

Environmental Ethics of Higher Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to find out the Environmental Ethics of higher secondary students. Normative survey methods were employed to conduct the study. A random sample of 500 Higher Secondary Students was selected and the Environmental Ethics test was used to collect the required information. The results of the study reveal that both of Environmental Ethics of the students are below average. The school students should be involved in Environmental programs. The participatory approach can be adapted to develop Environmental Ethics among the school students. A similar study can be undertaken by taking students studying at different levels of Education. Environmental Ethics of teachers working at different levels of Education can also be studied

Keywords: *Environmental Ethics, cognitive and affective integration- education, attitude, awareness, management.*

Introduction

Environmental Ethics is a branch of applied philosophy that studies the conceptual foundations of environmental values as well as more concrete issues surrounding societal attitudes, actions, and policies to protect and sustain biodiversity and ecological systems. As we will see, there are many different environmental ethics one could hold, running the gamut from human-centred views to more nature-centred perspectives. Non-anthropocentrists argue for the promotion of nature's intrinsic, rather than instrumental or use value to humans. For some ethicists and scientists, this attitude of respecting species and ecosystems for their own sake is a consequence of embracing an ecological worldview. It flows out of an understanding of the structure and function of ecological and evolutionary systems and processes. We will consider how newer scientific fields devoted to environmental protection such as conservation biology and sustainability science are thus often described as "normative" sciences that carry a commitment to the protection of species and ecosystems; again, either because of their intrinsic value or for their contribution to human wellbeing over the long run.

The relationship between environmental ethics and the environmental sciences, however, is

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a complex and often contested one. For example, debates over whether ecologists and conservation biologists should also be advocates for environmental protection, a role that goes beyond the traditional profile of the “objective” scientist, have received much attention in these fields. Likewise, we will see that issues such as the place of animal welfare concerns in wildlife management, the valuation and control of non-native species, and the adoption of a more interventionist approach to conservation and ecological protection frequently divide environmental scientists and conservationists. This split often has as much to do with different ethical convictions and values regarding our responsibility to species and ecosystems as it does with scientific disagreements over the interpretation of data or the predicted outcomes of societal actions and policies.

Need and Importance of the Present Study

The significance and need for implementing environmental studies as a tool to develop environmental ethics which can be achieved through the development of values, attitudes and environmental sensitivity. The investigator was highly motivated by the action taken by various agencies to protect environment and decided to study the higher secondary students’ environmental ethics.

Moreover, the location for the present study is Vellore where large scale conversion of fertile agricultural wet land for industrial purpose is taking place. The environmental friendly people have already started an agitation to stop the mass conversion of the agricultural land. The investigator decided to study the environmental ethics of the higher secondary students at this juncture.

Maneesh Verma and Varsha Weghmare (1994) state that “ignorance is an important cause of environmental damage and a serious impediment to findings solutions”. Therefore, the investigator strongly felt the need to study the Environmental Ethics of higher secondary students.

Meaning of the Term ‘Environmental Ethics’

Environmental Ethics refers to the responsibility to understand the environment consequences of our consumption, and need to recognize our individual and social responsibility to conserve natural resources and protect the earth for future generations.

Environmental Ethics is a field of applied ethics concerned with those issues that arise when human beings interact with the natural environment. It not only seeks to evaluate past and present attitude and practices, but aims to offer guidance as to how people ought to think about, and conduct, their relationship with the natural environment; for example, environmental ethicists debate whether the natural environment is simply an exploitable resource for human interests, or whether it has significance independent of any use that might be made of it, a value that ought to constrain certain practices.

Definitions of Terms

Environmental

Woodworth [2001] defines environment as, “The environment is everything that affects the individual except his genes. Environments cover all the outside factors that have acted on the

individual since he began life”.

Ethics

An ecological conscience or moral that reflects a commitment and responsibility toward the environment, including plants and animals as well as present and future.

Objectives of the Study

The investigator has conducted the present study with the following objectives.

1. To find out the environmental ethics of higher secondary' students.
2. To find out whether there is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of Male and Female students studying in higher secondary schools.
3. To find out whether there is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of higher secondary students studying in private and government schools.
4. To find out whether there is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of higher secondary students residing at Urban and Rural areas.

Hypotheses of the Study

In the light of the above, the following research hypotheses have been formulated:

1. The environmental ethics of higher secondary students is high.
2. There is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of Male and Female students studying higher secondary schools.
3. There is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of higher secondary students studying in private and government schools.
4. There is a significant difference between the environmental ethics of higher secondary students residing at Urban and Rural areas.

Methodology

Normative survey method was used to find out the Environmental Ethics of Higher Secondary students with respect to different Sub Samples.

Sample

The investigator has randomly selected 10 schools that differed in location, sex of the students etc. 500 students have been selected by random sampling from the seven schools.

Tools Used

1. Environmental Ethics Questionnaire standardized by **Haseen Taj**

Description of the Tool Used

The Environmental Ethics Science Questionnaire standardized by **Haseen Taj** has been used to measure the Environmental Ethics of Higher Secondary students. It includes 45 items, each one is followed by three responses viz. I - agree absolutely, II- slightly agree and III- don't agree. The subject is asked to indicate his or her response to the different statements. For

positive statements a score of 3 is given to **I agree absolutely response**, a score of 2 for **I slightly agree response**, a score of 1 for **I don't agree response**. For negative statements, the scoring is reversed. A subject can get a maximum score of 135. There is no time limit for completion of the form. However, it takes 20 to 30 minutes to complete the task. The reliability of the tool has been found out by the test retest method. It is found to be 0.76. The validity of the Environmental Ethics Science Questionnaire constructed by **Haseen Taj** has been ascertained by experts.

Descriptive Analysis

Table- 1: Mean and Standard Deviation for Environmental Ethics Scores of Higher Secondary Students

| Number | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| 500 | 135 | 112.52 | 16.00 |

One of the important objectives of the present study is to find out the environmental ethics of higher secondary students. The mean and standard deviation of the total group are 112.52 and 16.00 (Table -1). It may be remembered that a student can get a maximum score of 135. The mean value is more than the mid score of 67.50. So it can be concluded that the environmental ethics of higher secondary students is high.

Differential Analysis

Table – 2: Mean and Standard Deviation for Environmental Ethics Scores of Male and Female Higher Secondary Students

| Sub Sample | Number | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------------|--------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Male | 160 | 135 | 120.80 | 19.84 |
| Female | 340 | 135 | 108.99 | 12.52 |

To sum up the following conclusion is reached in respect of the hypothesis formulated under objective 4 at the beginning of the study. The mean and standard deviation of the environmental ethics scores of male students studying in higher secondary schools are found to be 120.80 and 19.84 and female students are found to be 108.99 and 12.52 (Table 4.13). A student can get a maximum scores of 135. So, it can be concluded, that the environmental ethics of male and female students is high.

Table -3: Mean and Standard Deviation for Environmental Ethics Scores of Higher Secondary Students Studying in Private and Government Schools

| Sub -Sample | Number | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------|--------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| Private | 340 | 135 | 108.99 | 12.52 |
| Government | 160 | 135 | 120.80 | 19.84 |