Factors Influencing EFL Students' Motivation in Online Learning in Public Colleges of Nepal[1]

Pitambar Paudel[2], Tribhuvan University, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, Gandaki, Nepal

Abstract

Motivation plays a pivotal role in students' academic success and overall performance in the learning process. However, the abrupt shift from face-to-face instruction to online learning, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, affected EFL students' motivation. To address this issue, this study aimed to explore the factors that affected students' motivation in online learning, using a sequential mixed-methods research design. The data were collected from 300 randomly selected EFL students from 30 purposively selected public colleges, and interviews were carried out with ten of the students during the months November and December 2021. The quantitative data were gathered using a survey questionnaire, while the qualitative data were collected through the interviews. The results showed that while learners were motivated to engage in online learning, only a few of them joined due to demotivating factors, primarily related to time management and technology use, rather than environmental factors. The study also identified an exciting learning environment, encouraging and instant feedback, transparent and persistent evaluation, and constant opportunities for learning as the major motivating factors. Conversely, poor technology, lack of proper access to the internet and electricity, learner skills and knowledge in using technology and collaborative tools, poor time management skills, and inadequate learning space were identified as the demotivating factors in online learning. The findings of this study highlight the importance of reducing demotivation factors to encourage learners' motivation for online learning. The study's results are useful for curriculum designers, policymakers, instructors, and students as they provide significant information to make online learning effective and meaningful, especially in EFL courses, thereby maximizing students' motivation and learning.

Resumen

La motivación juega un papel fundamental en el éxito académico de los estudiantes y en su desempeño general en el proceso de aprendizaje. Sin embargo, el cambio abrupto de la instrucción presencial al aprendizaje en línea, debido a la pandemia de Covid-19, afectó la motivación de los estudiantes de EFL. Para abordar esta cuestión, este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar los factores que afectaron la motivación de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje en línea, utilizando un diseño de investigación secuencial de métodos mixtos. Los datos se recopilaron de 300 estudiantes de EFL seleccionados al azar de 30 universidades públicas seleccionadas intencionalmente, y se llevaron a cabo entrevistas con diez de los estudiantes durante los meses de abril y mayo de 2022. Los datos cuantitativos se recopilaron mediante un cuestionario de encuesta, mientras que los datos cualitativos se recopilaron a través de las entrevistas. Los resultados mostraron que, si bien los estudiantes estaban motivados para participar en el aprendizaje en línea, solo unos pocos de ellos se unieron debido a factores desmotivadores, principalmente relacionados con la gestión del tiempo y el uso de la tecnología, en lugar de factores ambientales. El estudio también identificó un entorno de aprendizaje emocionante, retroalimentación alentadora e instantánea, evaluación transparente y persistente y oportunidades constantes de aprendizaje como los principales factores motivadores. Por el contrario, la tecnología deficiente, la falta de acceso adecuado a Internet y electricidad, las habilidades y conocimientos de los estudiantes en el uso de la tecnología y las herramientas colaborativas, las habilidades deficientes de gestión del tiempo y el espacio de aprendizaje inadecuado se identificaron como los factores desmotivadores en el aprendizaje en línea. Los hallazgos de este estudio destacan la importancia de reducir los factores desmotivadores para alentar la motivación de los estudiantes para el aprendizaje en línea. Los resultados del estudio son útiles para los diseñadores de planes de estudio, los responsables de las políticas, los instructores y los estudiantes, ya que brindan información importante para hacer que el aprendizaje en línea sea efectivo y significativo, especialmente en los cursos de EFL, maximizando así la motivación y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Introduction

The worldwide spread of COVID-19 and its adverse impact on human life significantly affected all activities and behaviours across every sector around the world. As a result, most countries imposed national lockdowns or implemented emergency measures to safeguard their citizens' well-being. Nepal was one of the countries with a highly infected population, especially during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Nevertheless, the government of Nepal implemented some policies to maintain effective teaching and learning activities while implementing measures to control the spread of the virus. Specifically, a new policy was enforced in basic to university-level education to shift from typical face-to-face to exclusively

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online instruction modes (Adhikari & Rana 2022; Paudel, 2020). The Nepal government identified that online teaching and learning as one of the most effective ways to maintain academic activities without disrupting academic sessions on the one hand and to break the chain of the pandemic on the other hand (Paudel, 2021). As such, teachers and students were instructed to shift to online learning through internet using computer-based applications such as Zoom, Google meet, Microsoft team, etc. (Sadiku et al., 2018). In my experience and observation, public colleges in Nepal have primarily relied on Zoom as a means of online teaching and learning.

Online learning is a new practice in the context of Nepal. Prior to the pandemic, teachers were not trained in the virtual mode of teaching, and teaching-learning resources were not digitalized. The sudden transformation to online learning has sparked a debate among people throughout the country about its accessibility, the quality of education, teachers' skills and knowledge, and students' involvement in learning. However, online learning has been reported to be beneficial for students since it enables them to interact with learning materials at their convenience and from any location (Firman & Rahayn, 2020; Simamora, 2020). Furthermore, online learning enhances high levels of interaction among teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers, which can promote a culture of information sharing (Rochman & Pertiwi, 2020). Online learning not only provides access to resources and boosts interaction, but it also encourages the participants to build capacity in technology. Unlimited access to review materials through online learning exposes learners to diverse learning styles, cultures, and contexts in a flexible manner in terms of scheduling and transportation (Hung et al., 2010; Yoo &Huang, 2013). Moreover, online learning boosts learners' self-motivation, enabling them to engage in diverse study areas, time, and space (Armstrong, 2013). Despite its effect on human psychology and health, the COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a catalyst to expand the horizon and use of online learning.

Although the emergence of online learning has changed perspectives about education (Otto et al., 2018), the full realization of the potential of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is hindered by a range of factors, including insufficient infrastructure, limited access to online facilities in developing countries such as Nepal, low levels of computer literacy, poor classroom management, and lack of teachers' skills and knowledge (Laudari, 2008; Paudel, 2021; Rana & Rana, 2018, Shrestha et al., 2022; Shrestha et al., 2021). Moreover, online learning requires a significant amount of time and effort from both teachers and students, making their lives increasingly complicated. Although online courses can enhance students' knowledge, skills, and employment opportunities in the global community, they fail to prevent cheating (Bawa, 2016; Lynch, 2020). Online learning requires self-motivation and proper time management skills from both teachers and students. In the context of Nepal, the forced shift to the online learning posed a significant challenge for all concerned stakeholders to provide quality education. According to Paudel (2020), high school teachers in Nepal are not skilful in operating and using ICT tools in their teaching. Chu and Li (2022) also argue that online learning can cause health issues such as fatigue, fever, and headache due to their excessive workload. Additionally, online learning may be effective for only a few students but cannot cope with thousands of students who attempt to join discussions (Armstrong, 2013). Such limitations potentially contribute to students' demotivation in the online learning environment.

Before the research began both formal and informal talks had been carried out with some EFL students, some of which had had English taught to them online. While some students were found to be enthusiastic about online learning, others were not. It was noticed that they frequently exhibited irregularities in their online English classes, such as failing to complete assigned tasks. This phenomenon can be attributed to the geographical complexity of Nepal, where many parts lack access to electricity and the internet. Additionally, the students often faced financial hardships, as they had to purchase mobile data packs to participate in online classes. Research conducted by Nistor and Neubauer (2010) indicated a high dropout rate among students in online learning. Paudel (2021) conceded that online learning alone cannot be as effective as in-person instruction for teaching and learning a language, and Meşe and Sevilen (2021) found a negative impact of online education on students' motivation in learning. Moreover, students with little or no motivation may be affected by external factors such as the learning environment, learning time, internet access, and instrumental support (Cahyani et al., 2020 as cited in Rahayu et al., 2023). Ghazi-Saidi et al. (2020) similarly concluded that online learning did not meet the level of students' satisfaction. Furthermore, research has shown that online learning increased students' anxiety levels and created a wider gap between the privileged and the underprivileged students (Dawadi et al. 2020; Gautam & Gautam, 2021; Unger & Meiran, 2020). While previous studies have explored the benefits and drawbacks of online learning, they have yet to investigate how students perceive their motivation towards online learning. Hence, it is necessary to examine the factors that influence university students' motivation towards online learning

within the context of Nepal. Effective delivery of online learning requires a strong relationship among technological support, teacher and students' perception, availability of the resources and infrastructure. In this context, this study aims to explore the key factors influencing students' motivation in online learning since they are is distinct from prior research in its context, objectives, and methodology.

Review of the Literature

Motivation is an internal drive that encourages learners to achieve their goals. It is a "theoretical construct to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence and quality of behaviour, especially goal directed behaviour" (Brophy, 2010, p. 34). Simply put, motivation is the impulse that propels learners towards a particular action. It is the first and most important condition for taking a learning task and is an engine to power the process (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). Connecting motivation with engagement, Dörnyei (2020) argued that motivation needs to be ensured for students' engagement and effective learning. Motivation encompasses the what, when, and how aspects of learning. Motivated learners can do better and are better equipped to face challenges compared to unmotivated or less motivated learners.

Motivation is a critical factor that is directly connected to success and effective learning in an online environment. Although the curricula and syllabi were not ICT-friendly, the widespread of COVID-19 forced universities to transition their teaching and learning process to an online format. Consequently, students' motivation in online learning became a crucial issue during this time of pedagogical transformation (Li & Tsai, 2017; Özhan & Kocadere, 2020). Student's individual behaviours and teaching-learning context played a vital role in determining their motivation in online learning. Kyewski and Krämer (2018) argued that students' motivation in online learning is questionable because many students are prone to participate less in it.

Similarly, it has often been observed by local teachers that most of the students joined the class, but their videos were not turned on, nor did they take part in the interaction. Meşe and Sevilen (2021) found in their research that online courses have a negative impact on students' motivation to learn. The learning environment, teachers' behaviour, administrative support, and parental care can be external factors, while students' own internal drives play a crucial role in ensuring effective online learning. Motivation inspired at the policy level acts as a catalyst to connect students' intrinsic motivation with their participation in online learning (De Barba et al., 2016). Students' participation in learning can be increased and their anxiety level can be decreased by making teaching resources that fulfil their contextual needs. Course materials and instructional activities are directly proportionate to the level of motivation. In this regard, Çebi and Güyer (2020) found a positive correlation between students' engagement and motivation in classroom learning.

Motivation leads to a dynamic interplay between online learning and students' participation. Online learning seeks students' participation in their own responsibility for successful learning and better performance. In this context, Schunk et al. (2014) conceded that the success of students' learning is directly related to both their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation[3]. Research has shown both positive and negative impacts of online learning on students' participation, motivation, and achievement. Online learning reduces the rising cost of postsecondary education by including a large number of students into a single class (Bowen, 2013). Gustiani (2020) found that students' motivation in online learning was intrinsically affected by their ambition for gaining new knowledge and experiencing new learning methods and extrinsically by the environmental conditions. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2020) reported that many higher education institutions in the world are unable to apply online learning due to inadequate technology infrastructures and poor internet connection. This phenomenon raises a question about the shifting modality of learning and its accessibility, equality, and quality. Students' motivation was found to be more effective and participatory in hybrid or blended modes rather than only online or face to face modes of learning (Lin et al., 2017; Paudel, 2021; Yantraprakorn et al., 2018). Similarly, Czerniewicz et al. (2019) in a study conducted in South Africa, found that the blended mode of learning, rather than only the online mode of learning, became more important in maintaining students' awareness of learning. In contrast, Upadhyay et al. (2021), in their research conducted in Nepal, found that students' satisfaction level with online learning was good, and they were willing to use the distance learning approach in their future learning too.

Several factors play a crucial role in student motivation toward online learning. Yantraprakorn et al. (2018) found that discouraging or insufficient teacher feedback leads students' motivation to negativity in online

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[3] Intrinsic Motivation: The internal drive to learn or achieve something for personal satisfaction and interest. Extrinsic Motivation: The motivation to learn or perform due to external rewards or pressures. Blended/Hybrid: A teaching approach that combines online and face-to-face learning experiences

learning. In the same connection, Maslow, as cited in McLeod (2024), presented the need for hierarchy to motivate the learners towards a gradually higher level of learning. Fulfilment of learners' lower-level needs becomes a motivational prerequisite for moving to the next level of learning. Bandura (1997) introduced self-efficacy theory, which suggests that learners' belief in their own capabilities determines their participation and performance in any mode or aspect of learning. Students' self-motivation in learning can be achieved through their learning experiences, social persuasion, teachers' treatment, and their positive attitude towards the tasks they are engaging with. The aim of their learning affects the development of their beliefs on how effectively they can carry out any action successfully and effectively (Yavuzalp & Bahçivan, 2020). Zimmerman & Kulikowich (2016) reported that the students with greater self-motivation were more successful and positive in online learning. Other factors, such as students' attitudes towards online technology, their proficiency using it, and its accessibility, all have an impact on their participation and performance in online learning (Alqurashi, 2016; Yavuzalp & Bahçivan, 2020). Learners' experiences, motivation, skills and knowledge of information and communication technology, and their internal desire for learning may determine the success of online learning.

Despite the challenges posed by geographical complexity, lack of ICT friendly classrooms, explicit ICT policy, teacher training, and student preparation, and proper internet facility, all higher education institutions in Nepal moved their classes online. It is the first experience of online learning both for teachers and students. While many research studies have been conducted on the issue of online education in the world in recent years, limited studies have been done to explore the factors that affect students' online learning in the context of Nepal. To fill this gap, this study attempted to explore students' perceptions of motivating and demotivating factors in online learning, as well as the usefulness of online learning in the context of Nepal. Based on the reviewed literature and the nature and context of the study, the self-efficacy framework developed by Zimmerman and Kulikowich (2016) was used. This framework classifies online self-efficacy into three parameters: the learning environment (students' experiences), time management and technology use.

Methodology

This study followed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, which involved the combination of quantitative and qualitative data in order to achieve a stronger understanding of the research problem and to support the derivation of a suitable and effective conclusion. Specifically, this study used sequential explanatory mixed -methods research design, in which the quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014; Terrel, 2012). The findings derived from the quantitative data set are used to contextualize the qualitative data, and qualitative data enhances and enriches the findings to explore the actual context and to generate new knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Mason, 2006). This study aimed to combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative findings generated from the data collected in different situations and at different times. Thus, this research was divided into three phases, as illustrated in Figure 1.
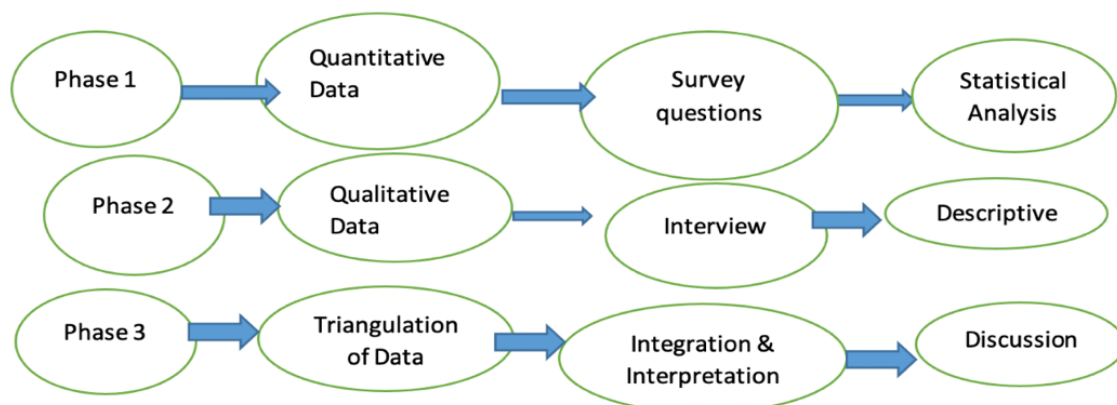

Figure 1: Overview of the phases employed in the study (Creswell, 2014; Terrel, 2012).

The participants

In the present study, 300 students from 20 public colleges (15 students from each college) in Nepal were randomly selected. The colleges were chosen because they offered online classes to their students. Moreover, ten students were purposively selected, one from each selected college, to be interviewed for qualitative data. Before participating in the research, the participants were informed of the purpose of the

research and were asked for their voluntary involvement in the research. After receiving their oral permission, both the participants and the researcher signed a written online consent form to confirm their participation.

Research tools

This research utilized a combination of tools, including a questionnaire for quantitative data and unstructured interviews for qualitative data. A questionnaire is a good tool for obtaining data that are statistically significant and are suitable to ensure a high response rate (Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire used in this study was validated, and its reliability was established through expert feedback and revision. The survey questionnaire included structured statements related to students' motivation toward online learning, divided into three categories of 15 statements each. In each category, the participants were requested to respond on a five-point Likert scale (Appendix 1). In addition to the questionnaire, unstructured interviews were used to collect the qualitative data. The unstructured type of interviews was used because it is non-directive and considered suitable for acquiring in-depth information (Gray, 2009). Researchers usually do not have a pre-planned set of questions but may have mental guidelines to follow during the interview process.

Data collection procedures

After designing the research tools, ten public colleges and participants for the study were selected. Then, to ensure ethical research practice, Positive relationships with the participants were established and the purpose of the research was clearly explained through virtual communication via emails and *Facebook Messenger*. The participants were sent the survey questionnaire through their respective emails and *Facebook* messengers, had been received from their teachers who conducted online learning. Once the responses to the survey questionnaire were received, they were analyzed and the findings were to plan for interviews to collect the qualitative data. Interviews were arranged with the selected students at times and locations convenient for them. For three participants who gave permission, their interviews were recorded and notes taken from them, while notes were only procured from the remaining seven interviews as they did not permit recording.

Data analysis procedures

In this study, the data collected through the survey questionnaire were statistically analyzed using simple statistical tools, which were then divided into three categories: learning environment, time management, and technology-related factors, as suggested by Zimmerman and Kulikowich (2016). The data collected through interviews were coded, categorized, and analyzed descriptively under two themes. First, the quantitative data were analyzed and used as a basis for developing interview protocols. The interview protocols were designed to ensure both qualitative and quantitative data were intersected, interrelated, and integrated. Finally, the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated, analyzed, interpreted, and are presented in the Discussion section.

Research ethics

In this research, the focus was on the 'what' and 'how' aspects, rather than the 'who' aspect. Before involving the participants in the research process, permission was obtained from them. Furthermore, conflict-creating questions were not asked both in the survey and interviews to reduce researcher's possible bias and reveal more information from the interviewees. Anonymity was maintained in the research by using alphanumeric codes (e.g., C1, C2…Cn) for the colleges and P1-P2…Pn for the students' names. The information provided by the respondents was presented exactly as provided, without any alteration to maintain reliability and validity of the research. Further, the analysis was based more on the informants' accounts rather than on their emotions and experiences.

Results

Learning environment

Under the learning environment parameter, the students were asked to rate ten statements on a 5-point Likert scale, which focussed on the role of environmental factors on their motivation toward online learning (Table 1).

SN	Statements I like / don't like online learning because:	Students' Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	The learning context is exciting.	28.6	57.1			14.3
2	Teachers use variety of teaching methods.	28.6	42.9	28.6		
3	Teachers provides immediate and encouraging feedback.	14.3	57.1	14.3		14.3
4	It does not put me under a lot of pressure.		42.9	14.2	14.3	28.6
5	Students are engaged in question answer and discussion.	28.6	28.6	28.6		14.3
6	Resources are easily available.	14.3	14.3	14.3	28.6	28.6
7	It enhances flexibility and self-paced learning.	14.3	71.4	14.3		
8	Assessment is persistent, authentic, and transparent.	14.3	51.7			28.6
9	It enhances creative and critical thinking abilities.		14.3	14.3	42.9	28.6
10	There are constant opportunities for practice.	14.3	57.1			28.6

Table 1: Environmental factors influencing EFL learners' motivation in online learning

The results revealed several interesting trends. For example, over 57% of participants agreed that the online learning environment was exciting, while only 14% disagreed. Regarding teaching methods, 42.9% of participants agreed that teachers used a variety of methods, while 28.6% strongly agreed. Similarly, almost 43% of participants felt that the online learning environment did not put them under a lot of pressure. On the other hand, a large majority (71.4%) strongly agreed that online learning enhances flexibility and self-paced learning. Moreover, 57.1% agreed that in online learning, teachers provide them with immediate and encouraging feedback. Likewise, 57.1% agreed that online learning provided constant opportunities for learning, while 28.6% disagreed. However, 42.9% strongly disagreed that online learning could enhance creativity and critical thinking abilities, while 28.6% disagreed. Furthermore, the findings show that more than half of them (57.2%) disagreed that online learning provided easy access to resources. Concerning question-answer and discussion in online learning, an equal percentage (28.6%) of the participants strongly agreed, agreed, and remained neutral. Finally, the results showed that 51.7% of the participants strongly agreed that assessment in online learning was persistent, transparent, and authentic, while 28.6% disagreed.

Time management

SN	Statements I like / don't like online learning because:	Students' Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	I manage time effectively.	14.3			28.6	57.1
2	I feel difficult to manage time.	42.9	28.6		14.3	14.3
3	I cannot manage time due to multitasking.	57.1			14.3	28.6
4	I cannot manage time due to lack of separate learning space for me.	28.6	42.9		14.3	14.3
5	I join the classes regularly.	10	45		44	1
6	It improves my time management skills.	42.9	42.9			14.3
7	I complete all assignments on time.		14.3	28.6	42.9	14.3
8	I meet deadline with few reminders only.	14.3	14.3		28.6	42.9
9	It supports to avoid time related distraction.	14.3	28.6	28.6	28.6	
10	I planned my schedule for all online courses.	14.3	42.9	14.3	14.3	14.3

Table 2: Time management-related factors affecting EFL students' motivation

As shown in Table 2, more than half of the participants (51.1%) did not feel that they managed time effectively for online learning, while only 14.3% strongly felt they did. Similarly, a significant proportion (42.9% + 28.6%) found it difficult to manage their time for online courses. Regarding the difficulties in time management, a large number (57.1%) of the participants strongly agreed that multitasking was the prime cause, while 42.9% agreed and 28.6% strongly agreed that a lack of separate learning space in their homes was the major problem. However, a considerable number of the participants (42.9%) reported that online learning helped them improve their time management skills. The findings further showed that only 45% of the participants strongly agreed that they regularly participated in online learning. In addition, 42.9% strongly disagreed and 14.3% disagreed that they completed assignments on time. Similarly, the majority of the participants (42.9% +28.6%) did not meet the deadline to submit their home assignment for online learning. Regarding planning, 42.9% of the participants agreed that they scheduled time in their online

learning for all the courses. In terms of online learning support to avoid time-related distractions, an equal percentage of the participants (28.6%) agreed, disagreed, and did not express their opinions.

Technology

Technology-based knowledge and skills are essential requirements for online learning. Individuals who are unable to handle technology may not feel confident enough to participate in online classes. Table 3 presents students' responses on technology related factors that affect their motivation in online learning.

SN	Statements I like / don't like online learning because/because of:	Students' Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	I have good internet access.		14.3		57.1	28.6
2	I have skills and knowledge to handle devices and applications.		42.9	14.3	28.6	14.3
3	I have motives in learning through technology.	28.6	42.9	14.3	14.3	
4	It has good document transfer protocol.	42.9	28.6	14.3	14.3	
5	There is easy availability of learning devices for me.		14.3	57.1		28.6
6	It has good networking.	28.6	42.9	14.3	14.3	
7	We have inadequate technology and poor software programmes.	57.1	28.6	14.3		
8	Lack of sufficient and effective professional development.	14.3	28.6	14.3	14.3	14.3
9	There is reliable electricity facility at my home.				57.1	42.9
10	I am skilful in using collaboration tools and skills.		14.3		71.4	14.3

Table 3: Technology-related factors affecting EFL students' motivation in online learning

The data presented in Table 3 highlight important findings regarding participants' responses on the technological aspects of online learning. The data indicated that the majority (57.1%) strongly disagreed with having good internet access, while only 14.3% agreed. In addition, all participants expressed their lack of reliable electricity facilities. Likewise, a vast majority of the participants strongly agreed and agreed (57.1% + 28.6%) that they had inadequate technology and poor software programs, despite acknowledging that technology had good networking. With reference to technological knowledge and skill, only 42.9% felt confident in handling technological devices and applications, while a considerable number (28.6%) strongly disagreed. However, a majority of the participants (28.6% + 42.9%) expressed that they were motivated towards online learning, and the same number believed that technology had a good document transfer protocol. However, a large majority (71.4%) strongly disagreed that they were skilled in using collaboration tools and skills in their online learning. Similarly, more than half of the participants (57.1%) remained neutral, and 28.6% strongly disagreed that they had easy access to devices for online learning. The results further show that 28.6% agreed that there is a lack of sufficient and effective professional development in online learning, while the majority remained neutral.

Based on the results of the quantitative data, unstructured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore more information on the factors affecting online learning in higher education in Nepal. The information gathered from the participants was analyzed under two themes: External factors that influence motivation and internal factors that lead to motivation in online learning.

External factors that impact EFL learners' motivation in online learning

External factors are the extrinsic elements that drive learners' desire to learn. Interviews conducted to gather information on the factors affecting students' motivation in online learning identified various external factors that play a significant role. These include curricula, teachers, teaching-learning techniques, ICT tools and applications, parental support, and home environment.

In the context of Nepal, these resources are rarely available in digital format. During interviews with students, P1 conceded that students' motivation for online learning was lower due to the lack of e-resources as prescribed in the curricula. All the participants agreed that the lack of digitized resources made online learning complicated and less comprehensive. However, P2 perceived this as an opportunity to obtain teacher-made notes and materials, as he said, "In online learning, teachers share their notes in the slides and send them to our emails, which make us easy to learn" While online learning was a new experience and practice for the students, some found it exciting, while others found it boring. One of the participants (P5) expressed excitement about receiving notes and slides from teachers and felt that discussions with teachers and interaction with classmates motivated them toward online learning. The students also received regular encouragement from their teachers and did their best to participate in discussions and interactions. P5

shared, "We get more time in online learning, where our teachers keep us engaged in group discussions, individual sharing, and even shy students speak in the learning class when the teachers call their name". In contrast, P6 disagreed with his peers and claimed that teachers' pace of teaching was too fast, making it difficult to take notes. He further added that the students also felt less motivated to learn online because they did not have digitized resources, and they were unable to take note from teachers. Most of the students stated that they used their mobile phones to access online classes, which did not support them in completing all the assigned tasks in the classroom.

A poor and unstable internet connection, coupled with less functional learning devices, has disrupted the online learning experience for many participants. P10 expressed, "Online learning has become boring for me…you know the interrupted voice of the teachers, unstable internet bandwidth, blurry materials on the screen made me leave the class many times. However, I prefer joining it due to my teachers' encouragement". Poor internet connectivity has become a major influencing factor for all the participants to join online learning. The information further revealed that most of the students did not have separate rooms for learning in their residences. Clarifying this, P7 stated that he did not have a separate, quiet and relaxed learning space at his home. However, he still attended online classes as it saved him money, time, and energy that he would have otherwise spent attending physical classes at college. Although most participants mentioned that they received some level of parental support, it was insufficient. Parents frequently asked them to do various household tasks during their study time. Expressing the experience, P3 shared:

> You know…my parents are illiterate in technology and cannot support me in online learning. Along with online learning, I had to perform household chores while being muted and invisible to the teacher. My parents ask me to cook food, clean rooms, and sometimes feed chickens. And you know…my teacher asks me to help my friends, write my assignment and sometimes support him in handling presentation.

Overall, the lack of adequate learning devices, internet connectivity, and parental support has presented significant challenges for participants in their online learning experience.

Internal factors that boost motivation in online learning

Internal factors refer to the inherent satisfaction of learners that drives their desire to learn. Learners' internal desire is key to being motivated in online learning. Their satisfaction, enjoyment, competence, relatedness, positive thoughts are the internal factors that encourage learners to learn. Relying solely on external factors such as rewards, recognition, and opportunities may not be sufficient to motivate learners to learn the English language if they are not internally motivated or prepared. The data gathered from the interviews with the participants revealed that their motivation for online learning was influenced by several internal factors, including their belief and confidence in their ability to learn and acquire new information, their proficiency in English, their enjoyment of trying out different learning methods, their eagerness to learn using technology, and their ability to manage their time. As one learner shared, "My eagerness to join online learning was to get updated with new knowledge". He further added, "No form of pandemic could disturb our academic activities if we had a willingness to learn." Another learner, P9, stated, "I joined online class because of my parents told me that I would get good skill and job opportunity around the globe." Online learning could be ineffective and unproductive if learners had no internal drive to learn. All the learners in the interviews agreed that online learning mode was not as effective as face-to-face mode. These accounts suggest that most learners who joined online classes exhibited a strong sense of self-awareness and actively engaged in the learning process.

The gathered data further revealed that the majority of the students enjoyed online learning, particularly due to technology-based activities it offered. As a new experience for all participants, it was noted that they enjoyed learning through online platforms such as *Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams*, and *Veda* despite the challenges encountered when working with these applications. P1 stated that digital platforms have become a source of motivation for learning, whereas for P4, online learning enforced the use of technological devices and lead to skill development in using different applications for learning. Similarly, P5 expressed, "If I had no online learning, I would never use such applications and tools for learning in my life". These results indicate that online learning devices and applications are the sources of their motivation for learning. Furthermore, P8 added that the students could sharpen their knowledge and skills in using technology if they had the eagerness to use them in learning.

Discussion

Technology-related expertise and knowledge have become fundamental requirements for participation in today's global society. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated educational institutions across the world,

including those in Nepal to shift from purely face-to-face modes of teaching and learning to online platforms. This research aimed to investigate factors that affect EFL students' motivation in online learning in public colleges in Nepal. The research findings, obtained through both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, indicated that several factors contribute to the success of online learning, such as engaging learning environments, a variety of teaching techniques, prompt and encouraging feedback, questions and discussions during class, ongoing learning opportunities, and persistent, transparent, and genuine evaluation. Notably, all these factors concern the teacher's perception and behaviour. Specifically, teachers who create a learner-friendly environment and use learner-centred teaching techniques such as interaction, discussion, more student talking time, affirmative feedback, and fair evaluation can motivate learners towards online learning. These findings are consistent with the findings of some prior studies, which also reported that teachers' positive and encouraging feedback, affirmative and fair evaluation, and students-friendly classroom behaviour positively influenced students' motivation, while discouraging feedback, teacher-dominated learning environments, and classroom instruction had a negative impact on students' online learning (Gustiani, 2020; Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Ushida, 2005; Yantraprakorn et al., 2018).

Moreover, the results also identified a range of factors that demotivate learners towards online learning, including a lack of dedicated online learning spaces, students' inability to multitask, a lack of online learning resources, slow internet speeds, a lack of learning devices, inadequate technology and poor software, insufficient and ineffective professional development, insufficient electricity supply, and students' inability to use collaboration tools. The results suggest that online learning can be effective when learners are free from multitasking, have a strong internet connection with reliable electricity, and use suitable learning software. Moreover, teachers' and learners' technological knowledge and skills as well as the learning environmentwere found to be critical factors that determine students' motivation to learn. The literature suggests that an exciting learning environment enhances both synchronous and asynchronous discussion to assist learners' learning (Zimmerman & Kulikowich, 2016). The findings also showed that students have an inner motivation to learn and use technology to do so, despite various external influences on their learning, including electricity, the internet, multitasking, and their abilities and knowledge. However, Linet's (2015) study showed that both students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels were lower in online learning environments. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown that learners' ongoing efforts to promote successful learning, as well as their awareness, self-motivation, belief, and devotion, all play critical roles in online learning (Artino, 2007; Gustiani, 2020; Zimmerman & Kulikowich, 2016).

The results further showed that teachers' teaching techniques, encouragement, and immediate feedback play a significant role in students' motivation in online learning. The findings in this study corroborate the critical role of teachers in creating a suitable classroom culture. Meanwhile, delayed and discouraging feedback has a negative impact on students' motivation towards online learning, as evident from previous research (Ushida, 2005; Yantraprakorn et al., 2018). The results also revealed that online learning provides ample opportunities for questioning and discussion, which can motivate learners in their learning. This indicates that learners learn more effectively and successfully if they are engaged in interactions. However, the results also showed that most of the learners did not have separate learning spaces at home for online learning, which could be a demotivating factor for their learning. A separate learning space fosters motivation for interaction, discussion, and questioning, leading to successful learning outcomes. Although online learning is supported by learning space, it remains a crucial component of various nations' online teaching and learning systems while being dispersed (Wu, 2018). Nevertheless, creating a suitable learning space largely depends upon learners' own self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Kulikowich, 2016), and self-motivated learners can independently create a suitable and effective learning environment without depending on their parents or teachers.

Moreover, the results revealed that learners' motivation in online learning is hindered by various factors, including inadequate access to technology, poor internet access, poor learning applications, inadequate electricity supply, and a lack of digitized ELT courses. Effective online learning depends heavily upon adequate technology and its proper use. These findings align with Mafruudloh et al.'s (2021) claim that online learning can be effective when the teachers and students have proper technological knowledge and skills to operate different devices and applications. It is essential that learning devices be up-to-date and compatible with various online learning platforms such as *Zoom, Google, Telegram, Microsoft Team*s among others. Furthermore, stable internet access and its quality are essential for effective and successful online learning (Mafruudloh et al., 2021; Nur Agung, 2020). Another factor causing demotivation is the lack of proper online resources. Most of the teaching-learning resources such as curricula and textbooks are not digitized in Nepal. As a result, learners are unable to benefit as expected from online learning. The nature

of these teaching-learning materials significantly impact the level of students' motivation in online learning (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). Additionally, many of the learners believe that online learning cannot develop their creative and critical thinking abilities, and can encourage plagiarism, which also needs to be addressed. In the context of public colleges in Nepal, the results showed that only 55% of the participants joined online classes regularly, which is not encouraging and satisfactory. Additionally, an equal number of participants did not complete and submit their assignments on time. The students reported that they were engaged in multitasking at the same time, either from their parents or their teachers. These findings imply that demotivating factors need to be promptly reduced to make online learning effective and successful.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to investigate factors that affect EFL students' motivation in online learning in the context of public colleges in Nepal, using a sequential mixed-methods research design. The findings indicated that although the participants had a high level of intrinsic motivation towards online learning, only a few of them enrolled in this mode of learning regularly due to issues of time management and technology use rather than environmental concerns. The results further revealed that poor internet connectivity, inadequate technology and applications, poor software, a lack of digitized resources, multitasking, an abstracted learning space, inadequate time management skills, and limited knowledge and skills in using technology were identified as major demotivating factors in online learning. Despite these challenges, the students still participated in online learning due to several factors such as learning environment, teaching methods, encouraging and immediate feedback, self-paced and flexible learning styles and the evaluation system. Accordingly, the students expressed the need for technological training to enhance their knowledge and skills in using technology for learning purposes. The results imply the need for concerted efforts to reduce demotivating factors at the practice and policy levels to ensure effective and successful online learning. Thus, policymakers must consider students' motivation while planning online learning policies and curricula, recommending resources, and providing professional development training.

Although this study has opened new insights into online EFL learning in higher education in Nepal, it has several limitations in its scope and methodology. The sample size of only 300 EFL students from 30 public colleges in Nepal may not represent the entire population of EFL learners in the country. Thus, future studies could benefit from larger participants by including EFL learners from other colleges within the country and from other countries. Additionally, comparative analyses between EFL learners and English native speakers could also provide significant insights. Such studies can be crucial for decision-making at the practice and policy levels. Moreover, the study used only a sequential mixed-methods research design, opening up arenas for other research designs to explore the same phenomenon. Therefore, future studies could consider employing multiple tools and include participants from diverse backgrounds. Despite its limitations, the findings of this study provide feedback to the government, policymakers, curriculum designers, material developers, teachers, and students, guiding their efforts and practices in reducing demotivating factors and embarking on paths for further studies.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the government should prioritize ensuring a steady supply of electricity and facilitating access to the internet. Furthermore, the students should receive adequate training in handling technology devices and operating different applications to enhance their technological knowledge and skills. Additionally, courses and teaching learning materials should be digitized to make them easily accessible to students. To maintain students' learning motivation, it is imperative to avoid multitasking during the same class and time. Universities, colleges, departments and even teachers should also strive to reduce demotivating factors and increase students' involvement in online learning.

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Appendix 1

Survey Questionnaire

	I like / don't like online learning because:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**
1	The learning context is exciting.					
2	Teachers use a variety of teaching methods.					
3	Teachers provide immediate and encouraging feedback.					
4	It does not put me under a lot of pressure.					
5	Students are engaged in questioning, answering, and discussion.					
6	Resources are easily available.					
7	It enhances flexibility and self-paced learning.					
8	Assessment is persistent, authentic, and transparent.					
9	It enhances creative and critical thinking abilities.					
10	There are constant opportunities for practice.					
	I like or don't like online learning because:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No opinion**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**
1	I manage my time effectively.					
2	I find it difficult to manage my time.					
3	I cannot manage time due to multitasking.					
4	I cannot manage time due to the lack of a separate learning space for me.					
5	I join the classes regularly.					
6	It improves my time management skills.					
7	I complete all assignments on time.					
8	I met the deadline with only a few reminders.					
9	It encourages the avoidance of time-related distractions.					
10	I made a schedule for all of my online courses.					
	I like or dislike online learning for the following reasons:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No opinion**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**
1	I have good internet access.					
2	I have the skills and knowledge to handle devices and applications.					
3	I have reasons for wanting to learn through technology.					
4	It has a good document transfer protocol.					
5	For me, learning devices are easily accessible.					
6	It has good networking.					
7	We have inadequate technology and poor software programs.					
8	Lack of sufficient and effective professional development					
9	There is reliable electricity at my home.					
10	I am skilled in using collaboration tools and skills.					