



Improving Student Retention in Higher Education Institutions: Evidences from Community Campuses of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines and analyzes the various factors affecting student retention at Myagdi Multiple Campus (MMC), a semi-urban higher education institution in Nepal. Prior research on student retention has been predominantly focused on urban settings and developed countries. However, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the factors influencing student retention in higher education institutions in the rural setting. A structured questionnaire was distributed to students through convenience sampling. The study is based on responses from 104 participants of MMC. Descriptive research design was used as the research method for quantitative analysis, and positivism was employed as the research paradigm. The theory of student engagement has been employed to highlight the crucial role of student involvement in academic and extracurricular activities in determining retention and success in higher education institutions. Statistical methods like correlation, regression, Cronbach's alpha, Mean and SD were used to analyze the data and draw conclusions. The results indicate that quality education is the most significant factor of student retention. The findings of this study can be beneficial for researchers, policymakers, and educators in higher

education institutions in the rural and semi-urban settings, providing valuable insights to improve student retention and ensure the sustainability of higher education in higher education institutions of rural areas of Nepal.

KEYWORDS: Community campuses, higher education, student retention, quality education

INTRODUCTION

An important factor in determining a country's socioeconomic landscape is education. Higher education can be viewed as a tool for social mobility, economic prosperity, and individual empowerment in developing nations like Nepal. Higher education sustainability, however, appears to be a major obstacle, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Since formal education systems were established, there has been an interest in the retention of students in their higher education programs, which has a significant impact on both students and the institutions (Aljahani, 2016). This study explores the issues that impact the sustainability of higher education in semi-urban environments, with a particular focus on student retention at Myagdi Multiple Campus (MMC), a community campus located in the rural area of Nepal.

Higher education institutions offer significant benefits to individuals, where educated people reside and contribute to the society as a whole. Regions that have heavily invested in private or public higher education institutions have experienced notable growth and economic prosperity (Hill et al., 2005). However, the growth may not be evenly distributed and rural areas can often face greater difficulties in accessing quality education. Higher education in Nepal has undergone a significant transformation since the establishment of multi-party system in the country in 1990 (Upadhyay, 2018). The country's higher education system, which includes universities, community colleges, and technical institutions, has expanded in response to the increasing demand for educational opportunities. Government policies, such as the introduction of free primary and secondary education in the constitution of Nepal may have contributed to a growing number of students enrolling in higher education (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2024). Despite these policy changes, challenges such as financial constraints and inadequate resources seem to continue to hinder the progress of many students.

Despite these positive trends, the higher education system in Nepal faces a range of challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified faculty, and limited financial resources (The Borgen Project, n.d). Semi-urban institutions like MMC face these challenges on a larger scale, with additional issues such as geographical isolation, socio-economic disparities, and cultural factors that influence educational access and retention (Ghimire, 2024). Addressing these issues may require a multifaceted approach that includes the government support with institutional improvements.

Student retention refers to the ability of an educational institution to retain students from the time of enrollment through the completion of their degrees. Retention rates are an important indicator of institutional health and sustainability. High retention rates are associated with improved academic outcomes, higher graduation rates, and a better reputation for the institution. Conversely, low retention rates can lead to financial strain, diminished academic performance, and reduced enrollment in subsequent years, all of which threaten the sustainability of higher education (Rossier School of Education, n.d.). These trends highlight the need for effective policies and interventions to enhance student retention in rural institutions.

Retention is particularly important for campuses in rural areas because of the institution's low resources. Early student losses can have a domino effect that lowers financing, lowers faculty and student morale, and makes it more difficult to attract new students. For rural educational institutions to succeed in the long run, it is crucial to comprehend the elements that affect retention and figure out how to deal with them (The Institute for College Access and Success, 2023). By addressing these issues, institutions can create a more supportive learning environment that encourages student persistence.

MMC, established in 1992 with the motto "Quality Education for Successful Life," is a community campus founded through the joint efforts of local residents, social activists, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs in Beni, Myagdi District, Nepal. As highlighted in the Tracer Study Report (February, 2022), the campus relies on financial contributions from local government grants. Affiliated to Tribhuvan University, MMC offers bachelor and master's degree programs in Humanities and Social Sciences, Management, and Education. It primarily serves students from Myagdi District and neighboring areas of Parbat and Baglung districts, focusing on delivering quality education to lower-and-middle-income communities. While MMC has made notable contributions to education for over three decades, it faces challenges in student retention, often attributed to financial constraints, migration for better opportunities, and varying academic engagement among students in community campuses (Ghimire, 2024). These challenges can be addressed through targeted policy interventions and institutional reforms.

Due to many institutional and socioeconomic circumstances, student retention issues are frequently more severe in rural locations. Students in rural Nepal are likely to encounter obstacles that are less common in urban areas. These could include familial obligations that could divert students from their studies, financial difficulties, and restricted access to high-quality education. Additionally, the quality of education and student involvement may suffer in remote locations due to lack of educational resources including lack of libraries, labs, and knowledgeable instructors.

This study is significant because it sheds light on the specific challenges faced by rural institutions in Nepal. By examining the factors that influence student retention at MMC, this study provides insights into the broader issues affecting higher education in rural areas. The findings of this study can help inform policy interventions aimed at improving retention rates and ensuring the sustainability of higher education in rural Nepal.

Thus, the primary objective of this study is to identify the socio-economic, academic, psychological and institutional factors that influence student retention, providing community campuses of rural areas with recommendations for improving student retention rates and ensuring the sustainability of higher education.

This study has limitations even if it offers insightful information about the factors affecting student retention at MMC. The results' applicability to all students at MMC or other rural educational institutions may have been limited by selection bias brought about by the use of a structured questionnaire distributed through convenience sampling. The study's cross-sectional approach collects data at a particular moment in time, which might not accurately represent how retention dynamics evolve over time. Furthermore, by concentrating mostly on quantitative approaches, the study may miss subtle qualitative insights that could offer a more thorough comprehension of the cultural and psychological factors influencing student retention. A more thorough understanding of the difficulties faced by rural institutions would have been provided by a more thorough examination of external issues, such as community-level effects or changes in policy. A stronger basis for addressing retention in comparable environments may be offered by future studies that overcome these constraints using longitudinal, mixed-methods approaches and larger sampling.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student retention can be understood as the ability of an institution to ensure that students remain enrolled until they complete their academic programs, is a critical issue in higher education worldwide. It is especially relevant in rural areas, where various

socio-economic, institutional, and cultural challenges make retention more difficult. This literature review explores key concepts, theories, and studies related to student retention, with a particular focus on rural higher education settings like MMC in Nepal. It examines the role of socio-economic factors, institutional quality, student engagement, community support, and the specific challenges faced by rural educational institutions.

Astin's A.W. Theory of Student Engagement (1984) highlights the crucial role of student involvement in academic and extracurricular activities in determining retention and success in higher education. Astin defines engagement as the psychological and physical energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities, such as faculty interactions, participation in student organizations, and time spent on academic tasks. The theory is based on five postulates: student learning and development are directly related to the extent of involvement, involvement requires both psychological commitment and physical effort, engagement varies in intensity and form among students, the amount of learning and development gained is proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement, and educational institutions should create environments that maximize student engagement.

Astin further conceptualized the Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) Model as a framework for assessing how various factors influence student development. Inputs refer to students' pre-existing characteristics, such as socio-economic background, prior academic achievements, and motivation levels. Environment encompasses the institutional experiences students encounter, including faculty support, academic resources, campus culture, and extracurricular opportunities. Outcomes represent the changes in students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and persistence as a result of their engagement in the academic and social environment. This model underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and resource-rich environment to optimize student retention.

For rural institutions like MMC, where socio-economic barriers, migration trends, and limited academic infrastructure pose challenges, Astin's framework offers valuable insights. Enhancing student involvement through structured academic mentoring, social integration initiatives, and institutional support can significantly improve retention rates. By designing policies that actively engage students in both academic and non-academic spheres, educational institutions can create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that encourages persistence and success.

A study conducted by Scott et al. (2008) at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) identifies the factors impacting student retention and explores strategies for improvement. This study identified both personal and institutional factors that contribute to student dropout, with notable reasons including career changes, study-work-life conflicts, and dissatisfaction with course content or delivery. It highlighted six key areas where UWS implemented retention strategies: enhancing orientation, simplifying administrative processes, improving academic and social engagement, clarifying assessment expectations, and promoting support services. UWS's two-year retention initiative involved targeted actions like customer service training, better IT resources, online support, and clear communication channels which resulted a 4.2% increase in overall retention and a 6.4% improvement in student satisfaction, measured through the national Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). This case study emphasizes the importance of integrating tailored support and continuous improvement to enhance retention, with implications for similar institutions.

In another study on student retention, Tinto (1993) emphasizes the shift in understanding student retention from focusing on individual shortcomings to recognizing

the role of institutional and environmental factors. He highlights the importance of engagement, especially in the first year, where both academic and social involvement are critical for retention. Tinto identifies three main challenges: translating theory into actionable strategies, ensuring effective and sustainable program implementation, and addressing the persistent barriers faced by low-income students. He stresses that while research on retention has grown, many institutions struggle to apply these insights meaningfully. Faculty involvement, particularly through classroom practices, plays a pivotal role, but stronger institutional support and development are needed. Tinto calls for a shift from fragmented efforts to integrated practices that promote both retention and academic success, particularly for underrepresented groups.

Gonçalves et al. (2024) investigate student retention factors and activities in higher education institutions, focusing on challenges and potential strategies. Through a systematic review of 125 studies from 2014-2022, the authors identify three main research areas. The first two is institution-centric, focusing on activities aimed at reducing dropouts and promoting student success, such as enhanced academic support, social integration programs, and digital resources. The third area centers on the student perspective, exploring psychological factors like self-efficacy and social integration that impact persistence. Their analysis reveals that institutions benefit from tailored support activities, particularly during critical early years, which improve student retention and satisfaction. They also highlight gaps in research on diverse institutional contexts, especially in emerging economies, where unique retention challenges exist. This study emphasizes the need for holistic, culturally adapted strategies and propose a future research agenda to address these variations, urging for more longitudinal and comparative studies to enrich understanding and application across different institutional contexts.

In their study on student retention, Crosling, Heagney, and Thomas (2009) explore strategies to improve student retention through enhancing student engagement within higher education. Key findings highlight the importance of fostering engagement via inclusive and supportive learning environments, tailored to meet diverse student needs. They emphasize that academic success and retention correlate strongly with active, student-centered learning approaches, including collaborative and experiential learning that promotes deep engagement with content. Authentic curriculum design, which aligns with students' real-life contexts and aspirations, further bolsters retention. Additionally, the integration of formative assessment and study skills into the curriculum supports students' academic development, particularly for underrepresented groups. The scholars argue that institutions can enhance retention by adopting early engagement practices and offering ongoing support, such as integrated study skills and timely feedback. Such strategies not only promote inclusivity and academic success but also contribute positively to institutional reputation and funding metrics, demonstrating that quality teaching and supportive academic environments are vital for student persistence.

Ghimire (2024) conducted a study on student dropout rates at MMC, uncovering a range of factors contributing to attrition in semi-urban community campuses. The overall dropout rate from admission years 2016-2022 was found to be alarming at 41.82%. Personal factors, such as the pursuit of foreign employment and low academic motivation, emerged as the most significant, with 55% of respondents citing foreign employment as the primary reason and 51.4% finding the four-year bachelor's program duration discouraging. Family-related issues, including financial constraints and familial obligations, along with campus challenges like inadequate academic support and dissatisfaction with facilities, also played key roles. Community influences, such as peer

pressure and limited local employment opportunities, further exacerbated dropout rates. Using Tinto's Integration Model and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the study highlighted how difficulties in academic engagement, financial stability, and social integration drive attrition. Ghimire recommended enhancing academic support services, expanding financial aid, and fostering local job opportunities to address these challenges and improve retention rates, emphasizing the need for targeted policies tailored to the socio-economic and academic realities of semi-urban community campuses.

The existing literature on student retention has extensively explored the socio-economic, academic, and institutional factors affecting student persistence, primarily focusing on urban settings and well-resourced institutions. However, studies examining retention challenges in rural, resource-limited environments like MMC are limited. While research has identified the critical role of academic engagement, financial support, and social integration in retention, the unique interplay of these factors in rural settings, where socio-economic hardships and limited institutional resources are more prevalent, remains underexplored. The current study seeks to fill these gaps by examining student retention at MMC, offering context-specific insights into how academic, social, psychological, and institutional factors interact to affect retention. This study contributes to the broader discourse on retention by highlighting the specific challenges and potential solutions for rural campuses, offering implications for policies tailored to the unique needs of rural higher education settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate factors influencing student retention at MMC. Google forms were created for data collection and distributed to the 350 students of MMC using convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method. The respondents were selected across four years' academic programs (BBS, B.Ed., BA) using a structured questionnaire that measured academic, social, psychological, and institutional factors; among which, 104 students responded, who were used for distributing the structured questionnaire descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, provided insights into general trends, while reliability testing via Cronbach's alpha ensured internal consistency of the variables. To further explore relationships between retention-related factors, Pearson correlation analysis identified associations among the variables, and regression analysis determined which factors most significantly predicted retention, with academic support emerging as a key predictor. SPSS software was used for data analysis, using descriptive analysis method and supporting accurate and reliable calculations. This quantitative approach offers a robust statistical foundation for understanding student retention at MMC and highlights areas for targeted interventions to improve student persistence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on factors of student retention at MMC. The results obtained from descriptive and inferential statistics provide insights into the status of student retention and the different factors affecting it. The analysis reveals key trends and significant factors that influence student retention in community campuses.

Before diving into the descriptive analysis, reliability testing was conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the different factors considered in the study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability for four sets of variables: academic factors, social factors, psychological factors, and institutional factors.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis Using Cronbach's alpha

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic factors	3	0.759
Social factors	4	0.844
Psychological factors	3	0.715
Institutional factors	3	0.726

In Table 1, all the Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables are above 0.7, indicating a good level of internal consistency and reliability in the scales used to measure these factors. This suggests that the items for each factor are well-correlated and measure the underlying constructs effectively.

Descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the general trends in student retention and to understand the extent to which academic, social, psychological, and institutional factors influence student retention at MMC.

Academic factors are critical in determining student retention, as they directly influence learning experiences and academic success. The first item (Ac1) measures class attendance frequency, reflecting the extent to which students engage with academic activities regularly. The second item (Ac2) assesses satisfaction with curriculum relevance and difficulty, determining whether students find the course content appropriately structured and beneficial for their learning and future prospects. The third item (Ac3) evaluates teaching performance and teacher interaction, capturing students' perceptions of faculty support, engagement, and instructional quality. Together, these factors provide insight into how academic engagement influences students' likelihood of completing their degrees.

Social factors play a crucial role in student retention, as they influence the sense of belonging and peer relationships within the academic environment. The first item (Sf1) measures the quality of interactions with other students, reflecting how well students engage with their peers academically and socially. The second item (Sf2) assesses participation in campus activities or student organizations, indicating the level of extracurricular involvement, which can contribute to stronger institutional attachment. The third item (Sf3) evaluates support from the campus community, determining whether students feel welcomed and encouraged by faculty, staff, and peers. The fourth item (Sf4) measures the responsiveness of campus administration to student needs, reflecting how effectively institutional services address student concerns and contribute to a supportive educational environment. These social factors collectively influence student motivation and commitment to completing their studies.

Psychological well-being and motivation play a crucial role in students' retention decisions. Motivation to Succeed in Studies (Pf1) reflects students' determination and drive to complete their degree, highlighting their commitment to academic success. Feelings about Academic Workload (Pf2) assess whether students perceive their coursework as manageable or overwhelming, which can impact their overall well-being and ability to persist in their studies. Additionally, Confidence in Meeting Academic Challenges (Pf3) evaluates students' self-perceived ability to succeed academically, influencing their resilience in overcoming academic difficulties. Together, these factors contribute to students' overall psychological readiness and motivation, ultimately affecting their decision to continue their education.

Institutional factors play a significant role in student retention, as support mechanisms, financial aid, and infrastructure directly impact academic persistence. Academic Resource Availability (If1) assesses the perceived quality of study materials,

libraries, labs, and other educational facilities, ensuring that students have access to the necessary resources for academic success. Satisfaction with Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities (If2) determines whether financial support influences students' ability to continue their studies, highlighting the importance of accessible funding options. Additionally, Responsiveness of Campus Administration to Student Needs (If3) evaluates how well the institution addresses student concerns and provides necessary support, fostering a student-centered environment. Together, these factors contribute to a supportive academic experience, influencing students' decisions to remain enrolled.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables*

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Retention (Re)	104	1	5	3.94	.774
Academic factor					
Ac1	104	1	5	4.37	.838
Ac2	104	1	5	3.55	.681
Ac3	104	1	5	3.55	.652
Social factor					
Sf1	104	1	5	3.85	.810
Sf2	104	1	5	3.88	.733
Sf3	104	1	5	2.46	.800
Sf4	104	1	5	3.80	.885
Psychological factor					
Pf1	104	1	5	3.64	.835
Pf2	104	1	5	3.40	.842
Pf3	104	1	5	3.77	.815
Institutional factor					
If1	104	1	5	3.83	.929
If2	104	1	5	3.52	1.052
If3	104	1	5	3.70	.799

In Table 2, the analysis of the factors influencing student retention at MMC reveals several key insights. The mean score for retention is 3.94, indicating a generally moderate to high intention for students to remain enrolled, though some variability exists. Academic factors play a significant role, with the highest mean score (4.37) for academic support, suggesting that academic experiences greatly impact retention. Social factors also influence retention, but with variability; while social integration scores are high (3.85 and 3.88), peer relationships or extracurricular activities are less favorable (2.46). Psychological factors show a positive influence on retention, with mean values around 3.64 to 3.77, although some students face psychological barriers. Lastly, institutional factors present mixed results, with general satisfaction high (3.83) but areas like infrastructure or administrative support scoring lower (3.52 and 3.70), indicating potential for improvement in these areas.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between retention and the key factors of academic, social, psychological, and institutional factors.

Table 3
Correlation of Independent and Dependent Variables

	Variables	Re	Ac	Sf	Pf	If
Re	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Ac	Pearson Correlation	.411**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
Sf	Pearson Correlation	.350**	.340**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
Pf	Pearson Correlation	.315**	.255**	.509**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.009	.000		
If	Pearson Correlation	.247*	.223*	.678**	.553**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.023	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In Table 3, the correlation analysis shows that academic factors have the strongest positive relationship with student retention ($r = 0.411$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that academic experiences are crucial in influencing students' decisions to stay enrolled. Social factors also have a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.350$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of social integration and peer relationships. Psychological factors show a moderate but significant correlation with retention ($r = 0.315$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the role of emotional well-being in retention decisions. Institutional factors, while positively correlated ($r = 0.247$, $p < 0.05$), have a weaker influence on retention, underscoring the need for stronger institutional support to improve retention outcomes. A regression analysis was conducted to determine the relative influence of each factor on student retention. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 4
Regression Analysis of Factors

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.023	.538		1.901	.060
Ac	.407	.122	.315	3.352	.001
Sf	.239	.160	.188	1.491	.139
Pf	.187	.127	.160	1.475	.143
If	-.041	.131	-.039	-.310	.757

As shown in Table 4, the regression analysis shows that academic factors are the most significant predictor of student retention ($p = 0.001$), with a Beta value of 0.315, indicating a strong influence on students' decisions to remain enrolled. Social and psychological factors, while positively related to retention, do not have a statistically significant impact in this model ($p = 0.139$ and $p = 0.143$, respectively). Institutional factors, with a high p-value of 0.757, are not significant predictors of retention, suggesting that other elements like academic and social experiences play a more prominent role in influencing student retention.

In summary, this study demonstrates that academic factors are the strongest predictors of student retention at MMC, underscoring the critical need for institutional

investments in curriculum quality and faculty development. Social engagement and psychological well-being also contribute significantly to retention, suggesting that initiatives aimed at fostering peer interaction and providing emotional support can enhance student persistence. Although institutional factors were found to have a weaker impact, improvements in administrative efficiency and financial aid accessibility could still play a supporting role in student retention. These findings highlight the necessity of a holistic approach that integrates academic, social, psychological, and institutional strategies to create a conducive learning environment. Addressing these factors can ensure the long-term sustainability of higher education in rural Nepal, benefiting both students and educational institutions alike. Ultimately, the study concludes that quality education is the most significant factor in student retention. Ensuring strong academic programs, well-trained faculty, and accessible learning resources can directly impact students' decisions to continue their education, making quality education the cornerstone of student persistence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study underscores the critical importance of addressing the diverse factors influencing student retention at MMC. The findings revealed that academic factors are the most significant drivers of retention, emphasizing the need for a strong academic foundation, quality teaching, and accessible educational resources to sustain student engagement. Social and psychological dimensions also play crucial roles, highlighting the necessity for fostering an inclusive environment where students can build meaningful connections and access emotional support. Institutional factors, while less influential in this study, signify potential areas for development, such as enhanced administrative support, infrastructure improvements, and streamlined processes to address student needs effectively.

Retention at MMC, like many rural institutions, is shaped by the interplay of socio-economic challenges, cultural norms, and limited institutional resources. Addressing these challenges holistically is imperative. Financial support mechanisms, such as scholarships and stipends, can alleviate economic burdens, while curriculum modernization and professional development for faculty can enhance academic delivery. Equally important are the establishment of robust student support services, including counseling, career guidance, and extracurricular activities, to create a balanced and supportive academic environment.

Community involvement and awareness are pivotal in reshaping societal attitudes towards higher education, particularly for women and marginalized groups. Promoting the value of education through targeted outreach and partnerships can help mitigate cultural and familial barriers that often hinder retention. Furthermore, government policies must prioritize rural education through increased funding, infrastructure development, and strategic initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between rural and urban educational standards.

By implementing these strategies, institutions like MMC can significantly improve retention rates, enhance academic outcomes, and ensure the long-term sustainability of higher education in rural Nepal. The insights from this study serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and administrators committed to addressing the unique challenges of rural higher education and empowering students to achieve their academic aspirations.

Based on the findings of this study, a multifaceted approach is recommended to address the challenges of student retention at MMC. First, the provision of need-based

scholarships and financial aid programs is crucial to support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, alleviating the financial pressures that often lead to dropout. Concurrently, investments in faculty development and curriculum modernization should be prioritized to enhance the quality of education and ensure alignment with contemporary academic standards. Developing robust institutional support systems, such as academic advising, counseling services, and career guidance programs, can help students navigate personal and academic challenges effectively. Furthermore, fostering a sense of community and belonging through social engagement initiatives, extracurricular activities, and peer mentoring can strengthen social integration and encourage persistence. Engaging with local communities to raise awareness about the long-term benefits of higher education, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and ethnic minorities, is essential in addressing cultural and societal barriers. Lastly, government intervention is critical in bridging the resource gap between rural and urban educational institutions, with targeted policies that enhance infrastructure, increase funding, and promote equitable access to higher education. These comprehensive measures can collectively improve retention rates, ensure academic success, and contribute to the sustainability of higher education in rural Nepal.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose. However, I declare that the manuscript has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

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