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Assessing Bachelor-Level Students' Interest in Daytime Non-Credit Skill- Based Courses: A Survey Study at Mahakavi Devkota Campus

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Abstract

This study investigates bachelor-level students' interest in daytime non-credit skill-based courses at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. In contemporary higher education, academic degrees alone are often insufficient to meet the rapidly changing demands of the labor market. Students increasingly seek additional practical, technical, and entrepreneurial competencies that can improve employability and career readiness. In this context, non-credit short courses provide a flexible and accessible opportunity for learners to acquire market-relevant skills without increasing the burden of formal academic programs. The study employed a descriptive survey design and collected data from 136 bachelor-level students enrolled in different programs, including BBA, BBS, BA, B.Ed., and BICTE. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information regarding students' awareness, previous exposure, level of interest, preferred course categories, class timing preferences, motivation, and willingness to pay. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and interpretive discussion. The findings reveal that although most students had limited prior experience with non-credit courses, a significant majority expressed strong interest in enrolling in such programs. Digital Marketing, Graphic Design, and Share Market-related courses emerged as the most preferred areas, followed by hospitality-oriented skills such as Barista and Bakery training. Students preferred classes during mid-morning and afternoon hours, indicating the practicality of daytime scheduling. Most respondents also favored an affordable fee range of NPR 10,000–12,000 for a three-month course. The study concludes that there is clear demand for structured, affordable, and career-oriented non-credit courses at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. Introducing such programs can strengthen students' practical competence, improve employability prospects, and enhance the campus's role in skill development and lifelong learning.

Keywords: *Non-credit courses, skill development, employability, bachelor students, higher education, student interest, Mahakavi Devkota Campus, Nepal*

Introduction

Higher education institutions across the world are increasingly expected to produce graduates who possess not only academic knowledge but also practical skills, adaptability, and professional competence. In the twenty-first century labor market, employers often seek individuals who can demonstrate communication ability, digital literacy, problem-solving capacity, teamwork, and entrepreneurial thinking (Binkley et al., 2011). As a result, conventional degree programs alone are no longer considered sufficient to ensure employability and career success. This changing context has encouraged universities and colleges to explore supplementary learning opportunities that enhance students' workplace readiness and lifelong learning capacity.

One important response to this shift is the introduction of non-credit skill-based courses. These courses are generally short-term, flexible, practice-oriented, and separate from the formal credit-bearing curriculum. They allow students to gain specialized competencies in areas such as digital marketing, graphic design, financial literacy, hospitality services, language training, and information technology (Adeyinka-Ojo et al., 2020). Because they do not add pressure to formal academic requirements, non-credit courses are particularly suitable for students who wish to strengthen their skills while continuing regular degree studies. Okolie et al. (2020) have noted that such courses contribute significantly to employability enhancement, professional confidence, and continuous learning culture in higher education institutions.

In Nepal, concerns regarding graduate unemployment, underemployment, and the mismatch between academic qualifications and labor market expectations have become increasingly visible. Many students complete bachelor-level degrees with theoretical knowledge but limited practical exposure. Consequently, there is growing interest in alternative and complementary forms of education that can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world demands (Ramaley, 2005). Non-credit skill-based programs have strong potential in this regard, especially when designed according to students' needs, affordability, and scheduling convenience.

Mahakavi Devkota Campus, as a multidisciplinary institution offering bachelor-level programs such as BBA, BBS, BA, B.Ed., and BICTE, is well positioned to introduce such initiatives. The campus serves students from diverse academic and socio-economic backgrounds who may benefit from additional opportunities for skill acquisition and career preparation. However, successful implementation of non-credit courses requires evidence-based understanding of students' awareness, motivation, course preferences, available time, and fee expectations. Without such information, programs may fail to attract participation or respond effectively to learner demand.

This study, therefore, seeks to assess bachelor-level students' interest in daytime non-credit skill-based courses at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. It specifically examines students' familiarity with such courses, level of motivation to enroll, preferred training areas, suitable class timings, and willingness to pay. The findings are expected to provide valuable guidance for campus administrators and academic planners in designing practical, affordable, and student-centered non-credit programs. Ultimately, the study contributes to broader discussions on how higher education institutions in Nepal can expand their role from knowledge providers to facilitators of employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning.

Literature Review

The concept of non-credit education has gained increasing recognition in higher education systems throughout the world. Traditionally, universities and colleges focused primarily on credit-bearing degree programs that emphasized disciplinary knowledge and academic certification. However, the rapid transformation of economies, technology, and employment patterns has encouraged institutions to diversify learning opportunities beyond formal curricula. Non-credit courses, certificate programs, and short-term skill-based training have emerged as practical responses to the growing demand for flexible, career-oriented education (Newmann and Rosedale, 2025). These programs are particularly valuable because they enable students to acquire relevant competencies without extending the duration of their formal degree studies.

One of the major theoretical foundations supporting non-credit education is the concept of human capital development. According to Becker's human capital theory (1992), investment in education and

training enhances individuals' productivity, earning potential, and employability. In this perspective, non-credit courses function as additional investments that strengthen a learner's market value through practical competencies such as digital literacy, communication skills, technical expertise, and entrepreneurial knowledge. Modern employers often seek graduates who can apply theoretical understanding in real-world settings, making skill-based training increasingly important (Dharma Raja, 2025).

Several studies have emphasized the relationship between employability and supplementary skill development. Boateng (2025) argued that employability depends not only on academic qualifications but also on transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, adaptability, and technological competence. Similarly, Yorke (2010) noted that employability is a combination of knowledge, skills, personal attributes, and understanding that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen occupations. In this context, non-credit courses can provide students with targeted learning experiences that formal academic programs may not always deliver in sufficient depth.

The growing digital economy has further increased the relevance of short-term skill-based courses. Studies by Tan and Guo (2025) indicated that institutions are increasingly offering non-credit training in areas such as digital marketing, graphic design, coding, financial technology, and online entrepreneurship. These programs allow colleges and universities to respond quickly to changing labor market trends, unlike traditional curricula which often require lengthy approval and revision processes. As industries evolve rapidly, flexible learning pathways become essential for preparing students for contemporary careers.

Student motivation is another important factor in participation in non-credit learning. According to self-determination theory developed by Reeve (2012), learners are more likely to engage in educational activities when they perceive personal value, autonomy, and future benefit. Applied to non-credit education, students are more motivated to enroll when courses align with their career goals, interests, and immediate practical needs. Courses that promise certification, employability advantages, entrepreneurship opportunities, or income generation tend to attract stronger participation.

Affordability and accessibility also play critical roles in determining student interest. Research conducted in South Asian higher education contexts by Pradhan et al. (2023) found that students showed greater willingness to enroll in short-term skill courses when fees were reasonable and schedules were compatible with regular classes. Flexible timing, especially daytime or weekend sessions, was identified as a major factor influencing participation. For many students in developing countries, cost sensitivity remains significant; therefore, institutions must design programs with realistic fee structures.

In Nepal, higher education institutions have increasingly recognized the need to integrate practical learning opportunities alongside degree programs. However, many campuses still rely heavily on theoretical instruction and examination-oriented teaching practices. This often creates a gap between graduates' academic qualifications and the practical skills demanded by employers. Studies on youth employment in Nepal frequently identify deficiencies in communication skills, digital competence, workplace readiness, and entrepreneurial capacity among graduates (Gupta, 2025). As a result, short-term non-credit programs have strong potential to address these shortcomings.

Non-credit education also contributes to the broader concept of lifelong learning. UNESCO (Biesta et al.) emphasizes that education should not be limited to formal degree attainment but should continue throughout life in response to changing economic and social conditions (Sayed and Ahmed, 2015).

Short courses and continuing education programs enable learners to reskill and upskill at different stages of life. For undergraduate students, such opportunities cultivate habits of continuous self-improvement and adaptability.

Despite the growing relevance of non-credit courses, existing literature reveals a shortage of institution-specific studies in Nepal, particularly at the campus level. While general discussions on employability and technical training exist, limited empirical research has examined students' preferences regarding course categories, timing, affordability, and motivation within specific higher education institutions. Student interests may vary according to program background, gender composition, geographic setting, and local labor market opportunities. Therefore, localized studies are necessary for effective planning and implementation.

This study addresses that gap by examining bachelor-level students' interest in daytime non-credit skill-based courses at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. It contributes to the literature by providing campus-based evidence on student awareness, demand patterns, scheduling preferences, and affordability expectations. Such findings can help policymakers and administrators design responsive programs that connect higher education with employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning goals.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design (Tripodi and Bender, 2010) to assess bachelor-level students' interest in daytime non-credit skill-based courses at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. The descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to examine existing opinions, preferences, awareness levels, and expectations of respondents in a systematic manner (Vass et al., 2017). Since the study aimed to understand students' current perceptions rather than establish causal relationships, the survey method provided an effective framework for collecting data from a relatively large number of participants within a limited period of time.

The population of the study consisted of bachelor-level students enrolled in different academic programs at Mahakavi Devkota Campus. These programs included BBA, BBS, BA, B.Ed., and BICTE. Students from different semesters and years of study were considered to ensure representation of learners with varying academic experiences and career concerns. A total of 136 students participated in the study. The respondents were selected through convenience sampling (Johnston et al., 2009), whereby students who were available and willing to participate during the data collection period were included in the sample. Although convenience sampling has limitations in terms of generalizability, it was practical and suitable for an institutional survey of this nature (Almusaed et al., 2025).

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended items. Closed-ended questions were used to gather measurable information regarding demographic background, awareness of non-credit courses, level of interest, preferred course categories, class timing preferences, motivation, and willingness to pay. Open-ended questions were included to obtain students' suggestions, expectations, and additional views regarding the design and implementation of such courses. The instrument was prepared in clear and simple language so that respondents could understand the questions easily.

Before the final administration, the questionnaire was reviewed carefully to ensure clarity, relevance, and logical sequencing of questions. Necessary modifications were made to improve wording and

eliminate ambiguity. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire among students present on campus during daytime hours. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were requested to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. Adequate time was provided for completion, and the researcher remained available to clarify any confusion regarding the items.

The collected data were edited, coded, and organized systematically for analysis. Quantitative responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, and tabular presentation. These techniques were useful in summarizing trends related to students' awareness, motivation, preferences, and affordability expectations (Conner and Rabovsky, 2011). Qualitative responses obtained from open-ended questions were reviewed thematically to identify common suggestions and recurring concerns expressed by students. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis helped provide a broader understanding of student interest in non-credit courses.

Ethical considerations were given due importance throughout the research process. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from respondents prior to data collection. Students were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic and institutional planning purposes. No personal identifiers were recorded, and the data were handled with respect for privacy and anonymity. These ethical measures helped ensure trustworthiness and integrity in the research process.

Findings and Discussions

This section presents the major findings of the survey conducted among 136 bachelor-level students of Mahakavi Devkota Campus regarding their interest in daytime non-credit skill-based courses. The data are presented through tables followed by analysis and interpretation.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Age Group of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
16–18	5	3.7
19–21	93	68.4
22–24	38	27.9
Total	**136**	**100.0**

The majority of respondents (68.4%) belonged to the age group of 19–21 years, followed by 27.9 percent in the 22–24 age group. This indicates that most participants were in the active phase of undergraduate study, where career preparation and skill development are highly relevant.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	26	19.1
Female	110	80.9
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Female students represented the majority of respondents (80.9%), while male students accounted for 19.1 percent. This reflects the current enrollment pattern of several programs at the campus and suggests that future skill-based courses should be designed inclusively with attention to female learners' participation.

Table 3: Program of Study

Program	Frequency	Percent
BBA	35	25.7
BBS	57	41.9
BA	1	0.7
BICTE	22	16.2
B.Ed.	20	14.7
Others	1	0.7
Total	**136**	**100.0**

The highest number of respondents came from BBS (41.9%), followed by BBA (25.7%), BICTE (16.2%), and B.Ed. (14.7%). This indicates stronger representation from management and education streams, where practical and professional skill enhancement may be particularly valued.

Awareness and Exposure to Non-Credit Courses

Table 4: Previous Participation in Non-Credit Courses

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	19.9
No	109	80.1
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Only 19.9 percent of respondents had previously taken any non-credit course, while 80.1 percent had no prior experience. This suggests that non-credit education opportunities remain underutilized among students.

Table 5: Familiarity with Non-Credit Courses

Level of Familiarity	Frequency	Percent
Very Familiar	19	14.0
Somewhat Familiar	38	27.9
Heard but Unsure	40	29.4
Not Familiar at All	39	28.7
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Although some students were familiar with non-credit courses, a large proportion had limited understanding. This finding indicates the need for awareness campaigns and proper communication before launching such programs.

Interest in Non-Credit Courses

Table 6: Level of Interest

Level of Interest	Frequency	Percent
Very Interested	64	47.1
Moderately Interested	31	22.8
Slightly Interested	29	21.3
Not Interested	12	8.8
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Despite low prior exposure, students demonstrated high interest in enrolling in non-credit courses. Nearly half of the respondents (47.1%) were very interested, while only 8.8 percent showed no interest. This suggests strong demand for such learning opportunities.

Table 7: Motivation to Take Non-Credit Courses

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	113	83.1
No	23	16.9
Total	**136**	**100.0**

A large majority (83.1%) expressed motivation to join non-credit courses. This indicates that students recognize the importance of practical skills for employment and self-development.

Preferred Class Timing

Table 8: Preferred Timing

Class Timing	Frequency	Percent
Early Morning (6–9 AM)	36	26.5
Mid-Morning (9 AM–12 PM)	60	44.1
Afternoon (12–3 PM)	39	28.7
Total	**136**	**100.0**

The most preferred schedule was mid-morning (44.1%), followed by afternoon sessions (28.7%). This suggests that students prefer courses during regular daytime hours rather than very early sessions.

Willingness to Pay

Table 9: Fee Preference for a 3-Month Course

Fee Range	Frequency	Percent
NPR 10,000–12,000	133	97.8
NPR 15,000–18,000	1	0.7
More than NPR 18,000	1	0.7
Total	**136**	**100.0**

Almost all respondents preferred the fee range of NPR 10,000–12,000. This indicates strong price sensitivity and highlights the need for affordable course structures.

Preferred Course Categories

Table 10: Preferred Skill-Based Courses

Course Category	Responses	Percent of Cases
Digital Marketing	58	43.9
Graphic Design	46	34.8
Share Market	41	31.1
Barista	31	23.5
Bakery	30	22.7
Share Market (Basic)	25	18.9
UI/UX Design	17	12.9

Digital Marketing emerged as the most preferred course, followed by Graphic Design and Share Market-related training. Students also showed interest in hospitality-based skills such as Barista and Bakery. This demonstrates diverse student demand across digital, financial, creative, and service sectors.

Inferential Analysis

To determine whether students' level of interest in non-credit skill-based courses differs according to demographic characteristics, Chi-Square tests of independence were conducted. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Table 11: Association between Gender and Level of Interest in Non-Credit Courses

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
Gender × Level of Interest	3.27	3	0.352	Not Significant

The Chi-Square test revealed no statistically significant association between gender and students' level of interest in non-credit courses ($\chi^2 = 3.27$, $p > .05$). This indicates that male and female students showed similar levels of interest in participating in skill-based training programs. Therefore, interest in non-credit courses appears to be independent of gender.

Table 12: Association between Academic Program and Level of Interest in Non-Credit Courses

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
Program of Study × Level of Interest	12.84	12	0.381	Not Significant

The relationship between students' academic program and their level of interest in non-credit courses was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 12.84$, $p > .05$). Students from BBA, BBS, B.Ed., BICTE, and other programs exhibited comparable levels of interest. This finding suggests that demand for non-credit skill-based courses exists across academic disciplines rather than being concentrated within a specific program.

Table 13: Association between Previous Participation and Motivation to Enroll

Variable	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
Previous Participation × Motivation	9.56	1	0.002	Significant

A statistically significant association was found between previous participation in non-credit courses and motivation to enroll in future courses ($\chi^2 = 9.56$, $p < .05$). Students who had prior experience with non-credit courses were more likely to express motivation to participate again compared to those who had never attended such programs. This suggests that positive exposure to skill-based training encourages continued engagement in lifelong learning opportunities.

The inferential analysis demonstrates that students' interest in non-credit skill-based courses is broadly shared across gender groups and academic programs. However, prior experience with non-credit learning significantly influences future motivation to participate. These findings imply that once students are exposed to such programs, they are more likely to recognize their value and seek additional training opportunities. Consequently, awareness campaigns, pilot courses, and introductory training initiatives may play an important role in increasing participation and sustaining demand for non-credit education at Mahakavi Devkota Campus.

Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly indicate that bachelor-level students at Mahakavi Devkota Campus possess strong interest in non-credit skill-based courses, despite limited prior awareness and participation. Most students perceive such programs as valuable opportunities to gain practical knowledge, enhance employability, and improve future career prospects.

The study further reveals that students prefer short-term, affordable, and market-oriented courses offered during convenient daytime hours. Digital Marketing, Graphic Design, and Share Market training emerged as the most demanded areas, while hospitality skills such as Barista and Bakery also attracted notable interest. These preferences reflect changing employment trends and students' desire for practical competencies beyond traditional academic degrees.

Affordability was another significant finding, as nearly all respondents favored a fee range of NPR 10,000–12,000 for a three-month course. This suggests that cost-conscious planning will be essential for successful implementation.

Overall, the study concludes that Mahakavi Devkota Campus has a strong opportunity to introduce structured non-credit courses as part of its academic support and skill development initiatives. If properly planned, student-centered, and aligned with labor market needs, such programs can enhance student satisfaction, strengthen institutional reputation, and contribute meaningfully to employability and lifelong learning.

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