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# THE EFFECT OF TRANSPORT ALLOWANCES IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE OF IRUWASA IN IRINGA, TANZANIA

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### ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of transport allowances on employee engagement at Iringa Urban Water and Sewerage Authority (IRUWASA) in Iringa, Tanzania. A mixed-methods research approach was employed, utilizing a convergent design that allowed for simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Structured questionnaires were administered to 91 staff members, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with five departmental managers selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS version 20, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that transport allowances contributed to punctuality, reduced commuting stress, and improved employee morale. These indicators demonstrated a strong correlation between well-structured transport allowance programs and enhanced levels of employee engagement. The study concluded that transport allowances at IRUWASA had a positive effect on employee engagement, particularly when disbursed timely, adequately, and equitably. However, inconsistencies in allowance distribution and communication were noted as barriers to full effectiveness. Based on the findings, the study recommended that IRUWASA standardize transport allowances to accommodate rising commuting costs, ensure timely payments, and improve transparency to foster trust and motivation among employees.

Keywords: Transport allowances, Employee engagement, IRUWASA, Punctuality, Morale

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a key factor in organizational performance, reflecting the emotional and psychological connection employees have with their work (Markos, 2019). When employees feel supported, motivated, and fairly treated, they are more likely to be committed, productive, and loyal (Armstrong, 2020; Sridevi, 2010). Among various welfare initiatives, transport allowances are particularly important in organizations where commuting challenges affect punctuality, attendance, and morale. The theoretical foundation for linking transport allowances to employee engagement draws on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959). Maslow posits that employees must satisfy basic needs, such as safety and stability, before higher-level motivation occurs. Transport support helps meet these fundamental needs by reducing commuting stress and financial burden, allowing employees to focus on their work. Herzberg's theory distinguishes between hygiene factors, which prevent dissatisfaction (e.g., salary, benefits), and motivators that drive satisfaction (e.g., recognition, growth). Transport allowances function as a hygiene factor by addressing practical barriers to attendance and as a motivator by signaling organizational support, thereby enhancing engagement.

Research across Africa and other regions supports the role of transport allowances in fostering engagement. Studies show that transport support improves punctuality, reduces lateness, and enhances job satisfaction (Brown, 2020; Dube, 2022; Aliyu, 2017; Mwakalebela, 2021). In East Africa, public institutions in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya implement transport facilitation schemes to improve staff morale, attendance, and commitment (Mugerwa, 2021; Nsengiyumva & Uwimana, 2020; Munyua, 2018). At Iringa Urban Water and Sewerage Authority (IRUWASA), transport allowances aim to mitigate commuting challenges in a resource-constrained environment (IRUWASA Annual Report, 2023). However, limited evidence exists on how these allowances influence employee engagement in this context, particularly regarding punctuality, attendance, and overall satisfaction (Mwakapenda, 2021; Lutambi, 2021).

This study assessed the effect of transport allowances on employee engagement at IRUWASA. By understanding how these allowances affect staff behavior, the organization can design policies that improve attendance, motivation, and performance, ultimately supporting more reliable service delivery.

### Statement of the Problem

In Tanzania, many organizations are striving to improve employee well-being and job satisfaction by introducing staff welfare programs, including transport allowances (Ngowi, 2022). These initiatives are known to reduce commuting stress, enhance morale, and improve attendance and retention. IRUWASA, a public water utility in Iringa, has also implemented transport allowances to support employees and boost engagement. However, despite these efforts, evidence suggests that employee satisfaction with this benefit remains relatively low. According to the IRUWASA Human Resource Report (2023), only 49.5% of employees expressed satisfaction with the welfare services offered, and concerns were raised regarding the adequacy and consistency of transport allowances.

Although transport allowances are in place at IRUWASA, their actual effect on employee engagement remains unclear. Employees continue to report challenges such as insufficient allowance amounts and delays in disbursement, which may reduce the intended motivational impact (IRUWASA Human Resource Report, 2023). It is still unknown whether these issues significantly influence punctuality, attendance, and overall job satisfaction, or whether the current transport allowance system is achieving its intended outcomes. Furthermore, no systematic internal evaluations have been conducted to measure how this benefit contributes to employee morale, commitment, or productivity. This lack of insight makes it difficult for the organization to determine whether the transport allowance is effective or requires adjustment (Mbwana, 2024). Therefore, this study specifically examined the effect of transport allowances as the key welfare component provided at IRUWASA. Other benefits, such as health insurance, extra duty allowances, housing, hardship, airtime, and lunch allowances, were excluded because they are either incorporated into fixed salary packages or were beyond the scope of this research (IRUWASA, 2020). By focusing on transport allowances, the study aimed to assess their effect on employee engagement and provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing staff motivation, attendance, and overall organizational performance at IRUWASA in Iringa, Tanzania.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL AND EMPERICAL

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, introduced in 1959, explains employee motivation by distinguishing between hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors, including salary, job security, company policies, and working conditions, prevent dissatisfaction but do not directly inspire higher performance. In contrast, motivators such as recognition, career advancement, and personal growth actively enhance satisfaction and productivity. Herzberg emphasized that while the absence of hygiene factors creates dissatisfaction, the presence of motivators fosters higher performance and commitment (Herzberg, 1959). Despite its relevance, the theory has been critiqued for overlooking individual differences and focusing heavily on white-collar employees, which raises questions about its applicability across all work settings (House & Wigdor, 1967).

In the context of this study, Herzberg's framework was adopted to explain the role of staff welfare programs in influencing employee engagement at IRUWASA. Health insurance, transport allowances and extra duty allowances functioned as hygiene factors. Findings indicated that their absence contributed to absenteeism, low morale and turnover, while their consistent provision improved focus and organizational stability. Employees particularly valued the predictability of transport and healthcare support, which reduced stress and enhanced their work presence. This highlights the importance of welfare-related hygiene factors in ensuring both job satisfaction and reliable organizational performance.

A number of empirical studies reinforce the link between transport allowances and employee motivation. Brown (2020), studying 250 multinational company employees in the UK, found that those receiving transport support were 30% more punctual and engaged than those without allowances. Similarly, Dube (2022) reported that transport incentives significantly improved morale and reduced absenteeism among 160 healthcare workers in Zimbabwe, while Aliyu (2017) demonstrated that transport stipends predicted better attendance and retention among 200 telecom employees in Nigeria. In Rwanda, Habimana (2021) found that commuting benefits reduced fatigue and improved customer service performance among 140 hospitality workers. Collectively, these findings underscore the role of transport-related incentives in reducing lateness, absenteeism, and turnover across different sectors.

Evidence from East Africa further emphasizes the positive impact of transport allowances. Kawira (2023) revealed a strong correlation between commuter subsidies and motivation among 190 retail workers in Kenya, while Njoroge (2019) found that allowances improved job satisfaction and attendance among 200 Kenyan public sector employees. In Tanzania, Mwakalebela (2021) showed that transport support reduced commuting fatigue and improved productivity for 150 manufacturing employees. Similarly, Ngwale (2018), studying 180 employees in Dar es Salaam, found that subsidies boosted commitment by 25%, while Mutalemwa (2020) concluded that allowances improved satisfaction and reliability among 175 local government staff in Morogoro. These studies provide consistent evidence that transport allowances play a vital role in enhancing employee engagement and performance, aligning with Herzberg's argument that welfare-related provisions are essential in preventing dissatisfaction and sustaining organizational outcomes.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focused on transport allowances as a critical staff welfare program aimed at enhancing employee engagement. At IRUWASA, transport allowances are provided to compensate employees for commuting expenses, particularly for those traveling long distances or from peri-urban and rural areas (Mutalemwa, 2020; Mwakalebela, 2021). Examining this allowance within IRUWASA's operational context enabled the study to assess how financial support for commuting affects punctuality, attendance, job satisfaction and overall engagement among employees (Ngwale, 2018; Dube, 2022). The selection of IRUWASA also allowed the inclusion of diverse perspectives from technical, administrative, and field staff, who face varying commuting challenges (URT, 2020). This context provided meaningful insights into how welfare programs can be structured to improve employee morale and organizational performance in Tanzania's public service utilities (Njoroge, 2019; Habimana, 2021).

Research design is the overall strategy that integrates study components in a coherent way, guiding how data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design, enabling the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and

qualitative data. The approach captured numerical trends from staff surveys while also exploring managerial perspectives through interviews (Brown, 2020). The combination of methods ensured a deeper understanding of how transport allowances influence employee engagement at IRUWASA. The study population included all 127 IRUWASA employees across various directorates. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling was applied. Purposive sampling targeted five managerial staff to provide in-depth insights into transport allowances and their effect on engagement (Dube, 2022). Meanwhile, simple random sampling was used to select 91 general staff, ensuring representativeness and minimizing bias. Quantitative data were gathered using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale questions focusing on commuting challenges, punctuality, attendance, and engagement (Ngwale, 2018). For qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five managers, exploring observations on transport allowances and their impact on motivation, attendance, and commitment (Mwakalebela, 2021). Data analysis involved organizing and interpreting collected information to draw conclusions (Kothari, 2016). Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS Version 20, highlighting patterns related to transport allowances and engagement (Mutalemwa, 2020). Qualitative data were thematically analyzed through transcription, coding, and identification of recurring themes to capture managerial perspectives (Habimana, 2021). Ethical standards were strictly observed: approval was obtained from the Postgraduate Director at the University of Iringa, informed consent was sought, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained by coding responses and securing data. Honesty and integrity guided data collection, analysis, and reporting, ensuring validity and credibility of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study on the effect of transport allowances on employee engagement at IRUWASA in Iringa, Tanzania. The discussion combines quantitative survey results from 91 staff members and qualitative insights from five departmental managers to provide a comprehensive understanding of how transport support influences punctuality, attendance, morale, and overall engagement.

Variable Response Frequency (n=91) Percentage (%) Mode allowance reduced 2.00 Transport Strongly Agree lateness and absenteeism 33 36.3 Agree Neutral 6 6.6 28 Disagree 30.8 Strongly Disagree 22 24.2 allowance Reduced 2.00 Transport Strongly Agree 4 4.4 likelihood to leave organization Agree 43 47.3 16 17.6 Neutral Disagree 14 15.4 Strongly Disagree 14 15.4 Transport allowance Supports focus 2 2.2 2.00 Strongly Agree 59 and productivity 64.8 Agree 3 3.3 Neutral 17 18.7 Disagree Strongly Disagree 10 11.0

Table 1. Influence of staff welfare programs on reducing employee turnover

Source: Field data (2025)

### Transport Allowance Reduced Lateness and Absenteeism

Findings in Table 1 show that a majority of respondents acknowledged the positive role of transport allowances in reducing lateness and absenteeism. Specifically, 33 respondents (36.3%) agreed, while a smaller group of 2 respondents (2.2%) strongly agreed that transport allowances helped them avoid being late or absent. The mode of 2.00, corresponding to "Agree," confirms that this is the most frequent perception among employees. However, there is a notable portion of respondents who disagreed (28 respondents, 30.8%) or strongly disagreed (22 respondents, 24.2%), indicating some variation in experiences. Six respondents (6.6%) were neutral on this matter. This distribution suggests that while transport allowances benefit many employees by facilitating timely attendance, the impact is not uniform across the workforce. Factors such as distance, transport availability, or personal circumstances explain why some employees do not perceive a significant effect.

Through these findings, it appears that transport allowances contribute to improved punctuality and reduced absenteeism for a substantial portion of staff, thereby supporting operational efficiency. Nonetheless, the presence of dissenting views implies that transport benefits alone may not fully address all causes of lateness or absence. For some employees, other issues like family obligations, health concerns, or transport system inefficiencies might also play a role. Therefore, while the transport allowance is a valuable tool, it should be complemented by other welfare initiatives to ensure broader impact.

A review of IRUWASA's attendance data from 2022 to 2025 shows that the effect of transport allowances on reducing lateness and absenteeism was present but not systematically acknowledged in earlier records. While staff were benefiting from the allowance since its introduction in 2020, the HR office had not consistently tracked or highlighted its impact, making the improvements less visible in official reports. Historical records indicate gradual improvements in punctuality from roughly 30% in 2022 to 35% in 2024 but these changes were not formally attributed to the transport allowance at the time. It is only in 2025, through both survey data and manager feedback, that the contribution of transport allowances becomes evident: 36.3% of respondents agreed and 2.2% strongly agreed that it helps reduce lateness and absenteeism. This suggests that the allowance was supporting staff behavior all along, but its effects were under-recorded and under-recognized in prior years, highlighting the need for more systematic monitoring and documentation of welfare program outcomes.

# During interviews, managers offered insights into the effects of the transport allowance on current staff behavior. One senior manager explained:

The transport allowance enables staff to arrive on time more consistently, especially those coming from distant or less-connected areas. Employees report feeling more secure in their daily commute because they don't have to worry about fare shortages. This reliability has supported stronger team coordination and fewer interruptions to daily operations. Supervisors also spend less time managing lateness-related issues, which boosts productivity. The benefit supports mental focus since staff are not preoccupied with travel-related stress. Overall, it's a crucial factor in maintaining work discipline and stability. (Interview with respondent E. 24/06/2025, 10:19 a.m.)

### Another manager remarked:

With the transport allowance in place, many employees show improved attendance and greater commitment. It relieves financial pressure, which increases job satisfaction. Teams are more complete during working hours and this continuity supports better performance. We see fewer attendance gaps, especially among those who commute long distances. The allowance contributes directly to staff morale and helps minimize excuses related to transport. It has become a reliable pillar in our welfare framework. (Interview with respondent A. 23/06/2025, 10:22 a.m.)

These statements highlighted that the continued availability of the transport allowance contributes meaningfully to punctuality, team coordination and staff motivation. From the quantitative data, 38.5% of respondents (combining "Strongly Agree" and "Agree") recognized that transport allowances helped reduce lateness and absenteeism, contrasted with 55% who expressed disagreement or strong disagreement. The mode response "Agree" confirms this positive leaning, but the relatively high disagreement rates suggest the need for further investigation into underlying causes of absenteeism not mitigated by transport support.

These findings are consistent with empirical studies such as those by Mutua (2023), who found that transport allowances reduced employee lateness in similar organizations but noted variability depending on individual circumstances. Similarly, Njoroge (2022) highlighted that while transport support improves punctuality, it must be part of a comprehensive welfare strategy to reduce absenteeism sustainably. This study confirms that transport allowances at IRUWASA play an important role in reducing absenteeism but should be integrated with other interventions for maximum effectiveness.

### Transport Allowance Reduced Likelihood to Leave Organization

Table 1 shows that the transport allowance has a generally positive influence on employees' decisions to remain with IRUWASA. A total of 43 respondents (47.3%) agreed and 4 respondents (4.4%) strongly agreed that the transport allowance reduced their likelihood of leaving the organization for financial reasons. The mode of 2.00, corresponding to "Agree," indicates this is the most common view. However, 14 respondents (15.4%) disagreed and another 14 (15.4%) strongly disagreed, while 16 respondents (17.6%) were neutral. This suggests that while the majority feel supported by the transport allowance in staying with the organization, a sizeable minority are either indifferent or unconvinced of its impact on turnover intentions. It is possible that other factors beyond transport costs influence employees' decisions to leave.

These results, it is evident that transport allowances serve as a significant financial support that alleviates one of the economic burdens employees face, which can help reduce turnover. For many staff, this benefit improves their job satisfaction and commitment, especially in a context where transport costs can be unpredictable and high. Nonetheless, the presence of neutral and negative responses implies that transport allowances alone cannot fully address all reasons for employee turnover, which include issues such as career growth, work environment, or personal factors.

A closer look at past records suggests that the retention benefits of transport allowances were present even before 2025 but were not systematically documented. Historical attendance and HR files from 2022–2024 indicate gradual improvements in staff stability and fewer transport-related absences, yet these trends were not explicitly linked to the allowance in official reports. Employees were clearly benefiting, but without deliberate tracking, the contribution of the transport allowance to retention remained under-recognized. The 2025 survey, showing 47.3% agreement and 4.4% strong agreement that transport support reduced the likelihood of leaving, now makes this effect explicit. Interviews with managers further corroborate that staff feel less financial strain and are more likely to stay, confirming that the allowance has been an unacknowledged yet effective retention tool over the years. This underlines the importance of systematic monitoring to fully capture and leverage the impact of welfare programs on employee turnover. During interviews, managers shared their observations on how the availability of the transport allowance continues to impact retention. One manager commented:

The transport allowance has reduces pressure for many employees, especially those commuting long distances. It eases the financial burden of daily travel, which in turn boosts satisfaction with the job. Staff members are more willing to stay, as this support makes their daily routines more manageable. We've observed greater consistency in staffing and fewer discussions about resigning due to transport expenses. It acts as a stabilizing factor, particularly for junior staff. Overall, it promotes retention by removing one key source of stress. (Interview with respondent C. 27/06/2025, 09:30 a.m.)

### Another manager stated:

Many employees view the allowance as a dependable benefit that improves their quality of work life. When people feel supported in just getting to work, it reduces frustrations and helps them focus on long-term goals within the organization. We've seen fewer complaints about transport challenges and that contributes to more stable teams. Even if other benefits still need improvement, this one creates a sense of being valued. It reduces spontaneous resignations caused by daily struggles. Retention is positively influenced because people feel they can manage their lives better with this support. (Interview with respondent D. 27/6/2025, 11:18 a.m.)

These insights illustrate that the consistent provision of transport allowances contributes meaningfully to employee retention by reducing one of the key economic stressors in their day-to-day experience. When combining quantitative data, 51.7% of respondents ("Strongly Agree" and "Agree") felt that transport allowances reduced their likelihood to leave, while 30.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mode "Agree" reflects overall positive sentiment, yet the nearly one-third disagreement rate points to the complexity of turnover decisions beyond just financial incentives.

These findings align with existing research that underscores the important role of transport allowances in employee retention. For example, Mwangi (2023) found that providing transport support in public institutions significantly lowered employee turnover by reducing the financial burden of daily commuting. This kind of welfare program not only makes it easier for employees to get to work on time but also fosters a sense of organizational care and commitment. Similarly, Karanja (2021) emphasized that while financial incentives such as transport allowances boost employee loyalty and satisfaction, they are most effective when combined with other factors like opportunities for career advancement, supportive management and positive work environments. This suggests that transport allowances contribute to a multifaceted approach to retention rather than being a sole solution. The current study's results confirm that transport allowances at IRUWASA play a vital role in reducing turnover related to financial concerns. However, the presence of some disagreement and neutral responses highlights that turnover is influenced by a broader set of factors, including job fulfillment, workplace culture and personal ambitions. Therefore, while transport allowances are critical, IRUWASA may need to complement them with additional welfare and development programs to fully address employee turnover challenges.

### Transport Allowance Supports Focus and Productivity

Findings in Table 1 reveal that a majority of respondents agreed that the transport allowance provided by IRUWASA supports their ability to focus on work, thereby contributing positively to productivity and organizational performance. Specifically, 59 respondents (64.8%) agreed with the statement, while only 27 respondents (29.7%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement. The mode value of 2.00 (Agree) confirms that the most common response was positive, indicating that transport allowances help employees arrive at work with fewer distractions or worries about commuting costs. This suggests that financial support in transportation reduces stress related to getting to work, allowing employees to concentrate better on their tasks. Those who disagreed might have other underlying factors affecting their productivity beyond transport issues. Overall, the data illustrates that transport allowances play a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement and work output at IRUWASA.

Historical observations suggest that the productivity benefits of transport allowances were present long before being formally recorded in its effect. While earlier HR and attendance records indicated improvements in punctuality and fewer commuting-related disruptions, these effects were not explicitly linked to the allowance in official monitoring systems. The 2025 survey, showing 64.8% agreement that transport support enhances focus and productivity, now quantifies an impact that had previously gone unacknowledged. Managerial interviews confirm that employees experience reduced commuting stress, higher morale, and smoother workflow, demonstrating that the allowance has been an effective yet historically under-documented contributor to organizational performance. This underscores the need for systematic tracking to fully recognize how welfare initiatives like transport support influence employee engagement and output.

## During interviews, one manager shared on current situation:

The transport allowance has significantly reduced commuting-related worries for staff. Employees come to work more focused, without the anxiety of how they'll afford daily travel. It has helped improve punctuality and team coordination. You can sense higher energy in the mornings and fewer disruptions due to late arrivals. People now manage their time better, which reflects in overall departmental performance. This simple provision has made a real difference in how staff approach their workday. (Interview with respondent A. 08/07/2025, 09:11 a.m.)

### Another manager added:

Staff morale has improved noticeably since the allowance became consistent. Employees view it as a meaningful form of support that lightens their daily burden. It has reduced the number of informal complaints about transport challenges and teams are more productive. People are more willing to stay late when needed because their basic needs feel acknowledged. We now experience smoother workflow and fewer unplanned absences. The allowance strengthens their commitment and ability to deliver consistently (Interview with respondent B. 08/07/2025, 11:24 a.m.)

These reflections demonstrate that transport allowances function as more than just a financial benefit they form part of an effective welfare structure that directly influences employees' concentration, morale and output. Both qualitative and quantitative data align to confirm that this initiative strengthens organizational performance at IRUWASA by enabling a more stable, focused and engaged workforce.

Empirical studies reinforce these findings. For example, Njoroge (2023) reported that transport benefits significantly reduce absenteeism and improve punctuality, which in turn raises productivity levels in public sector organizations. Likewise, Otieno (2022) found that transport allowances increase employee satisfaction and commitment by easing daily financial pressures, allowing staff to dedicate more energy and attention to their work tasks. However, some research also stresses that transport support should be part of a broader welfare package, including health benefits and flexible work arrangements, to maximize productivity gains (Wambua, 2021). The current study confirms that transport allowances are a vital component of welfare programs that boost productivity, but sustained improvements require integrated employee support strategies. These findings advocate for continued investment in comprehensive welfare initiatives to maintain high employee engagement and performance levels.

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that transport allowances at IRUWASA positively influence employee engagement by reducing lateness and absenteeism, supporting retention, and enhancing focus and productivity. While the majority of staff recognized these benefits, a notable portion reported limited or no impact, suggesting that transport support alone cannot address all engagement challenges.

It is recommended that IRUWASA continue providing transport allowances while complementing them with other welfare initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements, career development opportunities, and improved monitoring of attendance and performance. Regular assessment of the allowance's adequacy and timely disbursement will ensure its effectiveness. Additionally, systematic documentation of the impact of welfare programs will help the organization optimize strategies to further boost employee morale, commitment, and overall organizational performance.

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