

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Environmental ethics play a crucial role in preparing prospective teachers to promote sustainable values in society. The study examined the environmental ethics of prospective teachers. The results revealed that the majority of prospective teachers (64%) exhibit an average level of environmental ethics, while 21% show a low level of environmental ethics and 15% demonstrate a high level of environmental ethics. A significant difference in environmental ethics was observed with respect to gender, with female prospective teachers exhibiting higher levels than their male counterparts. No significant differences were found with respect to locality and management. However, a significant difference was observed between subject streams, with science prospective teachers demonstrating higher environmental ethics than those in the arts stream.

Keywords: *Environmental Ethics, Prospective Teachers, Environmental Responsibility.*



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Introduction

Environmental ethics deals with the moral responsibilities of human beings toward nature. It emphasizes the importance of responsible behavior, sustainable practices, and ethical use of resources. Promoting environmental ethics has become essential to both the educational process and societal development due to the increasing global challenges such as pollution, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and global warming. Education plays a vital role in fostering ethical awareness and promoting environmentally responsible behavior among individuals. In the present era of environmental crises and resource depletion, it is crucial to cultivate a strong sense of environmental responsibility through systematic educational efforts. Teacher education holds a central position in this process, as prospective teachers are future nation-builders who significantly influence students' knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors. The integration of environmental ethics into teacher training programmes ensures

that moral responsibility toward nature and sustainable living becomes an integral component of classroom practices. By equipping prospective teachers with ethical sensitivity and environmental awareness, teacher education institutions can make a meaningful contribution to the development of environmentally conscious citizens and the promotion of a sustainable society.

Prospective teachers act as change agents who can influence not only students but also families and the wider community. Their understanding of environmental ethics significantly affects their ability to guide students toward adopting sustainable lifestyles. Teachers with strong environmental ethics are better equipped to model responsible behaviors, foster pro-environmental attitudes, and promote critical thinking about ecological challenges. By integrating ethical perspectives into their teaching practices, they can motivate learners to develop environmentally responsible habits and a deeper sense of commitment toward sustainability. Environmental ethics among prospective teachers encompasses several important dimensions, including ecological responsibility, conservation of biodiversity, ethical decision-making in resource utilization, and the promotion of sustainability. It also involves developing a strong sense of moral duty toward environmental protection and fostering the ability to make informed ethical choices in both personal and professional contexts. By nurturing these competencies, teacher education programmes can prepare future educators to integrate environmental values effectively into their teaching practices and daily lives.

While teacher education programmes highlight the importance of environmental awareness and knowledge, they often give limited attention to the ethical dimension of environmental education. However, understanding environmental issues without a strong ethical foundation may not lead to responsible action. Therefore, it is essential to conduct research on environmental ethics among prospective teachers to identify gaps in ethical understanding, examine the factors influencing their ethical attitudes, and develop effective strategies to strengthen their sense of environmental responsibility. Such research can contribute to the enhancement of teacher education programmes and promote a more value-oriented approach to environmental education. Enhancing environmental ethics among prospective teachers plays a vital role in achieving sustainability goals. Teachers who uphold strong environmental values can influence students, families, and communities by promoting eco-friendly behaviors at multiple levels. Therefore, it is essential to assess and strengthen the

environmental ethics of teacher trainees to prepare them to guide future generations toward responsible and ethical relationships with nature. Examining environmental ethics among prospective teachers is crucial for cultivating morally accountable educators who can foster sustainable lifestyles among learners. This study is significant as it contributes to strengthening teacher education by integrating ethical perspectives on environmental responsibility. Therefore, it becomes essential to assess the “*Environmental Ethics of Prospective Teachers*.”

Statement of the Problem

The current investigation, entitled “*Environmental Ethics of Prospective Teachers*,” aims to assess the level of environmental ethics among Prospective Teachers.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics refer to prospective teachers’ moral principles, attitudes, and sense of responsibility concerning environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources, as measured by the Environmental Ethics Scale developed by Haseen Taj (2001).

Prospective Teachers

Prospective teachers refer to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme in teacher education institutions.

Review of related Literature

Preston (2012) examined how graduates of an Outdoor and Environmental Education programme sustained their environmental ethics after entering professional life. The study highlighted how school expectations and institutional constraints sometimes hindered their environmental practices, while some graduates found ways to overcome these challenges and continue incorporating environmental ethics into their teaching.

Mathivanan and Pazhanivelu (2013) examined the relationship between environmental ethics and participation in environmental activities among higher secondary students. The findings revealed that the students possessed a high level of environmental ethics and actively participated in environmental activities. Furthermore, the study established a significant positive relationship between environmental ethics and participation in environmental activities among higher secondary students.

Soleimanpour Omran (2014) reported that teaching environmental ethics significantly influences individuals’ attitudes and behaviors toward environmental protection.

The study emphasized that environmental attitudes and values strongly affect human behavior toward nature and highlighted the need to strengthen environmental ethics to promote pro-environmental actions.

Aziz and Singh (2015) conducted a comparative study to examine the environmental ethics of 160 primary school teachers selected through cluster sampling. The results revealed significant differences in environmental ethics based on gender and type of school management, whereas no significant difference was observed with respect to locality.

Vidhya K. (2016) carried out a study to assess environmental ethics among higher secondary students in the Vellore District of Tamil Nadu. The results indicated significant differences in environmental ethics with respect to the locality of the institution, parental qualifications, and residence of students. Conversely, no significant differences were identified based on gender, type of institution, medium of instruction, parental occupation, and type of family.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the levels of environmental ethics among prospective teachers.
- To examine the difference in environmental ethics of prospective teachers with respect to gender.
- To examine the difference in environmental ethics of prospective teachers with respect to locality.
- To examine the difference in environmental ethics of prospective teachers with respect to management.
- To examine the difference in environmental ethics of prospective teachers with respect to subject stream.

Hypotheses of the Study

- Prospective teachers do not differ in their levels of environmental ethics.
- Gender does not significantly influence the environmental ethics of prospective teachers.
- Locality does not significantly influence the environmental ethics of prospective teachers.
- Type of management does not significantly influence the environmental ethics of prospective teachers.
- Subject stream does not significantly influence the environmental ethics of prospective teachers

Methodology of the Study

To conduct this research, the investigator used a descriptive survey method. The sample was selected through a stratified random sampling method. This study involved 120 prospective teachers enrolled in the B.Ed. Programme at certain teacher education institutions in Guntur city, situated in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. Data was collected using the Environmental Ethics Scale developed by Dr. Haseen Taj. The scale consisted of 45 items and is a self-reporting 3-point Likert scale. The instrument shows content validity and has a reliability value of 0.79, which was calculated using the split-half method. Responses were scored from 1 to 3 for negative items and from 3 to 1 for positive items.

Statistical Techniques Used

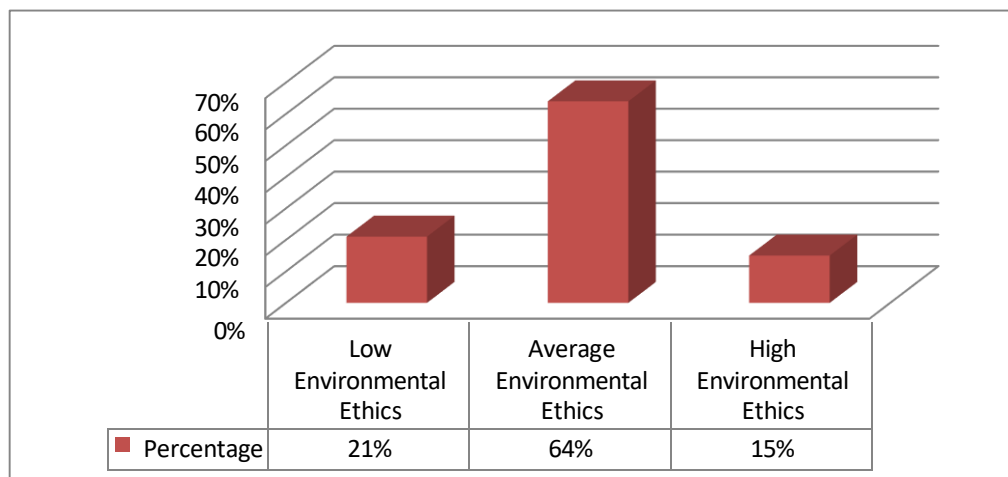
Percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the "t" test were used in the statistical analysis of the data.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

Table -1

Level of Environmental Ethics of Prospective teachers

Sl. No	Range of Scores	N	%	Classification
1	45-57	25	21	Low Environmental Ethics
2	58-81	77	64	Average Environmental Ethics
3	82-135	18	15	High Environmental Ethics
Total		120	100	



The results in Table 1 reveal that 21% of prospective teachers possess low environmental ethics, 64% possess average environmental ethics, and 15% possess high environmental ethics. These findings indicate variations in the levels of environmental ethics among prospective teachers.

Table-2**Comparison of Environmental Ethics of Male and Female Prospective Teachers**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	t-value
Male	60	61.32	13.91	2.63	118	2.86**
Female	60	68.87	14.93			

** Significant at 0.01level

From Table 2, it is clear that the computed t-value of (2.86) is higher than the table value of (2.58) at the 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that gender has a significant influence on the environmental ethics of prospective teachers. However, both groups exhibit an average environmental ethics. Notably, female prospective teachers demonstrated higher environmental ethics than their male counterparts.

Table -3**Comparison of Environmental Ethics of Rural and Urban Prospective Teachers**

Locality	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	t-value
Rural	60	65.43	13.65	2.60	118	0.58#
Urban	60	66.95	14.88			

Not Significant at 0.05 level

It can be seen from Table 3 that the computed t-value (0.58) is less than the table value (1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that locality has no significant influence on the environmental ethics of prospective teachers. However, both groups exhibit an average level of environmental ethics.

Table -4**Comparison of Environmental Ethics of Government and Private Prospective Teachers**

Management	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	t-value
Govt.	60	64.54	14.82	2.75	118	0.40#
Private	60	65.65	15.36			

Not Significant at 0.05 level

As presented in Table 4, the computed t-value (0.40) is less than the table value (1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that the type of management has no significant influence on the environmental ethics of prospective teachers. However, both groups exhibit an average level of environmental ethics.

Table -5**Comparison of Environmental Ethics of Arts and Science Prospective Teachers**

Subject	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	t-value
Arts	60	60.24	13.73	2.65	118	3.25**
Science	60	68.85	15.27			

** Significant at 0.01 level

As shown in Table 5, the computed t-value (3.25) is greater than the table value (2.58) at the 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant influence of subject stream on the environmental ethics of prospective teachers. However, both groups exhibit an average level of environmental ethics. Notably, the environmental ethics of science prospective teachers were found to be higher than those of their arts counterparts.

Delimitations of the Study

- The study was confined to prospective teachers enrolled in the B.Ed. Programme.
- The sample consisted of 120 prospective teachers from selected teacher education institutions in Guntur City, Andhra Pradesh.
- The study focused only on selected variables such as gender, locality, management, and subject stream.

Findings of the Study

- The majority of prospective teachers (64%) exhibited an average level of environmental ethics, while 21% exhibited a low level and 15% exhibited a high level.
- A significant difference in environmental ethics was observed with respect to gender. Female prospective teachers exhibited higher environmental ethics than male prospective teachers.
- No significant difference in environmental ethics was observed with respect to locality. Rural and urban prospective teachers showed similar levels of environmental ethics.
- No significant difference in environmental ethics was observed with respect to management. Prospective teachers from government and private institutions showed similar levels of environmental ethics.
- A significant difference in environmental ethics was observed with respect to subject stream. Science prospective teachers exhibited higher environmental ethics than Arts prospective teachers.

Educational Implications

Strengthening Environmental Ethics

The differences in environmental ethics among prospective teachers highlight the need to develop a better understanding of environmental protection. Classroom discussions, practical activities, and community participation can help them understand their responsibility towards nature and adopt environmentally responsible practices.

Promoting Gender-Inclusive Participation

The comparatively higher environmental ethics among female prospective teachers emphasise the importance of providing equal opportunities for everyone to participate in environmental activities. Group projects, environmental campaigns, and collaborative tasks can encourage active participation and a shared sense of responsibility.

Promoting Environmental Ethics in Institutions

Government and private teacher education institutions should encourage environmentally friendly practices through tree planting, waste management, and campus cleanliness drives. Such activities can help prospective teachers apply environmental values in their daily lives.

Integrating Environmental Ethics Across Disciplines

The higher environmental ethics observed among science prospective teachers than among arts prospective teachers emphasise the need to address environmental concerns across all academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary projects, field activities, and classroom discussions can help prospective teachers understand environmental issues from different perspectives.

Encouraging Experiential Learning and Leadership

Eco-club activities, sustainability projects, and community initiatives can help prospective teachers address local environmental concerns. These experiences can develop their leadership, teamwork, and practical problem-solving skills.

Enhancing Curriculum Integration and Assessment

Teacher education curricula should include environmental ethics through case studies, reflective assignments, and problem-based learning. These approaches can help prospective teachers connect environmental values with real-life situations. Appropriate assessment methods can also help teacher educators understand how well they apply these values.

Preparing Environmentally Responsible Teachers

Workshops and seminars can prepare prospective teachers to address environmental issues and encourage students to adopt sustainable practices and protect the environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating environmental ethics as an essential component of teacher education through experiential learning, reflective practice, value-oriented instruction, and community engagement can strengthen prospective teachers' ethical commitment to environmental protection. This approach can prepare future teachers to address environmental challenges, model sustainable practices, promote responsible environmental behaviour among students, and contribute to building a more environmentally conscious and sustainable society.

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