

A study on environmental Ethics among the Higher Secondary Students in Kamrup District of Assam, India

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ABSTRACT

In the modern globalized world of today, human beings should develop a sense of ethics to conserve the environment as the world suffers from serious environmental threats. Ethics' means moral code of conduct and it helps one to be judicious and differentiate between what is wrong or right. The objective of Environmental ethics is to provide ethical justification and moral motivation for protecting environment globally. The present study is an attempt to study the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to gender and locality. The present study has followed Descriptive research method. From class XII 160 students studying under Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) of Kamrup district of Assam were selected as sample of the study. The sample consisted of 80 female and 80 male students. Out of 160 students, 80 belonged to the urban locality and 80 belonged to the rural locality. The present study has used random sampling technique. The researcher has used Environmental Ethics Scale which was constructed (2001) and revised (2016) by Dr. (Mrs.) Haseen Taj. This study has used simple percentage method, descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation as well as inferential statistics such as t test to analyze and interpret the data. The results revealed that the higher secondary students possessed average level of Environmental Ethics. Significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students was found with regard to gender but higher secondary students did not differ significantly in environmental ethics with regard to the locality.

Key words : Environmental ethics, Gender, Higher secondary students, Locality

Introduction

The unconstrained use of scientific and technological developments have given human beings a free hand in exploiting the natural resources without having respect for ecological considerations. This overexploitation has resulted in ecological imbalances and degradation of the environment. Moreover, excessive industrialization has resulted in various forms of environmental pollution. Untold harm is done through air and water pollution. Along with

Industrialization, urbanization also have resulted in deforestation, insanitation problem, problem of waste disposal, as well as scarcity of housing, potable water, acid rain, global warming etc. In fact, the overexploitation of natural resources for industrialization and urbanization has resulted in most of the environmental problems of global dimension. Therefore, in order to maintain and protect the environment, we should identify ourselves with nature so that we can develop an eco-friendly and sustainable lifestyle. Environmental ethics can develop at-

titude which is in favour of environmental conservation and protection.

In the modern globalized world of today, human beings should develop ethics for conserving the environment as the world suffers from serious environmental threats. 'Ethics' means moral code of conduct and it helps one to be judicious and differentiate between what is wrong or right. Environmental ethics influences large range of disciplines including law, sociology, theology, economics, ecology and geography. It relates to the relationship between humans and the environment and can be defined as a system of ethical values, human reasoning and knowledge of nature which endeavors to forge patterns of right conduct towards environment which are essential for fulfilling the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (McDonough and Broungart, 2002).

Environmental ethics is the scientific study of various issues relating to the rights of the individual with respect to the environment. It concerns itself with what human beings should do and what they should not do for environmental protection. Environmental ethics also concerns itself with ecological rights of all creatures present today as well as those which will follow on the earth. Environmental ethics provides guidance to an individual regarding how to behave with the environment.

Environmental Ethics not only seeks to evaluate past as well as present attitude and practices, but it also guides people as how they should conduct their relationship with the natural environment. Like for example, environmental ethicists discuss whether the natural environment can be exploited for human interests, or whether it has significance independent of any use which might be made of it, a value which should constrain certain practice (Magalingam, 2016)

Environmental ethics can be defined as the awareness and know-how of the variables as well as practices which are causing degradation of the environment. Therefore, it is the duty of each and every individual for preserving the scenic beauty and environmental values for future generations to come. Certain codes of conduct are essential for people to follow for keeping this precious gift intact and in its original form. The environmental values need to be institutionalized and embodied in societal practices so that there remains relationship of these values to currently accepted moral principles (Khitoliya,

2008).

Review of Related Literature

Thulassi and Ganapathy (2016) studied the environmental ethics of higher secondary students. The purpose was to assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students. The researchers employed the Normative Survey method. Three hundred higher secondary students of Puducherry were selected as sample for the study. Taj Environmental Ethics Scale (TEES) was used. SPSS (version-16) was used to analyze the data. The higher secondary students studying in Puducherry were found to possess average environmental ethics.

Another study was conducted in Vellore district by Vidhya (2016) for investigating the environmental ethics among the higher secondary students. The aim of this study was to assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu with respect to gender, locality of institution, type of institution, medium of instruction, parental qualification, residence of students, parental occupation as well as with their type of family. Random sampling technique was used by the researcher for selecting the sample. Analysis of the data was done by using Descriptive and Differential analysis. Taj Environmental Ethics Scale (TEES) was used by the researcher. With respect to locality of institution, parental qualification and residence of students, significant difference was found in the environmental ethics of higher secondary students. On the contrary, with respect to gender, type of institution, medium of instruction, parental occupation and type of family, no significant difference was found in environmental ethics of higher secondary students

Marie (2017) studied environmental ethics among higher secondary students of Chennai and found that the higher secondary students possessed average environmental ethics. With respect to subject of study, management of school and type of family, it was found that significant difference exists in the environmental ethics of higher secondary students. On the contrary, with respect to gender, it was found that no significant difference exists in the environmental ethics of higher secondary students.

Need of the Study

Each and every human being has right for a decent living, but today there are certain elements in environment which work against the attainment and

enjoyment of such a life. Incalculable misery is caused by the increasing pollution of environment. Human beings are suffering more because we have failed to show concern for the common good and our absence of responsibility and ethics for sustaining a balanced eco-system. If we aspire for a better quality of life- a life which ensures freedom from want, from disease and from fear itself, then all should work together to stop the toxification of this beautiful earth. Immediate concerted action of people is needed to defuse this environmental bomb but such action can come only when we reorient citizenry's values i.e., inculcating people with those attitudes and ethics, which helps to lead to a greater concern for maintaining balance in ecosystem, moreover teaching people how to protect from further environmental degradation and how to make the environment a more progressive place to live in, results from a strong sense of responsibility. Therefore, developing environmental ethics becomes important for every individual (Taj, 2016).

Higher Secondary education is an essential and terminal stage of school education as it opens the gate for higher education. After higher Secondary stage, students are introduced to the world of work. After completion of higher secondary education, students become more matured and cantake more informed decisions. Therefore, efforts need to be taken for imbibing environmental ethics among the higher secondary students because they are the future of the country and have huge potentialities to take actions for conserving the environment. Imbibing environmental ethics among the higher secondary students shall greatly help them in taking informed decisions and actions which are value oriented and would complement their awareness of the environment.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To assess the environmental ethics among the higher secondary students
- (2) To assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to gender.
- (3) To assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to locality.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in environ-

mental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to locality.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study is delimited to the higher secondary Schools of Kamrup district. It is also delimited to only class XII students studying under Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC)

Research Method: The present study has followed Descriptive research method. Descriptive research method play an essential role in understanding the present status of any situation, hence, the researcher has decided to use descriptive method for studying the understanding about environmental ethics among the higher secondary students of Kamrup district of Assam.

Sample: The sample of the study consisted of 160 students studying under Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) of class XII of Kamrup district of Assam. The sample consisted of 80 female and 80 male students. Out of 160 students, 80 belonged to the urban locality and 80 belonged to the rural locality.

Sampling Technique: In the present study the researcher has used Random sampling technique.

Tool Used: Environmental Ethics Scale which was constructed (2001) and revised (2016) by Dr. (Mrs.) Haseen Taj was used in the study. This scale consists 45 items and can be successfully used from 14 to 55 years age group of both sexes. For positive items, each item alternative is assigned a weight ranging from 3 (I absolutely agree) to 1 (I don't agree). Again for negative items, each item alternative is assigned a weight ranging from 1 (I absolutely agree) to 3 (I don't agree). The sum total of scores is the ethics score of an individual. 135 is the maximum score for this scale and 45 is the minimum possible score. After taking permission from the concerned head of the institution, the investigator administered the tool.

Statistical technique used: This study has used simple percentage method, descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics such as t test to analyze and interpret the data.

Analysis of objective 1

The first objective mentioned in the study is: To assess the environmental ethics among the higher secondary students.

For assessing the environmental ethics, classification of the higher secondary students were done on the basis of having High, Average and Low levels of Environmental Ethics (EE) after calculating their scores on the Environmental Ethics Scale. First, mean and standard deviation of the scores of higher secondary students were calculated by the researcher. Those higher secondary students, whose scores were between M+ s and M-s were classified as possessing Average Environmental Ethics. Students who scored below M-s were classified as possessing Low Environmental Ethics, and those who scored above M+s were classified as possessing High Environmental Ethics. So students whose scores were above 108 (94+14) can be said to possess high environmental ethics and those whose scores were less than 80 (94-14) can be said to possess low environmental ethics. Those who scores fall between 108 and 80 were said to possess average environmental ethics. The results have been given as follows

To test the hypothesis no.1 of the study 'There is no significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to their gender', at first mean and standard deviation for both female higher secondary students and male higher secondary students were computed separately and finally 't' value is computed and found to be 5 which is greater than 1.96 (at 0.05 level). Significant differences in environmental ethics of higher secondary students were found with respect to gender. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be concluded that there is significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with respect to their gender.

Female and male higher secondary students were found to differ significantly in environmental ethics. However, Vidhya (2016) found no significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students in Vellore district with regard to gender. Likewise, Marie (2017) also found no significant dif-

Table 1. Scores of Higher Secondary Students in Environmental Ethics Scale

High Environmental Ethics	Average Environmental Ethics	Low Environmental Ethics	Total
29	118	13	160
18.125%	73.75%	8.125%	100.0%

It can be seen from the table that majority (73.75%) of the students possessed average Environmental Ethics whereas only few of them (18.125%) possessed high Environmental Ethics and 8.125% possessed low Environmental Ethics. Therefore, it is revealed that majority of higher secondary students have average environmental ethics.

Analysis of objective 2

The second objective mentioned in the study is: *To assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to their gender.* To achieve this objective, the following null hypothesis was formulated; *There is no significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to their gender.* The result found on the basis of this objective is shown with the help of the following table.

ference in the environmental ethics of higher secondary students of Chennai with regard to gender

Analysis of objective 3

The third objective mentioned in the study is: *To assess the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to locality.* To achieve this objective, the following null hypothesis was formulated. *There is no significant difference in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with regard to locality.* The result found on the basis of this objective is shown with the help of the following table.

From Table 3 it is found that the number of students from urban locality is 80 and students from rural locality is 80 and the mean of urban and rural students is 94.2 and 94.02 respectively. The 't' value

Table 2. Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Ethics of Female and Male Higher Secondary Students

Variable Environmental Ethics	Gender						t-value	Interpretation
	Female			Male				
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.		
	80	95.56	15.63	80	92.66	12.65	5	Significant

Table 3. Mean, S.D and t- values of Environmental Ethics of Higher Secondary Students with respect to locality

Variable	Locality						t-value	Interpretation
	Urban			Rural				
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.		
Environmental Ethics	80	94.2	15.20	80	94.02	13.16	.30	Not Significant

is not significant at both 0.01 and 0.05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be rejected. So, no significant difference was found in environmental ethics of higher secondary students with respect to locality.

Urban and rural higher secondary students did not differ significantly in environmental ethics. On the contrary, Vidhya (2016) found urban and rural higher secondary students to differ significantly in the environmental ethics

Findings and suggestions

- The study revealed that majority of the higher secondary students possessed average environmental ethics whereas only few of them exhibited high and low environmental ethics which indicates that efforts should be constantly made for further inculcating environmental ethics among them. An eco-friendly attitude can only be developed by inculcating environmental ethics among them.
- Significant difference was found in the environmental ethics of higher secondary students with respect to gender. Male higher secondary students showed low environmental ethics among them in comparison to their female counterparts. Hence, male and female students were found to differ significantly in environmental ethics. Male higher secondary students should be provided guidance and counseling services for improving their environmental ethics.
- No significant difference was found in environmental ethics among higher secondary students with respect to locality. Urban and rural higher secondary students did not differ significantly in environmental ethics. Hence, environmental ethics was not affected by the locality of the students.

Conclusion

The earth itself is a heritage left to us by our ances-

tors, not only for our own use but also for the generations to come. So, everybody must be aware of the necessity to protect and conserve the environment and realize that human beings and environment are interdependent for their mutual survival and existence. Environment should become a major concern for the whole world. Inculcating environmental ethics among students would help them to realize their obligations towards the environment so that they can contribute significantly towards the conservation and protection of the environment. Thus, developing environmental ethics among students would not only make them aware about different issues of the environment and implications of their activities upon environment but can also help them to adopt environmentally ethical lifestyles.

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