

Centralising Recruitment in Tanzania's Public Service: A Critical Assessment of the PSRS Legal Framework and Implementation Outcomes

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Abstract

This doctrinal review assesses the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat's (PSRS) efforts in Tanzania to foster a results-oriented public service. By replacing decentralised, ministry-based hiring with a unified, merit-based system, the PSRS's approach is analysed through thematic coding of legal instruments, literature, and policy documents. Findings show that while the PSRS has enhanced transparency and qualification standards, gaps remain between hiring and performance outcomes. Persistent challenges include inadequate staff expertise, slow recruitment causing service delays, and a weak link between recruitment and performance management. The Online Aptitude Testing System (OATS) shows potential but requires integration with ministry performance agreements. The study concludes that the PSRS has made procedural progress yet remains disconnected from post-hire evaluation. Recommendations include amending the Public Service Act to mandate recruitment-performance linkages, building specialised PSRS capacity, integrating OATS with performance agreements, and bridging centralised hiring with decentralised performance accountability.

Keywords: Public service recruitment, performance management, Tanzania, merit system, result-oriented management.

1.0 Introduction

In the early 2000s, Tanzania joined a wave of African public-sector reforms by establishing the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS). This initiative stemmed from the fundamental understanding that administrative capacity rests on the quality of personnel. The government sought to overhaul hiring practices, moving from decentralised, ministry-specific processes vulnerable to patronage toward a transparent, merit-based system capable of attracting talented individuals committed to quality service delivery (Kiragu & Mutahaba, 2020).

The PSRS thus represented strategic centralisation of recruitment functions. This approach mirrors experiences in other countries around the world. For instance, Rwanda implemented a centralised recruitment system through its Public Service Commission,

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which significantly reduced ethnic and political favouritism and improved service delivery outcomes (Chemouni, 2019). Similarly, Ghana's centralisation of recruitment under the Public Services Commission helped standardise qualifications and curb ghost-worker scandals, though it faced delays similar to those in Tanzania (Ayee, 2018).

In contrast, decentralised systems such as those in Nigeria have suffered from persistent patronage and inconsistent standards, demonstrating the risks of fragmented hiring authority (Brierley, 2020). Meanwhile, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom have adopted hybrid models, centralised policy frameworks with decentralised operational flexibility, to balance consistency with agency-specific responsiveness (Christensen et al., 2022).

These comparative insights suggest that while centralisation can enhance fairness and transparency, its success depends critically on adequate institutional capacity, timely execution, and, most importantly, strong linkages with post-hire performance management systems, a lesson directly relevant to Tanzania's ongoing reform journey. Indeed, the effectiveness of centralised reforms is consistently contingent on the institutional strength of the implementing bodies; for instance, SIGMA's assessment of Armenian public administration revealed that even well-intentioned legal frameworks faltered without clear policy direction and sufficient administrative capacity (SIGMA, 2019), while comparative research on South Africa and Uganda similarly identified weak institutional capacity and corruption as persistent barriers to effective service delivery despite robust legal provisions (Mpedi & Smit, 2020). The challenge of timely execution is equally pronounced, as evidenced by a study on Tanzania's own centralised recruitment reforms in Morogoro and Dodoma, which found that while procedural efficiency improved, vacancy-filling times increased by 33.3% from 90 to 120 days, creating bureaucratic delays that undermined local responsiveness and citizen satisfaction (Mushi & Mgalla, 2021).

Furthermore, the critical imperative of linking centralised processes to post-hire performance management is underscored by historical evidence from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which documented that a centralised, one-size-fits-all appraisal system ultimately lost credibility and required decentralisation precisely because it failed to meaningfully connect evaluation outcomes to individual accountability and performance improvement (OPM, 2016). Cross-national comparisons reinforce this finding, with Portugal's highly centralised evaluation system succeeding largely because it maintained strong linkages to individual and organisational performance outcomes. In contrast, Spain's weaker performance link rendered its less centralised system comparatively ineffective for accountability purposes (Palermo & Raudla, 2018).

Collectively, these cases demonstrate that centralisation is not an end in itself but a mechanism whose outcomes hinge on the very factors currently being tested in Tanzania's Public Service Reform Program, where experts have cautioned against overly ambitious "big bang" approaches and instead recommended incremental, demonstrable successes to build both capacity and political will (World Bank, 2019; Mndolwa, 2020). These lessons from both international experience and Tanzania's own reform trajectory thus affirm that sustainable improvements in fairness and transparency require not merely structural

centralisation, but complementary investments in implementation capacity, operational timeliness, and above all, a coherent performance management framework that closes the loop between hiring decisions and workforce outcomes

The PSRS emerged during mounting concern over Tanzania's public sector performance. Despite progressive legal frameworks and formal commitments to results-based administration, persistent challenges, including weak accountability mechanisms, misalignment between qualifications and job requirements, and inconsistent service quality, continue to undermine effectiveness (United Republic of Tanzania, 2022).

Consolidating recruitment was viewed as a strategic response to ensure selection prioritised proven abilities over personal affiliations, reflecting a broader shift toward merit-based civil service reforms aimed at curbing patronage. In Tanzania, this centralisation was explicitly designed to insulate hiring from local political interference and nepotism. Research by Mongi (2024) found that the primary reasons for centralising recruitment through the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) included addressing unethical behaviours by Local Government Authority staff, the lack of meritocracy in local hiring, and the need to ensure the equal distribution of human resources across the country. The system was intended to be free from political interference, resulting in the recruitment of qualified human resources that could contribute to national development

This logic aligns with international evidence from countries such as Ghana and Rwanda, where similar reforms yielded measurable improvements in technical skills and organisational performance (Ayee, 2013; Chemouni, 2018). However, the PSRS's success in achieving this meritocratic ideal has remained contingent on the integrity of examination processes, the transparency of scoring, and sustained political will, factors that comparative studies in East Africa identify as persistent challenges in translating formal centralisation into genuine meritocracy (Therkildsen, 2012; Mndolwa, 2020). Nevertheless, by establishing a gatekeeping function at the national level, the PSRS sought not only to elevate the quality of new entrants but also to signal a fundamental cultural shift towards professionalism and a performance orientation within the public service. After more than two decades, critical questions remain about the PSRS's efficacy in realising its vision of results-oriented performance in the public service. The central issue is whether centralised recruitment has elevated service quality and cultivated greater commitment to performance and accountability. This requires examining how formal legal frameworks intersect with implementation challenges to shape public sector outcomes. This study critically analyses the PSRS's contribution to fostering results-oriented performance in Tanzania's public sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Result-Oriented Performance in Public Service

The concept of result-oriented performance in public administration represents a significant evolution in how government effectiveness is conceptualised and measured. As Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) explain, this management paradigm prioritises outcomes, accountability, and the continuous refinement of service delivery, standing in contrast to earlier models of

public administration that were predominantly concerned with procedural regularity and rule compliance. The fundamental shift involves directing attention toward the substantive impact of government activities on citizens' lives, moving beyond bureaucratic process to focus on tangible results and citizen-centric performance (Bouckaert, 2017). Emerging prominently through the New Public Management reforms of the late twentieth century, this orientation has been adapted and applied in various forms across developing countries in subsequent decades (Larbi, 2019).

In Tanzania, the concept of results-oriented performance has been progressively articulated through a series of policy frameworks. These include the Public Service Reform Programmes and, more recently, the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and its successor, Vision 2050 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2021). These frameworks underscore the imperative for a public service that demonstrates both operational efficiency and effectiveness in achieving development objectives. Central components include performance contracting, results-based management, performance appraisal mechanisms, and accountability structures that link individual contributions to broader organisational outcomes, reflecting the global shift towards performance-oriented public management that prioritises citizen-centred results over procedural compliance (Bouckaert, 2017).

However, as Nchimbi's (2023) investigation into the implementation of performance management in Tanzania shows, substantial barriers impede the translation of policy commitments into practice. The study reveals that institutional performance contracts are frequently unenforced, while individual performance agreements are often treated as procedural formalities rather than as instruments for professional development. Additionally, performance appraisal data remain largely untapped in administrative decision-making, except when required for regulatory compliance related to promotions, underscoring a persistent disconnect between the aspirational logic of results-oriented reforms and the operational realities of public service delivery (Nchimbi, 2023). These observations indicate that cultivating a genuinely results-oriented public service requires more than formal policy architecture; it requires coherent integration across recruitment, professional development, performance management, and accountability mechanisms.

2.2 The Role of Recruitment in Shaping Performance Outcomes

The strategic importance of recruitment in determining organisational performance is well established in human resource management literature. As Boxall and Purcell (2022) observe, individuals who enter an organisation through its hiring processes bring not only technical capabilities but also ingrained attitudes, value systems, and work orientations. In governmental settings, these recruitment mechanisms do more than fill vacancies; they actively construct the professional identity of public servants and shape their adherence to public service values (Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen, 2021).

The quality of recruitment practices carries significant consequences for organisational outcomes. Merit-based systems featuring transparent competency assessment tend to yield workforces that are both capable of delivering results and invested in upholding professional standards. By contrast, systems susceptible to patronage, political interference, or other extrameritocratic influences risk compromising performance by admitting individuals who

either lack essential competencies or remain beholden to personal or political interests rather than public duties (Brierley, 2020).

Grindle (2021) identifies multiple mechanisms through which recruitment influences performance. These include: determining the pool of baseline competencies available to the public service; shaping workforce diversity and the range of perspectives informing policy responses; influencing organisational culture by signalling the qualities that are valued and rewarded; and affecting employee motivation by demonstrating whether the system genuinely rewards merit and diligence or merely connections and patronage.

It was precisely to address these mechanisms of political interference and discretionary hiring that Tanzania established the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) in 2009. The Secretariat was designed to remove hiring authority from individual ministries and local political actors, replacing discretionary decision-making with standardised, merit-based assessments (Mongi, 2024). This centralisation was a direct response to documented unethical behaviours by Local Government Authority staff and the lack of meritocracy observed in local hiring processes (Mongi, 2024).

The reform rested on the premise that transparent recruitment would accomplish two interrelated goals: directly improving the quality of new public servants by ensuring selection was free from political interference, and indirectly signalling a system-wide commitment to performance and accountability. The government has since reaffirmed this commitment, stating that recruitment through the PSRS remains open, competitive, and merit-based, promoting fairness, professionalism, and trust in government systems. This foundational logic is consistent with broader public service reforms that seek to depoliticise personnel decisions and embed professional norms within public institutions, operating on the principle that standardised, centrally administered selection would attract higher-quality candidates based on objective criteria (Deogratias & Tefurukwa, 2025; Saad & Itika, 2024).

2.3 Centralised Versus Decentralised Recruitment: Comparative Perspectives

When designing recruitment systems, policymakers face a fundamental choice between centralisation and decentralisation, a decision with significant implications for public sector performance, as the locus of hiring authority shapes not only the quality of personnel selected but also the broader dynamics of organisational responsiveness, accountability, and political control. Centralised systems, such as Tanzania's PSRS, offer several distinct advantages. They promote consistency through uniform competency standards, generate economies of scale by eliminating duplication, and constrain opportunities for patronage at the local level (Lah & Perry, 2020). Furthermore, concentrating recruitment functions can facilitate the development of specialised expertise and support investment in sophisticated assessment methodologies.

These advantages, however, must be weighed against potential limitations. Christensen et al (2022) note that centralised systems may demonstrate insufficient responsiveness to agency-specific needs, operate more slowly in filling positions, and remain detached from local contextual realities. Where institutional capacity proves inadequate to handle system-wide recruitment demands, centralised processes risk becoming bottlenecks that delay service delivery.

Decentralised approaches offer countervailing benefits. They enable organisational tailoring of hiring processes and can accelerate the filling of vacancies, allowing line managers to respond more swiftly to specific operational needs and contextual demands (Peters, 2018; Manning, 2004). However, these gains come at a cost: increased risk of inconsistent practices, variable quality across institutions, and greater exposure to local patronage pressures (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2020). The centralisation-decentralisation decision therefore entails inherent trade-offs that require careful institutional design and strategic capacity-building to manage effectively.

Tanzania's choice to centralise recruitment through the PSRS was fundamentally a response to perceived patronage problems and a desire for standardised practices across a heterogeneous public service, reflecting a broader reform logic that centralisation can insulate hiring from political interference while ensuring consistency in selection criteria and procedural integrity (Mushi & Mgalla, 2021). The enduring challenge has been to capture the promised benefits of centralisation while devising mechanisms to overcome its inherent limitations.

2.4 Legal Frameworks on Recruitment

The relationship between law and practice is central to understanding the performance of recruitment systems, as formal legal frameworks and procedural guidelines do not guarantee consistent application; implementation gaps often reveal deeper institutional weaknesses in capacity, enforcement, and political will (Therkildsen, 2012; Mndolwa, 2020). While legal frameworks establish the formal rules, merit requirements, transparency obligations, and assessment protocols that purport to govern hiring processes, their practical effects remain contingent upon a range of mediating factors. Andrews (2023) identifies institutional capacity, political dynamics, and administrative culture as critical variables shaping how legal provisions translate into outcomes.

This insight is particularly relevant in developing-country contexts, where Peiffer and Marquette (2021) document persistent gaps between formal rules and operational realities. Robust statutory provisions often coexist with weak enforcement, resource constraints, political interference, and informal practices that effectively override formal requirements (Mndolwa, 2020). Consequently, evaluating recruitment systems requires moving beyond textual analysis to examine how legal rules are interpreted, implemented, and experienced in practice, as the gap between policy intentions and operational realities often determines the actual performance of public sector institutions (Peters, 2018; Mushi & Mgalla, 2021; Bouckaert, 2017).

Consistent with this perspective, the present study investigates both the formal legal architecture of the PSRS and its practical implementation. This dual focus enables identification not only of the Secretariat's performance against its stated objectives but also of the specific institutional, political, or cultural factors that enhance or constrain its contribution to results-oriented public service.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodological framework grounded in doctrinal legal research and supplemented by documentary analysis to investigate the PSRS's role in fostering performance-oriented public service in Tanzania. Doctrinal research, as characterised by Hutchinson and Duncan (2012), involves rigorous scrutiny of legal rules and principles from statutory provisions and regulatory instruments, an approach well-suited to examining the legal architecture underpinning the PSRS and its interface with performance management. Data were drawn from secondary sources. Primary materials included the Public Service Act, No. 8 of 2002, the Public Service Regulations (2022), and subsidiary legislation governing recruitment and performance appraisal. Secondary sources encompassed peer-reviewed articles, academic texts, theses, policy documents, and reports from governmental agencies and international organisations.

The study followed systematic steps of doctrinal legal research. First, the researcher identified and collected primary legal sources, including the Public Service Act (Cap 298) and the Public Service Regulations. Second, he conducted a detailed examination and interpretation of these legal instruments to understand their requirements. Third, he analysed the relationships between different legal provisions, focusing on four areas: the PSRS's statutory framework, operational recruitment realities, linkages between recruitment and performance management, and recent policy innovations. Fourth, he identified gaps and inconsistencies between what the law says and what happens in practice by comparing legal provisions with empirical research. Fifth, he used thematic analysis to code and categorise all data, which helped synthesise findings. Finally, triangulation, cross-checking legal documents with evaluation reports and peer-reviewed literature, strengthened validity by revealing consistent patterns. These steps formed the basis for the study's findings and discussion.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Historical Background of the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat

Tanzania's journey towards centralised, merit-based public service recruitment has unfolded in distinct historical phases. The colonial era (pre-1961) established an exclusionary pattern, reserving senior positions for expatriates and marginalising indigenous Tanzanians. Independence in 1961 triggered Africanisation, with nationals rapidly assuming former colonial posts (Mutahaba, 1989).

The one-party era introduced new dynamics. While formal qualifications remained nominally required, recruitment became susceptible to political considerations. Ministerial discretion created fertile ground for patronage, with appointments often reflecting affiliation rather than aptitude. Tanzania's return to multiparty democracy in 1992 catalysed demands for transparency. The Public Service Reform Programme diagnosed systemic weaknesses, documenting inconsistent standards, opaque procedures, and persistent network interference (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999).

These diagnoses culminated in the Public Service Act (Cap 298 R.E 2023), which incorporated the Public Service (Amendment) Act of 2007 and established the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) as a centralised authority (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007; United Republic of Tanzania, 2023). This reform removed hiring functions from ministries, concentrating them within a specialised body designed to insulate decisions from particularistic pressures. Since 2003, the PSRS has progressively built capacity by introducing the Ajira Portal and the Online Aptitude Test System. The historical trajectory reveals sustained efforts to professionalise recruitment, yet translating insulation from political influence into consistent practice remains a persistent challenge, reflecting a broader gap between statutory provisions and operational realities that characterises public-sector reforms in many developing contexts (Mndolwa, 2020).

4.2 Functions of the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat

4.2.1 Statutory Functions

The core responsibilities of the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat are set out in Section 32(7) of the Public Service Act (Cap 298 R.E 2023), which incorporates the Public Service (Amendment) Act of 2007 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007; United Republic of Tanzania, 2023). As provided by the statute, these duties constitute the Secretariat's primary work and include: publicising job openings and advertising vacant positions; receiving, handling, and reviewing applications from prospective candidates; conducting initial candidate selection and shortlisting; managing interviews, assessments, and evaluations of applicants; proposing suitable candidates for appointment to respective public service institutions; maintaining a comprehensive talent pool or database of qualified candidates for future reference; and undertaking any additional duties as may be assigned by the Minister or the President's Office in relation to recruitment functions (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007; United Republic of Tanzania, 2023).

4.2.2 Evolving Functions in Practice

Beyond its statutory duties, the PSRS has developed specialised expertise in modern hiring practices, including competency-based interviews and psychometric testing. Its role has expanded to include policy development and advising the President's Office on recruitment strategy. Digital transformation has introduced responsibilities for the Ajira Portal, requiring expertise in information technology management and cybersecurity. The Secretariat also provides oversight, ensuring uniform adherence to protocol across the public sector and managing applicant grievances.

4.2.3 Limitations on Functions

While the PSRS has a wide-ranging mandate, its powers are constrained by specific limits. The Secretariat's role is to propose candidates, but it lacks the final authority to appoint them. The PSRS's remit does not include employee performance reviews, professional training, or career progression. Once a candidate is hired, the responsibility for managing their performance transfers to their respective ministry. The Secretariat's full execution of its duties is often hampered by resource scarcity. As noted by Kiwara (2018), the PSRS frequently struggles to meet timelines and maintain high standards due to excessive workloads and insufficient specialised training for its staff.

4.3 Administration and Composition of the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat

4.3.1 Institutional Structure

The PSRS is a semi-autonomous entity within the President's Office, Public Service Management and Good Governance. Its placement within the President's Office underscores the strategic importance of recruitment and helps protect the Secretariat from undue influence by individual ministries. Leadership rests with a secretary appointed by the President, who oversees all aspects of management and operations and reports to the Public Service Commission on recruitment activities. The Secretariat's work is divided among various divisions: Recruitment Management, Quality Control, Information and Communication Technology, Administration and Human Resources Management, and Legal Services.

4.3.2 Composition and Staffing

The PSRS staff are drawn from diverse professional backgrounds and hold credentials in human resources management, public administration, law, information technology, and other specialised fields. Nevertheless, research by Kiwara (2018) indicates that a significant number of PSRS employees lack formal, specialised training in recruitment or assessment. Staffing levels have also been an ongoing issue, as the workforce has failed to keep pace with the increasing workload, leading to processing delays and potentially undermining evaluation quality.

4.3.3 Governance and Oversight

PSRS operations are governed by the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat Rules of Operation, most recently updated in 2021 to address digital recruitment methods (Saad & Itika, 2024). Accountability is maintained through the Public Service Commission, the Parliamentary Committee on Public Service and Local Government, and internal audit teams.

4.4 Achievements of the PSRS

Over its 20-year history, the PSRS has achieved several significant milestones in transforming public service recruitment. Firstly, the Secretariat has embedded transparency as a standard feature of hiring processes, a shift enabled by the adoption of e-recruitment systems that have reduced physical interactions between applicants and recruitment officials, thereby minimising opportunities for corrupt practices and favouritism (Deogratias & Tefurukwa, 2024; Redson & Tefurukwa, 2024). Currently, all vacancies are publicly announced, and applicants can monitor their submissions via the Ajira Portal, a system that enhances transparency, reduces the potential for patronage and bias, and bolsters public trust (Deogratias & Tefurukwa, 2024; Redson & Tefurukwa, 2024). This transparency is widely recognised as a hallmark of effective and responsive public administration, with the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA, 2024) acknowledging such practices for promoting fairness and professionalism in government systems worldwide.

Secondly, the PSRS has introduced uniformity and regularity to hiring practices. All applicants are now evaluated against uniform benchmarks using standardised procedures, ensuring that equivalent qualifications are assessed consistently across government entities. Research indicates that centralised recruitment has contributed to reduced corruption,

equality of opportunity in vacancy applications, and the recruitment of qualified staff. The system has been positively received by stakeholders, with key reasons for centralisation including addressing unethical behaviour by local government staff, ensuring meritocracy, and promoting cost-effectiveness in recruitment.

Thirdly, the Secretariat has advanced the professionalisation of government recruitment. By centralising recruitment expertise within a specialised body, the system has fostered specialised knowledge and skills that would be challenging to sustain in a decentralised arrangement. The adoption of digital assessment instruments, structured interview formats, and standardised scoring criteria exemplifies this professional evolution. However, studies have identified persistent challenges, including delays in filling vacancies, problems with employee allocation, and the need for greater involvement of local government authorities in the recruitment process.

Fourthly, recent initiatives demonstrate sustained dedication to progress. The Online Aptitude Test System (OATS), unveiled in December 2025, is expected to improve both the speed and accuracy of preliminary candidate screening. The system enables candidates to take aptitude tests online, with results released the same day, eliminating the need for in-person interviews and reducing costs for both the government and applicants. Likewise, compulsory examinations for senior-level officials, implemented in July 2025, extend performance-based evaluation beyond entry-level posts to include leadership selection. The government has also announced plans to recruit 41,500 public servants for the 2025/26 financial year, with the PSRS coordinating interviews across all regions of Tanzania using the digital aptitude test system.

4.5 Ongoing Difficulties

Notwithstanding these successes, considerable obstacles remain. Insufficient capacity has been identified as a fundamental limitation. A study of the PSRS's institutional strength found that employees at the Secretariat face significant pressure to meet recruitment deadlines because of a high workload relative to the size of the workforce (Kiwara, 2018). The research, conducted at the PSRS headquarters, found that the number of available staff is insufficient to meet the demands of the selection process, leading to delays that hinder the timely filling of vacancies and contribute to the deterioration of service delivery in public institutions. In addition to workload challenges, the study highlighted that recruiters and selectors at the PSRS lacked specific training in recruitment and selection, despite possessing qualifications in fields such as human resource management and public administration, underscoring the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives. Kiwara further recommended recruiting additional staff for the PSRS, including deployment to regional offices, and increasing the budget allocation to strengthen the Secretariat's operational capacity and meet the demands of a changing economic and technological environment.

A limited number of staff have undergone specialised training in modern recruitment techniques, thereby limiting the sophistication of evaluation processes. Indeed, research indicates that few, if any, PSRS employees were specifically trained as recruiters or selectors; staff were specialised in fields such as human resources management and public

administration rather than in recruitment, necessitating targeted training to enhance institutional efficiency and effectiveness. These capacity constraints are compounded by connectivity issues, meagre budgets for running and maintaining the e-government infrastructure, and inadequate interoperability of ICT systems, all of which further undermine the Secretariat's operational effectiveness (Ponsian, 2023; Deogratias & Tefurukwa, 2024).

Timeliness and adaptability also remain problematic. When ministries require urgent staffing, the centralised procedure may not respond quickly enough. Kiwara (2018) indicated that PSRS operational methods occasionally impeded or slowed hiring processes, resulting in declining service quality when posts stayed vacant. A further significant challenge involves skills mismatches. Siyao and Chishami (2025) observed that job announcements for library professionals did not consistently align with the competencies required in contemporary digital library settings, suggesting that competency frameworks may not keep pace with evolving skill demands.

The move toward digital operations has encountered practical difficulties. Saad and Itika (2024) found that the e-recruitment system has not yet fully realised its intended benefits, citing challenges such as user navigation difficulties, restricted accessibility in regions with poor internet connectivity, financial limitations, and insufficient integration with other government data systems.

4.6 The fragmented Link between Hiring and Performance Evaluation

The most significant shortcoming identified by this analysis is the disconnect between recruitment and performance management systems within the public service. Although both functions are essential components of human resource management, they operate under separate legal frameworks, are administered by distinct institutional entities, and lack meaningful integration. Recruitment is governed by the Public Service Act (Cap 298 R.E 2023), which assigns responsibility to the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS), whereas performance management falls under the purview of the President's Office, Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSMGG), and is implemented through the Public Employee Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) within individual ministries.

This institutional fragmentation gives rise to several challenges. First, there is no structured mechanism for feeding performance evaluation data back into recruitment planning, even though existing regulations require that such information be used to inform decisions related to training, appointments, and performance-based sanctions. Second, the competency frameworks used in recruitment and performance appraisal are misaligned. The National Audit Office has observed that public institutions often fail to develop comprehensive competency profiles for their staff, relying instead on generic schemes of service that inadequately capture specific competency needs. Third, there is little continuity across the employee lifecycle, from hiring through ongoing performance management. Evidence suggests that PEPMIS results are rarely utilised in administrative decision-making, except when required for compliance with promotion-related regulations. Moreover, research

indicates that PEPMIS implementation has been hindered by persistent challenges, including employee scepticism, insufficient funding, limited technical proficiency among staff, and weak leadership commitment.

Additionally, the Public Service Regulations (2022) mandate that all public servants sign performance contracts with their immediate supervisors. However, these agreements are frequently treated as bureaucratic formalities rather than as tools for professional growth. Ultimately, the lack of cohesion between recruitment and performance management undermines the integrity of the public service human resource lifecycle. Without a unified competency framework across the public sector, it becomes difficult to identify objective skill gaps or design targeted interventions to enhance staff capacity.

4.7 Consequences for Public Service Delivery

The ultimate measure of PSRS success lies in its contribution to the quality of public service. The evidence indicates mixed outcomes. On the positive side, openness and uniformity have likely diminished blatant instances of patronage. Applicants now have greater assurance of impartial evaluation, and appointees are more likely to hold the required formal qualifications.

Conversely, skills mismatches and capacity limitations suggest that formal qualifications alone do not guarantee effective job performance. Delays in filling vacancies, as documented by Kiwara (2018), have direct repercussions: services are interrupted, remaining personnel become overburdened, and citizens experience longer waiting times. The fragmentation between recruitment and performance management means that even when recruitment successfully identifies high-calibre candidates, frameworks for nurturing their performance are not adequately connected to the hiring process.

4.8 Potential of Current Reforms

Recent policy changes offer promise for addressing persistent challenges. OATS represents a substantial advancement in assessment methodology, enabling simultaneous standardised testing of large applicant groups and improving accessibility through distributed testing centres. Mandatory examinations for senior officials address a previous gap by extending rigorous assessment to leadership positions. The comprehensive public service audit, initiated in December 2025, is directly relevant for systematically identifying skills deficiencies to guide recruitment planning. Enhanced digital platforms, including the e-Mrejesho feedback system, create new opportunities to incorporate citizen feedback.

Analysing the findings together reveals a clear pattern: the PSRS has succeeded at making hiring transparent and uniform, but it struggles to link recruitment with actual job performance. The synthesis shows three main problems. First, recruitment delays leave posts vacant for long periods, directly harming service delivery to citizens. Second, skills mismatches persist, as candidates hired often lack the competencies required for modern digital roles. Third, and most critically, recruitment and performance management operate in complete separation. The PSRS hires people but has no role in evaluating their on-the-job performance, while ministries evaluate performance but have no input into hiring criteria.

This means even well-selected candidates lack systematic support or accountability for delivering results. Comparing these findings with studies from Rwanda and Ghana (Kiragu & Mutahaba, 2020) confirms that centralisation alone is not enough; without formal links between hiring and performance systems, recruitment reforms cannot fully create a results-oriented public service.

5.0 Conclusion

This analysis has explored the role and impact of the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat in fostering a results-oriented culture within the Tanzanian public service, with particular attention to the relationship between its legal mandate and real-world operations. The evidence presents a nuanced picture: notable progress in establishing transparency, uniformity, and professional standards coexists with ongoing difficulties related to institutional capacity, processing speed, skills relevance, and lack of cohesion with broader performance management systems. The PSRS has effectively embedded merit-based selection principles and developed mechanisms offering unprecedented access to government job opportunities. The Ajira Portal, despite initial operational hurdles, marks a considerable advancement in process openness and efficiency. Recent initiatives such as OATS, compulsory senior position assessments, and the extensive workforce audit demonstrate a clear intent to strengthen the link between hiring practices and subsequent performance outcomes. Nevertheless, the fundamental weakness remains the significant separation between recruitment and performance management functions. Until these critical areas are more cohesively linked, systematic channels for performance data to inform recruitment strategies are established, and the competency framework is aligned, the PSRS's ability to drive results-oriented performance will be inherently constrained. Likewise, addressing limited capacity and skill mismatches is essential for the Secretariat to consistently achieve both efficiency and quality.

The statutory framework establishing the PSRS offers a robust foundation for meritocratic hiring. However, its ultimate effectiveness depends heavily on institutional strength, resource availability, and the degree of collaboration with other human resource functions. Closing the divide between law on paper and its application requires focused attention on these influencing factors, not simply legal text amendments. The creation of the PSRS was a pivotal milestone in Tanzania's ongoing public sector modernisation. Unlocking its full capacity to contribute meaningfully to a high-performing public service will require sustained effort to address highlighted deficiencies, along with a commitment to synchronising its legal basis, institutional capabilities, and daily operations, all in pursuit of a government apparatus that delivers meaningful results for all citizens.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations directly address the identified gaps and problems.

First, the study found a complete separation between hiring functions under the PSRS and post-hire performance evaluation, the latter of which is managed by individual ministries. Therefore, the Public Service Act should be amended to legally mandate formal linkages between recruitment and performance management systems, including aligned competency frameworks and systematic data sharing between the two functions. Second, the study found that many PSRS staff lack specialised training in modern recruitment methods, which limits the sophistication of candidate assessments. Consequently, continuous professional development in competency-based interviewing, psychometric testing, and digital assessment tools should be made mandatory for all recruitment personnel.

Third, the study found that prolonged recruitment processes disrupt service delivery, as critical posts remain vacant for extended periods. Thus, staffing levels at the PSRS should be increased to match workload demands, and clear expedited procedures should be established for urgent vacancies where service delivery is at imminent risk. Fourth, the study found persistent mismatches between job specifications and actual workplace demands, particularly for digital and specialised roles. Therefore, regular mandatory reviews of job descriptions and assessment criteria should be instituted to ensure they remain relevant to evolving, results-focused work environments.

Fifth, the study found that performance appraisal data is never used to inform recruitment planning, representing a lost opportunity for evidence-based hiring. Hence, a formal system should be developed to channel anonymised and aggregated performance data back to the PSRS to identify systemic skills gaps and refine hiring criteria over time. Finally, the study found no existing longitudinal data on how PSRS-selected recruits actually perform once placed in their jobs. Therefore, future research should track recruitment performance over time and conduct comparative studies of international best practices on integrating recruitment with performance management systems.

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