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Delayed Promotion and Its Implication on Teachers' Commitment to Professional Practices: Experience from Butiama District in Mara Region, Tanzania

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Abstract

High-performing education systems prioritize teachers' welfare and favourable working conditions, including timely promotion. However, timely teacher promotion remains a challenge in in many developing countries. This study explored the implications of delayed promotion for teachers' commitment to their professional practices in Tanzania. It adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design involving four public secondary schools and 28 participants in Butiama District, Mara Region. The participants comprised teachers, heads of school, Teachers' Service Commission officer, Ward Education Officers, and a Human Resource Officer. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed several implications of delayed promotions, including reduced work motivation and commitment, deterioration of classroom teaching practices, diminished participation in professional development activities, emotional and psychological distress, increased teacher misconduct, and declining teamwork in schools. The findings suggest that unless teacher promotion is prioritised, government efforts to improve the quality education may be undermined. Given the central role of teacher in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), immediate and appropriate measures are needed to ensure fair and timely promotion and support the attainment of this goal in Tanzania.

Keywords: promotion, delayed promotion, teacher, professional practice, Tanzania

1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to promote sustainable development and foster balanced and inclusive societies worldwide (Akter, 2025). The agenda provides a comprehensive framework for global progress comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). Among these, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) seeks to ensure free, inclusive, and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). All UN member States are committed to pursuing this goal, including ensuring that all boys and girls have access to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. Teachers play a central role in realising this goal, as the quality of education depends substantially on their professional competence, commitment, and effectiveness (Akter, 2025). Teachers play the most significant role as the key agents in the delivery of quality education within any education system (Kanwetuu, Brenya & Obeng, 2020). They shape the teaching and learning process by identifying students' learning abilities, recognising their intrinsic and extrinsic learning needs and adopting appropriate pedagogical approaches to support learning and improve educational outcomes (Day, 2019; Mincu, 2015).

In the context of 21st century education, competent, committed and motivated teachers are essential to advancing quality education in any nation (Akter, 2025; Kuranchie, 2013). Consequently, governments across the world have introduced various policy initiatives to recruit, retain and motivate teachers to ensure that education systems are served by competent and motivated professionals. The initiatives include providing opportunities for career advancement through promotion (UNESCO, 2023). Promotion entails the upward advancement of a teacher from a lower to a higher position or grade, accompanied by increased status, authority, responsibilities and remuneration (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020; Ameen & Baharom, 2019; Canet, Redondo, Saorín & Escribá, 2020). In the teaching profession, promotion is regarded as recognition of teachers' qualifications, performance and experience, as well as an important mechanism for enhancing their professional status, motivation and commitment to their responsibilities (Akter, 2025; Kalogiannidis, Savvidou, Papaevangelou & Pakaki,

2021; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023). Research conducted in both developed and developing countries shows that teachers who receive timely promotions tend to demonstrate greater work commitment and perform better with less supervision than their counterparts who experience promotion delays (Swai & Malingumu, 2022). In many African countries, teachers' promotion is a recognized employment entitlement, as provided for in their terms and conditions of service (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023). Generally, teachers' promotion criteria are stipulated in official documents and are primarily based on seniority, merit, or a combination of merit and seniority. Merit-based promotion considers teachers' effectiveness, efficiency, and performance, alongside their relevant qualifications. Consequently, teachers who meet the established criteria are entitled to timely consideration for promotion (Daniel, Haji & Malecela, 2025; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023). However, studies and media reports indicate that timely and fair promotion remains a significant challenge for teachers in many African countries, even when they meet the established requirements. For instance, a study on teacher job satisfaction in Kenya by Sirima and Poipoi (2010) revealed that delays in teachers' promotions negatively affected their morale. A recent report by Mumbi (East Leigh Voice- On line news and newspaper) disclosed that Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) threatened to strike over delayed promotions and stalled reforms at Teachers' Service Commission. The report stressed that about 135, 000 teachers, had been left stagnated in same grades with some waiting for advancement up to thirty years despite long service and qualifying for promotion. Studies by Aloo, Ajowi and Aloka (2017); Ekabu, Nyagah and Kalai (2018) and Orina, Kiumi and Kaboro (2022) also reported on teachers' promotion challenges in Kenya. Similarly, in Uganda, the study by Hannington (2017) and Muwagga, Genza and Ssemulya (2013) highlighted rigidity in bureaucratic procedures and insufficient dialogue between appraisers and employees. Thus, many teachers in public schools worked for years without promotions. In Ghana, a considerable number of teachers experienced delayed promotions or were not promoted due to bureaucratic procedures associated with the verification process (Yeboah & Kurachie, 2023). Similarly, reports of delayed teacher promotions are repeatedly reported in Nigeria (Mohammed & El-Jajah, 2019; Oluoma, Anele & Wordu, 2022; Porbari & Barinem, 2023).

In Tanzania, promotion is a legal right for public employees, including teachers, as stipulated under the United Republic of Tanzania's Standing Orders of 2009 and the Public Service Regulations of 2022 (URT, 2009; URT, 2022). The government has undertaken concerted initiatives to ensure timely and fair promotions as part of broader initiatives to improve public service delivery. For example, in 2010, the government launched the Public Service Pay and Incentive Scheme policy, which mandates that the promotion of public employees, including teachers, should be based on open performance (URT, 2010; UNESCO, 2023). To facilitate an open and participatory assessment of teachers' performance for promotion, the former Teachers Service Department (TSD), now the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), which is responsible for teacher promotions, among other functions, introduced the Open Performance Review and Assessment System (OPRAS) in 2004. The system was intended to foster a performance-oriented promotion culture in the public service. It replaced the previous confidential reporting system, which was characterized by secrecy, bureaucratic procedures, and inadequate employee support (Sanga, Kitigwa & Matoka, 2025). OPRAS was designed as a participatory system involving supervisors and employees in setting performance objectives, monitoring progress, and providing feedback (Kira & Ewana, 2022). In the education sector, heads of school and teachers jointly agreed on specific objectives and performance targets, which were documented in a contract signed at the beginning of the financial year. The contract was subsequently reviewed at mid-year and at the end of the year to assess progress and evaluate achievements, which informed decisions on eligibility for promotion (Kira & Ewana 2022; Mwita & Andrea, 2019). However, the system was criticized for inadequate employee participation in goal setting, particularly where supervisors dominated the process. This undermined the integrity and fairness of performance assessments and, consequently, affected teachers' promotion prospects (Mwita & Andrea, 2019). Consequently, in January 2024, the government introduced digitalized Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) through Circular No. 2 of 2024 to address implementation challenges associated with OPRAS (Bakar, Osaki & Mwila, 2024). PEPMIS aims to streamline the performance appraisal process by reducing paperwork, enhancing transparency and fairness in performance evaluations, and facilitating the fair and timely promotion of public employees, including teachers (URT, 2022).

Despite these policy initiatives, a significant gap persists between policy intentions and practice, as delays in teachers' promotion remain a recurring concern. Reports from the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), mass media, and research studies consistently highlight cases of teachers remaining in the same ranks for years despite meeting the prescribed promotion requirements (Kilonzo, 2022; Mhando, 2018; Mwijage, 2015). Teachers also frequently report delays in receiving promotion letters, receiving promotion letters without corresponding salary adjustments, and delays in the payment of promotion-related arrears (Bihu & Dachi, 2025; Birembo, 2021; Nehemia, 2017; Raymond, 2019; Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). For instance, TSC records indicate that between 2014 and 2020, many teachers who were due for promotion were not promoted, despite meeting the relevant requirements, and no clear reasons were provided for the delays. Specifically, the Mara region recorded the highest proportion of the affected teachers at 67%, with Butiama District alone accounting for 60% of affected teachers in the region. Other regions included Geita (50%), Dodoma (48%), Kagera (42%), Songwe (41%), Mbeya (33%), Iringa (28%), Manyara (25%), and Mtwara (20%) (TSC, 2020). Although delayed

teacher promotion has become an increasingly persistent concern across Africa, particularly in Tanzania, existing studies in the country have focused primarily on the administrative and financial aspects of teacher promotion and its effects on motivation. Consequently, the implications of delayed promotion for teachers' professional practices remain largely underexplored. The denial or delay of promotion, which constitutes a legal entitlement for teachers who have fulfilled the prescribed requirements, can cause significant psychological distress. If such distress is left unaddressed, affected teachers may be less motivated to perform their professional responsibilities effectively, potentially undermining the achievement of educational goals (Daniel et al., 2025). This gap in the existing literature underscores the need for empirical research to inform policy decisions aimed at enhancing teacher motivation and supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) in Tanzania. Therefore, this study explores the implications of delayed promotion on teachers' professional practices in Butiama District, Mara Region, in Tanzania.

2. Review of Related Studies

Researchers across African countries have extensively examined various aspects of teacher promotion, with individual studies focusing on specific areas of interest. For example, in Nigeria, Mohammed and El-Jajah (2019) conducted a quantitative study examining the relationship between teachers' salaries, promotion, and job performance in secondary schools in Adamawa State. Similarly, Oluoma, Anele and Wordu (2022) investigated the relationship between promotion and teachers' performance in Nigeria, finding a significant association between promotion stagnation, teachers' work output, and absenteeism. In another study, Porbari and Barinem (2023) examined the effects of delayed promotion on teachers' performance in secondary schools in Rivers State, involving 393 participants. Their findings revealed that delayed promotion was significantly associated with reduced teacher motivation, increased absenteeism, and diminished student learning outcomes. Although these studies examined various aspects of teacher promotion, they relied primarily on quantitative methods and, therefore, did not adequately capture teachers' personal experiences through qualitative inquiry. In Botswana, Monyamane (2020) conducted a quantitative study examining the influence of promotion opportunities and professional development on secondary school teachers' job satisfaction. The findings indicated that male teachers were less satisfied than their female counterparts with their jobs and prospects for promotion. However, the study did not explore how delayed promotion affects teachers' commitment in professional practices, which is the focus of the present study. In Ghana, Yeboah and Kuranchie (2023) conducted a descriptive survey involving 246 participants to explore the challenges senior school teachers face in seeking promotion and career advancement. The survey highlighted several challenges, including irregular and untimely dissemination of promotion-related information, lengthy application procedures, and delays in announcing promotion results. These challenges adversely affected teachers' work performance and their psychological, social, and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the study did not explore in depth teachers' lived experiences of how these challenges influenced their commitment to professional practices.

In Tanzania, studies by Mhando (2018) and Ngussa and Gabriel (2021) examined the challenges teachers encounter in the promotion process. Their findings revealed that, despite the existence of well-established promotion policies, weak enforcement, favouritism, and inconsistent application of promotion procedures remained major obstacles to fairness and professionalism in teacher promotion. Although these studies identified persistent challenges in implementing equitable promotion systems, they did not examine the implications of delayed promotion, which the focus of the current study. Mbukwin and Matoka (2023) examined teacher promotion under the OPRAS framework. The findings revealed that the Open Performance Review and Appraisal system was ineffective in facilitating timely teacher promotions due to several challenges, including inadequate knowledge and skills among teachers and school heads. Consequently, OPRAS data were rarely used to inform promotion and reward decisions. However, the study focused primarily on effectiveness of OPRAS as a toll for teacher promotion. Similarly, Mwita (2020) and Daniel et al. (2025) examined the strengths and weaknesses of teacher promotion criteria. Their findings identified educational qualifications, teaching experience, job performance, professional development, adherence to professional ethics, and citizenship status as the key promotion criteria. Although these criteria were merit-based and clearly stipulated, their implementation was characterized by bureaucratic delays, inadequate performance assessments, excessive reliance on years of service, and limited teacher involvement, which often contributed to delays in promotion. However, these studies did not examine the implications of delayed promotion for teachers' professional practices.

Overall, although previous studies have extensively examined various aspects of teacher promotion, research conducted in Tanzania has focused on the effectiveness and shortcomings of appraisal systems, such as OPRAS, as a tool for promotion; challenges teachers encounter in the promotion process; promotion criteria and gender disparities in promotion. However, the implications of delayed promotions for teachers' commitment to professional practices have received relatively little attention.

3. Method

3.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach informed by an interpretive phenomenological design to explore participants' experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because of its

capacity to explore participants' views and experiences of a specific phenomenon in depth (Creswell, 2014). It enabled the researchers to generate rich data grounded in participants' experiences and perspectives regarding delayed promotions and their implications for teachers' professional commitment and practices. The choice of this approach was also informed by its flexibility, which allowed the researchers to make real-time adjustments to the research process whenever necessary (Patton, 2015). Accordingly, the qualitative approach was guided by an interpretive phenomenological design, which is well suited to studies seeking to understand subjective human experiences and interpretations of events within their social and professional contexts (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Since delayed promotion is both an administrative issue and a professional experience that may shape teachers' commitment and engagement in their professional responsibilities, the design provided an opportunity for direct engagement with teachers who had experienced delayed promotions, as well as educational leaders and administrators responsible for teachers' promotions. This enabled the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings teachers attached to delayed promotions and their perceived implications for their professional practices (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Patton, 2015). Although the design primarily focused on teachers' lived experiences of the phenomenon, it also allowed for the inclusion of different categories of educational leaders and administrators to provide complementary perspectives on the administrative processes, institutional circumstances and professional implications of delayed promotions. Their contributions were not treated as accounts of lived experience but were used to contextualise, corroborate and deepen the understanding of teachers' accounts.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Procedures

The study involved four secondary schools in Butiama District and 28 participants, comprising 18 teachers, four heads of school, four Ward Education Officers (WEOs), one District Human Resource Officer (DHRO), and one Teachers Service Commission (TSC) officer. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation (Patton, 2015). Participants were purposively selected based on their roles and relevant experiences concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Specifically, the four schools were selected because they had relatively large numbers of teachers who had experienced delayed promotions. Teachers who had fulfilled the promotion requirements but had experienced delays in promotion ranging from four to eight years were selected. Given their firsthand experience of the phenomenon, they were considered well positioned to provide detailed accounts of how delayed promotions affected their professional practices. Heads of school, WEOs, the DHRO, and the TSC officer from promotion unit were purposively selected based on their positions and institutional responsibilities. As they were directly involved in teacher management and promotion processes, they were considered well placed to provide relevant insights and perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study employed two data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and document review. An interpretive phenomenological design requires a flexible data collection instrument. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants using interview guide containing questions relevant to the research objectives. This method enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences regarding the implications of delayed teacher promotion for professional practices in schools. Probing questions were also used to obtain further clarification and elicit detailed responses (Patton, 2015). All interviews were conducted in private, interruption-free locations selected by the participants to ensure confidentiality and provide comfortable environment for expressing their views and experiences freely. The interviews were conducted in English, lasted between 50 minutes and one hour, and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. To enhance the accuracy and credibility of the interview data, participants were given the opportunity to review the audio recordings and transcripts of their interviews to verify the accuracy of their responses (Tisdell, Merriam & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025). To complement the interview data, the researchers also reviewed relevant documents, including the United Republic of Tanzania Standing Orders (2009), the Public Service Regulations (2022), the Teachers' Scheme of Service (2014) (URT, 2009; 2022), and records of teachers whose promotions had been delayed. The document review enabled the researchers to establish requirements for teacher promotion and identify the number of teachers who had been promoted and those whose promotions had been delayed (Mogalakwe, 2006).

3.4 Data Analysis

The researchers manually analysed the data following the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). The analysis began with familiarisation with the data, during which each researcher repeatedly listened to the audio-recorded interviews to gain a thorough understand of their content. Subsequently, the researchers independently transcribed the interviews, after which the transcripts were compared and discussed collectively until consensus was reached on their accuracy. The agreed transcripts were then shared with participants for verification. Following participant verification, the researchers independently generated initial codes inductively from the data. Following initial coding, the researchers compared and discussed the codes, reaching consensus and refining them to ensure alignment with the study objectives. Similar codes were then grouped into preliminary themes. To ensure the credibility of the themes, two research experts were invited to review them against the corresponding data extracts. Following this review, the researchers further

refined and defined themes, identified illustrative quotations to support them, and developed interpretations and conclusions based on the emerging patterns before presenting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.5 Ethical Protocal

The study adhered to all ethical guidelines and requirements. The researchers obtained permission to conduct the study from all relevant authorities, including the University of Dar es Salaam and the Regional and District Administrative Secretary offices. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and voluntarily completed consent forms; they were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained before, during, and after data collection and in reporting the findings. For example, all interviews were conducted in private areas free from interruptions, and data were stored on password-protected computers accessible only to the researchers. Accordingly, pseudonyms were used when reporting the findings, with the 28 coded participants identified as P1, P2, P3, up to P28, to protect their identities (Tracy, 2024).

4. Results

This section presents the findings of the study in accordance with the key research question as follows

4.1 The Implications of Delayed Promotions on Teachers' Professional Practices

The study explored the implications of delayed promotions for teachers' professional practices, drawing on the participants' experiences. The analysis generated the following themes, which captured the key implications identified in the data:

Declined work motivation and commitment: All the teachers interviewed reported that delayed promotions had undermined their morale, motivation, and commitment to work. They explained that they worked hard to achieve educational goals, with some pursuing further studies at their own expense and completing the PEPMIS appraisal process, thereby meeting all the requirements for promotion. Yet, they were shocked to learn that their promotions had been halted following government directive, through Secular No. PSC/TSD/FA.346/452/01/29 of 01st December 2015; which provided instructions to the TSD (currently the TSC) on how to promote teachers. The secular pointed out that teachers who were due for promotion were those employed in 2013 or those whose last promotions were endorsed in 2013 although some teachers had already received promotion letters for the financial year 2016/2017. Teachers perceived the withholding of promotion, despite having fulfilled the stipulated requirements, as unfair and unlawful. They further explained that this situation caused frustration and discouragement, leading some to reduce their work effort and perform their duties less efficiently. The P3's account illustrates this experience: *"I am very much discouraged to work as a teacher… imagine I was given a promotion letter three years ago, but to date I am still at the same rank because the president stopped all promotions."* Similarly, P4 observed: *"Despite working for more than ten years, I am almost at the same rank as junior teachers because of delayed promotions… this is very discouraging, and honestly, I now devote my effort to personal matters."* These accounts were corroborated by heads of school and education officers, who acknowledged that teachers experiencing delayed promotions often demonstrated lower levels commitment to their professional duties than their peers. Consider the statement from P19:

Timely promotion is an important motivational factor for teachers. However, delays in promotion, reportedly resulting from transpanrent appraising procedures that , have undermined teachers' morale and commitment to their professional responsibilities. I have teachers here who were previously punctual and highly committed, but the promotion delays have weakened their dedication to achieving educational goals, and some have consequently become less cooperative.

Deterioration of classroom teaching practices: The majority of teachers reported that delayed promotions had reduced their willingness to devote additional time and effort to their classroom responsibilities. These responsibilities included preparing lessons thoroughly, developing teaching and learning materials, marking students' exercises, and conducting remedial teaching. They further explained that, since their promotions had been withheld, their classroom performance had deteriorated, with some attending classes merely to fulfil their routine obligations rather than demonstrating active commitment to effective teaching. The assertion from P1 illustrates this: *"I invested a lot of my time preparing lessons, teaching, marking exercise books, and ensuring effective teaching and learning... when my promotion was delayed, I felt no one recognised my efforts. I deliberately decided to conserve my energy."* Similarly, P6 explained how uncertainty surrounding promotion affected their engagement with teaching: *"I often arrive at school tired and disengaged, and sometimes I struggle to give my full attention to teaching or mentoring students. Not knowing the fate of my career promotion is mentally and emotionally exhausting my teaching morale."* Heads of school, TSC officer, and education officers corroborated these accounts, acknowledging that delayed promotions have negatively affected teaching and learning processes. They reported that some teachers had become reluctant to attend classroom sessions unless compelled to do so. Others were said to engage in indirect teaching practices, remaining in the staff rooms while distributing notes or exercises for students to complete without adequate supervision. Such practices were perceived to undermine the quality of teaching and learning. P19 further narrated:

Delayed promotions have adversely affected teaching and learning processes in schools. Many teachers reportedly make inadequate preparations for lesson plans, fail to attend class sessions regularly, or neglect to mark students' work. Some simply provide students with notes or exercises to complete independently while remaining in the office chatting or engaging with social media platforms.

The findings suggest that delayed promotions adversely affect teaching and learning processes, potentially undermining efforts to achieve inclusive and quality education for all.

Reduced participation in professional development and extracurricular activities: The findings further revealed that delayed promotions had discouraged teachers from participating in professional development and extra-curricular activities. The majority of teachers reported that they were no longer willing to engage in either long- or short-term professional development opportunities. They explained that they had invested considerable time and financial resources in upgrading their qualifications to bachelor's and master's levels, anticipating that these achievements would lead to promotions. However, the failure to secure promotion had diminished their motivation to pursue further education. Interviews with heads of school and education officers corroborated these accounts, indicating that teachers whose promotions had been delayed were often reluctant to undertake xtracurricular responsibilities, including serving on school committees, assuming leadership roles, coordinating subjects, mentoring colleagues, and conducting remedial sessions. The sentiment of P7 illustrates how delayed promotion discouraged further investment in professional development: *"I took out a loan to attend higher education expecting promotion after graduation, but this was not the case… I swear I will never invest any more in professional development until my retirement… had I known, I would never have wasted my money."* Similarly, P20 concurred, *"Teachers with delayed promotions are difficult to work with… they are reluctant to assume assigned roles such as leadership, mentorship, or teaching remedial sessions, and they perceive everyone as an enemy…"* P5 expressed a similar sense of disappointment: "*Despite attending higher education and acquiring additional qualifications, the employer did not recognise my efforts. I regret wasting my time and will neither pursue professional growth nor engage in extra duties."* These accounts suggest that delayed promotion not only discourages teachers from pursuing further professional development but also reduces their willingness to undertake additional professional responsibilities, potentially constraining their career progression and effectiveness in fulfilling their roles.

Increased emotional and psychological distress: The majority of participants associated delayed promotions with adverse emotional and psychological effects on teachers. Teachers reported experiencing stress, frustration, and feelings of being neglected or undervalued. They further explained that these experiences sometimes manifested in anger and harsh treatment towards students, colleagues, and parents. Some teachers were also reported to engage in inappropriate and irrational behaviours, including administrating severe corporal punishment to students. Such behaviours not only threatened students' safety and well-being but also disrupted the teaching and learning environment. Heads of school, human resource personnel, TSC officer, and education officers corroborated these accounts, reporting that teachers experiencing delayed promotions often exhibited grievances, impatience, dissatisfaction, and negative attitudes towards their profession. They were also described as less approachable, a tendency that reportedly heightened workforce tensions and strained professional relationships. These circumstances affected workplace harmony, teachers' professional engagement, and overall productivity. P4's highlights the emotional and psychological distress associated with delayed promotion: *"Every month I check my pay slip hoping for a salary change, but nothing happens. I feel emotionally and psychologically tortured, frustrated, dissatisfied, and burnt out… I no longer feel satisfied with my job but mentally exhausted."* In addition, Participant P2 described the psychological strain experienced as a result of delayed promotion: *"The delay of my promotion affected me psychologically. I have been nervous and stressed, leading to high blood pressure… when you see teachers punishing students severely or using abusive language, it is due to stress and burnout."* Effective teaching and learning depend on positive and supportive relationships among teachers, students, and the wider school community. However, the negative attitudes and behaviours associated with emotional and psychological distress arising from delayed teacher promotions undermine these relationships, potentially compromising adherence to professional standards and the achievement of desired educational outcomes.

Prevalence of teacher misconduct in schools: The findings further suggested that delayed promotions were associated with various forms of teacher misconduct in schools. Participants observed that frustrated and demoralised teachers were less committed to supervising examinations and ensuring compliance with examination rules and procedures, thereby compromising academic integrity. Heads of school also reported cases of teachers failing to attend school or arriving late, engaging in alcohol misuse, and inappropriate relationships with students, and administering severe corporal punishment without justifiable reasons. Participants further reported that some teachers neglected their professional responsibilities by engaging in private income-generating activities, including petty trade, farming, and motorcycle transport services commonly known as "bodaboda,". These activities were reportedly undertaken at the expense of regular school attendance and adherence to the school timetable. P3 stated clearly, *"Teachers with promotion claims engage in different forms of misconduct. Their attendance and punctuality are poor, they are less committed to professional responsibilities, punish*

students severely, and the like…" P9 explained how engagement in motorcycle transport services had taken precedence over teaching responsibilities:

I am currently a motorcycle (boda boda) driver. I devote all my effort to this work to compensate for the loss caused by a delayed promotion. Every day, an hour before the end of school hours, I start rushing my fellow teachers home. Whenever someone calls, I drop everything to respond.

The findings suggest that delayed promotion may undermine teachers' adherence to the professional code of conduct, compromising the maintenance of professional standards, and ultimately jeopardise the attainment of desired educational outcomes.

Decline in teamwork and collegiality in schools: Teachers reported that delayed promotions had negatively affected relationships among colleagues and between teachers and their supervisors. Competition for limited promotion opportunities and perceptions of favouritism reportedly generated tensions among staff, further undermining morale and collegiality. These challenges, coupled with emotional strain and perceived administrative inefficiencies, contributed to dissatisfaction within the teaching workforce. In particular, perceived inconsistencies in promotion decisions fuelled tension, mistrust, and competition among teachers, weakening teamwork and tundermining a collaborative school culture. P28 illustrated these relational and organisational consequences as follows: "The prolonged delays create tension among colleagues. Some teachers seem to get promoted faster, while others wait for years. This has created competition, mistrust, and jealousy, even between close colleagues. This situation negatively affects teamwork and the school environment." These findings highlight the far-reaching implications of delayed promotions and perceived administrative inefficiencies for teachers' well-being, school performance, and the overall quality of education.

5. Discussion

The findings revealed that delayed teacher promotions had substantial negative implications for teachers' commitment to their professional responsibilities. Specifically, delayed promotions undermined teachers' work motivation and commitment. These findings are consistent with Yeboah and Kuranchie (2023) and Daniel et al. (2025), who reported that teachers who fulfil promotion requirements but do not receive timely promotions may experience disappointment and consequently reduce the effort they devoted to their professional duties. Promotion is an important motivational factor that influences teachers' commitment and willingness to perform their professional duties effectively. When promotions are delayed or withheld, teachers' morale and commitment may decline, potentially undermining student learning and the attainment of educational goals, particularly the SDG 4 (Porbari& Barinem, 2023).

Another significant finding was that delayed promotion undermined teachers' classroom teaching practices, particularly lesson preparation, classroom instruction, classroom management and the use of innovative pedagogical approaches. Similarly, Mohammed et al. (2019) revealed an association between teacher promotion and effective classroom teaching performance. Effective classroom practice depends on thorough lesson preparation, effective instruction and the use of innovative pedagogical approaches. Therefore, neglecting teachers' welfare, including ensuring timely promotion, not only affects teachers' professional well-being but also threatens the quality of teaching and learning, potentially limiting students' opportunities to realise their full potential. In this regard, fair and timely promotion is essential to motivate teachers to devote their time and effort to their instructional responsibilities and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

The findings further disclosed that delayed promotions undermined teachers' participation in continuing professional development and other school improvement activities. Career advancement and the prospect of promotion following the acquisition of additional qualifications are among the incentives to engage in short- and long-term professional development. Thus, delays in promotion may weaken teachers' motivation and willingness to pursue lifelong learning, which is essential for maintaining professional competence and fulfilling the expectations of the teaching profession. Teachers' reduced participation in key dimensions of professional development limit their opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills needed to keep abreast of global developments and respond effectively to the demands of 21st century teaching and learning (Daniel et al., 2025; Mwita, 2020). Nevertheless, teachers should recognise that participation in professional development and other school improvement activities is an integral part of their professional responsibilities. Therefore, despite experiencing delayed promotions, they are expected to continue fulfilling their professional obligations while pursuing appropriate administrative and legal channels to claim their promotion entitlements rather than neglecting their core responsibilities.

Delayed promotions were found to expose teachers to psychological and emotional distress, particularly stress, anxiety, frustration, burnout and feeling of being neglected or undervalued. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Mwita, 2020; Monyamane, 2020; Porbari & Barinem, 2023; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023), which associated challenges in teacher promotion processes with diverse psychological and emotional experiences. The attainment of educational goals depends, in part, on teachers' psychological and emotional well-being, which is essential for effective professional engagement and the provision of quality education. Teachers experiencing emotional and psychological exhaustion may struggle to teach effectively, guide and support learners, and maintain positive professional relationships.

Such distress may also contribute to inappropriate practices and behaviours in schools, including excessive corporal punishment, bullying, and strained collegial relationships, thereby undermining school safety and disrupting teaching and learning. This underscores the important of fair and promotion in supporting teachers' well-being, maintaining safe and supportive learning environments, and advancing educational goals (Mhando, 2018; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023).

Moreover, the study found that delayed teacher promotions were associated with various forms of teacher misconducts in schools, including absenteeism, alcohol abuse, engaging in private income-generating activities during working hours, theft and administrating unlawful punishment to students. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Oluoma et al., 2022; Yeboah & Kuranchie, 2023), which reported associations between promotion stagnation and teacher misconduct, particularly absenteeism and negligence in fulfilling professional responsibilities. When teachers engage in misconduct, such as alcohol misuse, absenteeism, and neglect of their professional responsibilities, Students' right to education is compromised, potentially undermining the achievement of educational objectives. Teaching is a moral profession guided by ethical standards that require educators to serve learners and society responsibly. Therefore, delayed promotions cannot justify professional misconduct or neglect of teachers' duties. Teachers should continue to fulfill their professional obligations while pursuing their promotion entitlements through appropriate and professionally recognised channels.

The findings further revealed that delayed promotions fostered feelings of isolation and perceptions of favouritism among teachers, making some less willing to collaborate with colleagues and school leaders in carrying out routine professional responsibilities. Teamwork is essential to effective functioning of any education system, as the attainment of educational goals depends on knowledge and experience sharing, collaborative problem-solving, mutual support, and collective responsibility. Therefore, fair and timely teacher promotion is important in fostering a collaborative school culture characterised by trust, collegiality, and shared responsibilities. Conversely, delayed or inequitable promotions may leave teachers feeling undervalued and unfairly treated, thereby weakening workplace relationships and collaborative practices. In this regard, ensuring fair and timely promotions is essential for strengthening trust and fostering a collaborative school culture, thereby enhancing the quality of education and enabling students to realise their full potential (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

6. Limitation and Future Study

The study was limited to 28 participants from four secondary schools in one district, which restricts the transferability of its findings to other contexts. Future research should therefore involver larger sample drawn from diverse districts to capture a wider range of experiences and perspectives and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effects of delayed teacher promotions on professional practice in secondary schools in Butiama District, Tanzania. The findings disclosed that delayed promotions undermine teachers' commitment to their professional responsibilities. Specifically, promotion delays diminish teachers' motivation and engagement in classroom instruction, discourage participation in continuous professional development and school-improvement activities; and exacerbate emotional and psychological distress. They also disrupt the teaching and learning environment and contribute to teacher misconduct, reduced collegiality, and weakened teamwork. Collectively, these effects threaten the effective delivery educational services and the attainment of educational goals. Arguably, teachers are essential agents in the provision of inclusive and quality education; hence, the nation rightly expects them to demonstrate strong professional commitment and performance. At the same time, teachers deserve the timely fulfillment of their contractual and legal rights, including promotions, to enable them to perform effectively. Without timely promotions and decent working conditions more broadly, teachers are unlikely to sustain their commitment to delivering quality education. Therefore, alongside efforts to expand access to education, and providing teaching and learning materials, the government must also prioritise teachers' rights and welfare, including timely promotions. Since delayed promotions are partly attributed to the shortcomings in the implementation of the existing Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) and the negligence of personnel responsible for the process, the government should provide training for teachers, heads of school and other personnel involved in teacher performance evaluation through PEPMIS. Such training would help ensure the accurate and timely completion of performance evaluations and the proper processing of promotion-related records. Since teacher performance evaluation through the online appraisal system (PEPMIS) depends on internet access, the government, in collaboration with education partners, should ensure reliable internet connectivity and the provision of necessary hardware, particularly in rural and underserved schools, to prevent system-related delays. Furthermore, to strengthen accountability, the government should establish clear oversight mechanisms and appropriate sanctions for individuals or offices responsible for unjustified delays in promotion process. These measures would help minimize promotion delays arising from systemic weaknesses, safeguard teachers' rights, and sustained their commitment to professional responsibilities, ultimately contributing to the provision of quality education.

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However, the authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the content and all other aspects of the article.

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Author contributions

The authors played different roles in writing this paper. Dr. Eunice E. Makere was responsible for conceptualizing the study, drafting the initial manuscript as well as collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. Dr. Eugenia J. Kafanabo and Dr. Afrael M. Sarakikya, critically reviewed the manuscript, offered proof-reading including constructive advice and feedback to improve its scholarly quality. All authors contributed in refining the manuscript, approved the final version and accepted the publication.

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