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Assessing Environmental Ethics Among Postgraduate Students: A Comparative Study Of Gender And Academic Discipline In Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal, India.

Bipul Kanti Bhunia**Abstract**

Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy that discusses the moral relationship between human and the natural environment, develops moral arguments for sustainable use of natural entities and resources, and explores the responsibilities of human to other organisms and ecosystems. Given the severe environmental threats facing the globe today, it is imperative to inculcate a sense of ethics for the preservation of the human environment. The objective of this study was to compare the knowledge of environmental ethics among science-arts & male-female postgraduate students of Midnapore district. Descriptive research design is used for this study. 132 students are selected as sample size and the responses of the students have collected using systematic random sampling. In this study analysis was done using some statistical techniques such as t-test, SD, Mean. The finding of the study revealed that there is significant difference in environmental ethics among post graduate student of West Midnapore district in terms of gender & discipline. That is, there is a similar concept of environmental ethics among the post graduate students of West Midnapore district, similarly there is a concept between arts & science discipline.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Post graduate student, Discipline, Science, Arts, Gender. Ecocentrism

Introduction

Environment can be defined as a sum total of all the living and non-living elements and their effects that influence human life. While all living or biotic elements are animals, plants, forests and birds, non-living or abiotic elements include water, land, sunlight, rocks, and air.

The definition of environmental ethics explains that it's a subcategory of ethics about how humans value, and relate, to the environment include to the non-human species that live there. While environmental ethics, as an academic field, emerged after the industrial revolution began to negatively impact the environment through improper use of natural resource, humans have been taking about their relationship with nature even before agriculture was developed. There are two warring viewpoints in environmental ethics. Anthropocentric ethicists believe that human interests should be considered before natural interests. Eco centric ethicists find intrinsic value in nature's existence, and believe that destroying it is wrong even through its non-human. Environmental ethics offers brief yet wide ranging introduction to issues of environmental ethics and major schools of thought in the field. A discussion of basic concepts in ethical theory in part-1 is followed by an application of these thoughts across a variety of major environmental problems (Such as pollution, population, animals) in part-2. Part-3 introduces students to the major theories of environmental ethics in particular (including bio centric, eco centric and the land ethics). The final chapter offers a pragmatic approach to reconciling philosophical perspectives as a mean to making progress in solving environmental problems. Joseph R Des Jardins, engage Learning, 2013.

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The quality of human life is closely tied to the quality of the environment. Humans have significantly altered their surroundings, often relying heavily on natural resources like soil, air, water, and photosynthesis despite the proliferation of artificial environments. Just as minds and bodies are interconnected, culture and environment are inherently linked. Consequently, ethics must be applied to environmental contexts, addressing human behavior and the choices that fall within the ethical domain of human capacity (Vidhyak, 2016).

From an environmental perspective, human interactions with nature and the resulting conduct are subject to ethical scrutiny. Environmental ethics involves a critical reflection on norms, values, and moral principles widely accepted in society (Purnomo & Kurniawan, 2021). Nature is currently experiencing a severe crisis, much of which is due to human behavior. People often act unethically toward the natural world, distancing themselves from it. This separation, viewing nature as mere physical matter, leads to unsustainable exploitation and endangers the survival of various species. Sustainable economic progress requires a harmonious relationship with the environment (Heruyono et al., 2021). Addressing large-scale environmental issues at a global level requires the integration of ethics and educational sciences. Ethical approaches enhance the principles crucial for problem-solving, making them effective in influencing educational practices. The emergence of diverse viewpoints on environmental issues has led to a range of environmental perspectives, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of environmental protection (Yalmance, 2015). Ethics provides a foundational framework for addressing environmental issues and offering recommendations for protection, making it a crucial concept in environmental problem-solving (Tozdan & Keles, 2022).

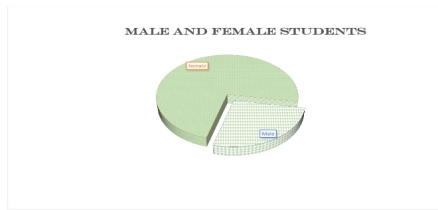
Literature Review

Zuale et al. (2024) conducted a study on environmental ethics and attitudes towards environmental protection among undergraduate students in Mizoram. The objectives included comparing environmental ethics knowledge levels among students and analyzing environmental protection knowledge by gender. The study, which involved 900 male and female students, used quantitative and qualitative analyses. Techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and t-test were employed. The results showed a significant correlation between environmental ethics and attitudes towards environmental protection among undergraduate students. Keles and Ozer (2016) explored pre-service science teachers' awareness of environmental ethics, focusing on different variables. Using a cluster sampling method and an "Environmental Ethics Awareness Scale" developed by the researchers, the study employed t-test and ANOVA for data analysis. The findings revealed that pre-service science teachers had significantly higher environmental awareness, with female teachers showing greater awareness than their male

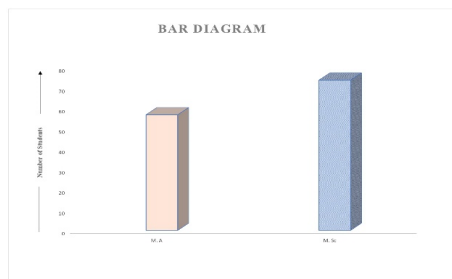
counterparts. Qiong Liu. Et al (2018) studied about applying virtual reality to study the effect of environmental education on college students' ethics and environmental literacy. The main purpose of this study is to establish a mutual relationship between people and the environment which will solve environmental problems. Experimental research method was used in these study & 360 students were selected as a sample. The data was collected through questionnaire. As a result of research, significant relationship is observed between environmental education and environmental ethics, environmental ethics and environmental literacy, environmental education and environmental literacy.

Rani and Singh (2018) examined environmental attitudes among college students, focusing on dimensions such as health and hygiene, wildlife, forests, population explosion, and pollution. They utilized an environmental ethics scale developed by Haseen Taj (2001). The study revealed a positive correlation between environmental ethics and environmental attitudes, indicating that environmental ethics were positively associated with various dimensions of environmental attitudes. Singh et al. (2023) explored sustainable habits and attitudes towards environmental ethics among undergraduate students in Prayag raj district. The study focused on the environmental ethics of urban and rural undergraduate students, using a sample of 600 students selected through random sampling. An environmental ethics scale revised by Haseen Taj (2021) was used as a tool. The findings suggested that environmental ethics play a crucial role in raising awareness about environmental behavior.

V. Sankar, & Dr D. P. Saravanan. (2022) studied about environmental ethics & awareness among B. Ed trains in Villupuram district, a study aimed to determine the level and relationship between environmental awareness and environmental ethics among B. Ed students. The study involved 300 students and used statistical calculations like mean, standard deviation, t-test, and coefficient correlation. Tools such as Haseen Taj's and Vipin Der Nagra's scales were used. The findings indicated that environmental ethics awareness levels varied among B. Ed students, showing a positive relationship between environmental ethics and environmental awareness. Vidhya, K (2016). Studied about environmental ethics among the higher secondary students In Vellore district, a study involving 300 higher secondary school students examined the significant differences in environmental ethics based on variables such as locality, type of institution, parental qualification, and occupation. Random sampling techniques and statistical methods like SPSS, t-test, and ANOVA were used. The study found no significant differences in environmental ethics concerning gender, parental occupation, and qualification but observed differences based on residence and urban-rural areas

Fig.1 Male & female student presented

The above pie chart presents the total sample size of the research, male and female students. It is also being observed that the statistics of female students are much higher than that of male students. According to statistic, the total sample size of male students is 34 and female students are 97.

Fig.2 The figure showing an M. A and M. Sc student

The bar graph presented above illustrates the M. A and M. Sc students comprising the total sample size of the research. The figure shows the relative differences between M. A and M. Sc students. That is, in comparative terms, the total sample size of M. Sc students is higher than that of M. A student.

Method & Methodology

Descriptive research design used in this study. The study was quantitative nature. Total sample size 131 postgraduate students. 131 post graduate students were selected through systematic random sampling. Questionnaire was used as a tool in this study. The type of questioner in this study was a closed ended question. In this study analysis was done using some statistical techniques such as t-test, SD, Mean. Microsoft excel has also been used for this study work.

Study Area

In this study focused on environmental ethic among post graduates' students of M. A, M. SC and male-female in West Medinipur district. The post graduate institutes selected in West Midnapur district is Vidyasagar University. It is situated with in the Midnapur Sadar Community Development Block. This study attempted to understand the environmental attitudes, awareness, and ethical issues of post graduate students.

Research Question

- What is the overall environmental ethics among post graduate level students in Paschim Medinipur district.
- Are there any environmental ethics differences between male and female students in Paschim Medinipur district.
- Are there gender differences in environmental policies among post graduate student in Paschim Medinipur district.

Research Deign

Descriptive research design in used for this study. The study was quantitative nature.

Study and Population

A research population is also, known as well-defined collection of individuals or objectives known to have similar characterize. All individuals or objects within a certain population usually have a common binding characteristics or traits. In this study, students of post graduate level science and arts department have been selected as population.

Sample of the Study

In this study, 131 post graduate students from West Midnapur district were used as the sample. In this study post graduate institute selection has been done using convenience sampling. The responses of the students have collected using systematic random sampling.

Tools

The questionnaire was used as a tool for this study. my dissertation work. The research questionnaire type is closed ended question. The questionnaire has 50 questions and they are in statement format. Answers to the statements of the questionnaire were accepted from the students in three ways namely agree, undecided and disagree. Self-development questionnaire environmental ethics scale has been used for this study. The questionnaire has been developed on dimension like anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, intervention responses stability, environmental sustainability commitment etc.

Major Finding & Discussion

The study is based on two main hypotheses. On of the two hypotheses is that there is no significance difference in environmental ethics between male and female post graduate students and the other hypotheses is that there is no significant difference in environmental ethics between post graduate student in science and arts. Also, the purpose of this study is to compare the environmental ethics among male-female and science-arts post graduate student.

The present study, conducted among postgraduate students of Paschim Medinipur and affiliated institutions under Vidyasagar University, reveals several significant insights into the environmental ethics of young scholars. The findings are discussed below in detail:

1. Overall Level of Environmental Ethics

The overall environmental ethics score of postgraduate students indicates a moderately high level of ethical awareness toward environmental protection and sustainability. Most respondents demonstrated agreement

with statements related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, pollution control, and intergenerational responsibility. However, while awareness levels were relatively strong, behavioral commitment (such as consistent eco-friendly practices) showed moderate variation. This suggests that cognitive understanding of environmental issues does not always translate into consistent pro-environmental behavior.

2. Gender-Based Differences

One of the most prominent findings of the study is the significant difference in environmental ethics between male and female students. Female students recorded higher mean scores across all dimensions—environmental responsibility, ecocentrism, and sustainable behavior.

This finding may be interpreted through socialization theory, which suggests that women are often nurtured with values of care, empathy, and responsibility. Female students expressed stronger moral concern regarding climate change, deforestation, and water conservation. They also showed greater willingness to participate in environmental campaigns and green initiatives.

Male students, while demonstrating awareness, displayed comparatively lower engagement in ethical action-oriented responses. The difference indicates the need for gender-sensitive environmental engagement programs that encourage balanced participation.

3. Discipline-Wise Variation

The study also reveals significant variation across academic disciplines. Science students scored highest in environmental ethics, followed by Arts students, while Commerce students recorded comparatively lower scores.

Science students' higher scores may be attributed to their direct exposure to environmental science subjects, laboratory work, and research-based understanding of ecological systems. Their academic curriculum likely enhances ecological literacy and scientific awareness of environmental degradation.

Arts students demonstrated moderate ethical orientation, often expressing strong philosophical and social perspectives on environmental justice and sustainability. Commerce students, however, showed relatively lower ecocentric values, possibly reflecting curriculum emphasis on economic growth, market systems, and profit-oriented frameworks. This highlights the importance of integrating sustainability and environmental ethics modules into commerce and management education.

Conclusion

The present study on “*Assessing Environmental Ethics among Postgraduate Students: A Comparative Study of Gender and Academic Discipline in Paschim Medinipur*” provides significant insights into the ethical orientation of young scholars toward environmental sustainability. Conducted among postgraduate students of institutions affiliated with Vidyasagar University in Paschim

Medinipur, the research highlights the growing awareness of environmental issues among higher education students, while also revealing important variations based on gender and academic discipline.

The findings demonstrate that postgraduate students generally possess a moderate to high level of environmental ethics. They show awareness regarding biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and intergenerational responsibility. However, the study also identifies a gap between environmental awareness and consistent pro-environmental behavior, indicating that ethical understanding does not always translate into practical action.

Gender emerged as a significant determinant of environmental ethics. Female students exhibited stronger ecocentric values, moral responsibility, and sustainable behavioral intentions compared to male students. This suggests that ethical sensitivity and care-oriented perspectives may positively influence environmental concern. Academic discipline also played a crucial role, with science students demonstrating the highest environmental ethics scores, followed by arts students, while commerce students showed comparatively lower ethical orientation toward ecological sustainability.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating environmental ethics across all academic disciplines rather than limiting it to science-based curricula. Higher education institutions must adopt interdisciplinary approaches, encourage experiential learning, and implement green campus initiatives to bridge the gap between awareness and action. Environmental ethics education should aim not only at knowledge dissemination but also at fostering moral commitment and responsible citizenship.

In the broader context of regional development in Paschim Medinipur, cultivating environmentally ethical graduates is essential for sustainable progress. Postgraduate students represent future leaders, policymakers, educators, and professionals whose ethical orientation will influence environmental governance and community practices. Therefore, strengthening environmental ethics in higher education is not merely an academic necessity but a social and ecological imperative for long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, the study reaffirms that environmental ethics among postgraduate students is shaped by socio-cultural and academic factors, and systematic educational interventions are essential to promote a holistic, action-oriented environmental consciousness.

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