The Role of Professional Ethics in Higher Education

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Abstract

Everyone needs some norms to lead his/her life because norms make our life and working style smooth. In education and especially in higher education, some norms play very important roles. These norms may be in different forms. One form is professional ethics. Professional ethics are soul of higher education. This research paper is focused on the role and importance of professional ethics in higher education. Quantitative methods of research have been applied for the research. This paper included a survey to know the different aspects of professional ethics in higher education. The population of the research is college/university teachers and student from Delhi and NCR. The sample size is 200. This research paper is useful for teachers, students in higher education and researchers.

Key words: Ethics, Higher education, Norms, Professional

Introduction

There is a well known saying that "Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions."[1] It means that teaching or educating someone is very important job but education without moral values is good for nothing. Therefore professional ethics are needed in higher education. In this age, the role of professional ethics is very much important. However it is important in every age. Basically professional ethics create an atmosphere of good work culture. It is related to our behavior. If we behave in proper manner then we are liked by other people and this creates a state of positive energy. For success in life in the field of education, professional ethics are vital. These ethics motivate people to gain their professional goal and also give satisfaction. When a person or a faculty member is following professional ethics, it means that he or she will have no discrimination on the basis of religion, cast, creed, gender, age, socio-economic factors etc. This research paper highlights the roles and importance of professional ethics in higher education.

Research question

What is the role of professional ethics in higher education?

Objective

To know the role of professional ethics in higher education.

Concept of professional ethics

Professional ethics controls the behavior of the people who are in different professions. This is helpful in creating a good atmosphere at the work-place. Professional ethics are also known as codes. They are commonly used by the people who are working in a specific place. Every profession has some rules, regulations and standards. All the people of the organization have to follow them. Basically professional ethics are norms and standards set by the organizations and those norms are based on moral values also.

"Professional ethics is guidance for people working in a particular profession that tells them what they supposed to do and what they are not supposed to do while working there. Professional is about delivering essential services and making commitments. For instance, let's think about a professor; his profession is to serve the students and solve their problems. It requires a special relationship between the place, the trade, and the student. Everything runs based on ethics."[2]

Professional ethics are part of our life. To understand professional ethics, consider these points- "1. The moral duties or rules that must be followed in the exercise of a profession. 2. Professional ethics are the principles that determine what is right and wrong about a profession, establish ethical rules about that profession, and oblige the members of the profession to comply with these codes of conduct. 3. Business/corporate and domain-based standards of behaviors and attitudes and values. Learn more in: Understanding Learners' Self-Expressed and Self-Professed Core Personal Values for Effective Teaching and Learning 4.Moral guidelines for professional behavior that protect the integrity of the profession. Professional ethics codes have been established for healthcare, law, accounting, and information technology among other fields."[3]

Roles of professional ethics in higher education

In higher education value based lesson is needed and for this, professional ethics are required. These ethics should be practiced by the college and universities teachers. Those teachers who have moral values in their teachings and nature, students learn more from them. "The first responsibility then is to teach. This is what defines the relationship of educator to learner. The instructor enters the role with the assumption of this responsibility as basic and defining the relationship, the role and purpose of the relationship. The responsibility is not simply to teach but to teach well so as not to fail in any way to provide those served with the most effective instruction possible and in order to provide exemplars for novice instructors. As is established below the professional educator has a fiduciary relationship with the learner and that relationship incorporates and is defined by the dual responsibilities of providing benefit and avoiding harm. Not to teach well would be to teach in a manner that was not effective or as effective as it might be. Not to teach well is to fail to fulfill the basic positive professional responsibility of an educator toward the leaner."[4]

Review of Literature

- The research 'Professional ethics in higher education' (2020) has been written by Radhika Kapur (Delhi University). This article underlines the importance of professional ethics in higher education. The writer points out an important thing that the feeling of professional ethics starts from our family because family is the eternal school of our life.

- 'Higher Education and Professional Ethics: Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers' (2018) is a book edited By Satya Sundar Sethy. This book has three parts. Part I of this book focuses on philosophy, education, and professional ethics. Part II highlights basic points of teaching, research, and professional ethics. Part III of the book explains professional ethics: case studies. No doubt, this book is useful to know the different aspects of professional ethics.

- Kodari Krishna Prasad's research article 'Importance of Ethics in Higher Education' (2019). The author says that honesty, confidentiality, conflict of interest and responsibilities are four basic principles in ethical codes.

- ‘A Prospective Study of Professional Ethics in Teacher Education’ (2016) is a research paper authored by Dr. G. Kannan. This paper has explored knowledge, honesty, accountability, integrity, loyalty regarding professional ethics.

Methodology

Descriptive method has been adopted to gain the result. This research paper is based on a survey which was conducted in Delhi-NCR on 200 people (both male and female). Nine questions were asked in the survey. Both primary and secondary data have been used.

Data Analysis

The data received after survey has been analyzed. The following is the detail of the data analysis:
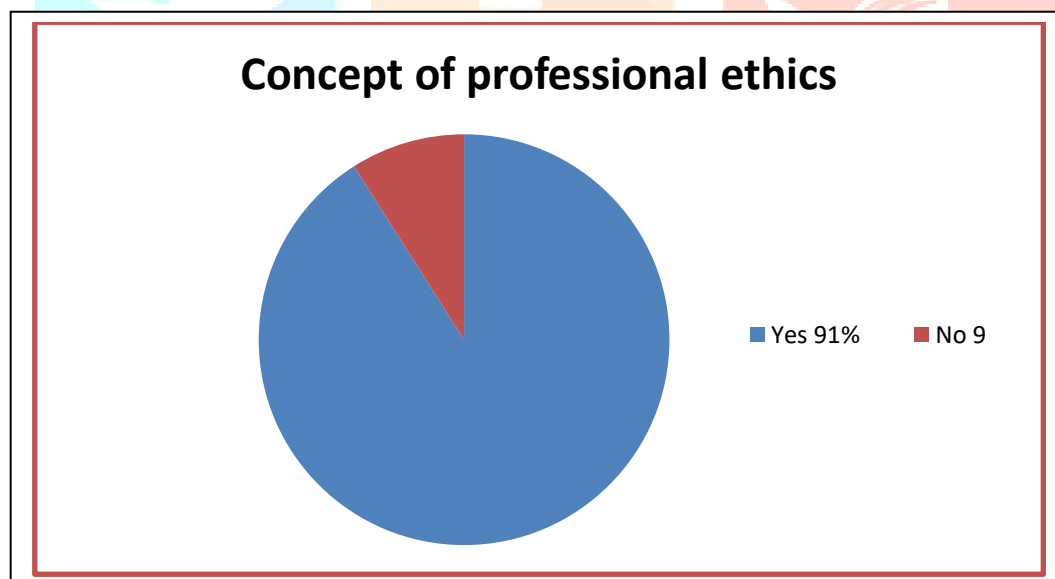
Concept of professional ethics

A question was asked- Do you aware of the concept of professional ethics in higher education? People had two options for their response- Yes or No.

92% of respondents said ‘yes’ and only 10% of respondents said ‘no’. It means that 90% people are aware of the concept of professional ethics. However, 8% people don't know about this. Table 1 and graph 1 describe the same.

Table: 1- Concept of professional ethics

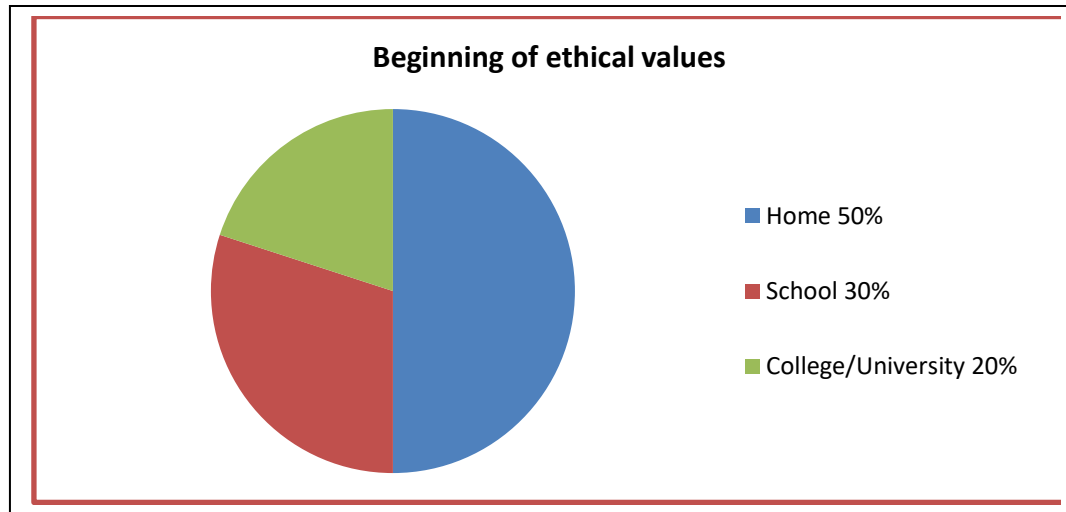| Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Yes	91
2.	No	9

Graph: 1

Beginning of the ethical values

No doubt, ethical values are important part of the life. So it is better to know people's opinion about the beginning point of ethical values. The question which was asked to respondents in the survey was- From where the teaching of ethical begins? The respondents had three options- Home, School and college/university.

50% of respondents said that the beginning point of ethical values is home. This opinion has been expressed by highest number of people who participated in the survey. 30% people said that school is the beginning point of ethical values. 20% people are in favor that college/university are the points from where the teaching of ethical values begins.
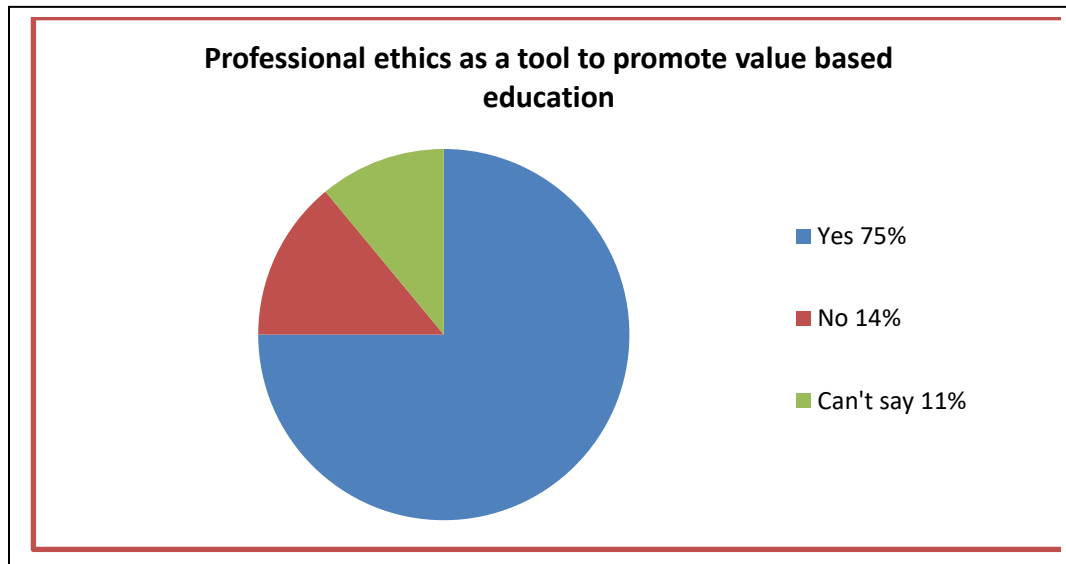
Table: 2- Beginning of ethical values

Sr. No.	Online platforms	Percentage of use by the people
1.	Home	50
2.	School	30
3.	College/University	20

Graph: 2

Beginning of ethical values

- Home 50%
- School 30%
- College/University 20%

Professional ethics as a tool to promote value based education

Do you think that professional ethics are helpful to promote value based education? This question was asked with three options- 'Yes', 'No' and 'Can't say'. 75% people replied in 'yes' and 14% people said that 'no'. However 11% people were not able to answer in 'yes' or 'no' but replied as 'Can't say'. Replies of the respondents are shown in table 3 and graph 3.

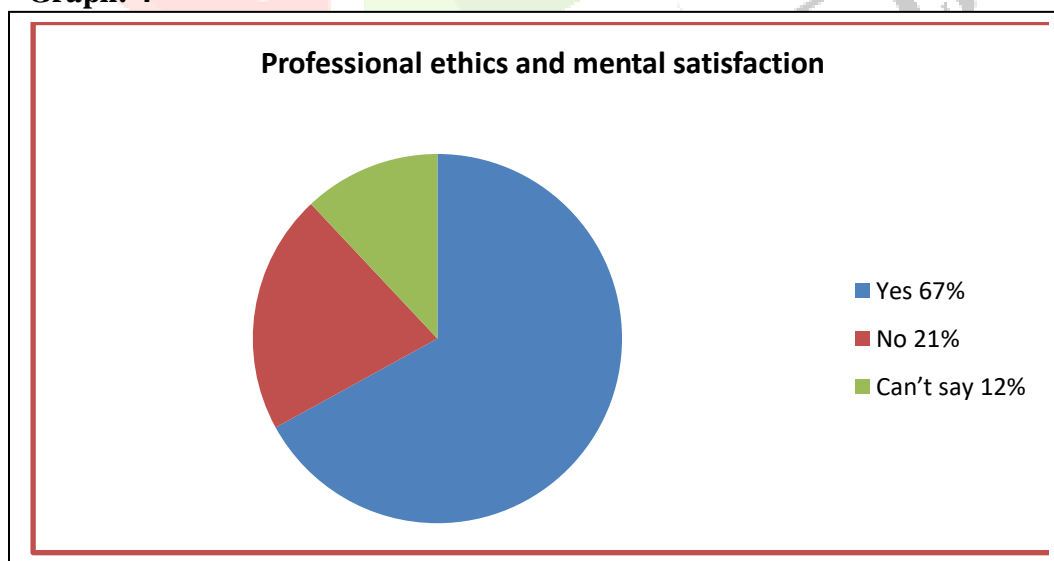**Table: 3-** Professional ethics as a tool to promote value based education

Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Yes	75
2.	No	14
3.	Can't say	11

Graph: 3

Professional ethics as a tool to promote value based education

- Yes 75%
- No 14%
- Can't say 11%

Professional ethics and mental satisfaction

Mental satisfaction counts in every step of life. In the survey, the question was asked- Do you think that professional ethics give you mental satisfaction? 21% people answered in 'no' and 67% people said 'yes'. There were only 12% people whose reply was as 'Can't say'. According to highest number of people (67%), it can be said that professional ethics give mental satisfaction. Table 4 and graph 4 explain the same.

Table: 4- Professional ethics and mental satisfaction

Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Yes	67
2.	No	21
3.	Can't say	12

Graph: 4

Professional ethics and mental satisfaction

- Yes 67%
- No 21%
- Can't say 12%
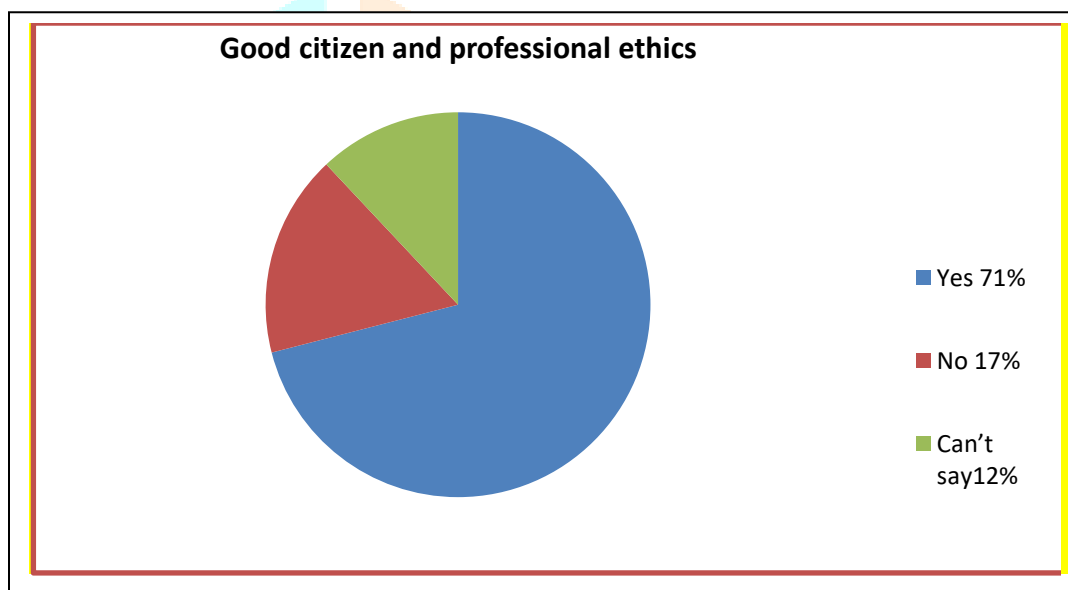
Good citizen and professional ethics

Do professional ethics motivate good citizens? A question was asked during the survey in this regard. Are you in favor of this fact-- professional ethics in higher education will help students to be a good citizen?

71% people do agree with this point, on the other hand 17% people do not agree with the point. It means that they don't think that professional ethics in higher education will help students to be a good citizen. 12% people in the survey said 'Can't say' on the question. The opinion expressed in the survey can be seen in the table 5 and graph 5.

Table: 5- Good citizen and professional ethics

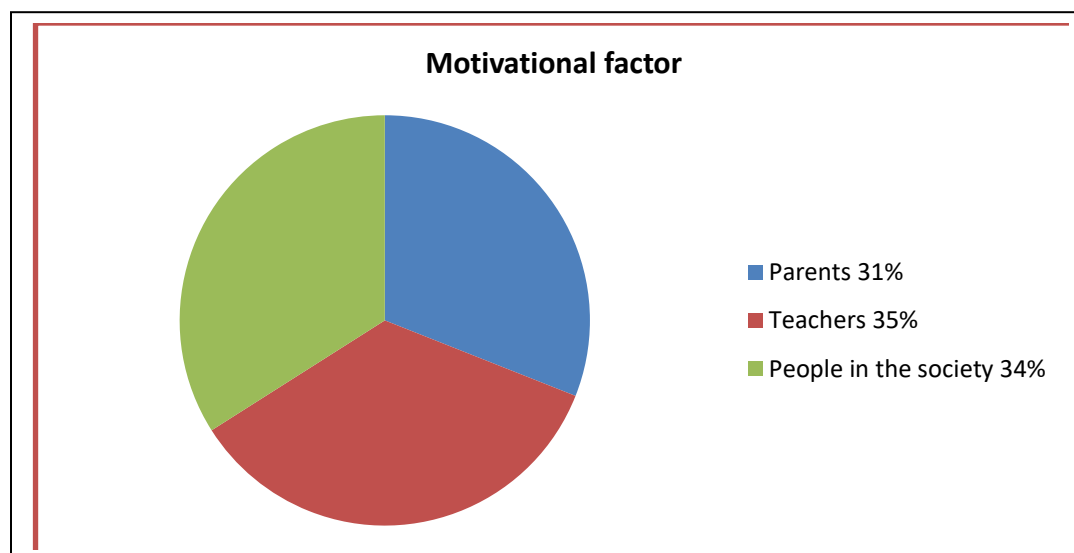| Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Yes	71
2.	No	17
3.	Can't say	12

Graph 5

Motivational factor

Who can motivate professional ethics? This was a question asked with three options- parents, teachers and people in the society. According to report of the survey, 31% people said that parents can motivate professional ethics. 35% of respondents think that teacher can do this. On the other hand, 34% people are in favor of the people in the society. According to them society can motivate professional ethics. Table 6 and graph 6 reveal the fact which is based on a survey.

Table: 6- Motivational factor

Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Parents	31
2.	Teachers	35
3.	People in the society	34

Graph: 6

Accountability for professional ethics

Who is accountable for professional ethics in higher education- educational institution, society or friends' circle? In the answer of this question, people reacted in different ways. 22% of respondents said that home is accountable for this. 30% people think the responsibility goes to the society. According to the opinion of 20% people, Educational institutions are accountable for professional ethics in higher education. 28% people's views are in favor of friends' circle.

Table: 7- Accountability for professional ethics

Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Home	22
2.	Society	30
3.	Educational institution	20
4.	Friends' circle	28

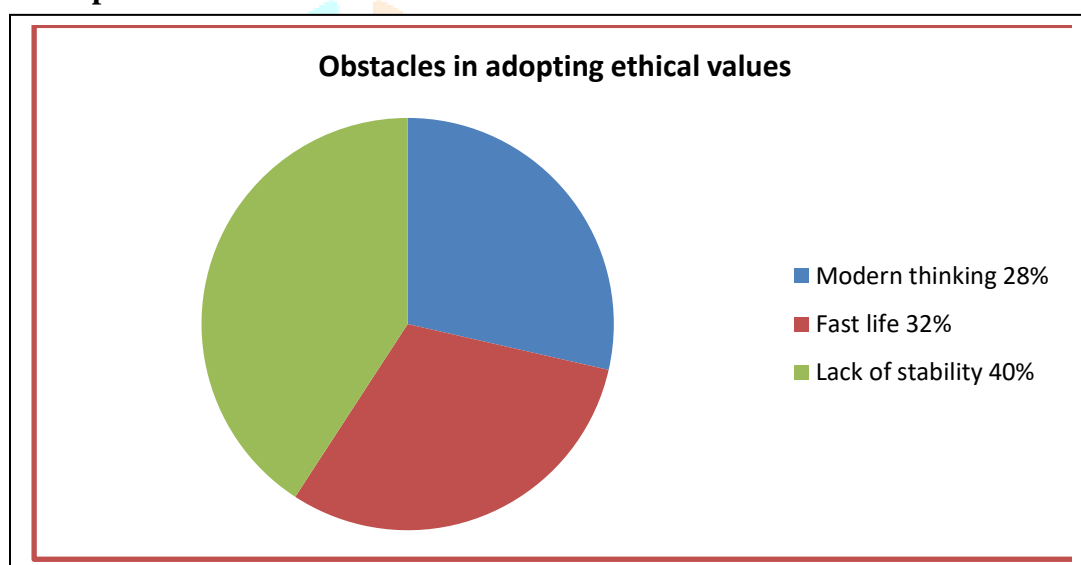**Graph 7**

Obstacles in adopting ethical values

What are the obstacles in adopting ethical values- modern thinking, fast life or lack of stability?

28% of respondents in the survey said that modern thinking is main obstacle in adopting ethical values. According to 32% of respondents, fast life is a barrier in adopting ethical values. 40% people in the survey have different opinion from these people. They said that lack of stability in life is the main problem in adopting ethical values. The details of survey can be seen in table 8 and graph 8.

Table: 8- Obstacles in adopting ethical values

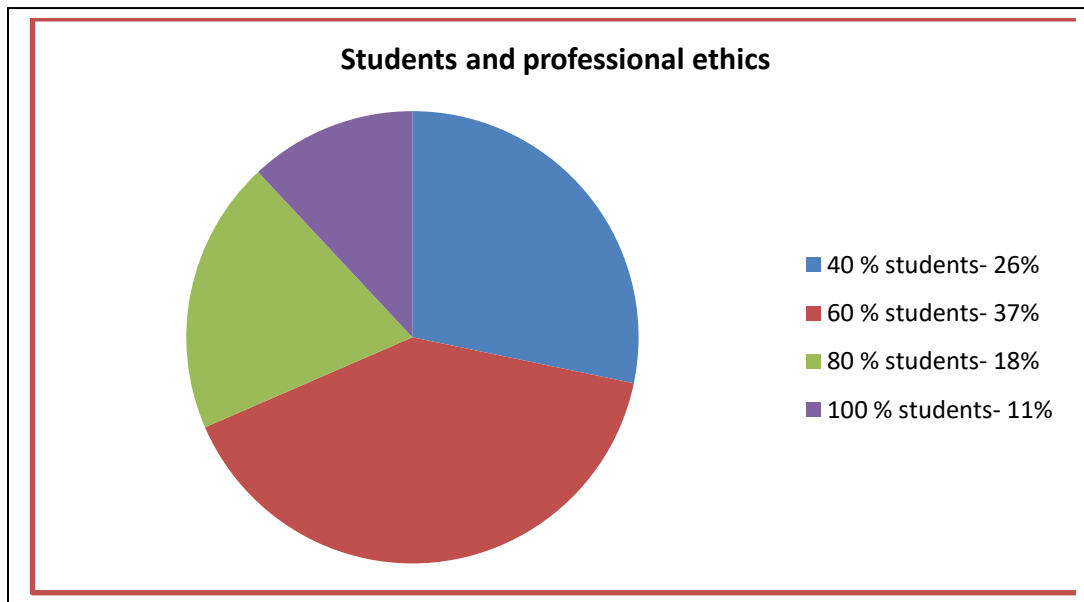| Sr. No.	People's opinion	Opinion in percentage
1.	Modern thinking	28
2.	Fast life	32
3.	Lack of stability	40

Graph: 8

Students and professional ethics

People were asked- How many students like professional ethics in higher education? 8% of respondents said that 20% students like professional ethics in higher education. 26% of respondents gave the data of 26% in this regard. 37% people participated in the survey said that 60% students like professional ethics in higher education. 18% people are in favor of that 80 % students like professional ethics in higher education. According to 11% people, 100% students like professional ethics in higher education.

Table: 9- Students and professional ethics

Sr. No.	Description	People's opinion
1.	20 % students	8
2.	40 % students	26
3.	60 % students	37
4.	80 % students	18
5.	100 % students	11

Graph: 9

Students and professional ethics

- 40 % students- 26%
- 60 % students- 37%
- 80 % students- 18%
- 100 % students- 11%

Finding and Conclusion

- 91% of respondents are aware of the concept of professional ethics in higher education.
- 8% people don't know the concept of professional ethics in higher education.
- 50% of respondents said that the beginning point of ethical values is home.
- 30% people said that school is the beginning point of ethical values.
- 20% people are in favor that college/university is the points from where the teaching of ethical begins.
- Do you think that professional ethics are helpful to promote value based education? This question was asked with three options- 'Yes', 'No' and 'Can't say'.
- 75% people think that professional ethics are helpful to promote value based education but 14% people are not in favor of such opinion.
- According to highest number of people (67%), it can be said that professional ethics give mental satisfaction.
- 71% people do agree with this point that professional ethics motivate good citizens on the other hand 17% people do not agree with the point.
- 22% of respondents said that home is accountable for professional ethics but 30% people think the responsibility goes to the society.

- 28% of respondents in the survey said that modern thinking is main obstacle in adopting ethical values. According to 40% people in the survey, lack of stability in life is the main problem in adopting ethical values.
- 37% people participated in the survey said that 60% students like professional ethics in higher education.

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