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The Causes and Consequences of Divorce Among Immigrant Women: The Influence of Marital Adjustment, Marital Trajectories, and Sociodemographic Factors

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Abstract

Background

Divorce among immigrant women in Taiwan has become an increasingly important public health issue due to the instability of transnational marriages and the limited social support available to this population. This study examined the sociodemographic, marital adjustment, and marital trajectory factors associated with divorce among immigrant women in Taiwan.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted between June and October 2022. A total of 360 immigrant women who had experienced marital transitions were recruited through social welfare organizations across Taiwan using proportional allocation sampling. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires assessing sociodemographic characteristics, marital adjustment, and marital trajectories. Univariate and multiple logistic regression analyses were performed to identify factors associated with divorce.

Results

Poor relationships with husbands (AOR = 2.50, 95% CI = 1.35–4.65) and with members of the husband's family (AOR = 4.08, 95% CI = 2.34–7.09) were strongly associated with divorce. Immigrant women whose natal families were aware of their marital status had higher odds of divorce (AOR = 2.10, 95% CI = 1.33–3.33). Child custody difficulties, lack of alimony, and children's participation in after-school tutoring were also significantly associated with divorce. In contrast, the use of nongovernmental resources was associated with lower odds of divorce (AOR = 0.51, 95% CI = 0.33–0.80). Sociodemographic factors, including residential region, age, housing ownership, citizenship status, and spouses' educational attainment, were also related to divorce.

Conclusions

Divorce among immigrant women is influenced by multidimensional factors, particularly marital adjustment and family interpersonal relationships. External resource utilization appears to reflect coping strategies following divorce. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening family support systems and providing accessible social and legal resources for immigrant women experiencing marital difficulties.

Background

Immigrant women in Taiwan primarily immigrate through transnational marriage and relocate to Taiwan alone. By the end of December 2025, the cumulative number of new residents had reached 615,355, accounting for 2.6% of Taiwan's total population [1]. Among them, women from Mainland China constituted the largest proportion (59.7%), while those from Southeast Asian countries collectively accounted for approximately 30.4%, with Vietnamese women representing the largest subgroup (20.4%), followed by Indonesian spouses (5.4%).

Families formed through marriage migration often lack a prior emotional foundation between spouses [2, 3]. In addition, they frequently encounter challenges related to cultural adaptation [4, 5]. Economic hardship, caregiving responsibilities for older family members, and the burden of raising children [3, 6] further constitute overwhelming sources of stress for many immigrant women, thereby substantially threatening marital stability.

Based on official data from the Department of Household Registration, the crude divorce rate among immigrant women in Taiwan was estimated to be 19.20‰ in 2025, approximately 4.7 times higher than that among native-born Taiwanese women (4.08‰) [7]. These findings reflect that transnational marriages in Taiwan are considerably less stable than marriages between native-born Taiwanese spouses [6]. Owing to limited social support and insufficient social capital, immigrant women often encounter greater difficulties and challenges in their post-divorce lives.

The unique characteristics of marriages involving immigrant women often result in particularly challenging marital trajectories, and the factors influencing marital stability may be highly complex. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the sociodemographic characteristics of both immigrant women and their spouses to identify factors potentially associated with divorce. Furthermore, research exploring the marital trajectories of immigrant women remains limited. Accordingly, understanding and clarifying the causes and consequences of divorce among immigrant women may facilitate the development of preventive policies and the implementation of accurate and effective intervention strategies in practice, representing an important public health issue. Marital discord within immigrant families may affect the lives of more than two million individuals, underscoring the substantial social impact of this issue.

This study recruited single immigrant women as the study sample and aimed to investigate the adaptation and marital trajectory factors associated with divorce among immigrant women. Given that immigrant women and their spouses constitute a relatively unique population, the relationships between relevant sociodemographic factors and divorce were also examined in this study. By integrating multidimensional factors, this study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes and consequences before and after divorce among immigrant women.

Methods

Participants

This study recruited participants with the assistance of social welfare organizations, using a proportional allocation sampling method across four regions of Taiwan (northern, central, southern, and eastern). The inclusion criteria for immigrant women were as follows: (1) country of origin in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Southeast Asia; (2) having experienced marital transitions after arriving in Taiwan, including divorce, widowhood, separation, or remarriage; and (3) aged between 18 and 50 years.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Interpreters or social workers were present to assist respondents in completing the questionnaires. Participants who completed the questionnaire received a 100 NTD (around 3.5 USD) convenience store voucher as compensation. Data collection was conducted from June 2022 to October 2022, yielding a total of 360 valid questionnaires. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Chung Shan Medical University Hospital (CSMUH No: CS2-22028) prior to commencement.

Measures

Based on the findings from prior in-depth interviews (The qualitative interview guide developed for this study is provided in Appendix 1), this study delineated the processes and patterns of marital adjustment experienced by immigrant women after migrating to Taiwan. Key themes were extracted from these narratives and, together with the socio-demographic characteristics of immigrant women and their spouses, were used to develop a self-administered questionnaire (The quantitative questionnaire developed for this study is provided in Appendix 2).

The marital adjustment and trajectory variables comprised 23 items, including: motives for marriage; factors related to divorce/separation; whether other family members or relatives had also migrated to Taiwan through marriage; ability to adapt to Taiwanese family cultural norms and practices; relationship with the husband after marriage; relationships with members of the husband's family; whether members of the natal family were aware of the respondent's marital status; support from the husband's family during marital crises; support from relatives or friends during marital crises; difficulties encountered after divorce/separation; child co-residence arrangements; current child custody; difficulties in obtaining custody; whether the husband provides alimony; visitation rights; difficulties in obtaining visitation rights; parent–child relationship; children's relationships with the husband's family; challenges in balancing childcare responsibilities; children's participation in after-school tutoring; access to subsidies or resources for immigrant populations; receipt of assistance from professionals; use of governmental resources to resolve difficulties; use of non-governmental resources; consultation of legal services; use of psychological support resources; and willingness to enhance competitiveness through education or training.

Socio-demographic factors were categorized into two domains: those of immigrant women and those of their spouses. Shared socio-demographic characteristics were classified under the immigrant women's domain. The socio-demographic variables for immigrant women included 21 items: marital status, residential region, age, type of residence, educational attainment, religious affiliation, country of origin,

number of children, years of residence in Taiwan, professional certifications, economic status, employment status, welfare status, most proficient language, levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the most proficient language, history of psychiatric consultation, presence of chronic diseases, and presence of other major illnesses. Among these, marital status was treated as the dependent variable, while the remaining 20 variables were used to examine the association between socio-demographic characteristics and divorce among immigrant women.

The spouses' socio-demographic variables included nine items: age, co-residence with members of the family of origin, educational attainment, religious affiliation, economic status, employment status, history of psychiatric consultation, presence of chronic diseases, and presence of other major illnesses. These variables were used to examine the association between spouses' socio-demographic characteristics and divorce.

Statistical analysis

All data were analyzed using SAS statistical software. Specifically, univariate logistic regression analyses were first conducted to identify potential factors across different domains. The selected variables were then entered into multiple logistic regression models to clarify the factors associated with divorce. Adjusted odds ratios (AORs) were used to estimate the magnitude of the associations between factors from different domains and divorce.

The factors were classified into three domains: socio-demographic characteristics of immigrant women, socio-demographic characteristics of their spouses, and marital adjustment and trajectory factors. To ensure adequate statistical power for the models, the effects of variables in these three domains were examined separately using three multiple logistic regression models.

Results

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

Among the 360 immigrant women who completed the questionnaire in this study, 132 (36.67%) were divorced, 77 (21.39%) were widowed, 73 (20.28%) were remarried, 46 (12.70%) were separated, and 32 (8.89%) were classified as other (Table 1).

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics and distribution of immigrant women and their spouses

		Immigrant women		Spouse	
		n	%	n	%
Marital status	Divorced	132	36.67	(Same as the left)	
	Widowed	77	21.39		
	Remarried	73	20.28		
	Separated	46	12.70		
	Other	32	8.89		
Region of residence	Northern	74	20.56	(Same as the left)	
	Central	106	29.44		
	Southern	90	25.00		
	Eastern	90	25.00		
Age (Mean, S.D.)		45.82	7.37	55.19	10.14
Type of housing	Owner-occupied	185	51.39	(Same as the left)	
	Rental	162	45.00		
	Other	13	3.61		
Live with husband's family members	No	-	-	205	56.94
	Yes	-	-	155	43.05
Educational level	Illiterate	8	2.22	2	0.56
	Primary school	77	21.39	38	10.56
	Junior high school	145	40.28	129	35.83
	Senior high or vocational school	103	28.61	157	43.61
	College or above	27	7.50	34	9.44
Religion	None	124	34.44	169	47.21
	Buddhism	127	35.28	86	24.02

[a] APRC = Alien Permanent Resident Certificate

		Immigrant women		Spouse	
		n	%	n	%
	Taoism	55	15.28	89	24.86
	Catholic	7	1.94	1	0.28
	Christianity	34	9.44	8	2.23
	Islam	11	3.06	3	0.84
	Other	2	0.56	2	0.56
Country of origin	Vietnam	33	9.17	-	-
	Indonesia	32	8.89	-	-
	The Philippines	32	8.89	-	-
	Cambodia	32	8.89	-	-
	Tailand	31	8.61	-	-
	Japan	5	1.39	-	-
	Korea	4	1.11	-	-
	Mainland China	61	16.94	-	-
	Hongkong	60	16.67	-	-
	Macao	59	16.39	-	-
	USA	5	1.39	-	-
	Canada	6	1.67	-	-
Number of children	0	26	7.22	(Same as the left)	
	1	137	38.06		
	2	164	45.56		
	> 2	33	9.17		
Years in Taiwan (Mean, S.D.)		17.47	6.09	-	-
Residence permit	APRC[a]	36	10.00	-	-
	Identification card	322	89.44	-	-
	Other	2	0.56	-	-

[a] APRC = Alien Permanent Resident Certificate

		Immigrant women		Spouse	
		n	%	n	%
Financial status	Balanced	214	59.44	192	53.33
	Income>expenses	46	12.78	44	12.22
	Expenses>income	100	27.78	124	34.44
Employment	No	69	19.71	47	13.06
	Yes	291	80.83	313	86.94
Welfare status	No	194	53.89	(Same as the left)	
	Yes	166	46.11		
Most proficient language	Mandarin	345	95.83	-	-
	Taiwanese	13	3.61	-	-
	Hakka	1	0.28	-	-
	Indigenous	1	0.28	-	-
Level of listening	Fluent	156	43.33	-	-
	Intermediate	164	45.56	-	-
	Fair/basic	39	10.83	-	-
	Not at all	1	0.28	-	-
Level of speaking	Fluent	151	41.94	-	-
	Intermediate	167	46.39	-	-
	Fair/basic	41	11.38	-	-
	Not at all	1	0.28	-	-
Level of reading	Fluent	110	30.56	-	-
	Intermediate	136	37.77	-	-
	Fair/basic	87	24.17	-	-
	Not at all	27	7.50	-	-
Level of writing	Fluent	96	26.67	-	-
	Intermediate	124	34.44	-	-

[a] APRC = Alien Permanent Resident Certificate

		Immigrant women		Spouse	
		n	%	n	%
	Fair/basic	99	27.5	-	-
	Not at all	41	11.39	-	-
History of psychiatric consultation	No	332	92.22	339	94.17
	Yes	28	7.78	21	5.83
Presence of chronic disease	No	329	91.39	300	83.33
	Yes	31	8.61	60	16.67
Presence of other major illnesses	No	346	96.11	318	88.33
	Yes	14	3.89	42	11.67

[a] APRC = Alien Permanent Resident Certificate

The distribution across the four residential regions (northern, central, southern, and eastern Taiwan) was approximately even. The mean age of participants was 45.82 years. Most participants resided in owner-occupied housing (51.39%). In terms of educational attainment, the majority had completed junior high school (40.28%). Buddhism was the most commonly reported religion (35.28%). The largest proportion of participants originated from Mainland China (16.94%). Regarding the number of children, having two children was most common (45.56%). The average duration of residence in Taiwan was 17.47 years.

The majority of immigrant women held a national identification card (89.44%). Over half reported a balanced financial status (59.44%), and more than 80% were employed. Nearly half had welfare status (46.11%). Mandarin Chinese was the most commonly reported proficient language (95.83%). Approximately 90% reported at least moderate proficiency in listening and speaking, while about two-thirds reported at least moderate proficiency in reading and writing. Around 8% had a history of psychiatric consultation or a diagnosis of chronic disease, and approximately 4% reported having a major illness.

The spouses were, on average, approximately 10 years older than the immigrant women, with a mean age of 55.19 years. Fewer than half (43.05%) co-resided with members of their family of origin. In terms of educational attainment, the largest proportion had completed senior high school or vocational education (43.61%). Nearly half reported no religious affiliation (47.21%). More than half reported a balanced financial status (53.33%), while over one-third (34.44%) reported financial strain (income insufficient to meet expenses).

In addition, 5.83% had a history of psychiatric consultation. A relatively high proportion (16.67%) had been diagnosed with chronic diseases, and more than one-tenth (11.67%) reported having a major

illness.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Marital Adjustment and Trajectories of Immigrant Women

Regarding marital motivations, the most commonly reported reason among immigrant women was to improve the living conditions of their family of origin (43.33%). The primary reason for divorce or separation was marital discord (41.39%). Nearly one-fifth (18.89%) of participants reported that other family members or relatives had also migrated to Taiwan through marriage.

More than two-thirds (68.61%) of immigrant women reported being able to adapt to Taiwanese family cultural norms and practices. After marriage, a higher proportion reported poor relationships with their husbands (35.84%) than good relationships (19.45%). In contrast, relationships with members of the husband's family were slightly more positive (24.45%) than negative (21.95%). Over half (60.56%) indicated that their natal family members were aware of their marital status in Taiwan.

Fewer than one-quarter (23.33%) reported receiving support from their husband's family during marital crises, whereas approximately one-third (34.44%) received support from friends or relatives. Nearly half (48.06%) experienced difficulties following divorce or separation. After divorce or separation, most children lived with (74.44%) and were under the custody of (76.19%) the immigrant women. However, some participants reported difficulties in obtaining child custody (17.37%) or visitation rights (21.71%), and nearly 30% (30.25%) had no visitation rights. Additionally, nearly 80% (78.87%) of husbands did not provide alimony.

More than 80% (82.79%) of immigrant women reported good relationships with their children; however, fewer than half (47.77%) reported that their children had good relationships with the husband's family. Approximately 40% (39.76%) reported experiencing difficulties in managing daily life due to childcare responsibilities, which was consistent with the proportion of children participating in after-school tutoring (40.65%).

More than half of the participants had utilized subsidies or resources (57.78%), received assistance from professionals (55.56%), accessed governmental resources (55.83%), and used non-governmental resources (60.28%) to cope with their difficulties. However, the use of legal consultation services (22.78%) and psychological support resources (10.56%) was relatively low. Nearly half (48.06%) of immigrant women expressed a desire to enhance their competitiveness through further education or training.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Table 2
Factors and distribution related to marital adjustment status and trajectories among immigrant women

Motivation for marriage		**n**	**%**
	Improve the living conditions of their family of origin	**156**	**43.33**
	Pursue dreams	60	16.67
	Romantic love	113	31.39
	Other	31	8.61
Divorced/separated factors	Marital discord	149	41.39
	Financial factor	126	35.00
	Family/affinity	15	4.16
	Legal factor	9	2.50
	Other	61	16.94
Other family members also migrated to Taiwan through marriage	No	292	81.11
	Yes	68	18.89
Being able to adapt to Taiwanese family cultural norms	No	113	31.39
	Yes	247	68.61
Relationships with husbands	Very poor	47	13.06
	Poor	82	22.78
	Fair	161	44.72
	Good	56	15.56
	Very good	14	3.89
Relationships with members of the husband's family	Very poor	15	4.17
	Poor	64	17.78
	Fair	193	53.61
	Good	73	20.28
	Very good	15	4.17
Natal family members aware of your marital status in Taiwan	No	142	39.44
	Yes	218	60.56

Motivation for marriage		n	%
	Improve the living conditions of their family of origin	**156**	**43.33**
Received support from husband’s family during marital crises	No	276	76.67
	Yes	84	23.33
Received support from friends or relatives during marital crises	No	236	65.56
	Yes	124	34.44
Experienced difficulties following divorce or separation	No	187	51.94
	Yes	173	48.06
Children lived with	Me	268	74.44
	Husband	49	13.61
	Other	43	11.94
Children under the custody of	Me	256	76.19
	Husband	51	15.18
	Other	29	8.63
Difficulties in obtaining child custody	No	276	82.63
	Yes	58	17.37
Husbands provide alimony	No	265	78.87
	Yes	71	21.13
Owning child visitation rights	No	36	30.25
	Yes	83	69.75
Difficulties in obtaining child visitation rights	No	101	78.29
	Yes	28	21.71
Relationships with children	Very poor	9	2.67
	Poor	4	1.19
	Fair	45	13.35
	Good	193	57.27
	Very good	86	25.52
Children’s relationships with husband’s family	Very poor	12	3.56

Motivation for marriage		n	%
	Improve the living conditions of their family of origin	**156**	**43.33**
	Poor	32	9.50
	Fair	132	39.17
	Good	137	40.65
	Very good	24	7.12
Difficulties in managing daily life due to childcare responsibilities	No	203	60.24
	Yes	134	39.76
Children participating in after-school tutoring	Unknown	31	9.20
	No	169	50.15
	Yes	137	40.65
Utilized subsidies or resources	No	152	42.22
	Yes	208	57.78
Received assistance from professionals	No	160	44.44
	Yes	200	55.56
Accessed governmental resources	No	159	44.17
	Yes	201	55.83
Used non-governmental resources	No	143	39.72
	Yes	217	60.28
Used legal consultation services	No	278	77.22
	Yes	82	22.78
Used psychological support resources	No	322	89.44
	Yes	38	10.56
Desire to enhance competitiveness through further education or training	No	187	51.94
	Yes	173	48.06

Socio-demographic Factors Associated with Divorce among Immigrant Women

To clarify the effects of individual variables, this study first employed univariate logistic regression analyses to identify nine socio-demographic variables significantly associated with divorce among immigrant women. These variables were subsequently entered into a multiple logistic regression model to further examine their effects.

As shown in Table 3, among the nine socio-demographic variables included in the model, residing in eastern Taiwan (AOR = 0.31; 95% CI = 0.17–0.55), younger age (AOR = 0.95; 95% CI = 0.92–0.98), having a Taoist religious affiliation (AOR = 0.44; 95% CI = 0.22–0.87), and having basic spoken Mandarin proficiency (AOR = 0.23; 95% CI = 0.09–0.61) were associated with a lower risk of divorce.

Table 3
Multivariable logistic regression analysis of divorce among immigrant women: sociodemographic characteristics

Variables		**AOR (95% CI)**
Region of residence	Northern	Reference
	Central	1.25 (0.76–1.99)
	Southern	1.15 (0.70–1.88)
	Eastern	**0.31 (0.17–0.55)**
Age		**0.95 (0.92–0.98)**
Years in Taiwan		1.02 (0.98–1.06)
Type of housing	Rental vs. Owner-occupied	**3.20 (2.04–5.01)**
Religion	None	Reference
	Buddhism	1.56 (0.99–2.44)
	Taoism	**0.44 (0.22–0.87)**
	Other	1.33 (0.74–2.39)
Country of origin	Southeastern Asia vs. Mainland China (incl. Hongkong and Macao)	1.02 (0.66–1.56)
Residence permit	ID card vs. APRC	**4.04 (1.53–10.66)**
Welfare status	Yes vs. No	1.26 (0.82–1.94)
Level of speaking	Not at all	Reference
	Fair/Basic	**0.23 (0.09–0.61)**
	Intermediate	1.25 (0.81–1.92)
	Proficient	1.27 (0.82–1.96)
AOR = Adjusted Odds Ratio		

In contrast, immigrant women who did not live in owner-occupied housing had approximately three times the risk of divorce compared with those who did (AOR = 3.20; 95% CI = 2.04–5.01). Furthermore, immigrant women who had obtained national identification status had a fourfold higher risk of divorce compared with those holding only residency permits (AOR = 4.04; 95% CI = 1.53–10.66).

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Spouses' Socio-demographic Characteristics Associated with Divorce

When examining the factors associated with divorce among immigrant women from the perspective of spouses' socio-demographic characteristics (Table 4), the results indicate that, among the seven variables included in the multiple logistic regression model, older spousal age was associated with a lower risk of divorce (AOR = 0.97; 95% CI = 0.95–0.99).

Table 4
Multivariable logistic regression analysis of divorce among immigrant women: spouses' demographic characteristics

Age		**AOR (95% CI)**
		0.97 (0.95–0.99)
Educational level	Illiterate	Reference
	Primary school	0.67 (0.32–1.40)
	Junior high school	**0.52 (0.32–0.83)**
	Senior high or above	**2.12 (1.36–3.30)**
Financial status	Balanced	Reference
	Income > Expenses	1.08 (0.57–2.07)
	Expenses > Income	1.49 (0.95–2.33)
Live with family members	Yes vs. No	0.87 (0.58–1.31)
Presence of chronic disease	Yes vs. No	0.71 (0.39–1.30)
Presence of other major illness	Yes vs. No	0.50 (0.24–1.05)
AOR = Adjusted Odds Ratio		

Spousal educational attainment was also significantly associated with divorce among immigrant women. Compared with spouses who were illiterate, those with a junior high school education had a lower risk of divorce (AOR = 0.52; 95% CI = 0.32–0.83), whereas those with a senior high school education or above had approximately twice the risk of divorce (AOR = 2.12; 95% CI = 1.36–3.30).

(Insert Table 4 about here)

Marital Adjustment and Marital Trajectory Factors Associated with Divorce among Immigrant Women

When examining divorce-related factors from the perspective of marital adjustment and marital trajectories among immigrant women, several variables were found to be significantly associated with divorce (Table 5).

Table 5
Multivariable logistic regression analysis of divorce among immigrant women: marital adjustment status and trajectory factors

Divorced/separated factors		**AOR (95% CI)**
	Marital discord	**Reference**
	Financial factor	0.78 (0.49–1.23)
	Family/affinity	0.94 (0.31–2.88)
	Legal/other factor	**0.49 (0.27–0.89)**
Adapt to Taiwanese cultural norms	Yes vs. No	1.61 (0.99–2.60)
Relationships with husbands	Good/very good	Reference
	Poor/very poor	**2.50 (1.35–4.65)**
Relationships with members of the husband's family	Good/very good	Reference
	Poor/very poor	**4.08 (2.34–7.09)**
Natal family members aware of your marital status in Taiwan	Yes vs. No	**2.10 (1.33–3.33)**
Received support from husband's family during marital crises	Yes vs. No	0.61 (0.36–1.04)
Children lived with	Husband	Reference
	Me	**0.37 (0.23–0.61)**
	Other	1.26 (0.66–2.41)
Children under the custody of	Husband vs. Me	**2.80 (1.67–4.69)**
Difficulties in obtaining child custody	Yes vs. No	**2.51 (1.41–4.47)**
Husbands provide alimony	Yes vs. No	**0.39 (0.21–0.73)**
Difficulties in obtaining child visitation rights	Yes vs. No	0.62 (0.26–1.46)

AOR = Adjusted Odds Ratio

Divorced/separated factors		AOR (95% CI)
	Marital discord	**Reference**
Children participating in after-school tutoring	Yes vs. No	**2.64 (1.23–7.29)**
Received assistance from professionals	Yes vs. No	1.15 (0.75–1.78)
Accessed governmental resources	Yes vs. No	1.25 (0.81–1.93)
Used non-governmental resources	Yes vs. No	**0.51 (0.33–0.80)**
Used legal consultation services	Yes vs. No	**2.82 (1.69–4.69)**
Desire to enhance competitiveness through further education or training	Yes vs. No	**2.13 (1.37–3.30)**
AOR = Adjusted Odds Ratio		

Immigrant women who reported poor relationships with their husbands had 2.5 times higher odds of divorce compared with those reporting good relationships (AOR = 2.50; 95% CI = 1.35–4.65). Moreover, poor relationships with members of the husband's family were associated with even higher odds of divorce than spousal relationships (AOR = 4.08; 95% CI = 2.34–7.09). Immigrant women whose natal families were aware of their marital status had approximately twice the odds of divorce compared with those whose natal families were unaware (AOR = 2.10; 95% CI = 1.33–3.33).

With regard to child-related factors, immigrant women whose children co-resided with them had a lower likelihood of divorce compared with those whose children lived with the husband's family (AOR = 0.37; 95% CI = 0.23–0.61). When child custody was held by the husband or others, the odds of divorce were 2.8 times higher than when custody was held by the immigrant women themselves (AOR = 2.80; 95% CI = 1.67–4.69). Additionally, those who experienced difficulties in obtaining child custody had approximately 2.5 times higher odds of divorce compared with those who did not encounter such difficulties (AOR = 2.51; 95% CI = 1.41–4.47).

If the husband provided alimony, the odds of divorce were approximately one-third of those among women whose husbands did not provide alimony (AOR = 0.39; 95% CI = 0.21–0.73). Participation of children in after-school tutoring was associated with a 2.6-fold increase in the odds of divorce (AOR = 2.64; 95% CI = 1.23–7.29).

In terms of resource utilization, immigrant women who had used non-governmental resources had approximately half the odds of divorce compared with those who had not (AOR = 0.51; 95% CI = 0.33–0.80). In contrast, those who had used legal consultation services had nearly three times higher odds of

divorce (AOR = 2.82; 95% CI = 1.69–4.69). Finally, immigrant women who expressed a desire to enhance their competitiveness through education or training had more than twice the odds of divorce compared with those who did not (AOR = 2.13; 95% CI = 1.37–3.30).

(Insert Table 5 about here)

Discussion

The results of a series of logistic regression analyses indicated that factors associated with divorce among immigrant women were related not only to the sociodemographic characteristics of the women themselves and their spouses, but also, more importantly, to factors concerning marital adjustment and marital trajectories. In particular, interpersonal relationships within the family and the utilization of external resources appeared to play especially important roles in relation to divorce among immigrant women.

Association Between Sociodemographic Factors and Divorce Among Immigrant Women

Among the sociodemographic factors associated with divorce, the characteristics of immigrant women themselves appeared to be more strongly related to divorce than those of their spouses. The associations between these characteristics and divorce among immigrant women may largely be attributable to the underlying factor of economic independence. For example, immigrant women residing in Eastern Taiwan were less likely to experience divorce, which may reflect the relatively limited employment opportunities in Eastern Taiwan. This situation may increase their dependence on marriage and consequently lower the likelihood of divorce. Similarly, immigrant women who did not own a residence had lower odds of divorce, which may also be understood within the same context: lower economic independence may lead to greater dependence on marriage, thereby reducing the probability of divorce.

This interpretation is further indirectly supported by the finding that immigrant women who had obtained Taiwanese citizenship exhibited higher odds of divorce. After acquiring citizenship, immigrant women are able to seek employment and earn wages in Taiwan, substantially enhancing their economic independence. Under the influence of other contributing factors, economic independence may become an important form of capital in considerations of divorce [8].

However, the relationship between age and divorce may involve additional explanations. In general, age is positively associated with the likelihood of divorce, whereas age at first marriage is significantly negatively associated with divorce [9], suggesting that early marriage may be an important contributing factor to divorce. Many immigrant women migrate to Taiwan for marriage at a relatively young age and are subsequently confronted with various cultural and life challenges, making divorce a more likely choice during early adulthood [6]. In addition, older immigrant women may possess greater experience

and capacity to cope with marital challenges, thereby reducing the risk of divorce [9, 10]. Alternatively, they may perceive fewer opportunities following divorce, making them less likely to dissolve their marriages impulsively [8].

Association Between Spouses' Sociodemographic Factors and Divorce Among Immigrant Women

In contrast, among the spouses' sociodemographic characteristics, only age and educational attainment were found to be associated with divorce. Spouses who were older and had lower levels of education were less likely to experience divorce. Older Taiwanese men with lower educational attainment constitute the primary group who marry immigrant women, largely because their socioeconomic circumstances may make it more difficult for them to marry native-born Taiwanese women. Consequently, they may place greater value on their existing families and be less likely to pursue divorce [11].

Marital Trajectory Factors Associated With Divorce Among Immigrant Women

The findings of this study clearly indicated that poor relationships between immigrant women and their husbands, as well as unsatisfactory relationships with members of the husband's family, were important factors associated with divorce. Many couples in immigrant families are unfamiliar with one another prior to marriage, and such relationships, lacking an emotional foundation and mutual trust, are more likely to result in marital maladjustment, marital conflict, or even domestic violence, ultimately leading to divorce [4].

Family relationships in Eastern societies are often highly interconnected. This study found that approximately 40% of immigrant women lived with members of their husband's family, requiring frequent interactions with in-laws and other family members. Poor relationships with the husband's family inevitably threaten marital stability, particularly when family members form alliances against the immigrant woman. Under such circumstances, immigrant women may find themselves isolated and unsupported, with limited ability to seek meaningful assistance from their families of origin due to geographical distance. Consequently, they may ultimately choose to leave the marriage [6, 12]. These findings suggest that the quality of interpersonal relationships within the family is a critical factor determining whether marriages involving immigrant women eventually end in divorce.

In this study, child custody was also identified as an important variable associated with the marital status of immigrant women; however, this factor should be interpreted as a consequence rather than a cause of divorce. In most cases, courts tend to award child custody to the father or to the parent with greater financial capacity. Consequently, immigrant mothers who lack stable employment or whose residency status does not meet legal requirements are placed at a relative disadvantage when seeking custody [6, 13]. Furthermore, immigrant women are often disadvantaged in terms of legal knowledge and language proficiency, making them more likely to relinquish or lose the opportunity to assert their rights.

Similarly, childcare after divorce represents another major challenge. When immigrant women become single parents, the lack of support from relatives and friends often necessitates enrolling their children in after-school programs, as otherwise they may be unable to maintain employment and financial stability. Within this context, it is understandable why access to and utilization of certain resources were significantly associated with divorce among immigrant women in this study. In particular, immigrant women who were connected with resources provided by nongovernmental organizations appeared to have a substantially lower likelihood of divorce. One possible explanation is that assistance from nongovernmental organizations may help immigrant women overcome marital difficulties. However, a more plausible interpretation may be that women who are already divorced have greater freedom to participate in community or social organizations [6].

In addition, this study found that the use of social resources, including legal consultation services related to divorce and opportunities to acquire skills that enhance competitiveness in daily life, was also associated with divorce among immigrant women. These findings suggest that the utilization of social resources may represent an important coping strategy for immigrant women seeking support after divorce. Future research employing longitudinal designs is warranted to further examine how the use of social resources influences the marital status of immigrant women over time.

Limitations

Because participants in this study were recruited through social welfare organizations, all individuals included in the sample were currently single immigrant women. Therefore, the reference group for divorced immigrant women did not consist of counterparts whose marriages remained intact, and caution is warranted when interpreting the findings. In addition, the cross-sectional design of this study precludes conclusions regarding causal relationships. Except for certain factors that could be clearly distinguished as occurring before or after divorce, other factors associated with divorce may represent either causes or consequences of divorce. Nevertheless, these findings also reflect that the entire process of divorce among immigrant women is characterized by considerable difficulties and challenges.

Conclusions

Factors associated with divorce among immigrant women are multifaceted, with marital adjustment and marital trajectory factors being particularly closely related to divorce. This study demonstrated that interpersonal relationships within the family constitute a primary cause of divorce among immigrant women, whereas the utilization of external resources reflects coping outcomes following divorce.

Abbreviations

AOR: adjusted odds ratio

CI: confidence interval

IRB: Institutional Review Board

NTD: New Taiwan Dollar

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Chung Shan Medical University Hospital (approval no. CS2-22028). All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation.

Consent for publication

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any individual person's identifying data.

Availability of data and materials

The data cannot be provided due to the data usage rights mentioned in informed consent.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

Yu-Hsin Huang and Hao-Jan Yang conceived and designed the study. Yu-Hsin Huang and Pang-Li Liu collected and managed the data. Yu-Hsin Huang, Pang-Li Liu and Yun-Jun Chang analysed and interpreted the data. Yu-Hsin Huang drafted the manuscript. Hao-Jan Yang supervised the study and critically revised the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Authors' information

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