
Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Technique on Emotional Adjustment Among Sampled Single Mothers in Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on emotional adjustment among sampled single mothers in Abia State, Nigeria. The need for the research came as a result of high increase of single mothers in the area of the study and the quest to ameliorate the continuous increase in the subject area. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the non-randomized pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental design. The population of the study consisted of 52 sampled single mothers in Umuahia and Isuikwuato Local Government Areas of Abia state. The entire populations of 52 single mothers were used as sample for the study because the number was manageable by the researchers. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Emotional Adjustment of Single Mothers Questionnaire (EASMQ)" developed by the researchers and validated by three professionals from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.83, which was deemed sufficient for the study. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at p 0.05 level of significance and answer research questions utilizing the data obtained for the study. The result of the study indicated that cognitive restructuring technique had significant effect on emotional adjustment of sample single mothers. The study also showed that there was no significant difference in the effects of cognitive restructuring technique on emotional adjustment among urban and rural single mothers. In other words, urban and rural single mothers benefitted almost equally from the CRT treatment. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that professional counsellors should employ all necessary avenues such as workshops, seminar and jingle to help the single mothers adjust emotionally using cognitive restructuring technique.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive restructuring, Technique, Emotional adjustment, Single mothers, Abia state

INTRODUCTION

The multiplicities of real life situation have made human interaction and independence inevitable. Apparently, human beings cannot survive in isolation. Hence, individuals tend to seek for companionship and intimate relationship with others which are referred to as their partners. It is therefore understandable that when there is harmony in a relationship (between a male and a female) it gives vent to stability which leads to familyhood or agreement for sexual behaviour. Sexual behaviour is a product of biological and psycho-social forces which involve heterosexuality and bisexuality behaviour that may result to parenthood (Chigbu, Nwobi, Nwanna & Etele, 2021).

Parenting has become a difficult task considering the negative norms and values nurtured in our environment amidst our children. Though, Chigbu, Ofojebe, Grace, Uzokwe and Mokwelu, (2022) assert that parents have a critical role in the task of inculcating positive values in adolescents yet illicit sexual behaviour has persistently and seemingly become a norm contrary to established societal values. Thus, the untold economic hardship and struggle for survival have made parenting responsibility to hit the rock. The toxification of our societal norms and values has pushed this sacred responsibility (parenting) to the mud thereby pushing it to the hand of solely one person. A responsibility that two persons hardly manage is presently and conspicuously left in the hand of single persons which, most often, than not are mothers.

Single parents are those individuals who incidentally find themselves in charge of responsibilities meant for two persons to handle with no choice of options than to face the consequences. Single parenthood as viewed by Achakpa (1999) is the taking of family responsibility (which includes caring for children) without the father's or mother's contribution. Husmiati, Adi, Budiman, Fahmi and Fikran (2020) postulate that there is rapid and drastic increase in the number of single family around the world as a result of divorce, desertion or separation of adults, death of adult, giving birth to an illegitimate child among others. Grace and Mary (2022) noted that single parent is a challenging responsibility especially when the family is headed by a woman.

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In the United States, about 85 percent of all single parent families are headed by women and 16 percent of men (Husmiati et al 2020). Succinctly, the number of single parent families has increased drastically and it is gaining a global dimension (Adelami & Ogunbanwo, 2005). Kibel and Wagstaff (2006) affirm that the prevalence of single parenting is increasing and comprised of unmarried mothers (including teenagers), divorce and family separated by migrant labour arrangement. In Nigeria, the single parenthood is on the increase as people currently see the practice as norm rather than anomaly. Eze (2007) affirms that over 18 percent of all Nigeria children were living with one biological parent and one step parent.

The researchers' observation from daily experience and workshop during Women Annual Conference indicates that single motherhood appear to be on the increase in Abia State, and the problem is absolutely stressful for both mother, children and society. Undoubtedly, the stress which evolves from single motherhood causes emotional and psychological instability with drastic negative effect on the part of the children. Emotional and psychological instability most often result from financial strain which they experience, loneliness, sadness, poor self-concept and stigmatization and difficulty in interpersonal relationship. Single mothers go through lots of stress and emotional instability in the process of making the two ends meet. In the process of ensuring that the centre holds, they meet lots of challenges which usually result to health issues. Children of single mothers suffer behavioural disorders, emotional imbalance, poor self-esteem, sadness, depression, isolation and humiliation. Children of single mothers are more likely to experience poverty, educational failure, early and risky sexual activity, non-marital child birth, earlier marriage, cohabitation, marital discord and divorce (Mbiti, 2022). The above assertion implies that children nurtured by single mothers are more likely to be nuisances, touts and problems to the society at large and this may cause adverse effect on the growth and development of the economy of a nation.

Empirically, available literature has indicated that the high prevalence of single motherhood may be linked to economic hardship, poor parenting style, non-assertiveness, cultural diversities, social norms, experiences and location (Gonzalez, 2005). Location (urban and rural) may be responsible for higher prevalence of single motherhood. Location is an important social variable that influences the behaviour of an individual. By location, the researchers mean the place of abode by single mothers (rural or urban area), people's wellbeing are affected by various elements of the built environment including spatial allocations, lighting, access to nature, colour, indoor air quality, noise, preferred environments among others (Nagara, 2020). Access to good environment yields better cognitive functioning, more self-discipline, impulse control and greater mental health overall. Conversely, those who are deprived of adequate environment may lack control over their lives which can lead to poor personality formation and low self-esteem. The negative consequences of poor environment may lead one to single parenthood. It is on this note that the researchers are interested in investigating the environment that has greater influence to single motherhood.

Furthermore, single motherhood parenting significantly increases crime, abuse, neglect, substance abuse, depression, sadness and behavioural disorders. Dan (2021) posits that single parent children can feel frightened, stressed and frustrated by the difference between their lives and friends. Sometimes, they feel withdrawn and isolated especially when their friends discuss about their parents (mother and father). When their friends discuss with their parents freely and happily, they feel neglected and incomplete. Dan, further observed that children of single parents are more prone to psychological effect, for instance, neurocognitive illnesses, substance abuse and suicidal attempt than children from homes with two parents. Based on the above assertions, the option for single mothers to help in solving or ameliorating the negative vices associated with their status is adjustment.

Adjustment is a slight change a person encounters in process of environmental interaction (Ritu, 2015). Adjustment is the result of psychological, emotional and social equilibrium (Chigbu, Obi, Uzoekwe & Grace, 2021). In this present study, adjustment is the application of counselling technique by single mothers to ameliorate or to reduce the negative effect associated with single mother parenting. Adjustment will help single mothers to lead a healthy life full of psychological and emotional balanced lifestyle.

Emotional adjustment is an important factor needed for single mothers to withstand family pressure and stand the taste of time in the upbringing of their children. For single mothers to have emotional adjustment, they need proper guide to fit in the society therefore this role will be farfetched without the inclusion of counselling techniques. These techniques include finding special skills, using family counsellors, training in skills such as discussion and group guidance (Damian, Esther & Ugwu, 2021). Grace and Mary (2022) confirm that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in improving the emotional adjustment of the selected single mothers in Jos metropolis. CRT had been confirmed to be one of the tools for adjusting the emotions of divorcees (Nwosu, Enajedu, Itobore & Ncheke, 2022). In this regard, cognitive restructuring could serve as a veritable technique to for encouraging the emotional adjustment of single mothers.

Conceptually, cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) is a behaviour change technique that deals with the potential effect of clients' attribution on the change and maintenance of behaviour (Oguzie, Ani, Obi & Onyegirim, 2018). It is a core component in cognitive behavioural therapy which focuses on cognitive, thinking, emotion and behaviour (Mkpoikanke, Ibiwari, Elizabeth, Chigbu & Favour, 2021). CRT addresses the potential impact or clients' attributions on the modification and maintenance of behaviour (Chigbu, Oguzie, Nwosu, Ngwaka & Onu, 2022). According to Chigbu, Ngwaka and Grace (2022), cognitive restructuring is a set of coordinated counselling process aimed at helping individuals modify and re-organize their mindsets positively towards a more

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worthwhile and productive self-concepts and dependable. CRT is the therapeutic process of identifying, modifying negative and irrational thought.

Operationally, Oguzie, Ani, Obi and Onyegirim (2018) emphasized that cognitive restructuring technique focuses on identifying, understanding, disputing and replacing irrational, maladaptive and self-defeating thoughts with more rational, adaptive and self-enhancing ones. This therefore, means that counsellors can use CRT to affect change on single mothers thought patterns and their emotional adjustment. The counsellors will identify all thoughts that distort the emotions of single mothers and modify them for achievable emotional stability. Previous researches have attested that cognitive restructuring technique is an effective treatment technique for reducing maladaptive behaviours and increasing adaptive ones (Deacon, Fawzy, Lickel & Wolitzky-Taylor, 2011; Abodike & Ebenebe, 2016; Oguzie, Ani, Obi & Onyegirim, 2018). They also noted that difference in location can cause difference in the effect of cognitive restructuring technique. For instance, Frojan, Calero and Montano (2009) found that rural participants benefited more from cognitive restructuring technique than their urban counterparts. In addition, Mujtaba (2016) reported that there was no significant difference in the effects of cognitive restructuring technique based on location. Consequent upon the above reports by previous researches, establishing the effect of cognitive restructuring on emotional adjustment of sampled single mothers in Abia State will provide counsellors, researchers and other stakeholders with good knowledge of effective techniques that can be used to handle the problem of emotional maladjustment among single mothers.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on emotional adjustment among sampled single mothers in Abia State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study determined:

- 1) The difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group.
- 2) The difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of urban and rural sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group?
2. What is the difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of urban and rural sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the Pre-test and Post-test emotional adjustment mean scores of urban and rural sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a quasi-experimental non-randomized control group pretest-posttest design was used. The design is referred to as quasi-experimental by Chigbu, Oguzie, Nwosu, Ngwaka and Onu (2022) because participants are not randomly assigned to the experimental or control groups. The population for the study consisted of 52 single mothers sampled from Umuahia and Isuikwuato Local Government Areas of Abia State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled "Emotional Adjustment Single Mothers Questionnaire (EASMQ)". This tool was created by researchers and approved by 3 professionals from the Faculty of Education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The instrument produced a Cronbach Alpha of 0.83, which was deemed sufficient for the investigation. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at p 0.05 level of significance and answer research questions utilizing the data obtained for the study.

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Results

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest emotional adjustment mean scores of sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group

Source of Variation	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Increase in Mean	Remarks
CRT	26	18.05	52.40	34.35	Effective
CG	26	18.72	18.25	-0.47	

Norm=23.21 CRT= Cognitive Restructuring Techniques, CG= Control Group

Data in table 1 revealed that single mothers in the control group had a pre-test mean score of 18.72 and a post-test mean score of 18.25, with an increase in mean score of -0.47 in emotional adjustment, while those in the experimental group had pre-test mean scores 18.05 and post-test scores 52.40 with an increase in mean score of 34.35. With a post-test mean score of 52.40 which is above the norm of 23.21, cognitive restructuring technique was effective in increasing the emotional adjustment of the single mothers.

Table 2: Pretest and Posttest Emotional adjustment mean scores of urban and rural sampled single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique

Source of Variation	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Increase in Mean	Remark
Urban	14	19.55	47.02	27.47	
Rural	12	19.41	53.18	33.77	More effective

Data in table 2 above shows that the urban single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique had a pre-test mean score of 19.55 and a post-test mean score of 47.02, with an increase in mean score of 27.47, while rural single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique had a pre-test mean score of 19.41 and a post-test mean score of 53.18, with an increase in mean score of 33.77. Therefore, cognitive restructuring technique was more effective in increasing rural single mother's emotional adjustment than their urban counterpart.

Table 3: ANCOVA on the posttest emotional adjustment mean scores of single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	Cal.F	P-value	P 0.05
Corrected model	10068.911	2	3164.854			
Intercept	102.446	1	5.502			
Pretest	5.306	1	5504.248	212.342	.000	S
Treatment	5502.000	1	12.517			
Error	1468.1000	50				
Total	68622.00	52				
Corrected Model	10466.466	51				

Table 3 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 51df denominator, the calculated F is 212.34 with Pvalue of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the effect of cognitive restructuring technique in increasing emotional adjustment among the single mothers was significant

Table 4: ANCOVA on the posttest emotional adjustment mean scores of urban and rural single mothers treated with cognitive restructuring technique

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	Cal.F	P-value	P 0.05
Corrected model	1117.521	2	3.538			
Intercept	115.282	1	112.244			
Pretest	5.143	1	5.268	20.241	.103	NS
Treatment	63111.218	1	14.517			
Error	1537.000	24				
Total	6421000	26				
Corrected Model	11232.101	25				

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Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 25df denominator, the calculated F is 20.24 with Pvalue of 0.10 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the difference in the effects of cognitive restructuring technique in increasing emotional adjustment among the urban and rural single mothers was not significant.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) on emotional adjustment among sampled single mothers in Abia state, Nigeria. From the analysis carried out in this study, the results revealed that cognitive restructuring technique was significantly effective in increasing emotional adjustment among the single mothers who participated in the experiment. Specifically, the result indicated that the single mothers had low level of emotional adjustment as evidenced in their pre-test scores, but there was a significant increase in their post-test scores. Hence, the overall result implied that single mothers who were treated with cognitive restructuring technique benefited greatly in the exercise. This finding is in line with the report of previous researchers (Deacon, Fawzy, Lickel & Wolitzky-Taylor, 2011; Abodike & Ebenebe, 2016; Oguzie, Ani, Obi & Onyegirim, 2018) who reported that cognitive restructuring is an effective intervention technique in reducing various maladaptive behaviours and increasing adaptive ones. A more recent research by Grace and Mary (2022) confirmed that cognitive restructuring technique is effective in improving the emotional adjustment of the selected single mothers in Jos metropolis. Oguzie, Ani, Obi and Onyegirim (2018) observed that CRT focuses on identifying, understanding, disputing and replacing irrational, maladaptive and self-defeating thoughts to more rational, adaptive and self-enhancing ones. This could have been the reason why the single mothers who participated in the cognitive restructuring experiment recorded significant increase in their emotional adjustment. Perhaps through the thought evaluation platform provided by CRT during the experiment the single mothers gained better understanding of their irrational thought, and this may have enabled them adopt rational and self-enhancing ways of achieving emotional adjustment and stability.

Another finding of this study revealed that cognitive restructuring technique was more effective on single mothers in the rural area than those in the urban area. The second result of this study indicated that rural single mothers who participated in the cognitive restructuring experiment had a greater increase in mean their score than the urban single mothers. This signifies that the rural single mothers benefited more from cognitive restructuring than their urban counterpart. This finding is in accordance with the study of Akpama (2013) which indicated that female students benefited more from group counselling than the male students. This finding is in accordance with (Frojan, Calero & Montano, 2009) who in their study found that rural participants benefited more from cognitive restructuring technique than their urban counterparts. However, the result of the second null hypotheses indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural single mothers who were treated with cognitive restructuring technique. This implies that although there was slightly greater increase in the mean score of the rural single mothers than that of the urban single mothers, the difference was not significant. That is to say that, both urban and rural single mothers benefited almost equally from the cognitive restructuring technique experiment. This finding is in accordance with the previous report by Mujtaba (2016) which concluded that there was no significant difference in the effects of cognitive restructuring technique based on location. Cognitive restructuring is a thought identification, reorganizing and replacement process, which may not be hindered difference in location. Perhaps, this is the reason why all the single mothers benefited equally from the technique no matter where they came from.

CONCLUSION

On the ground to find out the solution to the existing problems of single mothers, the researchers develop the research topic. Apparently, the study investigated the effect of CRT on emotional adjustment of sample single mothers. The study stated that CRT was effective in adjusting the emotions of single mothers. Therefore, CRT should be used by counsellors to modify the thoughts of single mothers positively for proper emotional adjustment.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Professional counsellors should employ all necessary avenues such as workshops, seminar and jingle to help the single mothers adjust emotionally using cognitive restructuring technique.
2. Single parents should always endeavor to seek the help of professional counsellors so as to maintain good level of emotional adjustment in order to carry out their parenting responsibilities effectively.
3. Government at all levels should employ adequate qualified counsellors in welfare centers to take care of the emotional and psychological needs of single parents.

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