

## **Ragging continues in Educational Institutions despite SC Orders against it - by Riya Rathi**

September 3, 2017

**Surveillance tools like CCTV cameras have proved to be ineffectual as they often induced a sense of complacency among administrators.**

Those who indulge in ragging probably don't realize the extent of how it affects those at its receiving end, or they only want others to go through what they were made to experience at one time.

Ragging has been one of the most troublesome issues in India. Ragging has become more of a 'norm' than an exception in a no. of educational institutes across the country, some develop mental disorders, some choose to end their lives while many others are also murdered by the force of ragging.

Ragging in educational institutions is truly alive. 4 out of every 10 students admitted to higher educational institutions have been victims, a study commissioned by the University Grants Commission(UGC) has found.

A detailed news article in this regard was carried by [Leading Legal Website LatestLaws.in](http://www.latestlaws.in) just few days ago.

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This study reveals that hostelers are the worst-hit, the incidence is more in professional colleges & majority of the victims are male.

Study titled 'Psychosocial Study of Ragging in Selected Educational Institutions in India' was done during 2013-2014 in 37 colleges/universities across India. It inspected the experiences of 10,632 students from various demographic profiles.

The study covers 13 colleges from the northern parts of India, 10 from the south, 6 from the east and 8 from western. The surveyed institutions included 9 medical colleges, 11 engineering colleges & 9 'degree' colleges & universities.

“Analysis of the overall data reveals that around 40% students admitted to having gone through ragging - out of which 4.1% students were subjected to severe ragging.” the study states.

It not only highlights occurrence in terms of frequency but also deals with the prevalence of the malpractice irrespective of places, types of courses & gender divide. The study discusses causes & consequences.

The malpractice continues despite multiple judgments by the Supreme Court over the past 2 decades seeking to curb it. The Apex Court issued guidelines to curb ragging in the landmark cases ***Vishwa Jagriti Mission v. Central Govt. (2001) 6 SCC 577*** and ***University of Kerala v. Councils, Principal's colleges Kerala (2009) 7 SCC 726*** in which the top court felt the need to set up the 'Raghavan Committee' - a committee of mental health & public health professionals to study the menace. (***Read Judgments Below***)

The study finds ragging is more prevalent among hostelers at 45.9%, as compared to 32.5% incidence seen among day scholars. The incidence was more in professional courses such as medicine & engineering — approximately 48.3% in medical colleges & 44.5% in engineering colleges. The figure is 28.8% for other courses. Instances of ragging was much higher among males.

### **Reported in media**

The study also examines ragging incidents reported in major media outlets between 2007 & 2013, and analyses 717 ragging cases. The highest number of 97 was reported from Uttar Pradesh. The figure was 75 for Andhra Pradesh, 73 for West Bengal, 54 for Tamil Nadu, 48 for Kerala, 48 again for Madhya Pradesh, 42 for Maharashtra, & 35 for Punjab.

In that period, a total of 71 deaths due ragging was reported. There were 199 cases of ragging that led to minor & major injuries to students, including 81 incidents leading to hospitalization & causing permanent disability.

According to the study, factors such as individual appearance, language spoken, region of origin, sexuality & caste were factors involved in such incidents. 20.7% of students who admitted to having been ragged said they were targeted for their looks, 15.6% attributed it to their region of origin & 12.2% to their mother tongue.

The Report states that the ability or inability to speak English often becomes a major basis for discrimination & factor in ragging.

The data highlighted the fact that even sexual harassment in the name of ragging is prevalent in some institutions. More than 10% faced sexual ragging in some institutions.

Harsh Agarwal-one of the authors said there's notable variation in the prevalence of ragging across colleges & institutions. In some institutions the prevalence was as high as 75%, which pointed to the significance of institutional factors. "The response of a institution to ragging complaints & the attitude of the faculty are the most important factors in influencing ragging," Mr. Agarwal said.

Data collection was done between February 2013 and February 2014. Experts analysed the data in 2014 & 2015 authored the 252-page report. It was submitted to the UGC in 2016 & released on August 11, 2017.

### **Surveillance tools**

Academicians and researchers said that during their field visits they observed that ragging was less prevalent in institutions that promoted a healthy interaction between teachers & students, and when there was a sense of community on the campus.

Surveillance tools such as CCTV cameras proved to be ineffectual as they often induced a sense of self satisfaction or complacency among the administrators.

The researchers also noted some interesting anecdotes. In a medical college in UP, the research team was having a conversation with a peon when a senior faculty member instructed him not to talk to the team. "The faculty member was afraid that the peon could reveal information pertaining to ragging," the report states.

A girl student interviewed at a Delhi college said she was targeted because she was an 'outsider' and hailed from Bihar. Many students broke down while narrating their experiences. Many refused to talk inside the campus & handed over their numbers so the researchers could speak to them over phone.

### **33% enjoyed ragging**

Strangely, of the students who admitted to being ragged, 32.6% said that they enjoyed the experience, while 45.1% admitted to feeling bad only initially. Negative experiences such as feeling angry was reported by 19.1% students, 12.1% felt helpless & 8.6% felt ashamed & humiliated.

The researchers had a set of questions to evaluate students' level of support to ragging. The results show that 33.8% of students felt ragging helps build confidence & develop personality traits & 34.8% felt it toughened them mentally. 35.7% felt ragging prepares a student to deal with the harsh world outside.

"This normalization of ragging is very dangerous, where the students are socialized into thinking that the world outside is a tough place & that a 'toughening-up exercise' will help them succeed in this harsh world," Divya Padalia, a co-author of the report said.

### **Read Judgments Here:**

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