

Exposing the Hidden Torment: The Unseen Struggles of Enduring Hatred and Marital Rape in Domestic Violence

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Dear Editor,

Domestic violence (DV) in the form of marital rape refers to any act between spouses involving unwanted intercourse or sexual penetration that is forced, threatened, or occurs when the victim is incapacitated (e.g., asleep or intoxicated). It is a devastating and often overlooked category of DV that profoundly affects the victim, violating the fundamental principles of trust and intimacy in a relationship. Unfortunately, many victims of marital rape suffer in silence due to fear of societal stigma or being doubted, as well as the incorrect belief that consent is automatic within marriage. As a result, the psychological and emotional scars are long-lasting and seriously impact the victim's self-esteem and mental well-being.^{1,2}

Marital rape is often hidden by cultural taboos and confusion surrounding the concept of consent within marriage. Over time, many legal systems have incorrectly assumed that marriage automatically equals consent to sexual activity. This misunderstanding not only overlooks the problem of marital rape within legal frameworks but also keeps this form of DV hidden from public view. This lack of awareness minimizes the pain experienced by victims and reinforces a culture of silence, enabling marital rape to persist unchecked.^{3,4}

Distinguishing marital rape as a crime is a critical step toward achieving justice for its victims. In many jurisdictions, the lack of clear laws addressing this form of DV leaves survivors vulnerable and without adequate legal recourse. When the importance of consent is disregarded in sexual encounters, regardless of marital status, it sends a dangerous message that such acts are acceptable. This legal loophole weakens the severity of marital rape and discourages victims from seeking help, as they may feel that their suffering is unworthy or contemptible of recognition. Without legal acknowledgment, victims are denied validation and protection, perpetuating a vicious cycle of silence and impunity that worsens the problem.^{5,6}

There is an urgent need for legal reform to recognize marital rape as a form of DV. This perspective on the crime allows for a more comprehensive approach to support services, addressing not only the physical but also the emotional and psychological trauma associated with sexual violence. Comprehensive training for law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and counselors ensures the delivery of appropriate care and resources for victims. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns play a vital role in changing societal attitudes, empowering victims to speak out, and promoting a culture that values personal autonomy and the right to sexual consent.^{7,8}

In conclusion, recognizing marital rape as a crime is both a legal necessity and a moral obligation that demonstrates our commitment to upholding the dignity, autonomy, and rights of individuals within a marriage. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge marital rape as a significant and serious form of DV. Denying or minimizing the criminal nature of marital rape only perpetuates a vicious cycle of silence and impunity, further reinforcing harmful stereotypes and silencing the voices of victims who deserve to be heard. Only through comprehensive efforts can we eradicate this hidden form of DV and ensure justice and protection for all victims. By directly and effectively addressing

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this issue, we can cultivate a society that values consent and respects the rights of individuals, ultimately paving the way for healthier and more equitable relationships. Updating laws and expanding support services are crucial steps in dismantling the cultural barriers that allow marital rape to persist in silence.

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