

Job Satisfaction of Selected Rural Community School Teachers in Nepal

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Abstract

The purpose of the study entitled Job Satisfaction of Selected Rural Community School Teachers in Nepal was to explore the factors that impact on job satisfaction of rural community school teachers in Nepal. The study employed a phenomenological research design and a qualitative method within the interpretive paradigm. Four public secondary schools were selected through purposive sampling, along with four head teachers, two permanent teachers, three government-subsidized contract teachers, and two teachers recruited from internal sources. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The study shows that the existing pay scale, school environment, distribution of opportunities, and the relationship between teachers and parents were the main factors of teachers' job satisfaction. Internal sources teachers' pay scale was based on nominal only. There was no team spirit, teamwork, co-ordination, cooperation, ideas sharing, or warm discussion about their professional careers between teachers. Backbiting, cheating, and political biasness were highly placed in school by which an internal environment was not peaceful in schools. Delegation of authority, promotion policy, transfer system, and teachers' selection for training were not fair in the school. Localization, political ideology, kinship was highly placed in the distribution of opportunities.

Keywords: Environment, factors, job, opportunities, satisfaction, school

Introduction

Teachers' job satisfaction refers to the contentment and fulfillment experienced by educators in their teaching roles. It plays a vital role in the effective teaching-learning process. It is also related to the positive behavior of teachers. For example, Unziker (2012) viewed job satisfaction as teachers' positive feelings in their work. The above views indicate that the teacher's job satisfaction is related to the rules and regulations of the school, the attitude of teachers, and different decision-making processes.

Job satisfaction is a complex and multidimensional concept. It is influenced by several factors, including workload, administrative support, interpersonal relationships, compensation, recognition, and working conditions (Dinham & Scott, 2000). In rural areas, these challenges tend to be more acute due to geographical isolation, resource limitations, and socio-economic constraints. Teachers in such settings often encounter professional challenges beyond the typical urban experience, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of instructional resources, and limited professional development opportunities (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). This dynamic is particularly evident in rural Nepal, where the lack of motivation among teachers not only compromises the quality of education but also contributes to high dropout rates and poor academic performance among students.

Reflecting on these realities, I saw the intricate connection between job satisfaction and pedagogical performance. A teacher's emotional and professional well-being significantly influences classroom behavior, teaching quality, and student engagement. Research suggests that satisfied teachers are more likely to demonstrate higher commitment, enthusiasm, and effectiveness in their teaching practices (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In contrast, dissatisfaction can lead to burnout, absenteeism, and even attrition, which negatively affect students' learning experiences and outcomes.

In this context, job satisfaction is influenced by a myriad of factors, including workload, administrative support, community expectations, and teacher-parent relationships. In rural Nepal, teachers often work in isolation, with minimal support from educational authorities and limited opportunities for collaboration with peers (Bhatta, 2011). The profession demands more than instructional expertise—teachers frequently take on multiple roles as social workers, mentors, and community leaders, particularly in rural areas where social services are scarce. While such involvement

can offer intrinsic rewards, the burden of fulfilling these roles without adequate institutional support can lead to dissatisfaction over time (Manandhar, 2018). The above information noted that in rural Nepal, most teachers face heavy workloads and loneliness, with minimal administrative support and high parents' expectations. Regardless of intrinsic rewards from multifaceted roles, insufficient instructional backing often leads to less satisfaction of teachers.

Additionally, teachers' socio-economic challenges in rural settings further exacerbate job dissatisfaction. Teachers working in these areas are often underpaid relative to their workload and face financial insecurity, which affects their motivation and ability to concentrate on pedagogical responsibilities (Bista, 2004). Furthermore, Nepal's decentralized education system, while intended to empower local governments and schools, has introduced new challenges, such as inconsistent policies and a lack of uniform guidelines for teacher management (Bishop et al., 2020). This uncertainty creates professional instability, making teachers feel undervalued and unsupported in their roles.

Teachers in Nepal have expressed dissatisfaction with heavy workloads, cooperation and coordination issues among colleagues, and perceptions of student discipline (Gu, 2016; Anna et al., 2021; Kelvin, 2016). These factors are believed to influence teacher job satisfaction within schools significantly (Anna et al., 2021). However, the exact nature and extent of these issues among community secondary school teachers in Nepal remain largely unexplored. So, the primary purpose of this study was to explore the factors impacting the job satisfaction of rural community school teachers in Nepal.

Literature Review

Different researchers, educators, and thinkers stated different factors. Among them related literatures were reviewed on the basis of research question about the factors that impact on teachers' job satisfaction. These factors were divided into main themes and illustrated in the following ways:

Professional Development Opportunities

Distribution and access of opportunities are key factors that impact teachers' job satisfaction. The distribution process of different types of opportunities determines the job satisfaction level of teachers. In this context, Ball and Stenlund (2010) indicated that teachers were highly satisfied with their job promotion opportunities

in the schools of Ontario in Canada. In contrast, Wong and Wong (2005) concluded that the secondary school teacher's job satisfaction level with promotion is quite low in Hong Kong and it influenced on teacher's commitment towards their school. Similarly, Mengistu (2012) noted that the Ethiopian secondary-level teachers were significantly dissatisfied with their job. Opportunities of promotion for the teachers were the main factor of job dissatisfaction. The aforementioned arguments state that the promotion system of the school helps to increase the job satisfaction of teachers.

Work Environment

Teacher job satisfaction is closely intertwined with the school environment. A supportive, collaborative, peaceful, and well-resourced school environment can contribute higher job satisfaction of teachers. School environment also plays a vital role in academic institution. Concerning this, Ansah- Hughes (2016) noted that most of teachers chosen to change their profession as a result of dissatisfaction and they felt that teachers' profession was not good. The research found that teachers were found dissatisfied with security in their workplace as well as their profession. Similarly, Chughati and Perveen (2013) found that public school teachers were not satisfied with their additional and other extra work benefits in Pakistan. Teachers were satisfied with their working hours and working conditions. They felt that their work was overloaded as they liked.

Likewise, Modest and Onyango (2021) found that there was low level of job satisfaction due to the poor workplace conditions in secondary level schools in Tanzania. On the other hand, You et al. (2015) stated that in Korean secondary school teachers were not satisfied to their job. The environment of the school and supporting behavior from other colleagues had a negative effect on the teacher's job satisfaction. The above-mentioned discussion highlights that teachers' job satisfaction is affected by working conditions and the working environment of the school and classroom as well.

Workload and Job Stress

Teachers' job satisfaction is related to their workload and job stress. Regarding this, Iwu et al. (2013) claimed that working conditions, job security and work overload were the affecting factors of teachers' job satisfaction in South African high schools. In contrast, Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) stated that the most of teachers were dissatisfied in South Africa. The study indicated that the overcrowded classes, and

lack of discipline of students, were the main factors of teacher's job dissatisfaction in South African schools. Moreover, Anastasiou and Papakonstantinou (2014) indicated that the most of secondary level teachers were less satisfied with the working conditions of schools in Greece. Furthermore, in Greece, the researcher stated that the teachers' joy for working with their students, working conditions of school were the affecting factors of teachers' job satisfaction (Anastasiou & Papakonstantinou, 2014). However, the teachers were more satisfied in schools with higher economic and social resources in both U.S. and China. Teachers in the U.S. chose to teach in rural areas because they enjoyed the rural lifestyle and environment (Ouyang & Paprock, 2006). The aforesaid conclusion shows that teacher's job dissatisfaction level is determined through the teacher's daily work load, and the working environment of the school.

Salary and Benefits

Salary is a key factor of teachers' job satisfaction. It plays an important role in an academic institution as well as teachers' satisfaction. Cypriot teacher's feelings of their satisfaction are largely related to their salary (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006). In contrast, the teachers in community secondary schools in the South-Central Region of Botswana were most dissatisfied with their jobs due to their salary (Isaiah & Nenty, 2012). In the same way, the research stated that 67.3 percent of the teachers were dissatisfied with their present salary in Ghana (George, 2010). The aforementioned conclusion clarifies that teachers' job satisfaction is affected by their salary. It also justifies that the pay scale of teacher determines the satisfaction and dissatisfaction level of teachers.

Recognition and Respect

Recognition and respect are the main factors of teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers expected these for their students, parent and community. In this context, Rocque and Malhotra (2024) noted that a successful educational system must emphasize and focus on the importance and recognition of teachers, both within schools and the broader community. Similarly, Andrews (2011) found that teacher recognition is one of the most important factors in improving student learning outcomes. Gavish and Friedman (2016) highlighted that novice teachers have very high expectations for public recognition. They expect respect and recognition from parents, students, and other members of the community. The mentioned above

information reflects that teachers' job satisfaction level declare on the basis of recognition and respect at their workplace.

Methodology

Phenomenology was the most suitable research approach for this study. It is a qualitative research approach that seeks to explore and describe the lived experiences of individuals, capturing the essence of how people experience particular phenomena (Creswell, 2013). In the context of this research, phenomenology allowed me for a deep understanding of how teachers in rural Nepal perceive and experience job satisfaction. This study was carried out in four public secondary schools of Chamunda Bindrasaini Municipality in Dailekh District. So, the research involved teachers of selected schools. Among eleven teachers, seven teachers and four head teachers were selected through purposive sampling. Interviews were the primary method of data collection in this study, as they are well-suited to phenomenological research, allowing participants to reflect deeply on their lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for phenomenological research, as it allows for a deep exploration of participants' lived experiences.

Results and Discussion

The data generated in the research field are analyzed and interpreted under their corresponding sub-themes namely (a) mutual relationship between parents and teachers, (b) distribution and access of opportunities, (c) school environment and (d) pay scale of teachers.

Mutual Relationship between Teachers and Parents

The role of the teacher-parents' relationship in teachers' job satisfaction is claimed to be important worldwide. In the context of this research, the participants had their opinions which appeared to be different from one another. According to them, there are several ways to claim how mutual relationship between teachers and parent's impacts teachers' job satisfaction. Exploring the role of teacher-parent relationship in teachers' job satisfaction. Regarding this, all selected respondents shared common views and said:

The relationship between teachers and parents at our school is strained, with parents holding predominantly negative views. They believe teachers should be solely responsible for the school's functioning and they do not see a role for themselves. Instead of recognizing positive aspects, parents often blame

and criticize teachers. Some even engage in unruly behavior, including scolding, quarreling, attacking upon teachers, and threatening them. I avoid responding to these incidents. As an outsider, defending against this behavior is challenging. School administrators occasionally hold meetings, but some parents refuse to participate in the meeting, often focusing on economic benefits over educational improvements. Such a challenging relationship between them often turns the teachers to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

The data provided paints a clear picture of how a strained relationship with parents can be a major source of dissatisfaction. By situating myself within this analysis, I can better understand the deeper emotional and professional implications. Research shows that strained relationships with stakeholders, especially parents, are often a primary cause of emotional exhaustion among teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). It's not merely about occasional frustrations; it's about the constant, unresolved tension that manifests in unruly behavior—scolding, quarreling, and even threats from parents.

In reviewing the situation, I observed that the relationship between teachers and parents is predominantly negative, with parents holding teachers solely responsible for the school's functioning. Instances of parents scolding, arguing with, and even threatening teachers were found to be common in the rural hill schools under this research. Some parents were found to have displayed unruly behavior, such as attending school meetings intoxicated and creating disruptions, which added to the teachers' stress and dissatisfaction. The teacher-parents' relationship was also found to have been unhelpful due to the lack of meaningful interaction between them. Teachers felt a lack of partnership, as parents were generally uninterested or uninvolved in school activities.

Empirical studies have indicated that teacher-parent relationships in rural schools globally often suffer due to limited communication, lack of resources, and traditional cultural expectations (Mansoor & Aslam, 2019). For instance, a study in rural India observed that teachers frequently experience emotional exhaustion when they are held solely responsible for educational outcomes, which detracts from their motivation and job satisfaction (Sharma & Kumar, 2018). Similarly, research in Nepal has found that limited parental involvement and the blaming of teachers negatively impact teachers' morale and commitment (Bhatta, 2009). In contrast, positive parental engagement has been linked to improved teacher morale and job

satisfaction in various studies (Kelvin, 2016), revealing that when parents show support, teachers feel more valued and empowered to perform effectively.

Distribution and Access to Opportunities

Data were collected about the access and distribution system of opportunities in the schools. Respondents openly expressed their opinion and experiences about the access of different types of opportunities. They agreed that access of opportunities is one of the most important factors which impact on teachers' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. All informants expressed their common experiences and perceptions with differently and noted:

From our perspective, the local government and the district education development and coordination unit create and provide various opportunities for teachers. However, we perceive a lack of fairness and equity in the distribution of these opportunities, including teacher training, professional development, superintendent roles in school-level examinations, assignment of authority, coordination of different schemes and activities, and the authorization of vice-principal and principal roles, as well as the formulation of local-level acts and curriculum. These opportunities are distributed on the basis of localization and political ideology. The authorized personalities ignore demand base and need-based opportunities. It seems that the local government and SMC place a high focus on local teachers, while neglecting and showing bias towards teachers from outside the local area. Consequently, we have not been afforded any opportunities thus far, leading to dissatisfaction based on the perceived bias in allocating responsibilities within our schools.

My interpretation aligns with research that reveals the importance of fairness in decision-making within educational contexts. For example, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) found that teachers who experienced fair resource and leadership role distribution reported higher job satisfaction levels. In the rural Nepalese context, I sense that the teachers' experience of bias against non-local staff not only affects their job satisfaction but might also impact their sense of belonging within their schools.

Inequity in opportunities was found among school teachers. Teachers were found to have perceived a lack of fairness in access to professional development, training, and leadership roles. Often, opportunities were allocated based on locality,

ethnicity, or political affiliations, resulting in some teachers, especially non-local and temporary staff, being overlooked.

Access to professional development and training is often considered a motivator. However, within the rural Nepalese context, the lack of equitable access to these opportunities acts more as a hygiene factor that fosters dissatisfaction rather than motivation. Inequity in opportunity distribution—rooted in biases related to locality, ethnicity, or political affiliation—undermines the basic work environment by creating a sense of unfairness and discouragement among teachers, particularly those who are non-local, temporary, or from marginalized backgrounds. These teachers perceive an imbalance in opportunities. Empirical studies corroborate the issues of inequity in opportunity distribution and political favoritism in Nepal's public-school system, especially in rural areas. Research shows that teachers in rural schools often face restricted access to professional development, as these programs are predominantly concentrated in urban or central areas, leaving rural teachers with fewer chances to advance their skills and qualifications (Subedi, 2020). Additionally, Basnet and Luitel (2019) emphasize the role of political favoritism in Nepalese educational administration, which impacts decisions on teacher promotions, transfers, and leadership appointments, disproportionately affecting those lacking political connections.

School Environment

School environment is an important aspect of teaching learning process. It plays the vital role for making the teaching learning more effective. It also plays the important role for teachers' job satisfaction. In this concern, interviews were conducted with selected informants to collect data related to the study area. All informants agreed and expressed that school environment play the vital role for satisfaction of the teachers. In this context, teachers opined:

In our opinion, both internal and external environments contribute to teachers' job dissatisfaction. Regular attendance of teachers and students, supportive behavior, the head teacher's mentorship, and trust between the school management committee and teachers are lacking. There is unhealthy competition, gossip, and misbehavior among teachers, as well as a lack of teaching materials and proper facilities. The school's location in a noisy market area disrupts teaching and makes it hard to maintain student

concentration. Overall, the environment is not conducive to deliver the lesson in school. These factors are leading to increase job dissatisfaction.

Lastly, issues like “gossip” and “unhealthy competition” among teachers are social factors that diminish the quality of the workplace environment. The lack of collaboration or professional camaraderie negatively impacts morale, consistent with studies suggesting that collegial relationships are essential for teachers’ well-being and job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Unfavorable working conditions for teachers were found to be prevalent in the research schools. Many teachers cited a lack of supportive infrastructure, including inadequate classroom facilities, insufficient teaching materials, and a noisy school environment that disrupted learning among students and lower job satisfaction among teachers. Internal conflicts and lack of cohesion within the school premises was found to be another issue which deteriorated teachers’ job satisfaction. Teachers reported issues with cooperation, teamwork, and trust among staff. Backbiting, ideological divisions, and competition were reported to be common among teachers, which disrupted a positive school culture and increased job dissatisfaction.

The findings on the school environment in rural Nepal reveal significant barriers to teacher job satisfaction, including both tangible deficiencies and relational challenges. This scenario can be discussed effectively through Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which helps delineate factors that either prevent dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) or actively contribute to job satisfaction (motivators). When relationships are strained or fraught with conflict, it leads to dissatisfaction among teachers, further eroding job satisfaction. Studies in rural school settings corroborate that collaborative and cohesive work environments are crucial for teacher morale and satisfaction (Thapa, 2019).

Pay Scale of Teachers

Pay scale is an important aspect of teaches. It determines the satisfaction and dissatisfaction level of teachers in schools. Different pay scale of different types of teachers determines their perception and attitude towards existing job. There are different factors which impact on teachers’ job satisfaction. In this context teachers expressed common perception and said:

In our perception and experience, the existing pay scale is not appropriate our family's basic needs could not be solved through the existing pay scale.

In our opinion, the pay scale is based on daily livelihood only. The civil servant earning criteria and pay scale is different than teachers. Remote allowance, local allowance, bonus, travelling allowance, daily allowance, over time allowance etc. are provided to the civil servant by government of Nepal, but teachers do not benefit from those types of allowance. We think there is discrimination between teachers and civil servant of Nepal. The job ranking system of secondary level teachers is higher than the clerk (Kharidar in Nepal) post of civil servant, but pay scale or economically earning rank is less of them than the clerk (Kharidar in Nepal). So, we think it is not better to be involved in this job. Sometimes, we think it is better to resign and search new occupation. So, our job dissatisfaction is increasing rather than decreasing.

The teacher highlights that the existing pay scale is insufficient to meet basic family needs, stating, "the basic needs of my family could not be solved through the existing pay scale." This aligns with Herzberg's emphasis on salary as a critical hygiene factor. According to Goh and Kuvaas (2014), inadequate pay can lead to negative perceptions about the job and overall dissatisfaction. The teacher's sentiment reflects a sense of injustice and discrimination, noting, "There is discrimination between teachers and civil servants of Nepal." This perception of inequity can significantly impact motivation and commitment, reinforcing Herzberg's assertion that hygiene factors must be adequately addressed to ensure job satisfaction.

Teachers, particularly relief and internal source teachers, were found to have been dissatisfied with the current pay scale, which they felt did not meet their daily financial needs or align with the high demands of their roles. Such teachers were reported to serve schools without allowances and incentives.

In the same way, different pay scales were found to have existed for permanent, temporary, and relief teachers, with internal source teachers and relief teachers being paid less despite having similar responsibilities. This disparity added to their job dissatisfaction. Teachers viewed the pay scale as discriminatory compared to other government employees with similar or even lower ranks, such as clerks, who receive higher financial compensation, leading some teachers to consider leaving the profession.

The teachers claimed not to have been offered similar benefits (allowances and bonuses) as offered to civil servants. Such disparity was found to have contributed to

feelings of inequity and job dissatisfaction among the teachers in question. A study by Kelvin (2016) emphasizes that the pay structure within the Nepalese education sector is a prominent factor affecting teacher morale, especially among temporary and relief teachers, who often view their role as unstable and undervalued.

Conclusion

I have drawn the conclusion based on in-depth interviews with head teachers and teachers. Most teachers are dissatisfied with their existing jobs. Internal sources and relief teachers are more dissatisfied than permanent teachers. Newly appointed teachers seem satisfied. The relationship between teachers and parents is needed for managing the students' learning. However, there is no mutual relationship in school. Parents try to impose the blame to the teachers for their pedagogical performance rather than motivate them towards their job. Specifically, there is important role of parents to increase the quality education in school but parents ignore, hate and scold to the teachers about unnecessary subject matter. Parents are not responsible for school, and they compare the teachers with the laborers. It is needed to maintain proper relationship between teachers and parents but there are high lapses to the presence of parents in school for developing a mutual relationship with teachers. Parents have no ownership of their school and are not conscious of developing a mutual relationship with teachers.

Different types of opportunities, such as teacher training, promotion, distribution of authority etc. must be distributed without any bias. Equity and equality must be needed in the schools. Existing pay scale of teachers in Nepal is a crucial factor in job satisfaction. Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction is determined by the existing pay scale system. The existing pay scale system for teachers in Nepal is based only on livelihood. Internal sources for teachers' pay scale do not match the pay scale criteria of the government of Nepal. There are no facilities of remote allowance, travelling allowance, daily allowance and local allowance to the teachers, which increases teachers' job dissatisfaction. Pay scale system must be equal in same post between teachers and civil servants but there is discrimination of pay scale system between all types of teachers and civil servants in Nepal. I believe that my study has some lapses to cover the areas of teachers' job satisfaction. Other areas are such as, job satisfaction of rural teachers, contextualizing of job satisfaction and pedagogies, role of local government for increasing job satisfaction of teachers.

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