

Compensation as Governance: Allowances and Employee Turnover in Public Sector Institutions

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Abstract

Compensation allowances function as important governance instruments that shape employee motivation, fairness perceptions, and turnover intentions in public sector institutions. Drawing on a mixed-methods case study of a revenue administration institution in Tanzania (n=32), this paper examines the availability, perceived adequacy, and governance of allowances using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Findings show that overtime allowances are universally available and strongly linked to employee satisfaction, while welfare-oriented allowances (transport and medical) have more limited coverage. Although overall satisfaction is relatively high (71.9%), gaps in key allowances foster perceptions of inequity and significantly influence turnover intentions (75% reported very great influence). Interpreted through expectancy theory, equity theory, and network governance perspectives, the study reconceptualises compensation allowances as governance tools. It recommends transparent, balanced, and welfare-sensitive allowance systems to strengthen employee retention in public sector settings.

Key words: Compensation allowances; employee turnover; governance; expectancy theory; equity theory; public sector; Tanzania

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1.0 Introduction

Employee turnover remains a persistent challenge in public sector institutions, particularly in developing countries where competing administrative demands continually test workforce stability (Mobley, 1977; Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom et al., 2017). In Tanzania, many public organisations experience moderate to high staff turnover, often disrupting service delivery and institutional continuity (Payowela & Mrema, 2023; Mmari & Mwangela, 2025). In this context, retaining skilled and experienced employees is critical for sustaining organisational performance and

advancing national development objectives.

Compensation has long been recognised as a powerful driver of employee motivation and retention (Gerhart et al., 2020; Armstrong, 2023). While base salaries in the Tanzanian public service are largely standardised, compensation allowances play a far more significant role than is commonly acknowledged. These allowances, which include additional monetary and in kind benefits such as overtime, transport, housing, and medical support, function as governance instruments. They signal organisational priorities, fairness, recognition, and leadership commitment through the administrative rules, decision making processes, and practices that govern their allocation (Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 2018).

Despite ongoing public sector reforms in Tanzania, allowance systems in many institutions continue to show variations in distribution and implementation across different categories of staff (Payowela & Mrema, 2023; Mmari & Mwangela, 2025; Mtatiro, 2021). Consequently, mismatches arise between employee needs, particularly welfare oriented needs such as transport and medical support, and the provisions actually available. These gaps can generate perceptions of inequity and significantly influence turnover intentions, even when overall employee satisfaction levels appear moderate.

This study therefore seeks to address the following research questions: (1) What types of compensation allowances are available to employees in the selected public sector revenue administration institution? (2) How do employees perceive the adequacy, fairness, accessibility, and governance of these allowances? (3) How do compensation allowances influence employees turnover intentions? (4) How do governance practices such as transparency,

consistency, and communication shape employees perceptions of compensation and retention decisions?

Drawing on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), equity theory (Adams, 1963), network governance theory (Rhodes, 1997), and organisational justice perspectives (Colquitt, 2001), this paper examines how compensation allowances operate as governance instruments in a revenue administration institution in the Ruvuma Region of Tanzania. Employing a mixed methods case study approach, the study integrates quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights to generate nuanced understanding.

This study makes three important contributions. First, it reconceptualises compensation allowances as governance tools rather than mere human resource mechanisms. Second, it bridges individual level motivational theories with institutional governance perspectives. Third, it provides timely contextual evidence from Tanzania to inform public sector reform efforts aligned with SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

2.0 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Understanding employee turnover in public organisations requires attention to both economic incentives and the institutional processes through which such incentives are designed and administered (Allen et al., 2010; Hom et al., 2017). This paper integrates expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1963) with network governance theory (Rhodes, 1997) to examine how compensation allowances influence employee retention. Compensation allowances are conceptualised not only as financial incentives but also as governance

instruments through which leadership communicates recognition, fairness, and organisational commitment.

2.1 Compensation Allowances, Motivation, and Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) posits that motivation is a multiplicative function of three components: expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (belief that performance leads to rewards), and valence (the value placed on those rewards). In public sector organisations in Tanzania, compensation allowances serve as important instrumental rewards. Overtime allowances strengthen instrumentality when payments are reliable and consistent. Welfare allowances (transport, housing, and medical) often carry high valence because they address daily living and commuting costs. Performance based incentives reinforce the

expectancy component by clearly linking extra effort to visible recognition.

In the Tanzanian context, public servants are entitled to health coverage through the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). However, only 6.3 percent of respondents in this study reported receiving a supplementary medical allowance. This suggests that while NHIF provides a basic safety net, many employees still perceive a gap in workplace specific medical support. In the current case, the universal availability of overtime allowance (100 percent) sustains strong instrumentality, while limited transport (12.5 percent) and medical allowances weaken valence for everyday practical needs. Transparent governance practices strengthen all three components of expectancy.

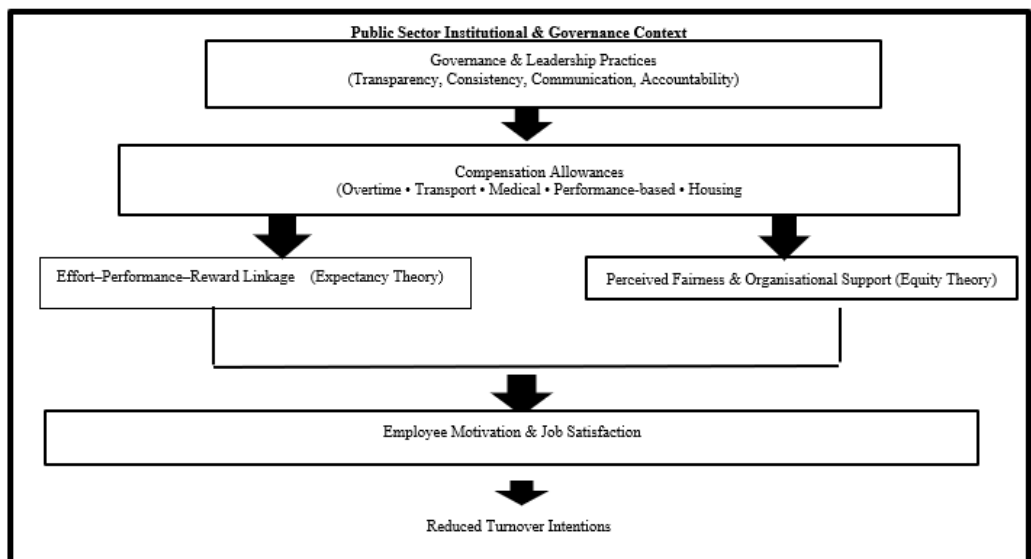


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Compensation Allowances as Governance Instruments Influencing Employee Turnover Intentions

Source: Authors conceptualisation based on Vroom (1964), Adams (1963), Rhodes (1997), and contemporary compensation and governance theory.

2.2 Equity Theory, Perceived Fairness, and Employee Retention

Equity theory (Adams, 1963) complements expectancy theory by emphasising social comparisons and perceived fairness. Employees evaluate fairness by comparing their inputs with the outcomes they receive relative to comparable others. When inequity is perceived, tension arises that may lead to reduced motivation or increased turnover intentions (Tekleab et al., 2005; Colquitt, 2001).

In public sector contexts with standardised base pay, allowances become highly visible indicators of fairness. The contrast between universal overtime provision and very low access to transport and medical allowances can influence perceptions of fairness, even when employees benefit from national schemes such as NHIF.

2.3 Synthesis and Analytical Implications

Expectancy theory and equity theory together provide complementary perspectives for understanding how compensation allowances influence employee turnover. Expectancy theory explains the motivational pathway through effort reward linkages, while equity theory highlights the critical role of fairness and transparency.

This study further draws on Rhodes (1997) network governance theory, which conceptualises governance as self organising inter organisational networks characterised by interdependence, resource exchange, and negotiated rules. In the Tanzanian revenue administration, compensation allowances emerge from policy networks involving human resource units, finance departments, line managers, and regulatory bodies. Governance practices such as transparency, consistency, and effective communication serve as important mechanisms that can strengthen

both motivational linkages and fairness perceptions. These mechanisms complement meta-governance perspectives (Jessop, 2018; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Sørensen, 2016), which emphasise the state's role in setting frameworks, facilitating collaboration, and coordinating networks. This paper proposes a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that links compensation allowances, governance practices, employee motivation, perceived fairness, and turnover intentions.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods case study design. Quantitative data were collected first through structured questionnaires to identify patterns regarding allowance availability, satisfaction, fairness, and turnover intentions. This was followed by semi structured interviews to explain and deepen the quantitative findings. The integration of both approaches allowed the research to capture statistical patterns as well as the nuanced lived experiences of employees (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Yin, 2018).

A case study approach was particularly appropriate because it enables an in depth investigation of compensation governance practices within their real life institutional context (Yin, 2018). Although the sample size is relatively small ($n = 32$), it is adequate for a single case study that prioritises analytical depth and contextual understanding over statistical generalisation (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Patton, 2015).

3.2 Study Area and Case Selection

The study was conducted in a public sector revenue administration institution in the Ruvuma Region of Tanzania. The institution operates within a centrally regulated compensation framework, where

allowances are administratively determined and applied across different employee categories. This case was purposively selected for its relevance to the research objectives, particularly its structured compensation systems and formal administrative procedures (Patton, 2015). The case also provided a suitable context for examining how governance practices shape the implementation and perception of compensation systems within a regulated public sector environment. The identity of the institution has been anonymised to protect respondent confidentiality and organisational sensitivity (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Israel & Hay, 2006). However, sufficient contextual details are provided to support understanding of the findings.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected from 32 respondents, including both managerial and non-managerial staff. While 62.5 percent of respondents were from middle management, this largely reflects the staff composition of the institution and provided valuable insights from those directly involved in allowance administration. Purposive sampling was used for key informants (human resource officers, departmental heads, and senior staff), while simple random and convenience sampling were combined for broader staff representation. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved.

The quantitative instrument was a structured questionnaire containing 15 Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). These items were adapted from established scales on compensation satisfaction, organisational justice, and turnover intentions (e.g., Hom et al., 2017; Colquitt, 2001), with minor contextual modifications for the Tanzanian public sector. Semi-structured interviews

were conducted with 12 purposively selected participants. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and used a flexible interview guide that allowed probing on allowance adequacy, fairness, governance processes, and retention decisions.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques including frequencies and percentages. This approach was suitable for the exploratory nature of the case study. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A combined deductive and inductive coding approach was adopted: an initial codebook was developed based on the theoretical framework (e.g., codes such as “instrumentality”, “procedural justice”, “governance transparency”, and “turnover intention”), while inductive codes captured new insights emerging from the data. Themes were then developed and integrated with quantitative findings through joint display tables.

3.5 Data Validity, Reliability and Ethical Considerations

Validity and reliability were strengthened through methodological triangulation (questionnaires, interviews, and document review), pilot testing of instruments, and consistent data collection procedures (Denzin, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2023). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Strict confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing all personal and organisational identifiers. The study fully complied with ethical standards for research involving human participants.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

A total of 32 employees participated in the

study, drawn from both managerial and non-managerial levels within the revenue administration institution. As shown in Table 1, the sample was predominantly male (65.6 percent) and relatively experienced. Most respondents were aged above 35 years and held at least a bachelor's degree (75.0 percent). Over 75 percent had more than six years of service, and 62.5 percent occupied middle management positions. All participants were on permanent contracts.

These characteristics reflect a relatively stable and experienced workforce. This profile provides a credible basis for

assessing perceptions of compensation allowances and turnover intentions.

4.2 Availability of Compensation Allowances

Considerable variation existed in the availability of compensation allowances. As presented in Table 2, overtime allowance was universally provided (100 percent), while housing allowance was received by 62.5 percent of respondents. In contrast, transport allowance was available to only 12.5 percent and medical allowance to 6.3 percent. No respondent reported receiving a meal allowance.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	65.6
	Female	11	34.4
Age Group	25–34 years	7	21.9
	35–44 years	10	31.3
	Above 45 years	12	37.5
Education Level	Diploma	2	6.3
	Bachelor's Degree	24	75.0
	Master's Degree	6	18.8
Years of Experience	Below 2 years	1	3.1
	2–5 years	7	21.9
	6–10 years	13	40.6
Management Level	Above 10 years	11	34.4
	Senior management	4	12.5
	Middle management	20	62.5
	Lower management	6	18.8
Employment Contract	Non-management	2	6.3
	Permanent	32	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 2: Availability of Compensation Allowances among Respondents (n = 32)

Type of Allowance	Received n (%)	Not Received n (%)
Overtime allowance	32 (100.0)	0 (0.0)
Housing allowance	20 (62.5)	12 (37.5)
Transport allowance	4 (12.5)	28 (87.5)
Medical allowance	2 (6.3)	30 (93.8)
Meal allowance	0 (0.0)	32 (100.0)

Source: Field Data (2025).

Qualitative evidence supports these patterns. As one key informant noted: “Overtime allowance is the most consistent benefit across staff, but other allowances depend on position and availability of funds.” (Interviewee 3, February 2025). This highlights the institutional prioritisation of performance-related allowances, while welfare-oriented allowances remain conditional and unevenly distributed.

4.3 Employee Preferences for Compensation Allowances

Respondents strongly preferred allowances that address daily practical challenges and recognise performance. Transport-related support emerged as the top priority due to high commuting costs. Performance-based bonuses were also frequently mentioned.

As one respondent explained: “For many of us, the biggest challenge is transport. You may live far from the office, and every single day you must calculate how much of your salary will go just to reaching your workstation. If there was a transport or travel allowance, it would reduce that pressure significantly.” (Interviewee 7, February 2025).

Another respondent added: “Performance bonuses are important because when you put in extra effort working late, meeting targets, or handling difficult assignments you want to see that effort recognized in a tangible way.” (Interviewee 8, February 2025).

These preferences indicate a clear mismatch between existing provisions and employees’ most valued needs.

4.4 Satisfaction with Compensation Allowances

Overall satisfaction with existing allowances was relatively positive, with 71.9 percent of respondents reporting being satisfied or very satisfied. Satisfaction was

highest for overtime allowance, which is consistently available and directly linked to additional effort. However, satisfaction was lower for welfare-oriented allowances, particularly transport and medical support. One participant captured this nuance: “We appreciate overtime pay because it acknowledges the extra hours we work. However, there are other important areas that are not covered at all, especially transport and medical support.” (Interviewee 5, February 2025)

This response illustrates that satisfaction with specific benefits does not necessarily reflect overall satisfaction with the compensation system. Instead, satisfaction appears to be driven by the availability and reliability of allowances, especially those linked to effort, rather than a balanced coverage of employees’ needs.

4.5 Perceived Fairness and Governance of Compensation Allowances

Perceptions of fairness were generally positive. However, inconsistencies emerged in governance practices, especially regarding communication and timing of allowance reviews. One respondent observed: “In general, allowances are there and most of the time they are considered fair. However, sometimes when reviews happen, there is not enough communication about when the review will take place or what criteria are used.” (Interviewee 1, February 2025).

Concerns about internal equity persisted due to uneven access across roles and departments. These findings reflect broader dimensions of organisational justice, particularly procedural and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001).

4.6 Compensation Allowances and Turnover Intentions

Compensation allowances were perceived to have a strong influence on turnover

intentions, as measured through Likert scale items assessing the extent to which allowances affect employees' decisions to remain in or leave the organisation. As shown in Table 3, 75% of respondents indicated that allowances influenced their decision to stay or leave the organisation to a very great extent, while 18.8% reported influence on some extent. Only a small proportion (6.3%) reported neutral views. Compensation allowances were perceived to strongly influence turnover intentions. As shown in Table 3, 75 percent of respondents indicated that allowances influenced their decision to stay or leave the organisation to a very great extent.

Qualitative accounts provided deeper insight. One respondent stated: "When allowances are not sufficient, especially for things like transport and medical needs, it becomes difficult to continue, and people start looking for other opportunities." (Interviewee 8, February 2025).

Another noted: "If allowances were improved, especially transport and medical support, I would not think of looking for another job." (Interviewee 6, February 2025).

4.7 Integrated Analysis: Convergence of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative findings and qualitative accounts show strong convergence. Table 4 presents a joint display that integrates key patterns from both data sources.

These findings demonstrate that satisfaction with specific allowances (especially overtime) can coexist with strong turnover intentions. While performance-oriented allowances contribute to motivation and recognition, unmet welfare needs create dissatisfaction that influences retention decisions.

Regarding medical support, although only 6.3 percent of respondents received a medical allowance, all employees are covered under the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). However, many participants still expressed the need for supplementary medical allowances to cover additional costs, preferred services, or faster access. This explains why gaps in workplace-specific allowances continue to affect turnover intentions. Overall, turnover intention is widely recognised as a strong predictor of actual turnover and therefore provides valuable insight into retention challenges in this institution.

Table 3: Influence of Compensation Allowances on Turnover Intentions (n = 32)

Influence Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very great extent	24	75.0
Some extent	6	18.8
Neutral	2	6.3

Source: Field data (2025)

Table 4: Integrated analysis: Convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Evidence	Integrated Interpretation
Overtime allowance is universally available among employees (100%)	“Overtime allowance is the most consistent benefit across staff, but other allowances depend on position and availability of funds.” (Interviewee 3)	Overtime supports satisfaction and motivation but does not address broader welfare needs.
Transport allowance is available to only a small proportion of employees (12.5%)	“For many of us, the biggest challenge is transport... every day you calculate how much of your salary goes just to reaching the office.” (Interviewee 7)	Limited transport allowance creates daily financial strain.
Most of the employee’s report being satisfied with existing allowances (71.9%)	“We appreciate overtime pay because it acknowledges extra hours, but some important areas like transport and medical support are not covered.” (Interviewee 5)	Satisfaction is mainly driven by reliable performance-linked allowances
Most employees report that compensation allowances influence their decision to remain in the organization (75%)	“If allowances were improved, especially transport and medical support, I would not think of looking for another job.” (Interviewee 6)	Gaps in welfare support, particularly transport and medical allowances, drive turnover intentions despite moderate overall satisfaction.

Source: Field data (2025)

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5.0 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that compensation allowances function as more than financial supplements; they operate as governance instruments that shape employee motivation, perceptions of fairness, and turnover intentions in public sector institutions. Performance-oriented allowances such as overtime are consistently available and contribute

positively to employee satisfaction. At the same time, welfare-oriented allowances, particularly transport and medical support, show more limited coverage. This pattern suggests that compensation systems produce different effects depending on how performance incentives and welfare support are structured and governed.

From the perspective of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), overtime allowances strengthen instrumentality by reliably linking additional effort to rewards. Welfare allowances, on the other hand, carry high valence because they address everyday practical needs. Although public servants benefit from the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), the low receipt of supplementary medical allowance (6.3 percent) indicates that employees still value additional workplace-specific support. These findings are consistent with earlier Tanzanian studies (Mtatiro, 2021; Mmari & Mwangela, 2025) and extend them by showing that strong performance incentives can be further enhanced when complemented by adequate welfare provisions.

Equity theory (Adams, 1963) helps explain why moderate overall satisfaction can coexist with notable turnover intentions. Employees compare their allowances with those of others in similar roles. The difference between universal overtime provision and lower access to transport and medical allowances appears to influence perceptions of fairness. This study highlights the importance of procedural and interactional justice (Colquitt, 2001), showing that transparent processes and clear communication play a significant role in strengthening fairness perceptions.

Drawing on Rhodes' (1997) network governance perspective, compensation allowances in this institution emerge from interactions among human resource units, finance departments, line managers, and

regulatory bodies under normal budgetary realities. In such contexts, governance practices particularly transparency, consistency, and effective communication become important mechanisms for enhancing both motivation and perceived organisational support.

A key insight from integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings is that employees can be satisfied with certain allowances (especially those linked to performance) while still desiring improvements in welfare support. This highlights the complementary roles of different allowance types and the critical contribution of governance quality to employee retention.

From a policy perspective, public sector institutions can strengthen retention by adopting a balanced compensation framework. This includes maintaining effective performance incentives while gradually expanding welfare-oriented support through practical measures such as clearer eligibility criteria, regular policy reviews, improved communication, and low-cost interventions (for example, transport-related assistance). Such steps can enhance perceived fairness and organisational support within existing resource realities.

In summary, this study shows that compensation allowances are important governance instruments. Their contribution to employee retention depends not only on their availability but also on how transparently and equitably they are administered. By integrating expectancy theory, equity theory, and network governance perspectives, the paper offers useful insights for improving compensation systems and supporting employee retention in Tanzanian public sector institutions.

6.0 Conclusion

Compensation allowances serve as important governance instruments that shape employee motivation, perceptions of fairness, and turnover intentions in public sector institutions. The findings show that performance oriented allowances such as overtime are universally available and contribute strongly to employee satisfaction. Welfare oriented allowances, particularly transport and medical support, have more limited coverage. This pattern indicates that effective compensation systems benefit from both strong performance incentives and adequate welfare support for employees everyday work related needs.

This study contributes to existing knowledge in three important ways. First, it demonstrates that employees place high value on allowances that clearly link effort to performance and recognition. Second, it shows that the effectiveness of compensation systems depends not only on financial value but also on the governance processes through which allowances are designed, allocated, and communicated. Third, by integrating expectancy theory, equity theory, and network governance perspectives, the paper offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding compensation as a governance tool in public sector settings.

Although the institution allowances are generally viewed as externally competitive, the findings indicate that internal fairness and governance processes are equally important for retention. The study highlights the value of developing a balanced compensation framework that combines performance based incentives with improved welfare oriented support. Such an approach can better address both motivational and practical needs, thereby strengthening employee commitment and retention.

The findings should be interpreted in light of the institutional realities that characterise many public sector organisations. As this analysis is based on a single case study, the results may not capture variations across different institutions or regions. Future research should extend this work by examining compensation systems in multiple public sector organisations and exploring their interaction with leadership practices, career development, and organisational culture. Further studies could also investigate how governance practices mediate the relationship between compensation structures and employee outcomes.

Ultimately, this study shows that compensation allowances function not merely as financial supplements but as governance mechanisms that signal recognition, fairness, and organisational support. By linking compensation systems to governance practices, the paper contributes to policy discussions aligned with SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). Strengthening compensation as a governance system offers a practical pathway for improving employee retention and institutional performance in the public sector.

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