



MUFFLING THE PERIL OF RAGGING IN MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Ragging experience left scars. Ragging indulges the student in dilemma. Educational institutes are the essence of learning and knowledge; ragging should be wholly prohibited. Ragging or rebuking is an annoying phenomenon in the higher education system in general and medical education in particular in our country. Ragging is a complicated problem. It is extensive and extraordinary in professional education system. Ragging is a kind of take advantage of newcomers in educational institutions where some senior students force the newcomers to go through different lingual, mental, physical, sexual, other, and or aggregation of agony and sufferings. The sufferers are usually too terrified and petrified to hold out against it and are stressed and upset. "Any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness, and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student.

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INTRODUCTION

Ragging has been frequently associated with a broad spectrum of physical, behavioral, emotional and social problems among the victims. It independently increases suicide risks. Some reasons given by students for ragging are; being ragged by seniors; sense of superiority; and a means of introduction (1)

A loss of self-control in search of fun is the initiator of ragging. It continues on for about a month or so, then things are back to normal. According to reports the victims are solely the freshmen.(2) Many senior students live under the misconception that ragging makes a style statement and will put them in the 'influential crowd' of their college (3) In India, a myth that ragging makes students bold has always existed. (4) There are few reported cases of loss of life. One thing is clear that ragging, which was originally thought of to be a mere joke, has crossed bounds of decency and had entered the arena of physical and mental torture. It needs to be dealt with iron hands (5)

Legally speaking ragging is an act which causes, or is likely to cause physical, psychological or physiological harm or apprehension or shame or embarrassment to a student (6) Ragging is a type of abuse of newcomers in educational institutions where some senior students force the newcomers to go through different verbal, mental, physical, sexual, other, and or combination of tortures.(7)

The victims are usually too frightened to resist it and are stressed. Bullying is mainly common in academic institutions, though workplace bullying is also gaining attention.2 Ragging is practiced all over the world(8)Nepal has not remained an exception. Ragging was found to be among the top 3 most common stressors affecting medical students of B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS), Dharan, Nepal.(9) While the medical students of this institute were reported with rich repertoire of extracurricular, social activities and hobbies on one hand (10) On the other, another report of high alcohol and substance abuse is alarming (11)

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Universities should be safe havens where students can grow, learn, and thrive in a secure environment. Often, students' wellbeing is affected due to initiation practices carried out in educational institutions over the world, and known as "Hazing" in North America, "Bizutage" in France, "Praxe" in Portugal, "Mopokaste" in Finland, and "Ragging" in South Asian countries [12,13].

These practices can range from being welcoming and consensual to violent and dangerous, depending on the context [14]. They are part of a complex social phenomenon and are contextual depending on the country, people, and situation [15]. In the Western world, these practices, especially within fraternities and sororities, are often of a sexual nature which could lead to sexual abuse. They can also include drinking games and binge drinking to form bonds [5,6]. Some of these rituals consist of harassment, intimidation, and humiliation [16].

When students join medical schools, often they are leaving home for the 1 time, and are likely to be of age more prone and vulnerable to mental illness. They are also likely to be individuating and creating their own identities and forming social networks. (17) Medical students have consistently shown higher rates of depression in comparison with rates reported by the general population (18)

Education is the crucial plank in the process of development in any nation. It empowers the citizens of a country to become active stakeholders in the functioning of the country. Especially in a country like India where illiteracy is still a crucial factor, the importance of education becomes all the more pronounced.(19) Ragging is a rampant social menace that has led down humanity on several occasions but unfortunately due to the involvement of only one section of the society i.e. the students, not much attention has been paid to combat it (20)

Ragging and college activity

1. Ragging make further pleasant to college life
2. It helps to execute friendships in college
3. It helps students develop close connection to one another and to their college/hostel
4. It facilitates juniors to get the help of seniors when require
5. It makes stiff to settle into college activity
6. It makes fresher's fright seniors
7. Ragging affects studies.

Medical students are the medical workforce of tomorrow

Ragging has been one of the most troublesome issues in India. Ragging, a culture of western society has been adopted by Indian educational institutions. Ragging has been prevalent all over in the educational institutions of India and world with different terminologies like hazing, bullying, fogging etc It is not only a term that makes freshers terrified but also it is a term that can vary from outrageous jokes to traumatised episodes (21) Ragging is now defined as an act that violates or is perceived to violate an individual student's dignity Male students encounter ragging aggressively compared to female students Physical dating violence and a greater total number of childhood victimization exposures were related to a higher number of perceived negative consequences. (e.g., felt stressed, felt guilty, problems in relationships, difficulty sleeping). (22)

Ragging is a rampant practice in colleges, hostels and sometimes even in high schools. Seniors, in the form of ragging, demoralize and defame the juniors. Ragging can be in the form of physical and verbal abuse. It also gives a sense of superiority to the seniors who rag their juniors. It is a disturbing reality and a disorderly conduct (23)

Madhya Pradesh's MBBS College Ragging Horrors

At the biggest state medical college in Madhya Pradesh, a number of senior MBBS students have been accused of ragging, including pressuring juniors into performing obscene and abusive behaviour. The names of the senior students have not been made public.

The junior students at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Medical College in Indore called the University Grants Commission's (UGC) anti-ragging helpline following the incident involving senior students and described their alleged experience. The junior students claimed to the police that the seniors forced them into engaging in sex acts with pillows and their batchmates. They further alleged to the police that the seniors had compelled them to abuse their batchmates, who were women. They claimed that the incident took place at the senior Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) students' flats. (24)

Six medicos suspended for ragging

A day after a committee was formed to inquire into allegations of ragging at Government Medical College, Suryapet, six second year MBBS students were suspended for a year and permanently barred from hostel. Orders to this effect were issued by principal of the Medical College C.V. Sarada on Tuesday based on the directions issued by the Director of Medical Education (DME). They were instructed to vacate the hostel rooms.(25)

Ragging Video on social media, 7 students of CMC Vellore suspended

Seven final-year students of Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, have been suspended for ragging after a video footage of first-year students being stripped, beaten and tortured went viral on social media.

CMC principal Dr Solomon Sathishkumar said Tuesday that the institute has a "zero tolerance policy" towards ragging. A top source in the college said the anti-ragging committee was conducting a detailed Inquiry into the issue.(26)

Forced To Imitate A Sexual Act'

In the government-run Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) medical college in Indore, junior students in July 2022 reported a group of seniors for allegedly harassing them mentally and physically. Seniors forced them to pass sexist and derogatory comments on body shape and skin colour of female batchmates, according to students.

"Seniors make us do non-sensible acts which contain sex with a pillow or doing the same act with own batchmates," said the complaint letter. "Juniors were also forced to slap each other and were beaten by the seniors when they failed to do so." (27)

Ragging whiff in first year medical student's death

The first year medical student Nishant Kumar, who died after reportedly falling off the roof of his hostel at Bhim Bhoi

Medical College and Hospital in Balangir, Odisha, alleged on Saturday that their son was a victim of ragging by seniors and he was murdered.

Nishant was a native of Haryana. He reportedly went to the terrace of his hostel after having lunch on Friday and fell from there. However, many have wondered how Nishant could fall from the terrace as it has a four-foot wall.(28)

Kilpauk medical college student attempts suicide after alleged ragging on campus

Alleged ragging by students in the Kilpauk medical college forced a girl student from Ramanathapuram to attempt to commit suicide, but timely medical intervention saved her life, police said. The survivor is a first-year nursing student at KMC. She stays at the Women’s hostel in Kilpauk hospital campus. Sources said two girls from the same hostel allegedly offended her by taking the name of her caste (29)

Ragging whiff in medico’s death after falling from BBMCH hostel roof

BALANGIR: A medical student died after falling from the roof of the hostel at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in Balangir. The deceased was a first-year MBBS student from Haryana. (30)

Police complaint filed over ragging at Christian Medical College in Vellore

The Christian Management College administration has filed a police complaint over ragging allegations on its hostel campus. A video of the mass ragging incident has been widely shared.

The complaint stated that an anonymous letter was sent to the college administration and based on that letter, seven students were suspended. A six-member team headed by a CMC professor is conducting an inquiry.(31)

Anti-Ragging Squad

Main functions of Anti-Ragging Squad will be to keep a patrol and holdback the prevalence of Ragging, if any, episodes / reported in the places of Student assemblage, in addition to Classrooms, Canteens, Buses, play grounds, Hostels etc. The anti-ragging squad is pounded and is en route by a lead faculty member of the medical college. The students at the entry-level sign an oath/testimony and acknowledge to the medical college about non- involvement in ragging. Anti-ragging Squad makes sure that there are no instances of ragging anywhere on the campus and hostel. Anti-ragging placards are visible at places within the campus. Main gates are guarded and means of access are selected. The protection and surveillance of all the students are safeguarded.

Impact of ragging	
Positive impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship forged Psychological: self-growth, experience, confidence, social exposure.
Negative impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional impact; fear, anxiety, stress, shame, depression. Psychological impact: low self-esteem, confidence Relations with other students may adversely effect Low/Impaired academic performance.

Impact of ragging on academic performance (Medical Students)

- It is opinioned that Ragging has both positive and negative impact on the academic performance of the medical students depending upon the grade of ragging for instance if it is just a formal introduction /funny verbal/healthy ways of communication then this will blossom the friendship, breaks the ice among the senior and junior students.
- Positive impact: help them to build their self-confidence, self-esteem, encourages them for gaining knowledge through small group discussion, exchange of knowledge, academic guidance, etc;
- Negative impact: Loss of concentration, Low cognitive skills, low self-esteem, fear, due to which they miss the academic sessions.
- Depression anxiety, fear and stress are effects of ragging which hinder the academic performance of the students finally result in low grades and skills.
- Victims will not participate in any of the academic activities like small group discussions, academic presentations, conferences, seminars, etc.;
- Hostlers are affected more than the day scholars as the seniors rag their juniors in the late hours (night) due to the fear that they might be caught by the faculty or administration. This will affect the sleep of the victims as a result they end-up sleeping in class during lectures.
- Reports says that the males students are much effected than female students, hostlers than day scholars, first year students/ freshers than the other batch students.(32)

The reason behind low academic performance due to ragging is the result of changes in cognitive pattern leading to loss of attention and concentration, forgetfulness and judgmental errors, reduced productivity, constant fear, guilt and inferiority complex as a result of decline in academic performance, insecure feelings raised out of low self-esteem/ carrier loss/financial exploitation (33)

Psychological Impact of ragging

- Psychological impact of ragging can be multifarious. This has a negative effect on the parties like victim, prep (offender), families, institutions, etc., involved in/ with this.
- Victims of ragging had learnt to experience higher levels of mental health problems like depression, stress leading to anxiety, suicidal ideation/ attempts, loss of faith, loss of self-confidence, reduced self-esteem, negative self-image, etc.;
- Students have withdrawal behavior due to which they appear to have no interest in any activities irrespective of whether they are academic or extra-curricular activities.
- Victims may have social phobia as a result they will be reluctant to socialize or communicate and prefer to stay isolated from groups/people.
- Studies also reported panic and obsessive compulsive disorder in the victims of ragging which is a worse psychological effect on students.

Ragging leads to stress and stress assembles much stronger psychological reactions than that of simple anxiety It may lead to Post Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), which are very consequential and dilatory reactions of severe stress (34)

- It is observed that the person with negative psychological state would definitely experience disturbed interpersonal/ rational relationships too.
- The psychological impact was so severe and serious in many cases wherein student had to undergo psychiatric treatment few came out of trauma while a few still experience the trauma they had by ragging even years after of the incident happened.
- Some cases reported that the severity of negative psychological impact had even forced the students to commit suicide, many ended up their life after facing such ordeal.
- Even though mostly girls indulge in very subtle and psychological forms of ragging that can be express, observed or considered but still the effect is equally damaging. They either express the fear of isolation or loneliness or prefer to stay isolated and alone.
- Psychological mechanisms operating or arising due to the negative effects caused by ragging may contribute to develop negative emotions like humiliation, anger, shame and helplessness. It is toxic for one's mental well-being and may lead to long-term and pervasive impact on the students.(35)
- Severe ragging may turn the student's psychological thinking and may encourage the student to become vicious raggers by themselves.
- Persistent ragging deprives the student's confidence leading to failures. Failures erase the identity and makes the person think that one's life is flawed this discomfort encourage them to hide, escape, give-up and may even stimulate the violent actions either they harm themselves or others.

As such medical students have more stress, limited extra-curricular activities and their social activities are confined and restricted only to their classmates as result they have limited friends that too within the campus. This highlights that the social lives of medical students is limited and isolated from other students.(36)

Impact of ragging on Relationship with seniors

- Ragging may have effect student's relationships between juniors and seniors. Research states different opinions on ragging and the relationship between seniors and juniors. Some students are with an opinion that ragging improves the bond among junior and senior students and helped them to accept the challenges thrown by the world, they get immunized of the facts and it also removes certain inhibitions they experience in social interactions.
- Some students share the experience as ragging had strained their relationship with seniors initially but later eventually they became friends and seniors were their mentors.
- The truth always remains the same that the opinions depend upon the experiences of an individual, their strength to cope up and the intensity or the grade of ragging held to them.
- The outcomes of ragging could also be based on an individual's act against ragging for instance if the student accept it or obey the senior and the ragging rituals over a time this may improve the bond between them and later may become friendship. On the other side if the student rebel against the activity the

circumstances may change and it may lead to the toxic effects may be mild to moderate or even severe like either physical violence, mental torture, abuse, humiliation, etc.; ultimately leading to remain enemies forever.

- Irrespective of the severity of ragging one should consider that ragging defines the dynamics of power. Group of rags fosters feel that ragging is to impose superiority on juniors they being seniors. This power by the name of ragging they use for some favors like completing assignments, updating records, materialistic exploitation, etc'; this unhealthy practice on the pretext of ragging to control and dynamics of power will not serve the purpose and no way helpful to juniors.
- This can be termed as clever ways of seniors to create dependency and continue it for years. Over the years, this is accepted and continued as a practice by later badges as a custom or as a must/ compulsory ragging ritual.(37)
- An important observation made from this hazing is it is considered as an initial ritual and the young generations get into it without the knowledge or wisdom of its effects and negative outcomes with a false believe/ myth that ragging is a must to build relationship with juniors.
- The fact is ragging has more destructive effects on human relationships than constructive. As it practices and rely on humiliation, substance abuse, isolating, socially offensive, aggressive, uncooperative, hurtful and all this practices are implemented at the expense of destroying integrity, civility, responsibility, respect, compassion and humanity. Hence, it should be thought to the generations and practically educate the students to learn the constructive ways to make a bond and simultaneously challenge each other personally and socially in a healthier, non-destructive and acceptable ways. (38)

Preventing Ragging

(The Landmark Supreme Court Guidelines)

1. Anti -Ragging Movements To Be Initiated By All Colleges And Educational Institutes
2. Undertakings To Be Taken Both From The Freshmen And Their Parents/ Guardians
3. Undertaking To Be Taken From Seniors Students And Their Parents/Guardians Too before commencement of next educational year/session
4. Notices To Be Issued Indicating Where To Approach For Redressal In Case Of Ragging
5. Management, Principles And The Teaching Staff To Have Personal Interaction With The Freshmen:
6. Pratorial Committees To Be Set Up to keep a continuous watch and vigil over ragging so as to prevent its occurrence and recurrence & to promptly deal with the incidents of ragging brought to its notice and summarily punish the guilty either by itself or by putting forth its findings/recommendations/suggestions before the authority competent to take decision.
7. Ragging- Prone Zones to be Identified and Carefully Guarded.
8. Society to be sensitized on the Issue of Ragging
9. Failure to Prevent Ragging to be Constructed as an act of Negligence

10. Hostels/Accommodations to be Carefully Guarded
11. Migration Certificates to Mention Whether the Student Ever Indulged In Ragging
12. Withdrawal of Financial Assistance To Institutes Where Ragging Incidents Are Reported
13. Students to first Approach their College's Disciplinary Committee and only if the said Committee does not take cognizance of the matter or if they feel dissatisfied with its decision that they should approach the police.
14. Police not to follow a retributive approach while dealing with ragging culprits

Substantive Laws Prohibiting Ragging

Presently, there are only four state legislations in India that prohibit ragging. These are:

1. The Prohibition of Ragging Act, 1996. (Applicable in the State of Tamil Nadu).
2. The Kerala Prohibition of Ragging Act, 1998.
3. The Maharashtra Prohibition of Ragging Act, 1999.
4. The Prohibition of Ragging in Educational Institutes Act, 2000 (Applicable in the State of West Bengal).

Preventing Ragging: The Landmark Supreme Court Guidelines

With ragging becoming a national issue affecting thousands of students across India, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India too could not remain silent and has seriously condemned the issue. So far there have been two landmark judgments prohibiting ragging. These are:

1. Ragging of Freshers in Thiruvananthapuram Government Engineering College vs. State of Kerala
2. Vishwa Jagriti Mission through President vs. Central Government through Cabinet Secretary

The judgment in the case of Vishwa Jagriti Mission through President vs. Central Government, through Cabinet Secretary is particularly significant as the Hon'ble Supreme Court, while exercising its jurisdiction under Articles 32 and 142 of the Constitution of India, has laid down broad guidelines for colleges and educational institutes to prevent ragging.

CONCLUSION

The experience left craters. Ragging pampers the student in disturbance. This practice has critically influenced student's lives as it leaves an agonizing effect, consequences within their own eyes and also in others. It can affect the newcomers who are the main fatality and seniors are the main offenders. Ragging is primarily completed only for catching counterblow, controlling their influence and excellence over the newcomers. Ragging leads to serious health issue along with mental disturbance as well as physical injury that results in poor academic performance etc. For the prevention of this, only acts formation and legislation enactment are not sufficient but require a straightforward policies and laws to stop this or to eradicate this from the educational institutions (39)

Overall awareness of ragging is not adequate. A prior education of students is utmost necessary. The provision of prior support for students may help to reduce anxiety among newcomers. There is a need to develop awareness among

these students about various aspects of ragging and legal action against it. (40)

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