

## **F-01: Ragging in the universities: attitudes of medical students**

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The objectives were: to assess (i) medical student attitudes towards ragging and (ii) the prevalence of certain 'traditional' reasons given for the persistence of ragging in the university system.

A pre-designed questionnaire with 20 simple statements on ragging was administered to 4 consecutive batches of medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, Galle, to 3 during their 2nd year in the pre-clinical course and one before commencement of the medical course, during their intensive English course which was during the 'rag period'. The responses were elicited anonymously and scored on a Likert-scale. One batch was divided into 6 groups according to their performance in the placement test in English and tested independently.

All 4 batches had similar attitudes. There was no difference between males and females. An overwhelming majority agreed that 'the police should not be brought to the University to stop ragging' (> 85%) and that 'ragging was acceptable within limits' (> 79%). They also agreed that 'ragging can cause serious mental distress' (> 65%). The majority of senior students (> 60%) disagreed with the statement that 'ragging should be completely banned', 46% of those who were undergoing the rag at that time, concurred with them. Over 48% of seniors and interestingly, 25% of juniors (who were being ragged at the time the questionnaire was administered) agreed that they 'liked to be ragged'. Proficiency in English was not a discriminating factor.

Correlation coefficients between statements eliciting similar attitudes were low (0.12-0.30) showing lack of consistency in their attitudes. Cross-tabulations were done between statements that gave correlation coefficients of +0.3 and above. These were generally consistent except for one where a confusion in attitudes was seen, e.g, 33% of students who agreed that 'ragging helps make friends' also agreed that it is a way of 'teaching proud students a lesson'.

Attitudes towards ragging among pre-clinical medical students were homogeneous, persistent and generally favourable towards ragging as a university tradition. This is likely to be the majority view of university

students in Sri Lanka. It is unlikely that the phenomenon of ragging in the universities could be eradicated when a majority of even medical students have attitudes such as those which were elicited in this study.

Part of the work reported has been presented at the *Annual Session, Galle Clinical Society* 51  
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