

Menace of Ragging on the Human Rights Discourse: A Comparative Study of Selected Public Universities in Odisha

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to investigate why ragging persists despite numerous regulations implemented by the government, the UGC, and the universities in developing countries. Everyone comprehends that ragging is a clear-cut infringement of individual rights and a global problem, but lawmakers and civil society in South Asia, have overlooked it. It is still ongoing, and this manuscript aims to investigate why this type of ignorance occurs, particularly among the University students. The present study collects data through stratified non-random sampling with a sample size of 85, and it was collected from the students and other individuals who were well acquainted with the educational institution within Odisha province. Ragging is not only an intrusion on the students' individual rights, but also spreads within an educational institution. Ragging encompasses all individuals within an institution, like teachers, students, Researchers, administrators, etc. Ragging's new dimension emerged after the emergence of cyber ragging. Now, most of the ragging cases fall under cyber ragging, which includes online bullying, publicizing someone's personal information, etc. This report concludes with specific suggestions, including the implementation of strict anti-ragging laws. The government in developing States should establish additional norms relating to ragging, UGC & the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) should prioritise a student-friendly environment over the infrastructure. This review offers insightful information.

Keywords: *Discourse, Human Rights Infringement, Ragging, Right to Education*

Human rights are fundamental for all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status. Originating from inherent dignity and equality, they are universal, inalienable, and indivisible. As per the Supreme Court guidelines, the term 'Ragging means' "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 other student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or

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embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student” .

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1948, serves as the foundation of modern human rights, outlining civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It serves as a guiding principle for national and international legal systems. ‘Human rights are classified into three categories viz, *Civil and political rights* which protect individual liberties and political involvement, *Economic, social, and cultural rights* focus on individual well-being and access to resources such as education, healthcare, and fair working conditions, whereas *Collective rights*, also known as third-generation rights, include self-determination, a healthy environment, and peace and development’.

Human dignity led to the birth of human rights, which turn into the inheritance of every single individual. With the nativity of individuals, they can't be discriminated against, regardless of their identity. It is the wholesome crux of numerous international agreements, like the Human Rights Covenants (1996), the Vienna Declaration (1993), and UDHR. The rights are essential for every citizen. Some rights are naturally given, such as rights to liberty and rights to life. These two rights are significant because of their ability to differentiate between human beings and other living beings. Nobody can snatch others' rights to liberty or life as individuals. However, it is unfortunate that it is still practised in the form of ragging in various educational institutions. Ragging of students constitutes an infringement of human rights, which is ignored by many intellectuals. Education is an effective tool for fostering a culture of individual rights because it incorporates human rights education into the school curriculum, fostering a deeper understanding of human dignity, equality, and social justice within future generations.

All kinds of rights are for individuals and citizens. That means "Every human being," and ‘Everyone is entitled’ for rights. In educational institutions, individual rights are encroached upon through ragging, but it does not come to the limelight more often. Ragging is affiliated with ornamental names, like interaction, conversation, and sometimes committed during the welcome events.

“*Vidya Dadaati Vinayam, Vinayaad Yaati Paatrataam. Paatratvaat Dhanamaaproti, Dhanaat Dharm Tatah Sukham.*” The *Sloka* implies that education produces a humble person. It leads to gaining respect and worth. After being a respected person, one can earn wealth and success. This helps a citizen to live a pleasant life.

Ragging is a humiliating phenomenon that is done by numerous individuals in educational institutions in the pretext of bullying, hazing, teasing, initiation of ritual, and fresher's harassment. It marks a persuasive impact on that individual who faced this type of action. On the other hand, perpetrator continue it because they are not punished for their actions, so they take it for granted, which also creates a mindset that they can easily infringe norms of the government. Because of ragging, the individual goes through depression, anxiety, and stress. Sometimes, it disrupts their mental well-being, which ultimately leads to situations like suicide. Ragging incidents are on the rise in various educational institutions as a result of the failures of the University Grant Commission (UGC), as per the Delhi High Court.

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As of 2020, India has almost 1113 universities and around 43,796 colleges within all of the educational institutions. Around 43.3 million students are enrolled in the 2020-21 academic year, which is a huge number. When we analyse the last 25 years of data since 2000, we witness nearly 2 lakh students died, and many students also attempted suicide. In 2017, the total suicide cases were 9,905, but in 2021, it increased up to 13,000, which is a growth rate of 32.1%. If we take the five States with the most suicide cases inside India, we get names like Maharashtra with 1834, Madhya Pradesh with 1808, Tamil Nadu with 1284, Karnataka with 855, and Odisha with 834. This number is huge because every life matters. "During January 2023 and April 2024, the UGC's anti-ragging helpline received 1,240 complaints". Following the establishment of the new government in Odisha, it reported that a total of 72 suicide cases have been documented in government records since 2020, covering a period of five years (2020-2025). Following the establishment of the new government in Odisha, it reported that a total of 72 suicide cases have been documented in government records since 2020, covering a period of five years (2020-2025).

Role of Ragging in Human Rights Discourse

Ragging is evidently an offensive crime in developing countries, that entails entire South Asian subcontinent. Unfortunately, it is still continuing in the realm of educational institutions. The menace of Ragging has been overlooked by the Establishment, UGC, and civil societies. There are multiple instances, like the Jadavpur University case (2023) and Soumyashree case (2025) as well as a few registered cases relating to ragging, because the main reason is that they do not consider the infringement of the Student's rights to come under the purview of the rights of individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attri's work (2017) offers a scrutiny of the intricate dynamics of ragging. Her research illustrates how ragging reinforces hierarchies, perpetuating social stratification and power inequality within institutions of higher learning. This paper also examines the psychological factors that affect student's lives. Ragging can be eliminated through cooperative work among the educational institutions, government policymakers, and NGOs.

A survey by Garg (2009) indicates 72% of Indian students undergoing ragging have anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Peer dynamics, institutional culture, and societal normalization promote ragging. The study endorses a multiple-dimensional strategy embracing policy change, sensitization workshops, and engagement with communities as measures to contain ragging. It further notes the significance of strong anti-ragging legislations, implementing them effectively, and having watchful mechanisms. Ragging is linked with physical, behavioural, emotional, and social issues posing as suicidal threats. Ragging based on Seniority, superiority complex, and asking introductions to the Juniors are also causes of ragging. Measures of practical control over ragging involve strong authorities' intervention, alcohol prohibition, surprise raids, postings of wardens, junior hostels, college disciplinary and cultural committees, harsh punishments, and anti-ragging legislation.

Gorea et al. (2012) stress the collective responsibility of individuals, communities, and institutions to prevent ragging within educational institutions. The research points out the importance of a multi-stakeholder intervention, acknowledging that ragging is a reflection of underlying problems within society. The authors believe that individual responsibility involves empathy, self-reflection, and reporting, while community responsibility involves parental counselling and peer intervention. Institutional accountability is essential,

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necessitating strong policies, good grievance systems, and sensitisation initiatives. Teacher training, student induction, and campus cultures of inclusion are suggested by the study to deter ragging. The findings highlight the need for collective action in responding to power relations, social norms, and cultural dynamics that sustain ragging. The authors suggest an institutional self-assessment and ongoing improvement framework. This research adds a great deal to knowledge regarding the multifaceted interconnection of ragging prevention factors and promoting concerted efforts towards the realization of secure and nurturing learning environments.

As per the work of Kaushal (2023), the Ragging Prohibition Act of 1996 is not relevant in contemporary times because it is not properly functional; in many cases, the culprit does not get the punishment that he/she needs. He believed in the unification of all levels (students, teachers, and authorities) coming together for the eradication of the menace of ragging. All educational institutions need to acknowledge that ragging is a serious crime that infringes on human rights.

The paper of Kumar (2017) speaks about the phenomenon of ragging in Indian colleges and universities and focuses on mental, emotional, and physical violence meted out to students. It condemns ragging as an infringement on basic human rights, such as life, dignity, and freedom. The paper advocates stricter implementation, awareness, and a kinder approach in dealing with incidents of ragging. It also underscores the necessity of preventive measures, psychological counselling, and a safer campus for students. VG Shinde (2017), on his paper “The Menace of Ragging in Educational Institutes: A Human Rights Perspective” remarks on the problem and its negative impact on victims, such as depression, anxiety, self-injurious behaviour, and suicide.

As per the 2024 study by Mohiuddin, Iqbal, Chishti, Shah, and Mohiuddin, Severe anti-ragging regulations, support networks, welcoming institution cultures, and anti-ragging policies are some of the means the research suggests to ban ragging and develop a more supportive environment.

Shrivastava, Shrivastava, and Srivastav (2024) examine hazing legislation, regulations, and court rulings in the U.S., Australia, India, and Sri Lanka in their book. As Law professionals and human rights organizations (HRW, Amnesty International) evaluate the effectiveness of laws, penalties, and institutional accountability. To maintain students' welfare and dignity in educational environments, the book emphasises the need for effective anti-hazing regulations and evidence-based prevention measures. 53% of American student victims reported the hazing in 2022. Around 80% of 500 students were verbally, physically, and psychologically ragged, causing suicidal thoughts, low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

Sivakumar's (2016) article discusses the impacts of ragging on an individual's life, primarily affecting their human rights, including the right to life, the right to education, and the right to expression. There is an attempt to identify how the authorities and hierarchy are involved in this context. He argues that the institutions do not give a serious outlook towards ragging; they are not things that provide a clean environment to the learners.

The 2001 Indian Supreme Court's historic anti-ragging judgment sought to deal with the rampant problem of ragging in schools and colleges. The landmark judgment categorised ragging as a breach of fundamental rights, such as the right to life, dignity, and personal

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liberty under Articles 21 and 14 of the Indian Constitution. It ordered schools and colleges to implement stringent anti-ragging policies, such as the formation of anti-ragging committees and squads to monitor and prevent ragging incidents. The Court levied stringent punishments for ragging, including expulsion of the guilty students and other disciplinary measures. As per the judgment, educational institutions need to maintain the anti-ragging complaint mechanisms and squads and launch a 24x7 anti-ragging helpline number. The ruling formed the basis for subsequent anti-ragging laws, including the 2009 University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations.

Halder and Sidkar (2024) investigated the impact of ragging on the students' learning process. According to them, stress, anxiety, despair, low academic performance, and suicidal ideation are the impact elements on the students. For that reason, they support zero tolerance, stringent legislation, inclusion, and awareness as the only way for the eradication of ragging.

The Indian Anti-Ragging Act of 2009, or the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, was enacted to stop ragging in schools. Ragging is described by the act as any behaviour that inflicts physical or mental injury, humiliation, or embarrassment on a student. Ragging in all forms is banned, and institutions are required to make arrangements to check it. Institutions are required to constitute Anti-Ragging Committees and Squads, post anti-ragging posters, have an anonymous complaint system, and conduct regular awareness campaigns. Students and parents are required to provide an affidavit during admission that they are well aware of the anti-ragging laws. Bodies like the UGC and AICTE regulate institutions for adherence to the anti-ragging rules. The act provides for 24/7 national anti-ragging helplines and redressal of grievances immediately, as well as protection of victims.

The article by Minj and Khan (2017) deliberate into the legal actions taken against ragging. It investigates the power relations, hierarchy, and bullying. They also underline the Honourable Supreme Court's orders to the UGC for the strict implementation of anti-ragging policies in all educational institutions. He gave three reasons for the ragging: 1. a low level of awareness, 2. tolerance from institutions, and the last one, which is part of popular culture.

Mishra (2013) delves into the issue of infringement in secondary schools in Odisha, India. It explores the nature of aggression, including physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse, and the parental concerns they have regarding the safety and well-being of their children. The study identifies contributing factors such as peer pressure, lack of discipline, ineffective teaching methods, and insufficient supervision by school authorities. The negative effects of school violence on students include reduced academic performance, psychological distress, and a lack of interest in attending school. The article emphasizes the role of parents in addressing school violence and suggests preventive measures such as awareness programs, counselling, and strict enforcement of discipline policies.

Rao et al. (2018) look at how ragging among Indian schools, 71.4% of respondents indicated that they had experienced ragging, the target mostly being the first-year students. Ragging often appears in the form of psychological harassment, physical intimidation, and verbal abuse. Institutional culture, social stratification, and power relations are a few of the factors contributing to ragging. The report underscores the need for stringent anti-ragging laws, effective implementation, and awareness campaigns. It also accentuates the role played by

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senior students, teachers, and institutional leaders in promoting or discouraging ragging. To ensure inclusive and secure learning environments, thorough reforms are urgently required.

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Singh's (2018) highlights the widespread issue of ragging in Indian educational institutions, which is a thoughtful human rights abuse. From name-calling to outright violence, ragging is an environment of control and fear that can be deleterious to one's mental health as well as enhance one's risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide. Singh demands stricter enforcement, complete monitoring, and higher awareness among students and faculty, as well as blasts judicial interventions to prevent ragging, like the Supreme Court's directives and anti-ragging cells.

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Thamarakshan, Lama, and Kumar (2023) discuss the phenomenon of ragging in Kerala college in India. The authors seek to analyze the amount of ragging, its nature, and its effects on students and how it could be prevented. Various types of ragging, including physical harassment, mental torture, verbal abuse, and sexual abuse, are categorised on a severity scale. Major themes include the emotional and psychological damage caused by ragging to the students, manifesting in deterioration of mental well-being, learning, and inter-personal relations. Senior-junior seniority, peer pressure, non-stringent rule enforcement, and normalization of ragging as "tradition" are identified as major contributory factors. Both parental and organizational reactions to incidence of ragging are also included, with weak communication and intervention gaps being outlined. Preventive measures involve stricter legislation, awareness campaigns, active involvement of teachers, victim and perpetrator counselling, and the involvement of college authorities in providing a secure environment.

According to the Government of Odisha, 2022, Educational institutions should ensure the UGC anti-ragging guidelines, (2009) with all amendments. As per the 2nd amendment of the UGC regulation, both students and their parents need to submit an anti-ragging undertaking that may be in either online or offline mode. All educational institutions are guided to maintain and ensure the UGC anti-ragging norms, like circulating the pamphlet, awareness programs, and forming an anti-ragging cell composed of 3 to 4 teachers, and are suggested to cooperate with the work of both permanent and non-permanent staff. Institutions need to take ragging as a criminal offense and need to file an FIR with the appropriate IPC in the nearest police station. And finally, the government of Odisha suggests members of the State-level Anti-ragging Committee, District-level Anti-ragging Committees, and HE Department-level Anti-ragging Committee may make random and surprise visits to universities and colleges to check.

The researcher interacted with the various students in the different public universities and unearthed research gaps regarding ragging that impacts individual rights and individual

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sovereignty. It also affects academic life in the Public University in India and Odisha in particular. This paper examined the forms and methods used during the ragging and ragging-related cases that goes unaddressed, which is a clear contravention of human rights.

In this purview, the present study took an exploratory approach and conducted a small-scale survey to explore the gender differences in ragging experience and perception among the university students and also to comprehend – how aware are the university students are about the functionality and effectiveness of the Anti-ragging norms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Population

The study comprised 85 students from reputed higher educational institutions. The majority were aged 22–25 years, with a slightly higher proportion of females than males. Participants were selected to represent different academic and institutional settings for a better understanding of ragging-related issues.

Study Area

Four study regions were selected— Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar, Berhampur University, Utkal University, and Fakir Mohan University in Odisha. Among these, one institution claimed to be free from ragging, while the others had reported incidents. About 54% of respondents were from Berhampur and Utkal Universities.

Data Types

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to assess ragging experiences, perpetrators, psychological impacts, institutional responses, and awareness of anti-ragging policies.

Collection of Data

Data were gathered using open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires administered from April to June of previous academic years. Responses were voluntary and confidential.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using percentage distribution and descriptive analysis. Comparative insights between male and female participants were drawn to highlight gender-based differences in perception and experiences of ragging, as well as awareness of complaint mechanisms and institutional measures.

Findings

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of 85 participants categorized by gender, university, and age. Females (52.94%) somewhat surpassed males (47.05%). The majority were from Berhampur University (31.76%) and Fakir Mohan University (34.11%). Male presence reached its apex at IIT Bhubaneswar (70%), whereas female representation was predominant at Utkal University (68.42%). The predominant age group (74.11%) consisted of individuals aged 22–25 years, with a nearly equal gender distribution throughout both age categories.

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Table 1. Demographic profile of the study participants of public universities

Category		Participants		Male		female	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Gender	Sample size	85	100%	40	47.05%	45	52.94%
Institute	Fakir Mohan university	29	34.11%	15	51.72%	14	48.27%
	Utkal university	19	22.35%	6	31.57%	13	68.42%
	Berhampur university	27	31.76%	12	44.44%	15	55.55%
	Indian Institute of technology , BBSR	10	11.76%	7	70%	3	30%
Age groups	22-25 age	63	74.11%	30	47.62%	33	52.38%
	25-28 age	22	25.88%	10	45.45%	12	54.55%

Table 2. Gender Differences in Ragging Experiences and Perception.

Category	Gender	Yes		No		Maybe	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Ragging experience	Male	8	20%	29	72.5%	3	7.5%
	Female	23	51.11%	15	33.33%	7	15.55%
Source of ragging (only by seniors)	Male	15	37.5%	8	20%	17	42.5%
	Female	9	20%	24	53.33%	12	26.66%
Backlash from teacher	Male	12	30%	28	70%	0	0
	Female	26	57.77%	19	42.22%	0	0
Problem faced by interaction	Male	8	20%	32	80%	0	0
	Female	11	24.55%	34	75.55%	0	0
Is it a traditional passage	Male	29	72.5%	3	7.5%	8	20%
	Female	5	11.11%	31	68.88%	9	20%
Stress, anxiety faced by ragging	Male	8	20%	27	67.5%	5	12.5%
	Female	22	48.88%	9	20%	14	31.11%
Awareness of ragging	Male	40	100%	0	0	0	0
	Female	43	95.55%	2	4.44%	0	0

Table 2. represents Gender-specific answers to questions about ragging experiences. Compared to women (51.11%), fewer men (20%) reported ragging. The main source for 20% of women and 37.5% of men was elders. 57% of women and 30% of males reported experiencing criticism from their instructors. Men were more likely to view ragging as a tradition (72.5%) than women (68.88%). Stress levels were higher among women (48.88%), although awareness was roughly equivalent for both sexes.

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Table 3. Gendered Perspectives on the Awareness, Functionality, and Effectiveness of Anti-Ragging Mechanisms

Category	Gender	Yes		No		Maybe	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Complaint mechanism (CM)	Male	30	75%	8	20%	2	5%
	Female	33	73.33%	5	11.11%	7	15.56%
CM is working properly	Male	21	52.5%	0	0	19	47%
	Female	27	60%	1	2.22%	17	37.78%
Ragging is violation of human right	Male	35	87.5%	0	0	5	12.5%
	Female	42	93.33%	1	2.22%	2	4.44%
Anti ragging policy clearly define by educational institution	Male	29	72.5%	0	0	11	27.5%
	Female	26	57.78%	2	4.44%	17	37.78%
Anti ragging policy is effective	Male	12	30%	6	12%	22	55%
	Female	13	28.89%	9	20%	23	51.11%
Training session	Male	12	30%	28	70%	0	0
	Female	21	46.67%	24	53.33%	0	0

Table 3. shows Participants' knowledge and opinions about anti-ragging measures. Although fewer people thought the complaint system operated effectively (52.5% of men and 60% of women), the majority of men (75%) and women (73.33%) were aware of it. Most people said that ragging violated human rights (87.5% of men and 93.33% of women). Only about 30% of both genders believed the policies were effective, even though 72.5% of men and 57.78% of women felt the policies were well-defined. 5% of men and 57.78% of women felt that they were well-defined. Females participated in training at a higher rate (46.67%).

CASE STUDY

Perception about ragging among the university students

Ragging refers to any act of harassment, humiliation, or abuse—physical, verbal, or psychological—inflicted by seniors upon juniors in educational institutions. Though often disguised as an introduction or ice-breaking activity, it frequently leads to fear, trauma, and distress. The University Grants Commission (UGC) defines ragging as a serious offense and prohibits it across all Indian institutions to ensure student safety and uphold human dignity (UGC Regulations, 2009).

When asked about their perception of ‘Ragging’, the university students enlightened with their unique assessments during the interview session.

A 23-year-old female voiced– “Ragging is a practice in some educational institutions where new students are harassed, humiliated, or mistreated by senior students under the guise of ‘introducing’ or ‘welcoming’ them. It can range from harmless pranks to serious abuse—both physical and psychological—and has often been linked to trauma, dropouts, and even tragic incidents. Ragging is an act that causes fear, perturbation, or embarrassment to a student, usually done by other students.”

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Another male (26 years) agreed with the aforesaid views and replied- "In my view, ragging is any form of harassment, abuse, or humiliation—whether physical, verbal, or psychological, inflicted by senior students on juniors, often under the guise of 'breaking the ice'. While some may claim it builds camaraderie, in reality, it creates fear, trauma, and a toxic environment".

However, to our wonder, a young female student (23 years) accused the teachers of harassing and ragging the students in the university premises. She cited that - "Principally, ragging means harassment, insult, humiliation, and abuse, verbally or physically, by seniors to their juniors. But it is not only done by seniors; sometimes teachers also contribute by forcing students to perform undisciplined activities against their will".

Overall, student accounts demonstrate that ragging is widely regarded as a harmful and humiliating behaviour that extends beyond senior-junior relationships, underscoring the vital need for educational institutions to rigorously enforce anti-ragging policies.

Present scenario of Ragging in the universities

The decline of ragging in educational institutions reflects growing awareness, stricter enforcement of anti-ragging laws, and changing students' approach. The UGC and Supreme Court of India have implemented numerous preventive measures, including helplines, monitoring cells, and disciplinary actions. These initiatives, along with media attention and public campaigns, have helped reduce the occurrence of ragging, though isolated cases still persist in some institutions (UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging, 2009).

During the interview, the university students shared their distinct perspectives on how they perceived the "problem of ragging". A 24-year-old male student said, "Ragging is a complex issue, and its prevalence can vary depending on institutions, regions, and cultural contexts. While some institutions and countries have made significant progress in reducing ragging, it persists in many places."

One female student, 24 years old, also articulated- "Yes, ragging has been declining in many places, especially in India, due to increased awareness, stricter laws, anti-ragging helplines, and active intervention by educational institutions."

Another female, 25-year-old student uttered, "The practice remains prevalent in a handful of institutions, but I think it is declining compared to the past." (Female, 25 years) Although isolated incidents of ragging still occur, students typically acknowledge that strict laws, institutional diligence, and public awareness have all contributed to a steady decline in the practice.

The Functional Effectiveness of Support Structures in Reducing Ragging

Support systems against ragging include institutional committees, legal frameworks, awareness campaigns, and counselling services designed to protect students and create a safe learning environment. The UGC mandates every Indian institution to establish an Anti-Ragging Committee, ensure student declarations, and promote anti-ragging cells. The effectiveness of these measures depends on active implementation, student participation, and continuous monitoring (UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging, 2009).

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The diverse viewpoints of the students further demonstrated how these support systems function within the organization.

A 26-year-old student said that "The university has an anti-ragging committee, but I am unable to say about its effectiveness." A 27-year-old female believed that "Anti-ragging campaigns and anti-ragging self-declarations during admission are part of the support system".

One male (28 years) mentioned that "Addressing the side effects of ragging should involve all students and staff members of the university". According to these viewpoints, the administration, staff, and students have to participate actively for these crucial procedures to be truly effective.

Consistency of Anti-Ragging Regulations with Human Rights Standards

Anti-ragging rules promote student safety, dignity, and equality, aligning with global human rights principles that emphasize respect, non-violence, and inclusivity within educational institutions. Numerous students' experiences are linked to how human rights correspond with the anti-ragging policy.

A male student (28 years) mentioned that "University guidelines on ragging uphold students' rights to safety and dignity, aligning with both the Indian Constitution and international human rights standards. By enforcing strict anti-ragging rules, they promote equality, respect, and a harassment-free environment, which are key principles of global human rights."

Two female students, one 26-year-old and the other 27-year-old, had similar opinions, confirming the earlier stance: "By prohibiting violence and abuse, and protecting students' rights to dignity and respect, these guidelines are often grounded in legal frameworks and have to align with national and international human rights standards".

Overall, students understood that anti-ragging regulations are firmly based in human rights principles, upholding the ideals of equality, safety, and dignity in educational settings.

DISCUSSION

Ragging is an abuse or harassment of students in educational institutions, often involving senior students along with others. It ranges from gentle teasing to rough bullying to the extent of causing serious injuries, mental trauma, or even suicide. Anti-ragging committees, helplines, and awareness campaigns are set up to tackle the difficulty at the University level. Institutions are required to cultivate healthy interactions through positive activities. Right to education is a part of the fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution, which is indispensable for every individual; The Indian Constitution provides free and compulsory education between the ages of 6 to 14 under Article 21(A), and it also provides a safe environment for higher institutions that protect the learner's educational rights.

Human Rights are the co-passengers of justice, which creates a stable socio-political environment. The emergence of human rights is an evolutionary process, and it passes through various spheres, like philosophy, history, and legal perspective. It was rooted in 1754 BCE, when the Code of Hammurabi in Babylon was written. The most crucial development related to human rights is the UDHR, with 40 articles, which serves as a guiding principle for every State in terms of providing rudimentary human rights. In India, a total of 6 fundamental

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rights are granted to the citizens. The Constitution of India provides indispensable fundamental rights, which are mentioned in Part 3 and Articles 12 to 32.

Human rights, aka *droits de l'homme* (French), *derechos humanos* (Spanish), *Menschenrechte* (German), "the rights of man" (Donnelly, 2014). Human rights furnish the equal status and opportunity for living with equal dignity, liberty, freedom, justice, and peace. UDHR defines "human rights as the inherent rights to which every human being is entitled, without regard to race or gender". John Locke described "human rights as natural rights include the rights to life, liberty, and property, the government's responsibility was to preserve these rights". Thomas Hobbes saw "human rights as part of the social contract. He felt that individuals gave up some liberties to a sovereign government in exchange for security and the safeguarding of their remaining rights, particularly the right to life. Rousseau emphasised the concept of "general will", He believed that individuals enjoyed inbuilt freedom, but that people chose to follow common rules to maintain equality and justice in society.

Interplay between Human Rights infringement and Constitutional Norms.

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution indicates regarding the rights to equality; it ensures equal attention to all individuals, and it doesn't matter to which caste, religion, race, or even sex the students belong, but it is a false consciousness. In the context of ragging, the power is in the hands of educational institutions that can do justice to the victim by taking action against the culprits because of favouritism. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution deals with the prohibition of discrimination in various quarters, like race, gender, class, caste, sex, and place of birth, as well as special provisions for both women and children.

Under Article 19(A), every individual has the freedom of speech and expression through writing, speech, printing, and picturing. If we look towards the traditional form of ragging between the seniors and juniors, between teachers and students, and even among teachers, the main transgressed rights are Article 19(A). The students are not allowed to freely express their thoughts, and sometimes they are not even allowed to move in front of the seniors, and if they have that right, then they need to maintain the decorum that their seniors are made of, like no one can criticise in front of their seniors. Article 21 declares that no person shall be deprived of his/her life except according to procedure established by law. This fundamental right is available for both citizens as well as non-citizens, and this right can't be snatched from any individuals. Victims frequently suffer from anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, which denies them mental peace and dignity. The coercive element of ragging inhibits human autonomy, leading to humiliating behaviours against students' consent. In extreme circumstances, it has resulted in suicides and catastrophic injuries, violating the right to life. The Supreme Court of India has emphasised the right to live with dignity as a vital component of Article 21.

The individual requires certain basic or fundamental rights from the state, and the state must deliver these rights without prejudice. The right to an education is also a basic right, as stated in Article 21(a), however, many people are denied this opportunity due to ragging. Ragging at educational institutions infringes a variety of fundamental human rights. Those rights are directly breached by the ragging, they are Articles 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 21(a), 23, 24, 29, 41, 46, etc., and plenty of the rights are indirectly violated through ragging.

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Various frameworks and Cases related to Ragging:

During the last 10 years, from 2012 to 2022, UGC in India received nearly 8000 ragging complaints, which increased 208%, from 358 cases in 2012 to 1115 in 2022. Even in 2023, 756 cases were registered. Odisha is placed in the 4th position in the ragging complaint, followed by Uttar Pradesh (1,202), Madhya Pradesh (795), and West Bengal (728), but on 22 February 2025, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi argued that the published data was totally wrong, and a total of 72 cases were registered within the 10 years.

Ragging is not limited to the university boundary, rather it spreads throughout the entire educational environment in developing countries. Some cases related to this ragging are: The POCSO Act has led to the arrest of five students at Binayak Acharya College in Odisha province on charges of ragging. The victim is a first-year Plus II student, and Abhishek Nahak, a Plus III final-year student, is the main accused. After the video went viral, the 12 students involved had to accept compulsory transfer certificates (TC) due to the furor.

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Mandi, India, took disciplinary action against 72 B Tech students, including 10 who have been prohibited for six months for ragging juniors. Three of the suspended students have positions on the institute's student body. The institute has a strong anti-ragging policy and has notified authorities about the occurrence. The 72 students face disciplinary punishment involving fines of ₹15,000, ₹20,000, ₹25,000 and 20, 40, and 60 hours of community service, and a suspension of 10 students from academics and the hostel till December 2023.

On July 12, 2025, one integrated B.Ed student, Soumyashree Bisi from Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Odisha committed self-immolation after being harassed by the faculty. She filed a complaint with the internal complaint committee (ICC) few days ago, but the committee didn't investigate it properly and rejected the complaint. Then she decided that she was going to self-immolate in front of the college gate during college hours. The honourable Supreme Court's viewpoint in India towards ragging is not very serious; it is clearly visible in the *Vishwa Jagriti Mission* case (2001), The Court gave the power to the police that they can be involved, but with the consent of the head of the institution, and they need to consider that they are students, not criminals. And also, the punishment is only fine or withholding the scholarship or result. This type of judgment clarifies the view of the Indian judicial system toward student rights; they only become serious when the ragging happens with underage boys and girls, who come under the POCSO Act 2012. (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012)

When we deliberate on the menace of ragging, we witness the increase of ragging cases that have an adverse impact on human rights discourse, Hence, a legal and institutional framework is needed for the eradication of ragging in the public universities throughout the globe. For the elimination of ragging, there are two basic frameworks according to the honourable Supreme Court of India i.e legal framework & institutional framework.

The article "Silent Killer: How Bullying at School is Killing Nepali Children" highlights the serious psychological effects of bullying in Nepal, using the accounts of two young boys who experienced suicide thoughts as an example. It describes the many types of bullying and emphasizes the fear and sadness that follow, which can result in suicide. Even though Nepal's Act Relating to Children (2018) forbids violence against children, bullying is still not handled, and there are not enough support resources available. Mental health professionals

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have called for national study and successful initiatives to address bullying and its repercussions in light of recent figures showing a concerning increase in child suicides.

Legal framework

Legal framework means the annihilation of ragging through the law and order that is created by the State, Court, and committee recommendations. Ragging, a form of harassment and abuse at educational institutions, is an ongoing issue that can cause serious psychological distress and even death. The Indian legal system has built a comprehensive framework to prohibit and punish such offenses, which includes legislation from the Indian Penal Code (IPC), State laws, and institutional norms. The UGC's rules and the Raghavan Committee's recommendations have enhanced these processes. These legislative frameworks strive to provide a safe and respected academic environment while safeguarding students' dignity and fundamental rights, as guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Tamil Nadu became the first State to criminalize ragging in educational institutions with the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Ragging Act, 1997. They are considered "Ragging within or without any educational institution is prohibited".

Raghavan Committee Report (2007): The Raghavan Committee was set up in 2006 by the Supreme Court of India, to investigate into the frequency of ragging in educational institutions under the case of Aman Kachroo Case in 2009. Dr. R.K. Raghavan chaired the committee, which tried to look into its impact and supply suitable preventive measures. The 2007 study underlined the disturbing amount of ragging, including systematic abuse and long-term trauma. Institutional inability to handle concerns, fear of reprisal, and a lack of regular regulatory processes were among the challenges.

Findings of the Committee

1. Ragging is universal; it exists in both public and private educational organizations in every vicinity of society. It has numerous forms like assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and psychological humiliation.
2. Institutions frequently hide ragging cases to protect their reputation. Institutions generally lacked outlined anti-ragging policies and committees.
3. Authorities are often unable to take action against criminals, creating an environment of impunity, and inadequate enforcement of laws allowed ragging to continue.
4. This committee argues that only seniors have done ragging to show their supremacy, which indicates the institution's ethical direction and uncontrolled peer pressure. Hence, there is a necessity of rigorous regulations and enforcement of anti-Ragging Laws and committees in all institutions

Recommendations of the Committee

1. This committee considers ragging an offensive crime, hence it needs a zero-tolerance policy and strict action under the IPC, and this committee even suggests forming legislative policies on it.
2. Establish anti-ragging committees and squads, confidential grievance redressal cells, build an online complaint system, and even a 24-hour toll-free anti-ragging helpline for students in the institution.
3. Provide psychological support to victims of ragging, safeguard complainants and arrange for critical victim relocation if necessary.

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4. Institutional officials must be held accountable for steering clear of ragging, and fines may be imposed for noncompliance, with governing bodies such as UGC, AICTE, and MCI checking compliance.

The Raghavan Committee included mental, physical, and sexual misconduct, resulting in psychological damage, trouble with schoolwork, and even suicide. The committee proposed a zero-tolerance approach, making ragging a punishable offence under the Indian Penal Code, and forming Anti-Ragging Committees and Squads. It also emphasised counselling services and severe punishments for fenders. These proposals informed the creation of the UGC Regulations on Curbing Ragging (2009).

Institutional Framework

Anti-ragging rules are enforced by an institutional architecture that includes anti-ragging committees, anti-ragging squads, and monitoring committees. 'For the elimination of ragging from the root, institutions need to take some attempts like Strict anti-ragging policies, campaigning, orientation programs, counseling support services, anti-ragging committees, anti-ragging numbers, peer mentoring, quick action, staff training, and legal impact'. A team effort comprising students, professors, parents, and regulatory organisations such as the UGC and the AICTE promotes a safe educational environment by raising awareness, vigilance, and guaranteeing prompt justice while preserving students' dignity and rights.

Anti Ragging Committee

The anti-ragging committee is set up in every educational institution under the Anti-Ragging Act 2009; it incorporates students, teachers, administrative staff, parents, police, and some media people as well. The committee's functions include policy creation, monitoring and supervision, resolution of complaints, disciplinary action, awareness and prevention, and student support.

Anti-Ragging Helpline

The Anti-Ragging Helpline is a 24-hour assistance system for students suffering ragging at educational institutions. It offers a confidential place for victims and witnesses to report occurrences without fear of punishment. It was established by the Raghavan Committee Report (2007) and is now institutionalised under the UGC Regulations on Combating Ragging in Higher Education Institutions, 2009. A across the nation toll-free hotline, email help, and an online complaint are the notable features.

Meaning and Nature of Ragging

The ragging is a wide-ranging field that comprises diverse forms of ragging as well as those carried out through whom all of this. The lexicon differs from State to State, such as 'Hazing' or 'bullying' in US, 'bizutage' in France, 'Praxe' in Portugal, 'Mopokaste' in Finland. Ragging, as per the Supreme Court of India, is restricted to educational institutions, and it is practiced among seniors and juniors. But in 2006, the Indian Supreme Court established a committee that Dr. R.K. Raghavan headed and his report denotes that ragging is not only confined within the academic institution, and within the senior and junior relationships; instead, it is beyond imagination, but the Supreme Court doesn't accept the report that ragging also occurs with the teachers. In case of Vishwa Jagriti Mission (2001), the Supreme Court provided a definition pertaining to ragging, i.e., "*Ragging is any disorderly conduct, whether by words spoken or written, or by an act that has the effect of teasing, treating, or handling with rudeness any other student*". (Vishwa Jagriti Mission Through ... vs Central Govt,

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Through Cabinet 2001). In simple words, ragging" is when somebody is forced to do something without any consent. That activity doesn't have any kind of consent or acceptance. The activity of ragging varies from person to person in an educational institution. The activity of ragging varies between senior and junior, teacher and student, and also between teachers. It has been observed in diverse cases pertaining to the ragging incident between teachers. "The sad issue is that most parents believe that ragging is a normal part of college life and should not be treated seriously, although 81.3% of students experience it in their institution and 43.75% of students are dissatisfied with the actions taken by the universities" (Kumar & Thamarakshan,2023). More empirical research is required to discern and fathom the brute realities of ragging in the developing countries.

Ragging in Developing Countries: Narratives

Sri Lanka, located in the South Asian subcontinent, is traditionally embedded in inflexible social norms & hierarchical procedures, lending itself to the youth's discontent, which manifests in ragging as hostility. Ayanthi Wikramasinghe, Pia Axemo, Birgitta Essen, Jill Trenholm, in their article, argue that ragging has become an impediment in significant public health problem, which not only has led to ill health, but also has resulted in a loss of students from universities, with a subsequent loss of human resources & economic prosperity in Sri Lanka. Universities are microcosms of the larger society.

In Bhutan, it is observed that the *bullied* often become *bullies*, it is crucial to have structures so that students do not perpetuate cycles of verbal & physical violence. A scoping review indicates that bullying are deemed to be crucial in helping to raise public awareness regarding the seriousness of the issue and invigorates social discussions on how to take steps towards resolving this conundrum. Whereas in Bangladesh, Bullying often overlaps with interpersonal prejudices, including discrimination based on race, gender, weight, disability or sexual orientation. According to UNICEF, around 32% of children between the ages of 10 and 17 years old.

in Bangladesh have been exposed to cyberbullying and digital harassment. Hence, stakeholders in the Bangladesh university administration have to put policies into practice to prevent the frequent occurrence of ragging. One of the barriers in developing States is that there is no sensitization of students & faculties about the menace of ragging. Whereas, in developed States, the university premises emphasize more on the sensitization of students & faculties through anti-ragging campaigning programmes.

44.4% of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 at Afghan educational institutions report experiencing bullying at school, according to the Global School-based Student Health Survey. In Afghanistan. The ragging faced by the boys and girls is analogous; 42.3% of boys and 44.3% of girls are bullied in their educational institution. The peer victimization is much higher than in any other country. Particularly linked to peer violence victimization include children's experiences of physical violence at home and corporal punishment at school, food insecurity, and witnessing family violence at home. Bullying has been a commonplace practice in Afghan institutions due to the country's daily bloodshed. Since the Afghan people have experienced several wars and conflicts, it will be impossible to eradicate bullying from their culture until they undergo social change and begin to prioritize peace in their homes.

Bullying in schools is more important in Nepal than bullying in colleges or universities. According to a survey on bullying and ragging in educational institutions, half of the public is

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aware of what school bullying is, while the other half are not. 25% of students have experienced ragging in the form of verbal, physical, or both forms of bullying, out of the 50% that are aware of what bullying at school is. UGC in Nepal implemented a zero-tolerance policy for ragging in order to eradicate bullying inside the organization, particularly in the college and university.

South Asian University has strict anti-ragging policies in place and has made eradicating it their top priority. They consider it a crime. Furthermore, they include harmful textual and verbal activities that the students do not desire. The organization have differing views on what is considered ragging, including verbal abuse, emails, posts, public taunts, and financial extortion or coercive financial expenditure. It includes the ragging activities as well. The school also has anti-ragging policies that include preventing students from taking exams and classes and suspending or terminating fellowships.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Ragging is a social jinx that is often carried out by seniors against newcomers or juniors in the form of harassment, abuse, or humiliation in educational institutions across South Asia, that have salience for India as well as globally. Physical, verbal, and psychological abuses are just a few of the many shapes it can take. Ragging is a crime under the human rights discourse that has a deep impact on Students' mental health, and academic performance. Under the pretence of introducing or welcoming new students, senior students frequently manipulate it in educational institutions to harass, humiliate, or mistreat the junior students in the public universities. The majority of the South Asian Universities have not clearly addressed the ragging issue through victim consultation or antibullying programs. When introspection occurs with the students or researchers in the various Public Universities, they state that their university has it, but are unaware of the further steps when someone infringes on someone's rights. It is not only detrimental to the students' lives, but also harms the university's reputation, hence they need to call a meeting at regular intervals. It is essential to make the university a student-friendly and gender sensitised campus in developing States like South Asia. Most of the institutions are behind the NAAC accreditation as well as busy in making huge buildings. This is clearly visible because the weightage of the students is heavily lessened in the parameters of the NAAC visit in India. The apex institutional mechanisms, such as UGC, higher educational commission, need to look at enhancement of the human rights discourse and student centric approach within the educational institutions across developing countries.

There is a need to adopt a multifaceted approach towards ragging to eradicate it from public universities. Some recommendations that can help to clearly expunge the ragging from educational institutions are that all authorities including establishments like UGC, need to make their policies related to ragging stringent, and they need to consider it an offensive crime, and the case should be handed over to the police. They also need to formulate some new policies rather than increasing fines and suspending him/her from the hostel. (UGC, 2022). Second, when it comes to the ranking of one particular educational institution, which is done by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), they need to emphasize more on the students' relationship with the institution. The modern-day ragging is anti locus standi in nature.

Indeed, incidents of ragging are still apparent, but in a new dimension and a new form. In the traditional approach, the practice was done between the seniors and juniors, but now it has

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spread its wings and includes other areas, like between teachers and students, and among teachers. Ragging changed its shape after cyber ragging came into the picture globally. Cyber ragging includes online bullying, leaking another citizen's personal information, and harassing someone through abusive recordings, which breaks the traditional approach of ragging.

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