

**MARITAL RAPE AMONG THE POOR WOMEN IN  
THE SLUM OF URBAN PHNOM PENH,  
CAMBODIA**

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**M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES)**

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**ABSTRACT**

In a context of an increasing number of violent acts committed against women in a slum of urban Phnom Penh, marital rape is a serious form of rape in general. The purpose of this research is to determine the unequal power relations between wife and husband that lead to marital rape. The selection of 12 wives' experiences on sexual abuse and 3 key informants were done through non-random sampling (Opportunistic Sampling and Convenience Sampling) in the slum of urban Phnom Penh. The data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews from July to October 2004.

Results revealed that most poor people are strongly oppressed under patriarchal capitalist ideology, particularly, married women. Four types and three consequences of marital rape were discovered in this research study. Patriarchal capitalism led to marital rape through six areas such as sexuality, production, reproduction, socialization, capitalist ideology and political state, and these factors were significantly related to a husband's power relation. The husbands used their patriarchal capitalist power to force sex on their wives as they wished, so the wives were oppressed and exploited by the patriarchal capitalist system through their husbands. Under the patriarchal capitalist structure, women kept silent on marital rape, because they lacked the knowledge on women's rights, economic independence, and social support. The wife rape victims had great difficult empowering themselves due to marital rape. Social support is of key importance in empowering women to have equal status with men.

These findings suggest that the state should take the responsibility of improving women's status through knowledge of women's rights, economic independence, health care services and reforms.

**KEY WORDS: MARITAL RAPE / POOR WOMEN / SLUM OF URBAN PHNOM PENH / CAMBODIA**

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