

Sexual Assault: The Burden of Proof for Survivors


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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The transition from "Intimate Partner Violence" to "Gaslighting" (p. 26) feels abrupt. Consider including a bridging sentence or a transitional phrase to explain how gaslighting specifically relates to IPV in this context.

In the paragraph discussing the impact of PTSD on survivors, the connection between "tonic immobility" and PTSD needs clearer elaboration. Provide more detail on how tonic immobility contributes to long-term PTSD symptoms.

In the discussion of underreporting, the sentence "Survivors often choose not to report for various reasons..." could be enriched by integrating more nuanced data from recent qualitative studies focusing on survivor testimonies.

The suggestion for a "multidisciplinary approach" is strong, but lacks specific examples of how this has been implemented successfully in case studies or other regions. Including a detailed example or case study would make this recommendation more tangible.

The paper would benefit from visual aids, such as a flowchart showing the relationship between gaslighting, secondary victimization, and PTSD. Consider adding figures or tables to help readers visualize these complex interactions.

The conclusion reiterates the main points but could be more robust by suggesting future research directions more explicitly. For example, which aspects of multidisciplinary care need more empirical study?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The section on consent could benefit from a more structured approach. Breaking down the three forms of consent into clearer sub-sections with headings might improve readability. Additionally, clarify how these forms intersect with legal cases of sexual assault.

You mention that gaslighting causes secondary victimization but cite primarily older studies (Knapp, 2019). Adding more recent studies from 2023 or 2024 would strengthen this point and ensure up-to-date research support.

The focus seems heavily on male-perpetrated assaults. Given the title's gender-neutral language, consider briefly addressing female perpetrators or LGBTQ+ dynamics to ensure inclusivity in the narrative.

The legal definition of "affirmative consent" is referenced but could be expanded. Include examples of recent legal cases where affirmative consent played a key role in the outcome to give real-world context.

There is a potential contradiction in the reported percentage of women affected by IPV in the U.S. (p. 28). One part says 36%, and another section suggests 70% by age 24. Clarify if these are different data sets or timeframes, and ensure consistency in reporting.

In the discussion of coercive control, it might help to define and distinguish between physical control and psychological/emotional coercion more clearly. Readers unfamiliar with these distinctions might find it hard to follow the argument.

The section on LGBTQIA+ survivors briefly mentions "outing" as emotional abuse but lacks depth. Consider expanding this to include more information on the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in reporting sexual assault.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.