

Perception of Ragging: The case of Eastern University, Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *Ragging is a serious concern when we study about university admissions in Sri Lanka, in fact there are so many studies on factors that contributes ragging. This study was focused on ragging at the hostels of Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Therefore, a pre tested questionnaire was used among 10 % of students population using stratified random sampling method which focused factors such as mode of ragging, inducing factors for involvement in ragging, the factors that refrain from involving in ragging and preference of the seniors involve in ragging when fresher students arrived the next time to university. Data analysis was carried out by using SPSS (2021) software. Analysis showed that there is no significant involvement of ragging by hostel students ($p \leq 0.05$) in eastern university; it was further revealed that modes of ragging at the hostel revealed that large number of students (69.8%) have done psychological or verbal mode of ragging, and found that around half of the students (53.7%) involved in ragging for the purpose of having leisure. Also, 55.3 % of the students refrained from involving in ragging due to the reason "don't like ragging since it is against humanity" but 35.2% of them informed that they would involve in ragging for newly intake students in future. Studies on ragging at the universities showed that there were some mechanisms recommended to mitigate the ragging not only at the hostels but also at the entire premises of the university. This study also recommend some mechanisms to curb the ragging at the entire premises of the universities such as more senior academics should be appointed as "Academic Sub Warden" for each wing of the hostels and requested them to monitor the misbehavior of the students at the hostels at least during the period of new intake, arranging a small function at the hostels to meet seniors and juniors to introduce each other and to show their talents at the function under the present of the academics, conducting awareness program over punishments to be imposed on the ragers as per the available Act and the by- law of the university and senior academics can convince some direct students to be act as an "anti-ragers" group among the direct senior students not only at the hostel but also at each faculty level*

Keywords: Ragging, university hostels, eastern university

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of ragging is reported in the state universities in Sri Lanka, and the number of reported incidents has increased rapidly. It is a universal occurrence. Ragging is defined in many ways. Seniors in universities want to control the juniors in the form of ragging at the commencement of the first academic year or semester on their admission. Ragging refers to any unruly behavior that involves mocking or treating any student offensively to cause nuisance, frustration, or feeling of fear to adversely affect their state of mind (Samson SR Nallapu, 2013). (Hemamalie Gunatilaka, 2019) In the basic sense, ragging consists of the use of humiliation to socialize newcomers. Ragging is one of the extreme outputs of students' misbehaviors in state universities, and many factors contribute to it. (K.E. Karunakaran, M.F.M. Marsook, A.L.M.Rifky, 2021). New students to the universities face ragging issues, and some new students who come with huge expectations and ambition may face inconvenience due to severe ragging by the senior.

Many studies have been conducted on ragging. Some studies done in Sri Lankan state Universities focus on the issues faced by the juniors. A literature review has addressed the issue and developed a framework to explain the concept clearly (I.M.S. Weerasinghe and R.L.S. Fernando, 2018).

Eastern University, Sri Lanka is one of the national universities in Sri Lanka that provides degree programs. Students for its undergraduate programs are selected by the University Grants Commission based on students' results obtained in the General Certificate Examination of Advanced Level held every year in Sri Lanka. Students' intakes to the university have increased rapidly since its inception in 1986. The University faces many ragging-related issues. Rigging usually lasts three to four months. Sometimes it continues to more than six months. Parents of the students make verbal and written complaints about ragging faced by their son or daughter or relatives in the hostel premises during night time. Even though the University authorities have adopted the policy of zero tolerance toward ragging and take every possible effort toward that policy, the University still faces the issue of ragging.

In addition, students and their parents lodge complaints directly in the Portal of the University Grants Commission. Then, the UGC requests the University to do the needful on those complaints. However, some such complaints recorded in the UGC's online portal do not carry proper identification of those who rag juniors. In such situations, the authority of the University faces challenges to identify the culprit of the incident of ragging. The bold students who want to be anti-ragers make complaints over harassment of ragging which he or she faced to the authority of the university and the authority conducts inquiry into the incident

and impose punishment ranging from out of bound for six months to expulse the students from the university as per the Commission Circular 946 of University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. Hostels of the universities are the common places where the ragging incident is staged. Eastern University, Sri Lanka has seven wings of Men’s hostel and eleven wings of Women’s hostels. Sub Wardens of the hostels, Proctor unit, Marshal unit, Security unit, Senior Student Counselor, and the Student Counselors have been functioning day and night to monitor the seniors and involved in protecting juniors from the ragging of direct seniors during the first two months from the date of intake discussion with direct seniors, it revealed that revenging what they underwent during their first year period by then seniors is the major cause for the ragging. Some research gaps are realized over ragging in the national university of Sri Lanka such as types of ragging staged by the seniors, the correlation between hostellers and involving in the ragging, factors which induce the seniors involved in ragging, the reasons in which the senior not involving the ragging and whether the junior students want to involve in ragging the next batch of students while intake of the batch taking place. The above research gaps in many literatures over ragging in the Sri Lankan context induced me to do this study in order to make some mechanism which could be helpful to the authority of the university to mitigate the ragging or to be zero tolerance of ragging in the premises of the university future.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find any relationship between hostel students and have they involved in ragging new students who entered into the hostels.
2. Find out the major factors contributing to ragging.

Table 1: Faculty wise student response

Faculty	Percentage
Science	12.0
Health Care Science	33.5
Commerce and Management	13.1
Arts and Culture	23.0
Technology	7.3
Agriculture	11.1
Total	100.0

294 out of 343 students were hostel students. Further 145 students stayed in the men’s hostel and 149 students were from women’s hostel of the university while 49 students were the day scholar to the university.

Universities are known as a common place of ragging and currently more attention is paid due to the incidents reported regarding extreme conditions that are many negative outcome of ragging and stress is of the significant negative outcomes. However, according to existing literature, ragging has also positive effects such as socializing students coming from

METHODOLOGY

The relevant data and information of the study collected among defined sample of students of Eastern University, Sri Lanka by having a structured questionnaire and pretested before use. Total student population of Eastern University, Sri Lanka is near about 4500. The sample was selected from total student population frame of each faculty comprising all faculties and all years of study program. Overall sample size was 10% of total student population of Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Direct senior students (Academic year 2017/2018) were given most priority in selecting the sample and the next priority was given for direct first year students (Newly intake, Academic year 2018/2019) but the first-year students of Faculty of Arts & Culture were excluded from this study since they were not physical entered into the University and all other senior students were given third priority and selected the samples accordingly.

The sample consists of students of all faculties of Eastern University, Sri Lanka except Trincomale Campus and SVIAS namely students of Faculty of Health Care Sciences, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Commerce & Management, Faculty of Art & Culture, Faculty of Agriculture and Faculty of Technology were selected randomly for the purpose of this study. Fair equal gender and ethnicity representation was considered. Using SPSS tool, the collected data were analyzed

343 students including all faculties of the university responded the questionnaire and found that students of Faculty of Health Care Sciences (FHCS) was higher 33.5% and Faculty of Technology (FOT) was lower (7.3%).

deprived background. It also revealed that ragging in several forms such as the verbal torture, dress code ragging, formal introduction, sexual abuse, playing the fool, hostel ragging and drug abuse (*Hemamalie Gunatilaka, 2019*).

Public health problem due to ragging and revealed that some of the reasons given by the students for ragging are they were also ragged by the seniors; sense of superiority and introduction. Other factors perpetuating ragging are use of alcohol in the hostels, lack of implementation of serious anti-ragging measures by college authorities. It also found that ill

effects of ragging; the psychological effects include constant fear, loss of concentration, inferiority complex guilty because of decline in academic performance and physical injury through beating by objects or by force to perform dangerous tasks, sexual abuse by forced stripping, forced masturbation, forced unnatural sex, etc (Rajesh Garg, 2009).

Some research found that there are negative and positive impacts happened to students due to ragging and it revealed that hostels are the most common place where the ragging occurred and seniors followed many methods or techniques for ragging juniors in universities and institutes. 54 percent of the students reported of being ragged in the hostels and reported number of ragging incidents reduced after introduced

anti-ragging mechanism and intervention of the authorities of the college in common place like hostels day and night (Arepalli, et. al, 2017)

Hostel students and Involvement in ragging

Involvement of ragging was analyzed and found that 21.3% of hostel students revealed that they have involved in ragging the direct junior students in the hostels and 19.0% of day scholars informed that they have also involved in ragging the juniors in the hostels. It can be concluded that only 20.9% of the seniors have involved in ragging the direct junior students in the hostels of Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Also, there is no significant relationship between the hostel students and involved in ragging (p=0.764).

Table 2: Involved in Ragging

Description		Hostel Facilities		Total
		Yes	No	
Involved in Ragging	Yes	50 21.3%	8 19.0%	58 20.9%
	No	169 71.9%	31 73.8%	200 72.2%
	no comment	16 6.8%	3 7.1%	19 6.9%
Total		235 100.0%	42 100.0%	277 100.0%

Sex and involvement of ragging

Hypothesis were made up by having sex and involved in ragging were independent but the study found that two variables such as Sex and Involved in Ragging were totally dependent since percentage of two groups (Male -14.5% & Female- 26.5%) were different. Further, the Chi-square value (Pearson Chi- square) for Involved in Ragging by Sex was found that 6.335 with significant (p=0.042). Therefore, “Sex and Involved in Ragging were dependent” were found to be significant. That is, it can be concluded that female students involved in ragging more than male students in the hostel.

The method of ragging

Even though hostel students involved in ragging is insignificant, 20.9% of the hostel students involved in ragging at the hostels and found that they have used some methods of ragging such as psychological/verbal, physical or both verbal & physical to rag the junior students at the hostels. The direct senior students involved in psychological/verbal ragging the junior students at the hostel was 69.8% while only 3.2 % of direct senior students involved in physical ragging and 11.1% of them involved in both physical and verbal ragging at the hostels

Table 3: Method of ragging

Methods of ragging	Percentage
Psychological/Verbal	69.8
Physical	3.2
Both Verbal & Physical	11.1
Other	15.9

Table 4: What factors induced the seniors to involve in ragging

Methods of ragging	Percentage
It's one kind of fun	53.7
Understanding among us	22.4
Revenge What I suffered	9.0
It bring junior students into right based fighting against administration	9.0
first two reasons	4.5
first three reasons	1.5

Inducing factors for involvement in ragging

Seniors who involved in ragging also expressed the factors induced them to do the ragging. It was revealed that the direct senior students involved in “ragging for the fun” was found to be 53.7% and 22.4% of them involved in ragging to prepare the juniors to “Understanding among them”. Some other factors also induced the seniors in involving ragging such as “revenge what I suffered” and “ragging brings junior students into right based fighting against administration in the university”.

Factors refraining from involvement in ragging

Many students in the hostels did not involve in ragging due to many reasons. This study found that factors such as “Don't Like Ragging since it is against humanity”, “Afraid of punishment”, “would be against creating good friendship with junior”, “My parent wanted me to refrain from ragging”, “previous bad experience of ragging”, and “suffered while I was in first year”. The major factor for refrain from ragging was (55.3%) “Don't like ragging since it is against humanity”.

Table 5: Factors refrain from involvement in ragging

Refraining factors	Percentage
Don't Like Ragging since it is against humanity	55.3
Afraid of punishment	7.3
Would be against creating good friendship with junior	16.4
My parent wanted me to refrain from ragging	3.2
Previous bad experience of ragging	3.7
Negative impact of ragging I suffered while I was in first year	5.9
Humanity and afraid of punishment	2.3
Humanity and parents sake	5.5
All factors	0.5

Mind set of junior students (Present first year students) for involvement in ragging the next fresher students

Majority of the senior students (58.9%) responded that they would not involve in ragging the junior students but 27.8 % senior students revealed that they would involve in ragging the junior students (Fresher) if they are the direct senior students. It was further revealed that 35.2% of direct students said that they would involve in ragging direct junior students when they intake into the university.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that 20.9% of senior students involved in ragging at the hostel but it is not significant (0.05) and on further analyzing, it was found that sex and involved in ragging at the hostel was insignificant. Also female than male students involved in ragging at the hostel was significant. Further, less number of students (3.2%) involved in physical ragging at the hostel but majority (69.8%) ragged the junior verbally. At the same time, 55.3 % of direct senior students

refrains from involving ragging due to the reason “don't like ragging since it is against humanity” while 35.2% of direct senior students(first year students) said that they would involve in ragging direct junior students next time when they would be enrolled into the university.

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