

A methodological framework for evaluating students' perceptions of institutional policies on anti-ragging

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Abstract

Ragging remains a critical concern in higher education institutions in India, despite the implementation of regulatory measures such as anti-ragging policies. Existing studies have largely relied on descriptive approaches with limited theoretical grounding, thereby restricting the systematic evaluation of policy effectiveness. Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a multidimensional, theory-driven framework for assessing students' perceptions of the implementation of institutional anti-ragging policies. The study integrates four key dimensions, awareness, institutional support, enforcement, and perceived safety, derived from established theoretical perspectives in social psychology, organizational behavior, and policy studies.

A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 80 students of Banaras Hindu University using a stratified random sampling technique. The researcher developed a 29-item instrument, the Anti-Ragging Policy Perception Scale (split-half reliability = 0.76), to measure students' perceptions across the identified dimensions. The findings indicate that professional students reported relatively higher perception scores than non-professional students. However, chi-square analysis revealed no statistically significant association with course type or gender.

The results suggest that students' perceptions of anti-ragging policies are generally consistent across demographic groups, reflecting a degree of uniformity in institutional implementation. The study highlights that effective policy perception depends not only on awareness but also on institutional support mechanisms, consistent enforcement, and a psychologically safe environment.

The study contributes to the literature by providing a standardized and theoretically grounded framework for evaluating institutional policies in higher education. Practically, this framework serves as a reliable diagnostic tool for higher education institutions to audit policy compliance, identify implementation gaps, and cultivate safer, more supportive campus environments.

Keywords: *Higher education, Anti-ragging policy, Policy evaluation, Scale development, Student perception*

INTRODUCTION

Institutional policies aimed at ensuring student safety and well-being, such as anti-ragging regulations, play a critical role in shaping the educational environment of higher education institutions. In the Indian context, ragging has been widely recognized as a serious social and psychological issue, prompting regulatory interventions by bodies such as the University Grants Commission. While considerable research has examined the prevalence, perception, and impact of ragging, there remains a significant methodological gap in how the effectiveness of such policies is systematically measured and evaluated.

Existing studies in this domain have predominantly relied on descriptive surveys and isolated perception-based findings, often using non-standardized instruments tailored to specific contexts. As a result, comparisons across studies remain limited, and the generalizability of findings is constrained. More importantly, there is a lack of structured frameworks that integrate multiple dimensions of policy perception, including awareness, institutional enforcement, support mechanisms, and perceived safety outcomes.

Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a methodological framework to evaluate students' perceptions of institutional policy implementation. Central to this framework is the development of a structured measurement instrument, designed to capture the multidimensional nature of policy perception in higher education settings. Unlike conventional survey approaches that focus primarily on outcome reporting, this study emphasizes the design, construction, and preliminary validation of a measurement tool adaptable across institutional and policy contexts.

The study operationalizes this framework by developing the Anti-Ragging Policy Perception Scale, a 29-item instrument designed to assess key dimensions of the student experience related to policy implementation. The instrument is applied at Banaras Hindu University as a case study to demonstrate its feasibility and analytical utility. The focus, however, is not limited to the institutional findings; it also extends to the broader methodological implications of designing and validating such tools in educational research.

Background of the Study

It has been rightly said that the end may not always justify the means. Behind the facade of 'welcoming' new students to college, ragging is, in actuality, a notorious practice in which senior students use it as an excuse to harass their junior counterparts and, more often than not, make them easy targets to satisfy their own perverse, sadistic pleasures. Apart from sustaining grievous physical injuries, those unfortunate students who succumb to ragging either develop a fear psychosis that haunts them throughout their lives, or worse, quit their college education even before it begins. For any student who slogs day and night to secure admission into a prestigious college, ragging can be his or her worst nightmare come true. It would not be an exaggeration to say that today, ragging has taken the form of a serious human rights violation, with even the most respected and disciplined educational institutions falling prey to it. Ragging is a disturbing reality in our country's higher education system. There are several rules designed to curb the menace of ragging. Despite this, the problem persists. It has become the new normal in college.

According to the Supreme Court of India, "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 student, including in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or are 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 student 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 embarrassment so as to adversely affect the psyche of a fresher or a junior student.” (Raghavan Committee Report, 2007). The Anti-Ragging Movement has recently emerged in India. Several voluntary organizations have launched drives to raise public awareness and support victims. Each year, many students are subjected to ragging, with media reporting incidents of suicides, violence, injuries, sexual abuse, and psychological trauma linked to ragging. The judiciary and legislative bodies have addressed the issue through debates and the development of rules and regulations to eradicate it. The Supreme Court has played a notable role in protecting students' rights and raising societal awareness about ragging, actively safeguarding student interests. Before 2009, under UGC regulations, all educational institutions, whether central, provincial, or state, were required to eliminate ragging entirely. These regulations imposed responsibilities on colleges, including proactive measures such as housing freshers separately, conducting surprise night raids by anti-ragging squads, and requiring students and parents to submit affidavits pledging not to partake in ragging.

Despite these regulations, ragging remains a major problem in many colleges across the country. Top institutions like the IITs and NITs have experienced significant instances of ragging that have persisted across generations. According to the latest 2025 report, UGC’s anti-ragging helpline received a total of 1,084 complaints, representing the highest number in the past five years. In this regard, UGC has identified 89 institutions that have failed to submit the mandatory anti-ragging undertakings by students, despite numerous advisories issued (Singh, 2025).

Despite the concerning statistics, some colleges have not faced ragging issues. Over the past three years—since the implementation of Anti-Ragging Regulations—no complaints have been recorded in universities in Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshadweep. To prevent ragging, the UGC has established regulations for observing Anti-Ragging Day, which should be celebrated from August 12th to August 18th each year (Singh, 2025). However, considering the positive and negative aspects before and after these policies, further in-depth research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these measures in curbing violence and improving policies. To create a peaceful university environment, students should be free from anxiety and fear related to such activities and attempt to adapt as much as possible.

Research Question

Are students' gender and the type of course they undertake associated with their perception of the institution's anti-ragging policy?

Objective of the Study

- ✧ To identify the existing framework related to policy perception on anti-ragging.
- ✧ To examine the perception of students regarding the anti-ragging policy of their institution.
- ✧ To compare the perception of students on the basis of the type of Course (Professional/ Non-Professional) and Gender.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant association between students' perceptions and course type (Professional/Non-Professional) and gender.

Delimitation of the study

The study was limited to students in professional and non-professional Degree courses at the Banaras Hindu University main campus, with the purpose of comparing perceptions of the enforcement of the anti-ragging policy at this university.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

Based on insights from previous studies, the present research adopts a descriptive research design to examine students' perceptions of their institution's anti-ragging policy. Prior research has largely relied on descriptive and perception-based approaches (Shakhya & Maskey, 2012; Nallapu, 2013; Suryawanshi & Hazari, 2016), which have proven effective in capturing the prevalence and subjective experiences associated with ragging. The cross-sectional nature of the study enables data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of existing attitudes and awareness levels among students.

The chosen methodology is justified by the dominance of survey-based and descriptive methods in existing literature. While earlier studies have effectively captured perceptions and awareness, they also highlight gaps in awareness of legal provisions and variations across demographic groups. Therefore, the present methodology aims to build upon these approaches while ensuring systematic data collection and broader applicability of findings.

Sample of the Study:

In this study, 80 students from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) were selected as the study sample using a stratified random sampling technique, as shown in the following table.

Table 1: Breakup of Sample Participants

Institute	Category of Students	Gender	No. of Students	Total
Banaras Hindu University	Professional	M	24	40
		F	16	
	Non-Professional	M	20	40
		F	20	

A sample size of 80 participants was determined primarily based on practical feasibility and the voluntary nature of student participation. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, obtaining informed consent was essential to ensure voluntary participation and maintain the authenticity and reliability of the responses.

Tool used for the Study:

To operationalize the objectives of the present study, the researcher has constructed a 3-point rating scale, titled the "Anti-Ragging Policy Perception Scale," for data collection, based on reviews of the relevant literature.

Item Generation process:

The development of the Anti-Ragging Policy Perception Scale (ARPPS) followed a systematic, theory-driven approach to ensure conceptual clarity and measurement validity. Items were

generated based on four theoretically grounded dimensions, namely awareness, institutional support, enforcement, and perceived safety. Each dimension was operationalized as measurable indicators, derived from relevant literature and institutional policy guidelines on anti-ragging regulations.

An initial pool of items was constructed to capture both cognitive (knowledge-based) and experiential (perception-based) aspects of policy implementation. The items were designed to be concise, contextually relevant, and reflective of institutional practices, ensuring ease of comprehension among respondents. After the experts' suggestions and item refinement, 29 items were finalized to measure students' perceptions. The entire process is shown in the flowchart below.

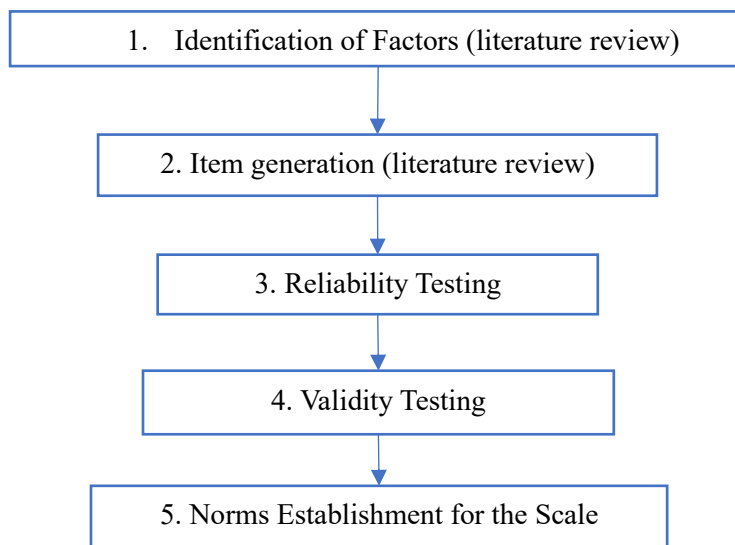


Figure 1: Steps of Scale Development Procedure

Source: The Author

Content Dimensions of the Scale:

1. Awareness: This factor comprises items related to laws, penalties, affidavits, policy knowledge, and the awareness of students within the institution.
2. Institutional Support: This factor comprises items related to counseling services, anti-ragging committees, and administrative mechanisms available within the institution.
3. Enforcement: This factor comprises items related to monitoring, disciplinary actions, and the involvement of authority within the institution.
4. Perceived Safety: This factor comprises items related to comfort, experiences of harassment, and the campus climate encountered by students.

Scoring Procedure:

The instrument employs a three-point rating scale, designed for ease of response and suitability in field-based data collection contexts:

High agreement/ positive response- Score 2

Moderate/ undecided response- Score 1

Low agreement/ negative response- Score 0

For negatively worded items, reverse scoring is applied to maintain directional consistency in the measurement. The serial numbers of the positive and negative items are stated in the following table.

Table 2: Item Analysis

Sl. No.	Types of Items	Serial number of the items	Total
1	Positive	1,2,4,5,6,7,9,11,12,13,14,15,16 17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,29	23
2	Negative	3,8,10,26,27,28	6

Developed Norms:

The norm table was developed to classify perception levels based on mean scores. Lower mean scores were interpreted as indicating low perception, whereas higher mean scores indicated high perception. This approach is supported by treating Likert-type scales as interval data, which allows the use of mean scores for analysis (Likert, 1932), and follows standard practices of score interpretation using class intervals in educational research (Garrett, 2008; Best & Kahn, 2006).

Table 3: The Norms

Sl. No.	Mean Score	Level of Perception
1	Lower mean score	Low Perception
2	Higher mean score	High Perception

According to the table, lower mean scores indicate a low level of perception, reflecting limited awareness, understanding, or sensitivity toward the issue under study. Conversely, higher mean scores indicate a high level of perception, suggesting greater awareness and stronger attitudinal orientation.

Reliability and Validity of the tool:

The reliability of this tool was determined by the split-half method, and the value was found to be 0.76. This value shows that the scale is a reliable instrument for this study. Validity was ascertained by reviewing the items by eminent professors and experts having considerable experience in the field of education and sociology, and suitable modifications were made. The opinion of these specialists confirmed that this was a sufficiently valid tool for this study purpose.

Procedure of Data Collection:

For the data collection purposes of the study, the researcher obtained permission from the respective Principal and the Head/Dean of the departments/faculties visited for data collection at Banaras Hindu University. There, the researcher explained the importance of the study and assured participants that the responses would be used solely for research purposes.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

Objective 1: Identify the Theoretical Framework

The present study develops a theory-grounded framework for measuring student perceptions of institutional policy implementation, conceptualizing policy perception as a multidimensional construct informed by theories from social psychology, organizational behavior, and policy studies. The awareness dimension is rooted in the Knowledge–Attitude framework, which posits that individuals’ perceptions are shaped by their level of knowledge and awareness. According to Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen (1975), beliefs derived from knowledge structures influence attitudes, which subsequently guide perception and behavior. In the context of higher education, awareness of institutional policies such as anti-ragging regulations enables students to form informed judgments about their effectiveness. Complementing this, the institutional support dimension is grounded in Perceived Organizational Support Theory, proposed by Robert Eisenberger et al. (1986), which emphasizes that individuals develop positive perceptions when they feel supported and valued by their institution. In educational settings, the availability of support mechanisms such as anti-ragging cells, counseling services, and administrative assistance contributes significantly to shaping students’ trust and perception of policy effectiveness.

The enforcement and perceived safety dimensions are derived from Policy Implementation Theory and Psychological Safety Theory, respectively. Policy Implementation Theory, developed by Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1973), asserts that the success of any policy depends on its effective execution, monitoring, and consistent enforcement. In this study, enforcement is reflected through institutional actions such as disciplinary measures, monitoring mechanisms, and administrative responsiveness. Alongside this, Psychological Safety Theory, proposed by Amy Edmondson (1999), highlights that individuals’ perceptions are strongly influenced by their sense of safety and freedom from fear. In higher education environments, especially in the context of anti-ragging policies, students’ feelings of comfort, absence of fear, and protection from harassment are critical in shaping their overall perception. Integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study conceptualizes policy perception as a function of awareness, institutional support, enforcement, and psychological safety, thereby ensuring that the measurement instrument is firmly grounded in established theoretical constructs and offers a comprehensive framework for evaluating institutional policy effectiveness.

From the table 4 (page 25), existing studies largely rely on descriptive methods with a limited theoretical basis, restricting their validity and generalizability. To address this limitation, the framework derives its dimensions from established theories, including the Knowledge–Attitude framework (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), Perceived Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), Policy Implementation Theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), and Psychological Safety Theory (Edmondson, 1999). This integration ensures alignment between construct and measurement, enhances methodological rigor, and supports the development of a standardized approach for evaluating institutional policies.

Objective 2: Examine the perception of students regarding the anti-ragging policy of their institution

Institution	Category of Students	Gender	No. of Students	Total	Mean Score
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Banaras Hindu University	Professional	M	24	40	44.62
		F	16		
	Non- Professional	M	20	40	40.85
		F	20		

The table reveals that among students of Banaras Hindu University, 40 professional and 40 non-professional students were selected for the study. In the professional group, 24 were male, and 16 were female, whereas in the non-professional group, male and female students were equally represented with 20 students each. The mean score of professional students (44.62) was higher than that of non-professional students (40.85), indicating a comparatively higher level of the variable under study among professional students.

Objective 3: Significant association between students' perceptions and course type (Professional/Non-Professional) and gender

The third objective of the study is linked to the hypothesis that there is no significant association between students' perceptions and course type (Professional/Non-Professional) and gender. The results of the analysis are presented below.

Table 5: Perception on the basis of Type of Course (Professional/Non-Professional)

Sl. No.	Category of Students	Gender	No. of Students	Total	Chi-Square Value	df	p value	Remarks
1	Professional	M	24	40	0.81	1	0.36	Failed to reject the null hypothesis
		F	16					
2	Non-Professional	M	20	40				
		F	20					

The chi-square test yielded $\chi^2 (1) = 0.81$, $p = .36$. Since the obtained p-value is greater than the standard significance level of .05, the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_0), indicating that there is no significant association between gender and student category.

Table 6: Perception on the basis of Gender (Male/Female)

Sl. No.	Gender	Category of Students	No. of Students	Total	Chi-Square Value	df	p value	Remarks
1	Male	Professional	24	40	0.63	1	0.42	Failed to reject the null hypothesis
		Non-Professional	20					
2	Female	Professional	16	40				
		Non-Professional	20					

The chi-square test of independence yielded $\chi^2 (1) = 0.63$, $p = .42$. Since the obtained p-value is greater than the standard significance level of .05, the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis (H0). This indicates that there is no significant association between gender and the category of students.

DISCUSSION:

The present study was conducted with 80 students from the professional and non-professional categories as the study sample to assess their opinions on different aspects of anti-ragging policies and to compare the results by collecting data using the “Anti-Ragging Policy Perception Scale (ARPPS)” for students of Banaras Hindu University.

The scale based on a multidimensional framework comprising awareness, institutional support, enforcement, and perceived safety. This integration reflects a strong alignment with established theories, thereby strengthening both conceptual clarity and measurement validity. The awareness dimension, rooted in the Knowledge–Attitude framework, highlights that students’ understanding of institutional policies plays a foundational role in shaping their perceptions. This is consistent with the proposition that informed individuals are more likely to develop structured attitudes and evaluative judgments.

Similarly, the role of institutional support, as conceptualized in Perceived Organizational Support Theory, emphasizes that students’ perceptions are not merely cognitive but also relational. When institutions provide visible and accessible support systems, such as anti-ragging cells and counseling services, students are more likely to perceive policies as effective and trustworthy. This reflects the importance of institutional responsiveness in fostering positive attitudes.

The enforcement dimension further reinforces the idea that policies cannot be effective in principle alone but must be consistently implemented. Drawing on Policy Implementation Theory, the findings suggest that monitoring mechanisms, disciplinary actions, and administrative engagement significantly shape perceptions. In addition, the inclusion of perceived safety, grounded in Psychological Safety Theory, underscores the emotional and experiential aspect of policy perception. Students’ sense of security and freedom from fear directly influences how they evaluate institutional efforts.

Overall, the integration of these four dimensions addresses a critical gap in existing literature, which often relies on descriptive approaches with limited theoretical grounding. The framework thus provides a comprehensive and theoretically robust basis for assessing institutional policy effectiveness.

The findings reveal that professional students (Mean = 44.62) exhibit higher perception levels compared to non-professional students (Mean = 40.85). This difference, although not statistically tested, suggests a meaningful trend that can be interpreted in light of academic exposure and institutional engagement.

Professional courses often involve structured environments, stricter regulations, and greater interaction with institutional authorities. As a result, students enrolled in such programs may have higher awareness of policies, better access to support systems, and more direct experiences with enforcement mechanisms. This aligns with the theoretical framework, particularly the awareness and institutional support dimensions, indicating that increased exposure leads to more favorable perceptions.

In contrast, non-professional students may experience relatively less structured institutional engagement, which could limit their awareness and interaction with policy mechanisms. This

may result in comparatively lower perception scores. The findings thus highlight the importance of ensuring uniform dissemination of policy information and support services across all academic streams to maintain equity in student experiences.

The chi-square analysis indicates no significant association between students' perceptions and course type or gender. Specifically, the p-values (0.36 for course type and 0.42 for gender) exceed the standard significance level of 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis in both cases.

The absence of gender-based differences is particularly noteworthy, as it suggests that institutional policies are perceived relatively uniformly by both male and female students. This may indicate equitable implementation of anti-ragging measures and comparable access to institutional resources and support systems.

Likewise, the lack of significant association with course type suggests that institutional policies are broadly consistent in their reach and impact, even though minor variations in perception levels exist. This reinforces the idea that effective policy implementation transcends demographic and academic categories when grounded in strong institutional practices.

CONCLUSION:

The present study concludes that students' perceptions of institutional anti-ragging policies are best understood through a multidimensional, theory-driven framework integrating awareness, institutional support, enforcement, and perceived safety. By grounding the measurement in established theoretical perspectives, the study not only enhances conceptual clarity but also ensures methodological rigor in assessing policy effectiveness.

The investigation revealed that students have a positive response regarding the implementation of the anti-ragging policy at BHU. To gain a clearer perspective, the researcher formulated a null hypothesis and demonstrated that there was no significant association between students' responses and their course type or gender. This is particularly evident given the unique perspective of categorizing students into two groups. Previous research indicated that professional students (Nallapu, 2013) supported such activities; however, this may not be true for this institution and its professional students. Additionally, studies by Sharma (2013) and Rao (2018) suggested that male students are more frequently involved in such activities and respond more positively to ragging compared to female students. Nonetheless, this has been refuted by the current study, which found that both female and male students are aware of the anti-ragging policies and support these regulations, feeling comfortable within the college environment. This research represents a positive development for this institution and provides a guiding framework for other institutions where regulations may not be taken seriously.

Lastly, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a comprehensive and theoretically grounded framework for evaluating institutional policies in higher education. It also provides practical implications for institutions to strengthen awareness initiatives, enhance support systems, ensure rigorous enforcement, and foster a safe campus climate, thereby improving the overall effectiveness and perception of anti-ragging policies.

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Declaration of Conflicts of Interest:

The authors are declaring that there are no conflicts of interest between them related to this research and the authorship of this paper.

Ethical approval and Informed Consent statements

This study adhered to ethical standards associated with secondary research on Institutional policies, which were preferred for developing our tool. All data sources were from publicly accessible academic resources. Consequently, no ethical approval or informed consent was required for this research. The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this work.

Authors' Bio-Sketch

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Authors Contribution:

Dr. Yogendra Kumar Prajapati and Laxmipriya Kanti worked together to develop and design the study. Laxmipriya Kanti collected the data and conducted the initial analysis. Both authors made equal contributions to the article's preparation and the framework's development. Dr. Yogendra Kumar Prajapati reviewed and revised the original draft, which was written by Laxmipriya Kanti, to ensure that it was logical and academically sound. Both authors, who are also accountable for every aspect of the work, approved the manuscript's final draft.

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Table 4: Policy Perception Framework

Dimension	Underlying Theory	Key Theoretical Idea	Core Concept in Theory	Operational Indicators in Study	Example Items from Instrument	Authors
Awareness	Knowledge –Attitude Framework (Cognitive Awareness Theory)	Perception is formed based on knowledge and awareness	Knowledge influences attitudes and perception formation	Awareness of rules, laws, penalties , procedures	Awareness of anti-ragging laws, affidavits, penalties	Ajzen & Fishbein (1975)
Institutional Support	Perceived Organizational Support Theory	Individuals form positive perceptions when they feel supported by the institution	Organizational care and support influence attitudes and trust	Availability of support systems, counseling, anti-ragging cells	Presence of anti-ragging cell, counseling services, administrative help	Eisenberger et al. (1986)
Enforcement	Policy Implementation Theory	Policy effectiveness depends on actual implementation and enforcement	Monitoring , execution, and consistency determine policy success	Monitoring by authorities, disciplinary action, institutional response	Authority action, anti-ragging committee involvement, rule enforcement	Pressman & Wildavsky (1973)
Perceived Safety	Psychological Safety Theory	Perception depends on feeling safe and free from fear or harm	Psychological comfort influences behavior and perception	Comfort level, absence of fear, experience of harassment	Feeling safe on campus, absence of ragging, comfort with environment	Edmondson (1999)