

Effects of Counselling Approaches on Divorcees' Emotional Adjustment in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of counselling approaches on divorcees' emotional adjustment in Otukpo LGA of Benue state. The population of the study comprised all divorcees, both male and female in Otukpo LGA of Benue state. A sample size of 90 participants was drawn through purposive sampling technique. Divorcees' Emotional Adjustment Inventory (DEAI) was the instrument for data gathering. The DEAI was validated and Cronbach's coefficient alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the research instrument and the programme. The internal consistency of the instrument was 0.78, while that of the programme was 0.80. The study employed the quasi-experimental design of non-randomized control group, pretest-posttest design. Descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to analyse the data collected to test the six hypotheses formulated and tested. The results obtained indicate that counselling approaches are effective in improving the divorcees' emotional adjustment. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended, among other things, the intensification of the role of counsellors in the reduction of emotional instability amongst the divorcees in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Keywords: self-concept, improvement, divorcees, emotional, adjustment

Introduction

Divorce is the dissolution of a legal marriage before the death of either spouse. It is the ending of a marital relationship between a couple. To be granted a divorce, separation is required first by most people. According to Winer and Benneth (2002), divorce is the legal termination of marriage which can be granted on 'fault' or 'no-fault' grounds. A fault divorce is based on proof that the marriage broke-up as a result of extreme cruelty, adultery, or other specific fault grounds. However, in a no-fault divorce, the divorce is based on irreconcilable differences which have caused the irremediable break-up of a marriage. Here, it means that the parties cannot get along and cannot reconcile. The explanation implies that divorce is usually not a step that is taken suddenly. It is often the aftermath of marital conflicts, infidelity and sometimes separation.

Divorce is never easy. Even when a couple agrees to terminate their marriage, it still hurts to separate. Guilt, anger, resentment, fear and disappointment often dominate the divorced persons' thinking. Frequently, there is loneliness, confusion, sadness, anger, sense of failure, guilt, insecurity, low self-esteem and loss of identity. When children are involved, the pain is even greater as sensitive parents watch innocent children suffer because their families have been torn apart. No one wins in a divorce. Everybody loses; the couple, their children, their parents, and the community at large. The high rate of divorce has made people to learn to accept divorce as a way of life for many in modern society.

In a society that has a prescription for almost any human ill, very little is being done to help the person struggling through the pains of divorce. Even though there are family interaction and support services in the study area, many hurting men and women find themselves aching and lonely when divorce shatters their dreams and tears apart their families.

Divorce is one of those things that cause emotional problems to its victims. Here, the individual finds it very difficult to adjust adequately to his/her social surroundings. It arises as a result of confusion in communication, maintenance of particular social values and enforcement of certain moral standards. When these conditions exist within individuals, they are usually perceived as maladjusted individuals. Divorce affects the divorcees' self-concept thereby causing them to have adjustment problems. For these divorcees to become productive in their new status, they need to adjust their emotions. This is because divorcees' emotional problems lead to lack of harmony between them and their environments.

The self-concept of divorcees has been battered as a result of their divorce status. They should be made to realize that emotionally healthy people can learn to feel good about themselves through group counselling. They feel adequate for life's challenges and feel a strong sense of personal worth. Emotionally healthy people also accept themselves as they are and understand that perfection is an impossible goal so they accept their imperfections as part of being humans.

Some divorcees have a low/negative self-concept which affects their social lives. Therefore, they should be assisted to overcome this self-defeating phenomenon. Self-concept is a reflection of an individual's behaviour. The function of self-concept implies self-evaluation and prediction of success or failure. This is why Durojaiye (1996) says that individuals who have a positive self-concept think about their success and good qualities while those who have a negative self-concept think about their failures and inadequacies. These divorcees need counselling in order to correct their negative thought patterns and irrational beliefs. Counselling is a process of developing a cooperative relationship and then using that interaction to help divorcees with negative self-concept to explore themselves and their environments.

Divorce rate today is increasing at an alarming rate. Why that is so, no one can really explain, but experts as stated in Anderson (2000), Kore (2002), Troxel and Matthews (2004), Melgosa and Melgosa (2006), Elaigwu (2008), and Ugboha (2012) claim that divorce can occur due to the following reasons:

1. Lack of communication between spouses
2. Lack of commitment towards marriage
3. Sexual incompatibility and infidelity
4. Physical abuse, and emotional abuse
5. Inability to manage or resolve conflict
6. Attitude and opportunity of baby boom generation
7. Inadequate love
8. Parents in-law and friends' interference
9. Unwillingness to compromise in marriage
10. Arrogance, deception and selfishness

When the love the couple has hoped and expected would last forever fails, their world falls apart. Unless one has already found another lover, divorce is a very painful experience. The hardest period of divorce is when the spouse is being rejected by the partner (Vanpelt, 2002). Divorce makes the couple lose their most important relationship. It can lead to depression. It can flood them with anger. It can also overwhelm them with scary changes and decisions. The divorced couple has new responsibilities, economic hardships, questions about "what do I want to do?" The "leaver" or "rejector" sometimes experiences less stress than the "leavee" but that is not always true. Baumeister and Wotman in Ugboha (2012) assert that many rejectors are profoundly guilty, in turmoil, and feel helpless or embarrassed. The "Leavee" is not guilty but is hurt and ashamed by failure and abandonment. According to Ugboha (2012), divorce brings about apathy, a new status, feelings of rejection, depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, hostility, meaninglessness of life and loss of self-esteem.

Counselling approaches of cognitive restructuring and role play are a form of re-education in which the clients are taught to recognize the irrationalities in their thinking for positive change of perceptions to enable them develop a new philosophical way of positive reasoning to be able to live better and healthier for peaceful coexistence with other people in the society. Therefore, with these counselling approaches on divorcees' emotional adjustment, they may be in a better position to rethink and correct their falsehood to enable them reintegrate successfully into the society. Ker, Ekoja and Ekoja (2006), and Iwok and Uwah (2009) in their separate studies emphasized on the effectiveness of these counselling approaches in helping individuals to discover for themselves their irrational thinking and falsehood and learn new ways of seeing and interpreting events in their lives objectively.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in pre-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in post-test means scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental role-playing group.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group due to educational qualification.

Ho6: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental role-playing group due to educational qualification.

Methodology

This study employed the quasi experimental research design involving the manipulation of an independent variable under controlled conditions. The choice of this design was to find out the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The population of the study included all divorcees, both male and female in Otukpo local government area of Benue state, Nigeria. Participants consisted of 90 divorcees who were selected through purposive sampling technique and assigned to the experimental and control groups of 30 per group. This was done by balloting to ensure the equivalence of the groups of study. Subjects' participation was based on their willingness to participate effectively. However, only those in the experimental groups were exposed to counselling approaches, while those in the control group were not but kept busy with discussions on family issues. The study had three groups in all; one group was experimental cognitive restructuring, the second was experimental role-playing group, while the third group was the control group.

The researcher's structured questionnaire titled: Divorcees' Emotional Adjustment Inventory (DEAI) composed of 30 items constructed on a 4 point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted accordingly as 4, 3, 2, and 1 was used in data gathering. The instrument consisted of two parts. Part one elicited information on the personal data of respondents, while part two required the respondents to tick (✓) in the column provided with options SA, A, D, and SD that best indicated how each of the instruments described their feelings as divorced individuals.

Both construct and content validities were done by three experts in Research, Measurement and Evaluation, Counselling Psychology, and Educational Psychology in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Jos. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Method was used to establish the reliability of the research

instrument and the programme. The internal consistency of the instrument was 0.78, while that of the programme was 0.80. Both were considered suitable for the study.

The treatment effect on the respondents' emotional adjustment was interpreted as very impressive for those that scored reasonably above 60 points, which is the midway point between the maximum and minimum scores of 90 and 30 points respectively. Mean, standard deviation, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse the data. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant difference in pre-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups.

Table 1: One way analysis of variance showing difference in pre-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups

| Sources of variation | of | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | | 255.489 | 2 | 127.744 | | |
| Within groups | | 12240.833 | 87 | 140.699 | 0.908 | 0.407 |
| Total | | 12496.322 | 89 | | | |

Table 1 indicated that the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. However, the null hypothesis is retained and then concluded that there is no justification to claim that there is a significant difference in pre-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups, $F(2,87) = .908$, $p > .05$. It means that the groups exposed to interventions were not initially different in emotional adjustment.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups.

Table 2: One way analysis of variance of post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control groups

| Sources of variation | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | p |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Between groups | 5438.689 | 2 | 2719.344 | | |
| Within groups | 7549.1 | 58 | 86.771 | 31.34 | 0.000 |
| Total | 12987.789 | 60 | | | |

Since the p-value in table 2 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected implying that there is a significant difference on post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control

groups, $F(2,58) = 31.34$, $p < .05$. The cognitive restructuring and role-playing significantly improved emotional adjustment of divorcees.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group

| Sex | N | Mean | Std deviation | df | t | p |
|--------|----|-------|---------------|----|-------|-------|
| Male | 15 | 89.87 | 9.75 | 28 | -0.33 | 0.750 |
| Female | 15 | 91.00 | 9.29 | | | |

Result in table 3 shows the difference in the post-test mean scores of male and female divorcees' emotional adjustment in the experimental cognitive restructuring group. Results indicated that the probability value is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no difference in the post-test mean scores of male (Mean = 89.87, SD = 9.75) and female (Mean = 91.00, SD = 9.29) divorcees in the experimental cognitive group, $t(28) = -.33$, $p > .05$. This implies that the treatment of cognitive restructuring has equal effect on male and female divorcees; this means that gender is therefore not a barrier to the efficacy of the treatment.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in post-test means scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental role-playing group.

Table 4: t-test analysis showing post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of male and female divorcees in the experimental role-playing group

| Sex | N | Mean | Std deviation | df | t | p |
|--------|----|-------|---------------|----|-------|------|
| Male | 15 | 87.67 | 8.61 | 28 | -0.49 | 0.63 |
| Female | 15 | 88.87 | 4.21 | | | |

Table 4 shows that the p-value is not less than 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained; hence there is no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. It is then concluded that there is no significant difference in the post test mean scores on emotional adjustment of male (Mean = 87.67, SD =8.61) and female (Mean = 88.87, SD = 4.21) divorcees in the experimental role-playing group ($t(28) = -.49$, $p > .05$). This means that gender does not influence the efficacy of the treatment, as the treatment of role playing has equal effect on male and female divorcees.

Ho5: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group due to educational qualification.

Table 5: ANOVA for post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group due to educational qualification

| Sources of variation | Sum of squares | df | Mean | F | p |
|----------------------|----------------|----|-------|------|-------|
| Between groups | 107.06 | 3 | 35.69 | | |
| Within groups | 2444.31 | 26 | 94.01 | 0.38 | 0.770 |
| Total | 2551.37 | 29 | | | |

Table 5 shows that the p-value of .770 is higher than the .05 level of significance, hence the hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental cognitive restructuring group due to educational qualification, $F(3,26) = 0.38$, $p > .05$. That is, irrespective of the educational qualification of the divorcees, the cognitive restructuring treatment is effective on all of them.

Ho6: There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental role-playing group due to educational qualification.

Table 6: One way analysis of variance for post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental role-playing group due to educational qualification

| Sources of variation | Sum of squares | df | Mean | F | p |
|----------------------|----------------|----|-------|------|-------|
| Between groups | 290.19 | 3 | 96.93 | | |
| Within groups | 1005.68 | 26 | 38.68 | 2.50 | 0.008 |
| Total | 1295.87 | 29 | | | |

Table 6 shows that the p of 0.008 is less than the significance level ($p < .05$). The hypothesis is rejected and signifies that there is significant difference in the post test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the experimental role-playing group due to educational qualification, $F(3, 26) = 2.50$, $p < .05$. This implies that educational qualification is a factor to be considered while applying role playing technique in emotional adjustment of divorcees, as it has influence on the outcome of the technique on the subjects.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of counselling approaches in improving the emotional adjustment of divorcees in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue state. This is evident from the results of data analysis and testing of hypotheses presented under presentation of results which show remarkable differences between the mean scores of those in the experimental groups of counselling approaches and those in the control group who were never exposed to treatment.

The result in table 2 indicates that the experimental groups had an impressive mean score advantage over the control group. As a result, the null hypothesis of no significant

difference was rejected. The significant difference in mean scores on emotional adjustment of the groups of participants was in favour of those in the treatment. The finding is consistent with that of Ker, Ekoja and Ekoja (2006), and Iwok and Uwah (2009), who reported in their studies that counselling approaches were effective in participants that went through the treatment sessions.

The findings also indicated a significant difference in pre-test and post-test mean scores on emotional adjustment of divorcees in the cognitive restructuring, role-playing and control group. The findings of this study are in agreement with the result of earlier studies of Vanpelt (2002) and Melgosa (2007) who proposed that a partner feels so worthless and experiences low self-concept when his/her marriage is terminated. A failed marriage often portrays the couple as failures. Neither the 'leaver' nor 'left' can escape the emotional crisis that accompanies divorce. When a marriage ends, there has already been massive destructive impact on each partners' self-concept.

The findings also revealed the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring and role-playing techniques on the treatment of divorcees' low emotional adjustment. The findings of this study appear to be in harmony with previous works, which showed significant improvement in behaviours and attitudes when exposed to a group treatment than those not exposed to any group treatment. Ker, Ekoja and Ekoja (2006), and Iwok and Uwah (2009) asserted that cognitive restructuring and role-playing used on group can facilitate deeper self-understanding and self-acceptance. Ugboha (2012) found out that the two techniques can help divorcees to alter their maladaptive thought patterns and replace them with more realistic and constructive thoughts. This was why the treatment factor showed significant difference over the control group.

Implications for counselling

The counselling implications of the findings of this study is that counselling approaches of cognitive restructuring and role play have therapeutic effects for those experiencing emotional pains and instability. The professional counsellors who are well equipped with the techniques and skills should use same to assist clients to recognize the irrational, negative thought patterns and behaviour and be able to change, rethink and restructure for improved emotional adjustment and rational behaviour. The government and the communities should provide the counsellors with conducive environments to render proper counselling services to those hurting or experiencing emotional pains as the divorcees.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown the effectiveness of counselling approaches on emotional adjustment of the hurting population. There is the need for adopting intensive and consistent counselling approaches in the community for those experiencing pains as a result of divorce. This is because they help the victims to rethink, restructure and change their behaviour to be able to live a normal life like others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Every community and judicial establishments should have a counselling centre with a professional counsellor to give a helping hand to those experiencing emotional adjustment.
2. The divorcees should be encouraged to always seek the expert services of the professional counsellors to assist them rediscover themselves, think rationally and behave well in order to coexist and live a normal life like others.
3. With the high rate of divorce in recent years, the government should train more professional counsellors who will be able to handle emotional adjustment of this hurting population.

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