Compensation Strategies and it's impact on Faculty Motivation in Community Colleges of Nepal

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Abstract
Compensation strategies are widely recognized as critical in enhancing employee motivation and organizational performance. In the context of Nepal, particularly within community colleges in Madhesh Pradesh, limited attention has been given to how teaching faculty perceive such strategies. Grounded in the expectancy theory of motivation, this study sought to examine faculty perceptions of existing compensation systems and their alignment with institutional and regulatory frameworks.

The study employed a descriptive and exploratory quantitative research design. Data were collected through structured, self-administered questionnaires distributed to full-time faculty members. Out of the total distributed, 87 valid responses were obtained. The data were analyzed using statistical techniques, including cross-tabulations and regression analysis.

Findings revealed that existing compensation strategies were largely inadequate in meeting faculty expectations. Faculty members reported dissatisfaction and negative attitudes toward compensation systems. A central concern highlighted was the inconsistency between institutional practices and the regulatory frameworks mandated by Tribhuvan University. This misalignment appeared to weaken faculty motivation and potentially undermine the quality of instruction and overall academic outcomes.

The study underscores the importance of aligning institutional compensation strategies with university guidelines to create a supportive and motivating work environment. By enhancing adherence to standardized compensation policies, institutions can improve faculty satisfaction, strengthen organizational effectiveness, and enhance educational quality. These insights are valuable for policymakers, administrators, and stakeholders aiming to improve governance and performance in Nepal's community college sector.

Keywords: *faculty attitudes, compensation strategies, faculty motivation, community colleges*

Introduction

Community colleges in Nepal often referred to as community-based or public colleges play a critical role in expanding access to higher education for students from economically and socially diverse backgrounds (UGC, 2023). These institutions, primarily affiliated with Tribhuvan University (TU), operate under a hybrid governance model involving local community management and partial funding from the government through the University Grants Commission (UGC). Their effectiveness in delivering quality education depends significantly on the commitment, motivation, and satisfaction of faculty, administrative staff, and support personnel (Gaihre & Khanal, 2025)most of it is centered on schools and universities.\n Objectives:\n This article presents an analysis of the perception of motivation among teachers in community colleges in Nepal, using Adams' equity theory of motivation as a framework.\n Findings:\n The study was conducted using an interpretive phenomenological design, analyzing the audio transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers who held full-time positions at four different community colleges in Nepal. The results revealed that teachers in community colleges enjoyed their work, experienced positive attitudes, and had a conducive work environment. Furthermore, community college teachers expected equitable treatment in terms of policies and practices, salary and benefits, administrative procedures, opportunities for professional growth and development, and recognition from their institutions.\n Contributions:\n This information can be used to inform policy and practice in community colleges in Nepal, as well as in other similar contexts.","container-title":"Community College Review","DOI":"10.1177/00915521251320968","ISSN":"0091-5521, 1940-2325","journalAbbreviation":"Community College Review","language":"en","page":"00915521251320968","source":"DOI.org (Crossref. Despite their significant role in fostering educational equity, community colleges in Nepal continue to face persistent challenges related to faculty motivation, retention, financial sustainability and performance (Gupta, 2022). Among the critical factors influencing these issues, compensation strategies stand out as a key determinant of employee motivation and engagement (Irabor & Okolie, 2019).

Compensation strategies, which encompass both monetary forms of reward, are essential for attracting and retaining qualified faculty while also promoting a positive work environment (Iqbal et al., 2017). In the context of community colleges, where resources are often limited and workloads are high, the alignment of compensation strategies with faculty expectations and contributions becomes particularly important. According to equity theory and expectancy theory of motivation, fair and strategically designed compensation systems can significantly influence an individual's motivation and performance (Bandhu et al., 2024). Employees are an organization's most important and valuable asset. They are more likely to perform well and work harder if they are motivated. Engagement with coworkers, sense of belonging, and productivity are all impacted by how they feel about and perceive their job at work (Zhenjing et al., 2022)data were collected from the academic staff under a cross-sectional research design, and they were approached through convenience sampling technique. As per recommendations of established sample size criteria, we distributed a sum of 420 questionnaires among the respondents. Among these distributed questionnaires, only 330 were received back. The returned questionnaires were checked for missing and incomplete responses and after discarding the missing responses useable responses were 314 which were used for the data analysis. Data had been analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM. When employees realize valued by the organizational practices, they are often happier. In addition to pay and benefits, employees should receive recognition for exceptional work. The organization should design reward programs and employee recognition initiatives that honor employees for their achievements. Maintaining high levels of employee motivation requires recognizing employees' achievements(Wang & Degol, 2016).

While global literature underscores the importance of compensation strategies in higher education settings, the effectiveness and contextual relevance of such strategies in Nepali community colleges remain underexplored. Limited empirical evidence exists on how current compensation strategies affect the motivation levels of faculties, many of whom operate under constrained institutional support. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of compensation strategies on faculty motivation within community colleges. By analyzing faculty perceptions and experiences, the research seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy and institutional reforms for more equitable and motivating work environments in the community colleges in Madhesh Pradesh Nepal.

Literature Review

Expectancy Theory

In 1964, Victor Vroom created the expectancy theory. The theory of motivation assumes that employees who work hard anticipate rewards from the organization. To put it another way, the employees strive to meet organizational goals if they believe they will receive a favorable incentive (Bandhu et al., 2024). They might not put out as much effort if they feel that the benefits do not justify the effort. The theory highlights three key components: expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance, instrumentality (belief that performance leads to rewards) and valence (value placed on the rewards) (Zajda, 2023). According to the theory, productivity is a way to feel motivated. Therefore, employees typically are high producers. They see high productivity as a way to achieve one or more rewards. They feel demotivated about productivity if the organization does not value their contribution. Consequently, they do not perform well and tend to be diverted (George & Humphrey, 2021).

Compensation Strategies

Compensation strategies, encompassing both monetary and non-monetary incentives, are designed to recognize employee performance and contributions while fostering motivation, engagement, and satisfaction within the workplace. These strategies include salaries, bonuses, health insurance, retirement plans, paid time off, and other perks, all aimed at attracting, motivating, and retaining talent (Assa, 2024). When effectively implemented, compensation strategies can significantly impact employee morale, drive critical thinking, and encourage high performance, particularly when aligned with organizational goals and based on employee achievements(Salah, 2016). Employees tend to feel happier and more committed when performance-based compensation strategies are practiced, contributing to a positive and productive work environment. Different forms such as team-based, intrinsic, extrinsic, equity-based, and flexible strategies play a vital role in increasing productivity, reducing absenteeism, enhancing customer satisfaction, and improving an organization's reputation (Zuleha et al., 2024); (Puspasari et al., 2022). By acknowledging employee efforts and aligning compensation strategies with evolving workforce expectations, organizations can cultivate a more engaged and loyal workforce. To comply with equity theory**,** compensation strategies in an organization should focus on fairness and balance between employee inputs and outcomes. Equity theory suggests that employees are motivated when they perceive fairness in the distribution of rewards relative to their efforts compared to others (Bandhu et al., 2024).

Employee Motivation

Employee motivation refers to the extent to which employees feel content and fulfilled in their jobs. It encompasses their feelings about various aspects of their work environment, including: work conditions, job role, compensation, work life balance, recognition and relationship. High employee motivation often leads to prevent from dissatisfaction, productivity, and retention, while low motivation can result in disengagement and higher turnover rates (Ralahallo et al., 2023)**.** The organizations play a crucial role in fostering employee motivation in the workplace. Open communication, recognition and appreciation, fair compensation, career development, work life balance, supportive working environment, employee involvement, regular feedback, health and well-being initiatives and strong leadership are the key ways for employees' motivation and satisfaction in the organization (Radu, 2023). By prioritizing these areas, organizations can create a work environment that enhances employee motivation, leading to increased loyalty, productivity, and overall organizational success.

Employee motivation is a pivotal factor influencing institutional climate, teaching quality, and overall student outcomes in community colleges. Two key dimensions shaping employee motivation are recognition, autonomy, opportunities for professional growth, and intrinsic rewards and financial incentives, health and retirement benefits, leave policies, and professional development support (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004).

Empirical Review

A substantial body of empirical research has demonstrated a strong and positive relationship between financial literacy and sound investment decision-making. In the UAE, Al-Tamimi et al. (2009) found that financial literacy—shaped by education and income—was a crucial determinant of individual investment behavior. Moreover, research shows that individuals with higher financial literacy are more likely to make informed, rational, and diversified investment decisions (Grohmann, 2018), and that this knowledge helps mitigate the effects of behavioral biases, thereby enhancing investment efficiency (Roy & Das, 2021).

Empirical studies in neighboring South Asian countries support these findings. In Sri Lanka, Balagobei and Prashanthan (2021) confirmed that financial knowledge, behavior, and attitude significantly affected investment decisions among individual investors in Jaffna. In Bangladesh, Hasan et al. (2022) revealed a strong link between financial literacy and increased willingness to participate in the stock market, emphasizing the role of financial literacy in promoting capital market engagement in developing economies.

Recent scholarship has also deconstructed financial literacy into its core dimensions—knowledge, behavior, and attitude—to better assess their individual impacts. Singh (2019) demonstrated that among working women in India, each component independently shaped their financial decisions. However, Mwathi and Kubasu (2017) observed variation in impact, noting that while financial knowledge and skills significantly influenced investment behavior among university staff in Kenya, financial attitude did not. Additionally, a systematic review on financial knowledge and investment behavior in developing economies concluded that financial knowledge is a crucial driver of investment participation and quality (Tavares et al., 2023).

Importantly, the growing digitization of finance has introduced new dimensions to the study of investment behavior. Kadoya et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of digital financial literacy, arguing that traditional literacy assessments should be updated to reflect contemporary investment patterns facilitated through FinTech platforms.

In the context of Nepal, several recent empirical studies affirm the critical role of financial literacy in shaping investment behavior. Bhandari (2021) found a significant relationship between financial literacy components and investment decisions among urban youth in Kathmandu Valley. Poudel and Gautam (2022) reported that financial education positively influenced stock market participation among salaried employees in Pokhara. Likewise, Shrestha and Shrestha (2023) highlighted that both formal education and financial awareness were strongly linked to rational investment decisions in Province 3.

Despite this emerging evidence, a critical research gap remains. Most empirical studies in Nepal are limited to major urban centers like Kathmandu and Pokhara and do not account for localized cultural and economic dynamics that influence investor behavior. Bhaktapur, a historically significant and rapidly urbanizing city, has a unique socio-cultural and economic fabric that may shape financial decision-making differently. To date, no in-depth empirical study has been conducted focusing specifically on Bhaktapur's investors, particularly regarding how their financial knowledge, behavior, and attitude influence their investment decisions. This study thus seeks to fill this gap by offering a community-level analysis and contributing to localized policy-making and tailored financial education initiatives.

Research Gap

Compensation strategies are widely recognized as critical motivational tools that significantly influence employee performance and contribute to the development of a competitive organizational climate (Assa, 2024). Empirical research indicates that employees are more inclined to engage in complex and demanding tasks when they perceive institutional incentives as fair and meaningful (Radu, 2023). In contrast, inadequate recognition and insufficient compensation are frequently associated with diminished motivation, increased dissatisfaction, and suboptimal performance outcomes (Salah, 2016).

In the context of Nepal, despite the growing emphasis on employee engagement within the educational reform agenda, substantial gaps remain in both academic research and policy discussions (Gupta, 2022). The majority of existing studies on employee motivation and job satisfaction have predominantly focused on the general public sector and financial institutions (Karki et al., 2023); (Shrestha, 2022); (Pradhan, 2020). Only a limited number of studies have considered the unique socio-economic and administrative characteristics of community colleges. While such factors are extensively discussed in the global literature on higher education, their relevance and effectiveness within Nepali community colleges have yet to be thoroughly examined. This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap by exploring the current compensation strategies employed by community colleges in Madhesh Pradesh. It further seeks to assess faculty perceptions of these practices and evaluate their corresponding levels of motivation.

Objectives of the Study

i. To assess the attitudes of faculty members toward the existing compensation strategies adopted by community colleges.
ii. To examine the impact of existing compensation strategies on faculty motivation in community colleges

Conceptual Design and Hypothesis of the Study

In line with the study's conceptual framework, faculty motivation is identified as the dependent variable, while compensation strategies function as independent variables. Accordingly, the central inquiry of the study concerns the extent to which these independent variables influence the dependent variable. To explore this relationship, the study employs the following research hypotheses to examine the association between the independent and dependent variables.

Figure 1: ***Conceptual Design of the Study***

Null Hypothesis (H0)
There is no significant motivation among faculty members resulting from the existing reward and compensation practices of community colleges.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1)
Faculty members are significantly motivated by the existing reward and compensation practices of community colleges.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive and exploratory research design, suitable for capturing and explaining existing compensation strategies. Guided by a positivist philosophical assumption, the study rests on the premise that objective reality can be measured and quantified through observable data. This stance assumes that compensation strategies, as social phenomena, can be systematically studied using empirical evidence and statistical tools.

The target population comprised full-time teaching faculty members, from which the sample was drawn using a simple random sampling technique to ensure unbiased representation. This reflects an underlying ontological assumption of objectivity, where the phenomenon under study exists independently of individual perceptions, and an epistemological assumption that valid knowledge can be generated through measurable and verifiable data.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was administered following a reliability test. The instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.86 to 0.89. A total of 113 questionnaires were distributed to eligible respondents, out of which 87 were returned duly completed and subsequently used for analysis. The collected data were analyzed and presented using tabular formats.

In accordance with ethical standards, a consent letter was attached to the front page of the questionnaire, clearly stating that participation was voluntary and not mandatory. Respondents were also provided with the option to withdraw or skip any part of the process.

Analysis and Interpretation

The study collected data from full-time faculty members regarding their perceptions of existing compensation strategies in community colleges. The responses were systematically analyzed and presented using appropriate statistical techniques, including cross-tabulations and chi-square tests, as illustrated in the accompanying table.

Table 1
Employees' attitudes on compensation strategies of the colleges
Very Small Extent-VSE, Small Extent –SE, Somewhat – SW, Large Extent – LE, Very Large Extent – VLE (P value = 0.05)

Statements	Job Status	F	VSE	SE	SW	LE	VLE	Total	Chi-Square Sig.(2-sided)
Gratuity Fund	Permanent	N	27	3	10	7	2	49	2.962[a]
		%	55.1	6.1	20.4	14.3	4.1	100.0	
	Temporary	N	22	4	9	3	0	38	.564
		%	57.9	10.5	23.7	7.9	0.0	100.0	
Social Security Fund	Permanent	N	11	13	12	4	9	49	4.609[a]
		%	22.4	26.5	24.5	8.2	18.4	100.0	
	Temporary	N	7	13	10	6	2	38	.330
		%	18.4	34.2	26.3	15.8	5.3	100.0	
Performance Based Reward.	Permanent	N	17	11	6	6	9	49	11.900[a]
		%	34.7	22.4	12.2	12.2	18.4	100.0	
	Temporary	N	10	5	16	4	3	38	.108
		%	26.32	13.16	42.11	10.52	7.89	100.0	
Parental Leave	Permanent	N	15	5	3	5	21	49	5.737[a]
		%	30.6	10.2	6.1	10.2	42.9	100.0	
	Temporary	N	15	0	1	6	16	38	.220
		%	39.48	0.0	2.63	15.79	42.10	100.0	
Carrier development opportunities	Permanent	N	23	3	9	9	5	49	1.855[a]
		%	46.93	6.12	18.36	18.36	10.20	100.0	
	Temporary	N	17	2	9	4	6	38	.762
		%	44.74	5.26	23.69	10.53	15.78	100.0	

Field Survey, 2024

The table presents a comparative analysis of teaching employees' perceptions regarding compensation strategies in the surveyed colleges. The data encompass frequency counts, percentages, chi-square values, and significance levels. Findings reveal that the perceived implementation of compensation strategies is generally weak and similar for both permanent and temporary employees. Although some variations in percentage distributions are observed across specific benefits, these differences are not statistically significant. This suggests a shared perception of limited benefit availability across both employment categories. The results underscore the necessity for continuous evaluation and reform of reward systems to address the diverse expectations and needs of all teaching faculties.

Testing Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0)

There is no significant motivation among faculty members resulting from the existing compensation strategies of community colleges.
To test the hypothesis, the study applied regression coefficients, and the results are presented below:

Table 2
Testing hypothesis using regression coefficient model

ANOVA[a]						
	Model	**Sum of Squares**	**DF**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	46.730	5	9.346	7.730	.000
	Residual	89.470	74	1.209		
	Total	136.200	79			

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gratuity Fund, Social Security Fund, Performance Based Reward, Parental Leave, Career Development Opportunities ,

Table 2.1
Testing hypothesis using regression coefficient model

Coefficients[a]						
Model [B]		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		Std. Error	**Beta**			
1	Constant	1.015	.500		2.028	.046
	Gratuity Fund	.519	.110	.458	4.722	.000
	Social Security Fund	.067	.099	.067	.672	.504
	Performance Based Reward	.240	.091	.258	2.618	.011
	Parental Leave	-.044	.070	-.062	-.632	.529
	Career Development Opportunities	-.115	.085	-.132	-1.345	.183

Dependent Variable: Faculty motivation

Field Survey, 2024

The provided ANOVA table outlines the results of a regression analysis, highlighting the contributions of the regression model and the residuals to the total variance observed in the data. The total variance is partitioned into two components: the Regression sum of squares and the Residual sum of squares. The total sum of squares represents the overall variance in the dependent variable. The regression model demonstrates an appropriate number of degrees of freedom, reflecting the inclusion of multiple predictor variables. The residual degrees of freedom are determined by subtracting the number of predictors and the intercept from the total number of observations. Mean square values for both regression and residual components are computed by dividing their respective sums of squares by the associated degrees of freedom. The F-ratio, obtained by dividing the mean square of the regression by that of the residuals, indicates the model's explanatory power relative to unexplained variance. A statistically significant p-value supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that the model accounts for a meaningful portion of the variance in the dependent variable. These results suggest that at least one of the predictor variables makes a significant contribution to explaining the outcome. Overall, the ANOVA results validate the suitability and effectiveness of the regression model used in the analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study highlight significant inconsistencies in the implementation of compensation strategies within community colleges, particularly when compared with the standards established by Tribhuvan University (TU) and national labor policies. While gratuity fund services and performance-based reward mechanisms were found to positively influence employee motivation, their adoption remains dependent on the internal regulations of individual colleges rather than being formally aligned with TU's overarching policy framework. This outcome corroborates the conclusions of Nurjadidah et al. (2024), who emphasized the motivational benefits of institutionalized reward practices even in decentralized governance settings.

Despite these positive practices, a notable gap was identified in the implementation of the legally mandated Social Security Fund across the sampled institutions. The absence of this provision not only reflects noncompliance with regulatory standards but also contradicts the findings of Nurjadidah et al. (2024), who reported widespread adherence to such mandates in comparable institutional contexts. This gap underscores weaknesses in institutional accountability and regulatory enforcement.

Similarly, the study revealed that parental leave provisions, including both maternity and paternity leave, were marginal and inconsistently applied. This finding represents a significant deviation from governmental labor policy and university guidelines. The limited adoption of parental leave provisions stands in contrast to the findings of Ren and Siew (2023), who documented broader implementation within similar educational institutions. The lack of consistency in such benefits raises concerns about equity and institutional responsibility.

Another important finding relates to the insufficient and poorly structured career development opportunities for teaching faculty. This aligns with the work of Chen et al. (2003), who reported the absence of systematic professional growth initiatives in higher education institutions. The persistence of these inadequacies suggests that employee development has not been treated as a strategic priority within community colleges. As a result, the potential for long-term institutional growth and faculty retention remains undermined.

Taken together, these findings reveal disparities in compensation strategies that contribute to a perceived undervaluation of employees within community colleges. To address these challenges, it is recommended that TU adopt a more proactive role in monitoring not only the academic but also the human resource management dimensions of community colleges. Likewise, the Nepal Public Campus Association (NPCA), as the representative body of community colleges, should engage more strategically with these issues. At the institutional level, management committees must prioritize the equitable application of employee benefits and professional development opportunities to strengthen faculty morale and enhance overall performance.

Finally, it is important to note that these findings are context-specific, reflecting the situation within community colleges in Madhesh Pradesh, Nepal. As such, generalizations to community colleges in other regions should be made with caution. Future studies encompassing a broader geographic scope would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the alignment between institutional practices, national labor policies, and university regulations.

Conclusion

The findings of this study carry important implications for policy and practice in the governance of community colleges. The inconsistencies in compensation strategies and benefits provision highlight an urgent need for harmonization between institutional practices and the national labor framework, particularly regarding gratuity funds, social security provisions, parental leave, and professional development opportunities. Without such alignment, faculty morale and institutional accountability risk further deterioration, ultimately affecting educational outcomes. Therefore, TU must take a more proactive role in ensuring compliance not only with academic standards but also with labor and human resource policies, while the NPCA should serve as a stronger advocacy body to bridge policy gaps at the institutional level. For individual campus management committees, these findings imply a responsibility to prioritize equitable compensation and career development as strategic investments in organizational performance. More broadly, the study suggests that institutional reforms and stronger oversight mechanisms are essential for building a fair, motivating, and sustainable work environment within community colleges, although the contextual focus on Madhesh Pradesh warrants caution in generalizing these implications to other regions.

Future research should expand the scope beyond Madhesh Pradesh to include community colleges from diverse provinces of Nepal in order to generate more representative insights into compensation strategies and governance practices. Comparative studies across regions could help identify systemic gaps as well as context-specific challenges. Moreover, future studies should adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative assessments of employee motivation and performance with qualitative perspectives from faculty, administrators, and policymakers to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Longitudinal research could also be valuable in tracking the long-term impact of policy reforms, particularly regarding the implementation of social security provisions, parental leave, and professional development opportunities. Finally, cross-national comparative studies with similar higher education contexts may offer useful lessons for policy harmonization, enabling Nepal's community colleges to align more effectively with international labor and academic standards.

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