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IMPACT OF PROMOTION WITHOUT MASTERY ON LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF DOLORES I DISTRICT, EASTERN SAMAR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of promotion without mastery on learners' academic performance and classroom management in selected elementary schools of Dolores I District, Eastern Samar Division during School Year 2025–2026. Using a descriptive–correlational design, data were collected from fifty (50) purposively selected Grades 4 to 6 teachers who handled learners promoted despite not fully mastering the required competencies. A researcher-developed questionnaire and class record data were utilized to measure the extent of promotion without mastery, the academic performance of affected learners, and corresponding classroom management challenges. Results revealed that promotion without mastery occurred to a moderate extent, primarily influenced by parental expectations and administrative pressure. Promoted learners demonstrated only fairly satisfactory academic performance, while teachers frequently encountered classroom management difficulties such as lesson pacing adjustments and behavioral disruptions. Correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between promotion without mastery and academic performance ($r = .16$, $p = .27$), but a moderate positive relationship with classroom management challenges ($r = .37$, $p = .009$). These findings suggest that while automatic promotion policies aim to reduce dropouts, they may inadvertently compromise classroom efficiency and learning quality when not paired with structured remediation. Strengthening mastery-based assessment and remediation programs is therefore recommended to uphold learner welfare and academic integrity.

KEYWORDS: *Promotion Without Mastery, Academic Performance, Classroom Management, Elementary Education, Remediation*

INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely the transmission of information but the formation of competencies, values, and lifelong learning habits. In the Philippine basic education system, the Department of Education (DepEd) expects learners to meet a set of prescribed Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) before they are promoted to the next grade level. These competencies ensure that each learner builds a strong academic foundation before advancing to more complex content.

However, in recent years, the practice of promotion without mastery—advancing students despite not meeting the minimum expected learning outcomes—has raised growing concern. While intended to reduce dropout rates, maintain learner motivation, or comply with system-wide policies like DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, this practice has also produced unintended consequences. Cuabo et al. (2024) found that learners promoted without the required academic skills often struggle in subsequent grade levels, particularly in core subjects such as English and Mathematics, resulting in poor academic outcomes and low self-esteem.

This issue is particularly evident in underserved and rural areas where class sizes are large, teacher support is limited, and structured remediation programs are lacking. Jayme and Tantiado (2025) emphasized that academically unprepared learners tend to become disengaged, struggle with tasks, and display behavioral challenges. Consequently, teachers must balance instructional delivery and classroom discipline while providing catch-up interventions, often without adequate support.

A study by Lacre and Valle (2024) further noted that ineffective classroom management and the presence of academically unready learners significantly reduce instructional time, disrupt routines, and dilute teacher attention. These conditions perpetuate a cycle of poor performance and weak discipline, especially in Grades 4 to 6, where foundational learning is critical for secondary education.

Globally, the issue of social promotion has generated extensive debate. The UNESCO (2021) report on learning recovery highlighted that while automatic promotion policies may sustain retention during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, they can also cause long-term learning losses if not

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accompanied by effective remediation. In countries with similar systems, national assessments have shown widening learning gaps among early graders.

In the Philippine context, DepEd has acknowledged learning loss through initiatives like the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP), yet the issue remains underexamined at the school level. Local studies (Paulines & Tantiado, 2024) have emphasized that promotion decisions must rely on mastery data and teacher judgment, not administrative targets.

In Dolores I District of Eastern Samar, anecdotal reports from teachers indicate an increasing number of learners promoted without fully meeting grade-level expectations. Despite these observations, no formal investigation has assessed the academic and behavioral implications of this practice on learners and classroom management.

This study addresses that gap by examining the extent and impact of promotion without mastery in selected elementary schools in Dolores I District. It aims to generate empirical data on how this practice affects learners' academic performance and teachers' classroom management, thereby contributing to the local evidence base that supports balanced policies between learner welfare and academic integrity.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the impact of promoting learners without mastery on their academic performance and on the classroom management practices of their teachers. It further sought to determine the prevalence of this practice in selected schools of Dolores I District and its effects on teaching and learning outcomes.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are learners promoted without achieving mastery in selected elementary schools of Dolores I District?
2. What is the academic performance of learners who were promoted without mastery?
3. What classroom management issues do teachers encounter when handling learners promoted without mastery?
4. Is there a significant relationship between promotion without mastery and learners' academic performance?
5. Is there a significant relationship between promotion without mastery and classroom management challenges?

Hypotheses of the Study

- H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between promotion without mastery and learners' academic performance.
- H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between promotion without mastery and classroom management challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Promotion Without Mastery in the Philippine Educational Context

Promotion without mastery, also referred to as social promotion, remains a critical concern in Philippine education, particularly in underserved districts. It refers to advancing learners to the next grade level despite their failure to meet minimum learning competencies (DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015). Although this practice is intended to protect students' emotional well-being and prevent dropouts, it has been criticized for creating long-term learning gaps and lowering academic standards.

In rural settings such as Eastern Samar, promotion without mastery is often attributed to limited instructional resources, teacher shortages, and institutional pressure to maintain high promotion rates. Cuabo et al. (2024) highlighted that when learners are advanced without readiness, teachers are forced to balance new instruction with remedial lessons, leading to academic and behavioral challenges. Similarly, Jayme and Tantiado (2025) found that teachers in Bukidnon experienced frustration when handling underprepared learners, who frequently demonstrated low motivation and incomplete task performance.

Academic Performance of Learners Promoted Without Mastery

Academic performance is commonly evaluated through grades or subject-based assessments that reflect learners' mastery of competencies. Bernardo (2021) asserted that learners promoted without mastering basic literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to underperform in higher grade levels, especially in English, Mathematics, and Science. Paulines and Tantiado (2024) also found that classroom performance declined among pupils promoted without showing mastery of prior lessons.

International research supports these observations. Freeman et al. (2014) demonstrated that active engagement and targeted instructional strategies significantly improve the performance of struggling learners. Similarly, Lacre and Valle (2024) noted that inconsistent remediation after social promotion contributes to sustained academic underachievement.

Classroom Management in the Presence of Academically Unready Learners

Classroom management involves organizing behavior and instruction to ensure an effective learning environment. Delos Santos and Ramos (2019) observed that unprepared learners often display disruptive behavior due to frustration or disengagement. Jayme and Tantiado (2025) reported that such learners require disproportionate teacher attention, which reduces instructional time for the rest of the class.

Martin and Sass (2010) developed the Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS), which evaluates how instructional demands interact with learner behavior. Studies using this tool (e.g., Lajom et al., 2022) confirmed that management challenges increase significantly when classes have heterogeneous skill levels. More recent interventions, such as structured positive behavior support and classroom coaching models, have been shown to reduce disruptive

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behavior and improve engagement (Baluyos, Entera, & Beringuel, 2024; Jayme & Tantiado, 2025). Similarly, Magtalas and Eduvala (2024) found that high teacher workload and limited behavioral management training intensify stress and reduce classroom effectiveness. However, such structured management and coaching strategies are rarely implemented in rural Philippine schools due to large class sizes and insufficient professional development opportunities.

Promotion Without Mastery and Academic Performance

Several studies have demonstrated that promotion without mastery correlates negatively with academic achievement. Reyes (2020) reported a significant negative relationship between premature promotion and performance in Math and English among Region IV-A learners. Cuabo et al. (2024) similarly found that students who scored below mastery level continued to perform poorly in subsequent grades. Jimerson (2001) argued that automatic promotion may delay failure but rarely prevents it, especially without structured remediation.

Promotion Without Mastery and Classroom Management

Jayme and Tantiado (2025) and Villanueva and Santos (2021) showed that promotion without mastery intensifies behavioral and engagement issues, often leading to teacher burnout. International literature, such as Johnson and Johnson (1989), suggests that cooperative and mastery-based strategies can mitigate such effects by fostering inclusion and peer support.

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that promotion without mastery negatively affects both learning outcomes and classroom climate. Despite ongoing DepEd efforts such as the National Learning Recovery Program (2022), few empirical studies have explored these effects in rural contexts like Eastern Samar. The present study addresses this gap by providing quantitative evidence on how promotion without mastery influences learners' academic performance and teachers' classroom management.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to determine the extent of promotion without mastery, describe the academic performance of affected learners, and identify related classroom management challenges. Correlational analysis was applied to examine the relationships between promotion without mastery, academic performance, and classroom management. This design was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to examine existing conditions and relationships without manipulation of variables.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Dolores I District, Division of Eastern Samar. This rural district was chosen based on teacher reports indicating cases of promotion without mastery, particularly in upper primary grades. Schools were selected according to accessibility, administrative approval, and the presence of Grades 4 to 6 classes.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study involved fifty (50) Grades 4 to 6 public school teachers purposively selected for their experience handling learners promoted despite lacking mastery. Purposive sampling ensured that respondents possessed the characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. According to Gay and Diehl (1992), a minimum of 30 respondents is sufficient for correlational studies, hence the chosen sample size was adequate.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire composed of four parts: Teacher Profile Sheet – collected demographic data such as age, sex, position, grade level handled, and years of experience; Extent of Promotion Without Mastery Scale – a Likert-type instrument developed based on DepEd policy guidelines and prior literature; Academic Performance Sheet – included teacher-provided mean grades of learners promoted without mastery in English, Mathematics, and Filipino; and Classroom Management Scale – adapted from the Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) of Martin and Sass (2010), contextualized for the Philippine elementary setting.

The instrument underwent expert validation by three specialists in educational management and assessment. After revisions, it was pilot-tested with 15 teachers from outside the study locale. The tool obtained a Cronbach's α of .86, indicating acceptable reliability.

Data Collection Procedure

Formal approval was secured from school heads prior to data gathering. Participants were briefed on the objectives and ethical considerations of the study, and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered in person or electronically depending on teacher accessibility. Data on learner grades were collected anonymously and securely.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, percentage) were used to summarize the responses, while Pearson's Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to test relationships between variables. The strength of correlation was interpreted using Cohen's conventions: ±0.10 (weak), ±0.30 (moderate), and ±0.50 or higher (strong). Statistical computations were performed using SPSS version 27.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, data were treated with confidentiality, and respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. Learner data were anonymized, and findings were shared with schools for transparency and improvement purposes.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Teacher-Respondents

Table1. Profile of Teacher-Respondents, *(n = 50)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	20–29	9	18%
	30–39	13	26%
	40–49	14	28%
	50–59	12	24%
	60+	2	4%
Sex	Male	13	26%
	Female	36	72%
	Prefer not to say	1	2%
Position	Teacher I	17	34%
	Teacher II	1	2%
	Teacher III	22	44%
	Master Teacher	6	12%
	Others	4	8%
Grade Level Taught	Grade 4	11	22%
	Grade 5	11	22%
	Grade 6	25	50%
	Multi-grade	3	6%
Years of Experience	1–5 years	13	26%
	6–10 years	10	20%
	11–15 years	5	10%
	16–20 years	8	16%
	> 20 years	14	28%

Table 1 shows that most respondents were aged 30–49 and female, consistent with the national teaching demographic (DepEd, 2024). Nearly half held the position of Teacher III, and many had over six years of teaching experience. The predominance of mid-career and senior teachers strengthens the credibility of the data since they are well-positioned to observe learner promotion trends.

This demographic profile indicates a well-balanced sample of teachers with diverse professional backgrounds. The predominance of experienced and higher-ranked educators enhances the credibility of the responses, as these teachers possess substantial firsthand experience in learner promotion and its academic implications. Moreover, the distribution aligns with national trends that highlight the feminization of the teaching profession and the concentration of senior teachers in upper elementary grades. This profile further reinforces the validity of the findings, as studies such as Magayon and Tabuzo (2024) have shown that teacher experience and educational background are closely linked to their capacity to identify least-mastered skills in mathematics and implement effective remediation strategies.

Extent of Promotion Without Mastery

The overall verbal interpretation was *Neutral*, indicating that promotion without mastery occurred to a moderate extent in the participating schools. The highest-rated statements were "Some parents expect promotion regardless of academic performance" ($M = 3.78$, *Agree*), "I have observed a trend of mass promotion in recent school years" ($M = 3.64$, *Agree*), and "I feel pressured to promote learners even when they are not ready" ($M = 3.50$, *Agree*). Conversely, the lowest mean ratings were observed for "There is a lack of remediation before promoting struggling learners" ($M = 3.06$) and "I have promoted students who failed one or more subjects" ($M = 3.12$).

Table 2. Extent of Promotion Without Mastery as perceived by intermediate teacher-respondents

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Many learners in my class were promoted even if they did not master key competencies.	3.38	0.88	Neutral
2. I have observed a trend of mass promotion in recent school years.	3.64	0.96	Agree
3. School promotion policies encourage advancing students despite poor performance.	3.44	0.88	Neutral
4. I have promoted students who failed one or more subjects.	3.12	1.08	Neutral
5. Promotion decisions are sometimes influenced by non-academic factors.	3.22	0.76	Neutral

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6. I feel pressured to promote learners even when they are not ready.	3.50	0.81	Agree
7. There is a lack of remediation before promoting struggling learners.	3.06	1.10	Neutral
8. Some learners in my class advanced levels without basic reading skills.	3.30	1.02	Neutral
9. Some parents expect promotion regardless of academic performance.	3.78	0.96	Agree
10. Our school follows a flexible promotion policy even without full mastery.	3.18	0.85	Neutral
Overall Mean	**3.36**	**0.93**	**Neutral**

These findings suggest that although most teachers acknowledge the occurrence of promotion without mastery, they are not uniformly compelled to implement it. External factors—such as parental expectations, administrative directives, and efforts to minimize dropout rates—strongly influence promotion decisions. The overall neutral responses indicate that teachers often navigate a delicate balance between policy compliance and professional judgment regarding learner readiness. The relatively lower ratings on items related to remediation imply that while teachers recognize the issue, many still attempt to provide interventions or adhere to existing guidelines. This aligns with the observations of Llego (2020) and Mateo and Ong (2018), who noted that promotion practices in Philippine schools are shaped more by systemic and social pressures than by purely academic criteria.

Furthermore, the moderate occurrence of non-mastery promotion corresponds with DepEd's flexible policies (DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015), which permit advancement with interventions even in the absence of full mastery. Similar international and local findings echo this trend: in Philippine mathematics instruction, mastery deficits are often linked to limited time, institutional pressures, and lack of teacher support. Magayon and Tabuzo (2024) emphasized that formal training and effective pedagogy help minimize these gaps. Likewise, Deloria, Agner, and Espanto (2025) found that teachers attribute mass promotion to parental and policy pressures, while the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2024) cautioned that such practices may undermine educational quality and increase teacher workload.

Academic Performance of Promoted Learners Without Mastery

The mean grades of promoted learners were 79.41 in English, 79.58 in Mathematics, and 79.86 in Science, all of which fall within the *Fairly Satisfactory* range. These averages, generally in the high 70s to low 80s, indicate that while learners meet the minimum passing standards, their performance remains only slightly above the mastery threshold. The grade distribution—many within the 80–84 band and fewer below—suggests that most promoted learners are not failing but are also not demonstrating strong mastery beyond basic competency.

This pattern implies that learners progress to the next grade level with limited proficiency, advancing despite incomplete mastery of foundational skills. Bernardo (2021) similarly reported that learners promoted without mastery often exhibit borderline performance, particularly in literacy and numeracy, which may hinder their success in higher grade levels. These results are consistent with other Philippine studies showing that such learners tend to hover near passing marks while lacking higher-order competencies. Deloria, Agner, and Espanto (2025) also found that mass promotion contributes to weak critical thinking and inconsistent academic growth, while the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2024) cautioned that the practice may inflate promotion rates without addressing learning deficits.

At the international level, research on promotion policies and academic outcomes presents mixed evidence. Some studies reveal that advancement without remediation diminishes long-term achievement, particularly in mathematics and reading. Magayon and Tabuzo (2024) further identified least-mastered mathematical skills as being associated with both teacher background and instructional effectiveness.

Table 3. Mean Academic Performance of Promoted Learners

Subject	Mean Grade	Description
English	79.41	Fairly Satisfactory
Math	79.58	Fairly Satisfactory
Science	79.86	Fairly Satisfactory

Table 4. Distribution of Learners by Grade Range

Subject	75–79	80–84
English	45	78
Math	32	64
Science	25	58

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Table 4 presents the distribution of learners promoted without mastery according to grade range and subject area. Across all subjects, most learners fall within the 80–84 grade range, while a substantial number remain in the 75–79 band—the lowest passing level. This concentration in the lower grade ranges indicates that many learners advance despite limited mastery of essential competencies. Such findings raise concern that promoting marginally passing learners may inflate completion rates without ensuring genuine competency development. These results highlight the need for structured remediation and targeted intervention prior to promotion decisions, as emphasized in the *National Learning Recovery Plan* (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022).

Classroom Management Challenges

Teachers frequently encounter classroom management difficulties associated with learners promoted without mastery, as shown in Table 4. The most prominent challenges include adjusting lesson pacing to accommodate underprepared learners (M = 3.65, *Often*), spending additional time assisting those who cannot follow the lesson (M = 3.63, *Often*), and managing frequent classroom disruptions (M = 3.58, *Often*). The overall mean of 3.51, interpreted as *Often*, indicates that management challenges are a regular occurrence in classrooms where promotion without mastery is practiced. Teachers often need to slow lesson pacing, reteach past competencies, and devote additional time to struggling learners. These high-mean items point to specific stressors such as managing readiness gaps, addressing behavioral disruptions, and expending extra instructional effort.

These results support the findings of Delos Santos and Ramos (2019), who reported that the promotion of non-mastery learners contributes to elevated classroom management stress. Mixed-ability settings compel teachers to modify instruction, reducing time for higher-order learning tasks and potentially causing frustration among both advanced and struggling students. Similarly, a 2024 study on the *Effectiveness of Classroom Management Skills of Teachers at San Gabriel Elementary School* documented frequent reports of inappropriate student behavior, the need for differentiated instruction, and teacher exhaustion. In addition, Paulines and Tantiado (2024) found a positive association between effective classroom management and students' academic behavior, suggesting that the presence of non-mastery learners—who increase management demands—can negatively influence the overall classroom environment.

Table 5. Classroom Management Challenges

Statement	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Learners often disrupt the lesson.	3.58	0.82	Often
2. I need to reteach past competencies while teaching new content.	3.54	0.82	Often
3. I encounter behavioral issues from learners promoted without mastery.	3.56	0.97	Often
4. Instructional time is affected due to constant redirection.	3.50	0.83	Often
5. I struggle to manage a class with varied ability levels.	3.29	0.80	Sometimes
6. Learners show frustration or low motivation.	3.40	0.74	Sometimes
7. I spend time handling learners who cannot follow the lesson.	3.63	0.67	Often
8. The presence of underprepared learners affects the whole class.	3.44	0.92	Sometimes
9. I adjust lesson pacing to accommodate learners without mastery.	3.65	0.73	Often
10. I find classroom management more difficult due to mixed readiness.	3.48	0.87	Sometimes
Overall Mean	**3.51**	**0.82**	**Often**

Relationship Between Promotion without Mastery and Academic Performance

Table 6 shows that a weak and statistically insignificant correlation was found between promotion without mastery and academic performance, $r(48) = .16$, $p = .27$. This result indicates that the frequency of promoting learners without mastery does not directly predict overall classroom performance. One possible explanation is that the effects of non-mastery promotion are uneven: while some learners manage to recover through effective remediation and teacher support, others continue to lag behind academically. Similar observations were noted by Bernardo (2023) and Reyes (2020), who reported that remediation and differentiated instruction can temporarily offset learning deficits among promoted learners. However, the lack of a significant correlation suggests that class-level grades may mask individual variations in mastery, a limitation also highlighted by Cuabo, Bandoy, and Balabagno (2024) in their study on teacher-aggregated performance data. Moreover, Jayme and Tantiado (2025) emphasized that academic outcomes are influenced by multiple contextual factors—including instructional quality, learner motivation, and classroom management—making it difficult to isolate the direct impact of promotion without mastery on achievement.

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Table 6. Correlation Between Promotion Without Mastery and Academic Performance

Variables	R	p-value	Interpretation
Promotion vs Academic Performance	0.1613	0.2683	small and **NOT** statistically significant

Relationship Between Promotion without Mastery and Classroom Management

Table 7 reveals a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation between promotion without mastery and classroom management challenges, $r(48) = .37$, $p = .009$. This finding indicates that as the frequency of promoting learners without mastery increases, teachers encounter more frequent and complex management difficulties. The result supports the hypothesis that promotion without mastery carries behavioral and instructional consequences. Learners who advance without essential foundational skills often become sources of disruption or require continuous reteaching, which strains classroom organization and instructional pacing.

These findings are consistent with those of Deloria, Agner, and Espanto (2025), who reported that teachers implementing mass promotion felt burdened by additional remediation and management demands. Similarly, policy analyses from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2024) noted that mass promotion practices elevate teacher workload without corresponding gains in learner outcomes. International literature further reinforces this pattern; studies have shown that academic readiness gaps contribute to off-task behavior, reduced student engagement, and teacher burnout, even when average academic performance does not immediately decline (Lajom, Fernandez, & Turalba, 2022; Jayme & Tantiado, 2025).

Table 7. Correlation Between Promotion Without Mastery and Classroom Management

Variables	R	p-value	Interpretation
Promotion vs Classroom Management	0.3714	0.0093	moderate positive and statistically significant

The significant correlation aligns with Martin and Sass's (2010) *Behavioral and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS)* framework, which associates learner readiness gaps with elevated management demands. It also validates anecdotal reports among teachers in the Dolores I District that managing promoted non-mastery learners consumes valuable instructional time. The implication is that automatic promotion policies, while well-intentioned, may undermine classroom efficiency if not coupled with effective remediation measures.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Most respondents were female, aged 30–49, and held the position of Teacher I or Teacher III. Many had 6–20 years of teaching experience and were handling upper elementary grades, making them well-positioned to observe learner progress and promotion patterns. This mirrors national teacher demographics (DepEd, 2024), where female educators dominate the public elementary sector, and mid-career teachers make up the majority of the workforce.
2. Promotion without mastery is moderately practiced among teachers in the Dolores I District. Teachers agreed that parental expectations, administrative pressures, and DepEd's lenient promotion policies often influence decisions, though many still attempt to apply remediation before advancing learners.
3. Promoted learners perform only fairly satisfactorily, suggesting that many advance to higher grades with incomplete mastery of essential competencies. The trend supports Bernardo (2023) and Magayon & Tabuzo (2024), who observed that learners promoted without mastery tend to underperform in literacy and numeracy benchmarks, especially when remediation is inadequate.
4. Teachers frequently encounter classroom management problems as a direct result of handling non-mastery learners, often needing to slow lesson pacing or allocate extra time for remediation. This is consistent with Paulines & Tantiado (2024) and Delos Santos & Ramos (2023), who found that heterogeneous readiness levels due to promotion without mastery strain classroom management and contribute to teacher stress and reduced instructional efficiency.
5. Statistical analyses confirm that promotion without mastery has a significant association with classroom management challenges, though not with class-level academic performance, implying that the impact is primarily behavioral and instructional. The pattern suggests that the behavioral and instructional consequences of non-mastery promotion are more visible than immediate academic decline.

These results validate the warnings of DepEd's National Learning Recovery Program (2022) and international studies (e.g., UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024) that lenient promotion policies risk perpetuating learning deficits that manifest in behavioral and engagement problems. The practice of automatic or flexible promotion, while intended to prevent dropout and promote equity, may inadvertently compromise learning quality if not paired with robust remediation and mastery-based assessment systems. Teacher readiness, support, and training are key mediating factors, those with stronger management and differentiated teaching skills cope better with the consequences of non-mastery promotion.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, several recommendations are advanced to address the issues surrounding the practice of promotion without mastery. Teachers should strengthen their remediation strategies and adopt differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those who advance without full

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competency in foundational skills. Professional development programs focusing on mastery-based instruction, formative assessment, and classroom management should be regularly conducted to enhance teachers' capacity to manage heterogeneous classes effectively. School heads and instructional leaders are encouraged to monitor and evaluate promotion decisions more closely, ensuring that learners' progression is based on demonstrated mastery rather than administrative or parental pressure. The Department of Education (DepEd) should review existing promotion policies, such as those outlined in DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, to ensure they balance learner welfare with academic integrity. Strengthening the implementation of the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) and similar remediation initiatives will also help address learning gaps before promotion. Parents and guardians, on the other hand, should be made aware of the long-term effects of premature promotion and encouraged to actively participate in their children's academic recovery efforts. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal or mixed-method studies to further explore the sustained academic and behavioral outcomes of learners promoted without mastery, thereby contributing to evidence-based policy refinement and educational improvement.

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