the finding of Johnson (2020) who conducted a study titled "The impact of group therapy on the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Canada" and showed that group therapy led to significant improvements in survivors' emotional regulation, social connections, and overall mental health. Okoro (2019) also conducted a study on the impact of group therapy on the psychological rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Edo State, Nigeria and revealed that participation in structured group therapy sessions significantly improved emotional stability, reduced trauma symptoms,

and enhanced social integration among survivors. The finding also tallies with the finding of Bello (2022) who examined group therapy as a tool for enhancing the mental health and life skills of human trafficking survivors in Lagos State rehabilitation centres and showed that group therapy participants recorded significant improvements in mental health indicators, conflict resolution skills, and vocational preparedness compared to the control group.

Findings from research question three revealed that emotional support has a positive impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis for the research question revealed that emotional support has a significant impact on rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. This implied that, if human trafficking survivors in support homes receive emotional support, it may enhance their rehabilitation. This finding tallies with the finding of Okafor and Nwoye (2021) who conducted a study on emotional support and its role in the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Nigeria and revealed that emotional support was positively correlated with improved emotional regulation, increased self-esteem, and enhanced coping skills among the survivors. The finding is also in support of the finding of Adeoye (2018) who conducted a study on the impact of emotional support on the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes in Nigeria and found that emotional support significantly improved the survivors' mental health, self-esteem, and social reintegration abilities. Okafor (2019) also conducted a study titled “Impact of emotional support on the rehabilitation of female human trafficking survivors in support homes in Anambra State, Nigeria and revealed that provision of consistent emotional counselling significantly improved survivors’ psychological stability, that peer emotional support enhanced self-esteem and social reintegration, and that staff empathy positively influenced survivors’ willingness to participate in vocational training.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, it was concluded that psychosocial and therapeutic interventions such as individual counselling, group therapy and emotional support significantly contribute to the rehabilitation of human trafficking survivors in support homes. The findings also underscore the necessity of integrating these evidence-based approaches into rehabilitation frameworks to ensure holistic recovery and sustainable reintegration of survivors into the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations were made:

1. Support homes should ensure that every survivor has regular access to qualified counsellors who provide individualised therapeutic sessions tailored to their personal experiences, trauma levels, and recovery needs, in order to facilitate emotional healing and personal empowerment.
2. Support homes should organise structured group therapy sessions that encourage peer interaction, sharing of experiences, and mutual emotional support among survivors, as this helps to reduce isolation, foster trust, and build a sense of community and belonging.
3. Caregivers, social workers, and rehabilitation staff should be trained to offer consistent emotional support through empathy, active listening, and positive reinforcement, to help survivors rebuild self-esteem and develop emotional stability throughout their recovery journey.

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