

The Impact of Verbal Abuse and Peer Group Influence on Divorce Rates: A Quantitative Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between divorce rates and two social factors: verbal abuse and peer group influence. Using multiple regression analysis on data collected from 71 cases, the research demonstrates that both verbal abuse and peer group influence are significant predictors of divorce rates. The regression model explains 87.9% of the variance in divorce rates ($R^2 = 0.879$, $p < 0.001$), indicating strong explanatory power. Verbal abuse emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 1.10$, $p < 0.001$), with each unit increase associated with a 1.10 unit increase in divorce rates. Peer group influence also showed a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.836$, $p < 0.001$). Correlation analysis revealed a strong association between verbal abuse and divorce rates ($r = 0.882$), and a moderately strong relationship between peer group influence and divorce rates ($r = 0.698$). The findings suggest that while both factors contribute significantly to divorce rates, verbal abuse plays a particularly crucial role. These results have important implications for marriage counseling, divorce prevention programs, and domestic violence intervention strategies. The study provides empirical evidence for the need to address both individual relationship dynamics and social influence factors in efforts to support marital stability.

Keywords: *Divorce rates, Verbal abuse, Peer group influence, multiple regression analysis, Marital stability*

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Background to the Study

Divorce represents a significant social phenomenon with far-reaching implications for individuals, families and society at large. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to understanding the various factors contributing to marital dissolution. While economic factors and physical abuse have been extensively studied, the impact of verbal abuse and peer group influence on divorce rates has received comparatively less attention (Thompson & Ahmad, 2023).

Verbal abuse, characterized by patterns of degrading communication, emotional manipulation, and psychological aggression can create deep-seated relationship trauma that may ultimately lead to divorce. Studies by Morrison *et al.* (2022) indicate that psychological abuse including verbal aggression, often precedes and predicts relationship dissolution more accurately than other forms of conflict.

Simultaneously, the role of peer group influence in marital stability has emerged as a crucial area of study. Research by Henderson and Zhou (2023) suggests that social networks and peer relationships can significantly impact marital satisfaction and decision-making regarding divorce. The interconnected nature of modern society, amplified by social media and digital communication, has potentially increased the significance of peer influence on marital outcomes.

Understanding the relationship between these factors and divorce rates is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Prevention and Intervention:** Identifying key predictors enables the development of targeted intervention strategies
2. **Counseling Approaches:** Understanding these relationships helps inform more effective counseling methodologies
3. **Policy Development:** Evidence-based insights can guide policy formation for family support services
4. **Social Support Systems:** Recognition of peer influence can help in designing appropriate support networks

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing concerns about rising divorce rates, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific contributions of verbal abuse and peer group influence to marital dissolution. While previous research has extensively explored economic factors and physical abuse as predictors of divorce, the quantitative impact of verbal abuse and social network influences has been inadequately examined. This lack of comprehensive analysis poses challenges for marriage counselors, social workers and policymakers in developing effective intervention strategies. The absence of empirical evidence specifically measuring the relative impact of verbal abuse and peer influence on divorce rates hampers the development of targeted prevention programs and support services. Additionally, the potential interaction between these two factors - how verbal abuse might influence individuals to seek peer validation and how peer groups might affect perceptions of verbal abuse - remains largely

unexplored. Therefore, this study addresses this critical research gap by quantitatively analyzing the relationship between verbal abuse, peer group influence, and divorce rates, aiming to provide evidence-based insights for more effective marital support interventions.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate and analyze the relationships between verbal abuse, peer group influence, and divorce rates, providing evidence-based insights for marriage counseling and intervention strategies.

Objectives

1. To determine the extent to which verbal abuse predicts divorce rates through quantitative analysis of collected data.
2. To examine the relationship between peer group influence and divorce rates using statistical methods.
3. To analyze the relative impact of verbal abuse and peer group influence on divorce rates using multiple regression analysis.
4. To develop evidence-based recommendations for marriage counseling and intervention programs based on the findings.

Literature Review

Verbal abuse within marriages has emerged as a significant predictor of relationship dissolution. Studies by Richardson and Ahmed (2023) found that couples experiencing regular verbal abuse were 3.5 times more likely to divorce compared to those reporting minimal verbal conflict. This finding aligns with longitudinal research by Thompson *et al.* (2022), which demonstrated that persistent verbal abuse preceded 68% of divorces in their study sample.

Karim and Wilson (2023) identified several key aspects of verbal abuse that particularly impact marital stability including: frequency of verbal aggression, Intensity of emotional manipulation, Pattern of degrading communication and presence of psychological control.

Recent research has highlighted the significant role of peer networks in marital outcomes. Ahmed and Roberts (2023) found that individuals whose close friends had experienced divorce were 75% more likely to consider divorce themselves. Social network analysis by Henderson *et al.* (2022) revealed that peer attitudes toward divorce significantly influenced individual decision-making processes.

Studies examining the interplay between verbal abuse and peer influence have shown complex relationships. Johnson and Liu (2023) demonstrated that individuals experiencing verbal abuse were more likely to seek peer validation for their relationship concerns, potentially amplifying the impact of peer influence on divorce decisions

Previous research has employed various approaches to measuring these variables. These include: Standardized verbal abuse scales (Morrison & Clark, 2022), Social network analysis

tools (Wilson *et al.*, 2023) and mixed-method approaches combining quantitative and qualitative data (Ahmed & Thompson, 2023).

Recent studies have shown significant shifts in divorce patterns globally. Research by Anderson and Williams (2023) indicates a 15% increase in divorce rates over the past decade, with psychological factors playing an increasingly prominent role. Mohammed *et al.* (2022) found that couples aged 25-35 are particularly vulnerable to divorce, with communication issues cited as a primary factor in 65% of cases.

Verbal abuse has emerged as a significant predictor of marital dissolution. Studies by Richardson and Kumar (2023) revealed that sustained verbal abuse reduces marital satisfaction by approximately 45% within the first five years of marriage. This finding is supported by Hassan and Smith's (2022) longitudinal study, which found that couples experiencing regular verbal abuse were 3.2 times more likely to divorce compared to those reporting minimal verbal conflict.

The influence of peer groups on marital decisions has gained increasing attention. Ibrahim and Chen (2023) conducted a social network analysis revealing that individuals with divorced friends were 62% more likely to consider divorce themselves. Additionally, research by Thompson *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that negative peer influence regarding marriage was particularly impactful during periods of marital conflict, increasing divorce likelihood by 40%.

Recent research has explored the psychological pathways linking verbal abuse and peer influence to divorce decisions. Ahmad and Wilson (2023) identified three key mechanisms: Erosion of self-esteem through sustained verbal abuse, reinforcement of negative relationship perceptions through peer validation and Development of escape-oriented coping strategies. Studies have shown that the impact of verbal abuse and peer influence varies across cultural contexts. Research by Oladipo and Johnson (2023) found that collectivist societies showed stronger peer group effects on marital decisions, while individualistic cultures demonstrated higher sensitivity to verbal abuse impacts.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design utilizing multiple regression and correlation analysis. The data used for this study is secondary data representing the number of registered divorce cases, number of cases as a result of verbal abuse and the number of cases as a result of peer group influence recorded at Kebbi state magistrate court in Birnin Kebbi for three consecutive years consisting of 71 cases. Multiple regression and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data in order to determine the functional relationship between them.

To fit a multiple regression model to the data, the total cases recorded was considered as the dependent variable while the number of cases as a result of verbal abuse and the number of cases as a result of peer group influence were considered as the independent variables for the study. Statistical software package MINITAB was used in the analysis.

Results and Findings

The fitted regression equation is:

$$\text{Divorce} = 9.91 + 1.10 \text{ Verbal Abuse} + 0.836 \text{ Peer Group Influence}$$

Predictor	Coef.	SE Coef.	<i>t</i>	P
Constant	9.9067	0.9592	10.33	0.000
Verbal Abuse	1.09938	0.07442	14.77	0.000
Peer Group influence	0.8362	0.1120	7.47	0.000

$$S = 3.72837 \quad R\text{-Sq} = 87.9\% \quad R\text{-Sq}(\text{adj}) = 87.5\%$$

This equation shows how the dependent variable (Divorce) is related to the independent variables (Verbal Abuse and Peer Group Influence). The coefficients of the equation are obtained as: Constant (intercept) = 9.9067, Verbal Abuse = 1.09938 and Peer Group Influence = 0.8362

These coefficients indicate the change in the dependent variable for a one-unit change in the respective independent variable, holding other variables constant.

Statistical Significance

Both independent variables are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$):

- i. Verbal Abuse: $p = 0.000$
- ii. Peer Group Influence: $p = 0.000$

This suggests that both variables have a significant impact on divorce rates.

Model Fit

$R\text{-Sq} = 87.9\%$: This indicates that 87.9% of the variance in divorce rates is explained by the model.

$R\text{-Sq}(\text{adj}) = 87.5\%$: This is the adjusted R-squared, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model.

Sequential Sum of Squares

Source	DF	Seq. SS
Verbal Abuse	1	6166.1
Peer Group influence	1	775.4

The Sequential Sum of Squares (Seq. SS) helps us understand the individual contributions of each predictor variable to the model.

1. Verbal Abuse: DF (Degrees of Freedom): 1, Seq. SS (Sequential Sum of Squares): 6166.1
2. Peer Group Influence: DF: 1, Seq. SS: 775.4

The Sequential Sum of Squares shows the contribution of each variable as it was added to the model. In this case, Verbal Abuse was entered first, followed by Peer Group Influence.

Verbal Abuse accounts for 6166.1 of the total regression sum of squares (6941.5). This represents about 88.8% of the explained variance ($6166.1 / 6941.5 \approx 0.888$). It suggests that Verbal Abuse is the stronger predictor in this model. Peer Group Influence on the other hand accounts for an additional 775.4 of the regression sum of squares. This represents about 11.2% of the explained variance ($775.4 / 6941.5 \approx 0.112$). While smaller than the contribution of Verbal Abuse, it still adds significant explanatory power to the model.

Verbal Abuse explains a much larger portion of the variance in Divorce rates compared to Peer Group Influence. However, both variables are statistically significant, as we saw in the earlier regression output.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis Results

		Correlations		
		Divorce	Verbal Abuse	Peer Group Influence
Divorce	Pearson Correlation	1	.882**	.698**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	71	71	71
Verbal Abuse	Pearson Correlation	.882**	1	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	71	71	71
Peer Group Influence	Pearson Correlation	.698**	.478**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	71	71	71

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Key Findings

1. Both Verbal Abuse and Peer Group Influence have positive relationships with Divorce rates.
2. For every one-unit increase in Verbal Abuse, Divorce rates increase by 1.10 units, on average.
3. For every one-unit increase in Peer Group Influence, Divorce rates increase by 0.836 units, on average.
4. The model explains a large proportion of the variance in Divorce rates (87.9%).
5. Verbal Abuse has the strongest correlation with Divorce (0.882) and peer Group Influence has a moderately strong correlation with Divorce (0.698).

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence for the significant impact of both verbal abuse and peer group influence on divorce rates. The multiple regression analysis revealed that these two factors collectively explain 87.9% of the variance in divorce rates, with

verbal abuse emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 1.10$, $p < 0.001$). The particularly strong correlation between verbal abuse and divorce rates ($r = 0.882$) underscores the critical role of psychological aggression in marital dissolution. While peer group influence showed a relatively lower but still significant impact ($\beta = 0.836$, $p < 0.001$), its moderately strong correlation with divorce rates ($r = 0.698$) highlights the importance of social networks in marital outcomes. These results demonstrate that both individual relationship dynamics and social influence factors play crucial roles in marital stability, suggesting the need for a comprehensive approach to marriage counseling and divorce prevention.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings from this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Implementation of mandatory pre-marital counseling programs focusing specifically on communication patterns and verbal abuse awareness.
2. Integration of peer group dynamics assessment into standard marriage counseling protocols
3. Launching of community-based programs to raise awareness about the impact of verbal abuse on marital relationships
4. Establishment of formal support networks for couples experiencing marital difficulties

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