



Perception of Prospective Teachers towards Ethical Issues in Using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of digital platforms in education has reshaped the teaching-learning environment by providing improved access, facilitating online collaboration, and offering flexible instructional strategies. At the same time, the emerging dependence on digital tools has raised several ethical concerns regarding data privacy, digital surveillance, cybersecurity, academic integrity, and equity of access. This study examines the perceptions of prospective teachers towards the ethical issues they have encountered while utilising digital platforms for classroom learning. Adopting a Survey method, the investigator developed a perception scale on ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning. In the present study, 189 prospective teachers were chosen from selected teacher education institutions of the University of Kerala through random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and a t-test to determine the overall perception and differences between rural and urban groups. The results show that most prospective teachers possess a moderate perception towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning, with no significant difference between the rural and urban trainees. This investigation indicates the growing need for integrating digital ethics, cybersecurity awareness, and responsible technology practices into teacher education programs to prepare prospective educators for the challenges of digitally enriched classrooms.



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital platforms have become an inseparable component of educational practices, enabling online content delivery, virtual classrooms, AI-supported learning tools, and technology-mediated teaching. Applications such as learning management systems, video-conferencing tools, digital assessment platforms, and cloud-based repositories have enhanced the scope and scale of learning. While such advancements offer advantages like flexibility, interactivity, and personalised learning, they also present ethical challenges that require immediate attention. Ethical issues in digital learning environments include concerns relating to data privacy, unauthorised data sharing, digital footprints, online behavioural risks, cyberbullying, and intellectual property violations. Teachers and students using digital platforms often share personal information, sometimes without being fully aware of the extent to which it may be collected, stored, or misused. The ethical use of digital platforms demands awareness, critical thinking, and responsible practices from educators.

Prospective teachers are those who study in pre-service teacher education programs and will be facilitators or implementers of technology-enhanced learning environments. Their perception of ethical concerns then plays a significant role in how responsibly and effectively digital platforms are integrated into classroom teaching. Positive and well-informed perceptions foster safety in digital practices, encourage critical evaluation of online tools, and ensure the protection of students' rights. A poor level of information or distorted information may lead to accidental ethical breaches, higher vulnerability to cyber threats, and lower levels of accountability in virtual learning spaces. Considering this, a deeper understanding of their awareness and perceptions is of paramount importance to inform the strengthening of ethical competencies at teacher education institutions.

The digital education context of India is very heterogeneous, where different sets of digital literacy, technological access, and exposure to online platforms exist amongst rural and urban regions. As against urban teacher trainees who might be more familiar with digital tools, rural trainees might be constrained by a lack of access and planned training opportunities. These differences in access and training may affect the way prospective teachers perceive risks, responsibilities, and ethical challenges linked with digital platforms. Identifying if such variations in locale lead to differences in perception becomes important for the purpose of designing equitable and inclusive teacher education programmes. Therefore, the present study attempts to evaluate the perception of student teachers regarding the issue of ethics concerning the use of digital platforms for classroom learning and to test whether there is any significant difference in perception according to the locale - rural and urban. It is envisaged that the



results will help improve digital ethics training, the integration of technology in a responsible way, and the construction of safer learning environments in teacher education.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The integration of digital platforms in education has greatly accelerated with the digitalisation of schools and other higher learning institutions. According to different studies globally, ethical awareness is crucial in protecting learners' rights and ensuring safe educational environments (UNESCO 2023; Livingstone & Third 2017). Teachers today face issues relating to privacy policies, sharing students' data, cyber safety, and ethical use of digital content. As indicated by research, without comprehensive ethical frameworks, digital learning environments can compromise students in regard to data misuse, tracking, and unsafe online interactions (Selwyn 2016).

In India, teacher education programs are informed by the National Education Policy of 2020 to focus on digital competency and the effective integration of technology. Nonetheless, digital ethics has not yet come into clear focus. The success of technology-supported instruction is influenced, among other factors, by teacher preparedness, ethical awareness, and digital citizenship skills in assuring student safety (Ribble, 2015; Wong et al., 2021).

The future educators also need to realise the implications of ethical issues such as data misuse, digital surveillance, algorithmic bias, cyber safety, and plagiarism. Their perception shapes their readiness to protect learners and take care of ethical standards. Research further illustrates that a teacher who is not clear on digital ethics is unable to make informed decisions when using online platforms; such inability has implications for instruction quality and the protection of students from potential harm (Aldridge, 2020; Floridi, 2018). Thus, this study is important in identifying gaps in ethical awareness and providing recommendations for developing comprehensive digital ethics training within teacher education programs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing reliance on digital platforms for learning introduces an array of ethical challenges, including data privacy violations, unauthorised content sharing, misuse of personal information, and cyber threats. For successful, safe digital learning, ethical judgment and responsible digital practices by teachers become an important concern. However, limited research has examined how prospective teachers perceive these ethical issues, particularly in the Indian context. Moreover, rural versus urban settings may also bring differences in digital exposure and awareness. Therefore, the present study is



undertaken and is titled: “Perception of Prospective Teachers Towards Ethical Issues in Using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning.”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning.
- To find out whether there exists any significant difference in the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning based on locale - rural and urban.

HYPOTHESES FORMULATED FOR THE STUDY

- The perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning is average.
- There exists a significant difference in the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning based on locale—rural and urban.

METHODOLOGY

Method Adopted for the Study

As the study was intended to assess the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning, the Survey Method was adopted for the present study.

Population of the Study

The population consists of all prospective teachers pursuing the B.Ed programme under the University of Kerala.

Sample Selected for the Study

The sample consisted of 189 prospective teachers pursuing B.Ed in Kollam district under the University of Kerala.



Tool Used for the Study

A Perception Scale on Ethical Issues in Using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning was developed by the investigator. The scale consisted of 32 statements with five response options (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Data Privacy Concerns, Academic Integrity Issues, Ethical Use of Digital Tools, Cyber Safety Awareness and Responsible Digital Behaviour are the components selected for the present study.

Statistical Techniques Used

The statistical techniques used in the present study are:

- Descriptive Statistics – Mean & Standard Deviation
- Test of Significance of Difference Between Means (t-test)

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis and interpretation of collected data based on the objectives are presented under the following headings:

- Analysis on the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning.
- Comparison of mean scores of perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning based on locale—rural and urban.

ANALYSIS ON THE PERCEPTION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS TOWARDS ETHICAL ISSUES IN USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR CLASSROOM LEARNING

The perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning was analysed using descriptive statistical analysis. The levels of attitude of prospective teachers were calculated by using mean and standard deviation of scores of the perception scale. The prospective teachers who scored greater than $M + \sigma$ and $M - \sigma$ were grouped as having high attitude and low attitude, respectively. Those who scored between $M + \sigma$ and $M - \sigma$ were grouped as having an average attitude. The details are given in Table 1.



Table 1

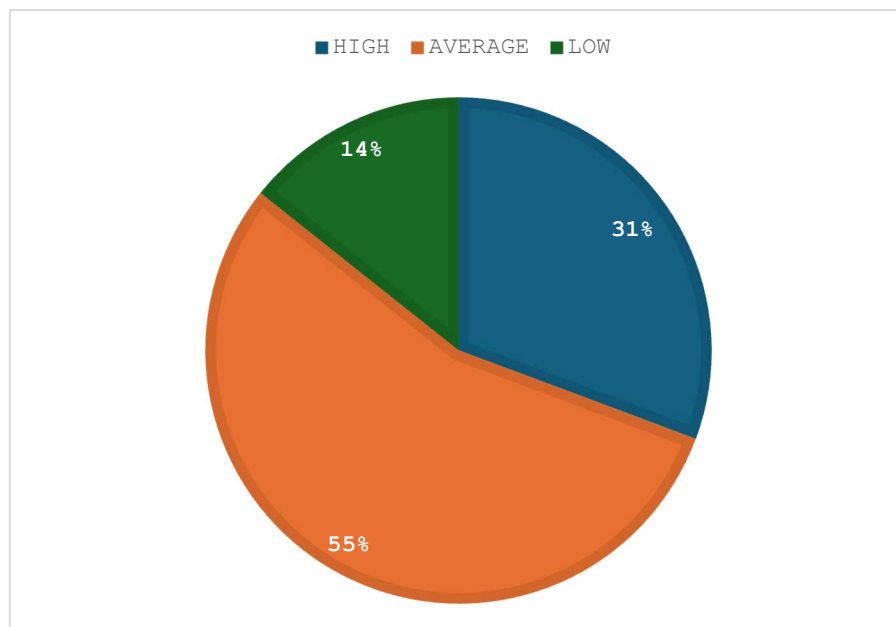
Number and Percentage of Levels of Perception of Prospective Teachers Towards Ethical Issues in Using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning

Level	Number	Percentage
High	58	30.69%
Average	104	55.02%
Low	27	14.29%
Total	189	100%

Table 1 shows that 55.02% of prospective teachers have an average perception of ethical issues, 30.69% have a high perception, and 14.29% exhibit a low perception. Thus, it is evident that most prospective teachers demonstrate an average level of perception concerning ethical issues in digital platforms.

Figure 1

Diagrammatic Representation of the Perception of Prospective Teachers Towards Ethical Issues in Using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning





COMPARISON OF MEAN SCORES OF PERCEPTION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS TOWARDS ETHICAL ISSUES IN USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR CLASSROOM LEARNING BASED ON LOCALE-RURAL AND URBAN.

In order to find out whether there exists a significant difference in the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning with respect to locale, the critical ratio of the mean scores of the perception scale was calculated. The details are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Data and Results of the Test of Significance of the Difference Between Mean Scores of Perception of Prospective Teachers towards Ethical Issues in using Digital Platforms for Classroom Learning Based on Locale

Locale	No: of prospective teachers	Mean	SD	Critical Ratio	Level of Significance
Rural	87	120.38	11.06	1.42	Not Significant
Urban	102	122.07	10.73		

From the Table 2, it is clear that the critical ratio 1.42 is less than the critical value 1.96 at 0.05 level, which means that there is no significant difference in the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning based on locale- rural and urban. From the above analysis, it can be concluded that prospective teachers from rural and urban locales show similar perceptions towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study are:

- The perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning is average.



- There does not exist any significant difference in the perception of prospective teachers towards ethical issues in using digital platforms for classroom learning based on locale—rural and urban.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Teacher education programmes should integrate digital ethics modules, focusing on data privacy, cyber safety, and responsible digital behaviour.
- Equal access to digital tools and training must be ensured across rural and urban institutions to maintain parity in digital awareness.
- Workshops and training on ethical digital practices should be conducted regularly to improve the confidence and preparedness of teachers.
- Institutions should introduce guidelines on ethical digital platform usage, including plagiarism awareness and safe content sharing.
- The findings stress the need to prepare teachers to navigate ethical challenges in technologically enhanced classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that prospective teachers generally demonstrate an average level of perception with regard to ethical issues in digital platforms, which, while reasonable, also indicates certain gaps that need attention. There is no significant difference between rural and urban trainees, which indicates that digital exposure is becoming more homogeneous across settings. In the face of an ever-increasing digital dependence in educational settings, future educators need to be equipped with ethical awareness, digital responsibility, and knowledge in cybersecurity. Strengthening teacher education through systematic training in digital ethics will better prepare prospective teachers for confident yet safe participation in technology-supported classrooms.

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