

MARITAL RAPE AND THE FIGHT FOR GENDER INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA BY MARIAGORATHY UKAMAKA ONYENWOSA. Submitted in the department of Gender Studies, University of Sussex Brighton, United Kingdom.

Introduction

Marital rape is one of the most serious violations of human rights and violence against women (VAW) but, this is not acknowledged as such in Nigeria. Section 357 of Nigeria's criminal law defines rape as non-consensual sex conducted outside of wedlock, but exempts rape in marriage from the definition of a crime. This definition is however, consistent with the penal code in Nigeria (Ameh, 2021). Nigeria is home to a diverse range of traditions, each with an individual take on marriage. But a similar theme unites these disparate traditions: a patriarchal structure that might serve as a haven for marital rape. However, in Nigerian tradition, marriage denotes the joining of families rather than just individuals. The emphasis is on reproduction and the continuance of the family line, frequently laying the onus of delivery on the woman (Onoh, 2015). Several cultures have strong traditions of wifely submission and obligation. Regardless of her own sexual urges, the wife is required to yield to her husband's (Essien, 2019). This social pressure fosters a culture of shame and silence around marital rape, which prevents women from coming forward and feeds the abuse cycle because the historical perception that marriage implied consent to all sexual actions, exclude husbands from prosecution for rape (Edwards, 2010) and for fear of embarrassing themselves and their families, victims are discouraged from speaking out (Awa, 2018). Victims find it challenging to get assistance because of this culture of silence, which exacerbates the problem. Beliefs in religion also matter. Some interpretations highlight the need of respect in marriage, while others uphold the husband's authority, which may make it more difficult to recognize marital rape (Ezejiofor, 2016). Thus, the campaign for gender equality is inextricably linked to the fight against marital rape. It demands legal frameworks that regard marital rape with the same seriousness as other forms of sexual assault, recognizing a woman's right to say no in a married relationship. The only way we can establish a culture in which marital rape is not accepted is by tackling the underlying reasons of gender inequality. Nigeria's battle for gender equality is hampered by the fact that marital rape is still a common and untreated problem. Husbands are shielded from prosecution for rape

committed within a marriage by the current legal system, which has its roots in colonial-era legislation (Olateru-Olagbegi, 2013). In addition to violating women's basic right to bodily autonomy, this serves to perpetuate the idea that wives are the property of their husbands, hence, they are commoditized. However, marital rape is facilitated by cultural norms that normalize male dominance and female submissiveness. The idea that women exist to service men's wants is reinforced by the expectation that wives should always be sexually available, regardless of their consent (Millet, 1970). Considering the deeply rooted culture embraced by Nigerians and the violations of women's right to bodily autonomy, need for an effective domesticated legislation that criminalizes marital rape in order to uphold gender equality and freedom from any form of discrimination in order to foster a positive change. In addition, this essay looks at marital rape from the angle of legal framework that characterizes it as an abuse and violation of women's right and therefore needs a domesticated and spelt out punishment to be able to criminalize it and view it as an offence punishable under the law.

Conceptualizing marital rape

The non-consensual sexual act committed by a spouse is known as marital rape, and it is a powerful emblem of gender inequality which draws attention to the unequal power relations that persist in civilizations where women are still seen as inferior to males. It not only causes victims to experience psychological and physical harm, but it also upholds a system of gender inequality that denies women agency over their bodies and sexuality. According to studies, marital rape is very common in Nigeria and has a terrible effect on the physical and emotional well-being of women (Ayodeji & Ogunbodede, 2018). Sexually transmitted illnesses, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and unintended pregnancies are among the consequences.

LEGAL RIGHTS INFRINGED UPON BY MARITAL RAPE

Victims of spouse rape suffer grave physical and psychological consequences. Moreover, it violates a few legal rights, which will be covered in more detail. Legal rights are those that are fully protected by the law; if they are violated, the person who was wronged is free to file a

lawsuit to get their rights restored. Usually, it results in responsibility or punishment of some kind. Ameh (2021) identified the following as the legal rights being infringed upon by marital rape:

Right to Life

Intimate partner abuse is recognized as one of the leading causes of death and suffering worldwide. There have been fatalities as a result of partners abusing their spouses. A number of cases when husbands kill their wives while arguing that they had to defend themselves, preserve their honor, or simply state it was an error made in a fit of passion have been connected to "marital murder" and marital rape. Section 33 of The 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) constitution, protects the right to life.

Right to Liberty and Security of Persons

Marital rape violates a woman's right to full and equal enjoyment of her freedom within her home and is a flagrant violation of her bodily and psychological security. The survivor of marital sexual assault lives in constant terror of another incident. The inability of Nigeria to make marital rape a crime breaches the country's constitution's guarantees of people's liberty and security and places the victim in a remarkably helpless position where she is constantly reminded of her fragility and loses her rights to both physical and sexual integrity.

The Right not to be Subject to Torture or to Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The total ban of sexual assault is one of their rights. Spousal rape meets all of the criteria for an act of torture, as stated in Article 1 of the Convention Against Torture.

(1) It inflicts severe suffering;

(2) It furthers an unlawful goal using intimidation, coercion, or discrimination; and

(3) An actor... accepts it or tolerates it. Intentional sexual assault against a spouse can result in severe pain and suffering, both physically and mentally. The Committee Against Torture states

that women are especially susceptible to being tortured in their homes by private individuals (Ameh, 2021).

Freedom from Discrimination

The right to be free from discrimination is recognized by every major human rights treaty. The CEDAW Committee stated in its general recommendations that marital rape is a gender-based violence and a form of discrimination that significantly restricts women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men.

Right to Equality

Marital rape is an infringement on women's equality of rights. According to Ameh (2021), gender equality cannot really exist in a culture if women are not allowed to freely consent to or object to having sex during marriage. Since most cultures view marriage as a kind of ongoing arrangement for sex, a woman may be regarded as her spouse's sexual property in the absence of marriage. Laws that create gender imbalance by designating the husband as the head of the household—as is the case, among other places, in Iran, Rwanda, Indonesia, Honduras, Gabon, and the United Arab Emirates—make women more vulnerable to sexual assault in their homes.

International instruments against marital rape

Fighting for gender parity requires a global strategy to end violence against women, which includes rape in marriage. A number of international agreements tackle violence against women, providing a foundation for the battle against marital rape. The rights to life, liberty, and personal security are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948). Nigeria signed the CEDAW convention on 23rd April 1984 and ratified the CEDAW convention on 13th June, 1985. This convention is majorly on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women with particular emphasis on abolition of all types of violence against women including domestic abuse- this includes marital rape as an abuse, and infringes upon women's autonomy over their bodies and protects them from sexual assault as demonstrated by United Nations (1981). It is up to individual countries, once the convention have been ratified to incorporate these ideas into their own domestic implementation and

enforcement because it is crucial for the effectiveness of international tools and they can act as a catalyst for change.

This is how CEDAW addresses these concerns:

- **Rape in marriage:** A framework that forbids marital rape is established by several provisions in CEDAW. Altogether, Articles 1, 2, 3, and 5(a) support women's equality and their freedom from discrimination. Furthermore, marital rape is included in the definition of violence against women in General Recommendation 19 on Violence Against Women by the CEDAW Committee. As a result, nations who ratified CEDAW are now required by law to combat marital rape.
- **Reproductive Autonomy:** Although the word "reproductive autonomy" is not used specifically in CEDAW, it is supported by a number of key principles. Women's rights are promoted under Articles 10, 11, and 12 with regard to employment, education, and health. This includes the freedom to make decisions regarding their reproductive health and the avoidance of marital rape because the idea of "marital ownership" to the husband entitles a wife no control over her body and takes away her ability to refuse sex. Because it deprives women of control over a crucial aspect of their lives, this denial of bodily autonomy is considered a basic component of gender inequality. In 2013, Nigerian non - governmental organizations (NGOs) presented shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee in order to offer an alternative viewpoint on the conditions that women confront (FIDH, 2013) in Nigeria on the issues with implementation—particularly with regard to women's reproductive rights. These papers emphasized the disparities that exist between women's lived experiences and the official government account. The shadow reports placed a lot of emphasis on the availability of safe and authorized abortion. Nigeria only allows abortions in cases where the mother's life is in jeopardy due to its severe abortion laws. The reports state that this disregards women's rights to health and physical autonomy (Center for Reproductive Rights, n.d.). Maternal mortality has been linked to unsafe abortion practices, which are against CEDAW's right to life and health (Article 12) (FIDH, 2013). The shadow reports also examined restrictions on family planning service access. Women's awareness of contraception is limited by cultural and religious views, as well as a dearth of comprehensive sexuality education (WRAPA, 2017). Consequently, this curtails their capacity to

make knowledgeable decisions regarding their reproductive health, so affecting CEDAW's Article 16(e) concerning family planning (UNDP, 2023). The shadow reports were an essential instrument for activism. They asked the CEDAW Committee to hold Nigeria responsible for its commitments by highlighting the discrepancy between legal frameworks and women's experiences. The submitted shadow report of 2013 prompted the CEDAW Committee to issue concluding observations in 2014. The follow-up on these observations include:

Concerns over Nigeria's restrictive abortion law and its effect on maternal mortality were raised by the CEDAW Committee (CEDAW, 2014). They pushed the government to amend the legislation to allow abortion in accordance with global human rights norms, highlighting women's right to health and life (Article 12) (CEDAW, 2014). But there haven't been any notable modifications to the law.

Access to family planning services also became a focal point. The Committee suggested making inexpensive contraception available and providing comprehensive sexuality education (CEDAW, 2014). Even if there has been considerable progress, difficulties still exist. There are obstacles in the way of the 2020 introduction of the National Sexuality Education Curriculum (NPC, 2020). In a same vein, few people use contraceptives, especially in rural regions (MCHIP, 2022).

The CEDAW Committee also discussed issues of reproductive health and violence against women. Female genital mutilation (FGM) and other related practices were denounced, and the government was encouraged to implement a comprehensive ban on FGM (CEDAW, 2014). FGM is now illegal in Nigeria due to the 2015 passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP Act) (UN Women, 2015). Their efforts, in addition to the CEDAW Committee's pressure, have probably made some progress possible. Nigeria's fight against violence and violations of human rights has been greatly aided by the historic Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015, often known as the VAPP Act. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan signed the Act into law with the intention of outlawing violence in all public and private domains (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons [NAPTIP], 2023). It forbids all forms of violence against people, with an emphasis on safeguarding disadvantaged populations that are disproportionately impacted, like women and girls (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2023). The VAPP Act created a thorough structure to accomplish its objectives. Numerous

violent crimes are prohibited under it, including as assault, rape, destructive customs, and forcible removal from one's home (FIDA Nigeria, 2020). Through the provision of legal remedies and the delineation of procedures for compensation claims, the Act empowers victims (FIDA Nigeria, 2020). In order to discourage repeat violations, it also requires the establishment of a sex offender registry (NAPTIP, 2023). Notwithstanding its progressive nature, the VAPP Act's implementation continues to face obstacles. After several years of legislative process, the laws pertaining to gender-based violence were combined and passed into law in 2015 as the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015. This law covers harmful traditional practices and physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence, including rape. 116 The Committee asked Nigeria to furnish information in its Letters of Inquiry (LOIs), to which Nigeria has not yet replied, regarding the applicability of the VAPP Act outside the Federal capital, as well as whether the Act is backed by specific budgetary allotments and incorporates a surveillance mechanism. 117 The Committee also asked the government to submit information on the quantity of;

(a) cases involving gender-based violence against women, including domestic abuse, that have been investigated, prosecuted, and found guilty; and

(b) the number of protection orders that women and girls have obtained and the percentage of those orders that they have complied with. 118 Because Nigeria has a three-tiered government structure, it is still unclear if the VAPP Act applies outside of the Federal Capital Territory or if it must be passed in each of the 36 States of the Federation. Ten states currently lack legislation banning FGM, and thirty percent of the nation lacks legislation safeguarding women from assault of any kind. 119 According to Section 55 of the Nigerian Penal Code, which is in effect in the North, men are permitted to discipline their wives, just as parents and instructors are permitted to do the same with their children, provided as the abuse is not severe. 120 The administration has not included any data indicating whether the VAPP Act has assisted in lowering the frequency of violence against women or protected them from it in its most recent report to the Committee. Several studies show that Nigeria is still a country where violence against women is pervasive. 121 Nearly three out of ten women had experienced physical violence since the age of fifteen, primarily at the hands of their husbands, according to the

most recent NDHS study. Additionally, 25% of married women report having experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse at some point in their marriage. 123 In Lagos State, 480 out-of-school girls between the ages of 10 and 19 were found to have experienced at least one instance of physical, psychological, or sexual domestic violence in the 12 months before to the examination, according to a 2015 study.¹²⁴ When victims have tried to file charges, the offenders have encountered antiquated and insufficient punitive statutes.¹²⁵ Out of the 31% of women who seek aid, just 2% report violence to the police; the majority of these women go to their family.¹²⁶ Even though the Lagos State Police Command alone documented 678 occurrences of rape in the State between 2012 and 2013, as of 2015, only 18 persons in Nigeria had ever been found guilty of the crime.

There is still a problem with the Act's uneven adoption across the Nigerian states; some states have not yet domesticated it into their own laws making it difficult to criminalize marital rape as an offence and a violation of women's right (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2023). Moreover, insufficient public knowledge and a burdened legal system may impede victims' ability to receive assistance and successful prosecution (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2023).

The Centre for Reproductive Rights' 2017 CEDAW shadow report on Nigeria sheds light on the discrepancies between Nigeria's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the lived realities of Nigerian women regarding their reproductive rights. The report highlights the restrictive legal framework surrounding abortion. Though the Nigerian Constitution doesn't explicitly address abortion, the 1963 Criminal Code Act criminalizes it except in instances where the mother's life is in danger (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1963). This limited access to safe abortion disproportionately impacts low-income women who lack resources for private healthcare, forcing them to seek unsafe procedures with high mortality rates (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2017). Furthermore, the report critiques the lack of comprehensive sexuality education. Nigeria's education system often avoids discussions on sexual and reproductive health, leaving young women vulnerable to misinformation, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2017). This aligns with Meekers' (2017) argument

that inadequate sexual education disproportionately disadvantages girls and reinforces gender inequalities.

The shadow report underscores the urgency for legislative reform. It calls for the revision of the Criminal Code Act to expand access to safe abortion services, particularly in cases of rape, incest, and severe fetal malformation. Additionally, the report advocates for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education into the national curriculum, ensuring young women have access to accurate information about their bodies and reproductive health (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2017).

By highlighting these gaps, the Centre for Reproductive Rights' shadow report serves as a crucial tool for holding Nigeria accountable to its CEDAW commitments. It pushes for legal and policy changes that empower women to make informed choices about their bodies and reproductive health, ultimately fostering gender equality in Nigeria.

The Maputo Protocol

- f) The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) stands as a landmark document for African women's rights. The Maputo protocol clearly in article 1 defined:

"Discrimination against women" to be any distinction, exclusion or restriction or any differential treatment based on sex and whose objectives or effects compromise or destroy the recognition, enjoyment or the exercise by women, regardless of their marital status, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life; and also defines
"Harmful Practices" to be all behaviour, attitudes and/or practices which negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health, dignity, education and physical integrity; (African Charter, 2003).

Article 4(2) explicitly prohibits all forms of violence against women, including "all forms of harmful traditional practices, particularly those harmful to women, such as ... marital rape."

(African Union, 2003). The Maputo Protocol compels signatory states to enact legislation criminalizing marital rape and ensure access to justice for victims (Okowa, 2012). A signatory to the Maputo Protocol is Nigeria. Its domestic laws about marital rape are still unclear, nevertheless. Marital rape is not included by the Criminal Code Act (CCA) of 1990, and spouses are not considered to be covered by any of the current rape statutes (Ezejirofor, 2016). The existence of patriarchal attitudes that reject the idea of marital rape and see a wife as her husband's property is reflected in this legislative divide.

The Maputo Protocol's Impact on Gender Equality

The Maputo Protocol has sparked efforts towards gender equality in Nigeria despite these obstacles. The Protocol has been used by civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote legislative reform. The Maputo Protocol has been used in significant instances, such as *Omobola Opeifa v. Lagos State Government* (2018), to contest the decriminalization of marital rape (Awa, 2019). The Nigerian government is under pressure to solve the issue as a result of these initiatives.

The Protocol has additionally had a role in raising awareness of marital rape. The Protocol's framework has been used by CSOs and women's rights organizations to inform communities and confront cultural practices that justify marital rape. Raising awareness is essential to changing public perceptions and motivating victims to pursue justice.

Socio-cultural Factors influencing marital rape

In Nigeria, deeply ingrained cultural traditions play a major role in the high rate of marital rape. Male dominance and female submissiveness are highlighted by the patriarchal framework of society. This translates into the belief that spouses should always have access to their bodies (Millet, 1970). Cultural customs like wife inheritance and the societal stigma associated with women declining sex serve to perpetuate this expectation. In addition, especially in rural regions, rape in marriage is shrouded in shame and silence. Initiatives aimed at empowering women via economic and educational possibilities can also provide them with the tools they need to question conventional gender roles and claim their agency. There are still a lot of obstacles to overcome despite continuous attempts. Resistance to change is a result of the

deeply ingrained patriarchal culture and the power of religious institutions, which frequently oppose such legal reforms but there is hope for advancement due to rising activism and pressure from around the world.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE DOMESTICATED LAWS IN NIGERIA TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHT.

Nigeria's Constitution (The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria)

This is Nigeria's ground norm, or the fundamental law that forms the basis for all other laws and legislation. All citizens of the nation, regardless of their social status, are granted certain legal rights. Legal rights are those that are fully protected by the law, and when those rights are violated, victims have the right to file a lawsuit to get their rights restored. These include, but are not limited to, the rights to life, human dignity, personal liberty, and a fair trial. In particular Section 42 (1) clearly forbids subjecting an individual to discrimination and guarantees the right to be free from it. The constitution forbids discrimination based on gender, but it does not specifically forbid violence against women.

The Criminal and Penal Code of Nigeria.

These statutes are the main ones that control all matters related to sexual abuse in Nigeria, including rape. The Penal Code is in effect in the Northern states, whereas the Criminal Code is applicable to those in the South. It is recognized that rape is a felony that carries a life sentence, either with or without physical punishment. According Ameh, (2021) both codes, one of the primary components of the crime of rape in Nigeria is unlawful carnal knowledge, which is connected to the physical act (actus reus) of the offence. Nonconsensual intercourse is essentially the actus reus of rape. Although the definitions of the offense differ, they have the same outcome. A person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force, by threats or intimidation of any kind, by fear of harm, or by false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or, in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape, according to Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act,⁵⁷. It is often impossible for a husband to be accused of raping his spouse, according to an analysis of Section 6 of the Criminal Code Act,

which defines illicit carnal knowledge as a carnal connection occurring between persons other than a man and his wife. In addition, section 282 of the Penal Code⁵⁹ states that: A man is considered to have committed rape if, with the exception of situations in which he had sex with his wife, he engages in sexual activity with a woman in any of the following ways: (a) against her will; (b) without her consent; or (c) with her consent when it was won by instilling fear of harm or death in the victim. The common law theory that a woman gives her irreversible permission to all acts of sexual intercourse, including future ones, when she enters into a marriage contract with a man provides the foundation for this exemption against marital rape.

Violence Against Persons Prohibitions Act of 2015

Ameh (2021) noted that many interest groups have been calling for years for a significant revision of Nigeria's criminal and penal codes to include new behaviors that are categorized as abuse and violence in the community. This led to the creation of the Violence Against Persons (prohibition) Act, which was enacted on May 28, 2015. The law was enacted in order to outlaw all sorts of violence, including harmful traditional practices, physical, sexual, psychological, and domestic abuse. It also forbade discrimination against individuals and provided penalties, compensation, and protection for victims of violence. Acts of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation and circumcision, are prohibited by law. In this case, performing female circumcision or genital mutilation on oneself or enlisting the help of another person to do so is illegal. If found guilty, the offender faces a maximum sentence of four years in jail, a maximum fine of N200,000.00, or both. There is no provision under this Act criminalizing marital rape, it doesn't even mention it as a form of offense. Ameh (2021) stated that in Section 9 the provisions of the act observed that , anyone who attempts to carry out the offence of female circumcision or genital mutilation also commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or to a fine not exceeding N100,000.00 or both. A person who also incites , aids or abets or counsels another to commit the offence of female circumcision or mutilation commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or to a fine not exceeding N100,000.00 or both. Furthermore the application of the law is limited to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and only the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja empowered by an Act of Parliament has the jurisdiction to hear and grant any application brought under the Act. This Act doesn't even list marital rape as a crime; it

doesn't contain any provisions that make it a crime. According to Section 9, attempting to carry out the crimes of female circumcision or genital mutilation is likewise illegal. If found guilty, the offender faces up to two years in prison, a fine of up to N100,000, or both. A person commits an offense when they encourage, assist, abet, or counsel someone else to perform female circumcision or mutilation. If found guilty, they face a maximum sentence of two years in jail, a maximum fine of N100,000.00, or both. The VAPP act has its limitations that has impeded the effectiveness of the legislation. It has no specific spelt out laws that criminalizes marital rape hence the need for policy/ legal reform.

Theoretical Framework – Liberal Feminism

Marital rape is seen by liberal feminism as an infringement on a woman's basic rights to legal equality and physical autonomy. This perspective highlights the importance of legal reform and social change in achieving gender equality in Nigeria, a country where patriarchal practices continue to exist. Individual liberty and equal rights for all citizens are the central ideas of liberal feminism (Friedman, 1982). By definition, marital rape violates a woman's autonomy to make decisions about her body and sexuality. This offense should be condemned by the law in the same way as non-marital rape. Progression is impeded by Nigeria's present legal ambiguity around marital rape. Laws that do not make marital rape a crime give abusers a free pass and support the myth that a wife's consent is assumed in a marriage. Legislative reform that clearly identifies and criminalizes marital rape and ensures that those who commit it are held accountable is something that liberal feminists support (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Liberal feminism acknowledges the necessity for social transformation in addition to legal reform. Creating a culture of consent and body autonomy requires educational activities. It's crucial to have honest conversations about healthy partnerships, sexual assault, and the ability to say "no" in a married relationship. Gender norms that normalize marital rape can be challenged by educational initiatives aimed at both men and women (Eaton & Kelly, 2018).

Liberal feminists also advocate for economic empowerment as a means of attaining gender equality. Women who are financially independent are better able to escape abusive marriages and start over. Women can be empowered and the power dynamics that support marital rape can be weakened by policies that support women's education, credit availability, and equal work possibilities.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Unquestionably, the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW and VAPP act has contributed to the advancement of gender equality in Nigeria, but there are still big obstacles to overcome. For marital rape to be clearly criminalized and for effective prosecution to be ensured, legislative reform is necessary. Sustained campaigning and awareness as well as public education are essential for empowering victims and tearing down detrimental cultural norms.

Strong enforcement measures are also required to guarantee that the laws making marital rape a crime are properly put into practice. There should be very rigid sanctions/ punishments in order to deter others from this act that impinges the bodily right of a woman. Liberal feminism provides a framework for tackling marital rape in Nigeria by supporting women's economic empowerment, encouraging social change through education, and pushing for legal reform. Nigeria may progress toward a society in which women have equal rights and authority over their bodies—both inside and outside of marriage—by implementing these policies. Making marital rape a crime is a vital first step in achieving gender parity.

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