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Correlates of Internal Migration and Marriage Dissolution among Women in Nigeria: A Cohort Analysis

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Abstract: Background: Marriage dissolution has far-reaching social and demographic implications for individuals, families, and society at large. In the Nigerian context, internal migration alters both sexual behaviour and cultural norms with potential consequences for marital stability. Against this background, this study investigates the relationship between internal migration and marriage dissolution among women in Nigeria.
Method: We analysed data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys of 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018, and 2024. Four generational cohorts were constructed: Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2009). The dependent variable was marital dissolution, measured as either previous or current. The primary independent variable was internal migration status. Control variables included women's age, age at first sex, number of lifetime sexual partners, educational level, religion, employment status, and access to mass media. Univariate analysis used frequencies and percentages; bivariate analysis used the chi-square test of association; and multivariate analysis used binary logistic regression.
Result: The Overall prevalence of marriage dissolution in the pooled sample was 15.77%. By migration stream, dissolution rates were highest among urban-to-rural migrants at 39.9% (p<0.01), followed by rural-to-urban migrants at 34.1% (p=0.001) and urban-to-urban migrants at 31.9% (p=0.002). Urban -to-urban migrants had the lowest rate at 25.7%, though this was not statistically significant (p=0.621). After adjusting for socio-demographic confounders, binary logistic regression showed that Generation X women migrating from urban to rural areas had 33% lower odds of marriage dissolution compared to rural-to-urban migrants (OR=0.67, p<0.0.001) and Millennials (OR=0.77, p<0.0.001). In contrast, recent migration of <2yearswas associated with a dissolution rate of 44.9% (p<0.001),
The strongest predictors of dissolution across cohorts were having 5+ lifetime sexual partners among Baby Boomers (OR= 177.22, p< 0.001), female household headship among Baby Boomers (OR= 17.74, p< 0.001), higher education among Millennials (OR= 0.20, p< 0.001), and Islamic Affiliation among Generation Z (OR= 6.64, p< 0.001)
Overall, these findings suggest that socio-demographic characteristics exert a stronger influence on marital stability than migration patterns, except long-term residential stability, which showed consistent protective effects across all generations.
Conclusion: The study recommends implementing marital counselling and relationship support programs for rural -to-urban migrants, alongside economic empowerment initiatives and targeted educational support for women with low educational attainment.

Keywords: Generation, Migration, Disintegration, Nigeria, Contemporary

1. Introduction

Marriage dissolution remains a serious global problem, and African countries are no exception. The rising trend of divorce has raised concern due to its wide-ranging social and family consequences. In some countries, the rate at which both formal and informal unions are ending has become alarming. In the United States, for example, it is estimated that approximately 50% of marriages will end in dissolution within 35 years [1]. If this trend continues, many families may face disruption, with particularly grave consequences for couples approaching later life. Evidence suggests that African countries are experiencing similar patterns.

Marriage in African contexts is a complex institution shaped by diverse customs, traditions, and legal systems that reflect the continent's rich cultural heritage.[45] Traditionally, marriage is regarded as a marker of adulthood and a source of spiritual, emotional, and psychological support [26,46]. In many communities, it represents not only a union between two individuals but also an alliance between families [17,36], sealed through rites and ceremonies that vary across cultures. Despite this cultural emphasis, economic hardship, shifting norms, and changing gender roles have introduced new complexities into marital relationships, contributing to increased dissolution.

Marriage dissolution, commonly referred to as divorce, is the legal termination of a marriage that allows spouses to live separately [18,41]. The process typically involves the division of assets, determination of livelihood, and arrangements for child custody and support, resulting in the formal separation of the parties [8]. Beyond the legal process, divorce carries high emotional costs as couples contend with psychological and social consequences [21]. Children are often among the most affected, facing risks of neglect and adverse legal, psychological, and social outcomes [24]. Despite strong cultural and religious opposition to divorce in many Nigerian communities, current dissolution rates remain a cause for concern [49].

Researchers have identified several key drivers of divorce, including financial stress, infidelity, poor communication, and growing apart over time [29]. While some dissolutions result from unexpected events, others stem from deliberate decisions by one or both partners. Internal migration is one such factor. For instance, large-scale male migration in Mozambique has been linked to spousal separation with serious consequences [4, 38]. Within countries, people relocate for jobs, education, or lifestyle changes, but the process can strain relationships. Migration often disrupts social networks and support systems, leaving couples isolated [44]. Without the buffer of extended family and community, conflicts may intensify and emotional support may decline.

Internal migration can also shift roles and responsibilities within marriage when one partner migrates for work while the other stays behind; it may lead to feelings of resentment, abandonment, and inadequacy [50], as well as increased risk of infidelity or risky sexual behavior [44]. Income disparities, new lifestyles, and the financial costs of relocation can further increase stress [14,40]. Communication often deteriorates as couples adjust to new environments, resulting in misunderstandings and unmet expectations [10,28,33,34]. In the current economic climate, the demands of securing employment and adapting to new jobs, homes, and communities can leave couples with little time to nurture their relationship [12]. Collectively, these factors increase the risk of marital dissatisfaction and eventual dissolution.

Some demographic groups appear especially vulnerable. Younger individuals and lower-income families face heightened risk of dissolution [26]. Age cohorts also experience migration and economic stress differently. Generation Z women, for example, face challenges such as high living costs and changing social expectations [32], while Baby Boomers may have benefited from stronger community support networks [13]. Younger women navigating more transient urban environments may therefore experience greater isolation and marital strain.

The study objectives are:

1. to examine the level of marriage dissolution among female cohorts in Nigeria
2. to investigate the migration pattern among the female cohorts in Nigeria.
3. to examine the significant association between migration pattern and marriage dissolution among the female cohort in Nigeria.
4. To ascertain other socio-demographic characteristics associated with marriage dissolution among the female cohort in Nigeria.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted among a birth cohort of women. The cohorts were created in groups of generational cohorts, based on the year and month of birth. The century-month code (CMC) approach was used [20]. Four rounds of the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys datasets were merged to obtain the cohorts (NDHS 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018, and 2024). Consequently, four generational cohorts were created; these include Gen Boomers "1946-1964", Gen X "1965-1980", Gen Millennial "1981-1996" and Gen Z "1997-2009", the total sample size was 111,126. The surveys specifically collected data on various aspects of marriage dissolution, such as the number of unions, current marital status, marital duration at sterilization, and marriage-to-first-birth interval. The survey employed a stratified two-stage sampling procedure in collecting data from the households. It was confirmed that all methods were carried out in accordance with relevant ethical considerations, guidelines, and regulations (https://dhsprogram.com/data/available-datasets.cfm).

Variable measurements

The main dependent variable was marriage dissolution, categorised as either Yes (1) or No (0). This variable was derived from the current marital status of women during the survey. Women whose current marital status was divorced, widowed, or separated were categorised as 'current dissolution'. Never-married women were excluded from the analyses. Secondly, previous marriage dissolution (Yes "1", No "0"). Women who are currently in second- or higher-order marriages or unions were classified as having previously experienced dissolution [7]

The main independent variable was the migration status, which was categorized as rural–urban, urban–rural, rural-rural, and urban-urban. Migration data are not routinely collected in the NDHS. Therefore, the migration status was derived from three other variables on which data were available, as it was conducted in a few previous studies [6, 31].

These were (a) duration (years) of stay in the place of current residence (responses recorded as years, always or visitor), (b) type of place of previous residence (city, town or village) and (c) place of current residence (urban or rural). Migration pattern was derived from respondents whose previous place of residence was a village and has lived in an urban area in the past 1 year was categorized as rural–urban migrants. An urban–rural migrant is a respondent whose current residence is in a rural area, but whose previous residence was a city or town. Rural-rural migrants were those who reported having always lived in a rural location or moved in from a village. Urban-urban migrants refer to those who have always lived in an urban location or moved in from a city or a town. Also, current migration status was coded as rural non-migrants and urban non-migrants, and the duration of stay in the current residence was generated. Other explanatory variables were categorized as socio-demographic characteristics, including number of life partners, age at first sex, level of education, wealth index, currently working, sex of household head, religion, and exposure to mass media in the last six months [2, 16]. Visitors (905 respondents) were excluded from the analysis. Data analyses were carried out at three different levels. The levels are univariate, bivariate, and multivariate. The frequency distribution of important variables was carried out at the univariate level, the chi-square distribution test of association was performed at the bivariate level, and logistic regression was performed at the multivariate level. The Odds ratios, 95% confidence intervals, including the corresponding P-value, were presented.

The logistic regression was of the form:

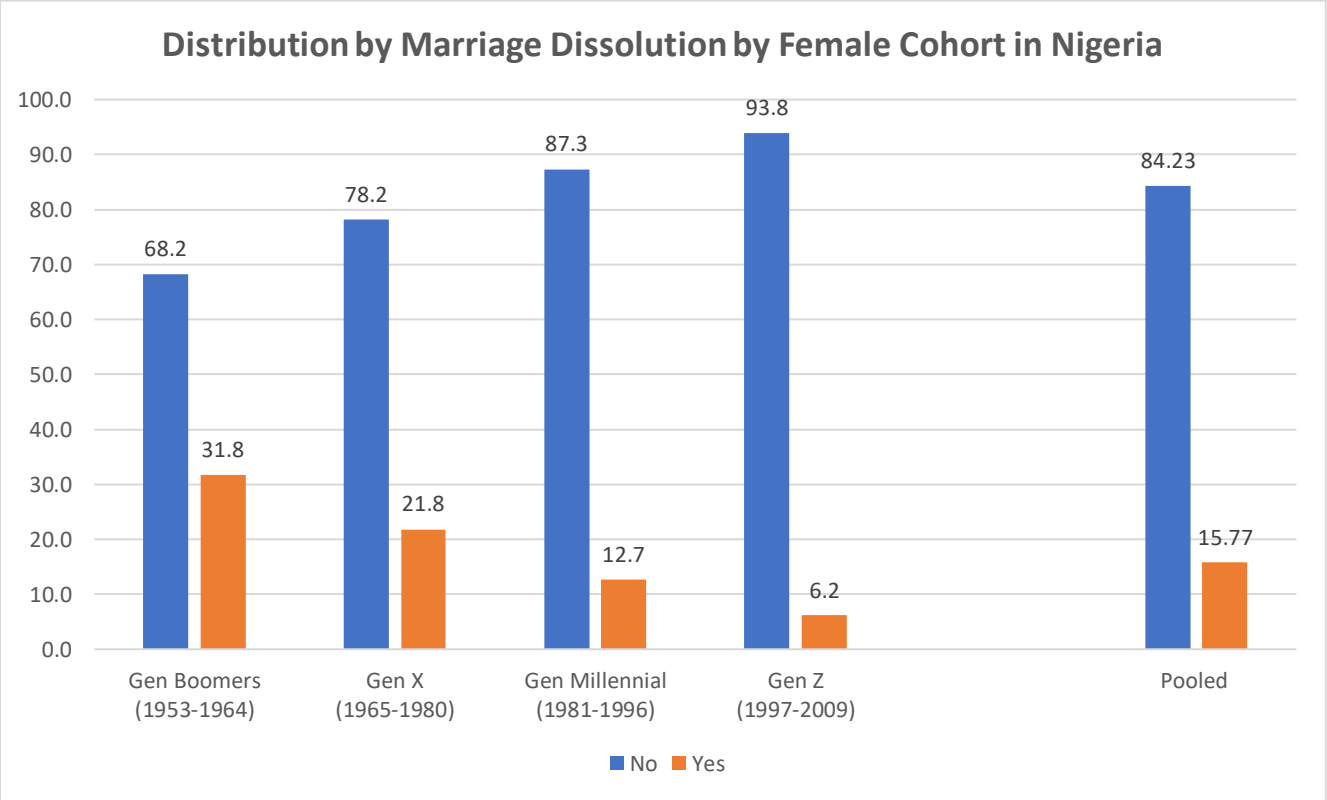
$$\boldsymbol{log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n}$$

where p indicates the probability of experiencing current or previous marriage dissolution, β is the regression coefficient associated with the reference group, and the xi are the explanatory variables. The data were weighted to extrapolate the results to other areas not included in the survey as a result of complex sampling designs (cluster sampling) used during data collection to adjust for the over-sampling or under-sampling effect of certain regions or areas and to adjust for coverage sampling error. To evaluate model fit and guide variable selection in the binary logistic regression analyses, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) were employed as relative fit indices across all generational cohorts. These information criteria facilitated the comparison of nested models by penalizing for the number of parameters, thereby balancing goodness-of-fit against model complexity to prevent overfitting, particularly given the varying sample sizes across cohorts.

3. Results

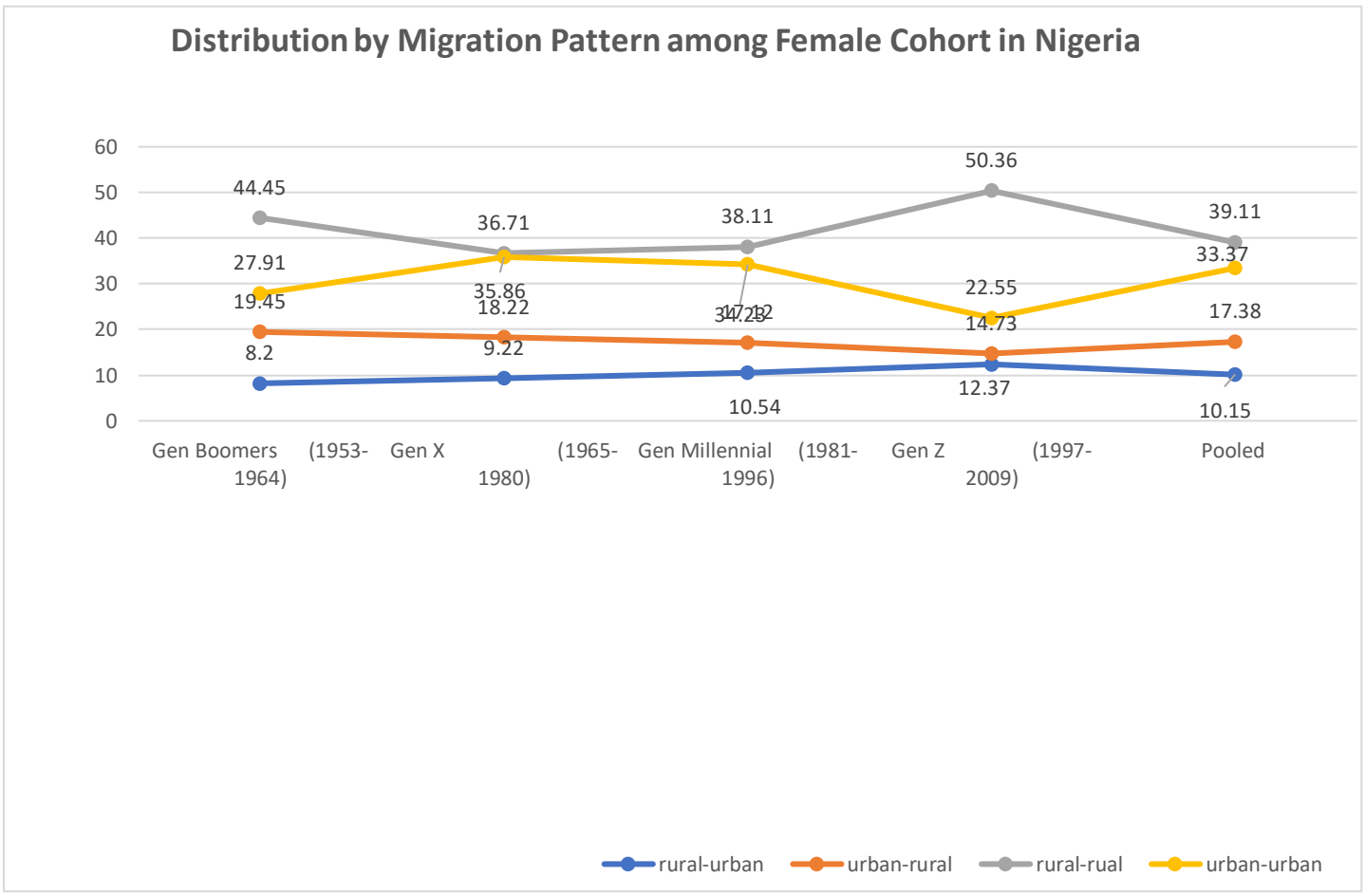
The study's first objective was to examine the level of marriage dissolution among female cohorts in Nigeria.
Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of marriage dissolution across different female cohorts in Nigeria. It shows that older generations, such as the Baby Boomers (1953-1964) and Generation X (1965-1980), have higher rates of marital dissolution, at 31.8% and 21.8%, respectively. In contrast, younger cohorts like Millennials (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2009) exhibit significantly lower dissolution rates, at 12.7% and 6.2%, respectively. Overall, the pooled data indicate that approximately 15.77% of marriages among women have ended in dissolution, suggesting a declining trend in marriage dissolution rates among more recent female cohorts in Nigeria.

Figure 1: Distribution of Marriage Dissolutions by Female Cohort in Nigeria



The second objective was to investigate the migration pattern among the female cohorts in Nigeria. Figure 2 reveals migration patterns among female cohorts in Nigeria. It shows that older cohorts, such as the Baby Boomers (1953-1964), were predominantly engaged in rural-to-rural migration (44.45%), indicating a tendency toward movement within rural areas. Similarly, Generation X and Millennials exhibit comparable patterns, with substantial rural-to-rural migration and a notable proportion of rural-to-urban movement. Interestingly, the youngest cohort, Generation Z (1997-2009), exhibits a significant increase in rural-rural migration (50.36%) and a rural-to-urban migration rate of about 12 per cent (12.37%). This suggests a shift toward more intra-rural mobility and less rural-to-urban migration compared to older cohorts. Overall, the pooled data indicate that rural-rural migration remains the most common pattern (39.11%), while urban-urban migration accounts for roughly one-third (33.37%), highlighting evolving migration behaviors across generations in Nigeria.

Figure 2: Distribution by Migration Pattern among the Female Cohort in Nigeria



Distribution by Internal Migration and Marriage Dissolution among the Female Cohort in Nigeria.

This study's third objective was to examine the significant association between migration patterns and marriage dissolution among the female cohort in Nigeria. Table 1 presents a detailed relationship between internal migration patterns and marriage dissolution among female cohorts in Nigeria. It reveals that women involved in rural-urban migration have a marriage dissolution rate of 31.9% with a statistically significant p-value (P = 0.0020). Similarly, women experiencing urban-rural migration show a higher dissolution rate of 39.9% with a highly significant p-value (P = 0.0000). For rural-rural migrants, the dissolution rate is 34.1% and statistically significant (P = 0.0014). Conversely, urban-urban migration exhibits the lowest dissolution rate at 25.7%. These findings suggest that migration involving rural-urban and urban-rural movements is associated with higher rates of marriage dissolution, highlighting migration as a potential factor influencing marital stability.

Further analysis of current migration status and duration of stay underscores the complexity of migration's impact on marriage dissolution. Non-migrants in rural areas have a dissolution rate of 30.9%, compared to 29.9% among urban non-migrants. However, women who have recently migrated (less than 2 years) show a higher dissolution rate of 44.9% than those with longer stays (6+ years), at 30.4%, with the difference being highly significant (P = 0.0000). This indicates that recent migration is associated with an increased likelihood of marital dissolution, potentially due to adjustment challenges shortly after migration. Overall, the data demonstrate that migration patterns and duration significantly influence marriage stability among women in Nigeria, with recent and cross-regional migrations correlating with higher dissolution rates.

Table 1: Distribution by Internal Migration and Marriage Dissolution among Female Cohort in Nigeria.

Characteristics	**N**	**Gen Boomers (1953-1964)**		**Gen X (1965-1980)**		**Gen Millennial (1981-1996)**		**Gen Z (1997-2009)**	
		Marriage Dissolution		**Marriage Dissolution**		**Marriage Dissolution**		**Marriage Dissolution**	
		No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)
Migration Pattern (n=38,992)									
Rural-urban	3,956	68.1	31.9	76.3	23.7	85.4	14.6	94.7	5.3
Urban-rural	6,775	60.1	39.9	78.5	21.5	87.3	12.7	93.2	6.8
Rural-rural	15,250	65.9	34.1	75.0	25.1	86.2	13.8	94.7	5.3
Urban-urban	13,010	74.3	25.7	82.1	17.9	88.6	11.4	95.1	4.9
Statistics		19.29	P = 0.0020	77.34	P = 0.0000	25.38	P = 0.0014	2.50	P = 0.6211
Current Migration Status (69,073)									
Rural non-migrants	44,674	69.1	30.9	78.3	21.7	87.8	12.2	94.4	5.7
Urban non-migrants	24,399	70.1	29.9	78.4	21.6	87.5	12.5	91.1	8.9
Statistics		0.32	P = 0.6428	0.04	P = 0.8942	0.72	P = 0.5726	23.05	P = 0.0016
Duration of stay in current residence (n=111,126)									
<= 2 yrs	9,077	55.1	44.9	72.7	27.3	83.1	16.9	93.7	6.4
3-5 yrs	8,473	57.2	42.8	75.5	24.5	86.3	13.7	94.8	5.2
6+ yrs	93,576	69.6	30.4	78.7	21.3	87.8	12.2	93.7	6.3
Statistics		32.74	P = 0.0000	53.79	P = 0.0000	95.75	P = 0.0000	1.99	P = 0.4698

Source: NDHS 2003 -2024

Distribution by Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Marriage Dissolution among the Female Cohort in Nigeria. The study's fourth objective, presented in Table 2, was to ascertain additional socio-demographic characteristics associated with marital dissolution among the female cohort in Nigeria. The distribution of marriage dissolution by the number of lifetime sex partners shows a significant association (p=0.0000). For the Baby Boomers (1953-1964), 87.1% of women with one partner experienced no marriage dissolution, whereas only 13.0% with multiple partners (2-4 or >5) experienced dissolution. The trend is similar for Gen X (1965-1980), where 92.5% of those with one partner remained married, and 7.6% with one partner experienced dissolution, compared to higher dissolution rates among women with multiple partners—66.0% (2-4 partners) and 82.2% (>5 partners). The Millennials (1981-1996) and Gen Z (1997-2009) cohorts exhibit even higher stability among women with one partner (96.1% and 96.9%, respectively), with only 3.9% and 3.1% experiencing dissolution. Conversely, women with more than five partners have significantly higher dissolution rates: 82.2% in Baby Boomers, 42.3% in Gen X, 25.4% in Millennials, and 15.1% in Gen Z, all with p-values of 0.0000, indicating these differences are statistically significant.

The age at first sex shows a statistically significant association for Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z ($p<0.05$), indicating a highly significant association. A majority of women across all cohorts had sex before age 20 years, with percentages ranging from 62.5% (Baby Boomers) to 93.6% (Gen Z). Younger cohorts tend to initiate sex at an older age, with 37.5% of Baby Boomers and only 6.4% of Gen Z starting after age 30. The pattern suggests that an earlier sexual debut is associated with higher marriage dissolution, especially among older cohorts. The statistical significance confirms that the differences in age at first sex are not due to random chance, and the observed trend points toward earlier sexual activity being linked with increased risk of marriage dissolution.

There are significant associations between marriage dissolution and education levels across all cohorts, with p-values less than 0.05. Women with no formal education have the highest rates of marriage dissolution: 33.2% in Baby Boomers, decreasing progressively to 5.8% in Gen Z. Conversely, women with higher education levels exhibit the lowest dissolution rates, with 16.6% in Baby Boomers and 3.0% in Gen Z. The data imply that higher educational attainment is associated with increased marital stability across cohorts, with statistical significance confirming that these differences are not due to chance. The trend indicates that education may serve as a protective factor against marriage dissolution. Marriage dissolution varies significantly with wealth status across cohorts ($p<0.05$) except Gen Z($p=0.0781$). Women in the poor wealth category have the highest dissolution rates (33.7% in Baby Boomers). Similarly, women classified as middle or rich show lower dissolution rates, with 36.2% and 27.1% in Gen Z and Baby Boomers, respectively. The pattern indicates that higher wealth status correlates with greater marital stability, and the significance levels support the robustness of this association across older cohorts, though it appears slightly less significant in Gen Z.
Employment status shows no significant association with marriage dissolution. The statistical analysis indicates that employment status does not significantly influence marriage dissolution, especially in the older cohorts, with only a marginal significance in Gen X.

The sex of the household head is strongly associated with marriage dissolution across all cohorts (p=0.0000). Women living in female-headed households have considerably higher dissolution rates: 64.8% in Baby Boomers, and similar patterns are observed in other cohorts. For example, among Gen Z, 15.6% of women in female-headed households experienced dissolution. The data clearly suggest that women in female-headed households are more likely to experience marriage dissolution, and this association is statistically significant across all age groups. Religion does not show a significant association with marriage dissolution, but exposure to mass media is significantly associated with marriage dissolution in some cohorts, with p-values of 0.0089 for Baby Boomers, 0.0000 for Gen X, and 0.0000 for Millennials.

Women exposed to mass media tend to have slightly lower dissolution rates; for instance, among Baby Boomers, those exposed have a 30.4% dissolution rate compared to 34.7% among those not exposed. The trend persists among Gen X and Millennials, suggesting that mass media exposure may be linked to increased marital stability in older cohorts, with significance levels confirming this association. However, in Gen Z, no significant association is observed

Table 2: Distribution by Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Marriage Dissolution among the Female Cohort in Nigeria.

	N	Gen Boomers (1953-1964)		Gen X (1965-1980)		Gen Millennial (1981-1996)		Gen Z (1997-2009)	
		Marriage Dissolution		Marriage Dissolution		Marriage Dissolution		Marriage Dissolution	
		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Number of lifetime sex partners (n=111,126)									
One partner	74,602	87.1	13.0	92.5	7.6	96.1	3.9	96.9	3.1
2-4 partners	33,326	34.0	66.0	55.6	44.4	68.3	31.7	76.9	23.1
> 5 partners	3,198	17.8	82.2	57.7	42.3	74.6	25.4	84.9	15.1
Statistics		1327.88	P = 0.0000	7123.77	P = 0.0000	8329.164	P = 0.0000	1002.31	P = 0.0000
Age at first sex (n=111,126)									
First union	27,977	70.7	29.3	79.6	20.4	89.6	10.4	96.6	3.4
< 20 years	66,033	62.5	37.5	75.2	24.8	85.1	14.9	93.6	6.4
20-29 years	16,790	76.3	23.7	84.3	15.8	92.0	8.0	95.3	4.8
30 years above	326	70.3	29.7	88.2	11.8	90.8	9.2	NA	NA
Statistics		46.59	P = 0.0000	263.7153	P = 0.0000	382.8961	P = 0.0000	9.4353	P = 0.0400
Level of education (n=111,126)									
No formal Education	47,265	66.9	33.2	76.9	23.1	86.1	13.9	94.2	5.8
Primary	21,370	64.8	35.2	73.7	26.3	84.0	16.0	91.7	8.3
Secondary	42,490	71.6	28.4	80.5	19.5	89.1	10.9	93.7	6.3
Higher	47,265	83.4	16.6	87.4	12.6	92.4	7.6	97.0	3.0
Statistics		44.2963	P = 0.0000	344.2734	P = 0.0000	296.9486	P = 0.0000	19.382	P = 0.0031
Wealth index (n= 111,126)									
Poor	47,265	66.3	33.7	76.2	23.8	86.4	13.7	93.7	6.3
Middle	21,370	63.8	36.2	73.6	26.4	85.0	15.0	93.1	6.9
Rich	42,490	72.9	27.1	81.8	18.2	89.5	10.5	94.9	5.1
Statistics		27.24	P = 0.0000	247.46	P = 0.0000	164.69	P = 0.0000	7.95	P = 0.0781
Currently working (n=111,126)									
No	35,018	69.3	30.7	79.6	20.5	87.8	12.2	94.1	5.9
Yes	76,108	68.0	32.0	77.8	22.2	87.1	13.0	93.6	6.5
Statistics		0.4989	P = 0.5168	10.8937	P = 0.0053	5.8017	P = 0.0516	1.3093	P = 0.3264
Sex of household head (n=111,126)									
Male	97,017	77.3	22.7	84.3	15.7	89.5	10.5	94.6	5.4
Female	14,109	35.2	64.8	46.6	53.4	68.8	31.2	84.4	15.6
Statistics		598.31	P = 0.0000	4330.103	P = 0.0000	2098.215	P = 0.0000	143.9551	P = 0.0000
Religion (n=111,126)									
Christianity	45,120	68.0	32.0	78.8	21.2	88.5	11.5	93.8	6.2
Islam	64,991	68.9	31.2	77.6	22.4	86.5	13.5	93.8	6.2
Traditional	1,015	61.3	38.8	79.2	20.9	87.3	12.7	97.3	2.7
Statistics		2.6119	P = 0.3480	8.1683	P = 0.0759	47.8333	P = 0.0000	0.9938	P = 0.5264
Exposure to mass media (n=111,126)									
Not exposed	39,275	65.3	34.7	75.5	24.5	86.1	13.9	93.9	6.1
Exposed	71,850	69.6	30.4	79.3	20.7	88.0	12.0	93.8	6.2
Statistics		7.8574	P = 0.0089	65.8783	P = 0.0000	42.3572	P = 0.0000	0.0486	P = 0.8449

Source: NDHS 2003-2024

Table 3a presents the adjusted odds ratios from binary logistic regression for internal migration and marriage dissolution among the female cohort, with P-values less than 0.05. For the Migration Pattern variable, the only statistically significant effect is observed for the "Urban-urban" migration pattern, specifically among Generation X (1965-1980) and Millennials (1981-1996). Among Gen X, those who moved from one urban area to another had 34% lower odds of marriage dissolution compared to the rural-urban reference category (OR = 0.66, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.56–0.80). For Millennials, the effect was slightly weaker but still significant, with an odds ratio of 0.73 ($p = 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.60–0.87), indicating a 27% reduction in the odds of dissolution for urban-urban migrants. No other migration patterns (rural-urban, urban-rural, or rural-rural) reached statistical significance for any cohort, suggesting that the protective effect of urban-urban mobility is specific to these two generations.

For the Duration of stay in current residence variable, significant effects emerged across multiple generations, particularly for longer durations. Among Baby Boomers, residing in the same home for 6 or more years was associated with a substantial 49% reduction in the odds of marriage dissolution compared to those with stays of 2 years or less (OR = 0.51, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.34–0.76). This protective effect persisted but was slightly attenuated in Gen X (OR = 0.67, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.58–0.78) and Millennials (OR = 0.68, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.60–0.78), indicating that long-term residential stability is consistently associated with lower dissolution risk across cohorts. Additionally, for Millennials, even a moderate duration of 3–5 years showed a significant protective effect (OR = 0.84, $p = 0.016$, 95% CI: 0.73–0.97), suggesting that residential stability begins to exert a positive influence earlier in this cohort. Notably, for Generation Z, none of the duration categories achieved statistical significance, perhaps due to the smaller sample size or the limited follow-up period for this younger cohort.

The overall model fit statistics indicate that the logistic regression models perform reasonably well across generations, though with some variation. The AIC values range from 13,014.7 (Millennials) to 14,835.2 (Gen X), while BIC values range from 13,062.1 to 14,880.3, suggesting that the model fits the Millennial data slightly better relative to sample size. The large sample sizes (ranging from 1,725 for Baby Boomers to 19,725 for Millennials) ensure adequate statistical power, though the Gen Z model has a notably smaller N (3,651) and AIC/BIC values that are negative, which may reflect different baseline probabilities or model specification issues. The consistent significance of long-duration stays across three generations, combined with the selective significance of urban-urban migration for middle cohorts, underscores the role of residential stability as a robust protective factor against marriage dissolution, while the migration pattern effects appear more generationally contingent.

Table 3a: Internal Migration associated with Marriage Dissolution among Female Cohort												
	Gen Boomers (1953-1964)			**Gen X (1965-1980)**			**Gen Millennial (1981-1996)**			**Gen Z (1997-2009)**		
	Odds ratio	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C. I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C. I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C. I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C. I**
Migration Pattern												
Rural-urban (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Urban-rural	1.3	0.243	0.84 -2	0.85	0.09	0.7 -1.03	0.83	0.073	0.68 -1.02	1.3	0.429	0.68 -2.49
Rural-rural	1.12	0.559	0.77 -1.62	1.1	0.259	0.93 -1.3	0.94	0.515	0.78 -1.13	0.99	0.976	0.56 -1.76
Urban-urban	0.65	0.051	0.42 -1	0.66	0	0.56 -0.8	0.73	0.001	0.6 -0.87	0.92	0.79	0.5 -1.7
Duration of stay in current residence												
<= 2 years (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
3-5 years	0.96	0.851	0.6 -1.52	0.92	0.36	0.78 -1.1	0.84	0.016	0.73 -0.97	0.97	0.896	0.63 -1.49
6+ years	0.51	0.001	0.34 -0.76	0.67	0	0.58 -0.78	0.68	0	0.6 -0.78	1.05	0.824	0.71 -1.55
_cons	0.84	0.502	0.5 -1.4	0.43	0	0.35 -0.52	0.22	0	0.19 -0.27	0.06	0	0.03 -0.1
Model	N			N			N			N		
N	1,725			13,721			19,725			3,651		
ll(null)	-1151.2			-7486.7			-6541.5			207.246		
ll(model)	-1130.9			-7411.6			-6501.4			209.335		
Df	6			6			6			6		
AIC	2273.71			14835.2			13014.7			-406.67		
BIC	2306.43			14880.3			13062.1			-369.45		

Table 3b: Socio-demographic Characteristics, Internal Migration Associated with Marriage Dissolution among Female Cohort (Adjusted Odds Ratio Based on Binary Logistic Regression Analysis)

The adjusted binary logistic regression model in Table 3b reveals several significant socio-demographic predictors of marriage dissolution, while the migration pattern effects are largely attenuated after controlling for other factors. Among the migration variables, for Migration Pattern, the only statistically significant effect now emerges for Generation X in the "Urban-rural" category. Among Gen X women, moving from an urban to a rural area is associated with a 33% reduction in the odds of marriage dissolution compared to the rural-urban reference group (OR = 0.67, p = 0.002, 95% CI: 0.52–0.86). This protective effect was not significant in the unadjusted model, suggesting that controlling for other factors reveals a unique stabilizing influence of urban-rural migration for this cohort. Notably, the previously significant "Urban-urban" pattern for Gen X and Millennials becomes non-significant after adjustment, indicating that those effects were largely explained by other socio-demographic variables such as education or wealth.

For Duration of stay in current residence, the significant protective effect of long-term stability persists but is somewhat attenuated after adjustment. Among Generation X, residing in the same home for 6 or more years remains strongly protective, with a 33% reduction in the odds of dissolution compared to stays of 2 years or less (OR = 0.67, p < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.54–0.82). Similarly, for Millennials, the 6+ years category continues to show a significant protective effect (OR = 0.77, p = 0.001, 95% CI: 0.66–0.90), though the magnitude is slightly smaller than in the unadjusted model. Interestingly, the 3-5 year duration category loses significance across all cohorts in the adjusted model, suggesting that only longer-term residential stability (6+ years) independently reduces dissolution risk when other factors are accounted for. For Baby Boomers, the duration effect becomes non-significant after adjustment, indicating that their observed stability benefit was confounded by variables like education or household headship.

The Age at first sex variable reveals strong and consistent protective effects for those who delayed sexual debut, but only for older cohorts. Among Baby Boomers, having first sex before age 20 is associated with a 50% reduction in the odds of dissolution compared to those who debuted within their first union (OR = 0.50, p < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.36–0.69), while the 20-29 age group shows an even stronger 72% reduction (OR = 0.28, p < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.14–0.56). For Generation X, the pattern is similar, with ORs of 0.51 (p < 0.001) for <20 years and 0.34 (p < 0.001) for 20-29 years. Millennials also benefit from later sexual debut, with the 20-29 age group showing a 48% reduction in dissolution odds (OR = 0.52, p < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.38–0.71). However, for Generation Z, none of the age-at-first-sex categories achieve statistical significance, likely due to the limited follow-up time and smaller sample size for this cohort.

The Number of life partners emerges as the strongest predictor of marriage dissolution across all generations, with a clear dose-response relationship. Compared to women with only one partner, those with 2-4 partners have dramatically higher odds of dissolution across all cohorts: Baby Boomers (OR = 41.96, p < 0.001), Gen X (OR = 25.54, p < 0.001), Millennials (OR = 40.37, p < 0.001), and Gen Z (OR = 44.53, p < 0.001). The effect is even more pronounced for those with 5 or more partners, with odds ratios ranging from 18.24 for Gen X to 177.22 for Baby Boomers, though the wide confidence intervals for some estimates (e.g., Baby Boomers: 95% CI: 49.33–636.69) suggest some instability. This consistent and powerful association underscores that relationship history is a fundamental predictor of marital stability, independent of migration, duration of stay, or other socio-demographic controls.

Level of education shows a strong and consistent protective gradient across all generations except Generation Z. Compared to those with no formal education, having primary education reduces dissolution odds significantly for Baby Boomers (OR = 0.53, p = 0.009), Gen X (OR = 0.79, p = 0.006), and Millennials (OR = 0.71, p = 0.001). The protective effect strengthens with higher education levels: secondary education yields ORs of 0.44 (Baby Boomers), 0.37 (Gen X), and 0.30 (Millennials), all highly significant. Most strikingly, higher education is associated with an 83% reduction in odds for Baby Boomers (OR = 0.17, p = 0.001), 78% for Gen X (OR = 0.22, p < 0.001), and 80% for Millennials (OR = 0.20, p < 0.001). For Generation Z, only higher education reaches significance (OR = 0.07, p = 0.001), suggesting that the protective effects of education are still emerging for this younger cohort.

For the Wealth index, the significant effects are concentrated among Gen X and Millennials for the "Rich" category. Compared to the poor reference group, being in the rich wealth quintile is associated with a 42% reduction in

dissolution odds for Gen X (OR = 0.58, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.47–0.71) and a 33% reduction for Millennials (OR = 0.67, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.55–0.82). The middle wealth category does not reach significance for any cohort, indicating that only the highest wealth level confers a protective advantage. Notably, wealth effects are not significant for Baby Boomers or Generation Z, which may reflect different life-course stages: older cohorts may have accumulated wealth that is less tied to current marital status, while Gen Z may not yet have sufficient wealth variation to detect effects.

The Sex of household head variable reveals one of the most striking findings in the model. Across all generations, female-headed households are associated with dramatically higher odds of marriage dissolution compared to male-headed households. The effect is strongest for Baby Boomers (OR = 17.74, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 9.79–32.12), followed by Gen X (OR = 13.87, $p < 0.001$), Millennials (OR = 6.15, $p < 0.001$), and Gen Z (OR = 4.25, $p < 0.001$). While this association is likely bidirectional—dissolution often leads to female headship—the consistent and powerful effect across all cohorts suggests that female household headship is a robust marker of marital instability, even after controlling for other socio-demographic factors. The declining odds ratio from older to younger cohorts may reflect changing social norms and increased economic independence among women.

Religion shows a significant and consistent pattern across all generations, with Islam being associated with higher odds of marriage dissolution compared to Christianity. The effect is strongest among Generation Z (OR = 6.64, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 3.58–12.29), followed by Millennials (OR = 3.61, $p < 0.001$), Gen X (OR = 2.65, $p < 0.001$), and Baby Boomers (OR = 2.23, $p < 0.001$). The increasing odds ratio across younger cohorts is notable, suggesting that the association between Islamic religious affiliation and higher dissolution risk has strengthened over time. Traditional/indigenous religion does not reach significance for any cohort, indicating that the effect is specific to Islam versus Christianity in this context, possibly reflecting differences in marital practices, divorce laws, or social support systems.

Exposure to mass media emerges as a significant protective factor for Generation X and Millennials, but not for Baby Boomers or Generation Z. Among Gen X women, those exposed to mass media have a 20% reduction in the odds of dissolution compared to those not exposed (OR = 0.80, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.70–0.92). For Millennials, the effect is slightly stronger (OR = 0.77, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI: 0.67–0.89). This protective effect may reflect greater access to information, more progressive attitudes, or better economic opportunities associated with media exposure. The lack of significance among Baby Boomers and Gen Z may be due to differing media consumption patterns or, for Gen Z, to the relatively early stage of their marriage histories.

The model fit statistics indicate that the adjusted models substantially improve upon the null models, with large reductions in log-likelihood values across all cohorts. The AIC values range from 7,830.32 (Millennials) to 9,388.18 (Gen X), while BIC values range from 7,996.01 to 9,546.24, suggesting reasonable model fit given the large sample sizes. The Millennial cohort shows the best relative fit, with the lowest AIC and BIC among the three larger cohorts, while the Gen Z model has negative AIC/BIC values, which may reflect the smaller sample size (N=3,651) or model overfitting. The degrees of freedom increase from 6 in the unadjusted model to 21 in the adjusted model, reflecting the inclusion of multiple socio-demographic covariates. The consistent significance of key variables—number of partners, education, sex of household head, and religion—across most cohorts highlights their fundamental roles in predicting marriage dissolution, while the attenuation of migration and duration effects after adjustment underscores the importance of controlling for socio-demographic confounders.

Table 3b: Socio-demographic Characteristics, Internal Migration associated with Marriage Dissolution among Female Cohort (Adjusted Odds Ratio Based on Binary Logistic Regression Analysis)

	Gen Boomers (1953-1964)			Gen X (1965-1980)			Gen Millennial (1981-1996)			Gen Z (1997-2009)		
	Odds ratio	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C.I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower- Upper C.I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower-Upper C.I**	**Odds ratio**	**P>t**	**Lower- Upper C.I**
Migration Pattern												
Rural-urban (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Urban-rural	1.36	0.354	0.71 -2.6	0.67	0.002	0.52 - 0.86	0.86	0.253	0.66 -1.12	1.33	0.48	0.6 -2.92
Rural-rural	1.15	0.632	0.66 -2	0.85	0.18	0.68 -1.08	0.8	0.082	0.62 -1.03	0.91	0.788	0.45 -1.83
Urban-urban	0.76	0.434	0.38 -1.51	0.79	0.055	0.62 -1	0.9	0.43	0.7 -1.17	0.91	0.815	0.41 -2.01
Duration of stay in current residence												
<= 2 years (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
3-5 years	0.63	0.285	0.28 -1.46	0.83	0.144	0.65 -1.06	0.87	0.129	0.73 -1.04	0.99	0.955	0.61 -1.59
6+ years	0.63	0.198	0.31 -1.28	0.67	0	0.54 -0.82	0.77	0.001	0.66 -0.9	1.43	0.126	0.9 -2.28
Age at first sex												
First union (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
< 20 years	0.5	0	0.36 -0.69	0.51	0	0.44 -0.6	0.82	0.059	0.66 -1.01	1.27	0.577	0.55 -2.93
20-29 years (RC)	0.28	0	0.14 -0.56	0.34	0	0.27 -0.43	0.52	0	0.38 -0.71	1		-
30 years above	0.62	0.694	0.06 -6.67	0.37	0.056	0.14 -1.03	2.35	0.266	0.52 -10.54			-
Number of lifetime sexual partners												
One partner (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
2-4 partners	41.96	0	27.57 -63.88	25.54	0	21.58 -30.23	40.37	0	32.27 -50.51	44.53	0	26.18 -75.75
> 5 partners	177.22	0	49.33 - 636.69	18.24	0	13.4 -24.82	37.57	0	27.47 -51.39	38.17	0	13.27 -109.74
Level of Education												

No formal Education (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Primary	0.53	0.009	0.33 -0.85	0.79	0.006	0.66 -0.93	0.71	0.001	0.58 -0.87	1.07	0.829	0.6 -1.9
Secondary	0.44	0.013	0.23 -0.84	0.37	0	0.3 -0.46	0.3	0	0.24 -0.37	0.61	0.159	0.31 -1.21
Higher	0.17	0.001	0.06 -0.47	0.22	0	0.16 -0.3	0.2	0	0.15 -0.27	0.07	0.001	0.01 -0.31
Wealth index												
Poor (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Middle	1.01	0.958	0.65 -1.57	0.98	0.8	0.83 -1.16	0.94	0.507	0.78 -1.13	1.23	0.392	0.77 -1.97
Rich	0.8	0.425	0.47 -1.37	0.58	0	0.47 -0.71	0.67	0	0.55 -0.82	0.71	0.291	0.37 -1.35
Currently working												
No (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Yes	0.81	0.251	0.57 -1.16	1.03	0.717	0.89 -1.19	0.99	0.879	0.86 -1.14	0.71	0.122	0.46 -1.1
Sex of household head												
Male (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Female	17.74	0	9.79 -32.12	13.87	0	11.45 -16.8	6.15	0	5.2 -7.27	4.25	0	2.5 -7.23
Religion												
Christianity (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Islam	2.23	0	1.43 -3.49	2.65	0	2.23 -3.15	3.61	0	3.04 -4.28	6.64	0	3.58 -12.29
Traditional	1.21	0.788	0.29 -4.99	0.91	0.745	0.52 -1.61	1.35	0.485	0.58 -3.14	1		-
Exposure to mass media												
Not exposed (RC)	1.00			1.00			1.00			1.00		
Exposed	0.84	0.275	0.61 -1.15	0.8	0.001	0.7 -0.92	0.77	0	0.67 -0.89	0.86	0.464	0.57 -1.29
_cons	0.13	0	0.05 -0.36	0.11	0	0.08 -0.16	0.03	0	0.02 -0.04	0	0	0 -0.01
Model	N			N			N			N		
N	1,725			13,721			19,725			3,651		

ll(null)	-1151.2			-7486.7			-6541.5			207.246		
ll(model)	-557.96			-4673.1			-3894.2			447.386		
Df	21			21			21			19		
AIC	1157.92			9388.18			7830.32			-856.77		
BIC	1272.43			9546.24			7996.01			-738.92		

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the theory of marital dissolution, stability, and the theory of disruption. The theory of marital dissolution and stability states that disputes within marriages are inevitable because marriages are based on conflict and conflict resolution [47]. Marital stability or instability is influenced by changes in social and economic factors and outcomes arising from fear of leaving the marriage. It is assumed that adjusting to learning each other's character could lead to disputes that may eventually lead to dissolution. In the present times in Nigeria, changes in societal norms as husband and wife come together could cause marital dissolution. The migration of either of the parties could lead to economic stress in the destination through cultural adaptation challenges, changes in social norms, and cultural expectations. Researchers suggest that the listed factors can weaken marital relationships and thereby cause dissolution. In addition to the theory of marital dissolution and stability, the theory of disruption suggests that internal migration and other life events can strain marital relationships, leading to marital dissolution. It is assumed that long separation of couples due to migration of either party causes marital dissolution [48]. Internal migration in the country causes social isolation, struggling to adapt to new environments and causes communication breakdown. These are factors that could either lead to misunderstanding among the parties or eventually lead to marriage dissolution.

4. Discussion

The study of the relationship between internal migration and marriage dissolution among women unveils a compelling narrative that reveals broader socio-cultural transformations [5, 37]. The study examined the association between migration and marriage dissolution with a view to other associated factors in Nigeria. Generation Boomers demonstrate the highest rates of marriage dissolution (31.8%), suggesting that women from this cohort may have faced more challenging socio-cultural dynamics and stressful circumstances, potentially exacerbated by migration [35]. Generation X follows, with lower dissolution rates of 21.8%, which may reflect shifting societal norms and increased resilience. In contrast, Generation Millennials and Generation Z present markedly lower rates of dissolution, at 12.7% and 6.2% respectively. These could indicate a trend towards newer generations being more selective in marriage, potentially influenced by evolving attitudes towards relationships and the impacts of internal migration on social networks.

The trends in internal migration patterns among female cohorts in Nigeria shows that there was gradual increase in rural-urban migration from 8.2% among Baby Boomers to 12.4% in Gen Z suggests a growing trend of women seeking opportunities in urban areas, which could contribute to shifting societal norms and increased economic independence [11, 27], possibly leading to higher rates of marriage dissolution as women prioritize personal empowerment. Conversely, urban-rural migration shows a notable decline among older generations but spikes to 15% in Gen Z, from 20% in Baby Boomers, indicating younger women may be returning to rural areas, potentially reflecting either a desire for community ties or the impacts of urban challenges on marital stability [42]. The substantial rise in rural-rural migration from Gen X (36.7%) to Gen Z (50.4%) further emphasizes a potential retreat into familiar environments, which may influence traditional family structures and divorce rates. Lastly, the fluctuation in urban-urban migration reflects both mobility and integration into urban contexts, yet the drop in Millennial and Gen Z rates raises questions about the stability of urban marriages [9], suggesting that higher levels of migration may correlate with increased marriage dissolution among these cohorts.

The relationship between internal migration patterns and marriage dissolution among various generations of women in Nigeria. Specifically, women from the Generation X cohort showed a reduced likelihood of experiencing marriage dissolution when engaging in urban-rural and rural-rural migrations, compared to those who migrated from rural to urban regions [39]. This trend highlights a potential protective effect of certain migration patterns that may foster more stable marital relationships. For the Millennial women, urban-urban migration appears to confer a similar stabilizing influence, with lower odds of previous marriage dissolution reported compared to those engaged in rural-urban migration [22]. Moreover, the duration of residence emerges as a significant factor, as women who have lived in their current locations for six years or more show consistently lower odds of previous marriage dissolution but exhibit heightened risks of current marriage dissolution in the Gen Z cohort, suggesting evolving dynamics in how stability is perceived across time.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the critical impact of relationship history on the likelihood of marriage dissolution across generations. Women across all cohorts with multiple partners, both two to four and five or more, exhibit

dramatically higher odds of marriage dissolution compared to those with a single partner. The heightened likelihood of marriage dissolution among women with multiple partners underscores a significant generational shift in marital stability [53]. This pattern is particularly evident in the Baby Boomer generation, which demonstrates an overwhelming 42% likelihood of dissolution associated with increased partnership diversity, indicating a significant generational shift in marital stability tied to relationship history. Interestingly, while Gen X and Millennial women also show heightened risks with multiple partners in terms of current marriage dissolution, the strength of these associations varies, reflecting changing social norms and potentially differing expectations of marriage and partnership across generations. Collectively, these findings illuminate the multifaceted influences of internal migration and relationship experiences on marriage stability among women in Nigeria.

The impact of internal migration on marriage dissolution among women in Nigeria is significantly influenced by several demographic factors, including the age at which women engage in their first sexual experience. The findings indicate that women across different generational cohorts- Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—who have their first sex at younger ages (less than 20 years) are less likely to experience marital dissolution. For instance, among Baby Boomers, those who initiated sexual activity before turning 20 are 50% less likely to have experienced previous marriage dissolution when compared to those who had their first union, with a striking 91% reduction for those aged 30 and above [52]. This trend suggests that early sexual initiation could provide a protective effect against marital instability, which may relate to factors such as cultural expectations and economic conditions during early adulthood.

Educational attainment emerges as another critical factor influencing women's experiences with marriage dissolution in Nigeria. The data suggest that women with primary and higher education are significantly less likely to experience marital dissolutions across all generational cohorts. For example, Baby Boomers with primary or higher education status faced a 53% and 83% reduction in dissolution rates, respectively, when compared to those with no formal education. Educational attainment significantly contributes to marital stability, as women with higher levels of education experience notably lower rates of marital dissolution [51]. This trend continues in Generation X and Millennials, indicating that educational attainment not only plays a pivotal role in enhancing women's socio-economic status but also contributes to more stable marital relationships. This association indicates that as women become more educated, they may possess better financial independence, decision-making capabilities, and access to support systems, which may, in turn, mitigate the risk of marital breakdown.

Wealth and employment status are also correlated with marital stability among women within these generational cohorts. The findings demonstrate a marked decrease in the likelihood of experiencing previous marriage dissolution among wealthier women, especially notable in Generation X and Millennials, where the probability drops by 42% and 33%, respectively. While wealthier women show reduced rates of marriage dissolution, the relationship between employment and stability among Millennials indicates a more complex dynamic [2]. In contrast, employment status among Millennials indicates a more complex relationship; those currently working were found to be 99% more likely to experience current marriage dissolution than their non-working counterparts. This highlights the intricate dynamics at play where economic independence, while beneficial in many contexts, may also contribute to the revaluation of marital satisfaction and stability in a changing socio-economic landscape. These findings emphasize the multifaceted influences of age, education, wealth, and employment on marriage dissolution among women in Nigeria amidst the backdrop of internal migration.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed a nuanced relationship between internal migration and marriage dissolution among women in Nigeria across different cohorts. Marriage dissolution rates were highest among older cohorts (Gen Boomers and Gen X). Internal migration patterns significantly influenced marriage stability, with rural-urban migrants being at a higher risk of marriage dissolution compared to rural non-migrants, while urban non-migrants were consistently less likely to experience dissolution. Other socio-demographic factors, including education level, household sex composition, and the number of lifetime partners, also played a critical role in determining marital stability. The study recommended that the need for programs promoting marital counselling and relationship support for rural-urban migrants and women

with low educational attainment should be strengthened. Government and policymakers should address the socio-economic challenges faced by rural-urban migrants, including job insecurity, which contribute to marriage dissolution. In conclusion, the relationship between internal migration and marriage dissolution among women in Nigeria reveals significant trends shaped by shifting socio-cultural dynamics and generational experiences. The study indicates that Baby Boomers face the highest rates of marriage dissolution, reflecting the challenging circumstances associated with their relationship history and socio-economic conditions. In contrast, Generations X, Millennials, and Gen Z demonstrate lower dissolution rates, suggesting a growing selectivity in marital choices and evolving societal norms around partnerships. Moreover, educational attainment, wealth, and employment emerge as critical factors influencing marital stability across these cohorts, with the findings hinting at a protective effect tied to certain migration patterns. To build upon these insights, it is recommended that policymakers and community leaders design interventions aimed at supporting women's education and economic empowerment, as well as conducting further research into the long-term effects of migration on marital dynamics. Additionally, programs promoting healthy relationship education could be beneficial, especially in fostering resilience and adaptability among younger generations in the face of societal change, thus contributing to more stable familial structures in Nigeria.

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