

Women's Status in Refusing Marital Rape and Its Associated Factors in Ethiopia: 2016 DHS Data Analysis

Melkamu Dires Asabu*

Abstract

Human right instruments underscore that wives have the right to refuse marital rape. This study was aimed to assess women's status in refusing marital rape and its associated factors. The study used data from the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of Ethiopia. The sample (n=8,695) was limited to married women. To examine associated factors, socio-demographic variables were computed using logistic regression. The finding revealed that the majority (53.73%) of married women did not refuse marital rape. Education and economic status of women were positively associated with women's status in refusing marital rape. Women whose age 35-49 years old (AOR=.277;95%CI=.088,.876), being a housewife (AOR=.839;95%CI=.757,.929), and women who got their marriage by others decision (AOR=.761;95%CI=.682,.849) were less likely refuse marital rape. Women who drink alcohol (AOR=1.232;95%CI=1.053,1.442) were more likely to refuse marital rape. In conclusion, women's status in refusing marital rape is low. Accordingly, addressing its associated hindering factors is necessary.

Keywords: Marital rape, refusing, women, Ethiopia,

*MSW in Social Work; MA in International Relations and Diplomacy

Woldia University, P.O.Box 400, Woldia, Ethiopia. E-mail: ketera2019@gmail.com ; Tel: +251922752795

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Introduction

Marital rape refers to sexual intercourse of spouses without the consent of wives (Ambawu, 2015; Bergen & Barnhill, 2006; Fekadu, 2008; Girma, 2013; Karadaş, 2008). Wives have the right to refuse sexual demand of husbands if they are not interested to do so. In this regard, Shashi Tharoor, an Indian Parliament Member, stated that "A husband does not own his wife's body. She, and only she, has the right to decide when she wants to have sexual intercourse... If she says no, he has to stop. If he does not, it is [marital] rape" (Tharoor, 2019). Similarly, Liberal Feminists underscore that women should have equal opportunities to access their right including free will to their body with men (Agassi, 1989; Lorber, 1997; Lorber, 2010). Marital rape gives an absolute sexual freedom for husbands over the rights and freedoms of wives. It is a violation of women's human rights such as the right to human dignity, right to bodily integrity, right to privacy, as well as the right not to be

subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (Ambawu, 2015; Meshesha, 2014). After a number of debates, feminists lobbied over 50 countries to make marital rape a crime (Wulfhorst, 2019).

Concerning marital rape exemption, there are ongoing debates. For instance, supporting marital rape exemption, the consent theory argued that wives gave their sexual consent to their husbands when they agreed to get married (Kolade-Faseyi, 2018). The origin of this argument goes back to Hale's Doctrine. However, the mutual consensus of spouses to be married each other shall not be considered as it (1) gives an absolute sexual freedom for husbands over the rights of wives and (2) facilitates the situation to violate human rights of wives. Secondly, the union theory claim that wives and husbands should not be considered as a separate

person, because their marriage makes them one. Using this premise, the theory concludes that "women lost their own civil identities in marriage, and they are subsequently viewed as their husbands' property" (Green, 1988; Small & Tetreault, 1990). Here, it is difficult to consider wives as property of husbands' though the researcher believes on spouses' oneness in marriage. The theory looks like advocate the mere advantage of husbands rather than reflecting the case evenhandedly. The right to privacy is the other argumentative point regarding the view for and against marital rape exemption. Proponents of marital rape exemption argued that in marital life, husbands have the right to be free from any interfere including the state itself. In contrary, it is possible to argue that marital rape prevents women to exercise their fundamental rights like the right to privacy (Ambawu, 2015; Meshesha, 2014). Moreover, advocating marital rape exemption to minimize divorce rate is the other justification of the opponents of criminalization of marital rape (Mahoney and Williams, 1998). However, the opponents argued that the sustainability of marriage should not be insured by the pain of wives (Sampson, 2010). Moreover, opponents asserted that since institution of marriage is not above an individual's dignity, criminalizing marital rape is mandatory whether it maximizes divorce rate or not (Tharoor, 2019).

To sum up, although the criminalization of marital rape is ongoing argumentative issue, regional and international human rights instruments that are ratified by many countries recognized marital rape as a form of violence against women. Astonishingly, in such countries like Ethiopia marital rape is not considered as a criminal act.

In Ethiopia, although the FDRE constitution and the ratified regional as well as international human rights instruments

recognized it as a form of violence against women, the country fails to regard it as a 'criminal offense' (Chuol, 2018; Guder, 2019; Meshesha, 2014). In the country, there is ongoing controversy to criminalize marital rape, but both proponents and opponents of marital rape fail to support their argument with quantitative evidences. Researchers also overlooked to study women's status in refusing marital rape although it is noteworthy in taking proper interventions on the area. In this regard, for example, a survey finding in Ghana revealed that 80% of spouses agreed that wives have the right to refuse unwanted sex (Adinkrah, 2017). Thus, since it is the will of majority, the finding helps to criminalize marital rape. Similarly, the study also found that husbands are ready to approve wives' refusal of unwanted sex, while by fearing its probable consequences many wives are not ready to refuse marital rape (Adinkrah, 2017). This finding also helps to strengthen open communication of spouses about their sexual interest so as to avoid the impacts of marital rape.

Marital rape has numerous severe impacts on the raped woman. Some of them are, for example, various forms of immediate and long-term physical problems, health problems, gynecological and chronic illnesses, and disorder and depression (Martin & Taft, 2007). Although marital rape is not considered as a crime like strangers' rape, the magnitude of its impacts is more painful and two times higher than stranger's rape (Russell, 1990; Walker, 2016). About the prevalence of marital rape, a study conducted in Ethiopia revealed that 60% (six in every 10) of women are raped by their husbands (Meshesha, 2014); while in worldwide, the percentage of women who are faced by marital rape ranged 10-15% (England, 2020; Mahoney & Williams, 1998; Martin, Taft & Resick, 2007). This infers that in comparison with the global statistical report, the prevalence of marital rape in Ethiopia is not only badly serious but also

needs an urgent intervention. Despite the fact that marital rape is a crime, the victims of marital rape get less attention. The finding of available qualitative studies uncovered that some participants did not refused marital rape or unwanted sex albeit some other refused it (Muche, Adekunle & Arowojolu, 2017; Yigzaw, Berhane, Deyessa & Kaba, 2010). The nature of research approach makes the findings of these studies too difficult for generalization.

Therefore, as far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, the status of women in refusing marital rape and its associated factors is not yet studied. As a result, the intention of this article was to examine women's status in refusing marital rape and its associated factors in Ethiopia. The finding will inform stakeholders to take immediate intervention measures in protecting women from health, physical and psychological related impacts of marital rape.

Literature Review

Based on related literature and theoretical assumptions, the plausible status of married women in refusing marital rape and its associated factors are discussed as follow.

The discriminatory gender norm forced women to tolerate domestic violence within marriage (Marcus, Harper, Brodbeck & Page, 2015). The implication is that since marital rape is part of domestic violence, the status of women in refusing marital rape might be too low. In this regard, the finding of qualitative studies completed in Ethiopia revealed the presence of some women who did refuse marital rape, but also there are others who did not (Muche *et al.*, 2017; Yigzaw *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the position of women in refusing marital rape and its associated factors needs to be quantified in Ethiopia.

Feminists argue that religious and community institutions impose preclude on

women to be reliant on men (Lorber, 1997; Nehere, 2016). In other words, women status in refusing marital rape might have variations due to religion and residential areas of women. Since no culture is free from sexism (Brandt, 2011), women are facing marital rape albeit the magnitude is not similar from one culture to another. In this regard, a study done in Ghana identified residence and religion as a determinate factor to marital rape (Adinkrah, 2017). This calls researchers to examine the effect of religion and residential areas on women's status in refusing marital rape in the context of Ethiopia.

For Marx Feminism, housewife or unemployed women are subordinated on husbands (Lorber, 1997). They also assert that low economic and educational status of women is a manifestation as well as result of gender inequality (Lorber, 2010). Therefore, being a housewife, having less educational and low economic status might be an enforcing factor of marital rape. Dependency theory also argued that economically dependent persons do not hesitate to fulfill the demand of aide (Ferraro, 2008). Inversely, empirical studies reported conflicting findings about the relationship between educational status of women and marital rape. The study done by Frieze revealed that marital rape victims were less educated (Frieze, 1983), while the other study found that women with higher education status were at greater risk of being physically and sexually assaulted by their partners (Johnson, 2003). About women working status, unemployed women were a victim of marital rape than employed women (Frieze, 1983; Johnson, 2003). A study done by Fekadu (2008) disclosed poverty as a risk factor of marital rape. This indicates that the effects of working, economic and educational status of women on women's status in refusing marital rape needs to be studied in Ethiopia.

According to Evolutionary theory, unlike males, females are denied to choose their marital partner. This practice is common in many countries including Ethiopia. Females who got the opportunity to select their marital partner were less likely raped in marriage (Thornhill & Palmer, 2001). Correspondingly, a study done in Ghana uncovered that spouses who got the opportunity to choose their marital partner were more likely refuse unwanted sex or marital rape (Adinkrah, 2017).

A study done about cause and effect of rape in Ethiopia discovered that younger women are the main victims of rape than older women (Fekadu, 2008). Similarly, many researchers (Johnson & Sigler, 2000; Shields & Hanneke, 1988; Tjaden 2000) consistently found that marital rape victims were more likely younger women. In case of alcohol use, since women who drink alcohol are unable to understand and resist potential sex reprobates, drinkers are more likely to be raped than non-drinkers (Dibaba, 2003; Fekadu, 2008). A study which directly focuses on marital rape also divulged positive association of drinking alcohol and marital rape (Bowker, 1983).

Data and Methods

The 2016 Ethiopian DHS was conducted in all regional states of Ethiopia; namely Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Gambella and Harari as well as the two Federal Cities' Administrations such as Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa (CSA and ICF, 2016). It was collected by the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority (CSA) and ORC Macro International. This nationally representative sample survey includes women aged between 15-49 years old. The survey collected a detail of women's background characteristics. It collected the information from unmarried, married, living with partner, divorced and widowed women. However, for

the purpose of this study, the researcher has used only married women's data. Based on the valid number of responses for identified variables, sample of the study was limited to 8,695 married women.

Variables and Measurement

Dependent Variable

The study's dependent variable was women's status in refusing marital rape. This was measured based on the response given by women about whether they can refuse sex or not. Wives who can refuse sex are considered as they are 'refusing marital rape'; and wives who cannot refuse sex are considered as they are 'not refusing marital rape'. Accordingly, women's status in refusing marital rape that dichotomized as 'not refusing marital rape' and 'refusing marital rape' coded as "0" and "1" respectively.

Independent Variables

Based on existing related literature and theoretical evidences that were summarized in the previous section, the study identified the following independent variables. These variables are age, education level, working status, place of residence, household wealth index, religion, region, ever drinking alcohol, and decision makers on women's first marriage. The researcher adopted the DHS measurements of independent variables though the measurements of variables such as: age, education status, wealth index and decision maker of the first marriage were adapted as follow.

The adapted measurements include: (1) age of respondents that was open to write their exact age, but the study that focused on "modern contraceptive use" measured age of respondents as 15-24, 25-34 and 35-49 (Asfaw & Asfaw, 2019). Since there are few women in marriage since the age of 11, this study used 11-24, 25-34 and 35-49 age categories of women. (2) For educational status, the DHS used six responses such as no education, incomplete primary, primary, incomplete secondary, secondary and higher.

Studies done using DHS data on “early initiation of breast feeding” in Nepal (Ghimire, 2019) as well as “women empowerment and their reproductive behavior among currently married women in Ethiopia” (Tadesse, 2018) had used ‘illiterate’, ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘higher’ educational status to measure this variable. Similarly, for the purpose of this study, incomplete primary and primary and incomplete secondary and secondary educational statuses were merged into ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ educational status respectively. (3) In regard to wealth index, middle was taken as it is but the categories poorest and poor, and rich and richest were merged into poor and rich respectively. In the same manner, other studies (Alemayehu & Meskele, 2017; Ebrahim & Atteraya 2019; Mekonnen & Asrese, 2009; Tadele, Tesfay & Kebede, 2019) had used these variables to measure wealth index. (4) The decision makers on women’s first marriage was dichotomized as; ‘myself’ and ‘others’.

Data Analysis

The dependent variable was dichotomized as ‘not refusing marital rape’ and ‘refusing marital rape’. Therefore, logistic regression was employed to examine the relationships between a categorical outcome variable and one or more categorical or continuous predictor variables (Peng, Lee & Ingersoll, 2002). Particularly, binary logistic regression is only applied in cases where the dependent variable is dichotomous (Hosmer, Lemeshow & Sturdivant, 2013; Muchabaiwa, 2013). Therefore, the Ethiopian DHS collected data would be analyzed through binary logistic regression. To analyze this, the study used 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error or p-value less than 0.05.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the age of the majority (92.0%) of women ranges from 11 to 24.

Regarding educational status, 61.8% of women had no education, and the rest (25.8%, 7.9% and 4.6%) had primary, secondary and higher educational status respectively. The majority (68.4%) of women were unemployed/housewives, while the rest 31.6% of women were employed. In the case of a residence, 76.8% of women were residing in urban areas of the country. About household wealth index, the relative majority (46.2%) of women were poor. The majority of included women were Orthodox Christians (34.8%) and Muslims (44.6%). Geographically, the relative majority women were found in Oromia (13.8%), SNNP (13%) and Tigray (9.7%) regional states. When 40.7% of women got their first marriage by their own decision, 59.3% of women were influenced to be married by other’s decision. With regard to drinking alcohol, 69.6% of women reported as they ever drink alcohol.

Table 1: Description of Socio-demographic Variables of Women

Background Characteristics of Women	Frequency	Percentage
Age	11-24	7998 (92.0%)
	25-34	683 (7.9%)
	35-49	14 (0.2%)
Educational status	No education	5371 (61.8%)
	Primary	2243 (25.8%)
	Secondary	683 (7.9%)
	Higher	398 (4.6%)
Working status	No Housewife	5949 (68.4%)
	Employed	2746 (31.6%)
Place of Residence	Urban	2018 (23.2%)
	Rural	6677 (76.8%)
Wealth Index	Poor	4019 (46.2%)
	Middle	1238 (14.2%)
	Rich	3438 (39.5%)
Religion	Orthodox	3023 (34.8%)
	Catholic	50 (0.6%)
	Protestant	1622 (18.7%)
	Muslim	3878 (44.6%)
	Traditional	69 (0.8%)
	Others	53 (0.6%)
Region	Tigray	840 (9.7%)
	Afar	747 (8.6%)
	Amhara	1003 (11.5%)
	Oromia	1200 (13.8%)
	Somali	899 (10.3%)
	Benishangul Gumuz	723 (8.3%)
	SNNP	1132 (13.0%)
	Gambela	621 (7.1%)
	Haramay	503 (5.8%)
	Addis Ababa	532 (6.1%)
Decision makers on women's first marriage		
Myself	3536 (40.7%)	
Others	5159 (59.3%)	
Ever drink alcohol	No	6053 (69.6%)
	Yes	2642 (30.4%)

Source: 2016 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey

3672(45.9%), 346(50.7%) and 5(35.7%), respectively. The percentage of women in refusing sex has shown significant increment from no education (40%) to higher educational status (73.4%). The position of employed women in refusing marital rape was better than housewives/unemployed women. The percentages of rural and urban women refusing marital rape were 42.0% and 60.5% respectively.

As presented in Table 2, the association between wealth index and women status in refusing marital rape looks positive. The highest percentage (61.7%) of women refusing marital rape were found in Orthodox Christian religion. Except for Orthodox Christian women, the majority of women in each religion did not refuse marital rape. In terms of geographic area, the majority of Tigray (69.3%), Amhara (63.3%), and Addis Ababa (67.3%) women refuse marital rape. From total of 5159(59.3%) women who got their first marriage by others decision, the majority (55.7%) did not refuse marital rape. The majority of women (61.1%) who reported as they ever drink alcohol founds in a good position in refusing marital rape.

Although the result of this descriptive statistics is not reliable like inferential statistics, the probabilities of significant associations (Pearson’s Chi-square) test of all included variables were statistically significant. The p-values of tested variables were statically significant with $p < 0.001$, except age of women that was associated with $p = 0.042$.

Table 2: Bivariate Analysis of Women’s Status in Refusing Marital Rape by Socio-Demographic Variables (N=8695)

Background Characteristics of Women	Women’s Status in Refusing Marital Rape		P	
	Not refuse=4672	Refuse=4023		
Age	11-24	4326(54.1%)	3672(45.9%)	0.042
	25-34	337(49.3%)	346(50.7%)	
	35-49	9(64.3%)	5(35.7%)	
Educational status	No education	322(60.0%)	214(40.0%)	.000
	Primary	1118(49.8%)	1125(50.2%)	
	Secondary	223(32.7%)	460(67.3%)	
	Higher	306(26.6%)	292(73.4%)	
Working status	No Housewife	3346(56.2%)	2603(43.8%)	.000
	Employed	1326(48.3%)	1420(51.7%)	
Place of Residence	Urban	797(39.5%)	1223(60.5%)	.000
	Rural	3873(58.0%)	2802(42.0%)	
Wealth Index	Poor	2494(62.1%)	1525(37.9%)	.000
	Middle	681(55.0%)	553(45.0%)	
	Rich	1497(43.5%)	1940(56.5%)	
Religion	Orthodox	1118(36.3%)	1865(63.7%)	.000
	Catholic	34(68.0%)	16(32.0%)	
	Protestant	661(40.7%)	961(59.3%)	
	Muslim	243(62.7%)	145(37.3%)	
	Traditional	53(78.8%)	16(21.2%)	
	Others	33(62.3%)	20(37.7%)	
Region	Tigray	258(30.7%)	582(69.3%)	.000
	Afar	426(57.0%)	321(43.0%)	
	Amhara	368(36.7%)	635(63.3%)	
	Oromia	796(66.3%)	404(33.7%)	
	Somali	622(69.2%)	273(30.8%)	
	Benishangul Gumuz	438(60.6%)	285(39.4%)	
	SNNP	708(62.5%)	424(37.5%)	
	Gambela	342(55.1%)	279(44.9%)	
	Haramay	262(52.1%)	241(47.9%)	
	Addis Ababa	174(32.7%)	358(67.3%)	
Decision makers on women's first marriage				
Myself	1866(50.0%)	1796(49.3%)	.000	
Others	2873(55.7%)	2287(44.3%)		
Ever drink alcohol	No	3643(60.2%)	2410(39.8%)	.000
	Yes	1029(38.9%)	1613(61.1%)	

Source: 2016 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey which significantly predict women’s status in refusing marital rape as follow.

Among women aged 11-24 and 25-34, there was no statistically significant association, but women aged 35-49 (AOR=.277;95%CI=.088,.876) were less likely refuse marital rape in comparison to those aged 11-24. The odds of women with primary, secondary and higher educational status were (AOR=1.313;95%CI=1.175,1.468), (AOR=2.179; 95%CI=1.793,2.648) and (AOR=2.439;95%CI=1.875,3.174) respectively. This infers that the relationship between educational status of women and their status in refusing marital rape was positive.

Housewives/unemployed women were less likely refuse marital rape than employed women (AOR =.839; 95% CI =.757, .929). There is no significant difference among rural women and urban women. The study

showed direct relationships of wealth index of households and women's position in refusing marital rape.

Women from middle wealth index (AOR = 1.224; 95% CI = 1.063,1.410) and rich wealth index (AOR=1.443; 95% CI = 1.269,1.640) more likely refuse marital rape.

In comparison with Orthodox Christian women, Catholic women (AOR =.476; 95% CI=. 253,.895), Muslim women (AOR=. 822; 95% CI =. 691,.977), and Traditionalist women (AOR =.505; 95% CI= .282,.904) had a lower position in refusing marital rape.

Women from Afar (AOR =.592; 95% CI =.462,.758), Oromia (AOR =.275; 95% CI =.221,.342), Somali (AOR =.280; 95% CI =.216,.362), Benishangul (AOR =.350; 95% CI =.278,.441), SNNP (AOR =.291;95% CI =.230,.367), Gambela (AOR =.341; 95% CI =.263, .441), Harari (AOR =.359; 95% CI =.273,.472), Addis Ababa (AOR =.401; 95% CI =.305,.528), and Dire Dawa (AOR =.307; 95% CI=.233,.404) were less likely refuse marital rape in comparison with those in Tigray.

Women who got their first marriage by others decision 76% less likely refuse marital rape than those who got their first marriage by their own decision (AOR =.761; 95% CI =.682,.849). By 23.2%, women who ever drink alcohol were more likely refuse marital rape when compared with those who ever not drink alcohol (AOR = 1.232; 95% CI =1.053,1.442).

Table 3 shows multivariate logistic regression analysis of associated factors on women's status in refusing marital rape

Table 3: Multivariate logistic regression analysis of associated factors on women's status in refusing marital rape

Associated Factors	Women's Status in Refusing Marital Rape	
	Unadjusted OR(95%CI)	Adjusted OR(95%CI)
Age	11-24	1(Ref)
	25-34	1.218(1.045,1.414)**
	35-49	1.051(0.881,1.245)
Education status	Illiterate	1
	Primary	1.512(1.369,1.670)***
	Secondary	1.100(0.918,1.312)**
Working status	Housewife	1.246(1.095,1.414)**
	Employed	1(Ref)
Place of Residence	Urban	1(Ref)
	Rural	1.121(0.976,1.282)**
	Place	1(Ref)
Wealth index	Middle	1.224(1.063,1.410)**
	Rich	1.443(1.269,1.640)***
	Others	1(Ref)
Religion	Orthodox	1(Ref)
	Catholic	0.476(0.253,0.895)**
	Protestant	0.822(0.691,0.977)**
	Muslim	0.505(0.282,0.904)**
	Traditionalist	0.476(0.253,0.895)**
	Others	1(Ref)
	Others	1(Ref)
Region	Tigray	1(Ref)
	Afar	0.592(0.462,0.758)**
	Amhara	0.275(0.221,0.342)**
	Oromia	0.280(0.216,0.362)**
	Somali	0.350(0.278,0.441)**
	Benishangul	0.291(0.230,0.367)**
	Gambela	0.341(0.263,0.441)**
	Harari	0.359(0.273,0.472)**
	Addis Ababa	0.401(0.305,0.528)**
	Dire Dawa	0.307(0.233,0.404)**
Decision makers on women's first marriage	Myself	1(Ref)
	Others	0.761(0.682,0.849)**
Ever drink alcohol	No	1(Ref)
	Yes	1.232(1.053,1.442)**

Notes: OR=odds ratio; 95% CI=95% confidence interval. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Source: 2016 Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey

Discussion

The majority of women are not refusing marital rape in Ethiopia. The possible justification is that the cultural traditions of most societies make them to be raped easily. This is due to the fact that 'discriminatory gender norms' are forcing women to tolerate domestic violence like marital rape (Marcus, Harper, Brodbeck & Page, 2015). Moreover, women's lack of awareness about their own rights is a contributing factor for low position of women in contesting marital rape (Hägglund, 2012). Since marital rape is not criminalized in Ethiopia (Chuol, 2018; Guder 2019; Meshesha, 2014; Woldu 2017), an absence of legal protection of women from marital rape might be the other issue that weaken women's potential in refusing marital rape.

With regard to residence, the study found insignificant statistical difference among rural and urban women. But younger women (11-24 years old) were refused marital rape

than older women (35-49 years old). Inversely, a study focused on rape concludes that younger women more likely raped than older women (Fekadu, 2008). Similarly, other studies (Johnson & Sigler, 2000; Shields & Hanneke, 1988; Tjaden, 2000) found that young women were experienced marital rape. The possible justification for this conflict of results might be associated with sample size, cultural difference and subject of studies.

This study finds positive association of educational status of women with their status in refusing marital rape. The finding goes in line with the theoretical assumption of Marx Feminism (Lorber, 2010) as well as an abroad study (Frieze, 1983). However, there is also another study that concludes women with higher education were at greater risk of being physically and sexually assaulted by their partners (Johnson, 2003).

Housewives/unemployed women and women from low economic status did not refuse marital rape in comparison with employed and women with higher economic status respectively. This result agrees with assumptions of dependency theory (Ferraro, 2008) as well as Marx Feminism theory (Lorber, 1997; Lorber, 2010). It is also consistent with other studies which found being unemployed (Frieze, 1983; Johnson, 2003) and poverty as a risk factor of rape (Fekadu, 2008).

In terms of religion, women from an Orthodox Christian religion had a better position in refusing marital rape than women of other religions. This infers that like a study completed in Ghana (Adinkrah, 2017), this study revealed the disparity of women position in refusing marital rape across religion groups. Although a review of marital rape confuses to conclude the presence or absence of marital rape differences due to geographic areas (Martin, Taft & Resick, 2007), this study finds variation across regions or geographic areas. Accordingly,

women from Tigray and Amhara regions had a better position in refusing marital rape than women from other areas of the country.

The status of women who got their first marriage by others decision were less likely refuse marital rape than those who got their first marriage by their own decision. This finding confirms with an assumption of evolutionary theory and the findings of empirical study which concludes that women who select their marital partner are less likely raped in marriage (Adinkrah, 2017; Thornhill & Palmer, 2001).

Studies conducted about non-marital rapes in Ethiopia conclude that women who drink alcohol are more likely to be raped than non-drinkers (Dibaba, 2003; Fekadu, 2008). Similarly, the result of abroad study on marital rape revealed positive association of drinking alcohol and marital rape (Bowker, 1983). However, this population based cross-sectional study (DHS data analysis) finds an indirect association of women's status in refusing marital rape and drinking alcohol. In refusing marital rape, the status of women who ever drink alcohol higher than those who ever not drink alcohol. The possible justification for this inconsistent finding might be due to the fact that with frequency of drinking alcohol because respondents for this study were asked about their lifetime experience in drinking alcohol. Moreover, unlike previous studies which are not directly fixated on marital rape (Dibaba, 2003; Fekadu, 2008), this study focused on marital rape with married women samples.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The autonomy of women in refusing marital rape in Ethiopia is poor. For this lower status of women in refusing marital rape, many factors had a positive contribution. These are: age, poverty, low educational status, unemployment (being a housewife), and forced marriage. Moreover, religion and

geographic areas are identified as other determinants. Therefore, addressing cultural barriers, that reinforce women to be raped and consider tolerance of domestic violence is a duty of women, shall be the main concern of both government and non-government bodies. Moreover, stakeholders including women association, women and children affairs office, and other nongovernmental organizations are expected to work on improving women's awareness about their fundamental rights. This is due to the fact that women's lack of awareness about their rights is a major factor that pulled them not to exercise their rights. In addition, improving economic and educational status of women will have helpful contribution to improve women's status in refusing marital rape. Particularly, women who are out of Amhara and Tigray Regional States, and Orthodox and Protestant Christian religions need special attention.

Author Contributions

MDA involved from the inception to design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation and drafting the manuscript and edit the manuscript for the final submission. Eventually, the author read and approved the final manuscript

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

Ethics Approval

This study is a secondary analysis of publicly available dataset where permission was obtained through registering with the

DHS website and therefore no ethics approval was required

Availability of Data and Materials

The study used publicly available data. For analysis, permission was obtained through registering with the DHS website and therefore no ethics approval was required. This publicly available dataset is freely available online with no participant's identity at <http://www.EDHSprogram.com/data/available-datasets.cfm>. After registering with the EDHS website, approval was sought from MEASURE EDHS/ICF International and permission was granted for this use.

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