
Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Intervention on Emotional Adjustment of Sample Divorcees in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria

Dr. Nneka Nwosu

Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Dr. Esther Enajedu E.

School of Foundations and General Studies, Delta State School of Marina Technology,
Burutu, Nigeria

Dr. Ughwutobe Alex Itobore

Guidance and Counsellor University of Benin Teaching Hospital, UBTH Benin Edo State

Dr. D. C. Ncheke

Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Citation: Nneka Nwosu, Esther E. Enajedu, Ughwutobe Alex Itobore and D. C. Ncheke (2022) Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Intervention on Emotional Adjustment of Sample Divorcees in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria, *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development*, Vol. 10, No.8, pp.18-26

ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the effect of Cognitive Restructuring Intervention on Emotional Adjustment of Divorcees in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The need for the study came as a result of increasing rate of divorce among married teachers in the study area to which the researchers sought to find solutions. It was guided by two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was quasi-experimental non-randomized control group, pretest-posttest design. The population of the study consisted of all 24 divorcees in public secondary schools in the study area identify by school counsellors. The entire population of 24 divorcees were used as sample. In this case, there was no sample. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled "Emotional Adjustment Divorcees Questionnaire (EADQ)" developed by the researchers and validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was obtained using cronbach alpha statistics which yielded the estimate of 0.84 for EADQ. This instrument was used to collect data from subjects as pretest before treatment programme which lasted for six weeks and were reshuffled by changing the serial numbers of the items and re-administered on the subjects on posttest after treatment. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses. The result of the study indicated that cognitive restructuring intervention had significant effect on emotional adjustment of divorcees. There was no significant difference in the mean rating on emotional adjustment of divorcees as moderated by gender. In the other words, male and female divorces exposed to treatment benefitted equally on the emotional adjustment. Based on the findings; it was recommended among others that guidance counsellors should employ cognitive restructuring intervention to help divorcees on emotional adjustment.*

KEYWORDS: cognitive restructuring, intervention, emotional adjustment, divorcees, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Marital stability requires that the couples or the people in it were able to make necessary and required transitions towards a successful relationship. Stability in marriage or rather family is used as a measure of success. Family's success is usually measured in terms of its members' satisfaction, harmony and happiness (George, 2021). To that effect, where there is harmony, satisfaction and happiness expressed by family members, such family could be said to be stable. However, despite the significance of marriage, every society is faced with situations in which marriage fails and the couples cannot tolerate living together. The result of this ugly situation is usually divorce. The observable fact or event of divorce is on daily bases receiving increasing attention as a stress inducing factor or rather a life crisis that affects over three million adults and one million children worldwide annually (Waigh, 2020). Divorce presently appears to be on the increase.

In Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria, the researchers' observation from supervision during practicum in public secondary schools indicate that divorce appears to be on the increase and it is becoming increasingly stressful on the part of the divorcees, their children and the society. To support this claim, the divorce rate in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State has been steadily increasing during the past twenty years and shows no signs of reduction (National Centre for Health Statistics, 2021). In every public secondary schools in the study area, there are at least two cases of divorced persons, as observed during the researchers' practicum supervision. According to National Centre for Health Statistics (2022), the divorce rate in Nigeria generally has been on the increase and shows no sign of reduction. Divorcee is a variable ascribe to person who have divorced in their marriage. Divorcee is a man or a woman who is divorced and who has not married again (Mirror, 2020). It is a man or a woman who is divorced and is living alone (Eze, 2020). Studies demonstrate that divorced individuals exhibit higher levels of depression and anxiety than do individuals who are married, and those divorced also tend to have poorer self-concepts and exhibit more symptoms of psychological distress, compared with those who are married (Obi, 2021). Children of divorce are more likely to experience poverty, educational failure, early and risky sexual activity, non-marital childbirth, earlier marriage, cohabitation, marital discord and divorce (Mbiti, 2022). In fact, emotional problems associated with divorce actually increase during young adulthood (Gertel, 2022).

Another factor that could be responsible for divorce is gender. Gender is an important social variable that influences the behaviours. The study of gender has attracted the interest of researchers today, especially as it relates to human behaviour and social adjustment (Dhull & Beniwal, 2017). Gender according to Onu and Nweke (2019) is a way of expressing being male or female that is socially invented. Gender also depicts social behaviour expectations learned by males and females in the society in consonance with the social standard. There are behavioural expectations from male and female in our society. According to Chen, Xu and LI (2021), males exhibit disruptive behaviour higher than the female counterparts. Also, Eze (2020) noted that females absorb pains more than the male counterparts. It is on this note that the researchers are interested on gender to found out who adjusts more in divorce situation.

Divorce significantly increases crime, abuse and neglect and drug use. It also increases behavioural, emotional and psychiatric risks, including even suicide (Mbiti, 2022). Based on the above observation, the best option to adopt in emotional adjustment of the divorcees remains a recourse to counselling intervention (Susswan, 2018).

For divorcees to have emotional adjustment, they need proper guide in order to fit in the society. Therefore, there is need to guide the divorcees properly to avoid emotional maladjustment. In order to accomplish this, the need for counselling intervention becomes necessary. Counselling intervention which is a helping process may assist divorcees to emotionally adjust. Counselling intervention which involves helping individuals with problems make needed changes in ways of behaving and feeling among others requires approaches to achieve it. Some approaches in counselling according to Gladding (2009) including modeling, cognitive restructuring, shaping among others. These interventions have been found to be effective in handling maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students. Specifically, cognitive restructuring intervention according to Weish (2020) is very effective in handling depression and anxiety among married couples. Also, Eze (2020) noted that cognitive restructuring intervention had a significant difference in reducing maladaptive behaviour of in-school adolescents. In this study, therefore, cognitive restructuring intervention was used because of its effectiveness in handling maladaptive behaviour and crisis in the home (Weish, 2020).

Cognitive restructuring intervention (CRI) is a technique in counselling that is used in handling a lot of maladaptive behaviours. Cognitive restructuring intervention (CRI) is a technique that has been successfully used to help people change the way they think (Eze, 2020). When used for stress management, according to the author, the goal is to replace stress-producing thought, (the cognitive distortions) with more balanced thoughts that do not produce stress. According to Clark (2018), CRI is a therapeutic process that helps the client discover, challenge and modify or replace their negative irrational thoughts (or cognitive distortions). This implies that CRI is all about restoring distorted thinking or behaviour. CRI involves the process of reframing negative and unrealistic thoughts to realistic and positive thinking (Beck, 2011). In this study, CRI is a therapeutic process that helps the divorcees discover and modify or replace their negative, irrational thoughts. This implies that if divorcees receive CRI programme, they may reframe from negative thoughts and think positively, hence adjust emotionally.

Theoretical Foundations

In Nigeria as well as other parts of the globe, many divorced people remarry and about half of those who do are already parents (Eze, 2018). This, according to Avugu (2018) results in the creation of “blended families” also called “step families”. For instance, in 2017, over 18% of all Nigerian children were living with one biological parent and one step parent (Eze, 2018). Estimates are that a fourth of Nigerian children will live with a step parent before reaching the age of sixteen (Obi, 2019). In the same vein, Nigeria in recent years has witnessed a high rate of divorce as a result of urbanization and industrialization (Adegoke, 2017). The periods triggered to a monetary industrial economy. Thus, the extended family that used to resolve conflicts or rather misunderstanding between couples was no longer functioning effectively like in the past (Mbiti, 2009; Olaniyi, 2015 & Obi, 2019).

Divorcees need adjustment to enable them leave on their own if the marriage crash. Adjustment is an important factor that helps divorcees to be successful in any endeavour. Adjustment is a prerequisite for individuals understanding and stability (Zuri, 2013). Emotional adjustment is an important factor for divorcees to cope in the marriage breakdown. This is because; it helps individuals to be successful in their endeavours (Bryauh, 2018). Emotional adjustment is the maintenance of emotional equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressors (Zuiy, 2014). It is a psychological process which an individual acquire to cope with common symptoms like anxiety, anger, depression among others (Eze, 2018). Marriage breakdown ushers in anger, anxiety, depression, among others and needs urgent solution for divorcees to adjust.

Marriage breakdown has ushered the country into the novel period culminating into the largest disruption of society. In such situation, there is no stability and this could lead to maladjustment. Based on the above observation, the best option to adopt in the event of any crisis remains a recourse to behavior modification. Different kinds of behavior modification techniques like reinforcement, aversive therapy, psychodrama, logotherapy among others have been used for intervention on maladjustment behavior among divorcees (Okeke, 2014; Anagbogu, 2016; Susswan, 2018).

However, Avugu (2018) has also suggested that psychological principles and the experiences of family counselor and those who have worked with divorcees support the following techniques for helping divorcees and their children achieve a place in the society. These techniques include finding special skills, using family counselors, training in skills such as discussion, and group guidance. Besides, all the techniques are used in counseling approaches like cognitive restructuring technique (CRT), hence; the researchers sought to investigate the effect of CRT on social and emotional adjustment of divorcees.

Cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) stated that couple divorce because of negative and unrealistic thoughts, and within this framework, CRT highlights the importance of replacing negative and unrealistic thoughts with realistic and positive thinking (Beck, 2011). Numerous experimental studies have focused on the management of divorcees (Enofa, 2017; Undaah, 2015). According to Livingstone (2018); Leo (2017) and Mejo (2016), lack of effective intervention programs has been emphasized in both local and international literature. However, experimental studies on managing divorcees are new and quite limited in developed countries which include Chad (Enofa, 2017).

Divorce in Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically Nsukka Education Zone is assuming an alarming rate. Family counsellors, psychologists, therapists, among others have often wondered and worried that divorcees are emotionally maladjusted. In spite of efforts made to reduce this ugly situation, it is still on the increase. It is based on this background that the researchers sought to investigate the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention (CRI) on emotional adjustment of divorcees in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

The study's main objective was to investigate cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees.

Specifically, the study sought to:

(1) determine the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees.

(2) determine the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees as moderated by gender.

The following research questions posed guided the study:

(1) What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees?

(2) What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees as moderated by gender?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated guided the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in mean ratings of divorcees exposed to CRI and those not exposed to it on emotional adjustment.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in mean ratings of divorcees exposed to CRI on emotional adjustment as moderated by gender.

METHOD

The researcher design used for the study was quasi-experimental non-randomized control group pretest-posttest design. The population for the study consisted of 24 divorcees identified from twelve schools in the log books of school counsellors. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled “Emotional Adjustment Divorcees Questionnaire (EADQ)”. This instrument was developed by the researchers with much help from literature reviewed and was validated by three experts in Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of EADQ was determined using cronbach alpha statistics and reliability estimate value of 0.81 was obtained for EADQ. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used in testing the hypotheses at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees?

Table 1: Emotional Adjustment Ratings of Divorcees who were exposed to CRI and Those in the control group

Group			N	Pre-test \bar{X}	SD	Post-test \bar{X}	SD	Mean differences
Cognitive	Restructuring	Intervention	24	50.40	2.40	16.05	1.20	-34.35
(CRI)								
Control Group			24	56.20	0.20	45.41	7.20	-10.79

Data on table 1 shows that the divorcees who were exposed to CRI had mean emotional adjustment rating of 50.40 with standard deviation of 2.40 at the pre-test and mean emotional adjustment rating of 16.05 with a standard deviation of 1.20 at the post-test; while those who were not exposed to CRI had mean emotional adjustment rating of 56.20 with a standard deviation of 0.20 at the pre-test and mean emotional adjustment rating of 45.41 with a standard deviation of 7.20 at the post-test. Mean difference of -34.35 and -10.79 for the two groups respectively imply that the divorcees who were exposed to CRI had lower mean difference than those who were not exposed to treatment. The post-test standard deviation of 1.20 and 7.20 for the experimental and control groups respectively implies that there is a higher variation in the individual ratings of the control group than the ratings of those in the experimental group.

Research Question Two

What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on emotional adjustment of divorcees as moderated by gender?

Table 2: Emotional Adjustment Ratings of Divorcees who were exposed to CRI as moderated by gender

Group	N	Pre-test \bar{X}	SD	Post-test \bar{X}	SD	Mean differences
Male	10	45.02	1.01	17.55	1.20	-27.47
Female	14	45.01	0.40	17.56	1.21	-27.45

Data on Table 2 above shows that the male divorcees who were exposed to CRI had mean emotional adjustment rating of 45.02 with standard deviation of 1.01 at the pre-test and mean emotional adjustment rating of 17.55 with standard deviation of 1.20 at the post-test, while the female divorcees exposed to CRI had mean emotional adjustment rating of 45.01 with standard deviation of 0.40 at the pre-test and mean emotional adjustment rating of 17.56 with standard deviation of 1.21 at the post-test. Mean difference of -27.47 and 27.45 for the two groups respectively imply that both male and female divorcees exposed to CRI had equal mean difference. The post-test standard deviation for male was 1.20 and that for female was 1.21. This indicates that the treatment brought the experimental group closer as their post-test ratings were almost equal.

Hypotheses One

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of divorcees exposed to CRI and those not exposed to it on emotional adjustment.

Table 3: Analysis of covariance of the effect of CRI on emotional adjustment of divorcees

Source	Type of sum of square	df	Mean	F	Sig.
Corrected model	10066.711 ^a	2	2164.854	151.912	.000
Intercept	101.223	1	5.302	2.432	.011
Pre-test	5.302	1	5302.126	.122	.212
Treatment	5302.131	1	12.512	210.342	.000
Error	1234.100	21			
Total	52311.00	24			
Corrected total	10122.233	23			

Table 3 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F(210.342) for the effect of CRI on divorcees emotional adjustment is 0.000. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < .05$), the null hypothesis was rejected implying that there was a significant difference in the mean emotional adjustment ratings of divorcees exposed to CRI and those not exposed to it in favour of those exposed to CRI.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in mean ratings of divorcees exposed to CRI on emotional adjustment as moderated by gender.

Table 4: Analysis of covariance of the effect of CRI on emotional adjustment of divorcees as moderated by gender

Source	Type of sum of square	df	Mean	F	Sig.
Corrected model	1115.321 ^a	2	5210.241	5142.712	.720
Intercept	112.141	1	144.289	2.321	.243
Pre-test	5.141	1	5.045	.135	.221
Treatment	721.2	1	54101.000	418.241	.720
Error	62111.000	21	16.515		
Total	62111.000	24			
Corrected total	10132.101	23			

Table 4 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F(418.241) for the effect of CRI treatment on divorcees emotional adjustment is .720. Since the probability value of 0.720 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is upheld. This means that there is no significance difference in the mean emotional adjustment rating of divorcees exposed to CRI as moderated by gender. This implies that the effect of treatment on emotional adjustment of divorcees was not significantly affected by the presence of gender.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result shows that divorcee exposed to CRI had higher mean adjustment than those who were not so exposed to treatment (control group). Thus, divorcees exposed to CRI treatment became well adjusted to emotional adjustment than those divorcees not exposed to treatment.

Further testing of the hypotheses revealed significant difference between treatment and control groups indicating that those exposed to treatment. This suggests that those divorcees exposed to treatment had a reduced and lower emotional adjustment than those in control group. So, CRI could be a veritable tool for reducing emotional adjustment of divorcees. The finding of the study is in agreement with the study of Weish (2020) who found that CRI is effective in handling maladaptive behaviour and crisis at home. In the same vein, Eze (2020) found out that CRI had a significant difference in reducing maladaptive among in-school adolescents. In this study, CRI has proved to be a veritable intervention for handling or rather counseling divorcees on emotional adjustment.

The findings also show that male and female divorcees exposed to CRI treatment had equal reduction of the emotional adjustment. By implication, it means that the effect of treatment on emotional adjustment of divorcees was not significantly affected by the presence of gender. Since this result turned out to be like this, it was possible that divorcees were involved to emotional maladjustment because they did not understand the implication of emotional adjustment. Therefore, counsellors should regularly apply CRI to reshape divorcees thinking from negative behaviour like divorce to positive thoughts.

CONCLUSION

The research emanated from the quest to find solution to the existing divorce problem. Consequently, the study investigated the effect of CRI on emotional adjustment of divorcees. The study revealed that CRI was effective in adjusting divorcees emotionally. Therefore, CRI should be regularly employed in counselling divorcees.

Implication of the Findings

The result of the study indicated that CRI was effective in adjusting divorcees emotionally. By implication, divorcees in public schools should be provided with such counselling to discourage divorce and emotional maladjustment.

Recommendations

- (1) School guidance counsellors should employ CRI to help divorcees adjust emotionally.
- (2) Guidance counsellors should organize workshops on CRI to help divorcees adjust emotionally.

References

- Adegoke, A. O. (2017). Widowhood, divorce and waiting time: A neglected aspect of nuptiality studies in Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Social Work Education*, 2(2), 38-54.
- Anagbogu, A. O. (2016). *Fundamental approach to counseling*. Awka, Auto Century Publisher.
- Avugu, L.O. (2018). Social Indicators and Impacts of Marriage divorce in African societies. *Business and Management Review*, 4(4), 200-201.
- Beck, J.S. (2011). *Cognitive behaviour therapy: Based and beyond*. Second edition. New York, London: The Guilford Press.

- Bryauh, A. O. (2018). Social adjustment and academic achievement. *School Psychology Review*, 35(3), 493-501.
- Chen, X. & Li, L. (2021). Parental behavioural control and bullying and victimization of rural adolescents in China. *International Journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(9), 4816.
- Dhull, V.N. & Beniwal, I.V. (2017). Deviant online behaiovur in adolescent and youth circles. *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education (IJCRSEE)*, 8(2), 105-119.
- Enofa, C. C. (2017). Cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) on anger management of divorcees. *Journal of Educational Psychologist*, 6, 257-258.
- Eze, T. U. (2018). Divorce and Stigma: Social problem. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1(1), 34-42.
- Eze, T. U. (2020). Effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on marital crisis among married couples social problems. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1(1), 44-60.
- George, A. N. (2021). Family and satisfaction. <http://familsatisfai.edi/georg/filies/html>.
- Gladding, S. (2009). *Counselling approaches*. Columbus Person Education Inc.
- Leo, T. A. (2017). *Attitude structure and function*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Mbiti, S. U. (2009). Marital instability among couples. *Journal of Education*, 3(2), 29-41.
- Mbiti, S.U. (2022). Marital instability among couples. *Journal of Education*, 3(2), 29-41.
- Mejo, N. O. (2016). Effect of cognitive restructuring in tendencies to engage in examination malpractices of students. *Journal of Education Curriculum Studies*, 3(1), 70-87.
- Mirror, S. T. (2020). Marriage breakdown and its implication to the children. *Journal of Psychologist*, 2(1), 320-331.
- NCHS (2021). Legal dissolution of marriages. <http://legal.dissol.nchs.com.html>.
- Obi, C. H. (2019). Modernization and divorce contrasting trends in Islamic Southeast Asia and the West. *Population and Development Review*, 23(1), 94-114.
- Obi, C. H. (2021). Modernization and divorce contrasting trends in Islamic Southwest Asia and the West. *Population and Development Review*, 23(1), 91-114.
- Okeke, C. C. (2014). *Practicum and counseling*. Enugu: CPA and Gold Publisher.
- Olaniyi, A. A. (2015). Analytical study of the causal factors of divorce in Africa. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Ritu, U. (2015). Adjustment from academic social and cultural viewpoints in Taiwan. *International Conference on Business Management and Information Technology Application*. Retrieved in 2019. <http://www.kynedu.twlenepge.ifeacpge.38/98%ES%Bg%>
- Susswan, A. N. (2018). Families and marital distress. *Nigerian Journal of Education*, 2(1), 102-119.
- Undaah, S. T. (2015). Effects of cognitive restructuring and bibliotherapy techniques on anger manifestation of divorcees in Enugu State. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 6(2), 230-249.
- Weish, I.C. (2020). Effect of cognitive restructuring intervention on maladaptive behaviour. *International Journal of Psychology*, 7(14), 201-211.
- Zuiy, S. B. (2014). The relationship between self-concept and career awareness amongst students. *Asia Social Science*, 9(1), 193-210.
- Zuri, R. O. (2013). Divorce and waiting time. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 6(2), 230-250.