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Causes of Demotivation in Sanskrit Education: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages and is also known as a main source of eastern knowledge. However, in the present time the motivating factors of Sanskrit study is being weakened in Nepal. In this context, the study analyzes the causes of the demotivating of youth in Sanskrit studies in Nepal. The purpose of this study has examined why students are demotivated to study Sanskrit in higher education and what the main factors are responsible for not pursuing Sanskrit studies. The study has followed a qualitative research design and analyzed the narratives of the participants about Sanskrit studies and causes of not to demotivate to continue higher education. In depth study has used to collect data from the field. Three individuals were purposely selected for this study as participants and asked questions about the demotivating factors of continuing Sanskrit education. The conclusion is based on the primary data; however, secondary sources of data were also used in the review section. The findings have indicated that students are demotivated to pursue Sanskrit education due to several reasons: limited job opportunities, outdated teaching methods, the perceived impracticality of the curriculum, and a lack of social respect for the discipline. These factors significantly discourage young students to continue the Sanskrit education at higher levels.

Key words; demotivate, education, Nepal, Sanskrit, youth

Introduction

1. Rishi Ram Adhikari is an Assistant Professor of English at Nepal Sanskrit University, Balmeeki Campus, Kathmandu. His academic interests are focused on English literature, criticism, and political science. He is particularly involved in the study, teaching, and research of English literature and criticism.

Sanskrit served as the main focus of education in Nepal before the introduced modern educational systems; however, the present condition of Sanskrit education is regrettable, primarily due to the insufficient motivation among the youths to engage with Sanskrit education. Silwal (2024) claimed that Sanskrit education is a struggle for existence; however, Sanskrit is the only source of knowledge and wisdom. Silwal emphasized increasing the Sanskrit education in Nepal for research and innovation; however, that would not happen in Nepal due to various reasons. Twenty-five years ago, a news article published in *My Republica* entitled "school halts Sanskrit class for lack of students" also signified the demotivation of students toward Sanskrit in Nepal. The news shows the reality of Sanskrit education in Nepal. Like that, Mishra (2020) published a narrative in the Kathmandu Post entitled "A crusader of Sanskrit education" that focused on the main socio-cultural challenges of Sanskrit education in Nepal. The data of the university grand commission (2023) noted that the total number of students studying at Nepal Sanskrit University is 2800; however, around 2000 are at the Sastri (bachelors) and Acharya (Masters) level. (University Grand Commission Report 2023). The annual budget of Nepal Sanskrit University for FY 82 is 1.31 billion (Rastriya Samachar Samiti, 2025, July 16). It shows that the investment of the state is high in Sanskrit education.

In Nepal, a separate university was established in 1986 in Dang for the promotion and preservation of Sanskrit education in Nepal. In 2021, 2828 students studied at Nepal Sanskrit University (UGC Report 2023). Like that, at the school level, around 150 Gurkukuls were run in 2022 (Ministry of Education, 2023). National population report 2021 noted that 13,906 people residing in Nepal used Sanskrit as their mother tongue. These data related to Sanskrit and government investment in Sanskrit show that there is demotivation towards Sanskrit in Nepal. There is a separate university in Nepal to teach Sanskrit, and other universities also teach Sanskrit as a major subject; however, the number of students in the Sanskrit subject is significantly lower than in the other subjects, which is questionable and researchable. There are not only single causes and consequences, but also to increase the number of students in the Sanskrit subject as well as in Sanskrit universities and

colleges. The publication and writings related to Sanskrit are also lower than those of the other subjects. In this context, the study focused on the following objectives

1. To analyze the perception of the participants about the main causes of demotivation in Sanskrit education among the young generation
2. To find out the possible way to motivate students to continue Sanskrit education at a higher level.

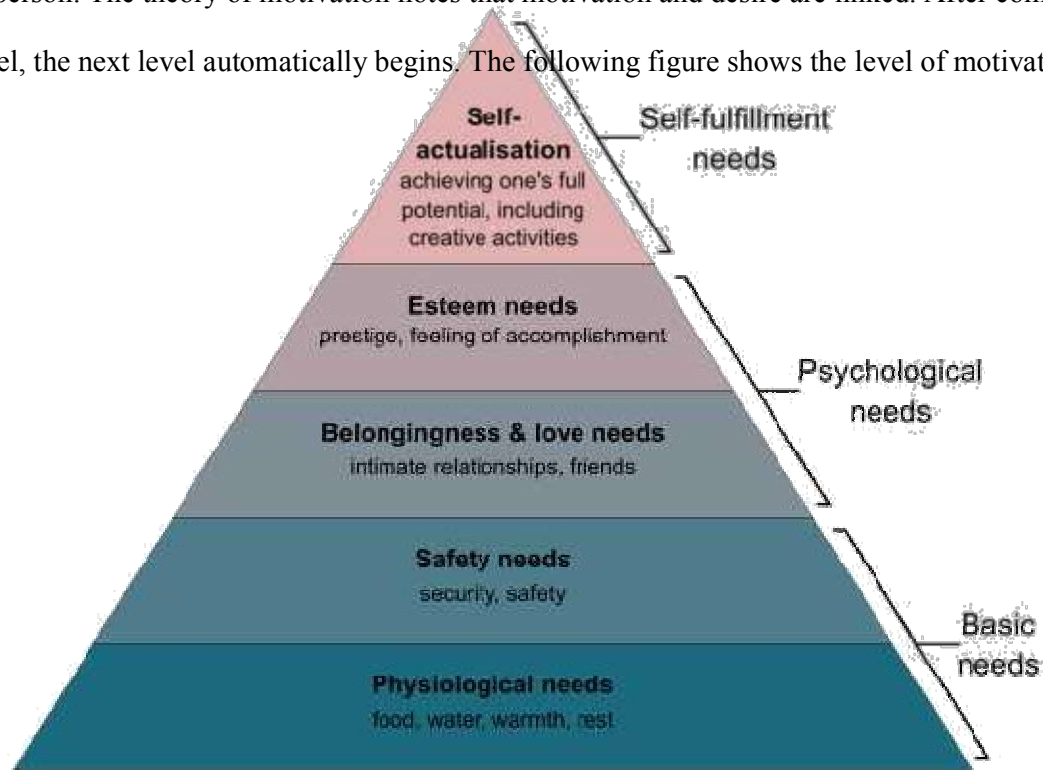
Theoretical reviews, empirical reviews and analysis of this study has based on the above mentioned objectives.

Theoretical Reviews

Motivation is an abstract force or stimulant that drives a living being towards accomplishing a task or continuing an activity. Harmer (2007, p.98) defines motivation as some sort of internal drive that pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. It is the feeling of wanting to do something, especially something that involves hard work and effort. Kreitner (1995) maintains motivation as the psychological process that gives behaviour purpose and direction. Malik (2010) defines motivation as the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals. As only a motivated individual can work persistently to achieve his/her goal, motivation is considered a very essential force or drive crucial for every teacher.

Psychologists and theorists like Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg, and McClelland have tackled various aspects of motivation theory in teaching and learning. They have analyzed the factors that play a role in motivating students to continue or discontinue their formal and informal study. They talked about content and process theories of motivation. McGregor (1960) discussed the concept of content theories that were influenced by the idea of classical theorists like David McClelland and Abraham Maslow. Maslow propounded the theory of motivation in 1993 and explained the basic factors of motivation. His book, *Motivation and Personality*, was published in 1954. The book

highlights the motivation level of an individual. In this regard, Deckers (2018) argued that internal sensation determines the motivation of an individual and creates a hierarchy of demand and desire of a person. The theory of motivation notes that motivation and desire are linked. After completing a level, the next level automatically begins. The following figure shows the level of motivation;



Source: Maslow (1970, p.55) and McEwen and Wills (2014)

Abraham Maslow discussed five levels of motivation for an individual, and he claimed that level five is the highest level of motivation. He discussed that self-actualization is the top level of motivation. After reached into the point of self actualized he or she continue her/ her work without any extra benefit. Another theorist Herzberg discussed on motivation theory in relations to working environment and productivity. His concept of motivation is related to the concept of job satisfaction Hollyforde & Whiddet, 2002 as cited in Tziava (2003) claimed that motivation factors of individual is related to the situation of working environment and job satisfaction. John Stacy Adams introduced the equity theory of motivation and he discussed about work and reward and claimed that both work and

reward play important role to enhance the motivation level of an individual. After published Adams's book of *Equity Theory of Motivation* Tziava, (2003) noted that reward and punishment based on equity play significant role to enhance the self motivation of an individual. Huczynski & Buchanan, (2001) also focused about the theory like Tziva and emphasized on equity based reward for motivation. Victor Vroom, an American psychologist talked about expectancy theory of motivation and published his book "*Work and motivation*" in 1964. In his book he claimed that relative value of reward play significant role to enhance the motivation factors of an individual. In the same way, Ghenghesh (2013) discussed on the factors of motivation and demotivation in term of working environment and the getting situation of direct and indirect benefit from the particular work. Like Ghenghesh (2013) , Tziava (2003) and Iliya and Ifeoma (2015) discussed the factors of demotivation that discourse an individual escape from the work. In the learning process of Sanskrit in university level students are demotivated not only factors but also various factors like future jobs, self respects , teaching learning environment, teaching learning materials, teaching methodology and policy of state play role to discontinue the academic career in Sanskrit education.

Review of the Empirical Literature

Sanskrit is known as one of the oldest languages of the world. In this regard, Cardona and Silvia (2018) claimed that the Sanskrit language is the source language of all Indian languages and the Rig Veda is the first and foremost text of the Sanskrit language. In the same way, Witzel (1997) explained that the Sanskrit language, known as the mother of all languages, played an important role in the advancement of indo Aryan civilization in Bharat Varsha. Scholar Mayrhofer (2000) asserted that Sanskrit holds significant value for ancient Indo-Aryan literature, including the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and its significance extends beyond its function as a language. The canonical Sanskrit epic highlights both epistemology and metaphysics of the Sanskrit world.

Niyogi (2009) claimed that Sanskrit is deeply intertwined with the philosophical and spiritual beliefs of Indo-Aryan people developed in south Asia particularly Indus civilization . So that Sanskrit is interconnected with the cultural identities of Indo Aryan people living in this territory. Sanskrit is both a language and a philosophy. In this regard Renou (1957) and Gonda (1967) noted that Sanskrit is the sources of the many languages spoken in south Asia . Like that major philosophy and cultural practices also influenced by the Sanskrit philosophy so that Sanskrit philosophy and knowledge system is the main source of epistemology of Indian sub continent including Nepal and India.

Sanskrit is the main source of Indian philosophy , however, teaching leaning of the Sanskrit more focused on the language and grammar rather than the philosophy. According to Brockington (2008) and Kak (2011), the complex nature of the Sanskrit language's syntax as well as its precise phonological features play vital roles in fountain the cognitive functionality which leads to logical reasoning, strong memory retention, and stimulating higher-order critical thinking capabilities. Patnaik (2015) further asserts that learning Sanskrit develops both linguistic and mathematics skills through its logical morphological structure and its connections to other Indo-European languages. Likewise, Narayan (2004) believes that the study of Sanskrit can help reveal the etymology of many living modern languages through comparative study of philology and linguistics.

At present, there are still ongoing debates concerning the teaching of Sanskrit as a classical means of education; however, Agarwal and Sharma (2018) present a modern interpretation of how teaching the Sanskrit language can enhance the way that students learn by enhancing their reasoning ability, ability to think critically about the material they study, and ability to solve problems, especially in scientific and mathematical content areas within the educational system.

In the same line, Jha (2016) and Dixit (2017) highlighted the role of Sanskrit in studying mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Mathematicians and scholars, such as Aryabhata and Brahmagupta, wrote mathematical and astronomical texts that were written in Sanskrit. Similarly,

Pollock (2006) observe role of Sanskrit study and its contribution for the linguistic evolution and cultural development within the Indian subcontinent and provides various examples of the interaction between languages and how Sanskrit influenced the development of languages in India. In recent time Sanskrit is being used as a language for computers concerning the issues of artificial intelligence. Singh (2019) has reported another increasing trend that can be attributed to the desire to use AI and machine learning to analyze and protect Sanskrit literature. In addition to these two areas of growth, this research seeks to identify the value of Sanskrit texts for converting historical manuscripts into contemporary digital formats.

Kanjilal (1985) investigates the mentions of flying machines in historical documents and attempts to relate them to technological interpretations. Tripathi (2007) noted that Sanskrit is based on both Vedic philosophy and modern scientific concepts, especially in the areas of quantum mechanics and consciousness. However, it is crucial to interpret these texts symbolically, taking into account the socio-cultural and historical contexts of their time rather than depending solely on an objective analysis. Moreover, Vaidya (2010) emphasizes the potential of Sanskrit to enhance international communication, particularly in the context of cross-border academic discussions.

Above reviews noted that Sanskrit is one of the important languages and philosophies of South Asia; however, the situation of Sanskrit teaching and learning is not effective in modern times. So there is a gap in the study about Sanskrit, so that the study fulfilled the gap and studied the factors that play a role in demotivating students to continue Sanskrit learning at a higher level.

Research Methodology

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews based on narrative inquiry. Three students who had recently graduated from Sanskrit University and had enrolled in Tribhuvan University participated in the study. A convenience sampling method was used to select these participants. During the in-depth interviews, they were asked about the main reasons that led them to discontinue their Sanskrit studies in higher education. The interviews covered topics such as job opportunities in Sanskrit education, the teaching and learning processes, curricula, and the overall

educational system. Collected data were thematically classified and interpreted in according to the objectives and topic

About Participants

There were three individuals who participated in this study, and they were from different socioeconomic backgrounds. A pseudonym has been given to the respondents to maintain the ethics of the research. There has been given p1 for the first participants, p2 for the second participants, and p3 for the third participants.

P1: 25 A 25-year-old boy has just completed the Sastri level from Nepal Sanskrit University, and now he is studying for a master's degree in Nepali at Tribhuvan University. He is from the Chhetri community and follows the Hindu religion.

P2: 30 A 30-year-old girl has completed a master's degree in Sanskrit University and is now studying Nepali education in Tribhuvan University. He belongs to the Brahmin Community and follows the Hindu religion.

P3: 27 A 27-year-old boy has completed the Sastri level from the Sanskrit University. After completing Sastri, he left the Sanskrit University and joined TU to study Nepali Education. He belongs to an ethnic community and follows the Hindu religion.

Discussion

In the context of Nepal, Sanskrit is the main subject of teaching and learning because there is a separate university in Nepal that teaches Sanskrit education. Before the beginning of the modern education system in 1953, only Sanskrit was the means of both formal and informal education. Till 1951, Sanskrit education was mostly used in both formal and informal teaching and learning. Slowly and gradually, the Sanskrit-educated were dominated by the modern education system, so they established a separate university was established in 1986; however, the situation of Sanskrit teaching and learning could not be improved. Still, the situation is the same according to the University grand commission report (2023), around two thousand students are studying at Sashastri(bachelor) and Acharya (master) levels. Except for the Sanskrit University, there are

masters' and bachelor's degrees in Tribhuvan University, although only a few students are enrolled in the program. The number of students studying Sanskrit teaching and learning is nominal due to various demotivating factors.

Major Factors That Demotivate Students from Sanskrit Education

Nominal students are studying Sanskrit education at a higher level because there is low motivation in Sanskrit. In this issue, p1 argued his view as:

There are certain socio-cultural factors that play a role in demotivating students to continue studying Sanskrit in higher education. Still, society treats a Sanskrit scholar as an ordinary preacher. Only a few posts are in the public service commission for a Sanskrit scholar. It is difficult to get a job for a Sanskrit scholar, so students want to join modern education. I also studied Sanskrit and faced that problem. I did not join a master's level in Sanskrit and joined Tribhuvan University. Society treats me as an ordinary astrologer. Due to the caste barrier, I could not be involved in the act of public worship and preaching. Like me, many students do not belong to the Brahmin community. *(Personal Interview, 2025)*

P1 notes the social and religious factors that demotivate students to continue Sanskrit education at a higher level. Generally, only Brahmin students get opportunities to be involved in preaching. There are no job opportunities in either the public or private sectors. Adhikari (2025) highlights, "Despite Sanskrit being one of the oldest and most culturally rich languages globally, various socio-cultural factors persist in discouraging students from pursuing it in higher education"(p.34). Even today, many people in our society treat these scholars primarily as traditional religious leaders and/or preachers, rather than serious academic professionals. Unfortunately, the limited view of scholars in the academic world has resulted in a lack of both respect and professional recognition for those involved in the study of Sanskrit. Another significant issue that contributes to this problem is the limited number of job opportunities for those who graduate with degrees in Sanskrit. Government agencies, including most Public Service Commissions, only have a few positions available for Sanskrit scholars. This lack of job opportunities leads many students to consider the field as

impractical when it comes to a future career. With the highly competitive nature of today's job market and the strong emphasis that the vast majority of students (and their families) place on securing financial stability and continuing to advance their careers, this lack of job opportunities causes students to pursue modern or "marketable" areas of study. A personal experience of mine that illustrates this frustrating situation is how I dealt with expectations of society regarding finding a meaningful job upon graduating with my degree in Sanskrit. The gap between cultural history and current utility is a main obstacle to preventing motivated students from completing their Sanskrit studies. Without structural reforms such as enhanced job opportunities, greater academic recognition, and social support Sanskrit risks becoming further marginalized within the current educational framework. Like that, government policy also plays a role in demotivating students to continue higher education. In this regard, P2 highlights,

Annually, the government invests Rs. 1.3 billion for Sanskrit university, which is the direct expenditure for Sanskrit higher education; however, the government does not have a vision to utilize the scholars of Sanskrit education. In the public service commission, there are fewer than 10 posts for Sanskrit scholars. Like that, only a few posts are available in the teacher service commission. Except that no job for a Sanskrit scholar. I have also completed a master's degree and did not get a job based on my education, so I enrolled in Tribhuvan University and studied Nepali subjects. Now I am teaching the Nepali subject in a private school. I faced many problems while I was at the Sanskrit University because there were no job opportunities except to be involved in preaching. (*Personal Interview, 2025*)

P2 noted that government policy is responsible for demotivating students to continue the Sanskrit subject at a higher level because there are fewer opportunities for jobs. She also noted that the understanding of the public toward Sanskrit is based on a traditional mindset. Except that the course content and teaching learning materials also encourage students to continue the Sanskrit subject in higher education. In this regard, p3 explains:

Sanskrit education is limited only to classical subjects, and also the classical lecturer based teaching learning is in practice. Students find it difficult in the learning process and procedure, as well as the course content and material. Difficult and outdated classical language-based courses are incorporated at a higher level, which is difficult for Brahmin students. I am a non-Brahmin student. I want to learn Sanskrit philosophy secularly, but the text is associated with religion. I hoped to learn many valuable philosophies and knowledge from Sanskrit, but my hope was not fulfilled, and I decided to join another university and did not fulfill my dream. *(Personal Interview, 2025)*

P3 describes the weakness of the course content, teaching, learning material, and teaching methodology that could not motivate students to continue higher education. He argued that if there were improved teaching and learning methodology and course contents, there would be an increase in motivation among students.

Currently, Sanskrit education is mainly consists of classical subjects with a focus on traditional teaching methods,

. Traditionally used lever method is used while teaching Sanskrit in class room. Students do not chance to actively participate in classroom and share the knowledge and experience on the on Sanskrit so that the teaching learning is boredom and students do not like to participate in classroom activities . Additionally, there is a real concern that the teaching/learning model, and resources (course material), remain antiquated. A large portion of the curriculum still centre on classical texts and linguistic structures that are no longer relevant to current learning requirements and inclusive teaching practices.

Classical and canonical Sanskrit texts were used as the main source of teaching leaning material in Sanskrit study. A lack of familiarity with these texts can create difficulties for many students - particularly those who do not have a Brahmin or other tradition-based Sanskrit background - since most have not had any access to them until they begin studying. The course material is often rigid and heavily centered on ancient religious or ritualistic topics; there is little

attempt to connect Sanskrit with more contemporary areas of study, such as linguistics, artificial intelligence (which has potential for Sanskrit), and comparative literature. Both the curriculum and methodology used to teach Sanskrit are overly traditional, making it more difficult for students to participate, and limiting the opportunities available to them. The nature of Sanskrit education also perpetuates a socio-cultural divide. Students who are not of Brahmin decent often find themselves at a disadvantage in learning because the language and methods for teaching it have been entrenched in traditions that have excluded those outside of the Brahmin class. Therefore, the higher education experience relating to Sanskrit can be both academically challenging and socially isolating for many students. To better serve students and increase participation in Sanskrit education, there is a pressing need to modernize the curriculum, incorporate interactive and learner-centered instructional strategies, and make course content more accessible and relevant to all learners, regardless of their caste or cultural background.

The participants involved in this study were from different social backgrounds. The first participant was from the Chhetri community, and he had a different story from the third participant. Both were not involved in preaching; however, p2 was involved in preaching; however, she was also not fully involved in the activities related to preaching. All have no job related to Sanskrit education, and they discontinue the Sanskrit subject and enroll in Nepali education. All agree that Sanskrit education is deeply rooted in religious motives. There is a lack of institutional support to motivate the Sanskrit students; however, the government provides certain scholarships to the students at a higher level. According to Nepal Sanskrit University records, annually, students who regularly attend classes receive a monthly scholarship of one thousand, and students who are from indigenous, Dalit, and women they have got two thousand per month. Such an amount is not sufficient to motivate the students because the number of students does not increase due to scholarships, so there needs to be more resource mobilization to motivate the students to continue Sanskrit education at a higher level. In this regard, P3 noted that the government provides scholarships for all students, but the college provides only to students who passed the final exam,

so that the scholarship is just for the students who passed the exam. Most of the time, Brahmin students secure a passing mark, and they get the scholarship. P2 and P1 also demands to increase the scholarship and other facilities, as well as a guarantee of a job after completing the Sanskrit course.

Conclusion

The study analyzes the factors that demotivate young students to continue Sanskrit studies in higher education. After completing bachelor level (Shastri) level students love to enrolled in other subjects rather to continue the Sanskrit studies. Students joined to Sanskrit study with the hope of getting knowledge about eastern philosophy, however, the situation is different and most of the teaching learning material of Sanskrit study concentrate on language and literature rather than the philosophy. The teaching learning method and the course contents applied in Sanskrit study do not link with the priority of the government to engage in job. The teaching learning material only focused the classical knowledge. The curriculum consists mostly of information taken from ancient texts, traditional grammar, and/or religious studies. There is little to no attempt to create a bridge from these classical studies to modern-day events. Because of this, many students feel like these courses do not relate to their day-to-day life. Most students believe that their degree lead to few or no career opportunities after they graduate. While there are very few careers available after obtaining a degree in just about any other major such as a scientific, managerial, or technical career, the connection of Sanskrit to a career is very tenuous at best.

The course contents of Sanskrit study is also more difficult than the modern subjects so that there need to more concentration and hard labor. The factors also demotivates the youth to continue Sanskrit study in higher level. Like that Nepalese society behave the Sanskrit scholar as ordinary pandit who involves in the performance certain ritual in special occasion of Hindu people like marriage ceremony, death rites and spacial puja so that youths feel humiliation on their study. In the context of Nepal government established separate university to enhance the Sanskrit study in higher education but there is not plans, strategies and programs to enhance the Sanskrit study in Nepal. Without a national strategy within the educational system to promote Sanskrit education it

is impossible to motive youth to study Sanskrit education. To increase long term motivation towards Sanskrit government and Nepal Sanskrit University and other universities where Sanskrit has been teaching joint work to improve teaching method, teaching contents and Sanskrit study develop as multidisciplinary approach. The new approach of teaching Sanskrit can preserve the Sanskrit study and motivate the youth to continue Sanskrit study in higher level. There need to develop Sanskrit study as multidisciplinary approach with other classical languages like Greek, roman , French and Chinese languages and philosophy.

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