

Institutional Factors Influencing Staff Mobility Across Public Sector in Tanzania. A Case of Tanzania Electric Supply Company

Dr. Kelvin M. Njunwa

Senior Lecturer –Business Management Department, Institute of Accountancy Arusha

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803147>

Received: 21 February 2024; Revised: 08 March 2024; Accepted: 14 March 2024; Published: 17 April 2024

ABSTRACT

Staff mobility in public service become a common phenomenon and employees move from one organization to another voluntarily. It was conducted from Tanzania Electricity Supply Company and involved a sample of 104 respondents. The study adopted a mixed approach whereby qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Moreover, a case study research design was used in which data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Data were analysed through content analysis and descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 15.0. The findings indicate the presence of high employee labour mobility among public workers through transfer. The overall findings confirmed the existence of institutional factors as a major factor that pushes public employees to move out of the host public institution. The institutional factors including poor career growth, unsatisfactory working relations and unsatisfactory compensation are the key push factors for staff mobility. The study concluded that staff mobility in public sectors is inevitable as the government allows the transfer of staff from one organization to another. The study recommended that government institutions should improve the working environment and establish good working relationships to retain their talented employees. The study suggests the government review and development of harmonized and staff welfare operational policies among public institutions.

Keywords: Staff mobility, Public sector, Tanzania Electric Supply Company

INTRODUCTION

Human capital in any organization is the key resource for the company to achieve a competitive advantage over its competitors (Jøranli, 2021). The modern management considers humans as the most important resource for organizational success (Mbwette & Ngirwa, 2012). However, retaining human resources in contemporary world of competing nature becomes a big challenge due to the ongoing employee mobility, especially for talented employees. The said mobility is associated with costs in terms of the shift of imperative knowledge, skills, and expertise from one to another competing counterparts (Castillo et al. 2019). The same may also cause a shift of relationships between goods and service providers, clients and consumers. All these may lead to bidirectional impediments to both sides in which, the victimized firms bear consequences to their productivity level at least for the immediate years after such shifts (Raffiee, 2017).

Staff mobility from institutions has been regarded as a critical issue in business continuity and productivity (Al Mamun & Md. Hasan 2017), Chan et al. (2020) asserted that this issue has been a serious concern to employers especially on how to manage staff retention which is costly to their institutions. Reducing the level of staff mobility out of organization is essential for institutional productivity and profit generation.

However, staff mobility can be defined as the rate of staff movement to and from the institution of interest (Wangiri, 2015). The United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) indicates that in 2019 a total of 169 million staff were globally working in countries of destination not their country of origin. The number increased by 5 million migrant workers compared to 2017 when the estimates were 164 million migrant workers. It has been revealed that in 2019, 4.9 per cent of the labour force in destination countries was made up of migrant workers due to global employee mobility (ILO, 2021). As a host region, Asia has recorded fewer migrant employees standing at 0.9 per cent relative to global rate of 3.3 per cent, Africa has recorded 1.7 per cent, while for Europe 10.3 per cent and North America 15.2 per cent (ILO, 2017).

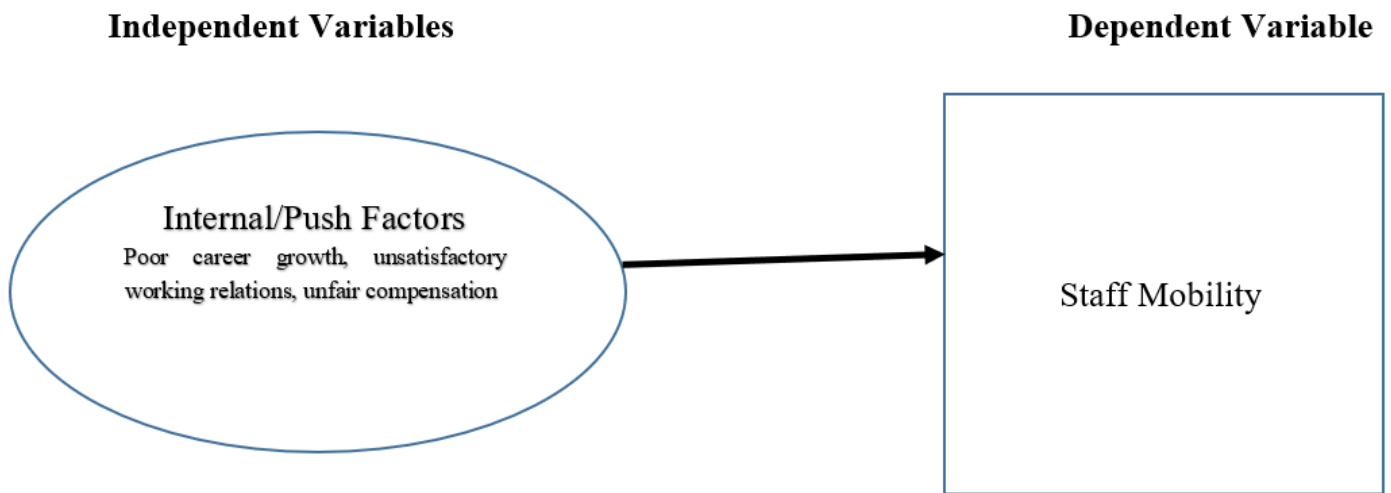
In the African region, the alarming debate on staff mobility is evident from different scholars AU (2019). Despite the complexity of employee mobility and its aftermath, it has been regarded as the driver for socio-economic development from a regional perspective (Raffiee, 2017). The benefits highlighted in global staff mobility are deemed imperative motivations for regional socio-economic development as well. The perceived benefits have triggered the formulation of policy frameworks to foster employee mobility within the African continent. These include the revised migration policy and its Action Plan (2018 to 2030) which provides the key priorities including enhancement of employee mobility within Africa through a free movement agenda. The policies have been strong underpinning tools for supporting the SDGs in the nine areas with an emphasis on labour migration (AUC, 2018). As a result, there has been a significant increase in the intra-African continental employee migration from 17.2 million in 2010 to 26.3 million in 2019.

Tanzania established the Employment Policy of 1999 which provides for free labour mobility of public services employees without undermining the performance of the host institution. However, the government discourage labour mobility which increases organizational costs for the host institution (Maige, 2018). In realizing such costs. The government has devised various initiatives to combat staff mobility within peer institutions and maintain similar practices to create a favourable environment for public servants. The government established Public Service Regulations, 2003 and Standing Orders, 2009 and other Legal and Institutional Frameworks intend to provide and guide public operations, remuneration and incentive packages practices—for instance, entitlements for various allowances like transport, fuel, electricity, housing and the like. The government and other public institutions established staff retention policies/schemes, succession planning, talent management, training and development policies in Public Institutions that aim to encourage employees to stay in the host public institution. In Tanzania, the Public Service Management and Employment Policy (2009), provides chances for free movement of public employees within the public service and private sectors. Employers are not allowed to restrict any public employee to change work, particularly if the new job is related to career progression or better earnings. This has triggered frequent transfers of employees across public institutions due to various factors.

Despite the mentioned government initiatives, staff mobility across public institutions in Tanzania is still a major concern to employers as it has been recently increasing and threatens business continuity and productivity of individual organizations from which labour exit is experienced. This is evident by the high rate of staff mobility taking place across public institutions. For instance, Tanzania Electric Supply (2021) data indicated that from 2019 to 2021 new staff transfers to TANESCO increased by 320% while in the same period, the rate of transfers to other institutions increased by 114%. This is also evident in the findings by Wiboga (2018) who researched the level of employee mobility in public institutions in Tanzania and found a high rate of employees' mobility in the public sector. Given the aforementioned initiatives put forth by public institutions in Tanzania to improve staff retention levels, still, staff mobility across public entities is still alarming. Therefore, this study aims at addressing the questions; *what are the internal factors influencing staff mobility across Public Institutions in Tanzania?* Additionally, given the same public sector is guided by the same national institutional frameworks and authorities, *why does staff mobility exist within the Tanzanian public sector?*

The study is guided by the Existence, Relatedness and Growth Theory developed by Alderfer (1972). The theory improves the one stipulated by Maslow on the hierarchy of human needs. In this theory existence implies the availability of basic needs for humankind such as food, shelter and safety. If such needs are not met employees may be unsatisfied. However, this theory argues that there is no rigid hierarchy needed. People may operate more than one need at a single time. For example, physiological and security needs could be operated at the same time. The next need is relatedness which implies a social network among staff for mutual collaboration which may lead to staff movement if not available at the workplace. The last one is growth which implies that employees would need to grow by attaining a challenging position to utilize their potential, skills and education. This theory stresses that human needs are not met by ascending hierarchal orders, there are other associated factors which must be aligned with human needs to motivate staff. This is because the needs of human beings are heterogeneous by nature and differ with time, thus placing them equally to all people like in Maslow’s theory is incorrect. ERG theory considers different ways of meeting the needs of people, thus, before establishing how to meet such needs one must study which ways can motivate employees to meet such needs through various significant factors.

Taping from ERG theory underpinning this study, the following conceptual model has been established.



METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed research approach based on both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and employed purposive and random sampling techniques in collecting data from the respondents. The study selected 104 respondents encompassing three strata namely; human resource officers, line managers and transfers to and from TANESCO. The fact that TANESCO has nationwide staff coverage and has a lot of experience with staff transfers to and from other public institutions in the recent past is the very reason for it being selected as the best fit for this study. The sample profile used in this study is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Sample by Frequency and Percentage

S.N	Strata/Category of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Transfer to and from TANESCO	44	42.31
2	HR Officers and Heads of Departments	43	41.35
3	Middle and Lower Levels employees	17	16.35

This study used questionnaires which were distributed to 104 respondents and 6 key informants from top

management staff and Officers from the President Office – Public Service Management and Good Governance who deal with transfers for public servants. Specifically, the study employed content and descriptive statistics analysis to establish empirical evidence on factors that push staff to other public institutions in Tanzania. The Likert scale type of quantitatively based questionnaires was structured in a range of 1 to 5 whereby; 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree while a checklist of interview questions was used to inquire relevant information from respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The overall findings confirmed the existence of the factors influencing staff mobility in Tanzanian public sector which is evident by 77% of total respondents. Figure 4.1 confirms the existence of the institutional factors influencing staff mobility across the public sector. A total of 77% confirmed this proposition of whom; 37% strongly agreed while 40% just agreed. However, only 12% disagreed whereby six per cent strongly disagreed and the other six per cent disagreed. The remaining 11% per cent of respondents were silent on this proposition. This implies the existence of internal factors within public institutions which act as pushing factors for employees to move out of the host institution. The study findings are in line with the findings by Mwinuka (2017) which indicated that institutional factors for labour mobility in the private sector by taking Access Bank as a case study.

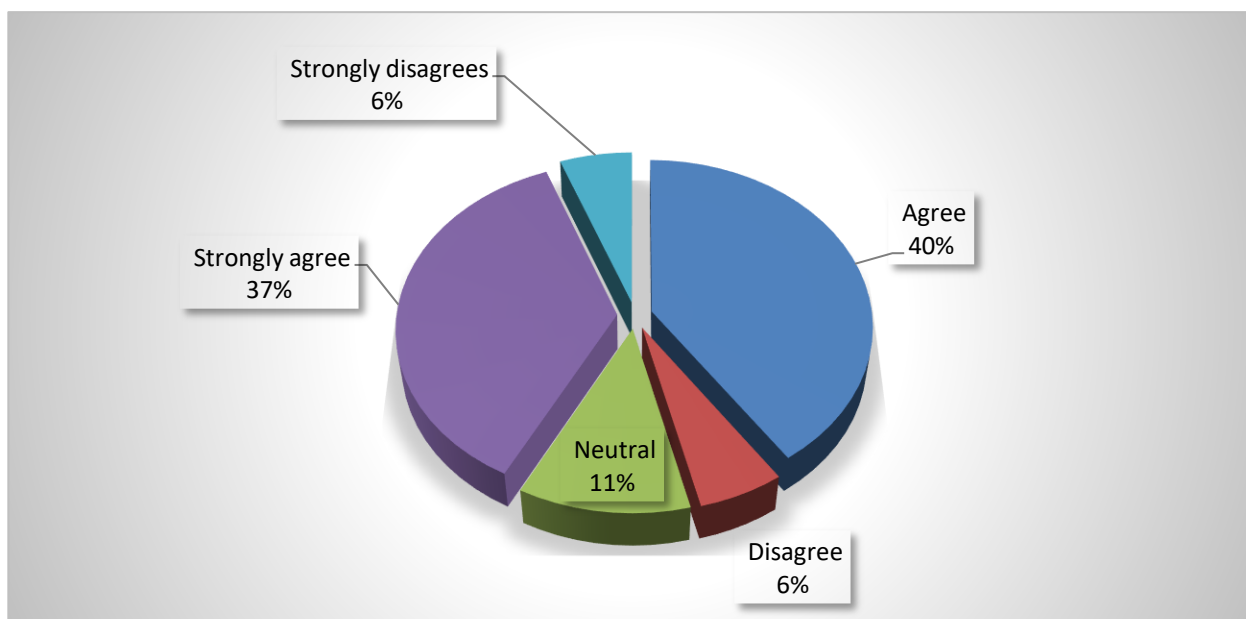


Figure 4.1: Presence of Key Institutional Push Factors Influencing Staff Mobility

Career growth and development of the employees play a greater role in retaining potential staff to work with the organization. Figure 4.2 depicts that poor career growth in the host public institution pushes staff to other public institutions that have a clear effective career growth path. As it is indicated in Figure 4.2, a total of 70% agreed on this matter of whom 42% strongly agreed while 28% just agreed. However, only 15% rejected this argument whereby nine per cent strongly disagreed and six per cent disagreed with this argument. The remaining 15% per cent of the respondents did not align with either side of this argument. This provides suggestive evidence that poor career growth is one of the internal factors influencing staff to move out of the host public institution to the next public institution exercising an effective and clear career growth path. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Mahundu (2022) on academic staff mobility in Tanzania's Higher Learning Institutions. The author revealed that pushing factors for labour mobility were highly influenced by the failure of host institutions to develop good career and development plans that limit promotion for academic staff.

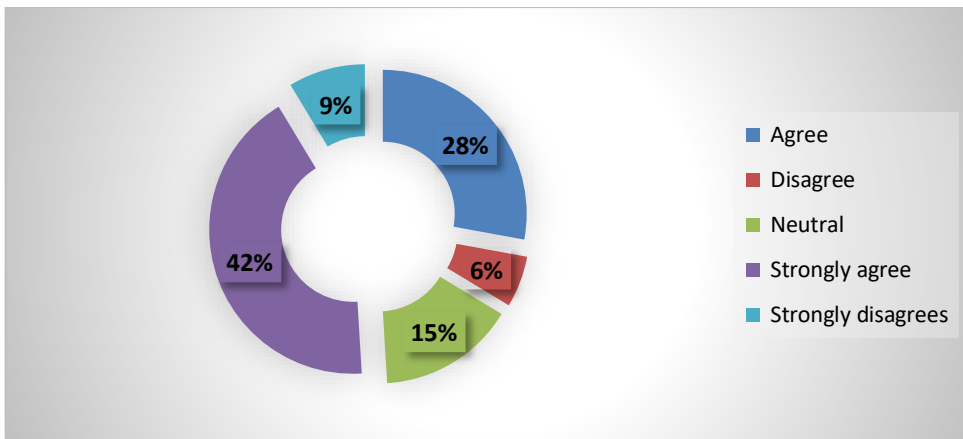


Figure 4.2: Poor Career Growth in the Host Institutions

Unsatisfactory work relations have been revealed to be one of the institutional factors influencing staff mobility from one to another public institution in Tanzania. Suggestive evidence from Figure 4.3 shows that 70% supported this matter of whom; 31% strongly agreed while 39% just agreed. However, only 14% of the respondents rejected this argument; nine per cent strongly disagreed and five per cent disagreed with this proposal. The remaining 16% did not comment on this argument. This implies that interpersonal relationships among employees influence the retention of staff at the workplace and motivate employees. The finding corresponds with the Existence, Relatedness and Growth Theory by (Alderfer, 1972) on the importance of working relationships as human needs. The study in line with the study conducted by Mbwette and Ngirwa (2012) on their study on the challenges of human resource management in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania. Their findings revealed that poor relationships between employee to employee, employees to management as well as organizational politics may negatively influence the employees to leave the organization. The finding was also supported by a key informant on the poor working relations who stated that;

“The factors that influence many employees to ask for transfer from the host institution is the poor relationship between employees and management. The lower level employees feel insecure to work with management in antagonistic relations” (Key Informant 2, 2023)

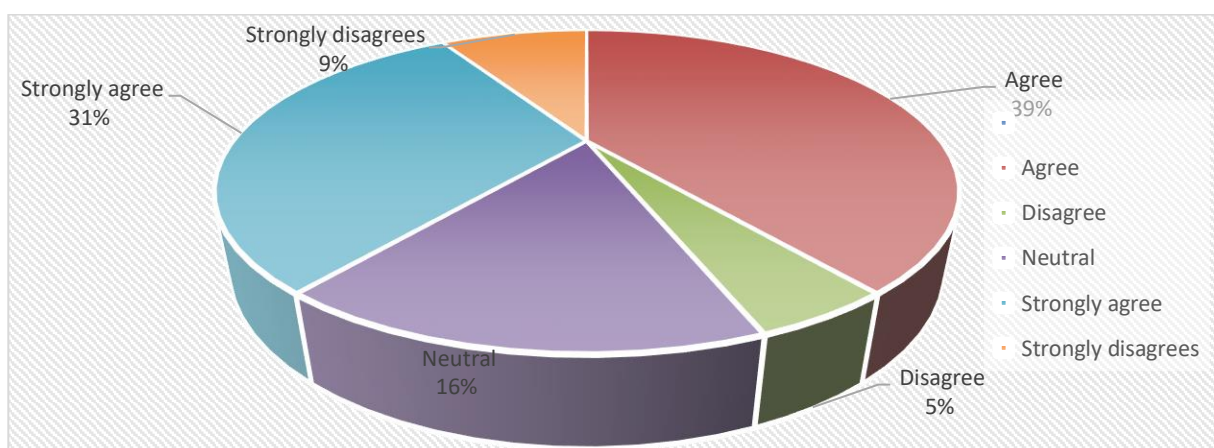


Figure 4.3: Unsatisfactory Working Relations in the Host Institutions

The study revealed that institutional compensation policy and incentive policy influence positively on retaining staff. Figure 4.4 confirms that unsatisfactory compensation of the host public institution influences staff to move to the next institution with better compensation across the public sector. A total of 69% confirmed this proposition; 39% strongly agreed while 30% just agreed. However, only 20% disagreed

whereby 10% strongly disagreed and another 10% disagreed. The remaining 11% of respondents were silent on this proposition. This implies that working relations matter in staff retention and further that unsatisfactory compensation of the host public institution is one of the important factors influencing staff mobility from one public institution to another. This finding substantiates the Existence, Relatedness and Growth Theory which insists on the satisfaction of human needs such as food, shelter and houses. The study in line with the study by Mahundu (2022) indicates that employee mobility from one public institution to another for searching green pasture in relation to compensation.

One of the respondents from the Key informants stated that;

“.....majority of the applicants for transfer from host organization is highly based on financial factors, in most case, they choose to be transferred to the organization with good compensation and incentive policies” (Key Informant 2, 2023).

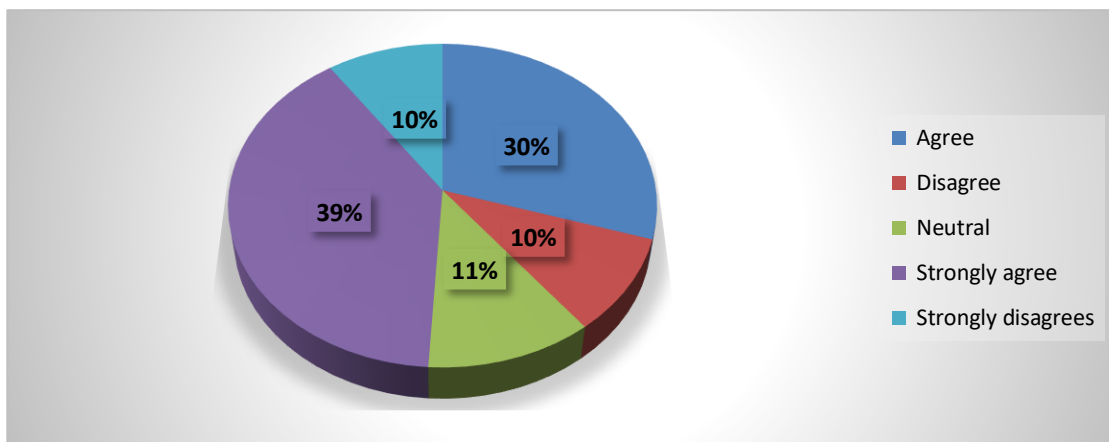


Figure 4.4: Unsatisfactory Compensation

After presenting the overall baseline findings, the findings from group-specific analysis provide details of the findings as presented in this part. Figure 4.5 reveals consistent results whereby; the majority of respondents confirmed the existence of internal factors influencing staff mobility in the public sector. The group of transfers confirmed the presence of internal factors by 81.82% of total transfers of whom; 34.09% strongly agreed while 47.73% just agreed. The finding is consistent with the finding by Mwinuka (2017) in the private sector which revealed that internal factors within the organization as the source of labour mobility.

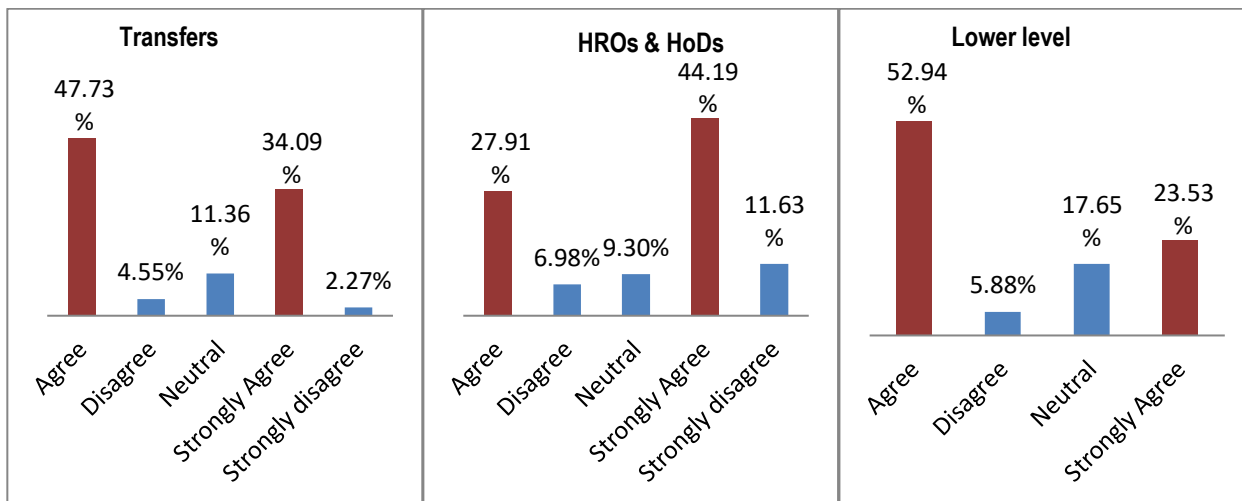


Figure 4.5: Group-Specific analysis on the Presence of Institutional Push Factors Influencing Staff Mobility

The Human Resource Officers and Head of Departments (HoDs) group equally confirmed by 72.1% of whom; 44.19% strongly agreed while 27.91% just agreed on this matter. The last group of lower level employees similarly equally affirmed by 76.47% of whom; 23.53% strongly agreed while 52.94% just agreed on this issue. A similar finding was also validated through a content analysis from the interview which was carried out among the respondents with strong emphasis given on the same finding. For instance, one of the respondents from transfers asserted that;

“The office where they do not care for their staff for example with enough working tools including furniture, office good look, good work relations and some incentives discourage staff to remain in the institution”. (Key Informants 6, 2023).

This finding implies the existence of unfavourable factors within the institution which push staff to move out to other institutions across public institutions. This is confirmed by the positive perception of respondents in supporting the existence of institutional factors in the public sector by 77% of total respondents. The group-specific finding unveiled similar evidence to the overall baseline finding presented earlier. Figure 4.6 shows that the transfers group confirmed that poor career growth is one of the internal factors that pushes staff to move to other public institutions by 77.27% of respondents of whom; 36.36% strongly agreed while 40.91% just agreed. The HROs and HoDs group confirmed by 60.47% of whom; 44.19% strongly agreed while 16.28% just agreed. The lower levels were equally confirmed by 76.47% of whom; 52.94% strongly agreed while 23.53% just agreed that poor career growth is one of the internal push factors influencing staff movement within the public sector in Tanzania.

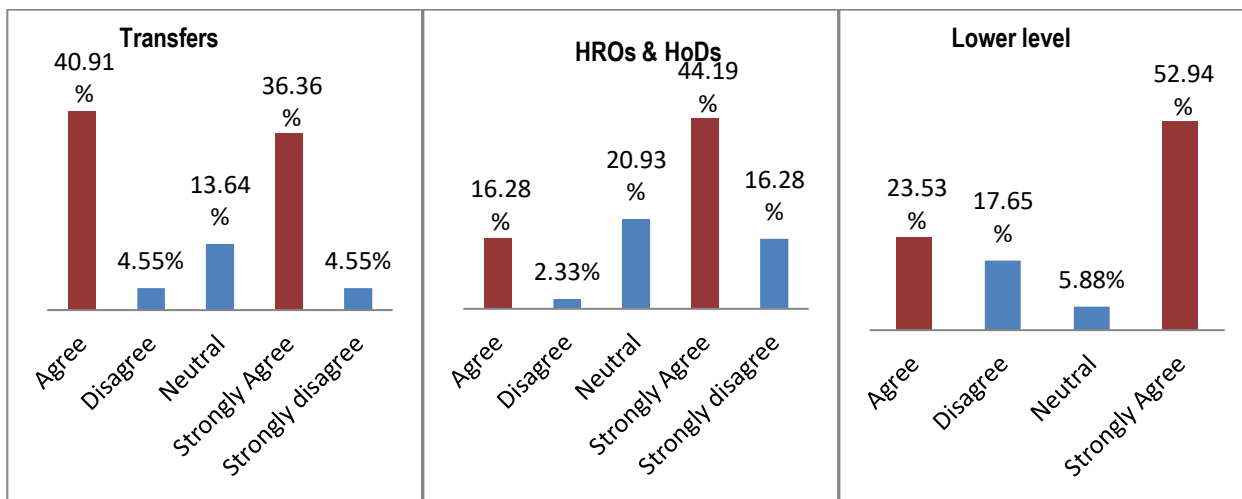


Figure 4.6: Group-Specific analysis on Poor Career Growth in the Host Institutions

A similar finding was also validated through the findings from key informant interviews (KIIs) which were carried out among the respondents with strong emphasis given on the same finding. For instance, one of the respondents from transfers asserted that;

“Every human being needs or aspires to see changes in life as time goes on at least after some time needs to be in a higher position than the previous and employers should support career improvement programmes like paying for short and long-term training programmes which enable employees to get merits for promotion”. (Key Informant 5, 2023)

This finding implies the absence of an effective and clear career growth path and policy is one of the crucial factors within some institutions in the public sector which pushes staff to move out to other public institutions which implement attractive career growth schemes. This is confirmed by the positive perception of respondents in supporting that poor career growth exercised by some public institutions is one of the key

push factors in the public sector asserted by 70% of total respondents. The group-specific analysis was carried out to validate the consistency of the overall baseline finding on unsatisfactory working relations and the result is presented in Figure 4.7. It reveals consistent findings to that of the previous baseline analysis whereby; the majority of respondents confirmed that unsatisfactory working relations as one of the internal factors influencing staff to move to other institutions of the public sector in Tanzania. Out of total transfers, 72.73% confirmed this factor of whom; 29.55% strongly agreed while 43.18% just agreed. The HROs group was equally confirmed by 65.12% of whom; 37.21% strongly agreed while 27.91% just agreed on this matter. The last group of lower levels similarly supported this argument by 76.47% of whom; 17.65% strongly agreed while 58.82% just agreed on this factor.

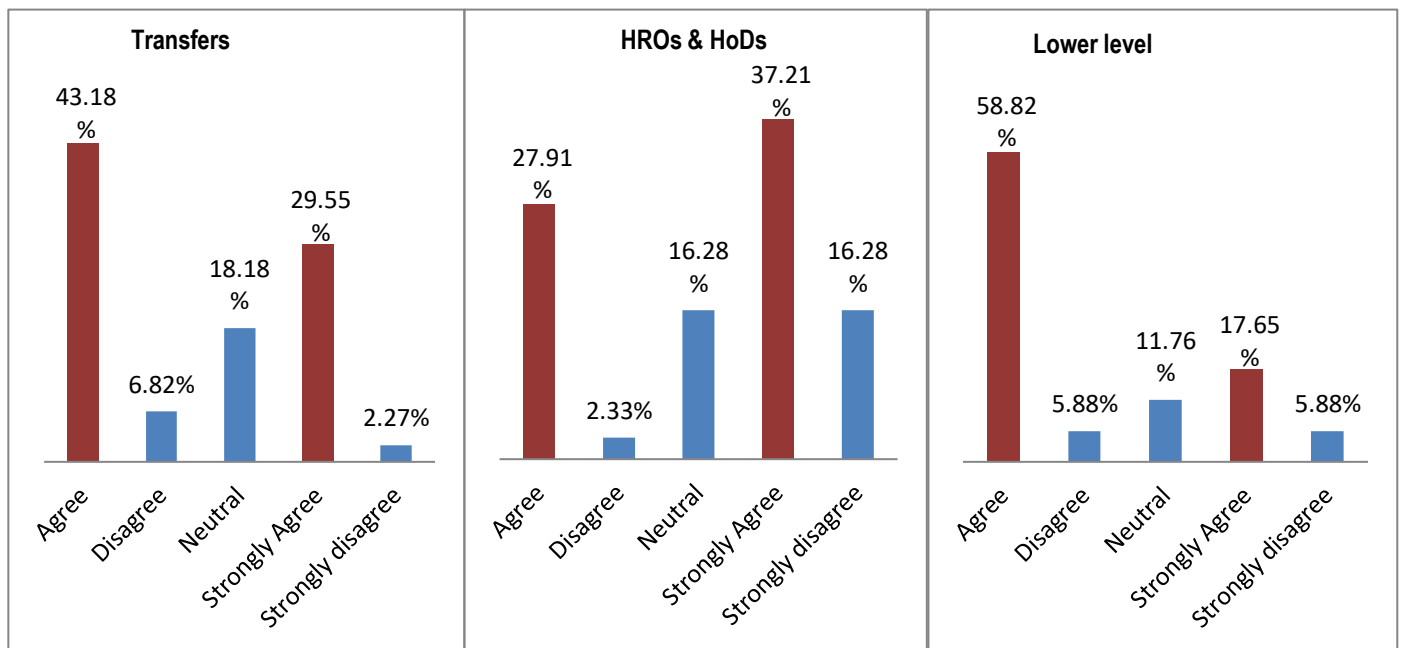


Figure 4.7: Group-Specific analysis on Unsatisfactory Working Relations in the Host Institutions

A similar finding was also validated through key informants interview (KIIs) which was carried out among the respondents with strong emphasis given on the same finding. For example, one of the respondents from the transfer group asserted that;

“Most of the time is spent at work so if the workplace stresses you up it is difficult to stay because everyone needs peace of mind to be productive and without good work relations teamwork is impossible”. (Key Informant 3, 2023)

This finding implies work relations are one of the crucial factors in staff retention within public institutions without which staff may be compelled to quit to other public institutions which portray healthy work relations. This is confirmed by the positive perception of respondents in supporting that poor working relations exercised by some public institutions is one of the factors that may push employees out of the institution in the public sector as asserted by 70% of total respondents.

Figure 4.8 reveals through a group-specific analysis the consistent finding to that of the previous baseline analysis on unsatisfactory compensation whereby; the majority of respondents confirmed that unsatisfactory compensation is one of the internal factors influencing staff to move to other institutions of the public sector in Tanzania. Out of total transfers, 68.18% confirmed on this factor of whom; 31.82% strongly agreed while 36.36% just agreed. The HROs group similarly confirmed by 67.44% of whom; 51.16% strongly agreed while 16.28% just agreed on this matter. The last group of Line Managers also supported this argument 76.47% of whom; 29.41% strongly agreed while 47.06% just agreed on this factor.

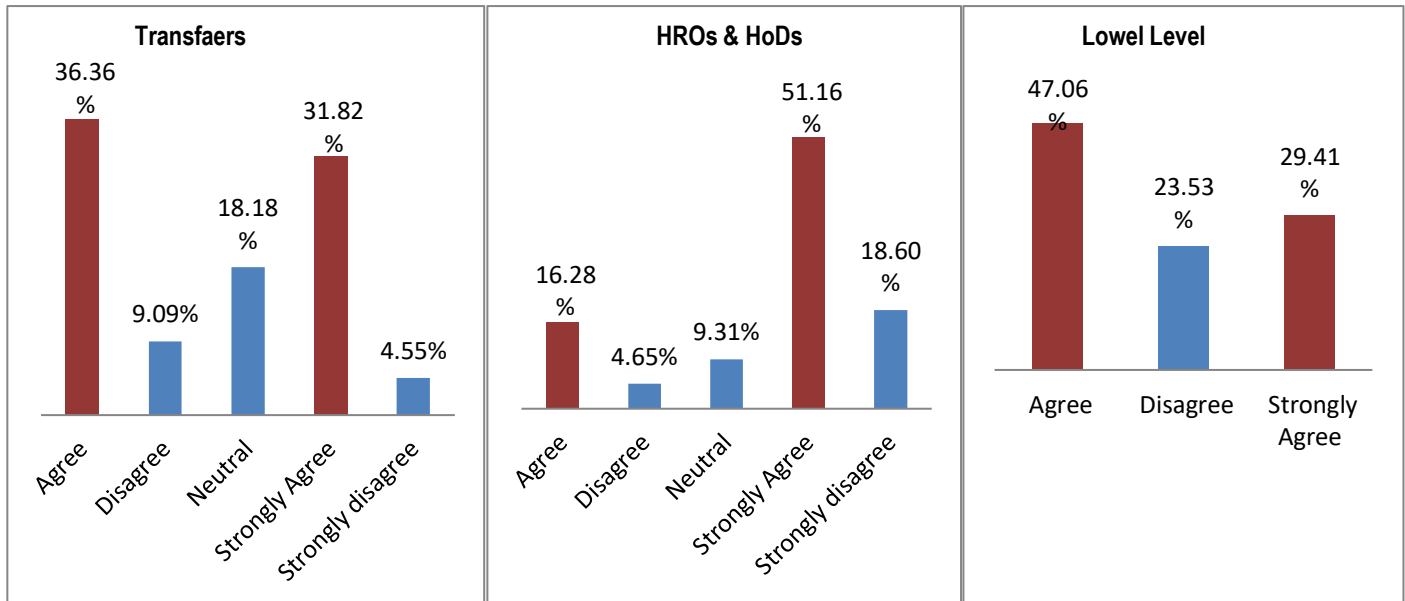


Figure 4.8: Group-Specific analysis of Unsatisfactory Compensation

The findings from key informant interviews (KIIs) validated this finding through interviews which were carried out among the respondents who strongly emphasized the same finding. For instance, one of the respondents from the Line Managers group asserted that;

“What matters the most for employees is remuneration package which helps to assure meeting one’s needs with the regard that we have a long family chain that are looking for our earnings to support them and other factors come next”. (Key Informant 1, 2023)

This finding implies that a satisfactory compensation policy is one of the crucial internal factors in staff retention within public institutions without which staff may be compelled to quit to other public institutions which having better compensation schemes. This is confirmed by the positive instinct of respondents in supporting that unsatisfactory compensation packages within some public institutions is the important factor influencing staff mobility in the public sector asserted by 69% of total respondents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it is recommended to harmonize incentive schemes across all the public institutions in Tanzania to reduce the level of differences existing between one and another institution, especially on incentives payable to staff in the public sector which is one of the major driving factor to staff movement to other institutions. The study recommends improving industrial relations among employees and creating harmony between employees and management by establishing respect and trust for each other. This will inculcate a culture of mutual respect and unity among staff and with their leaders in a harmonious context that would retain staff through amicable conflict resolutions in workplaces.

REFERENCES

1. Al Mamun, CA. and Md. Hasan, N. (2017) ‘Factors affecting employee turnover and sound retention strategies in business organisation’. *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 15(1), 63-71
2. Ashournia, D. (2018) ‘Labour Market Effects of International Trade When Mobility is Costly’. *The Economic Journal* 128(616), 3008-3038
3. African Union (2019) Report on Labour migration statistics in Africa. 3rd edn. Geneva: The African Union Commission African Union Commission (2018) African Union Handbook. Addis Ababa:

African Union

4. Bellucci, S. and Freund, B. (2017) 'Introduction. Work across Africa: labour exploitation and mobility in Southern, Eastern and Western Africa'. *Africa* 87 (1), 27–35
5. Castillo, V., Garone, L.F., Maffioli, A., Rojo, S. and Stucchi, R. (2019) 'Knowledge Spill overs through Labour Mobility: An Employer–Employee Analysis'. *Journal of Development Studies* 56(3), 1-20
6. Chantola, S. (2020) 'Free Flow of Skilled Labour in the ASEAN Economic Community: Opportunities and Challenges for Cambodia'. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 5(8), 5332-540
7. Cross, H. and Cliffe, L. (2017) 'A Comparative Political Economy of Regional Migration and Labour Mobility in West and Southern Africa'. *Review of African Political Economy* 44(153), 381-398
8. Forsythe, E. (2019) 'Careers within Firms: Occupational Mobility over the Lifecycle'. *Labour CEIS* 33(3), 241-277
9. Gibson, J. and Bailey, R. L. (2021) 'Seasonal Labour Mobility in the Pacific: Past Impacts, Future Prospects'. *Asian Development Review* 38(1), 1-31
10. Hall, S. (2019) 'Reframing Labour Market Mobility in Global Finance: Chinese elites in London's Financial District'. *Urban Geography* 40(5), 1-20
11. Holani, A. K. (2018) 'Labour Mobility in the PACER Plus'. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5(1), 90-101
12. International Labour Organization (2017) *Safeguarding the rights of Asian migrant workers from home to the workplace*. ADBI Philippines: International Labour Organization
13. International Labour Organization (2021) *Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers – Results and Methodology*. 3rd edn. Geneva: International Labour Office
14. Jørnli, I. (2021) 'How to solve competence demands? A review of employee mobility practices in knowledge-intensive organizations. Event Proceedings, 'ISPIM Connects Valencia – Reconnect, Rediscover, Reimagine'. Held 30 November – 2 December 2021 at Valencia. Manchester: LUT Scientific and Expertise Publications
15. Liu-Farrer, G., and Shire, K. (2021) 'Who are the fittest? The question of skills in national employment systems in an age of global labour mobility. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47(10), 1-18
16. Maige Wiboga (2018), Paper Title: *Employee Mobility in Public Institutions in Tanzania: Lesson from Selected Institutions in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam*. *Business Education Journal (BEJ)*, Volume II, Issue I, 11 Pages.
17. Marwa, C. M. (2016). *Analysis of factors leading to teacher turnover in rural district councils. A case study of Simanjiro district council*. Doctoral dissertation, Mzumbe University.
18. Mwinuka, C. (2017) *Factors Influencing Labour Mobility in Private Institutions: A Case of Access Bank, Tanzania*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Morogoro: Mzumbe University
19. Nchor, D. (2020) 'Labour Mobility as an adjustment mechanism to asymmetric shocks in Europe: evidence from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia'. *Journal for Labour Market Research* 54(16), 1-19
20. Raffiee, J. (2017) 'Employee Mobility and Interfirm Relationship Transfer: Evidence from the Mobility and Client Attachments of United States Federal Lobbyists.' *Strategic Management Journal* 38(1), 19-40.
21. Salazar, N. B. (2020) 'Labour Migration and Tourism Mobilities: Time to bring sustainability into the debate'. *Tourism Geographies* 24(1), 2-11
22. Tanzania Electric Supply Company (2021) *Annual Performance Report*
23. Tikhonov, A., Novikov, S., Kalachanov, V., and Solimene, U. (2020) 'Influence of the Profession and Industry of Work on the Labour Mobility of the Applicant'. *Social Sciences* 9(213), 1-14
24. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2018) *Measuring International Labour Mobility*. New York: United Nations
25. United Republic of Tanzania (2009). *The Public Service Standing Orders*

26. United Republic of Tanzania (2008). The Public Service Management and Employment Policy
27. Wangiri, T. (2015) Factors Influencing Employee Turnover in Private Tertiary Colleges. A Case of Embu College: A Research Project Report. Kenya: The University of Nairobi
28. Wiboga, M. (2018) 'Employee Mobility in Public Institutions in Tanzania: Lesson from Selected Institutions in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam'. Business Education Journal (BEJ), II (I), 1-11
29. Zhang, J., Leoncini, R. and Tsai, Y. (2017) 'Intellectual Property Rights Protection, Labour Mobility and Wage Inequality'. Economic Modelling 70(1), 339-344