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Implementation and Functioning of Government Safety Interventions for Female Students in Higher Educational Institutions of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract:
The safety of female students in higher education institutions is fundamental to ensuring equitable participation and sustained academic engagement. The present study investigates the implementation and functioning of government-mandated safety mechanisms, including Women's Cells, Internal Complaints Committees (ICC), and Anti-Ragging Cells, in selected higher educational institutions of Papum Pare, Tirap, and Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh. A qualitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through structured interviews with female faculty members and institutional heads. Findings indicate that safety-related committees are formally constituted and operational, gender sensitization programmes are regularly organized, grievance redressal procedures are structured, and safety infrastructure such as CCTV surveillance and security personnel is adequately maintained. While no major structural challenges were reported, respondents emphasized the need for sustained awareness programmes and stronger enforcement mechanisms. The study concludes that institutional safety frameworks are largely functional; however, continuous sensitization and monitoring are necessary to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Keywords: *Women's safety, higher education, gender sensitization, grievance redressal, institutional mechanisms*

1. Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is the northeastern most state of India, characterized by vast geographical diversity, mountainous terrain, scattered habitations, and rich ethnic and cultural plurality. The state shares international borders with China, Bhutan, and Myanmar, which further influences its socio-economic and developmental dynamics. Due to difficult terrain, limited infrastructure, and dispersed population, access to educational facilities—particularly in rural and remote areas—remains a significant challenge. Although literacy rates have improved over the years, disparities persist across districts and between genders. Socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and infrastructural limitations continue to influence educational participation, especially among women.

Higher education in Arunachal Pradesh has gradually expanded with the establishment of universities and government degree colleges across various districts. Institutions such as Rajiv Gandhi University and several affiliated government colleges play a vital role in providing undergraduate and postgraduate education. Despite this expansion, higher education in the state faces multiple challenges, including limited infrastructure, shortage of faculty, inadequate hostel facilities, transportation difficulties, and financial constraints faced by students.

For female students, participation in higher education is further shaped by socio-cultural expectations, safety concerns, economic conditions, and family support. Government initiatives aimed at improving

access, equity, and safety have been introduced; however, the effectiveness of their implementation requires systematic examination. Understanding the regional context of Arunachal Pradesh is therefore essential for analysing women's participation and the functioning of institutional support mechanisms in higher education.

Ensuring a safe academic environment for female students is essential for promoting gender equity in higher education. The Government of India has mandated the establishment of institutional mechanisms such as Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) under the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, as well as Anti-Ragging Cells under the regulations of the University Grants Commission (UGC, 2009). These frameworks are designed to prevent harassment, promote accountability, and provide structured grievance redressal systems within educational institutions.

Previous research indicates that the existence of institutional safety mechanisms significantly influences women's access to and retention in higher education (Morley & Lugg, 2009; Leach, 2013). In geographically and socio-culturally diverse regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, institutional preparedness becomes particularly important due to contextual challenges related to infrastructure, remoteness, and socio-cultural norms.

The present study examines the implementation and functioning of safety-related government interventions in selected higher educational institutions across Papum Pare, Tirap, and Lohit districts.

2. Objective of the Study

To investigate the implementation and functioning of government interventions for safety of female students relating to anti-ragging cell,sexual harassment cell and women's cell at higher educational institutions in Papum Pare,Tirap and Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

3. Methodology

To investigate the implementation and functioning of government interventions for safety of female students at higher educational institutions in Arunachal Pradesh, the researcher developed an interview schedule for female teachers and principals. It consisted of 10 structured questions focusing on the functioning of Women's Cell, Internal Complaints Committee(ICC), Anti-Ragging, Grievance redressal mechanisms, safety infrastructure (CCTV, Security personnel), Counseling facilities, awareness programmes, challenges in implementation, and Suggestions for improvement.

It was pilot-tested on a small group of teachers, not included in the final sample, to check clarity and relevance. Based on feedback, minor modifications were made before final administration.

The detailed analysis is given below:

4. Analysis and Interpretation

1: Does your college have a functional women's cell, ICC and anti-ragging cell?

The item number one is relating to the functioning of women's cell, ICC and anti-ragging cell in the colleges. It is evident from the responses that sampled colleges have functional women's cell, ICC and anti-ragging cells. This suggests that the institutions have formally established support and grievance-redressal mechanisms to safeguard the rights, dignity, and well-being of students, particularly women.

2: What activities or programmes are organized for gender sensitization and awareness?

The item number two is relating to the activities or programmes that are organized for gender sensitization and awareness in the sample colleges. The responses reveal that gender sensitization and awareness are promoted through a range of academic and co-curricular activities such as workshops, seminars, skits, street plays, and interactive sessions like 'Girl's Talk". These programmes are primarily organized by the women's cell and concerned departments, with several initiatives receiving financial support from

the National Commission for Women. Such activities indicate an institutional effort to foster awareness on gender issues, promote dialogue, and create a sensitized campus environment.

3: How frequently do these committees meet or review student grievances?

The responses indicates that the concerned committees conduct meetings on a biannual basis, that is, once every six months, and also convene as and when required to address specific student grievances. Such practices suggest an attempt to balance regular monitoring of student grievances with responsiveness to urgent concerns.

4: How are complaints of harassments or ragging handled?

The responses indicate that complaints related to harassments or ragging are addressed through a formal and systematic procedure. The students are advised to submit complaints in written form, which are subsequently forwarded to the concerned committees for examination. The committee, comprising the chairperson, coordinator, and the student representatives, deliberate collectively on the issue and undertakes appropriate interventions. Based on the deliberations, recommendations and decisions are made to resolve the complaint. This process reflects an institutionalized grievance-redressal mechanism with defined roles and participatory representation.

5: What safety and security measures are available in your college (e.g., CCTV, guards)?

The responses relating to the safety and security measures available in the colleges indicates that all the sampled colleges have put in place sufficient safety and security measures to ensure a secure campus environment. These include the installation of adequate CCTV surveillance across the campus, deployment of security guards and night chowkidars, and strict monitoring of hostels through wardens and prefects. The enforcement of clearly defined rules and regulations further reflects institutional efforts to maintain discipline, safety, and security for students.

6: Are there counseling facilities available for female students?

The item relating to availability of counseling facilities, responses revealed that counseling facilities are available in the colleges for both female and male students. In addition to formal counseling services, mentoring support is also provided to students to address academic, personal, and psychological concerns. This indicates an inclusive student-support mechanism aimed at promoting emotional well-being and holistic development.

7: How aware are students about the functioning of these committees?

The responses indicate that students are well aware of the functioning of institutional committees such as the women's cell, ICC, and anti-ragging cell. This awareness is primarily developed through systematic briefing during admission process, as well as through orientation and induction programmes. Such practices reflect institutional efforts to ensure that students are informed about available support mechanisms and grievance-redressal procedures from the outset of their academic journey.

8: What challenges do you face in implementing these government interventions?

The responses reveal that the institutions have not encountered any significant challenges in the implementation of government-mandated interventions related to women's safety, gender equity, and anti-ragging. This suggests smooth execution and institutional readiness in adopting and operationalising the prescribed guidelines.

9: Are there collaboration mechanism with police or district authorities for serious cases?

The responses indicate that the sampled colleges have not encountered any serious cases requiring collaboration with police or district authorities till date.

10: What improvements are needed to ensure women's safety in colleges?

The responses suggests that further strenghthening of women's safety in colleges require sustained efforts in awareness creation and gender sensitization. The respondents emphasized the need for regular awareness programmes, organization of gender sensitization initiatives, and the formulation and strict enforcement of clear rules and regulations. These suggestions indicate that while structural mechanism are in place, continuous educational interventions and effective implementation of institutional policies are essential to ensure safe and supportive environment for women students . Despite the existence of awareness programmes on women's safety in colleges, the respondents emphasized the need for conducting more such programmes.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that government safety interventions in the selected higher educational institutions of Arunachal Pradesh are structurally established and functionally operational. Women's Cells, ICCs, and Anti-Ragging Cells are active, grievance redressal systems are structured, and safety infrastructure is adequately maintained.

While institutional frameworks appear robust, the long-term sustainability of women's safety in higher education depends on continuous awareness generation, monitoring, and strict enforcement of policies. Strengthening preventive educational interventions will further enhance gender-inclusive campus environments.

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