

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



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# Faculty Empowerment, Work Environment and Organizational Commitment Toward Sustainable Educational Productivity During Flexible Learning

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The study aims to determine the level of faculty empowerment, work, and institutional productivity using different categories during the COVID 19 pandemic of Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College (NIPSC). **Methods:** This study is descriptive-correlation research participated by randomly selected 179 faculties of NIPSC, 5th District of Iloilo, Philippines. The instrument utilized in the study was researcher-made questionnaires validated by selected experts in the field. Frequency count, mean for descriptive analysis and t-test, One-Way Analysis of Variance, and Pearson's r for inferential were the statistical tool used in the study. **Findings:** The results revealed the level of faculty empowerment in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards when taken as to the entire group, sex, age, civil status, length of service, employment, and educational attainment were "Empowered". The results in the prevailing work environment in terms of physical was described as "Moderately Favorable"; and, for the psychological aspects, the results were described as "Favorable". While the level of institutional productivity in terms of instruction was "Very High Productivity"; research was "High Productivity" and, extension services were "High Productivity". Moreover, significant correlations between faculty empowerment, work environment, and commitment were noted. The NIPSC administrators empowered the faculty by giving them the chance to practice autonomy, participate in decision-making, and share relevant information regarding institutional goals and achievements during this pandemic crisis. **Novelty:** Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should create a reward policy to motivate faculty to improve instruction, research, extension, and production. Thence, in this flexible learning, commitments of faculty is crucial in the new landscape of education system towards achieving the mandates of every HEIs.

**Keywords:** Faculty Empowerment; Work Environment; Institutional Productivity; COVID19; Higher Education Institution

## 1 Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, about 175 countries and communities closed universities and colleges. About 220 million post students were displaced and online classes and distance education were introduced. But the lack of preparedness and strategies of many universities was greatly affected and many governments decided to halt education for an indefinite period<sup>(1)</sup>. Some of the common effects of the pandemic are the psychological impact of the outbreak, depressive symptoms, and stress levels. For psychological impacts and stress are imposed quarantine, prolonged home-stay and reports of poor health status, unnecessary worry, concerns for family members, and discrimination. But with Adequate health information, having grown-up children, perception of good health status, and confidence in doctors' abilities can help lessen mental health problems<sup>(2)</sup>.

Around 3.5 million of 2, 400 higher educations institutions (HEIs) implemented proactive policies despite the closure of colleges and universities in the Philippines<sup>(3)</sup>. The Philippine education system shifted to a new normal education policy by employing flexible learning. The readiness of teachers to adopt the new educational policy became a problem and issue in the academic community<sup>(4)</sup>; thus, all institutions in the country organized training and workshops to enhance faculty's knowledge and skills about flexible learning such as modular approach, gadgets, and connectivity. However, many students complained about internet connections; hence, students climbed trees, or even mountains, just to get a good internet signal for their classes<sup>(5)</sup>. According to 38 Filipino English university faculty, the problems related to Flexible Learning (FL) are minors. But factors like comprehension, engagements, and connectivity are the essential concern of the implementation of FL. Also, school administration should plan out effectively the implementation and monitoring of FL<sup>(6)</sup>.

Therefore, for schools to be effective and productive during this pandemic, they should be safe and have an orderly environment that is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning. It should have a clear mission through which the personnel shares a commitment to instructional goals, principles, assessment procedures, and accountability. School heads or principals should likewise understand and apply the characteristics of instructional leadership. School administrators are the instrument to encourage teachers to a climate of high expectations in which they will demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of basic skills<sup>(7)</sup>.

In an educational institution like Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College (NIPSC), situated in the fifth district of Northern Iloilo, Philippines, a faculty member can teach, do research, or extend services<sup>(8)</sup> but the qualitative and quantitative demonstration of activity and efficiency is not sufficient. So, young faculty that are dynamic and hardworking should be emotionally and physically nourished to improve job engagement in instruction, research, and extension services. Also, virtual learning support to this group of faculty influences improvement in job engagement<sup>(9)</sup>. This motivate researcher to pursue this concept as a research topic.

Empowered management and organizational style enable employees to practice autonomy, control their jobs, skills, and abilities to benefit both their organization and themselves. It is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired positive actions and outcomes. Teachers are empowered by allowing them to participate directly in school decision-making to improve the quality of educational practice<sup>(10)</sup>.

"Flattening the multimodal learning curve: A faculty playbook," is a paper that addressed the gap challenges, digital divides, skill gaps, and socio-economic disparities facing faculty at higher education institutions during the COVID 19 crisis produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The result revealed that higher education is gearing towards the flexible and personalized mode of instruction. Thus, various academic institutions adopt new pedagogical approaches to cope with changing times. Empowering faculty is the key<sup>(11)</sup>.

A study from the University of Maryland, College of Education about the impact of COVID 19 for teachers showed eight broad themes:

- (1) Difficulties Acclimating to New Teaching Demands,
- (2) Personal Concerns,
- (3) Teaching is a Relationship,
- (4) School as a Place of Community,
- (5) Self-Reflection About Teaching Identity,
- (6) Communication Between Administration and Teachers,
- (7) Difficulty Balancing Multiple Demands While Teaching Remotely, and
- (8) Education is Not Restricted to Academics<sup>(12)</sup>.

"Self-care is vital," a role to protect own well-being in this pandemic. COVID 19 causes emotional health resulted in a mental health crisis is a common issue during this time. A daily routine like sleep well, eat healthily, take breaks and exercise is the solution to avoid stress and anxiety<sup>(13)</sup>.

A positive mind and a healthy body are essential aspects of the work environment. The effectiveness of employers to motivated employees to increase productivity depends on organizational psychology, the physical, mental and social

environment. With this, frustration, anxiety, and worry inside the workplace are eliminated<sup>(14)</sup>. With good office environment improves employees' morale and performance. A good environment inspires employees to work efficiently and effectively<sup>(15)</sup>.

All employers agreed to shift to remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations are finding ways how to make the company productive amid pandemics and they engaged in many activities. They organized online activities to make everyone productive and stress-free, and work-from-work showed positive results for both employees and the organization<sup>(16)</sup>.

For instance, a study about the work environment of nurses showed they need training about the proper use of protective gears and many were afraid to get infected. Five themes such as the feeling of insecurity, lack of personal protective equipment, lack of diagnostic tests, changes in the care flow, and fear of the unknown are the important factors identified during the pandemic to care for the patient<sup>(17)</sup>.

Productivity to the highest level is what every organization would always aim for. The belief that empowered personnel and the most favorable environment would lead to institutional productivity for employees tend to develop the feeling of ownership, commitment, and loyalty toward the organization. Expanding their roles and responsibilities too often does nothing to enhance their sense of power unless they feel capable of managing their new roles and assignments and have the time to support to work through the conflict that inevitably accompanies any real change<sup>(18)</sup>.

The study aims to determine the level of faculty empowerment in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards; work environment in terms of physical and psychological; and, level of institutional productivity in terms of instruction, research, and extension services during the COVID 19 pandemic.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The 179 faculty members classified according to sex, age, civil status, length of service, employment status, and educational attainment were used as respondents of the study, representing the 321 total population of the faculty from the seven NIPSC campuses. The stratified random sampling method was employed in the selection of the final subjects of the study.

### 2.2 Instruments

The critical data needed in the study were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire duly validated by seven experts in the field of research, testing, and school administration. The instrument evaluated the respondent's level of empowerment in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards in their respective campus; their perceived work environment in terms of physical and psychological; and institutional productivity in instruction, research, and extension services.

### 2.3 Procedure

This study employed the descriptive-correlation research design to assess faculty empowerment, work environment, commitment, and institutional productivity of the NIPSC system during the new normal. Respondents were asked to check their selected responses on each item. In addition, the instrument was subjected to reliability testing using 30 faculty from another state college in Northern Iloilo. Frequency count, percentage, and mean were used as descriptive statistics while t-test, One-Way Analysis of Variance, and Pearson's *r* for inferential statistics.

## 3 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the level of faculty empowerment of the 7 campuses of NIPSC in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards.

The results revealed that the level of faculty empowerment of seven campuses of NIPSC in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards was "Empowered" with the highest mean score of 4.06. But in educational qualification under the bachelor's degree has a mean of 3.40 and is described as "Moderately Empowered". Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines follow the Commission on Higher Education standard policy of vertical articulations. This means that baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degrees are in vertical alignment with major fields of specialization. The highest quality and standard of education in HEIs depends on the merit and fitness of the professors handling the subjects or course offerings<sup>(19)</sup>.

Rewards are always important to all. The study about the impact of rewards on employee performance revealed a significant effect. Rewards always have a positive relationship with employees' job performance. Many organizations implement rewards systems to increase job performance and job satisfaction<sup>(20)</sup>. Also, the employee-employee relationship linked with working conditions, rewards, and compensation affect the commitment of teachers in private higher education<sup>(21)</sup>.

**Table 1. Level of faculty empowerment of the NIPSC System in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards**

Variables	Information		Knowledge		Participation		Reward	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	Mean	Descriptio	Mean	Description
Entire Group	3.68	Empowered	3.58	Empowered	3.54	Empowered	3.85	Empowered
Sex								
Male	3.65	Empowered	3.64	Empowered	3.54	Empowered	3.89	Empowered
Female	3.69	Empowered	3.54	Empowered	3.55	Empowered	3.82	Empowered
Age								
21 - 30 yrs. old	3.61	Empowered	3.67	Empowered	3.59	Empowered	4.06	Empowered
31 - 40 yrs. old	3.46	Empowered	3.41	Empowered	3.30	Empowered	3.60	Empowered
41 - 50 yrs. old	3.78	Empowered	3.64	Empowered	3.55	Empowered	3.83	Empowered
50 yrs. old and above	3.77	Empowered	3.60	Empowered	3.68	Empowered	3.92	Empowered
Civil Status								
Single	3.55	Empowered	3.52	Empowered	3.41	Empowered	3.84	Empowered
Married	3.71	Empowered	3.59	Empowered	3.56	Empowered	3.85	Empowered
Separated	3.75	Empowered	3.36	Empowered	3.88	Empowered	3.88	Empowered
Widowed	3.88	Empowered	3.65	Empowered	3.94	Empowered	3.92	Empowered
Length of Service								
1 - 10 years	3.46	Empowered	3.47	Empowered	3.32	Moderately Empowered	3.74	Empowered
11 - 20 years	3.69	Empowered	3.62	Empowered	3.58	Empowered	3.85	Empowered
21 - 30 years	3.77	Empowered	3.55	Empowered	3.60	Empowered	3.80	Empowered
30 years & above	3.85	Empowered	3.71	Empowered	3.75	Empowered	4.06	Empowered
Employment Status								
Permanent	3.70	Empowered	3.58	Empowered	3.55	Empowered	3.85	Empowered
Contractual	3.48	Empowered	3.57	Empowered	3.49	Empowered	3.85	Empowered
Educational Attainment								
Bachelor's degree	3.45	Empowered	3.40	Moderately	3.46	Empowered	3.75	Empowered
Bachelor's degree with units in MA	3.68	Empowered	3.60	Empowered	3.53	Empowered	3.71	Empowered
Master's degree	3.75	Empowered	3.57	Empowered	3.52	Empowered	3.99	Empowered
Master's degree with units in doctorate	3.59	Empowered	3.53	Empowered	3.54	Empowered	3.78	Empowered
Doctorate	3.78	Empowered	3.77	Empowered	3.71	Empowered	4.01	Empowered

Table 2 represents the prevailing work environment of the NIPSC System in terms of physical and psychological.

**Table 2. The prevailing work environment of the NIPSC System in terms of physical and psychological**

Variables	Physical		Psychological	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
Entire Group	3.18	Moderately Favorable	1.393	Favorable
Campus				
Ajuy	3.54	Favorable	4.39	Highly Favorable
Barotac Viejo	3.22	Moderately Favorable	3.88	Favorable
Batad	2.92	Moderately Favorable	3.56	Favorable
Concepcion	3.07	Moderately Favorable	3.88	Favorable
Estancia	3.23	Moderately Favorable	3.99	Favorable
Lemery	3.31	Moderately Favorable	3.96	Favorable
Sara	2.79	Moderately Favorable	3.65	Favorable
Number of Enrolment				
500 to 1,000 students	3.12	Moderately Favorable	3.81	Favorable
1,001 and more students	3.22	Moderately Favorable	4.01	Favorable
Number of Faculty				
Less than 50	3.15	Moderately Favorable	3.89	Favorable
50 and above	3.23	Moderately Favorable	3.99	Favorable
Number of Programs Offered				
6 and more programs	3.18	Moderately Favorable	3.93	Favorable

The prevailing physical work environment of the NIPSC system was “moderately favorable” in physical while the results indicated a “favorable” psychological environment. But in Ajuy Campus, the mean score for physical was 3.54 and described as “Favorable”; and, in psychological the mean score was 4.39 and described as “Highly Favorable”.

NIPSC as an academic institution acknowledged the value of childcare responsibilities. The faculty who mothered was a group of academicians highly affected during the pandemic. The institution creates solutions addressing the challenges faced by mothers in the academe<sup>(22)</sup>. In terms of productivity during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, male academics - especially those without children - are the least affected group<sup>(23)</sup>.

During this pandemic, faculty were tasked to work from home to help lessen the spread of the virus. Also, Work From Home (WFH) is the current trend in flexible learning. In this new normal, WFH is an outstanding fruitful engagement among employees during the lockdown. WFH allows new learning and development among themselves and creates commitments to the organization and stays motivated in this crisis<sup>(16)</sup>.

Significance, ability, self-determination, and impact are significantly correlated with employees' performance<sup>(24)</sup>. Human capital is a valuable resource of every organization. Thus, a study about positive organizational behavior revealed the importance of structural and psychological empowerment as strong predictors<sup>(25)</sup>. In the study about women's role in the travel industry on organization commitment and job satisfaction in an urban setting, the first regression analysis results show that job satisfaction factors pay considerably affect job attachment. Thus, job satisfaction plays a crucial role in the workforce<sup>(26)</sup>. In this new normal, technology and connectivity is a tool to continue the education system. E-learning becomes the saving graces of education systems amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, countries like the Philippines improved the implementation of e-learning practices<sup>(27)</sup>.

Table 3 shows the level of institutional productivity of the NIPSC System in Terms of instruction, research, and extension Services

The level of institutional productivity in terms of instruction shows “Very High Productivity”; for research was “High Productivity”; and, for extension services “High Productivity”. The mandate of the college is instruction, research, and extension services. Thus, the key officials give 100% support to all faculty members of the college.

**Table 3. Level of Institutional Productivity of the NIPSC System in Terms of Instruction, Research and Extension Services**

Variables	Instruction		Research		Extension Services	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
Entire Group	4.34	Very High Productivity	3.58	High Productivity	4.19	High Productivity
Campus						
Ajuy	4.75	Very High Productivity	3.83	High Productivity	4.50	Very High Productivity
Barotac Viejo	4.29	Very High Productivity	3.57	High Productivity	4.11	High Productivity
Batad	4.06	High Productivity	3.14	High Productivity	4.06	High Productivity
Concepcion	4.39	Very High Productivity	3.49	High Productivity	4.20	High Productivity
Estancia	4.34	Very High Productivity	3.69	High Productivity	4.20	High Productivity
Lemery	4.46	Very High Productivity	3.49	High Productivity	4.54	Very High Productivity
Sara	4.04	High Productivity	3.33	Average Productivity	3.67	High Productivity

Despite the current situations, the administration supports the faculty in various training and workshop for the implementation of flexible learning. Furthermore, all researches and extensions of the 7 campuses were aligned to COVID 19 pandemic. HEIs like the University of Northern Philippines showed "very high" in terms of research programs and capability and performance. But the results of research conducted in the community also revealed: "high". The encouragement and support of the administration play a great factor<sup>(28)</sup>. Even though instruction got a high mean score but many faculties complained about the use of technology and other modalities. Study like alternative learning such as e-learning, the lack of knowledge and experiences of teachers hinders the effective implementations<sup>(29)</sup>. In India, online learning is still in its infancy. Health is a common issue stressed by teachers and students<sup>(30)</sup>. But in the Philippines, specifically in NIPSC, teachers were allowed to use any modalities for teaching.

Positive Leadership skill helps employees' psychological well-being. Thus, leadership empowering behaviors is suggested to adopt by the school leaders to improve the employees' mental welfare for better organizational productivity<sup>(31)</sup>.

Furthermore, the t-test results show there were no significant differences in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of information when classified according to sex,  $t\text{-value}=0.495$ , sig (2-tailed) =.621, and employment status,  $t\text{-value}=1.76$ , sig(2-tailed) =.080. In addition, the Analysis of Variance [ANOVA] results revealed that there were significant differences in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of information when classified according to age,  $f\text{-ratio}=4.6$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.007, and length of service,  $f\text{-ratio}=5.32$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.002. Also, there were no significant differences in civil status,  $f\text{-ratio}=1.29$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.280, and educational attainment,  $f\text{-ratio}=1.63$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.170.

In terms of sex,  $t\text{-value}=1.278$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.203 and employment,  $t\text{-value}=.032$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.975 in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of knowledge; thus, the t-test results show there was no significant difference. The ANOVA results show that there were no significant differences in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of knowledge when classified according to age,  $f\text{-ratio}=2.219$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.088; civil status,  $f\text{-ratio}=0.301$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.824; length of services,  $f\text{-ratio}=1.863$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.138; and, educational attainment,  $f\text{-ratio}=1.363$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.249.

The t-test results in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of participation show no significant differences when classified according to sex,  $t\text{-value}=.046$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.963; and, employment status,  $t\text{-value}=.455$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.649. The ANOVA results show a significant difference in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of participation when classified according to age,  $F\text{-ratio}=3.848$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.011; and, length of service,  $F\text{-ratio}=4.722$ , sig- (2-tailed) =.003. Further, there were no significant differences when classified according to civil status,  $F\text{-ratio}=1.830$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.143; and, educational attainment,  $F\text{-ratio}=0.551$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.699.

The t-test results revealed that there were no significant differences in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of rewards when classified according to sex,  $t\text{-value}=.500$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.618; and, employment status,  $t\text{-value}=.035$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.972. The ANOVA results revealed that there were no significant differences in the level of faculty empowerment in terms of rewards when classified according to age,  $F\text{-ratio}=2.496$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.062; civil status,  $F\text{-ratio}=.019$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.997; length of service,  $F\text{-ratio}=1.332$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.265; and educational attainment,  $F\text{-ratio}=1.271$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.283.

The t-test results show no significant differences in the prevailing work environment in terms of physical when classified according to a number of enrolments,  $t\text{-value}=1.142$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.255; and, number of faculty,  $t\text{-value}=1.052$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.294. The ANOVA results show a significant difference in the prevailing work environment in terms of physical when classified according to campus,  $F\text{-ratio}=4.808$ , sig. (2-tailed) =.000.

The t-test results show a significant difference in the prevailing work environment in terms of psychological when classified according to the number of enrollments,  $t\text{-value}=2.219$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .028. When classified according to the number of faculty, the results show no significant difference,  $t\text{-value}=1.105$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .271. The ANOVA results indicate that there was a significant difference in the prevailing work environment in terms of psychological when classified according to campus,  $F\text{-ratio}=4.807$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .0001.

The t-test revealed that there was a significant difference in the level of institutional productivity in terms of instruction when classified according to campus,  $F\text{-ratio}=4.081$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .0001. The ANOVA results revealed that there was a significant difference in the level of institutional productivity in terms of research when classified according to campus,  $F\text{-ratio}=3.400$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .003. While the ANOVA results in terms of extension services, there were significant differences when classified to campus,  $F\text{-ratio}=3.06$ , sig. (2-tailed) = .001.

Furthermore, empowering employees contributes to organizational commitment and excellent performance on the job. Empowering allows employees a sense of belongingness, and feelings of ownership contribute to achieving organizational objectives<sup>(32)</sup>.

## 4 Conclusion

In general, during this flexible learning, the administrators empowered the faculty members in terms of information, knowledge, participation, and rewards by giving them the chance to practice autonomy, participate in decision-making, and share relevant information regarding institutional goals and achievements. The reward and incentives system is essential to increase work performance and organizational commitment. The rewards also attract skilled employees to join the organization for better profiles of the institutions. The key officials provide the faculty members with the necessary training and skills to enhance teaching and learning processes during COVID 19 pandemic. The faculty development plan should be maintained and continuously updated to create awareness for sensitivity and participation on social issues, precisely amidst pandemics to enhance performances in the mandates of HEIs. In addition, the administration should provide personnel with a work environment with complete facilities that can increase employee productivity, passion, and innovation. The study is descriptive; thus, it is suggested to assess in detail the engagement of faculty in terms of instruction, research, and community outreach activities. This is to identify the innovations and best practices of the college in flexible learning. Also, this study suggests evaluating the work-from-home policy of various HEIs around the world.

## 5 Research Interest (JLPB)

Hotel and Restaurant Management, Educational Management, Research

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