



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AS CORRELATES OF POST-DIVORCE ADJUSTMENT IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the predominant environmental factors responsible for post-divorce adjustment and the relationship between environmental factors (social network and work place environment) and post-divorce adjustment in North-Central Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with all male and female divorcees constituting the population. One thousand, one hundred and ninety-six (1196) male and female divorcees were sampled from three states in the North-central region using multi-stage sampling procedure. A self designed instrument tagged 'Questionnaire on Environmental Factors as Correlates of Post-Divorce Adjustment (QEFCPDA)' was used for data collection. Validity of the instrument was established by experts in Social Studies, marriage counselors as well as Tests, Measurement and Evaluation while its reliability was established through Cronbach-Alpha method that yielded 0.77 coefficients. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that work place environment was the predominant environmental factor that best contributed to post-divorce adjustment in North-Central, Nigeria. The study also revealed a significant relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment as well as significant relationship between work place environment, social network and post-divorce adjustment. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that work environment should be made conducive and accommodating for divorcees while co-worker should always look out for them in order to create means of assisting them to adjust positively.

Keywords: Divorce, Adjustment, Post-divorce adjustment, Environmental factors, Social network, Work place environment.

Introduction

Divorce can be defined as the process of terminating a marriage or marital union. It is a process of ending a marriage legally and illegally. Divorce, otherwise known as dissolution of marriage, usually entails the canceling or reorganizing of the duties and responsibilities of marriage, thus dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country or state. Simply put, divorce is a legal and illegal ending of a marriage. According to Ukpung (2014), divorce is a legal dissolution of the marriage, relation; any formal separation of a man and his wife according to established custom; a complete separation of any kind. In one of his article, Moriel (2021) opined that the three

most common causes of divorce are conflict, arguing, and irretrievable breakdown in the relationship, lack of commitment, infidelity, and lack of physical intimacy.

According to Rice (2002), as at 1999, the United States had a divorce rate of 5% per 1000 married persons; Australia 4.3% and Sweden 2.7% per 1000. Recent statistics as at 2019 shows that around 60% of second marriages in Australia end in divorce. The most recent data from the 2019 American Community survey puts the rate at 14.9% divorces per 1000 marriages which was regarded the lowest number since 1970. According to the United Nations, the Maldives has the highest divorce rate in the world with 10.97% divorces taking place per 1000 people each year. Belarus has the second highest



worldwide divorce rate, with 4.63% per 1000 followed by the US. The divorce rate remained at 1.9% divorces per 1000 people in 2020 in Australia. This indicates that the issue of divorce is a global phenomenon that is not peculiar to only Nigeria.

Recent statistical studies on divorce in Nigeria confirm the fact that married couples in Nigeria are increasingly drifting apart and the cumulative spousal separation rate increased by 14% over the past calendar year across the country's population (Vanguard Newspaper, 2020). Available literature such as Nwoye (1999), Omeje (2000), Aroh (2001), Asogwa (2003), and Mirror (2004) observation from the Nigerian society show that marriage breakdown seems to be on the increase and it is becoming increasingly stressful on the part of the divorcees, their children and the society at large. In addition, a record obtained from Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court showed that 24 divorce cases were filed from January to March 2017 in that court alone. Oyedokun and Alumona, (2018) lamented on the divorce epidemic in Lagos, as 30,000 cases of divorce were recorded in Badagry alone (National Centre for Health Statistics, 2011).

Divorce in Nigeria context is not properly documented, perhaps due to non-involvement of courts and welfare units in most divorce cases. Most Nigerians tend to treat their divorce issues secretly, hence determining the percentage rate seems to be difficult, so also is getting the total number of divorcees. From observation, the recent socio-economic recession in Nigeria has greatly contributed to the rate of divorce in Nigeria. This particular cause has really affected so many couples especially in North-central, Nigeria. For instance, within the period 2016-2020 in Kogi State, there was high rate of divorce cases reported as a result of retrenchment exercise. Many breadwinners could not meet up with their financial responsibilities as required within the family because of the percentage payment of salary.

A scholar, Obiadi (2003) identified evil effects of divorce as living a loose life and wandering about without control thereby indulging in sexual excesses and other social misconducts. Frustrated divorced ladies could resort to prostitution to make ends meet. In

addition, divorce tends to lead to incurring unbudgeted expenses when litigation is involved. It has been observed to contribute to increased number of single parenting which seems to affect proper child upbringing. In the opinion of Holemsand and White (2005), divorced people are likely to develop physical illnesses and have higher morbidity rate. Past researchers on the process of divorce, such as Ezechi (2005) and Obi (2006) focused mainly on the specific difficulties like withdrawal from relationship with others, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, financial insecurity, irritability and inability to relax. Other psychological maladjustments identified by scholars are depression, emotional distress, mental illness, anxiety, a sense of personal failure, rejection or identity crises, sadness, loneliness, emotional turmoil and guilt.

The concept of adjustment is applied to many aspects of social behaviour. Adjustment is defined as a process whereby a compromise is struck between persons and their environment; the process by which a harmonious relationship is attained. Adjustment in Psychology refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. Adjustment also means the reaction to the demands and pressures of social environment imposed upon the individual. The demand to which the individual has to react may be external or internal environment. Human beings are able to adjust to the physical, social and psychological demands that arise from having interred dependability with other individual. The Dictionary of Education defines post-divorce adjustment as the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment. Adjustment is further defined by Agulanna (2002) as a state in which an individual strives to resolve stress and create new ways of handling new situation of each life stage that one may find himself or herself.

Post-divorce adjustment refers to a state in which the divorced person has a positive evaluation of him or herself; a process of adapting to the life changes that result from divorce and achieving psychological and emotional stability following divorce. The



divorce literature indicates that individuals vary greatly in their variations to divorce (Hetherington, 2003; Amato, 2000). A review of the consequences of divorce indicated that divorce benefits some individuals, causes temporary decline in well-being for others, and forces some on a “downward trajectory” from which they never recover (Amato, 2000). Due to these varied responses to divorce, the research literature defines post-divorce adjustment along both positive and negative lines. It is most common to assess post-divorce adjustment through indicators of psychological maladjustment, such as depression, emotional distress, mental – illness, anxiety, loneliness, a sense of personal failure, rejection, or identity crises (Kitson and Morgan, 1990). However, it is also possible to focus on positive adjustment to divorce. Positive adjustment involves being relatively free of signs and symptoms of physical or mental-illness; being able to function adequately in the daily role responsibilities of home, family, work and leisure, and having developed an independent identity that is not tied to marital status or the ex-spouse (Kitson and Morgan, 1990).

Environmental factors simply refer to the prevailing situations within the new environment that could make or mar the psychological adjustment of the divorcees. A new environment can be a tool to aid divorcees in developing greater emotional wellness. However, according to Peter (2022), while a new environment can be a tool towards greater life satisfaction, it cannot replace, address and deal with issues that may arise during and after the end of the marriage. In course of adjustment, the psychologists laid emphasis on how individual divorcee could struggle to get along or survive in his or her social environment. This entails making oneself fit for the demands of the external world. This consists of two kinds of processes, which are fitting oneself in a given circumstance and changing the circumstance to fit one's needs. Divorce always proves to be an emotionally challenging and even traumatic experience, this oftentimes force divorcees to seek happiness or better emotional well-being. Environmental factors such as work place environment and social network could responsible for post-divorce adjustment.

Workplace environment is a location

where someone works, for their employer or themselves, a place of employment. Such a place can range from a home office to a large office building or factory. For industrialized societies, the workplace is one of the most important social spaces other than the home, constituting "a central concept for several entities: the worker and family, the employing organization, the customers of the organization, and the society as a whole" (Jackson and Suomi, 2001). Wanberg, Csillag and Duffy (2022) from their qualitative findings revealed that for some, divorcing frees up time and energy and amplifies motivation for work. The authors stressed that individuals

improve on work-related cognitive and physical engagement, job performance, and health after their divorces are completed. According to Silva (2023) emotional divorce in the workplace affects both individuals and organizations. For individuals, it leads to decreased job satisfaction and overall well-being.

For organizations, divorce has been observed to result in reduced employee loyalty and innovation. Until now, little research had examined how the effects of divorce may spill over at work. Wanberg, Duffy and Csillag, (2022) recently published their findings from two studies in Personnel Psychology. The first study surveyed more than 500 people who were married or cohabiting, going through a divorce, or had divorced with five years. The researchers found that on average, divorcing individuals reported lower health, poorer job performance and a more negative mood at work. Also nearly 44% of those going through divorce agreed that being in the process had a negative impact on their work. The finding further showed that nearly 39% of those going through a divorce agreed that divorcing had a positive impact on their work.

In Krumrei et al (2007) it was indicated that social relationships during the post-divorce period are associated with higher levels of positive adjustment and lower levels of maladjustment. In particular, network relationships are important in promoting positive adjustment, while, specific relationships are



important for buffering against maladjustment. In general the findings suggested that changes in the social networks of individuals from pre to post-divorce tend to decrease the quality of the person's adjustment to these life-crises such as depression, anxiety, stress, guilt, loneliness, isolation and emotional turmoil. Hetherington (2003) and Preece and De Longis (2005) found that the quality of close personal relationship can both promote and undermine psychological and physical health following divorce.

Meaningful and fulfilling workplaces can be created by prioritizing emotional connection and taking proactive steps toward fostering a culture of unity. Encouraging open and honest communication among team members fosters an environment where individuals can share their thoughts, concerns, and personal experiences. Actively listening to one another and providing genuine support and empathy, organizing virtual team-building activities that promote collaboration also fosters a sense of camaraderie. These activities include virtual coffee breaks, online games, or even virtual fitness challenges. The goal is to create opportunities for social interaction and shared experiences. Satisfied employees help build brand loyalty, and they drive organizational success.

Emotional divorce profoundly impacts individuals, leading to feelings of apathy, disillusionment, and disengagement. This lack of emotional support and connection can negatively affect mental well-being, leading to increased stress and burnout. And it is not just individuals who suffer--organizations bear the brunt of it as well. A lack of emotional connection can affect overall job satisfaction and a sense of purpose, decreasing motivation and productivity. According to Al-Shahrani and Hammad (2015) in their study, linear regression analysis indicated that depression, anxiety, and loneliness were strong predictors of emotional divorce, explaining 61% of the variance in the emotional divorce scores in this sample. These findings highlight the need to focus on the mental health outcomes of individuals experiencing emotional divorce, especially in societies where legal divorce may not be acceptable or encouraged. The authors added that mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness are

common among individuals experiencing formal and emotional divorce alike. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that emotional divorce in poor marital relationships could be predicted based on the incidence of mental health problems in the present sample. The finding threw light on the nature of association between emotional divorce and measures of adverse mental health outcomes. This finding was also confirmed by Momeni and Azadifard (2015) studies that reported that emotional divorce leads to depression, impatience, anxiety, psychological loneliness, feelings of inferiority, and loss of self-confidence. As individuals, the emotional gap can be bridged by seeking collaboration, networking, and mentorship opportunities. Engaging in open and honest communication with colleagues, seeking emotional support from friends and family outside of work, and finding purpose in personal growth can also help restore that emotional connection.

Social networks are websites and application that allow users and organization to connect, communicate, share information and form relationships. It involves using online social media platforms to connect with new and existing friends, family, colleagues and customers. Social networking can have a social purpose, a business purpose or both through sites like facebook, X(formerly Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, Whatsapp and Pinterest. Observation shows that social media has changed the way people meet and interact with each other. It provides a platform to learn more about people to associate with. However, social media usage has also contributed to problems in romantic relationships. Growing research has shown that increased usage of social media has had a negative effect on marriages and relationships. Higher levels of social media usage have led to more marital problems, infidelity, conflicts, jealousy, and eventually divorce. It is not only what a person does on social media, but also how much time they spend doing it that can create conflict. Excessive time spent on social media has been shown to negatively impact romantic relationships.

Statement of Problem

The number of divorce cases in Nigeria appears to have significantly increased over the



past few years. Recent statistical studies on divorce tend to confirm the fact that married couples are increasingly drifting apart and the cumulative spousal separation rate increased by 14% over the past calendar years. The social and emotional effects that follow divorce can be a lifelong experience and may have a lasting effect on the children and the divorced parents especially women. It appears divorcees face adjustment problems after the experience. Positive adjustment is good for the society while negative could have effects such as acting aggressively (common among men), bullying others, doing drugs, dressing a certain way, drinking alcohol, engaging in vandalism or other criminal activities, having sex uncontrollably, and physical fighting among others. Divorcees may be hostile and faced with lot of stress while going through adjustment. The identified evil effects of divorce are living a loose life and wandering about without control thereby indulging in sexual excesses, depression, loneliness, financial hardship, prostitution, increased number of single parenting which seems to affect proper child upbringing and other social misconducts that affect the parents, children and the society at large. This study is geared to examining the predominant environmental factor that is responsible for post-divorce adjustment or contributes to the consequences of divorce either positively or negatively in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the predominant environment factor responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North-Central, Nigeria. It also examined the relationship between environmental factors (work place environment, and social network) and post-divorce adjustment.

Research Question

The research question below was raised to pilot the study:

1. What is the predominant environmental factor responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North-Central Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment.
2. There is no significant relationship between workplace environment and post-divorce adjustment.
3. There is no significant relationship between social network and post-divorce adjustment.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could be of immense benefit to divorcees and guidance practitioners. The findings of this study could assist the divorcees to adjust themselves into divorce issues and the problems of divorce within the environment that they may find themselves. This study could as well encourage guidance counselors to organize periodic counseling to members of their community in order to awaken the awareness of the importance of good intact and healthy family living.

Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for this study. The population consisted of all the male and female divorcees in North Central, Nigeria. One thousand, one hundred and ninety-six (1196) male and female divorcees were sampled from three states in North Central, Nigeria using multi-stage sampling procedure. An instrument tagged 'Questionnaire on Environmental Factors as Correlates of Post-Divorce Adjustment (QEFPCDA)' was used to collect data for the study. The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validity by experts in Social Studies, Marriage Counselors as well as Tests, Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach-Alpha method and a reliability co-efficient of 0.77 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for research question as well as inferential statistic of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.



Results

Research Question: What is the predominant environmental factor responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North Central, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating on predominant environmental factors responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North Central, Nigeria

Environmental Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work Place Environment	1196	23.71	2.885
Social Network	1196	23.06	1.592

From table 1 data obtained revealed the predominant environmental factor responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North-central Nigeria. Considering the mean score of 23.71, work place environment is considered the environmental factor predominantly responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North-central Nigeria. This is closely followed by social network with the mean score of 23.06.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment.

Table 2: PPMC showing relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r _{cal}	p-value
Environmental Factors	1196	95.26	3.699	0.066*	0.023
Post-divorce Adjustment	1196	63.39	7.105		

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

From table 2 data obtained revealed that r_{cal} = 0.066; p = 0.023 < 0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between workplace environment and post-divorce adjustment.

Table 3: PPMC showing relationship between work place environment and post-divorce adjustment

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r _{cal}	p-value
Work Place Environment	1196	20.39	1.977	0.246*	0.000
Post-divorce Adjustment	1196	63.39	7.105		

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

From table 3 data obtained revealed that r_{cal} = 0.246; p = 0.000 < 0.05. Since the p value is less

than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between work place environment and post-divorce adjustment.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between social network and post-divorce adjustment.

Table 4: PPMC showing relationship between social network and post-divorce adjustment

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r _{cal}	p-value
Social Network	1196	13.88	2.417	0.074*	0.010
Post-divorce Adjustment	1196	63.39	7.105		

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

From table 4 data obtained revealed that r_{cal} = 0.074; p = 0.010 < 0.05. Since the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between social network and post-divorce adjustment.

Discussion

The findings from this study revealed that work place environment is considered the environmental factor that is predominantly responsible for post-divorce adjustment in North Central, Nigeria with a mean score of 23.71. This is closely followed by social network with the mean score of 23.06. The study further revealed that there was significant relationship between environmental factors and post-divorce adjustment. This finding revealed the importance of environmental factors to post-divorce adjustment as seen in the findings of Odedele and Egotanwa (2006) who revealed that the environment of man could be social, economic, political, cultural and physical. Social environment refers to people in the society and their relationship with each other, how they interact, provide for their needs and solve their problems, while physical environment refers to physical features that surround them such as building, atmosphere among others that influences their behaviours positively or negatively. Based on the above, environmental factor in this study refers to the prevailing situations within the new environment that could make or mar the psychological adjustment of the divorcees.

The finding of the study further revealed that



there was significant relationship between work place environment and post-divorce adjustment. This finding corroborates that of Wanberg, Csillag and Duffy (2022) who from their qualitative findings revealed that for some, divorcing frees up time and energy and amplifies motivation for work. The authors stressed that

individuals improve on work-related cognitive

and physical engagement, job performance, and health after their divorces are completed. Until now, little research had examined how the effects of divorce may spill over at work. Finding of the study also revealed that there was significant relationship between social network and post-divorce adjustment. This finding corroborates Krumrei et al (2007) who indicated that social relationships during the post-divorce period are associated with higher levels of positive adjustment and lower levels of maladjustment and that network relationships are important in promoting positive adjustment, while, specific relationships are important for buffering against maladjustment. Studies by Hetherington (2003) and Preece and De Longis (2005) showed that the quality of close personal relationship can both promote and undermine psychological and physical health following divorce.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that work place environment was the predominant environmental factor that best contributed to post-divorce adjustment in North-Central Nigeria

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Work environment should be made conducive and accommodating for divorcees while co-worker should always look out for them in order to create means of assisting them to adjust positively
2. Divorcees should identify and relate more with people that could enhance their post-divorce adjustment in the social environment
3. Guidance counselors should organize

periodic counseling for members of their community in order to sensitize them to the importance of good, intact and healthy family living.

4. Parents should inculcate in children the moral values that could enable them to establish a home that strives to attain successful marital life so as to reduce the high rate of divorce in the society.

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