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# **Research Article**

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# Awareness and perception about ragging amongst medical undergraduate students: a cross-sectional study

Jaya V. Suryawanshi<sup>1</sup>\*, Madhavi Hazari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Community Medicine, Gulbarga Institute of Medical Sciences, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India <sup>2</sup>Department. of Community Medicine, Employees State Insurance Corporation Medical College, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India

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# \*Correspondence:

Dr. Jaya V. Suryawanshi, E-mail: jayaad77@gmail.com

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Several studies in the past have shown that abuse, bullying, harassment at educational institutions are a regular phenomenon; it is faced not only by medical students, but also other healthcare professionals. While research has been carried out on bullying, however, to our knowledge no research has been conducted as yet studying the perception of newly admitted medical undergraduate students about ragging. Hence the present study was aimed to assess the perception about ragging among undergraduate MBBS students.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from August to October 2015 amongst 89 first year medical students of 2015 batch of ESIC Medical College, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India. A pre-designed questionnaire which assessed perceptions regarding ragging amongst medical students was the tool of data collection.

**Results:** Most of the male and female participants were unaware of fact that formal introduction is a type of ragging (72.73% and 98.21% respectively). We further inquired about student's knowledge about provision of any legal action against ragging, majority of male and female students were unaware of any legal action (75% and 91% respectively).

**Conclusion**: Overall awareness about ragging is not shown upto the mark. A prior education of students is utmost necessary. Provision of prior support for students may help to reduce anxiety among newcomers. There is need to develop awareness among these students about various aspects of ragging and legal action against it.

Key words: Ragging, Medical undergraduate students, Awareness, Perception

# INTRODUCTION

Ragging means the following: Any act, conduct or practice by which dominant power of senior students, former students or outsiders, is brought to bear on students freshly enrolled or students who are in any way considered junior by other students and includes individual or collective acts or practices. (A) involve physical or psychological assault or threat or use of force or wrongful confinement or restraint; (B) violate the status, dignity and honor of such students; or (C) expose students to ridicule and contempt and affect their self-

esteem; or (D) entail verbal abuse and aggression, indecent gesture and obscene behavior. Initially though the ragging started in British era, in English colleges and universities but slowly it spread and corrupted almost entire Indian educational institutions. The excuse was to teach the social hierarchy in early career, and also learn other important values in life as if they were mature enough know anything about values and hierarchy. Ragging involves gross violations of basic human rights. The seniors are known to torture juniors and by this those seniors get some kind of sadistic pleasures. Though ragging has ruined the lives of many, resistance against it

has grown up only recently. Several Indian states have made legislatures banning ragging, and the Supreme Court of India has taken a strong stand to curb ragging. Ragging has been declared a criminal offence. The Indian civil society has also started to mount resistance, only recently.<sup>2</sup>

# **METHODS**

A cross-sectional questionnaire based study was carried out from August to October 2015 among first year medical students of ESIC Medical College, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, which is affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS), Bangalore, Karnataka. The ESIC Medical College has been offering the MBBS course, with a maximum annual intake of 100 students. The students joining this course come from all over India. After receiving approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee, all 100 first year medical students admitted in August 2015 batch at this institution were included in the study. On the day of the study, out of total 100 students, 89 students were present and filled the questionnaires, at final, 89 questionnaires were filled complete and included in the study and data were analyzed. self-administered A semi-structured questionnaire was developed for the study by the investigators. The questionnaire had eliciting information about their socio-demographic profile, and about their knowledge and views about ragging. At the end of the session they were asked for suggestions to maintain a ragging free campus. They were further asked about measures to curb the menace of ragging. The students were explained and informed regarding the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was administered to the consenting students after obtaining the requisite permission from the head of the institution. The forms were given out and collected at the end of session.

## Data analysis

The data was recorded and analyzed using Microsoft excel (2007 version). The results are explained in frequency and percentage.

## **RESULTS**

In this cross sectional study, out of total 100 students 89 students participated in this study giving a response rate of 89%. Total study population comprises of 62.92% male and 37.08 % females.

As Table 1 showed that majority of participants were males and belonged to Karnataka state and studied in English medium at SSLC level.

As Table 2 revealed that the most common reason for joining MBBS course was student's own interest followed by interest of both parents and students.

**Table 1: General characteristics of the participants.** 

Characteristics	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
Region		
Karnataka	56 (100%)	31 (93.94%)
Non Karnataka	0 (0.00%)	2 (6.06%)
Basic SSLC medium		
Kannada and other	5 (8.93%)	8 (24.24%)
English	51 (91.07%)	25 (75.76%)

Table 2: Distribution of participants according to reason for joining MBBS course.

Reason for joining medical course	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
Own interest	50 (89.29%)	78 (84.84%)
Parents interest	3 (5.36%)	1 (3.03%)
Interests of both	3 (5.36%)	4 (12.12%)

Table 3: Distribution of participants according to experience on first day of college.

Experience	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
Afraid of seniors	5 (8.93%)	5 (15.15%)
Excited and happy	41 (73.21%)	16 (48.48%)
Other *	10 (17.86%)	12 (36.36%)

(\*Other experiences include loneliness, homesick, tired etc.)

Experiences on first day of college are shown in Table 3. On the very first day of college, most of the students felt excited and happy.

Table 4: Distribution of participants according to opinion about most probable reason of ragging.

Most probable reason of ragging	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
To dominate over juniors	3 (5.36%)	5 (15.15%)
Traditional practice	4 (7.14%)	5 (15.15%)
Fun	46 (82.14%)	18 (54.55%)
To Facilitates communication between seniors and juniors	1 (1.79%)	3 (9.09%)
Other reasons*	2 (3.57%)	2 (6.06%)

(\*Other reasons include: seniors rag as a revenge of personal past experiences, for no reason, just to pass the time etc.)

When inquired about most probable reasons of ragging, participant's responses are shown in Table 4. Most of the male and female students responded that seniors rag mostly for fun followed by reasons like 'to follow traditional practice of ragging'.

According to most of the students, hostel is the most common place of ragging (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution of participants according to opinion of students about most common place of ragging.

Most common place of ragging	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
Hostel	43 (76.79%)	25 (75.76%)
Canteen	9 (16.07%)	0 (0.00%)
Campus	4 (7.14%)	8 (24.24%)

As Table 6 showed that when asked about student's knowledge about whom to contact in case of ragging, most of the students responded that they will contact Dean of the institution. It could be seen that almost 23.60 % of juniors were having no idea about whom to contact if they face ragging.

Table 6: Distribution of participants according to knowledge about whom to contact in case of ragging.

Whom to contact in case of ragging	Male (n=56)	Female (n=33)
Dean of the institution	27 (48.21%)	8 (24.24%)
Anti-ragging committee members	1 (1.79%)	3 (9.09%)
Teachers	2 (3.57%)	4 (12.12%)
Warden of the hostel	14 (25.00%)	4 (12.12%)
Don't know	8 (14.29%)	13 (39.39%)
Others	4 (7.14%)	1 (3.03%)

# **DISCUSSION**

Out of a total number of 100 students enrolled in the first year of MBBS course, 89 were agreed to participate in the study giving rise to a response rate of 89%. Out of total participants 62.92% were male and 37.08 % were females. Most of the male students (89.29%) and 84.84% of female students told that they joined the course on their own interest. Formal introduction is also a type of ragging, we inquired students whether they are aware of this. Most of the male and female participants (72.73% and 98.21% respectively) were unaware of this. We further inquired about students knowledge about provision of any legal action against ragging, majority of male and female students were unaware of any legal action (75%, 91% respectively). Most of the male and female students are in support of a "ragging free campus" (85.71%, 90.91% respectively). When asked about most probable reason of ragging most of the male and female students responded that seniors rag mostly for fun (82.14%, 54.55% respectively). According to male and female students hostel is the most common place of ragging (76.79%, 75.76% respectively). When asked about student's opinion about most common impact of ragging on junior students, most of the male and female students responded that psychological disturbances are

most likely to affect those who get ragged (50.00%, 48.48 % respectively). In contrast to popular beliefs against ragging, few respondents gave a positive response that ragging is helpful to improve communication between seniors and juniors (1.12%).

Health professionals have the unique responsibility of promoting the development of community initiatives for the prevention of bullying and related health problems. Physicians need to be aware of the physical and psychosocial symptoms associated with ragging so that they can screen the children involved and provide the support needed to develop healthy relationships.<sup>3</sup> Although so many definitions are given by different authorities regarding ragging, the Honble Supreme Court of India has given a comprehensive definition of ragging: Ragging is any disorderly conduct, whether by words spoken or written, or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which cause or are likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the psyche of a fresher or a junior student.<sup>4</sup> It is an act of aggression committed by an individual or a group of individuals over another individual or a group of individuals wherein the individual/ individuals of the group first mentioned, by virtue of him/her/their being senior to the individual/ individuals of the group mentioned second, somehow get the authority and audacity to commit the act of aggression; and the latter, by virtue of their being new to the institution, spontaneously become victims. Any interaction which is aggressive and asymmetric (not on equal footing) is ragging.<sup>5</sup> The psychological effects include constant fear, loss of concentration, inferiority complex and guilt because of decline in academic performance and feeling of insecurity arising out of financial exploitation.<sup>6</sup>

Ragging needs to be perceived as our failure to inculcate human values from the schooling stage behavioral patterns ragging must deter its recurrence connected action is required at the level of the school, higher educational institution, district administration, university, state and central governments to make any curb effective media and the civil society. Ragging is not harmless fun. Students come from different social and cultural backgrounds, and what may be harmless fun for some may turn serious human indignity for some other human being. There are number of cases where some cases the fresher's and ragging intolerable and it leads to loss of self-esteem. Ragging sometimes causes to loss of innocents lives. The school of the sch

Limitations of the study were: The limitations of our study include its small sample size, recruiting students from only first year of academics course. As the questionnaire is filled by the students themselves, this may have influenced the results.

#### CONCLUSION

The finding that the perception of adequate support being in place for newly admitted students at their medical college is the strongest relief for someone having anxiety about new environment is an important one. Students who feel unsupported are more likely to be harassed, bullied, and ragged is a finding in many other research. A prior orientation session to students and their parents about ragging, its ill effects, anti-ragging movement, antiraging committee, anti-ragging squad in our college on the very first day of college by the faculty members may help to a great extend to newcomers. Also creation of a awareness drive about ragging among senior students, and all college faculty members may help to curb the menace of ragging from our society.

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