

## Perception of College Professors on Ethics

Karuppusamy. R<sup>1</sup> and K. Narayanan<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *Teaching is one of the noblest jobs and the responsibility of grooming up responsible future citizens of India is in the hands of Professors. Usually they engage in teaching, research and other institutional activities all through their career. It is expected that they should hold high standards of ethics in performing their duties. It is also an inbound duty of professors to supervise wards, teach them the content of the course curriculum, direct them in their studies and evaluate them periodically based on their performance and promptly rectify their mistakes in the case violation of generally accepted norms. The reputation of an academic institution largely depends on the significant behavior of the Professors. Previous studies have shown that teaching norms are informally defined and poorly observed in the colleges. Increase in violation of Code of Ethics to be followed is due to lack of awareness and improper understanding of ethics. Earlier researches also proved that professors are one of the keen factors that influence the moral standards and ethical behavior of students. In other words, the quality of academicians must improve to achieve the aim of producing responsible citizens in India. One way to address the quality of Professors is by discussing their perceptions on ethical behavior situational questions. This paper discusses the results of samples collected in 9 main institutions in Puducherry only (covering 170 samples). The focus is on certain ethical situations cum behavior and professors' perceptions about the same. The results reveal that most of the situations discussed are unethical from the professors' point of view and there is generally NO demographic association between questions on ethical situations and related professors' perceptions. It is also evident that both 'institutions' and 'individuals' have a binding influence on one another.*

**Keywords:** Ethics, Norms, Noble, Code of Ethics, Demographic, Binding

### Introduction

Ethics is defined as something relating to morals, treating of moral questions, morally correct and honorable... (OUP, 2011). As a discipline, it is concerned about in our action is moral or immoral, good or bad, acceptable and unacceptable (Colnerud, 1997; Dika and Hamiti, 2011; Soloman, 1984). All these definitions mainly revolve around daily routines of an individual. As such, every profession is directly related to all ethical issues, codes of conduct, rules and regulations which need to be followed by the members of the profession. Even though all these regulations turn futile, still some unethical issues arise occasionally in most educational institutions. In this process, Professors' behavior affects students either in a positive or negative

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor of Commerce, Kanchi Mamunivar Centre for PG Studies, Puducherry.

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India & Asst. Professor of Commerce, Rajiv Gandhi Arts and Science College, Thavalakuppam, Puducherry.

Corresponding author: Karuppusamy. R can be contacted at: rkaruppusamy2011@gmail.com

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way. Educators prepare members of the future society not only for its structural functioning but also to be guarded by students who can remove the various bottlenecks that tend to retard the nation growth. In this regard Professors play roles as teachers, supervisors, evaluators, screeners, certifiers etc. and help their students gain knowledge, develop their skills, learn values and acquire attitudes necessary for understanding the self. During that process, Professor-Student relationships and interactions become more substantial in higher education context. The present study makes an attempt to identify the perception of college professors on ethics and limit is confined to nine institutions in Puducherry region only.

### **Literature Review**

In a study by H. Shamina, Impact of Job satisfaction on Professional Commitment is widely shown to be a precursor of educators' performance. Dimensions of job satisfaction namely work itself, supervision, pay, co-workers and promotion opportunities are taken as variables for the study. About 250 teachers in self financing colleges were chosen and simple random test was used to collect data through a structured questionnaire. Inter correlation matrix, t test, ANNOVA and regression were carried out to analyze the data. Findings show that teachers have high degree of job satisfaction and Professional commitment. Morgan and Korschgen researched the differences in professors' and students' perceptions of unethical faculty behavior. A group of faculty and students responded to a survey that included 16 items relating to faculty behavior. The result of the survey showed that the faculty perceived that gaining popularity by assigning easy exams or accepting textbook rebates was more unethical compared to student perception. In contrast, students considered that faculty's failure to update their notes to be more unethical compared to faculty. Robie and Kidwell surveyed business faculty at accredited colleges in the US to get perceptions of unethical behavior with regard to undergraduate instructions. The study considered course content, student evaluation, educational environment, disrespectful behavior, financial transactions, and student-faculty relationships as variables. Results of the investigation showed that females' ethical perceptions differed considerably from that of males on three categories, and older participants differed from younger ones on seven behaviors. Also, the status of a faculty with regard to tenure affected the survey results on three behavioral categories. Heather Louise Moore, East Tennessee University researched to understand the relationship between the perceived ethical climate, the organizational commitment and the job satisfaction of full time faculty members. For this study, subjects were limited to full time faculty members of 4 targeted institutions of North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. The results show a positive relationship ethical climate, organization commitment and related to the overall job satisfaction of the faculty members.

### **Statement of Problem**

Higher education institutions role is to produce dependable graduates who will become the responsible citizens of the society and hence to the nation. This purely depends on the academicians who play a key role in giving a professional behavior for the students. Hence it is necessary to have a close watch of ethical behavior situation questions to have meaningful answers. As such, professors' actions are being observed by students, who will replicate the same, as they are being considered as forerunner. If the professors are in a position to teach ethics, it is really necessary that professors practice the same. More is the responsibility with the institution itself which expects the right conduct and moral development of students. Unethical actions are those that are against the academic rules or code of conduct or all that which bring

negative impact on students directly or indirectly. In the recent past, so many Professors who even chaired in a higher position in the University/College levels have been dispelled from the institution for various reasons including unethical conduct like intimate relationship among Professors and students, plagiarism etc. Teaching is predominant with ethical dilemma and research in this area seems to be grey and there is an urgency to do research involved in teaching and Professors-Students interactions. The present study makes an attempt to identify the perception of Professors on ethics in Pondicherry region fairly considering all Government, Private, Society Arts and Science Colleges in Puducherry only.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives have been established to accomplish the aim of the study

1. To identify the Professors' perceptions on ethics in academics and in professor- student interactions
2. To identify demographic factors that influence the perceptions
3. To study the Professors' action that influence institution ethics or vice versa
4. To establish Professors' tendency of performing unethical actions

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on ethics in academics and professor-student interactions. Academics refer to activities including teaching, conducting research, professor-student interactions and participation in Conference or Seminars. Perceptions would be obtained from all levels in teaching collegiate education viz. Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors from around 09 colleges [including Government, Private and Society run colleges] in Puducherry region alone namely:

1. KanchiMamunivar Center for Post Graduate Studies [KMCPGS]
2. Tagore Arts College [TAC]
3. Bharathidasan Government College for Women [BGCW]
4. Rajiv Gandhi College Arts & Science College [RGASC]
5. PerunthalaivarKamarajar Government Arts and Science College (PKGASC)
6. RAAK Arts and Science College
7. SaradhaGandhadaran Arts and Science College
8. Achariya Arts & Science College and
9. Idhaya College of Arts and Science for Women

With a total of about 690 teaching cadres from all these institutions, a sample of 25% that is 170 professors would be taken up for the study.

### **Limitations**

The study is limited to only teaching staff from the 09 institutions in Puducherry alone listed above namely KMCPGS, TAC, BGCW, RGASC, PKGASC, RAAK Arts and Science College, Achariya Arts & Science College, SaradhaGangadharan Arts and Science College, Idhaya College of Arts and Science for Women and does not include any Engineering or other stream Professors.

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### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between ethical situations and students who studied ethics as one of the subjects
2. There is no association between gender and ethical situations
3. Institutions where the Professors are employed do not have relationship with the ethical situations

### Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire was developed to determine the perception of ethics of Professors in 09 higher education learning institutions from Puducherry region only.

- The first section was designed to collect general information of participants which included personal data and socio-demographic profiles that include Gender, Institution where they are employed, whether they have studied/taken ethics as one of the subjects/courses etc.
- The second section of questionnaire would have some eleven ethical questions on ethical behaviors in academics and professor-student interactions which would be measured on a 5 point Likert scale.
- The third section deals with the mutual impact and role of University and Professors on each other in emphasizing ethical positions.
- The last section of the questionnaire consists of five items on ethical behavioral actions and Professors were enquired whether they have committed any of them. The data was collected based on simple random sampling method from about 170 out of 690 professors from the above said institutions.

The statistical tools used in this study include Percentages, Frequencies and Chi-square test, using SPSS.

### Analysis and Results

In the following paragraphs, the report on primary data that includes the questionnaire collected among 170 professors from 9 institutions and the respective views is presented in a tabular form. The study was conducted to look at the perception of these samples on professors' ethical situations and behavior and was used to find the factors that influence their perception. This study also earmarked the ethical actions that influence the individual and institution and vice versa. The professors' tendency of performing unethical actions was also studied.

**Table 1: Perception of Professors on Ethics**

S. No.	Perception of Professors on Ethics	No. of respondents (in percentage)		
		Ethical	Unethical	NO opinion
1	Students assistance for personal work	8%	88%	4%
2	Students assistance for official work related	39%	49%	12%
3	Inappropriately giving a student co-authorship in publication	17%	68%	15%
4	Not including the students as co-author in publication when they have contributed substantially	7%	81%	12%
5	Under-utilization of valuable resources for the betterment of students	39%	56%	5%

6	Using college resources for personal use	5%	83%	12%
7	Following outdated notes without updating	4%	89%	7%
8	Accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book	19%	57%	24%
9	Having an intimate relationship with students	19%	56%	25%
10	Doing personal activities during office hours	6%	85%	9%
11	Giving good marks to students based on personality	13%	79%	8%

In Table 1, for the ethical behavior questions, most of the votes cast for the questions have been found unethical from the view point of Professors. An overwhelming response in the ratio of 80:20 for unethical and ethical action in the case of students' assistance for personal work, not including the students as co-author in publication when they have contributed substantially, using college resources for personal use, following outdated notes without updating, doing personal activities during office hours and giving good marks to students based on personality is seen. 40% of the participants responded that students assistance for official work related is 'ethical'. It is also evident that 25% of the respondents are in the stand of 'NO opinion' in the ethical question of having intimate relationship with students.

**Table 2: Studied/Taken Ethics as one of the subjects/course**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	67	39.4%
No	103	60.6%
Total	175	100%

From Table 2, it is noticed that 39.4% of the respondents have studied/taken ethics as one of the subjects/courses and 60.6% of the respondents have not studied/taken as ethics as one of the subjects/courses.

**Table 3: Perception of Professors Vs Students studying Ethics as one of the subjects**

S. No.	Perception of Professors on Ethics Vs Students studying Ethics as one of the subjects	Significant value	Result
1	Students assistance for personal work	0.160	No association between (i) and (ii)
2	Students assistance for official work related	0.284	No association between (i) and (ii)
3	Inappropriately giving a student co-authorship in publication	0.110	No association between (i) and (ii)
4	Not including the students as co-author in publication when they have contributed substantially	0.518	No association between (i) and (ii)
5	Under- utilization of valuable resources for the betterment of students	0.373	No association between (i) and (ii)
6	Using college resources for personal use	0.561	No association between

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			(i) and (ii)
7	Following outdated notes without updating	0.967	No association between (i) and (ii)
8	Accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book	0.083	No association between (i) and (ii)
9	Having an intimate relationship with co-students	0.108	No association between (i) and (ii)
10	Doing personal activities during office hours	0.802	No association between (i) and (ii)
11	Giving good marks to students based on personality	0.599	No association between (i) and (ii)

From the Table 3, it is concluded that there is NO association between perception of Professors and Professors who have studied/taken Ethics as one of the subjects/courses.

**Table 4: Gender Distribution-Frequency and Percentage**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	73	41.7%
Female	97	55.3%
Total	175	100%

From Table 4, it is observed that 41.7% of the respondents were male and 55.3% were female. Female respondents were more than the male counterparts.

**Table 5: Perception of Professors on Ethics Vs Gender**

S.No.	Perception of Professors on Ethics Vs Gender	Significant value	Result
1	Students assistance for personal work	0.119	No association between (i) and (ii)
2	Students assistance for official work related	0.448	No association between (i) and (ii)
3	Inappropriately giving a student as co-authorship in publication	0.003	<b>Association between (i) and (ii)</b>
4	Not including the students as co-author in publication when they have contributed substantially	0.432	No association between (i) and (ii)
5	Under- utilization of valuable resources for the betterment of students	0.138	No association between (i) and (ii)
6	Using college resources for personal use	0.332	No association between (i) and (ii)
7	Following outdated notes, without updating	0.004	<b>Association between (i) and (ii)</b>
8	Accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book	0.030	<b>Association between (i) and (ii)</b>
9	Having an intimate relationship with co-students	0.552	No association between (i) and (ii)

10	Doing personal activities during office hours	0.116	No association between (i) and (ii)
11	Giving good marks to students based on personality	0.224	No association between (i) and (ii)

From Table 5, it is inferred that there is NO association between perception of Professors on Ethics and the Gender on most concerns except that on issues like - Inappropriately giving a student co-authorship in publication, following outdated notes without updating, accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text books etc.

**Table 6: Professors' Institution and Frequency Distribution of Samples**

S. No.	Institution Name	Frequency	Percentage of Professors
1	KanchiMamunivar Centre for Post Graduate Studies (KMCPGS)	10	5.89%
2	Tagore Arts College (TAC)	10	5.89%
3	Bharathidasan Government College for Women (BGCW)	10	5.89%
4	Rajiv Gandhi Arts & Science College (RGASC)	30	17.64%
5	PerunthalaivarKamarajar Government Arts and Science College(PKGASC)	10	5.89%
6	RAAK Arts and Science College	25	14.70%
7	Achariya Arts & Science College	25	14.70%
8	SaradhaGangadharan Arts and Science College	25	14.70%
9	Idhaya College of Arts and Science for Women	25	14.70%
	<b>Total</b>	170	100

From Table 6, it is observed that 14.70% of Professors were equally contributed from all private colleges in Puducherry, 5.89 % Professors were contributed from all Government colleges and a large portion about 17.64% Professors were contributed from Rajiv Gandhi Arts & Science College.

**Table 7: Perception of Professors Vs Institution where they were employed**

S. No.	Perception of Professors on Ethics Vs Institution where they were employed	Significant value	Result
1	Students assistance for personal work	0.770	No association between (i) and (ii)
2	Students assistance for official work related	0.080	No association between (i) and (ii)
3	Inappropriately giving a student co-authorship in publication	0.133	No association between (i) and (ii)
4	Not including the students as co-author in publication when they have contributed substantially	0.561	No association between (i) and (ii)
5	Under- utilization of valuable resources for the betterment of students	0.262	No association between (i) and (ii)
6	Using college resources for personal use	0.529	No association between (i) and (ii)
7	Following outdated notes, without updating	0.066	No association between (i) and (ii)

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8	Accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book	0.006	<b>Association between (i) and (ii)</b>
9	Having an intimate relationship with co-students	0.114	No association between (i) and (ii)
10	Doing personal activities during office hours	0.384	No association between (i) and (ii)
11	Giving good marks to students based on personality	0.019	<b>Association between (i) and (ii)</b>

From Table 7, it is inferred that there is NO association between perception of Professors on Ethics and the institution where they were employed on most of the concerns **except** that on factors like accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book and giving good marks to students based on personality.

**Table 8: Professors Action Can Influence the Overall Impact on How Ethical the Institution Must Be**

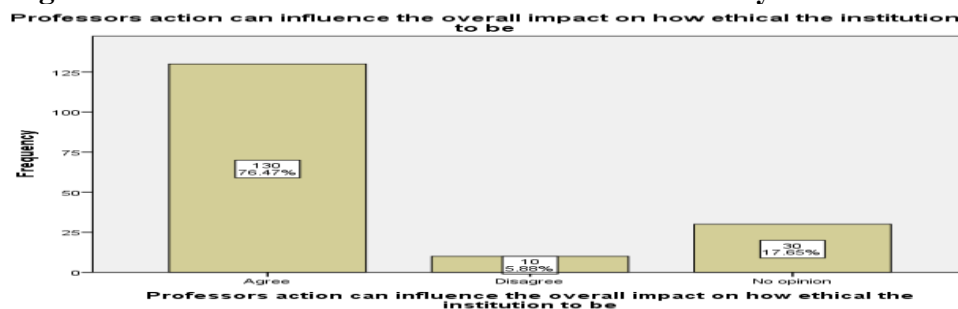
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Agree</b>	130	76.5	76.5	76.5
<b>Disagree</b>	10	5.9	5.9	82.4
<b>No opinion</b>	30	17.6	17.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	170	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9: Institutional Ethical Practice Will Influence the Personal Ethical Values**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Agree</b>	109	64.1	64.1	64.1
<b>Disagree</b>	27	15.9	15.9	80.0
<b>No opinion</b>	34	20.0	20.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	170	100.0	100.0	

From Table 8 and Table 9, it is inferred that more than 75% of the sample results show that the Professors action will strongly influence how the institution must be, while only 64% of the Professors believe that Institutional ethical practices will influence their personal ethical values. As a whole both will influence each other.

**Figure 1: Influence of Professor's behavior on ethicality of institution**



**Figure 2: Influence of Ethicality of Institution on Personal Values**



The two discussions namely how professors’ action can influence the overall impact of ethical behavior of the institution and how institutional ethical practices can influence one’s personal ethical values can be represented graphically as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

**Table 10: Perception on Professors Ethical Behavior**

S. No.	Situation Question	No. of respondents and in (%)			
		Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never
1	Giving easy question paper to get good results	5(2.9)	14(8.2)	77(45.3)	74(43.5)
2	Teaching only those subjects on which faculty have knowledge before	60(35.3)	50(29.4)	47(27.6)	13(7.6)
3	Neglecting institutional responsibilities	2(1.2)	5(2.9)	34(20.0)	129(75.9)
4	Have you been dispelled from college due to breach of ethical conduct?	1(.6)	6(3.5)	25(14.7)	138(81.2)
5	Whether the behavior of students obstruct the discharge of Professor duties	20(11.8)	15(8.8)	71(41.8)	64(37.6)

- More than 75% of Professors were never dispelled from the college due to breach of unethical acts and also they have never neglected the institutional responsibilities assigned to them
- It is also pragmatic that 35.3% of the Professors assert that they will always handle only the subjects on which they have more knowledge or handled many times before
- 45.3% professors have been identified to give easy question papers for students to get good results
- 41.8% of professors believe that occasionally, behavior of the students obstruct the discharge of their duties

Professors on the above grounds substantiate that their actions are ethical though it is not and always find alternative/reasons explanations to establish what they do is right.

## Conclusion

### Findings

In general, the study has achieved its objectives viz., it has identified the professors’ perception with regard to ethical questions in academics and in Professor-Student interactions. The study has also examined differences in perceptions with demographic influences. Additionally, it has

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also marked whether the professors action influence the overall impact of how ethical the institution should be and if institutional ethical practices would influence their own personal values. Furthermore, the tendency of professors towards unethical acts has also been examined and the reasons for the same have been noted.

As from the study,

- The ethical behavior questions seem mostly unethical and around 40% of the professors believe that getting students' assistance for official work is ethical
- Gender, Institution of employment, studying Ethics as one of the subjects are found to be demographic factors
- As far as the Professors studied/taken ethics as one of the subjects, there is no association between perception of professors' ethical question and ethics as one of the subjects
- With regard to Gender influence, there is no association between 'perception of Professors on Ethics' and 'Gender' except on factors like Inappropriately giving a student as co-authorship in publication, Following outdated notes without updating, Accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book
- Here male and female gender have some association may be on the same professional cadre. Also the association between the 'perceptions of professors' ethical situation questions' and the institution where they are employed, there is NO association between both except that on issues like accepting publisher's monetary rebate for adopting publisher text book and giving good marks to students based on personality. Here the association could be due to correlation among all the private colleges/ Government colleges

It is generally observed that individual's ethical action influences the impact on the institution as also the institution's ethical action has an influence on the individual's personal values but at a lower rate than the former. With regard to identifying the professors' tendency to unethical behaviors, it is evident from the result that professors always handle easy subjects and often give easy question paper for students to get good result and reason seems to be action is ethical and forced to such action and no choice for them to act ethically.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions**

This study has outlined the following recommendations in improving the ethical awareness, ethical perceptions and hence the ethical climate of a University/College. Professors and University/College have to seriously play their role in promoting ethics and code of ethics is just inadequate. There should be effective monitoring of professors conduct for personal and professional development. An Ethics related committee has to be established to act as mentor for the students. There should be frequent reinforcement and punishment in case of violations wherever it might be. They should develop and communicate ethical values through ethics based seminar, training and colloquium. University/College should arrange for frequent personal and professional development programs for all those concerned. Faculty handbook/manual should be given stating their responsibilities and obligations to the institution, students and to the society. The curriculum must emphasize on integrating ethics as one of the compulsory subjects to be taught. Code of ethics must be a part of the academic calendar and clear guidelines should be given when ethical concern arises.

### Scope for Further Studies

The present research has been confined to Professors of Arts and Science colleges selectively nine institution from Puducherry alone. This can be extended to the whole of Puducherry region including the Professors category of all other disciplines like Law, Engineering from the Graduation level. This study merely investigates the respondent's perception on ethical behaviors. Future researches may go a stage further by also looking at their ethical judgments as well as ethical intentions. The scope is a broad factor and can be magnified as required and also solutions may be sought to establish the thought of Ethics wherever needed.

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