

## FOUR

### Marital dissolution and migration in southwest Nigeria: determining the utility of migrants' social networks in a pandemic

Bamidele O. Alabi, Olufunlayo O. Bammeke  
and John L. Oyefara  
University of Lagos, Nigeria

#### **Abstract**

*This non-experimental study employed the triangulated research design to evaluate the utility of social networks in post-marital dissolution migrants at the place of destination in Southwest Nigeria, within the context of the peculiar challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. It used cross-sectional survey (CSS) and in-depth interview (IDI) methods to generate quantitative and qualitative data. Chi-square results showed that the relationship between social networks and post-marital dissolution migration is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) in Southwest Nigeria. Logistic regression model revealed that social network (family/relatives) constitute a strong predictor of post-marital dissolution migration (OR = 3.047, 95% CI 0.4–3.8,  $p < 0.05$ ). The qualitative results revealed that there were no significant impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in the place of origin for people who have embarked on post-marital dissolution migration at the destination location in Southwest Nigeria. The study recommends adequate data collection on special cohorts, for whom data have been deficient. It also recommends the adoption of deliberate policies that will promote balanced growth, within the context of the fact that migrant networks foster development for the migrants. Finally, it recommends acknowledgement and incorporation of human health frameworks in migration policy.*

*Keywords: Covid-19, Marital-dissolution, Migration, Social networks, Utility*

*Dissolution conjugale et migration dans le sud-ouest du Nigeria : déterminer l'utilité des réseaux sociaux des migrants en cas de pandémie*

#### **Résumés**

*Cette étude non expérimentale a utilisé la conception de la recherche triangulée pour évaluer l'importance des réseaux sociaux chez les migrants après dissolution du mariage sur le lieu de destination dans le sud-ouest du Nigeria, dans le contexte des défis particuliers de la pandémie de Covid-19. Il a utilisé des méthodes d'enquêtes transversales (CSS) et d'entretiens approfondis (IDI) pour générer des données quantitatives et qualitatives. Les résultats du chi carré ont montré que la relation entre les réseaux sociaux et la migration après dissolution du mariage est significative ( $p < 0,05$ ) dans le sud-ouest du Nigeria. Le modèle de régression logistique a révélé que le réseau social (famille/parents) constitue un puissant prédicteur de la migration après dissolution du mariage (OR = 3,047, IC à 95 % 0,4 à 3,8,  $p < 0,05$ ). Les résultats qualitatifs ont révélé qu'il n'y avait pas d'impacts significatifs de la pandémie de Covid-19 sur le processus d'absorption, d'intégration et d'assimilation dans le lieu d'origine pour les personnes qui se sont lancées dans une migration de dissolution post-maritale sur le lieu de destination dans le sud-ouest du Nigeria. L'étude recommande une collecte de données adéquates sur des cohortes spéciales, pour lesquelles les données ont été insuffisantes. Il recommande également l'adoption de politiques délibérées qui favoriseront une croissance équilibrée, dans le contexte du fait que les réseaux de migrants favorisent le développement des migrants. Enfin, il recommande la reconnaissance et l'intégration des cadres de santé humaine dans la politique migratoire.*

*Mots-clés : Covid-19; Dissolution conjugale; Migration; Réseaux sociaux; l'importance*

## **Introduction**

The outbreak of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which was first reported in China in December 2019 impacted the entire global community in many ways than anyone could have envisaged. The outbreak and its subsequent spread challenged fragile and stable nations, and threatened the strongest economies. To date, there have been almost 105 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection, with about 76.5 million recoveries and close to 2.3 million deaths globally (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). Of that statistic Africa has so far had almost 3.7 million, with about 3.2 million recoveries and over 92, 000 deaths (WHO, 2021).

The first case was confirmed in Nigeria on the 27th of February 2020 and it was confirmed by the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital. Since the confirmation of the first infected person, the spread of novel COVID-19 in Nigeria has continued to rise rapidly as the latest statistics provided by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control [NCDC] 2021 revealed that Nigeria has had more than 133,000 confirmed cases to date, out of which almost 108,000 people have recovered, and there have been more than 1, 600 mortality cases, thus leaving the recorded number of active cases at more than 24,000 people (NCDC, 2021).

Apart from wreaking mortal havoc on the people globally and on the global economy, the COVID-19 pandemic impeded human migration and mobility, and significantly impacted human interactions in all societies. The pandemic triggered a relentless crisis of mobility in many places, including Nigeria, particularly with the different lockdown directives of the government. The lockdown negatively impacted all forms of social networking in Nigeria significantly, as movements were curtailed considerably, with the probable effect of impacting the utility of social networks for migrants.

Social networks are a crucial element of human relationships which are commonly deployed throughout the world by for the creation of social capital. Social networks are of particular utility in migration and there are ample evidence in the literature that the process of migration is ingrained in social networks (Gold, 2001; Massey et al., 1993), as social networks are believed to be vital in all aspects of the migration experience – the decision, the planning, the choice of destinations, the journey, and particularly, the process of settlement and the emergence of social capitals at the destination (Castles & Miller, 2003; Massey et al., 1993). For example, it is through social networks that migrants learn about opportunities and conditions in potential destinations, which ultimately shape their ability and desire to leave home (Akanle & Adesina 2017; Comola & Mendola, 2015). Social networks are the sets of interpersonal ties that connect potential migrants in the place of origin to present or prior migrants at the place of destination, through relationships established at the kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Massey et. al., 2005). They are also crucial for the migrants in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in the place of destination (Chelipden Hamer & Mazzucato, 2010; Lubbers et al., 2010).

This study evaluates the utility of social networks as a veritable mechanism in the absorption, integration and assimilation of a peculiar cohort of migrants at the place of destination, in the face of the prevalent unusual challenges of Covid-19 pandemic.

### **The issue**

Post-marital dissolution migration presents a peculiar form of migration, on which only a sparse level of interest exists in migration studies, thus causing a dearth of understanding of the utility of social networks as a veritable mechanism in the absorption, integration and assimilation of post-marital dissolution migrants at the place of origin. Marital dissolution is said to be a stressful life event (Amato, 2010; Cooke et al., 2016) capable of causing crisis and distress for those involved (Booth & Amato, 1991). As such, compared to migration driven by other factors, post-marital dissolution migration is believed to be deviant, urgent, and restricted (Feijten & Van Ham, 2007), and owing to the circumstances under which it happens, post-marital dissolution migration is often believed to be unplanned, or at best, inadequately planned (Feijten & Van Ham, 2011). On account of this unplanned feature of post-marital dissolution migration, it is characterised by diverse consequences (Adepoju & van der Wiel, 2010; de Haas, 2010), and risks, which disrupts the migrants' balance, and compels them to readapt (Bhugra, 2004; Lev-Wiesel, 1998). To achieve this successfully, migrants are said to rely on social networks at the place of destination to assist with the process of absorption, integration and assimilation.

The association of risks between infectious disease and migration is a historically powerful one (Markel, 2003). Indeed, there are pieces of evidence in the literature of a frequent severe increase in the risk of increase in communicable diseases, and the spread of epidemics during and after migration - when populations residing in areas where a particular disease is not highly endemic pass through or into areas where the disease is highly endemic during the course of their migration (Ramaiah, 1995; Roberts et. al. 2009). This gets particularly exacerbated where such migrants rely on their social networks at the place of destination, with whom they are compelled to be in close proximity in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation. Expectedly, the need to mitigate risks of rapid spread of infectious disease often warrant the adoption of critical strategies such as the imposition and enforcement of social distancing and other directives which limit mobility and human interactions. Such strategies will undoubtedly have implications for social relations, particularly with regards to the utility of social networks in migration. While the importance of social networks in the migration process has been acknowledged in the mainstream migration literature, the prospects of finding pieces of empirical evidence on its significance to post-marital dissolution migration has been challenging. This becomes even more complex when considered within the context of an unusual epoch such as the prevalent Covid-19 pandemic has presented.

Migrant networks foster development in origin countries, create large remittance economies, and are the conduits of transnationalism.

### **Marital dissolution and migration in Nigeria**

Changing actualities and existing peculiarities of the African society is making the economic explanation inadequate to explain the mechanisms, progressions, and outcomes of migration in this environment. This is because new realities are indicating that other factors — social, psychological, cultural and environmental — significantly drive migration (Lundholm, 2007; Oyeniyi, 2013). Subsumed in these factors are some major life-course events (Dommermuth & Klusener, 2017; Thomas et al., 2016), in concurrence with which migration has been known to occur (Kley, 2011; Wingens et al., 2011), for

instance marital dissolution (Cooke et al., 2016; Feijten & Van-Ham, 2013). Characteristically, marital dissolution is followed by the inevitable relocation of either or both partners from their pre-dissolution location (Boyle et al., 2008; Clark, 2013). Indeed, Flowerdew and Al-Hamad (2004) posit that the probability of all forms of spatial mobility, including long-distance migration is increased by marital dissolution. In the same vein, Mincer (1978), hypothesised that the dissolution of marriage altered locational stability and ultimately induced spatial mobility for erstwhile married persons.

Marital dissolution is a prevalent social reality and a common feature in societies all over the world, including Nigeria (Akanbi, 2014; Boyle et al., 2008; Ediyang et al., 2013; United Nations [UN], 2015), where it has been observed to be on the increase, and is assuming a significant proportion over time (Akanbi, 2014; Ediyang et al., 2013), such that there are increasing reports of separation, divorce, desertions and loss of partners to death (Adedokun, 1998a, 1998b; Arugu, 2014; Ntoimo & Akokuwebe, 2014). For a country that records a high volume of migration (Adepoju & der Wiel, 2010; Bakewell & de Haas, 2007), of which internal migration has been noted to be most predominant, as over a tenth of Nigerians are said to either be lifetime migrants or live in states other than that which they were born (Isiugo-Abanihe & IOM, 2016; National Population Commission [NPopC], 2009; 2012), the subtleties of post-marital dissolution migration is still to be fully articulated and comprehended.

### **Covid-19 crisis and migration in Nigeria**

Virtually all the nations across the global community, including Nigeria, have faced, and are currently undergoing unprecedented challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from the socio-economic effect of the crisis, the COVID-19 epidemic also brought unprecedented restrictions to travel and mobility at a global level, as border closures was one of the immediate measures implemented by numerous countries to stop the spread of the virus in March, 2020. This was bound to have remarkable impact on human mobility, typified by migration, particularly within the context of a global space where according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2015, the number of people on the move in is constantly growing and had been estimated to be over 1 billion. In Nigeria, the lockdown measures and restricted mobility had marked impacts, as it created situations of 'imposed immobility' which hindered social interactions among networks, thereby engendering situations of social exclusions. For the peculiar African environments where social connectedness is the currency that nurtures the much-needed resilience for communities to persevere, particularly in the face of a crisis as severe as the Covid-19 presented itself, social networks and systems which provide support and regulate well-being was expected to become weakened by the adopted measures.

### **Theoretical underpinning**

This study will employ the Social Network Theory to explain the issues at hand.

#### **Social Network theory**

According to Wasserman and Faust (1999), social network theory emphasises the relations between individuals and it presents society as being made up of networks, which in turn comprises sets of the relationships or ties between the nodes or actors or social agents, who have been variously defined as individuals, groups, companies, or even countries. These relationship or tie is a flow of resources that can be material or non-material. The resources might include social support, emotional support,

companionship, time, information, expertise, money, business transactions, shared activity, and so on. In a social network, every node is not necessarily tied to every other node, thus explaining why any given network will always have unique characteristics. The theory believes that a person's ties tend to be with people like them, and as such peoples' personal networks tend to be homogeneous and defined by gender, occupation, education, religion, age, and most of all race and ethnicity (McPherson et al., 2001).

Considered in the context of this study, the main thrust of the proposition of social network theory becomes apposite to appreciating the dynamics of migration undertaken after marital dissolution, particularly in an unusual season of a pandemic. The selectivity of migration implies that people do not simply look around and arbitrarily decide where they might like to pick up and relocate, particularly after the occurrence of marital dissolution, as such decision may be too risky. Therefore, a migrant will seek to minimise their risks in moving and thus consider places where they know other individuals or organisations that can help them to make the trip and settle most easily. It is social networks that provide the kinds of connections needed to make migration possible. Such networks link potential migrants in origin areas with others, often family members in destination areas, or work to connect highly skilled or educated migrants with institutions or organisations in the home or destination that able to help them in different ways. In addition, within the context of the present pandemic COVID-19, the theory can be reflected upon considering the social distance, social exclusion, social stigmas, health risks, prejudices, apprehensions, and rumours generated by the outbreak of the pandemic, which appears to have shattered social relationships.

## **Methods**

To investigate the relationship between social networks and post-marital dissolution migration, within the context of a pandemic in Southwest Nigeria, this study adopted a non-experimental research design. It utilised triangulated method to generate both quantitative and qualitative data which were used in the study. The quantitative data was generated through a cross-sectional survey, and the qualitative data was generated through in-depth interview (IDI).

## **The study location**

The location for this study is the Southwest Nigeria, where data were collected. Southwest Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones in the country. Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo are the six States that make up the region. The Southwest region is relatively homogeneous in culture, and it is largely populated by the Yoruba ethnic group, hence, unified by a general language known as *Yoruba*. The region has a high incidence of internal migration activities (Oyeniyi, 2013). Nigeria's economic capital, the most economically vibrant state, and arguably the largest urban centre - Lagos State - is located in Southwest Nigeria and it attracts a high number of migrants from different parts of Nigeria, thus making the region the most cosmopolitan.

## **Study population**

The population for this study comprised of all ever-married individuals (those in subsisting marital union, those who are separated, divorced and widowed) within the age range of 18–65 years and above, who have been resident in Southwest Nigeria for not less than six months before the period of sampling.

### **Sampling/interview technique**

The probabilistic sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents in the cross-sectional survey. This was achieved using multi-stage sampling procedure. To start, the six States in the region were stratified into two groups – north and south. The states in the north are Osun, Oyo and Ekiti States while those in the south are Lagos, Ogun and Ondo States. Lagos State was selected from the south and Osun State was also selected from the north using random sampling techniques. Two Local Government Areas (LGAs) were each selected from the spectrum of stratified LGAs in each of the two states, using random sampling method, such that Alimoso LGA and Ibeju-Lekki LGA were sampled in Lagos, and Osogbo LGA and Ola-Oluwa LGA were sampled in Osun State.

In order to account for the contexts of the Covid-19 pandemic in the study, supplementary data were generated from the original samples during the pandemic. The cohorts were traced through the contacts they opted to provide at the initial stage of the survey in 2018.

### **Sample size**

The original sample size for the study was 1,200 ever-married persons, resident in the southwest region. The sample size was derived through the Yamane formula (Yamane, 1976).

Owing to the peculiarities of the times, only 18 sample size could be reached for the supplementary in-depth interview across the region during the pandemic. These purposively selected sample from the LGAs included the cohorts traced through the contacts which they opted to provide at the initial stage of the survey in 2018. The interview was conducted through a combination of platforms, WhatsApp and Telephone.

### **Data analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques were deployed to analyse the data generated. Parametric and non-parametric statistical tools were employed for analysing the quantitative data, using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS/PC+), and Computer Software Package (MS Window 10.0). It entailed univariate and bivariate analysis, as well as logistic regression. The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis.

### **Results**

Data regarding the basic socio-demographic/economic characteristics of the respondents are represented in Table 1. Sex of the respondents is the first variable on the table, and it reveals that 403 (43.1%) respondents were males, while 531 (56.9%) were females out of the total 943 respondents sampled. The table also shows that the modal age range was 40-49 years, as they represent 38.3% of the total respondents and this was followed by those between ages 30-39 years (31.2%). The outliers in the minority were between 20-29 years (5.1%) years. Respondents belonging to the Yoruba ethnic group were 638 (73.5%) while only a minimal percent (4%) were Hausas. Also of every ten respondents, 7.5 were Christians and only 2 were Muslims. The Table further reveals that of the total number of respondents, 607 (65.0%) had tertiary education while only 30 (3.2) had no education. Most of the respondents 904 (96.8%) were employed, and only 30 (3.2%) were unemployed.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of respondents**

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	403	43.1
	Female	531	56.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age Group</b>	20-29	48	5.1
	30-39	291	31.2
	40-49	358	38.3
	50-59	157	16.8
	60 and above	80	8.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Yoruba	687	73.5
	Igbo	208	22.3
	Hausa	39	4.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Christianity	697	74.6
	Islam	207	22.2
	Traditional	30	3.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Highest Education</b>	Primary	51	5.5
	Secondary	244	26.1
	Tertiary	607	65.0
	Qur'anic	2	0.2
	None	30	3.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Employment Status</b>	Employed	904	96.8
	Unemployed	30	3.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** (Field Survey, 2018).

Table 2 presents that univariate analysis regarding the marital dissolution, post-marital dissolution migration history, and the social network of respondents. The table shows that 347 (37.2%) of the respondents have experienced multiple marriages as they have been married more than once, out of which a majority 138 (31.4%) were with the experience of separation, followed by those with the experience of divorce 109 (31.4%), and those whose experience of marital dissolution was caused by the death of their partners were 100 (28.8%). Moreover, of those reported to have experienced marital dissolution, 326 (93.9%) experienced it once, while 21 (6.1%) experienced it twice or more. A significant number of all the respondents, 732 (78.4%), were life-time migrants, while 202 (21.6%) were born in the location they were sampled. Of the respondents who had experienced marital dissolution, 301 (86.7%) had embarked on post-marital dissolution migration, while 46 (13.3%) had not embarked on post-marital dissolution migration. The table also reveal that a vast majority 284 (94.4%) of the respondents who had embarked on post-marital dissolution migration had social networks (family/friends) at the place of destination prior to their migration, where 171 (56.8%) were families/relatives and 113 (37.5%) were friends/associates of the respondents at the place of destination. A vast majority 284 (94.4%) of the respondents who had embarked on post-marital dissolution migration had access to prior information about living in the place of destination before their migration. Furthermore, 280 (93.0%) of the respondents who had embarked on post-marital dissolution migration indicated that their migration was influenced by their social networks, and of these, 168 (55.8%) and 112 (37.2%) respectively, representing an aggregate of 93% of the respondents were influenced by a combination of

family/relatives and friends/associates to migrate to their place of destination. Along this line, a significant number 269 (89.4%) of the respondent who had embarked on post-marital dissolution migration had social networks who assisted them in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in their destination location, and of those assisted by social networks in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in their destination location, 158 (52.5%) were assisted by family/relatives, while 111 (36.9%) were assisted by friends/associates.



**Table 2. Marital dissolution, post-marital dissolution migration history and social network information of respondents**

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
First marriage	Yes	587	62.8
	No	347	37.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Experienced Marital Dissolution	Yes	347	37.2
	No	587	62.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Forms of Dissolution	Separation	138	39.8
	Divorce	109	31.4
	Widowhood	100	28.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Number of times marital dissolution is experienced	Once	326	93.9
	Twice	21	6.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Born in the present location	Yes	202	21.6
	No	732	78.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>934</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Post-marital dissolution migration	Yes	301	86.7
	No	46	13.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Social Networks in destination location before migration	Yes	284	94.4
	No	17	5.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Types of social networks in destination location	Relatives/Family	171	56.8
	Friends/Associates	113	37.5
	None	17	5.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Prior information about living in destination location before migration	Yes	284	94.4
	No	17	5.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Migration to present location influenced by anyone	Yes	280	93.0
	No	21	7.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Migration to present location influenced by	Relatives/Family	168	55.8
	Friends/Associates	112	37.2
	No one	21	7.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: (Field Survey, 2018).

Social networks in destination location assisted with absorption, integration and assimilation	Yes	269	100.0
	No	32	89.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	10.6
Specific social networks in destination location who assisted with absorption, integration and assimilation		158	100.0
	Relatives/Family	111	52.5
		32	
	Friends/Associates	<b>301</b>	36.9
	None		
<b>Total</b>		10.6	100.0

### Test of hypothesis

The hypothesis which sought to investigate the relationship between social networks' assistance – with absorption, integration and assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration in southwest Nigeria is

presented in table 3. It shows that ( $\chi^2$ ) is 6.914 and the 'p' value of 0.009 is lower than the level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Based on the chi-square test result attained, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) accepted. This implies a significant relationship between social networks' assistance – with absorption, integration and assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration in southwest Nigeria.

**Table 3: distribution of respondents by assistance of specific social networks – with absorption, integration and Assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration**

Social Network assisted with absorption, integration and assimilation	Post-Marital Migration		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	269	0	269
	100.0%	0.0%	100%
No	32	46	78
	41.1%	58.9%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>347</b>
	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

$\chi^2: 6.914; df: 1; P: 0.009$

Table 4 presents the hypothesis which sought to investigate the relationship between specific social networks' assistance – with absorption, integration and assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration in southwest Nigeria. It shows that ( $\chi^2$ ) is 4.496 and the 'p' value of 0.007 is lower than the level of significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Based on the chi-square test result attained, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) accepted. This implies a significant relationship between specific social networks' assistance – with absorption, integration and assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration in southwest Nigeria.

**Table 4: distribution of respondents by assistance of specific social networks – with absorption, integration and**

## Assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration

Specific social networks who assisted with integration and assimilation	Post-Marital Dissolution Migration		Total
	Yes	No	
	None	32 100.0%	
Family/Relatives	158 85.9%	26 14.1%	184 100%
Friends/Associates	111 84.7%	20 15.3%	131 100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>301 86.7%</b>	<b>46 13.3%</b>	<b>347 100%</b>

$\chi^2: 4.496; df: 2; P: 0.007$

To have a clearer insight on the relationship between social networks' assistance – with absorption, integration and assimilation at destination location – and post-marital dissolution migration in southwest Nigeria, it became imperative to adopt an advanced statistical technique (i.e. multivariate logistic regression). As such, the logistic regression was performed to further assess the relationship. The model had eight independent variables (age at migration, sex, religious affiliation, ethnic background, pre-dissolution employment status, forms of dissolution, number of children, and social networks).

The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (17, N = 286) = 52.694, p < .005$ , indicating that the model could distinguish between respondents who embarked on migration after marital dissolution and those who did not. The model explained between 16.8% (Cox and Snell R square) and 30.3% (Nagelkerke R squared) of the variance in post-marital dissolution migration, and correctly classified 89.0% of cases. The model showed that social networks was among the six independent variables (age, ethnic background and employment status, forms of dissolution, children and social network) made a statistically significant contribution to the model. Specifically, the logistic regression model for the study revealed that social network (family/relatives) constitute a strong predictor of post-marital dissolution migration (OR = 3.047, 95% confidence interval 0.4–3.8,  $p < 0.05$ ).

In terms of reflecting the peculiar contexts of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly with regards to the evaluating the utility of social networks in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation of the cohorts at the place of destination, the following excerpts are instructive:

...I got to this place before the pandemic broke out and I have been adequately absorbed, but the process of getting integrated was to begin when the Covid-19 started...although, the social distancing and the compulsory quarantine imposed by the governments led to social exclusion, it did not stop my being integrated...yes, it slowed things down a little and my hosts had to be careful too...Going back to my ex-husband was not even an option during the difficult times... (IDI, Female, 52 years, Osogbo, Osun State).

...the pandemic broke just when I was beginning to find my feet in this new place, and that made things a little difficult but only for a short while...I owe it all to my best friend who made me come to this place, and who ensured that I lacked nothing, even while the pandemic raged...that made me realise that no matter the situation, those who will be there for you will be there...that is why my people always say that a mans' greatest wealth are the people in his network... (IDI, Male, 47 years, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos State)

From the foregoing, it will appear that the outbreak of Covid-19 did not have such a significant effect on the process of settling down for people who have embarked on post-marital dissolution migration at the destination location. As such, the finding reveals that the outbreak of the pandemic did not seem to have had much implications on the utility inherent in the social networks of the migrants, despite the dire straits imposed by Covid-19.

... in my own case, I had just got a place of my own and was preparing to move in with my children when Covid-19 broke out...by this time I had already spent more than a year with my relative here, together with my children ... you can imagine they told me not to bother anymore until after the nationwide lock-down...of course it is only your people that can do that for you...so I will not say that the pandemic had any effect on what my people here did for us...in fact, they did not allow us feel the effect of the Covid-19 challenges at all...(IDI, Female, 51 years, Alimoso, Lagos State).

...you know in Yorubaland, we say “eniyan bo ni l’ara ju aso lo” and that literally means “your people (networks) are more effective protective covering than even your clothes...that is exactly what I have experienced since being in this place, and despite the outbreak of the Covid-19 at some point, my hosts and benefactors here ensured I had no reason to regret relocating to this place ... above all, they ensured I did not have reasons to get weighed down by my divorce...I am glad to get fully integrated and assimilated into this place, but I am sure that once the challenges of the pandemic are over, I will ... interestingly, my benefactors here have also promised to help through with that...(IDI, Male, 46 years, Osogbo, Osun State).

Further pieces of evidence as gleaned from the stated excerpts also reveal that despite challenges imposed by the outbreak of covid-19, including social distancing, lockdowns and attendant social exclusions, the utility of social networks was not diminished, as all the interviewees indicated that their hosts/benefactors at the place of destination continued to demonstrate willingness to continue their benevolence to the migrants.

## **Discussion**

The study investigated the relationship between post-marital dissolution migration and the utility of social network in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation at the place of destination within the context of a pandemic. The hypotheses, formulated around relevant variables, offered important and purposeful explanations of the issue that this study sought to explore. The independent variable was reported as social networks, while the outcome or dependent variable was post-marital dissolution migration. The discussion reflects indications from descriptive statistics and the results of the test of hypothesis, as well as cogent revelations from qualitative data – reflecting the peculiar contexts

of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly with regards to the evaluating the utility of social networks in the process of absorption, integration and assimilation of the cohorts at the place of destination.

The univariate analysis corroborates the ample evidence in the literature that the process of migration is ingrained in social networks (Gold, 2001; Massey et al., 1993), as social networks are believed to be vital in many aspects of the migration experiences particularly, the process of settlement, and the emergence of social capitals at the destination (Castles & Miller, 2003; Massey et al., 1987, 1993). The test of hypotheses conducted also validate established position that social networks are a crucial element of human relationships which are commonly deployed throughout the world by friends, family, businesses, corporate organisations, non-governmental bodies, community members, government agencies, and a wide range of others for the creation of social capital. Social networks are of particular utility in migration, as migrant social networks are quite different from others in terms of their composition, how they are used, and the effect they have on the lives of millions of the migrants (Gurak & Caces, 1992; Pellegrino, 2004; Tsuda, 1999).

Having established that social networks – which are a crucial element of human relationships commonly deployed throughout the world for the creation of social capital, particularly by migrants – exerts a significant influence on post-marital dissolution migration, findings from supplementary qualitative inquiries has further thrown up some astonishing revelations. Results showed that the Covid-19 pandemic did not have significant effect on the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in the place of origin for people who have embarked on post-marital dissolution migration at the destination location. This is despite the enforcement of social distancing directives, and the series of lock-down by the government which caused social exclusions and had enormous impact on social interactions across the globe. As such, the prevalent pandemic did not have negative implications on the utility inherent in the social networks of the migrants, despite the dire straits imposed by Covid-19.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study validate established positions in the literature that the process of migration is ingrained in social networks and that they are vital in many aspects of the migration experiences particularly, the process of settlement, and the emergence of social capitals at the destination. It also supports the idea that social networks are of particular utility in migration. However, the study goes further to depict the peculiar contexts in which social networks exert significant influence on post-marital dissolution migration, particularly in Southwest Nigeria. The study also found that despite the enforcement of social distancing directives, and the series of lock-down by the government which caused social exclusions and had enormous impact on social interactions across the globe, there were no significant impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the process of absorption, integration and assimilation in the place of origin for people who have embarked on post-marital dissolution migration at the destination location. Thus the implication was that the prevalent pandemic did not impair the utility inherent in the social networks of the migrants, despite the dire straits imposed by Covid-19. Undoubtedly, the results may not be unconnected with the prevalent peculiarities and actualities of the Nigerian social, cultural, economic, and demographic environment. In this regard, this study has added to the body of knowledge on migration, particularly with regards to the significance of social networks in post-marital dissolution migration – within the context of a pandemic – in Nigeria.

## Recommendations

The study recommends that stakeholders should fill gaps in the Nigerian internal migration profile by collecting relevant data on special cohorts, including those who have experienced marital dissolution, for whom data have been at best fragmentary, as evident in successive Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) data that focus on ever married people. This speaks to the need for Government to adopt some of the best practices of managing migration, including deliberate policies that will promote balanced growth in the societies and better human resource utilisation. This is within the context of the fact that migrant networks foster development for the migrants, their families as well as for both origin and destination communities. Migrants experience enhanced economic advancement at the place of destination, and this creates large remittance economies for the place of origin, while the human capital values of the migrants are economic assets to the place of destination. Government should therefore work at quantifying (with relative certainty) the change in internal migration flows, so as to take well-informed policy decisions regarding migration in such a way that will enhance the achievement of SDG 10.7. Finally, since migration is known to be a veritable vehicle for transmitting communicable diseases, and thus has the potentials to influence human health, it is advised that stakeholders should begin to acknowledge and incorporate the human health frameworks in migration policy planning, formulation, implementation, and decisions.

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the Lagos African Cluster Centre (LACC) through its maiden Doctoral Scholarship Award.

## References

- Adedokun, O.A. (1998a). Widowhood, divorce and waiting time: A neglected aspect of nuptiality studies in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Work Education*, 2 (2), 38-54. (1998b). Incidence and pattern of marital dissolution and remarriages in metropolitan Lagos Nigeria. *International Journal of Women Studies* 1 (2), 67-80.
- Adepoju, A., & van der Wiel, A. (2010). *Seeking greener pastures abroad: A migration profile of Nigeria*. Safari Publishers.
- Akanbi, M.I. (2014). Impact of divorce on academic performance of senior secondary students in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. *Education Research Journal*, 4(5), 59-64.
- Akanle, O., & Adesina, J. O. (2017). Remittances and household welfare in Nigeria. *African Population Studies*, 31(1), 3194–3211.
- Amato, P. R (2010). Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 72(3), 650–666.
- Arugu, L.O. (2014). Social indicators and effects of marriage divorce in African societies. *The Business & Management Review*, 4 (4), 374-383.
- Bhugra D. (2004). Migration and mental health. *Acta psychiatrica Scandinavica*. 109(4), 243-258.
- Booth A, Amato P. (1991). Divorce and psychological stress. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*. 32(4):396–407.

- Boyle, P. J., Kulu, H., Cook, T., Gayle, V., & Mulder, C.H. (2008). Moving and union dissolution. *Demography*, 45(1), 209-222.
- Castles, S., & Miller, M. (2003). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chelpi-den Hamer, M., & Mazzucato, V. (2010). The role of support networks in the initial stages of integration: The case of West African newcomers in the Netherlands. *International Migration*, 48 (2), 31-57.
- Clark, W.A.V (2013). Life course events and residential change: Unpacking Age effects on the probability of moving. *Journal of Population Research*, 30(4), 319-334.
- Comola, M. & Mendola, M. (2015). The formation of migrant networks. *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 117(2), 592-618.
- Cooke, T.J., Mulder, C.H., & Thomas, M. (2016). Union dissolution and migration. *Demographic Research*, 34 (26), 741-760.
- Curran, S. R., & Rivero-Fuentes, E. (2003). Engendering migrant networks: The case of Mexican migration. *Demography*, 40 (2), 289-307.
- de Haas, H. (2010). Migration and development: A theoretical perspective. *International Migration Review*, 44(1), 227-264.
- Dommermuth, L. & Klusener, S. (2017). Formation and realisation of moving intentions across the adult life course. Working papers of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research. Rostock, Germany.
- Ediyang, S.D., Ubi, I.E., & Yaro, L. (2013). Divorce, a social menace. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(3), 772 -782.
- Feijten, P. & van Ham, M. (2013). The consequences of divorce and splitting up for spatial mobility in the UK. *Comparative Population Studies*, 38 (2), 405-432.
- Feijten, P. & van Ham, M. (2007). Residential mobility and migration of the separated. *Demographic Research*, 17(21), 623-654.
- Feijten, P. & van Ham, M. (2011). The impact of union dissolution on moving distances and destinations in the UK. IZA Discussion Paper No 5628.
- Flowerdew, R., & Al-Hamad, A. (2004). The relationship between marriage, divorce and migration in a British dataset. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(2), 339-351.
- Gold, S. J. (2001). Gender, class, and network: Social structure and migration patterns among transnational Israelis. *Global Network*, 1 (1), 57-78.
- Gurak, D.T. and Caces, F. (1992). Migration networks and the shaping of migration systems. In Kritz, M.M., Lim, L.L. & Zlotnik, H. (Eds.) *International migrations systems: A global approach* (pp. 150-176). Clarendon Press.
- Isiugo-Abanihe, U.C. & International Organization for Migration - IOM (2016). *Migration in Nigeria: A Country Profile 2014*. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.
- Kley, S. (2011). Explaining the stages of migration within a life-course framework. *European Sociological Review*, 27(4), 469-486.
- Lev-Wiesel R. (1998). Coping with the stress associated with forced relocation in the Golan Heights, Israel. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 34(2), 143-160.
- Lubbers, M. J., Molina, J. L., Lerner, J., Brandes, U., Ávila, J., McCarty, C. M. (2010). Longitudinal analysis of personal networks. The case of Argentinean migrants in Spain. *Social Network*, 32 (1), 91-104.
- Lundholm, E. (2007). *New motives for migration? On interregional mobility in the Nordic context*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Social and Economic Geography Umeå University, Sweden].
- Markel H. (2009). *When germs travel: American stories of imported disease*. Pantheon Books.
- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population Development Review*, 19 (3), 431-466.

- Massey, D.S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A. & Taylor, J.E. (2005). *Worlds in motion: Understanding international migration at the end of the millennium*. Oxford University Press.
- McPherson, M.; Smith-Lovin, L. & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 415–444.
- Mincer, J. (1978). Family migration decisions. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 86(5), 749-773.
- National Population Commission (NPopC). (2009). *Final results of 2006 census*. Author
- (2012). *National internal migration survey report*. Abuja: Author
- Nigeria Centre for Disease Control – NCDC (2021). COVID-19 NIGERIA. <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/>. Accessed on 10/02/2021.
- Ntoimo, L. F. C., & Akokuwebe, M. E. (2014). Prevalence and patterns of marital dissolution in Nigeria. *The Nigerian journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12(2), 1-15.
- Oyeniya, B. A. (2013). *Internal migration in Nigeria: A positive contribution to human development*. A Research Report. Brussels, Belgium. ACP Observatory on Migration.
- Pellegrino, A. (2004). *Migration from Latin America to Europe: Trends and policy challenges*. IOM Research Series. No. 16.
- Ramaiah, S. (1995). *Health implications of involuntary resettlement and rehabilitation in developmental projects in India* (Vol. 1). Society for Health Education and Learning Packages.
- Thomas, M., Stillwell, J., & Gould, M. (2016). Modelling mover/stayer characteristics across the life-course using a large commercial sample. *Population, Space and Place*, 22(6), 584-598.
- United Nations, UN. (2015). Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). International Migration Report 2015, Highlights.
- United Nations Development Programme – UNDP Nigeria, (2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic In Nigeria: A socio-economic analysis. [file:///C:/Users/Gbenga%20Alabi/Downloads/Socio-Economic-Impact-COVID-19-Nigeria-Policy-Brief-1-UNDP-Nigeria-April-2020%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Gbenga%20Alabi/Downloads/Socio-Economic-Impact-COVID-19-Nigeria-Policy-Brief-1-UNDP-Nigeria-April-2020%20(2).pdf). Accessed on 01/02/2021.
- Wingens, M., Windzio, M., De Valk, H. A. G., & Aybek, C. (2011). The sociological life-course approach and research on migration and integration. In Wingens, M., Windzio, M, De Valk, H. A. G, & Aybek, C. (Eds.), *A Life-course Perspective on Migration and Integration* (pp. 1-26). Springer.
- World Health Organisation – WHO (2021). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Weekly Epidemiological Update and Weekly Operational Update. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>. Accessed on 10/02/2021.