



**The impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale: A case study  
at a South African University of Technology**

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## Abstract

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<p>Academic promotion is a process that allows the upward movement of staff within an institutional structure. Institutional leaders widely use promotion to motivate employees to perform better. However, to maintain stability, institutions of higher learning must not only recruit or appoint individuals based on their abilities, but they must also support the development of promoted individuals and encourage them to succeed at the end of the institutional promotion. Hence, the study aimed to investigate the impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale at the South Africa University of Technology. This was accomplished through three objectives: to assess the perception of academic staff regarding the current promotion process at SAUoT, to assess the impact that promotion expectations have on staff morale, and to evaluate the relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academic staff. The study was conducted using a mixed method, using quantitative and qualitative descriptive cross-sectional research designs. The study's population sampling was confined to all academic staff at SAUoT. Participation in the study was entirely optional and strictly confidential. The data was collected using an anonymous online survey sent via email with an included link.</p> <p>A total of 315 responses were collected from respondents. According to the findings, academic staff at SAUoT have mixed perceptions about promotion processes, opportunities, professional development, and job alignment. Many respondents express dissatisfaction with the promotion evaluation process and transparency. To enhance staff support, SAUoT should improve its evaluation and promotion policies. Encouraging professional development and improving communication about promotion processes is crucial. SAUoT should consider the promotion process as an integral part of a comprehensive retention strategy to retain talented, motivated academic staff. Establishing a supportive work environment is essential to promote positive morale and ensure a positive overall atmosphere.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Promotion processes, morale, academic staff, perception

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## **Abbreviations**

CHE	Council of Higher Education
DVC TLT	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning in Technology
DVC PRI	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Partnership, Research & Innovations
EMC	Executive Management Committee
HRD	Human Resource Department/Division
IHE	Institutions of Higher Education
SAUoT	South African University of Technology
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UoT	University of Technology

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

Promotion is the progression of an employee to a higher position in their line of work, with greater responsibility, accomplishment, and higher prestige, as well as an increase in salary and other benefits compared to the previous position (Abdulmumini 2021, 12-24). Therefore, Academic promotion is a procedure that allows upward staff movement within an institutional structure (Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423–442). It is a process in which individual staff stimulates personal development and generates passion for the job or responsibility at hand in accordance with institutional calls for applications instead of applying for vacant positions accessible to external applicants (Kyaruzi 2013, 30; Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423–442). Promotion, whenever and wherever it occurs, carries two interpretations: a financial benefit and a move from a lower to a higher position in the institutional hierarchy (Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423–442). However, according to Bedfast (2004, 30), promotion should be viewed not simply as rewarding people but also as a means of placing employees in positions they are qualified for. Furthermore, promotion is intended to increase employee motivation, eventually leading to achieving institutional goals. In other words, when employees are inspired, their morale rises, resulting in an institution's high performance.

In 2023, one South African University of Technology (SAUoT) employed approximately 3377 permanent personnel, including 1773 males and 1604 females. 900 of the 3377 personnel are academics. Permanent academic staff constitute a small component of the institution and play an essential role in attaining the institution's goals. Most (40%) hold Master's degrees, while 31% hold Doctoral degrees. Around 83% of these academic staff are lecturers, including some with doctorates, and they are responsible for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research. These academic staff oversee the learning process and serve as students' primary point of contact. SAUoT has five levels of academic positions: Junior Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Full Professor. The academic staff can progress from one level to another within the institution through vacant positions, if any are available or through responding to promotions calls if they meet the requirements.

Schnotz (2022) reported that a lack of promotion opportunities could decrease staff morale, especially when they realise they are locked in a dead-end position due to a lack of growth. Moreover, low morale may present itself in various ways, including underperformance in areas of work and a hesitancy to embrace workplace changes. According to Dessler (2008, 166), once staff morale and motivation are low, the institution risks losing critical staff members, placing it at a disadvantage in attracting prospective top talents. Academic staff motivation is critical in determining the quality of

teaching research and student interaction. Furthermore, academic staff members who are highly motivated have the potential to establish a national and international reputation for themselves as well as the institution through their work in publishing, teaching, and research (Bayissa & Zewdie 2010, 13-27). Such a reputation may substantially impact the institution's capacity to attract top students, research grants, and consulting contracts. Therefore, based on the above information, the researchers deliberately expressed their interest in conducting a study on "The impact of promotions processes on academic staff morale at the University of Technology in South Africa".

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Institutions of higher education (IHE) face challenges with promotion not only because they must select or appoint individuals based on their abilities but also because they must facilitate the development of leaders' subordinates and encourage them to succeed at the end of the institutional promotion in order to maintain stability (Subbaye & Vithal 2017, 37-60). Promotion is frequently applied by institutional leaders to inspire staff in order to enhance their performance. Academic staff who want promotions will automatically endeavour to improve their performance to meet the promotion requirements. On the one hand, academic staff expect to be promoted at work because it is considered a success and shows excellent work performed in the past (Handayani et al. 2019, 700). In order to adhere as closely to the expectations and needs of the employee as possible, each institution must have an improved, effective, transparent, and clear employee promotion process. However, a lack of an efficient promotion process may result in significant staff turnover, resulting in a shortage of skills, higher recruitment and training costs, a lack of commitment, demotivation, and lower staff morale (Tadesse 2017, 20).

According to Spaul and van Broekhuize (2017, 1-33), promotions must be implemented in order to (i) Improve work spirit when promotions are awarded to individuals who do well at work, as this will inspire them to boost their morale, (ii) ensure staff stability when promotions are applied on time and objectively, and (iii) Increase the productivity of workers whose abilities and accomplishments require being encouraged, one of which is by promoting them to positions of more authority and responsibility. However, issues concerning promotion might lead to legal consequences for higher education institutions (Kelly 2010; Oforiwaa & Afful-Broni 2014, 40). Promotional disputes arise as a result of apparent unequal treatment, candidate disappointment with the judgment to promote him or her, questions about the promotion processes, a candidate's class, gender, and, in some instances, ethnicity or ethnic orientation (Bartos & Wehr 2002, 232; Oforiwaa & Afful-Broni 2014, 35).

Academic promotions are meant to be executed every three years; however, at the SAUoT, promotions were only implemented twice in the last ten years (between 2011 and 2021). These frustrate academic staff because certain personnel voiced dissatisfaction with the promotion process used in



both promotion calls. Some employees believe that the promotion policy is not being followed consistently. Multiple processes are used to invite qualifying individuals and evaluate candidates during these two separate calls. Academic staff, specifically those whose promotion applications failed, are generally sceptical of the fairness of the process, which demoralises them.

This has been a concern among academics, as it has a detrimental impact on achieving the institution's vision every time there is a promotion exercise or the term promotion is used to express disappointment or a sign of frustration. Therefore, considering all the aspects in which promotions can affect employees' career paths and remuneration, the importance of promotions as a factor of employee wellbeing and morale has received almost no attention. Hence, the study topic was chosen to investigate whether promotion processes at the South Africa University of Technology impact academic staff morale.

The study findings will help close the gap between the two assumptions and display how the promotion process will impact staff morale, enabling corrective measures to be implemented and the SAUoT management to formulate effective processes and policies regarding employee promotion to achieve its goals better.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives**

This study aims to determine the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale at the South African University of Technology.

**In order to achieve the main aim of the study, the following objectives were pursued:**

- To assess the perception of academic staff regarding the current promotion process at SAUoT.
- To assess the impact of promotion opportunities and expectations on academic staff morale.
- To assess the link between the promotion process and academic staff morale.

### **1.4 Research questions**

The main intention of this study was to give answers to the following questions.

**RQ 1:** How do academic staff at SAUoT view the current promotion practice?

**RQ 2:** How does the prospect of a promotion impact academic staff morale?

**RQ 3:** What is the link between promotion practices and academic staff morale?

## 1.5 The structure of the thesis

The dissertation is structured into five chapters.

**Chapter 1:** discusses the study's background, the problem statement, the research aims and objectives, the research questions, and the study's structure.

**Chapter 2:** discusses different types of literature that have been reviewed in order to enhance knowledge of the underlying theoretical framework.

**Chapter 3:** discusses the study's research approach and methodology, as well as relevant justifications

**Chapter 4:** presents data, analyses and interpretation of the findings on the impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale at SAUoT.

**Chapter 5:** includes a brief overview of the findings, a conclusion, and recommendations.

## 4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a thorough review of the research study's background, which included an outline of the problem being studied and the approaches taken to address it. The next chapter will give an overview of the literature review regarding the impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In SAUoTs, promotions are essential to recognising individual achievement and encouraging employees to strive towards excellence. However, the impact of promotions on academic staff morale has been the topic of much controversy and research. This literature review explores the factors influencing the link between promotions and academic staff morale by analysing existing theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

The review also assesses promotions' potential advantages and disadvantages on job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. Furthermore, it scrutinises the impact of promotion policies and practices, including the criteria for promotion, the frequency of promotions, and the transparency of the promotion process.

### **2.2 Overview of academic staff promotions in institutions of higher learning**

Acknowledging the achievements of academic staff members is imperative in the SAUoT. Academic promotions are an essential tool for evaluating and recognising the accomplishments of academic staff at different stages of their careers. These educational institutions are committed to maintaining high teaching, research, and community involvement standards. Ensuring deserving candidates are appropriately recognised and promoted within the academic hierarchy is vital. The promotion process involves several assessments, including teaching performance, research output, and community engagement.

#### **2.2.1 Importance and potential benefit of academic staff promotions**

Promotions for academic staff members are an essential element of academia. They can benefit the institution, individual staff members, and the larger academic community (Alperin et al., 2019). Institutions of higher learning have provided academic staff incentives for excellence as a kind of remuneration (Oforiwaa & Afful-Broni 2014, 37). These benefits come in a wide range of forms; among them is the possibility of rank progression through promotions, as progress means better job stability and possibly a higher salary (Roberts 2002; Oforiwaa & Afful-Broni 2014, 37). Figure 1 presents the advantages and potential benefits outlined by Tadesse (2017, 11).



Figure 1: Advantages and some potential benefits of academic promotions (adapted from Tadesse 2017, 11).

### 2.2.2 Academic staff promotions process at South African UoT

The promotion process differs by academic institution and might vary depending on the field of study. Academic staff promotions in SAUoT frequently involve a rigorous process that assesses an individual's performance based on research, teaching, and community involvement (Subbaye & Vithal 2015, 37-60) over a set period. Therefore, academic institutions' promotion policies should specify the process to be followed for academic staff promotions (Peter 2014). Additionally, Table 1 displays some alternative models that can be used to promote academic staff (Peter 2014; Tadesse 2017, 12 -14). Institutions of higher learning can promote their staff by either using one of these approaches or a mixture of one or more models. These models are divided into two types:

- ❖ **Non-competitive promotion models** - are those that are based on a standard set of staff performance and achievements. Academic staff in such promotions are promoted after reaching a particular point in their career, despite variable standards such as performance

and determination. These kinds of promotions are accessible to everyone, and there is no opportunity for bias or unfair judgment.

- ❖ **Competitive promotion model** - staff member must demonstrate their value to their employers to be promoted to a higher position rank under a competitive promotion model. Instead of the non-competitive approach, this approach considers elements including staff productivity, performance, skills, expertise, and other attributes. In this concept, employees are compared based on their work and performance.

**Table 1: Models and Bases of Promotion (adapted from Peter 2014; Tadesse 2017, 12 -14).**

Non-competitive Model of Promotion	Competitive Model of Promotion
<p><b>1. Time scale promotion (Based merely on seniority)</b></p> <p>A noncompetitive promotion occurs after a person has worked for the institution or in a specific position within the institution for a certain number of years.</p>	<p><b>1. Seniority as a basis:</b></p> <p>It represents the long-term service in the same institution. It is relatively easy to monitor, simple to understand and run, decreases labour turnover and gives senior employees a sense of pleasure. It also has some drawbacks, such as a person may not learn after a certain age and an employee's performance and potential are not realised.</p>
<p><b>2. Accretion of duties</b></p> <p>When a person gets promoted due to increased workload or duties.</p>	<p><b>2. Merit as a basis:</b></p> <p>Merit refers to a staff's expertise, talents, and track record of performance. It stimulates skilled employees to work hard and helps to preserve efficiency by recognising talent and performance.</p>
<p><b>3. Adhocism</b></p> <p>An institution may occasionally need to promote someone without following policies to satisfy the demands of pressing or urgent conditions.</p>	<p><b>3. Seniority-cum-Merit as basis:</b></p> <p>A sound promotion policy should be based on a combination of seniority and merit because both seniority and merit as bases have their limitations. Seniority is used to select from the eligible candidates in order to maintain a proper balance between the two. Other methods include requiring a minimum length of service, weighing seniority and merit equally, and treating staff members with a minimum performance record and qualifications as eligible for promotion.</p>

Therefore, according to Subbaye and Vithal (2017, 37-60), the promotion process comprises numerous steps overseen by review committees. The Human Resources Department often starts the promotion process, which is completed in collaboration with the institution's executive and line managers (Prasad 2010, 133-136). The promotion process often begins with individual staff members applying for promotion in response to institutional calls or vacant posts open only internally for promotional purposes (Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423–442). Most South African Institutions of higher learning (SAIHL) have a structure with levels, with promotion ranks which include Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor. However, specific ranks might differ per institution. Academics who are lecturers may apply to be promoted to senior lecturers, senior lecturers may apply to become associate professors, and associate professors may apply to become full professorships if they meet the criteria (Mampane 2020, 187). Therefore, academic staff submit portfolios documenting their achievement in research, teaching, and community involvement to the human resource department (HRD). The portfolio typically includes a list of publications, student evaluations, and other evidence of professional achievement. These portfolios are sent to the promotion review committee comprising department heads, senior university executives and labour representatives (Subbaye & Vithal 2017, 37-60; Mampane 2020, 186).

Consequently, the review committee usually thoroughly evaluates the candidate's portfolio, considering the quality and impact of the candidate's research, the success of their teaching, and their contributions to the institution and profession. The committee then recommends whether the application for promotion should be approved or rejected. If the review committee recommends promotion, the application is usually moved to the next level of approval, which may include senior university administrators. The university's executive management committee (EMC) typically decides on promotion.

### **2.2.3 Criteria for academic promotions**

Academic staff members are usually required to meet specific qualifying criteria to be eligible for promotion. These criteria often include a minimum standard of qualification, such as a master's or doctoral degree, a set duration of employment service at the institution, and a demonstrated track record of academic achievement (Mampane 2020, 187). Promotion criteria differ across SAUoTs but often encompass research publications, teaching excellence, and community involvement. However, in most SAUoTs, academic promotions are weighted toward research as opposed to metrics like teaching and learning since the emphasis on research is connected to the increase in relevance of university rankings, which employ indices of university performance (Altbach 2015, 6-7). In South Africa, some institutions of higher learning consider teaching in academic promotions. Unfortunately, this is only applicable to junior positions, and the minimal standards for promotion to more senior positions favour research over teaching (CHE 2015, 102). Therefore, institutions of higher learning

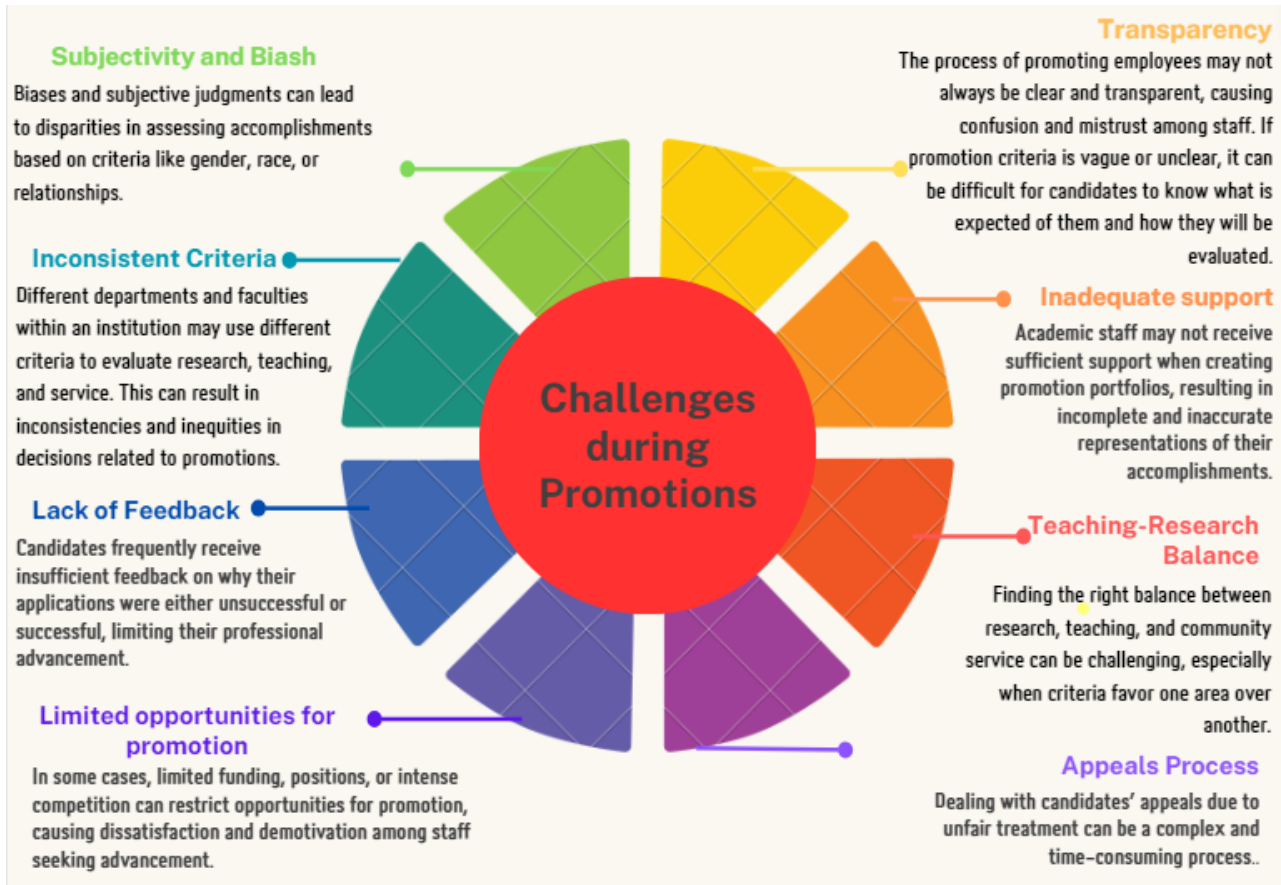
must establish fixed promotional criteria so that staff members know what is expected to be matched against and that employees are guided and may strive towards the appropriate target (Castelino 2001, 113). The author added that the established criteria will assist academic staff members to be evaluated fairly and impartially.

According to Mampane (2020, 187), an orderly progression within academic levels, as well as the exact conditions for advancement. To advance to the rank of senior lecturer, a lecturer must have a doctorate, moderate supervision and research contributions, and more than three years of teaching experience in higher education. Therefore, transitioning from senior lecturer to associate professor requires a PhD degree and more research outputs during five years while maintaining three years of teaching experience. A full professorship requires a doctoral degree, five years of teaching experience in a higher education institution, and a successful record of research outputs over five years, including supervising graduate students. Furthermore, Archibong et al. (2010) outlines the following broad guiding criteria for academic staff promotion:

- Candidates for Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Full Professor positions must have a PhD.
- A three-year waiting period at every rank before being eligible for promotion
- Specify a minimum number of articles in reputable journals and/or textbooks.
- A favourable recommendation from the Departmental Recruitment and Promotion Committee and the Department Head.
- A positive recommendation from the Faculty Recruitment and Promotion Committee.
- Candidates seeking promotion to Associate Professor or Full-Professor must have two positive assessments from external assessors.

#### **2.2.4 Challenges encountered during implementation of academic promotion**

Effective promotional efforts rely on the outcomes generated by the promotion procedures to achieve desired results, (Mampane 2020, 186). Any alternative strategy will undoubtedly result in dissatisfaction, disputes, and a failure to achieve the desired institutional goals (Koch & Emrey 2001, 133; Mampane 2020, 186). Academic staff promotions at the University of Technology are filled with complexities, as well as several challenges and issues. These challenges can raise doubt about the promotion system's fairness, transparency, and effectiveness. Furthermore, some SAUoTs face challenges when choosing whether to promote on merit or seniority because some academic staff prefer merit-based promotions while others prefer seniority-based promotions (Prasad 2010, 133-136; Peter 2014). Several common concerns and challenges that are encountered during promotions are presented below in Figure 2:



**Figure 2: Challenges encountered during the implementation of academic promotion (adapted from Prasad 2010, 133-136; Peter 2014).**

### 2.3 Understanding Academic Staff Morale

The term "morale" refers to a mental state concerned with an individual's confidence, hope, and eagerness to participate in executing a task (Maningu 2017, 9). Gaining knowledge about the overall mental and emotional health of staff within UoTs is necessary to understand academic staff morale. It includes staff members' attitudes, feelings, and overall satisfaction toward their work, colleagues, and the institution (Matsung 2014, 19). Recognising the effects of variables like communication, recognition, workload balance, job satisfaction, and prospective growth opportunities is necessary to understand staff morale in an academic environment. It involves understanding the link between high morale and better teamwork, productivity, and staff retention. SAUoTs can develop methods that foster a healthy workplace culture, increase motivation, and establish an environment where staff feel appreciated, engaged, and empowered to produce their best work by looking into the dynamics of staff morale.



Understanding the factors influencing academic staff morale is critical for SAUoTs seeking to establish a healthy working environment and academic performance. These factors are classified as internal or external variables.

### **2.3.1 Internal factors that influence academic staff morale**

#### **❖ Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a person's expression of being happy or frustrated, satisfied or dissatisfied at work (Saharuddin & Sulaiman 2016, 34). Academic staff satisfaction at work is crucial because it motivates every staff to work hard and passionately to attain high productivity. According to Santhapparaj & Alam (2005, 72-76), promotion positively and substantially affects job satisfaction. Academic staff morale is directly affected by how satisfied they are with their tasks and responsibilities and the support they are getting from their institutions (Hebert 2019, 306).

#### **❖ Academic freedom**

Academic autonomy and freedom must be granted to all academic members when performing their work. Academic staff with more independence have higher morale, allowing them to do their duties confidently (Matsung 2014, 24). According to Mgaiwa (2021, 2), restricting academic freedom and autonomy could negatively impact academics' work environment and, as a result, their job satisfaction, which may reduce their productivity and performance, eventually leading to low staff morale.

#### **❖ Professional development**

Academic staff who are actively pursuing their careers have an opportunity to advance (Khumalo 2022, 58-66). Opportunities for professional development, research support, and career advancement influence academic morale. However, recruiting staff externally rather than developing those already employed internally results in low morale among those who are overlooked (Khumalo 2022, 58-66). According to Fathaniy (2011), academic staff must be allowed to advance their professions to develop and nurture their skills; however, external recruitment contributes to low staff morale among internal employees and results in declined opportunities for advancement.

#### **❖ Relationships between colleagues**

Edwards (2003, 1639) emphasised the importance of collegiality among higher education workers. When team members cooperate and share a common faith and compassion, morale tends to be high (Matsung 2014, 26). Departmental heads in institutes of higher learning purposefully bring departments together to socialise, as relationships with peers enhance morale (Hebert 2020, 308). Positive relationships with colleagues and a supportive academic community also improve morale. Furthermore, strong morale is influenced by the behaviour and nature of colleagues in the workplace. However, a lack of relationships among colleagues results in low morale.

### **2.3.2 External factors that influence academic staff morale**

#### **❖ Leadership and Administration**

A leader has authority over or is in charge of a team of individuals or institutions. Every leader's responsibility is to raise enthusiasm, morale, and productivity in the workplace (Coffey 2021, 22). According to Schuler (2004) and Ngambi (2010, 762), the majority of staff who suffer from low morale at work typically attribute it to management or their immediate supervisor for failing to demonstrate leadership-related skills such as communication, inspiring staff, showing trust and loyalty, and developing teams. Academic staff morale is low in an institution headed by inexperienced or poor management, also created by leaders who fail to lead by example. Consequently, conflict between staff members, teams, or departments lowers staff morale (Haddock 2010). Therefore, leadership and staff morale are closely linked, and disengagement emerges when the relationship is broken. When employees are disengaged, their productivity and motivation may decrease, resulting in significant costs associated with employee turnover. Leaders who support their subordinates in achieving their goals and aspirations can positively impact morale (Matsung 2014, 26). Furthermore, maintaining a good work environment, utilising effective leadership styles, promoting open communication and decision-making, and having competent management are all important factors in upholding the morale of academic staff (Leong 2018). The creation of a supportive atmosphere is essential in fostering positive morale.

#### **❖ Workload and work-life balance**

Academic staff often experience emotional strain due to their heavy workload. Teaching tasks, such as managing large class sizes, preparing courses, grading, and interacting with students, contribute significantly to their workload. Moreover, administrative responsibilities like coordinating programs, serving on committees, and managing departmental duties add to their burden (Porter & Umbach 2000; Hebert 2020, 307). These excessive work demands, combined with long hours and tight deadlines, can lead to feelings of stress, burnout, and overwhelming pressure that can negatively impact morale (Altaf & Atif 2011, 93-94; Humphries et al., 2014, 295; Liu & Lo 2018, 155). Job satisfaction can decrease when academic staff feel overworked and struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Altaf & Atif 2011, 93-94). Additionally, a heavy workload can compromise the quality of research and teaching. The expectation to produce top-notch research, publish in reputable journals, and secure research funding adds further stress and workload to academic roles. Inadequate funding and resources may also force staff to take on additional responsibilities to cover resource gaps, leading to increased workload (Hebert 2020, 307). When staff are stretched too thin, they may have less time and energy to dedicate to their core responsibilities, resulting in diminished performance and reduced morale (Redfern 2002, 514). Academic staff who face an unmanageable workload may

become disengaged from their work, leading to a lack of motivation and decreased morale (Costin, Roman & Balica 2023, 4). It is vital to note that engagement, a crucial component of morale, tends to suffer when work pressures are too high.

#### ❖ **Recognition and rewards**

Within universities of technology, recognition and rewards significantly impact the morale of academic staff. By acknowledging and rewarding their contributions, UoTs can create a positive work culture that fosters a sense of belonging and closeness among staff, ultimately boosting overall morale (Matterapp 2023). Job promotions, income increases, bonuses, and performance-based pay are the most prevalent forms of reward (Otto et al. 2022, 152). Therefore, academic staff members apply for promotions to receive recognition, status and more significant rewards (Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423-442). Recognition of academic staff members' contribution to teaching, research, and community service improves their job satisfaction, inspiration, and general well-being (Winda 2015). According to research studies, recognition and rewards motivate and engage academic staff, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes as they strive to excel in their work (Tadesse 2017, 10-18). Archibong et al. (2010, 25-26) highlighted the importance of recognition and incentive systems for academic staff motivation and work performance, regardless of the promotion process. UoTs with solid recognition and incentive programs are more likely to retain outstanding academics with high morale and decrease turnover rates (Tadesse 2017, 18). According to Salmuni, Mustaffa and Kamis (2007, 1284), promotion remains the most desired form of recognition for academic staff since it can boost their performance and morale. Under the assertions of Ubeku (1975), promotion not only leads to an increase in income but also serves as a recognition of one's achievements, thereby serving as a significant motivational factor. However, Thaver (2010, 46) and Mampane (2020, 188) caution that particular academics may overestimate their contributions and seek promotion prematurely, as this may result in dissatisfaction and awkward interactions down the line, ultimately leading to low morale (Weyland, 2015).

#### ❖ **Equity and fairness**

The importance of equity and fairness in promotion processes for academic staff morale has been shown through various studies (Saharadunni & Sulaiman 2016, 35; Mampane 2020, 15). For Universities of Technology to have competent academic staff, these institutions must develop promotion policies that ensure fair and equitable promotion processes (Mampane 2020, 15). A well-structured promotion process that decreases the risk of bias and enhances objectivity is necessary for a fair promotion process (Loft et al. 2016, 25). Harel, Tzafir, and Baruch (2003, 247-263) discovered that promotion fairness can inspire promoted candidates, boosting their self-confidence and morale and confirming that they deserved to be promoted as they met all criteria for the promotion process. The

promotion committee's responsibility is to administer the promotion process with fairness, transparency, and equity and to develop appropriate measures for assessing the performance of academics within the university (Gilavand 2016, 26; Tadesse 2017, 20). Fair and transparent promotion decisions significantly affect academic professionals' job satisfaction, motivation, and morale. However, some South African Universities of Technology lack fair and equitable academic staff promotion processes, resulting in some staff members not receiving the promotions they deserve (Chabaya 2015; Saharadunni & Sulaiman 2016, 35). This leads to low morale for those who deserve promotion but do not receive it. If promotions are based on fairness and processes are followed strictly, academics will be content and motivated to work harder to be selected when such an opportunity arises (Adebayo 2005, 115; Tadesse 2017, 30). Otherwise, the promotion process can become a source of discouragement, leading to low morale and complacency, as academic staff begin to believe that no matter how dedicated or qualified they are, they may not be given the opportunity (Tadesse 2017, 25).

#### **2.4 Relationship between promotion and academic staff morale**

Promotions' impact on academic staff morale is overlooked despite their influence on career growth and salaries. Promotions are intended to increase employee motivation, leading to achieving institutional goals. When employees are motivated, their morale is boosted, resulting in high performance and productivity, ultimately boosting the overall institutional performance. Abdulmumini (2021, 12) defines promotions as rewards for good performance or additional qualifications, boosting morale and recognising achievement. He further said promotion is an excellent motivator for work behaviour and job satisfaction. Thus, the success of any organisation relies on its capacity to establish a supportive work environment that caters to the needs of employees, enhances their morale, and enables them to perform effectively. A staff member with low morale can result from an institution's failure to offer a favourable work environment, pay its staff fairly, and give opportunities for training and promotion (Nwachukwu 2004). According to Amstrong (2008), demotivated staff exhibit indicators of low morale, which can impact the institution. Prasad (2010) argues that staff promotions that come with total compensation will raise academic staff morale. When an institution fails to promote qualified and deserving staff, it can lead to a sense of distress and lower academic morale (Muhammad & Akhter 2010, 256). Every institution needs to offer equal opportunities for growth and development to qualified and competent individuals (Das 2002). According to Muhammad & Akhter (2010, 256), morale is significantly higher among employees who are content with their opportunities for promotion.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, how an academic institution handles promotions can significantly impact the morale of its staff in various ways. The process's design, communication, and execution can positively or negatively affect academic staff morale. When promotions are perceived as fair, transparent, and merit-based, they can boost morale by acknowledging and motivating staff. Conversely, if the process is viewed as unjust, excessively competitive, or lacking transparency, it can damage morale and weaken trust within the academic community. Therefore, institutions should strive to establish promotion procedures that prioritise fairness, transparency, and support to improve the overall morale of their academic staff. The research methodology on the impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale is presented in the next chapter.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Research methodology**

A research methodology is a framework that outlines an approach and structure for conducting research (Wahyuni 2012, 75). It is the systematic and methodical process of gathering or searching for new information, skills, or a personal perspective on something and processing information or data to gain a more excellent knowledge of the topic (Makala 2011, 34). There are two different types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative methodology of the study.

The quantitative technique entails collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting research findings (Rich et al. 2018, 150), whereas the qualitative methodology is used to quantify seemingly immeasurable attitudes, behaviour, and feelings (Hoover 2021). Therefore, this study followed a mixed method, employing quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The rationale for using mixed methods was to gain insights into the topic at hand to learn about academic staff perceptions on current SAUoT promotion processes while also broadening the study's facts, improving the credibility of its findings, and comparing the results of one method with the results of the other. Furthermore, data for this study was collected quantitatively. As a result, the results were interpreted using the actual data collected. The study's principal purpose in this regard was to investigate the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale. Correlation analysis was thus used to analyse the link between the two variables. The qualitative method assisted the study in examining attitudes or opinions, in which the study intended to find out how academic staff feel or what they think about promotion processes in the institution.

### **3.2 Study design**

An overall strategy for integrating the proposed research challenge into applicable and proper practical research is known as a study design (Boamah 2014, 40). A study design, as defined by Christensen and James (2008, 3), is a clear description of the subject matter being investigated and the selection of the most effective method to accomplish it. As a result, a research design is a strategy for collecting information to achieve the study's objectives and goals. Furthermore, (Kothari 2004, 88) defined study design as a conceptual model in which the study is carried out, which includes procedures for data gathering, measurement, and variable analysis. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional research design which involved a survey. Surveys are enormously beneficial for assessing people's perceptions and attitudes (De Vos 2011, 156). To carry out such a survey, a questionnaire was designed and emailed to targeted academic staff for completion. The approach was chosen because data on the impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale is

required. The fundamental rationale for conducting a cross-sectional study was to collect a significant number of data simultaneously, allowing for a better understanding of the impact of promotion processes on academic staff. The design was used to analyse the study's findings because it will interpret and explain the correlation between two or more variables and ensure that the outcomes cannot be influenced (Siedlecki 2020, 10). In other words, a design is required in which staff experiences and opinions may be measured (De Vos 2011, 156). Furthermore, the researcher concurrently measures the study participants' inputs and the outcome in a cross-sectional study. (Setia 2016, 261). Participants in a cross-sectional study are selected depending on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Once the participants have been chosen for the study, the investigator oversees the research to assess the exposure and findings (Setia 2016, 261).

### **3.3 Study population and sample size**

The selection of specific elements from the sample constitutes the study's population. Dura and Driga (2011, 77–88) define the population as the entire set of individuals, groups, goods, or events that the researcher is interested in studying, investigating, or observing. Features, geographical boundaries, and historical periods can be used to identify this target population (Sekaran & Bougie 2013, 241). Therefore, for this study, all permanent academic staff at SAUoT from all campuses were the targeted population. The number of permanent academic staff in the 2023 academic year, according to data obtained from SAUoT, is nine hundred nine (909), who are, by definition, the ones governed according to the institution's promotion policies. Since it is assumed that all academic staff at the university are knowledgeable of the promotion process, policy, and outcome and so form part of the study population. However, the study exclusion criteria are the non-academic staff.

A sample is a segment of the population that an investigator is trying to understand in order to extrapolate findings to the full population (Maningu 2017, 44). According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000, 200), the sample is a collection of components taken from the population that is assumed to be representative of the general population and is studied to learn more about the entire population. The degree of confidence, the maximum number of allowable flaws allowed for the results, and the distribution of the analysed variables at the collection level should all be considered when establishing the sampling size for a research study (Dura & Nita 2011, 1-7). They emphasised once more that a bigger sample size resulted in reduced sampling error, which improves results and makes it simpler for the researcher to interpret them. The sample size in the current study comprised the entire 909 academic staff population. Census probability sampling was used in the study. During the study period, the SAUoT's Human Resources Department (HRD) did not have statistics on academic staff who previously applied for promotions between 2011 and 2021, hence a 100% probability sampling was employed.

### **3.4 Recruitment of participant**

Participants are all individuals who can provide information on the subject under consideration (Babbie 2020, 156). However, to minimise the potential impact of external variables and assure the generalizability of the results, the quantitative approach requires procedure standardisation and random participant selection (Sargeant 2012, 1-3). Furthermore, participants for qualitative research are chosen with a specific objective in mind; they are individuals who will contribute the most to understanding the phenomenon being examined and the research objectives and questions. As a result, identifying appropriate participants is one of the phase's more essential duties. The study's research questions, theoretical concepts, and supporting data determine the selection criteria (Sargeant 2012, 1-3).

Therefore, to conduct this current study, lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors were recruited to participate. Participants were recruited by e-mail to the selected population to mitigate the potential consequences. The invitation to participate in the study contained a link to the online questionnaire and a cover letter explaining the study's purpose.

### **3.5 Data collection**

Data collection is one of the most critical steps of research. It is described as the systematic collection and measurement of data on essential variables to answer specific study questions, test a hypothesis, and evaluate outcomes (Kabir 2016, 100). It is a part of the study typical in all disciplines, including physical and social sciences, humanities, and business. Despite protocols differing by discipline, the importance of ensuring accurate and transparent data collection remains unchanged. The objective of any data collection is to collect high-quality evidence, leading to rich data analysis and establishing a coherent and credible solution to the issues addressed (Kabir 2016, 102). Data can originate from either a primary or secondary source. Primary data is data that the researcher has directly collected from individuals, online surveys, focus groups, panels of respondents, and other inconspicuous sources (Kubheka 2018, 46). According to Serakan & Bougie (2013, 241), the most common data-gathering methods are when a researcher administers a questionnaire, conducts face-to-face interviews, and observes individuals without videotaping.

Therefore, for this study, initial data was collected through an online survey questionnaire. Questionnaires were chosen for this study because the same question can be asked to each respondent using an open and closed form in a standardised self-administered approach to ease data collection reliably concerning the study topic. Secondly, using questionnaires has a substantial benefit since they allow anonymity and prevent bias (Neuman 2003, 201). Online survey questionnaires, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2013, 248), can be completed at the participant's convenience and pace.



The online survey questionnaire used in this study was developed by reviewing the literature by Tadesse (2017, 33). The questionnaire was developed in Microsoft Forms, and a link was generated. It consists of three parts. One part contains questions about demographic factors, while parts two: A and B, assess the perception of academic staff towards the promotion process. In this part, the respondents expressed their opinion using 5 Likert-scale items. These are closed-ended questions that only provide a small number of response alternatives to respondents, simplifying the process of collecting information and conducting analysis on a specific topic (Picardi & Masick 2014). Part three of the questionnaire presented open-ended questions, allowing a respondent to provide a personal opinion (Picardi & Masick 2014).

The online survey questionnaire to examine the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale was distributed through email using the following link: <https://forms.office.com/r/skVHwNcDcf> and the cover letter (Appendix 1) that was used to obtain consent for the questionnaire was also attached to the email that was sent to all academic staff after approval of ethical clearance SAUoT's Research Ethics Committee. Following that, over eight weeks, all respondents received a weekly follow-up reminder email. Individuals were therefore requested to respond to the questionnaire only if they had not completed the online survey to avoid completing it twice (Duchac & Amoruso 2012, 1-16).

### **3.6 Data analysis**

According to O'Brien et al. (2009, 626-633), the data analysis step begins once the data-collecting phase is complete. DePoy and Gitlin (2011, 180) define data analysis as classifying, arranging, manipulating, and organising raw data to express its information in understandable words. Data is analysed for validity and reliability to test hypotheses or draw assumptions (O'Brien et al. 2009, 626-633). In quantitative research, the participant's responses must be assigned a number. This is called data coding, and it permits data to be recorded into a system (Sekaran & Bougie 2009, 250).

For this current study, a mixed type of analysis was utilised to analyse the information and data collected; a quantitative type of explanatory analysis approach was used to depict the relationship between the variables. These variables are dependent (impact) and independent (cause). The impact element was academic staff morale, and the independent variable was SAUoT's promotion processes. The data from the independent variables (promotion processes) and the dependent variable (academic staff morale) was described using mean and standard deviation. Furthermore, responses to open-ended questions data were presented and analysed using open coding. This entails analysing the completed surveys, extracting crucial information, and finding probable patterns and trends from the data.

All other questions were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 27.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics, 27.0) (2020). Descriptive statistics, such as frequency measures and percentages, were utilised to summarise the respondents' demographic profiles. This information was then presented on pie charts, bar graphs and tables to assess the relationships between variables and to create a more understandable visual representation of the study's findings.

Additionally, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each variable to test the reliability of the levels used in this study. Third, descriptive statistical analysis was calculated to ascertain the means of each variable of interest. Fourth, correlation and regression analysis were performed to answer the research questions. Therefore, the researcher answered the study questions using correlation analysis. To aid in the interpretation of correlation analysis, the direction and amplitude of each variable were investigated in terms of the correlation coefficient's ( $r$ ) value. Multiple regressions assisted the researcher in better understanding the relationship between variables. Regression analysis was also used to quantify the relative influence of independent variables on the dependent variable.

### 3.7 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Validity and Reliability are frequently used in quantitative approaches. However, these are more difficult to apply to qualitative research, so qualitative research measures trustworthiness to attain high-quality research (Liljeström 2019, 35). The validity and reliability of the survey can be ensured by developing questions that are simple to understand and cannot be misinterpreted (Lonova 2016, 40). The participants must understand the questions exactly as the investigator would. Moreover, the researcher should understand a respondent's response exactly as the participant intended (Lonova 2016, 40).

**Validity:** The amount to which the research accurately measures what it was initially designed to measure is called validity (Liljeström 2019, 35). There are various approaches for validating the study: construct, content, face and criterion validation. Therefore, for the current study, content and face validity were used. The research supervisor was consulted as a content specialist to ensure the research study's content validity. The developed questionnaires were submitted to the supervisor for feedback on the relevance or irrelevance of each question in the questionnaire. Whereas Tadesse's (2017, 36) previously tested questionnaires were used to ensure face validity in terms of questions that were well understood and not misunderstood. According to DePoy and Gitlin (2011, 180), face validity is a subjective statement of whether a measurement method adopted in a study, such as a questionnaire, seems to be a valid measure of a specific variable,

**Reliability:** Reliability is the degree to which collected data can be trusted. It is described as the concept that a consistent measurement will produce the same results at different times (Serakan &

Bougie 2013, 141). Utilising established measurements that have demonstrated their reliability in previous studies is considered to be using reliable measures. Consequently, for this current study, a questionnaire was designed following a review of prior research by Tadesse (2017, 40). The researcher developed the questionnaires in Tadesse's study and pretested them with different respondents to demonstrate the measure's consistency. In addition, the internal reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Peter 1979, 1-6), which makes the questionnaires acceptable. The coefficient alpha limits the reliability of tests conducted using the domain sampling approach. If it is extremely low, the test was conducted too fast, or the observed variables provided have very little information (Avkiran 1994, 10-18). Lehman (2005) states that internal reliability with an alpha co-efficient ( $\alpha$ ) of greater than 0.70 is the most common and acceptable type.

**Trustworthiness:** Given the data-gathering instruments, the study can be considered trustworthy. The questionnaire used to collect information for the study comprises basic open-ended and closed-ended questions, a reliable method frequently used in mixed-method research that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative aspects (Zohrabi 2013).

Since the survey is anonymous, the researcher can obtain the voluntary consent required by the subjects and expect their responses to be valid, reliable, and trustworthy. In addition, allowing participants to provide anonymous responses should improve the results' validity, reliability and trustworthiness. This study will ensure that validity, reliability, and trustworthiness are obtained by being open and honest about the reasons behind the study and how the participant's information will be used. People are more inclined to provide honest, objective criticism when they do not feel their response may be tied back to their identity. Additionally, this implies that their reactions will speak more truthfully about their feelings. Generally, anonymous surveys receive higher response rates than non-confidential ones (Matsaung 2014, 55). This is due to the fact that respondents are more inclined to accept the stated objectives of an anonymous survey.

### **3.8 Ethical consideration**

Ethics is a very crucial part of the research. Moral values or norms determine how researchers behave themselves and engage with others (Cliffs 2011). The most important component in any study is conducting an investigation ethically (Elliot & Luke 2008, 87-119). There are certainly ethical issues to consider in this study due to its nature. Therefore, the ethical concerns mentioned below were considered for the study's purpose (Strydom 2011, 222-234).

The study was conducted ethically and will not harm any individual or institution's reputation. All participants were treated with respect. Consequently, targeted respondents were invited to participate in the study by email containing a survey questionnaire cover letter (refer to Appendix 1) and a

link to the survey questionnaire (refer to Appendix 2). The cover letter informs participants about the study's aim, the research methods employed by the researcher and how the information will be handled and used to ensure that the participants are protected.

Individual participants' confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. When researchers analyse data anonymously, they cannot contact the actual persons who submitted the information (Ting-Toomey 1994, 134; Matsaung 2014, 55). This indicates that because the survey was anonymous, there were no specific trials to contact particular respondents once completed. Therefore, for this study, the investigator ensured that the instructions for completing the survey questionnaire were explicitly provided so that respondents were not confused. This was done to protect the respondents' anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality. The cover letter also included specifics on the study's voluntariness and how participants can withdraw without penalty at any moment. Since the anonymous survey questionnaire was administered online, completion of the survey was interpreted as consent.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter describes the research methods employed in this study. The methodological procedures, including the approach and design, have been explained. The chapter describes the study's population, sample and sampling method, research instrument, study validity, reliability and trustworthiness, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Then the next chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

## **4 Data Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Academic promotions recognise individual accomplishments and show an institution's commitment to supporting career development, innovation, and academic excellence. They are essential to an academic staff member's professional growth and can significantly impact their motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to their institution. Therefore, the current study intends to explore the field of data presentation, analysis, and interpretation to fully understand the impact of promotion processes on the morale of academic staff at SA UoT. The study will analyse the quantitative factors linked with promotions and qualitative variables such as academic staff members' perspectives, experiences, and attitudes.

In the 2023 academic year, there were 909 permanent academic staff members, according to SAUoT data. These staff members are governed according to the institution's promotion policies. However, statistics on academic staff who previously applied for promotions between 2011 and 2021 were unavailable from SAUoT's HRD. Questionnaires were issued to all 909 academic staff members to collect this information. A census (100%) probability sampling method was employed. Only 315 of the 909 completed the questionnaires in this current study. Two respondents were deemed ineffective due to a lack of information. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0.

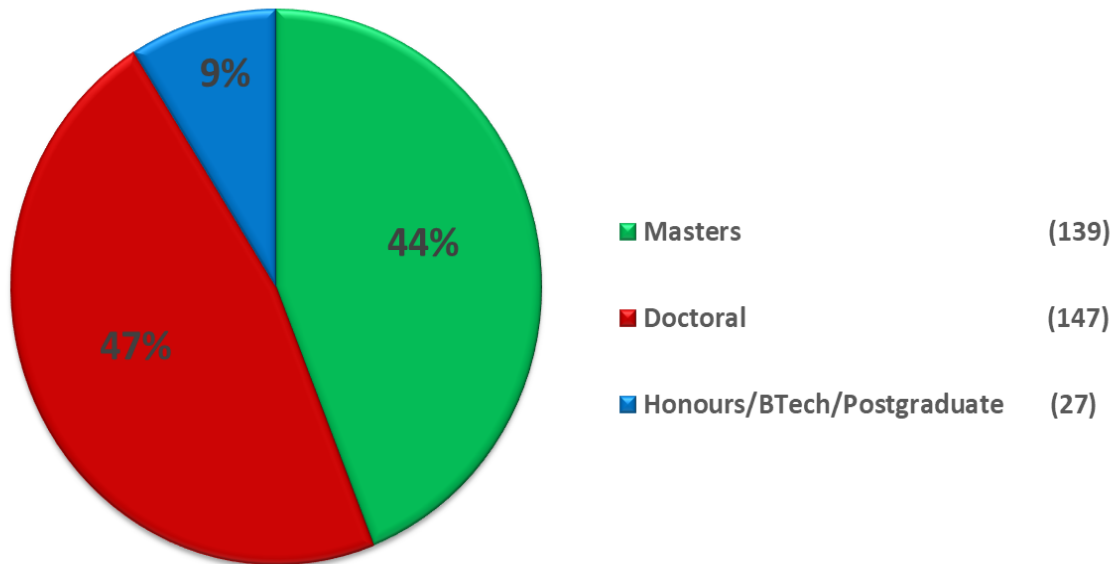
### **4.2 Findings on the Demographic Information of Respondents**

The respondent's demographic information was gathered based on their highest level of education, current position within the institution, years of service, and number of promotions.

#### **4.2.1 The highest educational level of academic staff at SAUoT**

The pie chart, Figure 3, illustrates the educational levels of academic staff at SAUoT. A total of 315 academics responded to the survey, and the results indicate that the majority of respondents, 147 (47%), hold a doctoral degree. 139 (44%) respondents have a Master's degree, and only 27 (9%) hold an Honours/BTech/Postgraduate degree, which is a minority. This suggests that SAUoT have a pool of qualified employees, as most respondents hold doctoral degrees. Peter (2014) reported that evaluating the educational qualifications of academic staff is crucial when considering promotions. Each institution should have a promotion policy that outlines how staff members can develop academically and professionally, allowing them to attain higher-ranking positions within the university. Academic staff who lack qualifications and expertise may negatively impact individual and

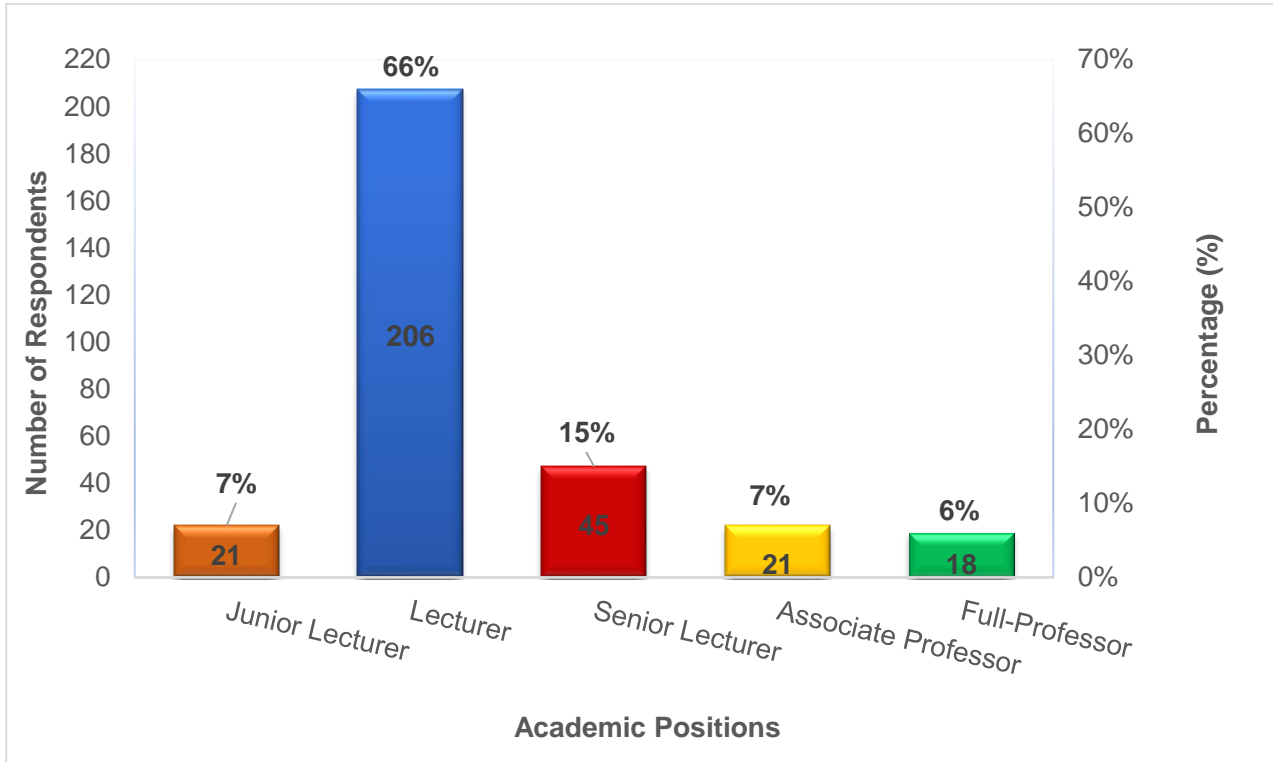
institutional performance. Unqualified individual staff might not be able to advance in their professions, which could result in grievances, low morale, and poor performance.



**Figure 3: Level of education for academic staff at SAUoT**

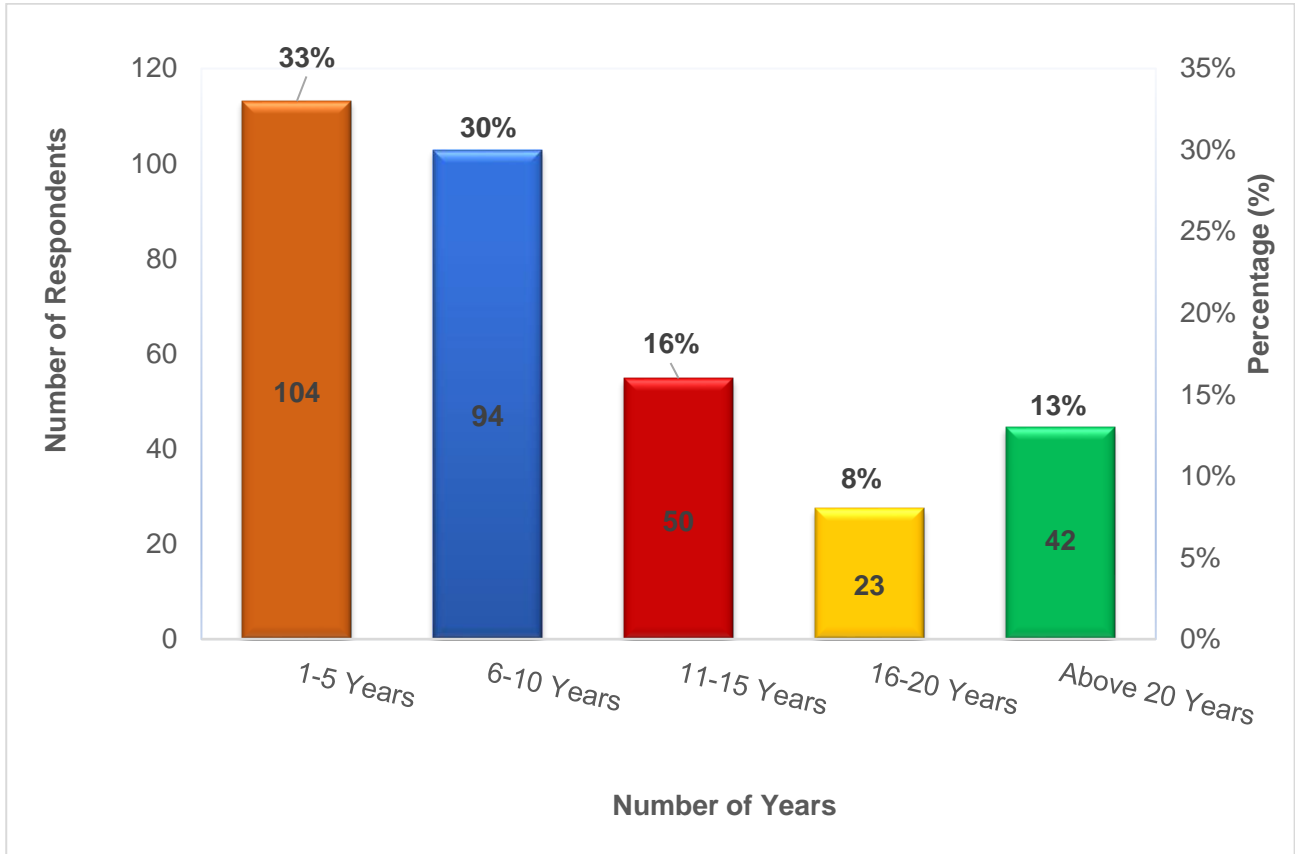
#### **4.2.2 Current position and the number of years they served in that position at SAUoT**

The data presented in Figures 4 and 5 provide information on the respondents' academic positions and years of service. Most respondents, 66% (206), were lecturers. Senior lecturers represented 15% (45) of respondents, while associate professors and junior lecturers accounted for 7% (21) of respondents each. The smallest group was full professors, with only 6% (18) respondents. This shows that SAUoT has diverse academic staff at all levels, focusing on teaching and research positions. The study aims to understand the perspectives and experiences of academics actively involved in academic leadership roles and classroom instruction at different stages of their careers. These findings are essential for program planning that meets the unique requirements and concerns of other groups of lecturing staff and researchers within the institution.



**Figure 4: Academic staff's current position at SAUoT**

According to the survey results (Figure 4), academic staff who have been in their current position for 1-5 years, comprising new entrants, had the highest response rate of 33% (104). Academic staff who have been employed with the university for 6-10 years received 30% (94), while those who have been in the same post for 11-15 years received 16% (50) (Figure 5). These individuals were once newcomers but have gained more incredible experience, expertise, additional responsibilities and leadership roles within the institution. The survey also found that 8% (23) of the respondents served the institution for 15-20 years, while 13% (42) served SAUoT for over 20 years. These long-serving individuals are highly committed to SAUoT and may hold senior positions or have witnessed significant growth and change within the institution. The study revealed that SAUoT has diverse employee tenures, including newly hired and experienced academic staff. This balance between junior and senior employees helps to utilise the knowledge and dedication of long-serving staff while providing opportunities and support for new hires to thrive in the university. Institutions need to leverage the experienced staff's expertise while guiding and nurturing new academics to achieve success.



**Figure 5: Number of years been in current position**

#### 4.2.3 Comparison between the highest educational level and current position.

The educational qualifications of the respondents were compared to their current positions in Table 2. The study found that among the 21 Junior Lecturers, 15 held an honours/BTech/Postgraduate degree, 5 had a master's degree, and 1 had a doctoral degree. Of the 206 respondents who identified themselves as Lecturers, 131 held a master's degree, 63 had a doctoral degree, and 12 held an honours/BTech/Postgraduate degree. The 46 Senior Lecturers mainly had doctoral degrees, with only 2 holding a master's degree. The Associate and Full Professors all held doctoral degrees. Only 1 respondent needed to provide information on their level of education.

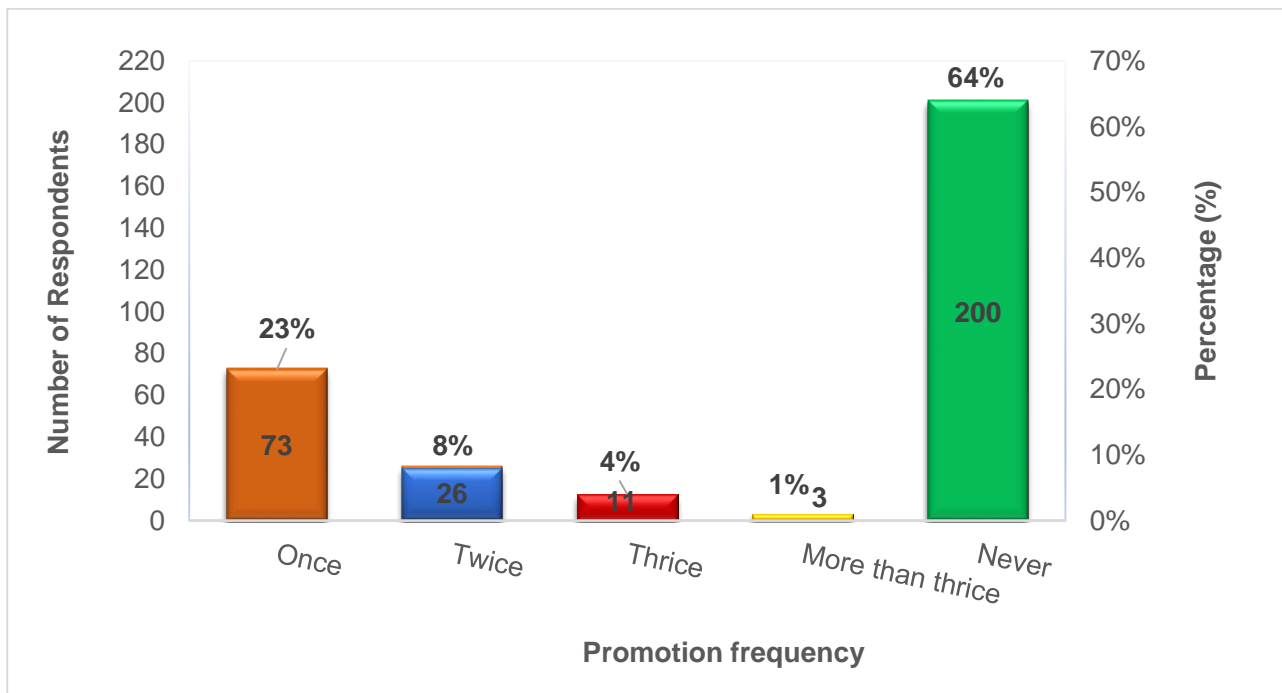
According to Mampane (2020, 185), South African Higher Education Institutions (SA HEIs) typically have four tiers of academic positions: lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor and full professor. A master's degree is adequate for lecturers, but a doctorate is required for all other posts. The South African University of Technology (SAUoT) includes five levels of educational achievement, ranging from Junior Lecturer to Full Professor. According to Mampane (2020, 185), lecturers with a doctoral degree qualify for senior lecturer positions if they meet the institution's criteria.



**Table 2: Comparison of the respondents' highest educational level and current position.**

Highest Educational Level	Junior Lecturer	Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Associate Professor	Full Professor	Un-specified
Masters	5	131	2	0	0	1
Doctoral	1	63	44	21	18	0
Honours/ BTech/Postgra	15	12	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>

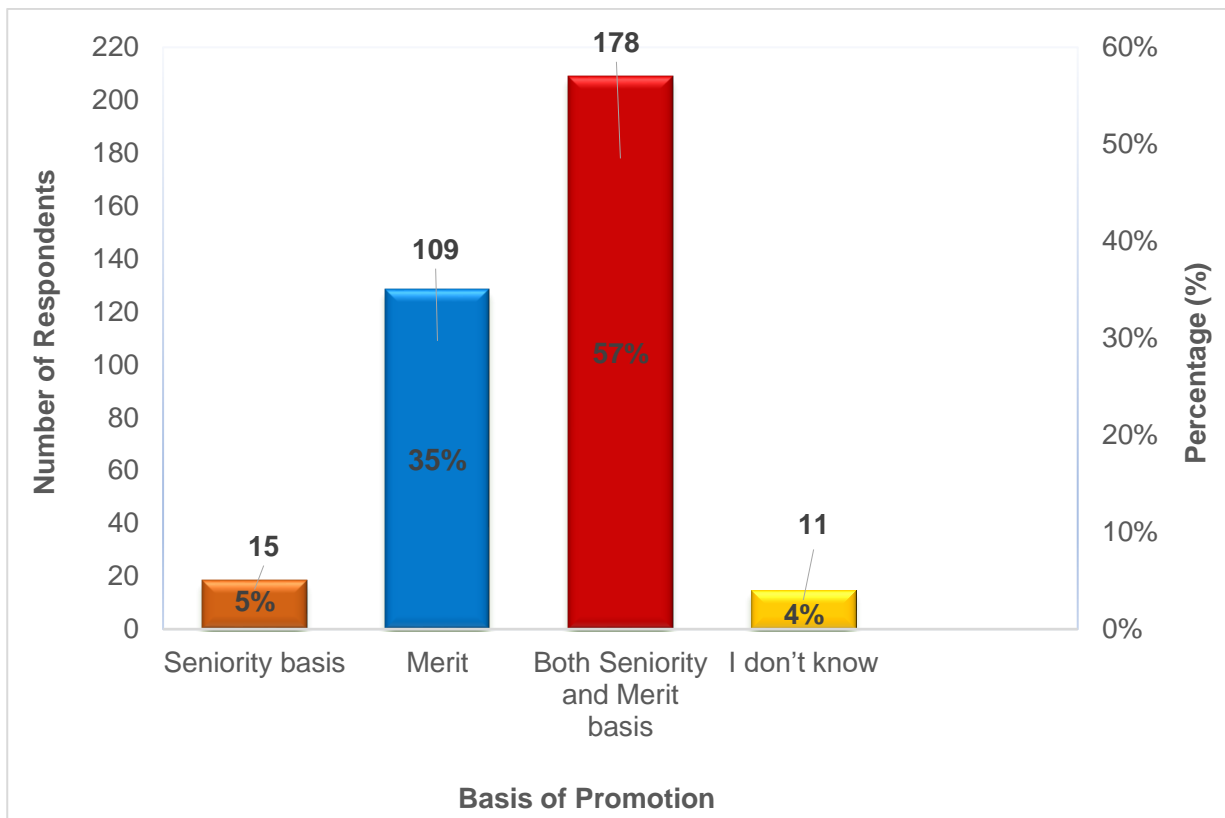
#### 4.2.4 Promotion frequency of the respondents at the SAUoT

**Figure 6: Promotion frequency received by respondents**

Based on Figure 6, 23% of respondents received a promotion once at SAUoT, while 8% received it twice, 4% thrice, and 1% more than thrice. However, a significant majority (64%) received no promotion, which is concerning as career advancement and recognition is crucial for academic fulfilment and staff motivation. According to Alam (2013, 232–238), some higher learning institutions have a promotion process or policy in place, where academic staff can submit their portfolio to the departmental committee or Head of Department (HoD) for initial review if they believe they meet the

promotion criteria. Once approved, the portfolio is submitted to the faculty's promotion committee. This approach is a much faster promotion process; academic staff members no longer need to wait long for promotions. Nwachukwu (2004, 38-46) states that institutions that fail to provide a favourable working environment, adequate promotion opportunities, and sufficient training for career growth risk having demotivated staff. In addition, Amstrong (2001) emphasised that demotivated workers display symptoms of low morale.

#### 4.2.5 Basis of Promotions at SAUoT

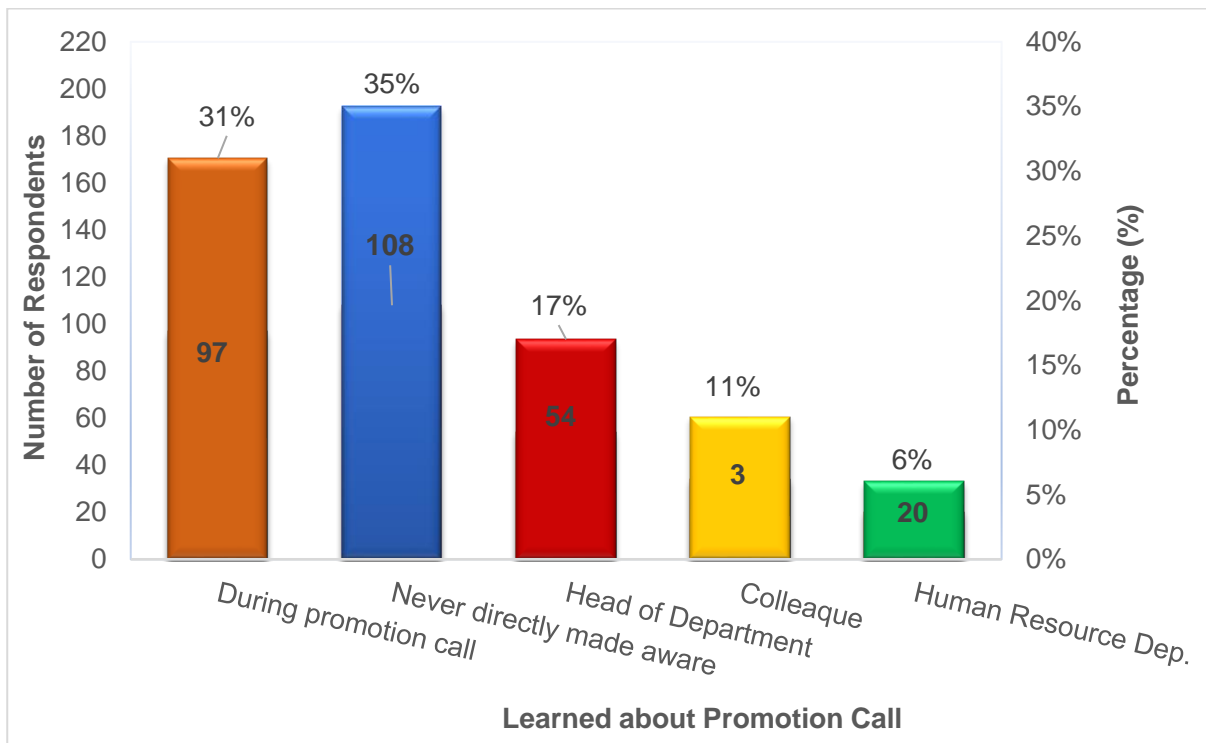


**Figure 7: Respondents' preferred method of promotion at SAUoT**

Figure 7, depicts the promotion preferences of respondents in SAUoT. A total of 315 individuals participated in the survey, of which 5% (15) believed seniority should be the basis for promotion. However, 35% (109) of the respondents favoured merit as the criteria for promotion. It's interesting to note that only 4% (11) of the participants were unsure, while 57% (178) wanted to base promotions on a combination of seniority and merit. These results show that there isn't a single promotion criterion that works for all institutions; instead, several elements need to be considered when developing policies. It can be challenging to balance seniority and merit, but it is crucial to do so to recognise both excellence and experience. According to Asaari, Desa, and Subramaniam (2019, 49), seniority-based promotions discourage motivation among staff, as they only need to meet the minimum job

requirements and wait for a particular year of the requirement to be promoted. This approach affects the morale of those who want to progress but do not receive promotions. Therefore, to ensure fairness and equality in promotion, institutions must have open discussions and implement policies that align with the expectations and values of their academic staff members.

### 4.3 Awareness of academic promotion call at SAUoT



**Figure 8: Methods of informing academic staff about promotion calls.**

Figure 8 indicates that only 97 out of 315 respondents (31%) were aware of the promotion calls at SAUoT during the call. Furthermore, 108 respondents (35%) never received direct information about the promotion calls. The survey discovered that 54 respondents (17%) were informed by their department head, 3 (11%) by their colleagues, and the remaining 20 (6%) learned about the promotion calls from the human resource department. Haddock (2010) identified lack of communication as one of the significant factors affecting staff morale. The study revealed that SAUoT faces challenges in effectively disseminating promotion calls. Many academic staff are unaware of these opportunities, which could impact their engagement and career advancement. There may be discrepancies in communication methods within the institution, as some departments notify their staff more proactively than others. It may be possible to enhance the institution's promotion communication methods to promote equity and transparency and ensure that all qualified staff members are informed of these significant chances for professional growth. However, Abdulmumini (2021, 14) stated that in Nigerian Universities, calls for promotion are usually made by the registrar of institutions to all departments,

requesting them to submit the names of academic staff who qualify for promotions. Peter (2014) suggested that the university's human resources department should provide more promotion awareness workshops for its academic staff so that every staff member is familiar with the promotion processes.

#### 4.4 The reliability and validity of the questionnaires

The internal consistency and reliability of variables were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which also ensures constructive validity. Pallant (2011) suggests that the alpha coefficient should range between 0 and 1, with a value closer to 1 indicating higher internal consistency. Other researchers have established a reliability scale (Table 3) that shows the measure of Cronbach's Alpha (Tredoux & Durrheim 2013, 213; Jeremiah 2018, 132). Lehman (2005) has stated that an alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of  $>0.70$  is the most common and acceptable internal reliability. This means the scale is reliable if the alpha coefficient is above 0.7. Therefore, a questionnaire must be considered acceptable to meet the standards of internal consistency.

**Table 3: Cronbach's alpha internal consistencies (adapted from Tredoux & Durrheim 2013, 225; Jeremiah 2018, 132).**

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

In the current stage of the survey, respondents were asked to rank a series of questions on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree". The instrument's reliability was assessed using the alpha coefficient of Cronbach. Twenty-four (24) variables were evaluated on the five-point Likert scale. The instrument's Cronbach's Alpha internal consistencies ranged between 0.794 and 0.938, indicating reliability. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Cronbach's alpha internal consistencies for the current study**

Item	Average inter-item correlation	Alpha
<b>The perception of employees towards promotion processes</b>		
<b>Q-1 to 9</b>	0.6263	0.9378
<b>The response of academic staff to promotion opportunities at SAUoT</b>		
<b>Q-1 to 7</b>	0.4429	0.8477
<b>Measure the impact of promotion expectations</b>		
<b>Q-1 to 5</b>	0.5269	0.8478
<b>Relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academics</b>		
<b>Q-1 to 5</b>	0.4356	0.7942

#### **4.5 The respondents' perception regarding the current promotion application, criteria, and feedback at SAUoT**

The study investigated the perceptions of respondents about the promotion process at SAUoT. Specifically, it looked into the application procedure, criteria, and evaluation feedback.

Table 5 summarises the survey results on promotion application, criteria, and feedback at SAUoT. Based on the data, 68% (212) of the respondents felt biases during their promotion application, while 25% (78) believed no biases. About 7% (23) of all respondents did not answer the question. In terms of the promotion criterion, 31% (96) of respondents argued they had changed, 6% (19) failed to respond, and 63% (198) indicated they had not changed during the evaluation period. When asked whether the criteria were applied consistently to all candidates, most respondents (61% or 192) replied no. They claim that certain requirements have been neglected regarding specific applicants. On the other hand, 4% (11) of respondents did not answer, and 35% (110) of respondents thought the promotion criterion applied to all applicants. 55% (172) of the respondents said the criteria were unfair when asked, whereas 42% said they were. 3% claimed that the criteria were fair but did not comment further.

**Table 5: The respondents' perception regarding the current promotion application, criteria, and feedback at SAUoT**

Questions	Type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
<b>Promotion application</b>				
<b>Did you encounter any bias during your promotion application?</b>	Yes	78	25	25
	No	212	68	93
	No response	23	7	100
<b>Total</b>		313	100	
<b>Promotion Criteria</b>				
<b>Did the criteria for promotion change during your evaluation period?</b>	Yes	96	31	31
	No	198	63	94
	No response	19	6	100
<b>Total</b>		313	100	
<b>Are the criteria for promotions applied equally to your knowledge?</b>	Yes	110	35	35
	No	192	61	96
	No response	11	4	100
<b>Total</b>		313	100	
<b>Do you feel the criteria are fair?</b>	Yes	130	42	42
	No	172	55	57
	No response	11	3	100
<b>Total</b>		313	100	
<b>Promotion feedback</b>				
<b>Did you receive a letter informing you that your application for promotion was unsuccessful?</b>	Yes	24	8	8
	No	283	90	98
	No response	6	2	100
<b>Total</b>		313	100	

The study results (Table 5) suggest that there may be biases in the promotion application process at SAUoT which could raise concerns about transparency, equality, and fairness. Respondents claimed these biases may include favouritism, racism, gender, and other forms of discrimination. Some respondents also mentioned that the criteria for promotion could be more consistent and seem to change frequently, adding to these concerns. However, some respondents emphasised the importance of institutions assessing and revising their promotion processes to ensure that the criteria are implemented consistently, presented accurately, and viewed as fair by all academic staff. According to Sadiq, Barnes, and Price (2019, 423-442), there has been a shift towards transparency and fairness during the promotion application process worldwide, as academic managers' influence on the promotion process has been reduced with more specific criteria and a more rigorous application process.

According to the survey (Table 5), 90% (283) of the respondents did not receive any feedback after their promotion application was evaluated, while only 8% (24) received a rejection letter. The remaining 2% (6) respondents did not provide any response. This indicates a lack of communication and transparency during the promotion process. It can be frustrating for applicants who have spent time and effort on their application to receive no feedback. Therefore, reviewing the feedback process after assessing promotion applications is necessary. A more transparent and supportive promotion system can be developed by addressing this issue to enhance professional development and increase academic staff morale.

#### **4.6 Assessing the perception of academic staff towards promotion processes at SAUoT**

Because "strongly disagree" and "disagree" have the same meaning, they were combined for more straightforward data interpretation, as were "agree" and "strongly agree." Figure 9 depicts the findings of a survey undertaken to assess academic staff promotion processes. Respondents were asked if they believed their institution's promotion policies and processes were followed on a regular basis. Only 20% of those respondents concurred with the statement, while 44% disagreed and 36% were neutral. Therefore, most respondents think that promotion processes and policies are not consistently followed. According to Tadesse (2017, 15), institutions that frequently face problems in their promotion processes should adopt promotion policies that are clearly defined and known to all staff members. Such policies should also ensure equal opportunity for all employees.

Results of a survey on whether the institution regularly reviews its promotion processes revealed that 44% of respondents disagreed, 39% were neutral, and only 17% agreed. This indicates that many believe that SAUoT does not regularly review its promotion processes, which may suggest a lack of reactivity and adaptability on the institution's part. To address this, promotional guidelines should be updated regularly to recognise staff contributions and quality (Bourini, 2010). Furthermore, Khumalo

(2022, 64) recommends revising the promotion policy to allow those overqualified to move directly to associate professor instead of starting from the lecturer or senior lecturer position.

Based on the responses received, the promotion application review process at SAUoT is not rigorous enough to ensure that the best candidate is promoted. About 45% of the respondents disagreed, 32% were neutral, and only 23% agreed with the statement. However, SAUoT does have promotion committees that comprise the following members Lecturer to Senior Lecturer: DVC: TLT (chairperson) or any other official at the DVC level delegated by the VC, Executive Dean of the concerned faculty, Head of the Department from the relevant faculty, a Senior Academic staff member, an officer of the HRD and Union representatives as observers. For Senior Lecturers to Associate Professorship, the committee is the same as for Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, with the addition of DVC: PRI as the chairperson or any other official at the DVC level delegated by the VC, and one other Professor to replace the Senior Academic staff member. Lastly, for Associate Professor to Full Professor, the committee comprises the Vice-Chancellor (chairperson), DVC: PRI, DVC: TLT, Executive Dean of the faculty concerned, two other Professors, one member from another IHE, a Senior Officer of the HRD, and Union representatives as observers. Despite the existence of promotion committees within SAUoT, the respondents have raised concerns about the evaluation process, fairness, and completeness of the committee's review process.

It's worth noting that when asked if the promotion process at their institution was transparent, 53% of respondents disagreed, 24% were neutral, and only 23% agreed. This indicates that most respondents feel that the promotion process at SAUoT is not transparent. It's important to understand that the promotion committee ensures that the promotion process is administered fairly, transparently, and equitably (Gilavand, 2016, 26; Tadesse, 2017, 20). They must also develop appropriate measures for assessing the performance of academics within the university. Fair and transparent promotion decisions significantly impact academic professionals' job satisfaction, motivation, and morale. Therefore, ensuring the process is fair and transparent is crucial.

The current survey revealed that only 20% of the respondents agreed that the SAUoT has proper processes to handle promotion objections. A considerable percentage of academic staff members, 45%, disagreed, while 35% were neutral. This indicates that many staff members are concerned about the effectiveness of the current objection-handling methods. Considering this, it is recommended that SAUoT establish an ombudsman or mediation services to provide equitable and unbiased resolution of objections and conflicts related to promotions.

Data has revealed varying perspectives among academic staff members at SAUoT regarding how their performance is weighed during the promotion process. 41% of academic staff members disagreed when asked if their performance was considered during promotions, while 31% agreed and



28% remained neutral. These findings suggest that there can be significant differences in how each academic perceives performance's role in promotions. To ensure a fair, consistent, and transparent evaluation process, effective communication between SAUoT and academic staff members is crucial. This will help them to gain a better understanding of how their performance affects their promotion outcome. Therefore, according to Tedesse (2017, 13), the merit-based model for promotion considers both academic performance and qualifications.

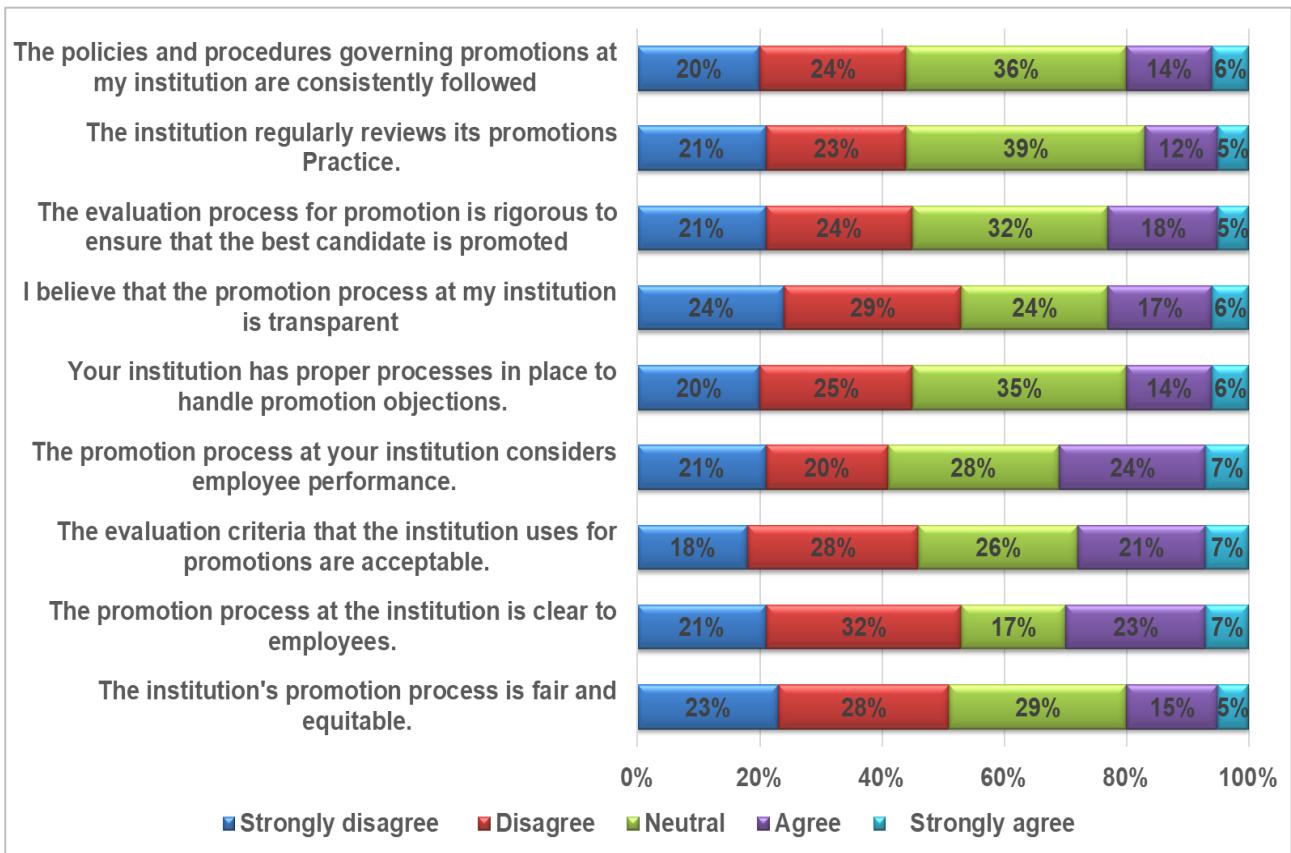
Furthermore, 39% of respondents disagreed with the statement that the institution's evaluation criteria for promotions are acceptable, 28% agreed, and the remaining 26% were neutral. Many academics have concerns or doubts about the current promotion criteria. This emphasises the need for institutions to address the uncertainties and worries of academic staff regarding the suitability of these criteria. The SAUoT must ensure that the promotion criteria are transparent, consistently applied, and communicated to academic staff. Being transparent can reduce misconceptions and doubts regarding the criteria's application.

According to a survey, 53% of academics find the promotion processes at the university easily understood, while 30% disagree and 17% have no opinion. Although this indicates that some respondents perceive the process as clear, Tadesse (2017, 4) highlights the importance of improving practical, clear, and transparent employee promotion processes in every institution. The process should meet the expectations and needs of staff members as much as possible. Peter (2014) further emphasises that implementing a clear policy and procedures for guidance is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of promotion processes in an institution. It is crucial to note that promotion should be based on clear processes that both management and staff understand.

Lastly, when asked about the fairness and equity of the institution's promotion procedures, only 20% of the respondents agreed, 29% were neutral, and 51% disagreed. This suggests that many respondents have concerns about the transparency and fairness of the promotion process at the institution. A well-structured promotion process that minimises the likelihood of bias and promotes objectivity is essential for a fair promotion process (Loft et al., 2016, 25). However, some UoT lacks fair and equitable academic staff promotion processes, resulting in some staff members not receiving the promotions they deserve (Chabaya 2015; Saharadunni & Sulaiman 2016, 35). This leads to low morale among those who deserve promotion but do not receive it. According to Adebayo (2005, 115) and Tadesse (2017, 30), if promotions are based on fairness and processes are rigorously followed, academics will be content and motivated to work harder to be selected when such an opportunity arises.

Based on the findings presented in Table 4, the average Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for this specific set of statements was 0.938. As per the classification in Table 3, this value indicates that the measure of internal consistency was excellent. Therefore, it can be concluded that the perception of

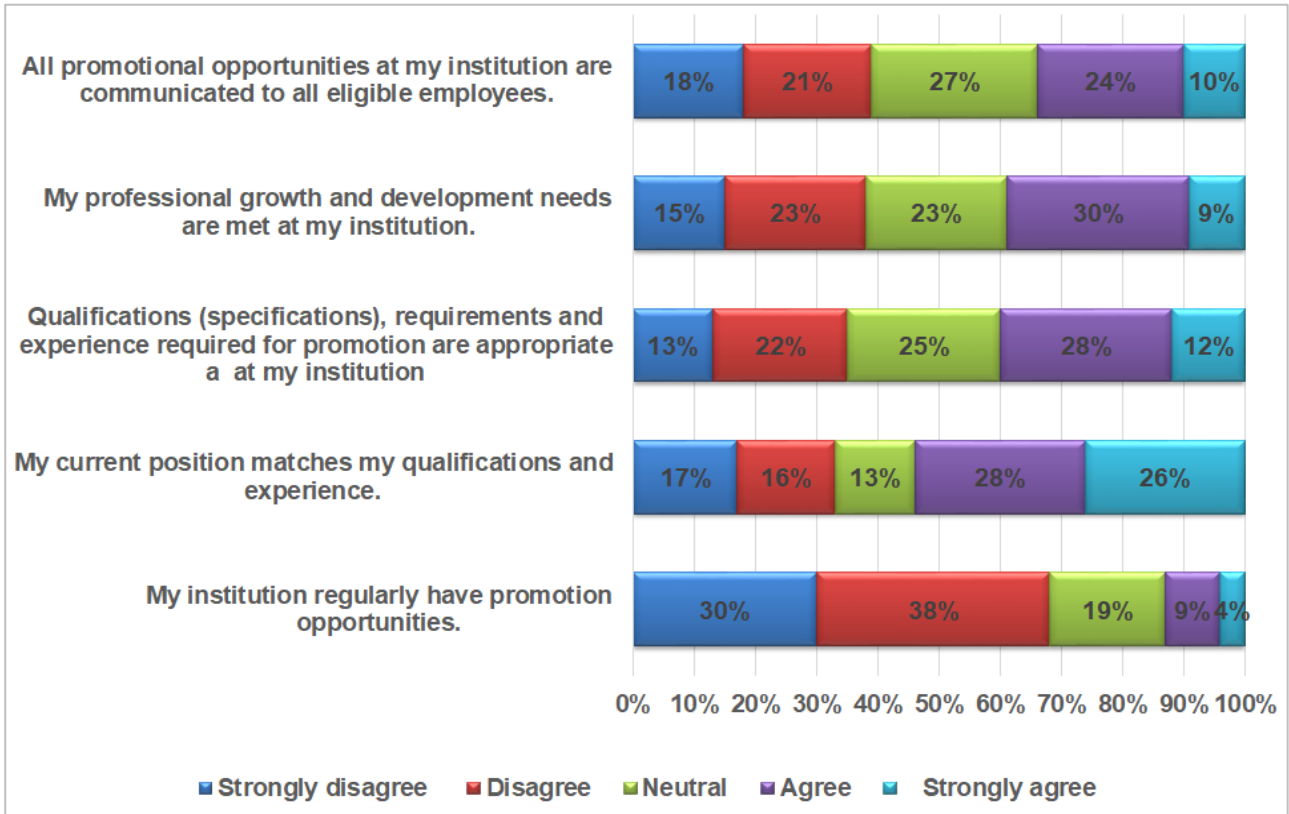
academic staff towards the promotion process at SAUoT was a reliable measure, as suggested by Cronbach's alpha value.



**Figure 9: Perception of academic staff towards promotion processes at SAUoT**

**4.7 Promotion opportunities for academic staff at SAUoT**

Since "strongly disagree" and "disagree" have the same meaning, they were combined for simpler data interpretation, as were "agree" and "strongly agree." Figure 10 below evaluates if the academic staff at SAUoT believes there are enough promotion opportunities. According to Fathaniy (2011), academic staff must be provided with promotion opportunities to advance in their current position and acquire new skills. When asked if all eligible staff members are informed about all promotional opportunities, 39% of the respondents disagreed, while 34% agreed and 27% were neutral. Most respondents think that not all academics are effectively informed about promotional opportunities. Peter (2014) suggests that the university's human resources department should offer more promotion awareness workshops for academic staff so that all staff members are familiar with promotion processes and opportunities.



**Figure 10: The response of academic staff on promotion opportunities at SAUoT**

According to the SAUoT survey, 39% of the respondents said they felt their needs for personal professional development were addressed, compared to 38% who disagreed and 23% who were neutral. According to the survey's results, some academic staff members are satisfied with the possibilities for professional growth and support they receive. At the same time, a significant number of respondents are dissatisfied with the institution's efforts to meet their development needs. This shows that perceptions of how well SAUoT meets the unique needs of its academic staff in terms of professional development and growth are diverse. As a result, the institution must continue acting proactively to empower and assist its staff members as they pursue their professional ambitions. However, according to Fathaniy (2011), allowing individuals an opportunity to advance in their careers is essential for their development and capacity for growth.

When asked if experience and qualifications are required at the institution for promotion, 40% of respondents agreed, 35% disagreed, and 25% were neutral. Most respondents believe that the minimum requirements for university opportunities are reasonable. Peter (2014) stated that academic qualification is essential when promoting staff. The absence of qualified academic staff can negatively impact their performance and institutional performance. Academic staff who are underqualified and unskilled if they are not given promotions, complaints and have low morale which leads to poor performance.

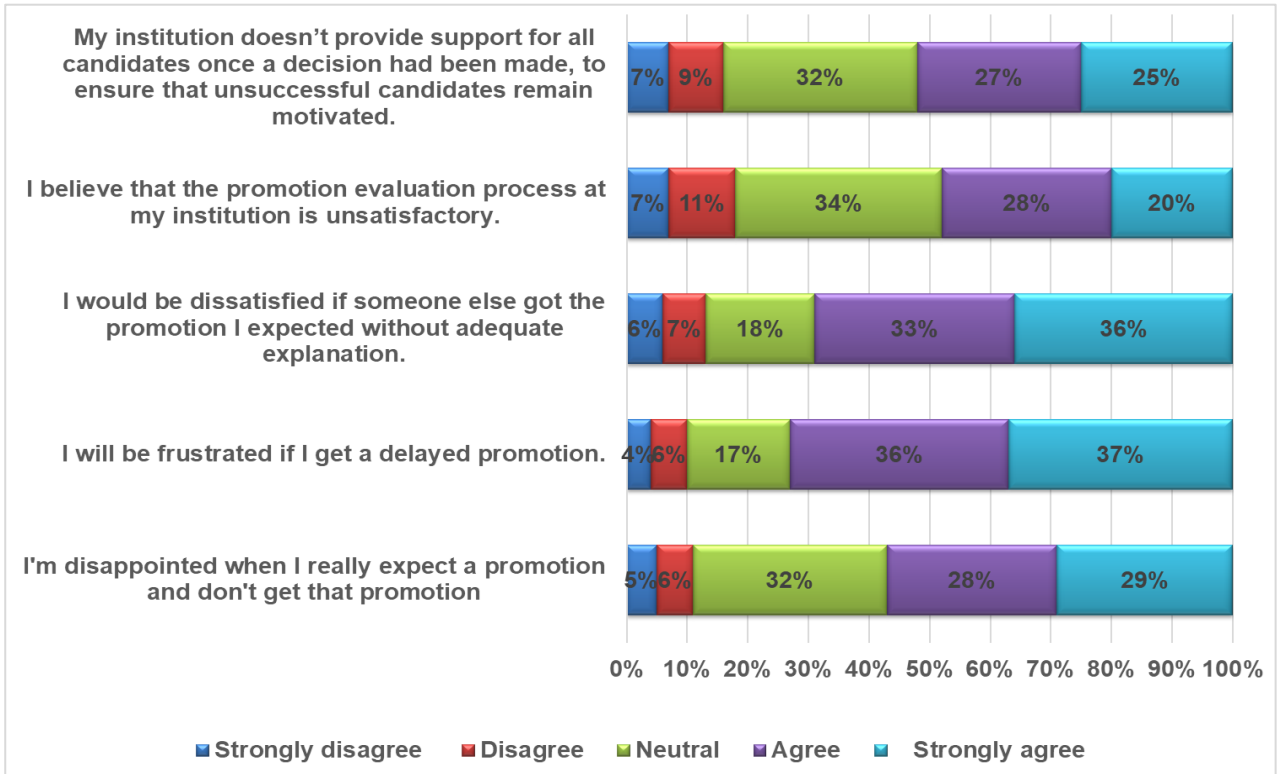
The findings show that 54% of respondents believe their present position matches their qualifications and experience, 33% disagree, and 13% are neutral. Most academics believe that their present duties reflect their expertise and skills, however according to the report, others believe they are underutilised. SAUoT must find the correct positions for its academic staff by considering their qualifications, experience, and career goals. By doing so, the institution can boost its academic staff's morale, motivation, and productivity, leading to tremendous long-term success.

When asked whether the institution provides promotion opportunities, most respondents (68%) disagreed, 19% remained neutral, and only 13% agreed. This suggests that there are limited opportunities for promotion within the institution. According to Macey et al. (2009), institutions that offer regular promotions and evaluation processes can motivate individuals. Promotion opportunities are significant aspects of employees' careers and personal lives. Boamah's (2014) study showed that unfair promotions and limited opportunities for career advancement can lead to low morale and negatively impact academic staff members' career intentions. Low employee morale can result in no opportunity for academic progression and promotion (Ngambi 2011, 672-776). However, promotion can significantly influence other professional aspects, such as responsibilities.

Lastly, based on Table 4.3, the average Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for the given set of statements is 0.845, which shows good internal consistency (as per Table 4.2). This indicates that promotion opportunities for academic staff were a reliable measure for the promotion process at SAUoT as demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha.

#### **4.8 Assessing the impact of promotion expectations at SAUoT**

For better data interpretation, the responses of "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were combined, as well as "agree" and "strongly agree" as they carry the same meaning. Figure 11 above assesses the impact of promotion expectations on academic staff. According to Boamah (2014), promotion expectations can motivate employees to put in extra effort, resulting in increased production for the institution. Tadesse's research findings (2017, 18) suggest that academics with better education and qualifications tend to have higher expectations regarding their job roles and promotions. The timeframes for expected promotions may vary from one individual to another based on factors such as work position, years of experience, and qualifications. Additionally, higher-ranked academics in an institution have higher expectations for promotions. However, the majority of staff members are often looking for immediate promotions.



**Figure 11: The impact of promotion expectations on academic staff at SAUoT**

According to the first statement, most respondents (52%) believed that the institution failed to support unsuccessful candidates to keep them motivated adequately. 32% of the respondents were neutral, and only 16% disagreed. It was found that most respondents who were unsuccessful in their promotion applications felt that the institution had not given them enough support. This indicates that there may be a communication gap regarding the resources available to unsuccessful candidates. The SAUoT needs to improve communication about the resources and support available to individuals who have not been promoted. This will ensure that academic staff members are aware of the available opportunities. Even after an unsuccessful application, the institution can encourage academic staff members to continue pursuing career advancement and growth by providing career development guidance, counselling or constructive feedback to assist candidates in understanding how to improve in future applications.

In response to the survey conducted at SAUoT, almost half of the respondents (48%) found the promotion evaluation process unsatisfactory, whereas 34% remained neutral and only 18% disagreed. The results indicate that most individuals are dissatisfied with the current promotion evaluation procedures. Considering the concerns expressed by 48% of the respondents who believe that the process is inadequate, SAUoT can work towards developing a more transparent, fair, and consistent promotion framework that benefits both the employees and the university.

When asked whether they would be unhappy if someone else received the promotion they expected without proper explanation, 69% of respondents agreed, 18% were neutral, and only 13% disagreed. When several candidates compete for a promotion within an institution, the competition can become exhausting and even tainted with mistrust. According to Tadesse (2017, 15), successful candidates may face obstacles from those who were not promoted. Based on the findings, many academic staff members are concerned about the fairness and transparency of the promotion process. A SAUoT must provide appropriate clarification and transparency for the promotion process to alleviate their concerns. Ensuring that academic staff members are aware of the reasons behind the institution's promotion decisions and giving them growth opportunities that can boost their morale and motivation.

According to the current study, 73% of respondents stated they would be frustrated if they were not promoted immediately. Only 10% of respondents disagreed with this statement, while 17% were neutral. This sense of dissatisfaction can be linked to various, including unfulfilled professional progress expectations, financial concerns, and a lack of recognition for one's contributions to the institution. When promotions are delayed, it can lead to job dissatisfaction, which ultimately affects the morale and productivity of academic staff.

It has been observed that 57% of academic staff feel disappointed when they expect a promotion but don't receive it. 32% of them remain neutral, while 11% disagree. This shows that the expectations of promotion play a vital role in determining the morale of academic staff. According to Tadesse (2017, 21), academic staff members who are promoted to suitable career paths that meet their expectations tend to be highly motivated and productive. On the other hand, if their expectations are not met, they become demotivated, leading to a decline in morale. As per Kosteas (2011, 174-194), the satisfaction of academic staff with their work is influenced by their promotion expectations. Those who believe that a promotion is possible within the next two/three years or cycles report higher work satisfaction.

Lastly, Table 4 shows that the average Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for this set of statements is 0.848. This value, as per Table 3, indicates that the measure of internal consistency was good. The reliability measure of academic staff's promotion expectations to assess its impact on academic morale was demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha.

#### **4.9 Relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academics at SAUoT**

For better data interpretation, the responses of "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were combined, as well as "agree" and "strongly agree" as they carry the same meaning. Figure 12 below focuses on the relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academics at SAUoT. Inquiring about respondents' satisfaction with the overall promotion process at their institution, the study found

that 53% disagreed, 30% were neutral, and only 17% agreed. Promoting academic staff members in higher learning institutions involves a comprehensive assessment of their performance in research, teaching, and community involvement, as highlighted by Subbaye and Vithal in 2015 (37-60). For this reason, academic institutions should have clear policies outlining evaluating and promoting their academic staff, as Peter (2014) stated. The survey results reveal that many academic staff members are displeased with how promotions are handled at SAUoT. This underscores the importance of addressing the concerns of most academic staff members about the promotion process. SAUoT could advocate for a promotion process prioritising transparency, clear communication, equity, and continuous growth to increase academic staff morale and motivation.

According to the survey, 45% of respondents did not believe that the current promotion process in their academic institution guarantees career growth, while 28% remained neutral, and only 27% agreed. This suggests that many academic staff members feel that being a part of an institution does not necessarily lead to career growth, resulting in prolonged periods in the same position and low morale. A promotion typically involves moving to a higher position within an institution, which often means more responsibility, recognition, prestige, and increased pay and benefits than the previous role (Abdulmumini 2021, 12–24). However, academic promotion is a formal process that helps staff members grow their careers within the institutional framework (Sadiq, Barnes & Price 2019, 423–442). Despite this, most academics who participated in the survey are either dissatisfied or uncertain about the existing promotion process's ability to support professional advancement. Furthermore, many academic staff members seem hesitant about how effectively the current promotion process fosters career advancement, highlighting the need for improvement. If the SAUoT hopes to boost employee motivation and morale, it must address these issues.

In response to the survey, 52% of the academic staff at SAUoT disagreed that the promotion process significantly influenced their decision to stay or leave, while 27% agreed and 21% remained neutral. However, a study by Miller and Wheeler (1992) showed that employees with fulfilling work and promotion opportunities are more likely to stay with the institution. Similarly, Tadesse (2017, 15) discovered that promotion and reward systems that use fair evaluation criteria can significantly impact the intentions of employees to leave. Furthermore, academic staff who have more opportunities for promotion are more inclined to stay with the institution. It is important to note that growth opportunities are essential in making individuals feel appreciated and valued, influencing their decision to stay or leave. According to the study, the promotion process should still be considered as part of an all-encompassing retention strategy, even though it might not be the only influence in academic staff members' decisions to stay or leave. SAUoTs should take care of this process to retain bright academic staff members who are highly motivated and have good morale. However, a comprehensive

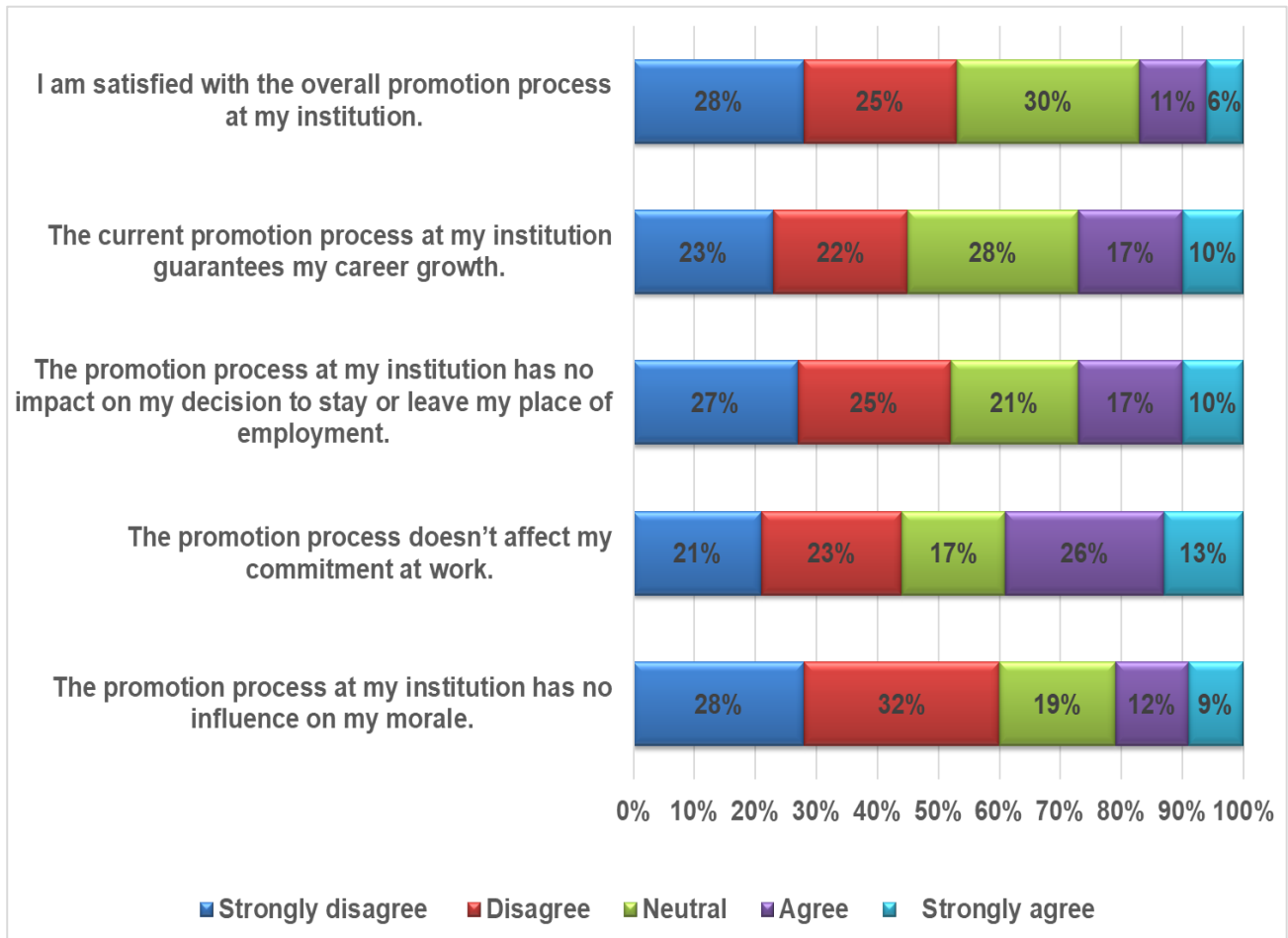
strategy that considers various factors affecting retention should be implemented by SAUoTs to ensure the best outcome.

The results of a survey conducted at SAUoT showed that most respondents (44%) disagreed, 39% agreed, and 17% were neutral regarding whether the promotion process affected their work commitment. Despite this, a significant number of respondents believed that the promotion process directly impacted their work commitment and level of engagement. This highlights the need for SAUoT to recognise how promotion impacts academic staff members' commitment to their work. To minimise the negative impact on work commitment, SAUoT should promote a work environment that values, encourages, and supports academics in their career advancement, regardless of promotion outcomes. Additionally, they should offer opportunities for professional development and improve communication regarding promotion processes. A study by Gathungu, Iravo, and Namusonge (2015, 39) found that only 12% of the participants reported that promotions significantly impacted their work commitment. The study concluded that institutional promotion processes minimally affected employees' commitment or were not affected at all. However, the study also found that the institution's promotion process positively impacted the staff's commitment. Another study by Lamba and Choudhary (2013, 407-423) showed that promotion increased staff members' work commitment.

The promotion process does not seem to affect the morale of most academic staff members, as 60% of them disagreed, 21% agreed, and 19% were neutral. However, the study suggests that the promotion process can have varying effects on academic staff morale, and therefore, it is crucial for SAUoT to be aware of its potential impact. The institution should establish a supportive and pleasant work environment that promotes positive morale and prevents negative repercussions. According to Armstrong (2001), demotivated staff exhibit low morale, which can negatively impact the institution. Abdulmumini (2021, 15) also pointed out that the success of any institution relies on its ability to establish a supportive work environment that meets the needs of employees, enhances their morale, and enables them to perform effectively.

Lastly, based on Table 4, it was determined that academic staff morale is a suitable indicator of internal consistency for assessing the impact of the promotion process at SAUoT on academic staff. The above statements exhibited an acceptable average Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of 0.794 per the standards outlined in Table 3.





**Figure 12: Relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academics at SAUoT**

#### 4.10 Summary of Open-Ended Questions

##### 4.10.1 Some respondents shared their opinions when asked if the criteria utilized at SAUoT are fair:

- ❖ *The promotion process at SAUoT is not transparent, consistent, and fair to ensure that all deserving academics can advance in their careers.*
- ❖ *The criteria are used as barriers to prevent deserving candidates from being promoted.*
- ❖ *The current promotion system is unfair and biased towards those in management positions, even if they lack the necessary experience and research output.*
- ❖ *The committee is seen as having favouritism among staff members, where some are helped to climb the ladder while others are ignored because those friends with decision-makers find it easy to get promoted.*
- ❖ *There is some preferential treatment and nepotism, with promotions being granted based on support from management rather than merit.*

- ❖ *One senior manager on the promotion committee has the power to overrule the unanimous decision of other members against the promotion of certain staff members.*
- ❖ *Some staff members with high scores on the promotion score sheet are left unprompted because the senior manager does not favour them.*
- ❖ *Research output is given more weight than teaching performance, which is unfair to those who excel in the classroom.*
- ❖ *People having been promoted regardless of their qualifications and people who qualify being rejected*

**4.10.2 Respondents were asked if they experienced any bias during their promotion application at SAUoT, some had the following to report:**

- ❖ *it appears that white people are promoted more quickly than others*
- ❖ *Eligible staff are not always informed about promotion opportunities, and specific candidates seem to have posts earmarked for them.*
- ❖ *It is common for favoured candidates to be offered positions*
- ❖ *There are too many political influences at play in our university.*
- ❖ *individuals working at distance campuses are less likely to be promoted due to how departments and faculties are structured.*
- ❖ *There are instances where panel members may dislike or hate an individual, leading them not to be promoted.*
- ❖ *Gender and racial-based promotion seem prevalent, and racial discrimination is concerning.*
- ❖ *The lack of transparency in the promotion process also indicates bias.*
- ❖ *It seems that those who make noise are targeted and not promoted.*
- ❖ *The promotion call indicated that one should have a master's or doctorate to be eligible to apply; however, I received a response that indicated that I was not promoted because I did not have a doctoral degree*

**4.10.3 Respondents were asked about how transparency (or lack thereof) affects their morale, some of the responses were:**

- ❖ *The lack of transparency in the promotion process dampens staff morale, especially when management promotes themselves or politically favoured candidates instead of deserving ones.*
- ❖ *It is discouraging that despite obtaining higher qualifications and publications, there is very little recognition. Transparency is crucial to increase morale and motivate staff to perform their best, mainly when promotions are based on merit.*

- ❖ *Staff members get demotivated when someone who recently obtained a PhD qualification is promoted in less than six months, while others awaiting promotions for years are overlooked. This affects morale immensely, especially when appointments and promotions are politically driven or done with ulterior motives and not based on expertise.*
- ❖ *When you work hard, achieve eve necessary qualifications, and yet do not receive a promotion for years, your morale can be significantly affected.*
- ❖ *When staff members who perform lower or are favoured get promoted, it lowers the morale of hardworking individuals.*
- ❖ *Lack of feedback, slow outcomes, and unrewarded efforts also affect morale.*
- ❖ *Transparency is crucial in specifying the promotion requirements and ensuring the process is fair and open to all.*
- ❖ *The lack of transparency decreases morale and destroys the will to thrive and prosper within the organisation.*
- ❖ *It makes staff members lose trust in HR and line managers, leading to demotivation and low morale.*
- ❖ *Staff members work hard to acquire doctoral degrees. Still, they are not recognised at TUT, and they have to wait for someone else to leave the department before applying for an available post, which is demoralising.*
- ❖ *The absence of feedback during the promotional process affects morale because candidates may apply with the same credentials previously rejected, only to learn later that the community engagement category requires certain specific documents as part of the evidence.*
- ❖ *A lack of transparency demotivates me from participating in work activities and helping out of my line of duty. I only perform the tasks I am paid for and leave as soon as possible.*

## **5 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The promotion process within institutions of higher learning has a considerable impact on the future and professional development of academic staff. In this chapter, the study summarises an extensive investigation of the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale at SAUoT. The previous chapters have thoroughly examined various aspects of academic staff promotions, such as academic staff perspectives, existing promotion processes, and factors influencing morale.

This chapter summarises the research findings and draws a firm conclusion. It also makes concrete recommendations to assist the SAUoT in improving the promotion process and creating a healthy and enthusiastic work environment for its academic staff. Furthermore, the chapter also examines the implications of the research findings, their general applicability, and potential course of action for resolving issue areas.

### **5.2 An overview of the study's conclusions**

The study's main aim was to determine the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale at South Africa's University of Technology. Both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were used in the study's data collection, which combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A total of 315 responses were collected from respondents. The University of Technology's overview of research findings on the impact of the promotion process on academic staff morale demonstrates a complicated and diverse relationship between promotions and academic staff well-being. The study included a wide range of dimensions and perspectives, generating key findings relevant to the study objectives:

#### **5.2.1 Objective 1: Assessing the perception of academic staff regarding the current promotion process at SAUoT**

According to the findings, most respondents reported facing bias during their promotion application process. This alarming trend raises serious concerns about transparency, equality, and fairness in promotion. The survey also revealed that according to what the respondents said, not all applicants were given the same treatment regarding the promotion selection criterion. Furthermore, the feedback process lacked transparency and communication. Most respondents did not get any feedback, which is concerning as it can negatively impact professional growth and academic staff morale.

An online survey sent to SAUoT staff members provided fascinating new information on the institution's promotion procedures and rules. The fact that most respondents believed that their institution's promotion policies are not regularly adhered to could point to a lack of flexibility. The employees' morale and productivity may suffer due to the promotion policies' rigour, which may cause them to feel unhappy and disillusioned. The survey findings also demonstrated that SAUoT's promotion evaluation process is not stringent enough to guarantee that the worthiest applicant receives a promotion. This casts doubt on the process's fairness and may give the impression of bias among the staff. It takes a fair promotion process to keep employees' faith and trust in the institution.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that most respondents do not believe the promotion process at SAUoT is transparent, indicating the importance of effective communication. A lack of transparency in the promotion process can result in academic staff uncertainty and confusion, impacting their morale and job satisfaction. Academic staff's trust can be increased by implementing a transparent promotion process that makes the criteria for advancement and the decision-making process obvious.

### **5.2.2 Objective 2: Assessing the impact of promotion opportunities and expectations on academic staff morale.**

#### ***Promotion opportunities***

The survey conducted at SAUoT provides valuable insights into the perceptions of academic staff members regarding promotion opportunities, professional development, and current job alignment. The data shows that while some staff members view promotion opportunities positively, others are less optimistic about their chances. This mixed perception can be attributed to the varying levels of qualifications and experience among the respondents.

Most respondents believe that qualifications and experience are essential criteria for promotion at the institution. Nonetheless, a few staff members voiced their concerns regarding the promotion process's lack of transparency as well as opportunities that are few. Some academic staff members have become discouraged and dissatisfied as a result, which may have a negative effect on their motivation and career goals.

Furthermore, the report also implies that the institution should be more proactive in enabling and assisting its academic staff in achieving their professional goals. This could include providing training and development opportunities, improving communication around promotion opportunities, and creating a more transparent and fair promotion process. Doing so would help improve staff morale and job satisfaction, benefiting the institution.

### ***Promotion expectations***

After a comprehensive analysis of the data, it is evident that the promotion process at SAUoT requires significant improvement. According to the survey findings, a significant number of respondents were dissatisfied with the evaluation process and the transparency of the decision-making. This lack of transparency is concerning because it can have a negative impact on academic staff morale and lead to a loss of trust in the institution.

It is critical to create open lines of communication about the support and resources provided to unsuccessful applicants to alleviate their worries. This will help alleviate some frustrations and disappointments inherent in the promotion process. Also, delayed promotions can lead to job dissatisfaction among academic staff, decreasing morale and productivity. Therefore, the institution must make the promotion process more efficient and transparent.

Lastly, academic staff members who meet their promotion expectations tend to be highly motivated and productive, which leads to job satisfaction. Therefore, the institution must foster an environment supporting academic excellence and rewarding hard work and dedication. This, in turn, will lead to a more productive and motivated workforce.

### **5.2.3 Objective 3: Assessing the link between the promotion process and academic staff morale.**

Academic institutions play a crucial role in shaping the careers of academic staff. They need clear and explicit policies for evaluating and promoting their staff. These policies should be improved to increase employee motivation and morale, resulting in better outcomes for staff and the institution.

SAUoT should support academic staff in their career advancement by encouraging professional development and improving communication regarding promotion processes. Most academic staff lack confidence in the promotion process's ability to support career growth. This lack of confidence is a significant concern, as the formal promotion process helps staff members grow their careers. Many are dissatisfied or unsure of its ability to support professional advancement.

The institution should view the promotion process as a comprehensive retention strategy for bright, motivated academic staff with good morale. Studies show that employees with fulfilling work and growth opportunities are likelier to stay with their current employer. Therefore, SAUoT should establish a supportive and pleasant work environment that promotes positive morale and prevents negative repercussions from ensuring a positive work environment. By doing so, they can establish themselves as an academic institution that values and encourages their staff's professional growth and advancement.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey conducted at SAUoT highlights the pressing need to address academic staff promotion processes for a more positive work environment.

The survey conducted on academic staff at SAUoT shows mixed perceptions regarding promotion processes, opportunities, professional development, and job alignment. According to Prasad (2010:547) and Sadiq, Barnes & Price (2019, 423–442)., HRD initiates promotion processes where staff members apply and submit portfolios. Subsequently, a committee reviews the portfolios (Subbaye & Vithal 2017, 37-60). However, lack of promotion opportunities negatively affects staff morale, as noted by Schnotz (2022). Therefore, academic staff must be provided with promotion opportunities to advance in their current position and acquire new skills, as suggested by Fathaniy (2011). Qualifications and experience are considered essential for promotion by most respondents, as stated by Mampane (2020, 187). This indicates the need for proactive support for academic staff in their career aspirations to combat potential morale issues arising from limited promotion opportunities. To be eligible for promotion, staff members must meet specific criteria, such as possessing a minimum qualification, having a set duration of employment, and demonstrating academic achievements, as noted by Peter (2014). Tedesse (2017, 13) suggests a merit-based model that takes into account both academic performance and qualifications.

There is a need for major reforms in the SAUoT promotion process because many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the review process and transparency. Peter (2014) stated that their study showed that staff members were not well-informed about the criteria and processes for promotions, which resulted in some staff members complaining that promotions are confidential. Additionally, Tedesse (2017, 56) found that most respondents in their study expressed dissatisfaction with the promotion processes regarding fairness and transparency. To prevent job dissatisfaction, maintain the morale and productivity of academic staff, and support unsuccessful candidates, it is imperative to maintain clear communication regarding promotion processes and criteria. In the study, Peter (2014) also found that staff members were not informed of promotion procedures and criteria. However, Tadesse (2017, 47) discovered in the study that their university does not provide support for unsuccessful candidates.

SAUoT should enhance its evaluation and promotion policies to further support academic staff, increasing motivation and morale. Encouraging professional development and improving communication about promotion processes is crucial. A well-structured, unbiased promotion process fostering objectivity is critical for fairness and positive career growth. SAUoT must consider the promotion process as an integral part of a comprehensive retention strategy to retain bright, motivated academic staff, as studies show that fulfilling work and growth opportunities lead to higher retention

rates. Establishing a supportive and pleasant work environment is essential to promote positive morale and prevent negative repercussions, ensuring a positive overall work atmosphere.

#### 5.4 Recommendation

Based on the findings, the researcher and respondents, through open-ended questions, recommend the following action to assist the university.

- ❖ The portfolio and evaluation/score sheets of all individuals who have been promoted must be made available to the public. This will allow all applicants access to information that can help them understand the promotion criteria. By comparing their scores against those of the promoted individuals, applicants can identify areas where they could improve and increase their chances of being promoted in the future. Additionally, this practice promotes transparency and fairness in the promotion process. According to Gilavand (2016, 26) and Tadesse (2017, 20), the promotion committee must ensure that the promotion process is administered fairly, transparently, and equitably.
- ❖ The SAUoT must provide detailed feedback to unsuccessful candidates regarding promotion decisions, which is essential to creating a fair and transparent work environment. The feedback should include specific reasons why the candidate was not promoted, possibly due to a lack of experience, skills, or qualifications. Additionally, the scoring system used to evaluate candidates should be explained to ensure transparency and fairness. Proper feedback can help unsuccessful candidates identify areas for improvement and develop a plan to enhance their skills and qualifications for future opportunities.
- ❖ Recognise Recognize and acknowledge long-serving academics' dedication and ability; it is recommended that those with ten years of service inside the university be automatically promoted upon receiving a PhD. This strategy ensures that our most qualified and experienced academics can continue to significantly contribute to the institution's success while fostering professional development and progress. According to Alam (2013, 232–238), some higher learning institutions have a promotion process or policy in place, where academic staff can be promoted anytime when they submit their portfolio to the promotion committee or Head of Department (HoD) for review if they believe they meet the promotion criteria. The institution can establish a healthy and supportive work environment that is advantageous to each individual and the institution by recognising its staff's successes while providing opportunities for advancement.
- ❖ External reviewers should be invited to join the promotion committees to promote equality and transparency in the promotion process for positions in academia that range from lecturer



to full professor. These external experts can provide valuable insights and evaluations of the candidate's work and qualifications, which can help the committees make informed decisions. Specifically, external reviewers should be included in the promotion committees for levels from lecturer to senior lecturer, senior lecturer to associate professor, and associate professor to full professor. This approach helps to ensure that the promotion process is based on objective and rigorous assessments, which ultimately benefit the academic institution and the individuals involved.

- ❖ To ensure that academic professionals can progress in their careers, it is essential that promotions take place regularly. One potential approach is to have promotions occur annually, allowing each individual to apply and be considered for advancement. Alternatively, promotions could be implemented every two to three years, allowing for a more extended period for academics to develop their skills and demonstrate their readiness for advancement. This approach would also provide a more predictable timeline for promotions, which could help to promote fairness and equity within the academic community.
- ❖ Any institution that seeks to succeed must create a work environment that fosters strong morale. As stated by Nwachukwu (2004, 38-46) institutions that fail to provide a favourable working environment, adequate promotion opportunities, and sufficient training for career growth, risk having demotivated staff. Therefore, establishing support structures that encourage and enable staff members to communicate their concerns is one method to do this. This can be done by implementing a platform that allows staff members to voice their thoughts and ideas. Furthermore, providing creative and flexible answers to problems at work can significantly boost staff morale.
- ❖ The SAUoT should implement a structured process for academics to appeal promotion decisions. This process allows staff members to voice their concerns and review grievances transparently and objectively. Academic staff can feel more confident knowing that the leadership team is considering their concerns and that their promotion outcomes are being fairly assessed when a clear and straightforward appeals process is in place. This may contribute to developing a healthier and more efficient workplace where staff members experience support and value.

Finally, it is suggested that the SAUoT consider using or modifying the framework adapted from the University of Bristol (2023, 1-16) presented in Tables 6 and 7 below to assist them when making decisions about promotions. This framework includes 15 criteria that are crucial for the institution and require the joint efforts of the academic community. These criteria are interconnected, and it is recommended that they be viewed as a whole instead of individually.

The Academic Promotions Framework outlines the various contributions valued and rewarded. It is divided into four broad categories that describe the work involved in any academic career. Each category includes several criteria that cover the full range of academic practices, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: The Academic Promotions Framework classifies scholarly contributions into four categories (adapted from the University of Bristol 2023, 1-16).**

Research	Teaching and Learning	Community Engagement	Leadership
Discovering new information and knowledge. Also, developing new prototypes	Fostering creative and critical thinking while supporting active learning.	Bringing the University into contact with the public and sharing knowledge with the larger community	Contributing actively to the University and serving as a role model for others
<b>R-1</b> Research output <b>R-2</b> Research capacity and recognition <b>R-3</b> Research grant <b>R-4</b> Supervision of research (Postgraduate)	<b>TL-1</b> Education Practice <b>TL- 2</b> Individual tutoring <b>TL-3</b> Curriculum development <b>TL-4</b> Scholarship of Teaching and Learning	<b>CE-1</b> Engagement with external organisations <b>CE-2</b> Knowledge transfer and implementation <b>CE-3</b> Community services	<b>L-1</b> Leadership within the University <b>L-2</b> Leadership in your discipline <b>L-3</b> Collegiality <b>L-4</b> Contribution to the University

Upon analysing Table 7, we can determine the qualifications for promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor, and Associate Professor to Full Professor. The promotion committee can choose a pathway that matches the candidate's expertise, whether in research, teaching or a blend of both. The candidates can also indicate which pathway they are applying for. It is essential to note that this decision is based on a thorough evaluation of the candidate's performance, including their research publications, teaching evaluations, and other relevant factors, such as their contributions to the institution's mission and vision.

The framework categories allow for variations in the time available for different aspects. The three pathways will also have their differences. Those on Pathway 1, who divide their time between research and teaching, may have more evidence of how they link the two. Those on Pathways 2 and 3 will likely show more evidence of their leadership and influence in research and teaching practices.

**Table 7: Pathways to Progress Academics from the Position of Lecturer to Full Professor (adapted from the University of Bristol 2023, 1-16).**

Lecturer to Senior Lecturer		Research	Teaching and Learning	Community Engagement	Leadership
Pathway 1	<b>Core</b>	R-1, R-2	TL-1, TL-2	<b>One of them</b> CE-1, CE-2, CE-3	<b>L-1, L-2, L-3</b>
	Additional	R-3, R-4	TL-3, TL-4		
Pathway 2	<b>Core</b>	R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4	TL-1, TL-2, TL-3, TL-4		
	Additional				
Pathway 3	<b>Core</b>	R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4	TL-1, TL-2, TL-3, TL-4		
	Additional				

### Requirements:

#### Lecturer to Senior Lecturer.

- To qualify, the candidates must obtain 9 of the 15 criteria, including the core ones above. In addition, the candidate should meet other requirements that the SAUoT might stipulate according to the policy.

#### Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor

- To qualify, the candidates must obtain 10 of the 15 criteria, including the core ones above. In addition, the candidate should meet other requirements that the SAUoT might stipulate according to the policy.

#### Associate Professor to Full Professor

- To qualify, the candidates must obtain 11 of the 15 criteria, including those above. The evidence provided must demonstrate excellence, meaning that their performance is of superior quality and decisively better than satisfactory. Additionally, at least two criteria must showcase outstanding performance, evident from the depth and quality of evidence provided. In other words, it must stand out from their peers.
- Also, the candidate should meet other requirements that the SAUoT might stipulate according to the policy.

## 5.5 Personal Reflection

During the intensive research on "The Impact of Promotion Processes on Academic Staff Morale at the University of Technology," I immersed myself in a complex and multifaceted exploration of the challenges academic staff face in their career progression. Delving into this subject matter was intellectually stimulating and profoundly enlightening about the intricate dynamics within academic institutions.

One of the most striking aspects of this research was the depth of emotions and experiences shared by the academic staff members at the University of Technology. Their perspectives illuminated the real-world implications of promotion processes, shedding light on bureaucratic procedures' and their profound impact on individual morale. It was inspiring and disheartening to witness these individuals' passion for pursuing their careers, juxtaposed against the frustration and demotivation caused by opaque promotion processes.

The research journey was marked by numerous moments of realisation, particularly concerning the critical role that transparent and fair promotion processes play in shaping the morale and motivation of academic staff. Understanding the nuances of their experiences, from the initial stages of career aspirations to the challenges faced during the promotion evaluation, provided valuable insights into the human aspect of academic institutions. Despite systemic barriers, these staff members' resiliency demonstrated their commitment and enthusiasm for their work.

Navigating through numerous questionnaires and literature reviews, I obtained a better understanding of the significance of this study issue. The intricate interplay between institutional policies, individual aspirations, and the academic environment became evident. It underscored the need for academic institutions, including the SAUoT, to re-evaluate and adapt their promotion processes to foster a supportive and empowering atmosphere for their staff.

The research also highlighted the importance of empathy and understanding when delving into academic staff members' personal and professional lives. Listening to their stories, challenges, and aspirations served as a reminder of the responsibility researchers bear in advocating for positive change within academic settings.

As I continue this research journey, I am energised by the potential impact our findings could have on reshaping promotion processes at the SAUoT and in similar institutions globally. This experience confirmed my conviction in the ability of research to effect positive change. It highlighted the necessity of advocacy for policies that prioritise the well-being and professional development of academic staff, resulting in a more dynamic and driven academic community.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Cover letter for online survey questionnaire

#### COVER LETTER – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

**PROJECT TITLE:** The impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale: A case study at a South African University of Technology

**Primary investigator:** L Monyatsi

South Africa University of Technology

#### 1.1 Dear Potential research participant,

You are invited to complete a survey questionnaire that forms part of my formal Master's degree in Education Management at the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science. I am conducting a research study entitled” *The impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale: A case study at a South African University of Technology*”.

#### 1.2 Background Information of the Study

Institutions of higher education face challenges with promotion not only because they must select or appoint individuals based on their abilities but also because they must facilitate the development of subordinates and encourage them to succeed at the end of institutional promotion to maintain stability. Academic staff, who want promotions will automatically endeavour to improve their performance to meet the requirements of the promotion. On the one hand, academic staff expect to be promoted at work because it is considered a success and shows excellent work performed in the past. However, a lack of an efficient promotion process may result in significant staff turnover, resulting in a shortage of skills, higher recruitment and training costs, a lack of commitment, demotivation, and lower staff morale. Promotions must be implemented to (i) improve work spirit when promotions are executed to employees who produce high work performance, as this will inspire them to boost their morale, (ii) ensure employee stability when promotions are applied on time and objectively, and (iii) Improve the work performance of employees whose adequate competencies and achievements must be fostered, one of which is by promoting them to positions of higher power and responsibility.

### **1.3 Time commitment**

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be required to complete an online survey questionnaire, which will not take more than 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be collected anonymously, and the data will be treated confidentially.

### **1.4 Exclusion criteria**

This study is directed only to permanent academic staff. Therefore, you will not be eligible to participate in this study if you are non-academic (support staff).

### **1.5 Potential and/or foreseeable risks**

There is no potential emotional risk or discomfort associated with participating in this study or completing the anonymous online survey questionnaire for you or your family. The survey is conducted online and is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time, with no penalties or other implications in the future. You're not even required to state the reason(s) for your decision.

### **1.6 Potential benefits of participating in the study**

Participating in this study will not provide any financial benefit or incentive. However, the benefits of participating in this study will:

- Assist in identifying the discrepancy in promotion processes and demonstrate how the promotion process affects staff morale if it is not properly executed.
- Assist in coming up with a solution, and measures that can be undertaken to resolve the issue.

### **1.7 Your rights as a participant**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to leave at any time, with no consequences or negative effects in the future. You are not even required to state the reason(s) for your choice.

### **1.8 How will your confidentiality and anonymity be ensured in the study?**

The completed questionnaires will only be accessible to the supervisors and the researcher. Your identity will never be disclosed, and your responses will remain anonymous. Furthermore, no response from anyone other than the research ethics committee and/or study panel will be able to be linked back to you in any way that is recognizable. Again, no research participant's identity will be disclosed if the study's findings are presented at scientific conferences or published in a peer-

reviewed publication. The original surveys will be password-protected and kept in a secure location for three years before being destroyed.

### **1.9 Ethical Approval**

The Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Finland does not require ethical approval to investigate. However, because SAUoT academic staff members are being used in the study, the Research Ethics Committee at SAUoT approved the study.

### **DECLARATION: CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The South African University of Technology funded the study because the researcher is a postgraduate student employed by the university. The researcher, on the other hand, will ethically conduct this study since the research protocol will be followed as approved by the supervisor and ethics committee, and the results will be documented as received from respondents without prejudice.

Finally, your cooperation and participation in the study will be greatly appreciated.



## Appendix 2. Online Survey Questionnaires

# SAUoT Academic Staff Survey Questionnaires

*"The impact of promotion processes on academic staff morale: A case study at a South African University of Technology"*

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Thank you for participating in this survey, but please be aware that it is anonymous.

## Part one: General Information

1. What is your highest educational qualification?

- Masters
- Doctoral
- Honours/Btech/Postgraduate

2. What is your current position at your current institution?

- Junior Lecturer
- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer
- Associate Professor
- Full-Professor

3. How long have you been in your current position?

- 1-5 Years
- 6-10 Years
- 11-15 Years
- 16-20 Years
- Above 20 Years

4. How many times have you been promoted in your institution?

- Once
- Twice
- Thrice
- More than thrice
- Never

5. In your opinion what should be the bases for employee promotion in your current institution?

- Seniority (long service years) based
- Merit (performance) based
- Both Seniority and merit based
- I don't know

#### SAUoT Academic Staff Questionnaires Survey

### Part two A: Perception of academic staff regarding the promotion process at your institution

6. When were you first aware of all the criteria necessary for promotion?

- During promotion call
- Never directly made aware
- From Head of Department
- From a colleague
- From Human Resources

7. Did the criteria for promotion change during your evaluation period?

- Yes
- No

8. Are the criteria for promotions applied equally to your knowledge?

- Yes
- No

9. Did you receive a letter informing you that your application for promotion was unsuccessful?

- Yes
- No

### SAUoT Academic Staff Questionnaires Survey

#### Part two B: Perception of academic staff regarding the promotion process at SAUoT

Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the respective statements

10. Statements for measuring the perception of employees towards promotion processes at SAUoT

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The institution's promotion process is fair and equitable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The promotion process at the institution is clear to employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The evaluation criteria that the institution uses for promotions are acceptable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The promotion process at your institution considers employee performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your institution has proper processes in place to handle promotion objections.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the promotion process at my institution is transparent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The evaluation process for promotion is rigorous to ensure that the best candidate is promoted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The institution regularly reviews its promotions Practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The policies and procedures governing promotions at my institution are consistently followed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 11. Statements to measure the response of employees for promotion opportunities at SAUoT

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My institution regularly have promotion opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My current position matches my qualifications and experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Qualifications (specifications), requirements and experience required for promotion are appropriate at my institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My professional growth and development needs are met at my institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All promotional opportunities at my institution are communicated to all eligible employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 12. Statements to measure the impact of promotion expectations

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I'm disappointed when I really expect a promotion and don't get that promotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will be frustrated if I get a delayed promotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be dissatisfied if someone else got the promotion I expected without adequate explanation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the promotion evaluation process at my institution is unsatisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution doesn't provide support for all candidates once a decision had been made, to ensure that unsuccessful candidates remain motivated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Statements on the relationship between the promotion process and the morale of academic staff

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The promotion process at my institution has no influence on my morale.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The promotion process doesn't affect my commitment at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The promotion process at my institution has no impact on my decision to stay or leave my place of employment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current promotion process at my institution guarantees my career growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the overall promotion process at my institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## SAUoT Academic Staff Questionnaires Survey

### Part Three: Open-ended questions

Please fill the following questions on the space provided

14. Do you feel the criteria are fair?

Yes

No

15. If your answer is "No" to question 14, please explain

16. Did you encounter any bias during your promotion application?

Yes

No

17. If your answer is "Yes" to question 16, please explain

18.What do you suggest for improving SAUoT's promotion process?

19.Do you have any further comments regarding the promotion process at SAUoT?