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Assessing The Influence Of Allowance Payments On Street Chairperson's Performance In Tanzania Local Government Authorities; A Case Of Shinyanga Municipal Council

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the influence of allowance payments on the motivation, work commitment, and performance of street chairpersons in Shinyanga Municipal Council, Tanzania. Grounded in Agency Theory and Expectancy Theory, the study sought to understand how financial incentives affect grassroots leadership and service delivery. A qualitative research approach employing a case study design was adopted. Data were collected through focus group discussions with street chairpersons and key informant interviews involving Ward Executive Officers and the Municipal Director. Findings revealed that allowance payments significantly enhance motivation, commitment, and responsiveness by enabling street chairpersons to meet operational costs such as transportation, communication, and administrative expenses. However, challenges including delayed payments, inadequate allowance amounts, and the absence of performance-based criteria negatively affected morale, accountability, and effectiveness. The study concludes that allowance payments are essential for strengthening grassroots governance and improving service delivery, but their effectiveness depends on transparent, timely, and performance-based payment systems supported by adequate funding and clear implementation guidelines.*

Keywords: Allowance Payments; Motivation; Work Commitment; Service Delivery

Introduction

Allowance payments are widely recognized as important financial incentives that enhance motivation, commitment, and performance among individuals performing public responsibilities. Financial rewards improve employee productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness by enabling individuals to meet work-related expenses and maintain commitment to their duties (Mudhofar, 2021; Nasution & Rizkina, 2024). Globally, decentralization reforms have strengthened local governance structures through the provision of financial incentives and operational support to grassroots leaders, thereby improving accountability and service delivery (Kim & Dougherty, 2020; Brudnick, 2024).

In Africa, local government reforms have increasingly emphasized the importance of supporting community leaders through allowances and other forms of compensation. However, financial constraints and inconsistent payment systems continue to affect the effectiveness of grassroots governance structures in many countries (ILO, 2023; OECD, 2022). Studies have shown that financial incentives positively influence motivation and service delivery, while inadequate compensation may reduce commitment and accountability among local leaders (Mlangala & Thomas, 2022; Boris, 2022).

In Tanzania, street chairpersons (Wenyeviti wa Mitaa) serve as key actors in local governance by mobilizing communities, maintaining social order, resolving disputes, and facilitating communication between citizens and government authorities (Mwombeki, 2021). Despite these important responsibilities, most street chairpersons operate on a voluntary basis and depend largely on allowances rather than formal salaries. The adequacy and consistency of these allowances have become important issues affecting their motivation and performance (Samb et al., 2020; SIDA, 2023).

Within Shinyanga Municipal Council, street chairpersons receive allowances intended to support their administrative and operational responsibilities. Nevertheless, concerns remain regarding whether these allowances are sufficient and timely enough to enhance motivation, work commitment, and service delivery effectiveness. Understanding the influence of allowance payments on street chairpersons' performance is therefore important for strengthening local governance and improving community development outcomes.

Problem Statement

Street chairpersons play a critical role in promoting grassroots governance and facilitating service delivery within local communities. They are responsible for community mobilization, conflict resolution, information dissemination, and supporting local development initiatives. Despite these responsibilities, many street chairpersons continue to rely on irregular and often inadequate allowance payments to perform their duties effectively (Mwombeki, 2021; SIDA, 2023).

Previous studies have demonstrated that financial incentives contribute significantly to employee motivation, commitment, and performance (Mudhofar, 2021; Millinga & Barongo, 2024; Nasution & Rizkina, 2024). However, inadequate and inconsistent payments may reduce morale, weaken accountability, and negatively affect service delivery outcomes (Tu et al., 2023; Boris, 2022). While these studies provide valuable insights, most have focused on employees in formal organizations and public institutions, with limited attention given to street chairpersons operating at the grassroots level.

In Shinyanga Municipal Council, the effectiveness of allowance payments in enhancing the motivation, commitment, and performance of street chairpersons remains insufficiently documented. This knowledge gap limits the ability of policymakers and local government authorities to design effective compensation systems for grassroots leaders. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of allowance payments on the performance of street chairpersons in Shinyanga Municipal Council, Tanzania.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the influence of allowance payments on the performance of street chairpersons in Shinyanga Municipal Council, Tanzania.

Specific Objectives

i. To examine how allowance payments influence the motivation and work commitment of street chairpersons in Tanzania.
ii. To explore street chairpersons' perceptions of how allowance payments influence their efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.
iii. To examine the perceived challenges associated with the use of allowance payments as a mechanism for improving street chairpersons' performance in Tanzania.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the understanding of how financial incentives influence the motivation, commitment, and performance of grassroots leaders. The findings provide street chairpersons with an opportunity to express their experiences regarding allowance payments and their impact on service delivery. The study also offers evidence-based information that can assist local government authorities, particularly Shinyanga Municipal Council, in developing effective policies and budgetary frameworks for supporting grassroots leadership.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to broader policy discussions on strengthening local governance systems in Tanzania through appropriate compensation mechanisms. The study also enriches existing literature on financial incentives and public service performance, providing a useful reference for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in local governance and public administration.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Agency Theory and Expectancy Theory, which provide complementary explanations regarding the relationship between financial incentives and performance.

Agency Theory

Agency Theory was developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976) to explain the relationship between principals and agents within organizations. The theory argues that agents are more likely to perform effectively when appropriate incentives are provided to align their interests with those of principals. In public administration, financial incentives such as allowances can encourage accountability, commitment, and efficiency among public officials.

In the context of this study, local government authorities act as principals, while street chairpersons serve as agents responsible for implementing governance functions at the grassroots level. Allowance payments are viewed as incentives that encourage street chairpersons to fulfill their responsibilities effectively, enhance accountability, and improve service delivery within their communities.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy Theory was developed by Vroom (1964) and explains motivation as a function of individuals' expectations that effort will lead to performance and that performance will result in valued rewards. The theory is based on three key components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence.

According to the theory, individuals are motivated to exert effort when they believe that their performance will be recognized and rewarded. In this study, allowance payments represent rewards that can motivate street chairpersons to increase their commitment, responsiveness, and effectiveness in executing local governance responsibilities. Timely and adequate allowances therefore strengthen the relationship between effort and performance.

Relevance of the Theories to the Study

Agency Theory and Expectancy Theory complement one another in explaining how allowance payments influence the performance of street chairpersons. Agency Theory emphasizes institutional accountability and incentive alignment, while Expectancy Theory focuses on individual motivation and perceptions of rewards. Together, the theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how financial incentives affect commitment, efficiency, accountability, and service delivery among grassroots leaders.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the relationship between financial incentives and employee performance. Mudhofar (2021) found that performance allowances positively influenced employee motivation, work achievement, and organizational performance in government offices. Similarly, Nasution and Rizkina (2024) reported that performance allowances enhanced employee motivation and commitment within public institutions.

In Tanzania, Millinga and Barongo (2024) established that financial rewards significantly improved employee commitment at Kinondoni Municipal Council. Likewise, Mlangala and Thomas (2022) found that motivational factors, including financial incentives, positively influenced service delivery within local government authorities. These findings suggest that financial incentives can improve efficiency, productivity, and organizational outcomes.

However, other studies have highlighted challenges associated with financial incentive systems. Tu et al. (2023) observed that inadequate performance-based payments negatively affected job satisfaction and public service motivation. Boris (2022) reported that limited financial resources constrained effective service delivery in local government administration. Similarly, Tidemand et al. (2021) identified fiscal challenges facing local government authorities in Tanzania, which affected the provision of incentives and the effectiveness of service delivery mechanisms.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that allowance payments play a significant role in enhancing motivation, commitment, and performance. Nevertheless, challenges such as inadequate funding, delayed payments, and weak implementation mechanisms may reduce their effectiveness.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have investigated the influence of financial incentives on employee motivation and performance, most have focused on formal employees, civil servants, and local government staff (Mudhofar, 2021; Nasution & Rizkina, 2024; Millinga & Barongo, 2024). Limited attention has been given to street chairpersons despite their critical role in grassroots governance and community development.

Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined how allowance payments influence the motivation, work commitment, and performance of street chairpersons within the Tanzanian context. Existing studies have concentrated on general public sector employees rather than grassroots leaders operating at the community level. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of allowance payments in enhancing the performance of street chairpersons in local governance.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this knowledge gap by examining the influence of allowance payments on the motivation, commitment, and performance of street chairpersons in Shinyanga Municipal Council, Tanzania.

Methodology

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy and a qualitative research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of how allowance payments influence the performance of street chairpersons. A case study design was employed because it enables a detailed exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions within their natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was conducted in Shinyanga Municipal Council, Tanzania, where street chairpersons play a vital role in grassroots governance and community service delivery (Mwombeki, 2021). The target population consisted of 41 statutory office holders, including 35 Street Chairpersons, 5 Ward Executive Officers, and 1 Municipal Director. Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques guided by the principle of data saturation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary review. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data through coding, categorization, and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Ethical standards were observed through informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and approval from the Open University of Tanzania and Shinyanga Municipal Council.

Results and Discussion

Motivation and Work Commitment

The findings indicate that allowance payments significantly influence motivation and work commitment among street chairpersons. Participants consistently reported that timely allowances enhance recognition, morale, and willingness to perform assigned duties:

> *"When allowances are paid on time, you feel recognized by the government. It motivates you to attend meetings, follow up community issues, and even use your own time to help residents"* (FGD Participant 3, 24 March 2026)

Similarly, allowances were reported as essential in balancing public responsibilities with personal and family obligations:

> *"This work is demanding, and we are always needed by the community. Without allowances, it becomes difficult to remain committed because we also have family responsibilities"* (FGD Participant 1, 23 March 2026)

However, delays and inadequate payments were found to reduce motivation:

> *"Sometimes allowances delay for months. When that happens, you lose morale because you have already used your own money for transport and communication"* (FGD Participant 5, 26 March 2026)

These results suggest that allowances function as extrinsic motivators that reinforce civic engagement and sustain commitment. When payments are timely and adequate, they strengthen perceived recognition and reduce the financial burden associated with voluntary public service roles. Conversely, delays weaken morale and reduce the willingness to expend personal resources for public duties.

These findings align with Mudhofar (2021) and Nasution and Rizkina (2024), who found that performance-related allowances enhance motivation and organizational commitment in public institutions. Similarly, Millinga and Barongo (2024) observed that financial rewards positively influence employee commitment in Tanzanian local government settings.

From a broader governance perspective, the results correspond with Tu et al. (2023), who emphasize that performance-contingent pay improves job satisfaction among street-level bureaucrats. However, the observed effects also reflect concerns raised by Samb et al. (2020), who caution that inconsistent per diem or allowance systems can undermine intrinsic motivation and create dependency on financial incentives.

Efficiency and Effectiveness in Service Delivery

The study found that allowances directly contribute to operational efficiency by covering essential work-related costs such as transport, communication, and coordination activities. Participants explained:

> *"Allowances help us move around the street, attend ward meetings, and communicate with residents. Without money for transport or phone calls, work becomes very difficult"* (FGD Participant 2, 24 March 2026)

In addition, availability of allowances improved responsiveness to community issues:

> *"When allowances are available, you can respond quickly to community issues like disputes or sanitation problems. When there is no allowance, some issues delay"* (FGD Participant 6, 25 March 2026)

Institutional actors supported these views. Ward Executive Officers noted higher activity levels among adequately supported chairpersons, while the Municipal Director acknowledged fiscal constraints but confirmed the importance of allowances in supporting grassroots governance.

The findings demonstrate that allowances are not only motivational tools but also functional resources enabling service delivery. They reduce operational barriers, enhance mobility, and improve responsiveness. In this sense, allowances serve as both incentive mechanisms and logistical enablers of local governance performance.

These results are consistent with Chisanga et al. (2023), who found that financial resources such as equalization funds improve service delivery effectiveness at the local government level. Similarly, Haque and Uddin (2024) highlight that central–local financial transfers enhance administrative responsiveness and service efficiency.

Boris (2022) also reports that inadequate funding and delayed remuneration significantly constrain local government performance in Nigeria, a pattern reflected in the present study. Moreover, Kim and Dougherty (2020) argue that local public finance capacity is critical for effective decentralized service delivery, reinforcing the view that financial support systems like allowances are essential for operational effectiveness.

Challenges of Allowance Payments

The study identified several challenges, including irregular payment schedules, delays, lack of performance-based criteria, and perceptions of inequity:

> *"You may work for several months without allowances, and no clear explanation is given. This discourages commitment"* (FGD Participant 4, 23 March 2026)

Participants also raised concerns about the absence of performance differentiation:

> *"Allowances are paid uniformly without clear performance indicators. This makes it difficult to encourage excellence or discipline poor performance"* (WEO-1, 24 March 2026)

Institutional constraints such as limited fiscal capacity were also highlighted:

> *"Limited financial resources and budget constraints affect our ability to pay allowances consistently. This remains a major administrative challenge"* (MD, 28 March 2026)

These findings suggest that while allowances are important, their effectiveness is undermined by weak administrative systems and fiscal limitations. The absence of performance-based mechanisms reduces accountability and limits the ability of allowances to drive improved performance. Irregularity further weakens trust in the system and reduces their motivational impact.

These challenges are consistent with Tidemand et al. (2021), who highlight fiscal inequities and resource constraints as persistent barriers in Tanzanian local government authorities. Similarly, Mwombeki (2021) notes that decentralization systems often suffer from inconsistent remuneration structures that weaken performance incentives.

At a broader level, OECD (2022) emphasizes that poorly structured remuneration systems can reduce efficiency and accountability in public institutions. In addition, Brudnick (2024) and Congressional Research Service (2020) show that even in advanced systems, allowances require clear regulation and transparency to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

Furthermore, Darmawan et al. (2024) and Hokororo (2020) support the argument that performance-linked financial incentives improve motivation and organisational outcomes, suggesting that the absence of such mechanisms in the current context limits effectiveness.

Overall synthesis

Across all objectives, the findings demonstrate that allowances play a dual role as both motivational incentives and operational enablers. However, their effectiveness is constrained by delays, irregularity, and weak performance linkage mechanisms. When well managed, they enhance commitment, efficiency, and responsiveness; when poorly administered, they undermine motivation and institutional trust. These results are consistent with both public finance literature and empirical studies on performance-based remuneration in local government systems.

Conclusion

The study established that allowance payments play a significant role in shaping the motivation, efficiency, and overall performance of street chairpersons in Shinyanga Municipal Council. The findings show that when allowances are timely, adequate, and predictable, they enhance morale, strengthen commitment to public duties, and improve responsiveness to community needs. In addition, allowances function as operational support by covering essential costs such as transport and communication, thereby enabling effective execution of daily responsibilities.

However, the study also revealed several constraints that reduce the effectiveness of allowance systems. These include delayed and irregular payments, inadequate allowance levels relative to workload and expenses, lack of performance-based allocation criteria, perceptions of unfairness, and limited fiscal capacity within local government structures. Collectively, these challenges weaken motivation and reduce the potential of allowances to fully enhance service delivery.

The findings imply that allowances are not merely financial benefits but an important governance tool that influences frontline public service performance. Their effectiveness depends largely on how they are administered, particularly in terms of timeliness, adequacy, transparency, and linkage to performance outcomes. Poorly managed allowance systems risk reducing intrinsic motivation and undermining trust in local government institutions. Conversely, well-structured systems can strengthen accountability, improve service delivery, and support decentralised governance objectives.

Recommendations

Practical recommendations

1. **Strengthen timely and consistent payment systems**

   Local government authorities should improve budgeting, cash flow management, and disbursement procedures to ensure that allowances are paid on time and without unnecessary delays.

2. **Review allowance levels periodically**

   Allowance rates should be regularly assessed and adjusted to reflect inflation, transportation costs, communication needs, and the actual workload of street chairpersons.

3. **Introduce performance-based allowance frameworks**

   Clear and measurable performance indicators should be developed, linking allowances to outputs such as community engagement, reporting efficiency, attendance in meetings, and responsiveness to local issues.

4. **Enhance transparency and accountability mechanisms**

   Standardized guidelines for allowance allocation should be clearly communicated, and records of payments should be made accessible to reduce perceptions of favoritism and improve trust in the system.

5. **Address budgetary limitations**

   The government should prioritize grassroots leadership in fiscal planning and explore supplementary funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability and consistency of allowance payments.

Areas for further research

1. Future studies should conduct comparative analyses across different municipal and district councils to determine variations in allowance systems and their effects on performance.
2. Researchers should adopt mixed-methods approaches to combine qualitative insights with quantitative performance measurements for stronger generalization.
3. Further research is needed on the long-term impact of performance-based allowance systems on motivation and institutional efficiency.
4. Additional studies should explore the role of leadership styles, governance structures, and community participation in shaping the effectiveness of allowance-based incentive systems.

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