



Path dependence in decentralised recruitment and selection in local government authorities in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, Tanzania government has adopted decentralization reforms as a tool to improve the performance of recruitment and selection in Tanzania's local government. Invariably, the reforms have failed to achieve the envisaged goal. Various studies have documented different reasons which attributes to this shortfall such as the low capacity of local government, corruption and nepotism in recruitment and selection. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the historical background of centralized regime in recruitment and selection. This study employed path dependency theory to investigate the shortfall of decentralized recruitment and selection reform in Tanzania. To this end, the article adopted a qualitative approach with comparative case study design. To this end, Chamwino District Council and Dodoma City council were selected for analysis. A purposeful sample of 50 respondents was selected, and the sample size was determined by the level of saturation. The actual research began with the analysis of various documents related with recruitment policy, recruitment authorities, quarterly and annual meetings of recruitment and selection. This was followed with 40 interviews and four focus group discussion with respondents from the two cases. Thematic approach was adopted for data analysis and the findings shows that, there is a strong link between the change of policy and regulations of recruitment and selection and the actual performance in the process and outcome of recruitment and selection especially, the legal architectures, resource flows, and entrenched administrative routines which still preserve central government oversight and control of recruitment and selection in local government authorities. Reliance on central government recruitment for local government staff should be checked and the institutions and capacity of local government in recruitment should be developed. This includes overhauling the obsolete legal framework which constrains the transformative potential for decentralized recruitment.

Keywords: Decentralised Recruitment, Institutional Reform, Institutional change, Path Dependence, Local government

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective recruitment and selection process is regarded as a cornerstone for effective human resources management [HRM] system because it ensures that the organization is well resourced with the required number of staff with the right quantity and quality. The effective recruitment and selection of employees is regarded as a fundamental HRM activity which if managed well can have a significant impact on organizational performance (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2006). Conceptually, recruitment implies the process of attracting and generating a pool of candidates to apply for a particular job while selection involves choosing the best candidates out of several applicants for a particular job or appointing qualified candidates based on a set of criteria. According to Bah et. al. (2022), recruitment is a set of activities an organization uses to attract job candidates who have the required abilities, relevant knowledge and the appropriate values and attitudes for the job in question. According to Dick-Sagoe (2020) the key recruitment channels used to attract applicants include: advertisements in local newspapers; recruitment agencies/search firms; corporate websites; specialist journals; encouraging speculative applications; employee referral schemes, and national newspaper advertisements.

A well-functioning recruitment and selection system plays an important role in ensuring that public institutions attract, assess, and select candidates with the skills, qualifications, and professional competencies required to effectively perform public service tasks (Sigma, 2018). However, the effectiveness of recruitment and selection is also influenced by the way decision-making authority is organized and distributed within the public service. In this regard, recruitment system can broadly be categorized as centralized, decentralized, and partially decentralized (hybrid) system, depending on where authority for recruitment and selection is located. A centralized recruitment system concentrates key recruitment and selection functions within a central government institution or human resource authority, whereas a decentralized system distributes such authority among individual departments, regional branches, local authorities, or



managers. Decentralization is therefore a talent acquisition approach in which decision-making on recruitment and selection is moved closer to the institutions or units with immediate knowledge of their staffing needs, thereby promoting greater responsiveness, contextual understanding, and flexibility (Lameck, 2015).

To this end, effective recruitment is regarded as the most important instrument in local government because local government institutions are designated to provide services which are responsive to local needs and citizens expectations. Therefore, the mix of skills and competencies which reflect the local needs is necessary for the effective functioning of local government (Lameck, 2015). This recognition is echoed in many countries across the globe which have decentralized their recruitment and selection systems to local government authorities to achieve this goal (Mudalige, 2019). Therefore, the decentralized recruitment and selection give local government authorities the ability to recruit the people who best fit in their local environment and who can deliver services in accordance with the preferences of the local population (Saito, 2001). This assertion has been disconfirmed by empirical studies which have consistently revealed that many countries in Africa such as, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Mali just to mention the few, have decentralized their governance system of recruitment and selection to subnational levels but the central government still remain in control of decentralized recruitment and selection. In general, the national level governments continue to preside over local government recruitment and hence undermining the intended goal of the reforms (Kessy, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2019).

However, although these countries share some similar characteristics of centralized administrative system of recruitment, some of them like Rwanda has made substantial progress towards effective decentralization by granting more authority to local governments authorities in recruitment of local staff (Mudereri et al., 2025). In Tanzania, the decentralization reform of recruitment and selection can be dated back in 1990s. By then, the reform was implemented as part of a local government reform program. The actual implementation started in 1998 with local government reform policy paper which mandated for the decentralized recruitment and selection. Since then, different policies and legislation have been amended to facilitate decentralization by devolution particularly in Human Resource Management (Kalufya et al, 2018). Originally, the decentralization reform for recruitment and selection was triggered by the failure of centralized system to deliver to the expectation of the people (Shangali, 2009). This shortfall pressed for a new arrangement in which local government can exercise its power to recruit the required number of staff in terms of quality and quantity. To advance this reform, the government formulated the 1998 Policy Paper on Local Government Reform (URT, 1998), which was implemented in phases through the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP), commencing in 2000. The policy also led to the creation of local government recruitment board which lasted for few years before its abolishment. The board was abolished because it was accused of failure to recruit the required number of local government personnel and its functions were shifted back to central government with local government playing minimal role (Lameck, 2015).

Five years later, the government report shows that compliance with recruitment procedures in the public sector was approximately 67 percent (Ahmed et al., 2019). Following that, the government formed Public Service Recruitment Secretariat as an institution to manage all matter related with recruitment and selection in Tanzania public service. Ten years later, the secretariat automated its recruitment processes using online recruitment portal (Malekano, 2021). Since then, the e-recruitment and selection have been functioning through the Ajira portal and aptitude and psychometric tests are used to enable enrolment of staff in Local Government Authorities (Deogratias and Tefurukwa, 2024). Empirical research work of (e.g. Kalufya et al, 2018; Mudalige 2019; Ahmed et al. 2019, Malekano, 2021; Kessy's, 2023; Kalufya et al, 2018; Yiga & Wandiba, 2017; Kinemo et al, 2015) show that despite all the efforts of decentralized recruitment and selection, public service recruitment still features corruption, nepotism, costs and delay in recruitment decision-making. The Public Service Act of 2019 and its accompanying regulations of 2023 introduced reforms aimed at strengthening the recruitment and selection system within Local Government Authorities in Tanzania. However, despite these reforms, it remains unclear to what extent Historical institutional arrangements and practices continue to constrain the effective implementation and performance of the decentralized recruitment and selection system. Existing studies have largely focused on contemporary factors such as institutional capacity, corruption, nepotism, and administrative challenges, while relatively limited attention has been given to the historical development and persistence of centralized recruitment and selection practices and how these historical background shape current reforms. To address this gap, this study employs path dependence theory to examine how historical institutional arrangement and practices influence the implementation and performance of decentralized recruitment and selection in Tanzania. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which historical patterns of centralized continue to shape the functioning of decentralized recruitment and selection at Chamwino District Council and Dodoma City Council.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Government of Tanzania has undertaken various reform measures to improve the performance of the decentralized recruitment and selection system, particularly following the implementation of the Public Service Act of 2019 and its accompanying regulations of 2023. The stated objective of these reforms is to enhance the autonomy of



local Government Authorities (LGAs) to recruit staff with the qualifications, skills, and competencies required to meet local delivery service's needs. Earlier, the Government introduced decentralized reforms through the 1998 Policy Paper, which sought to strengthen the role of local government in managing their own affairs, including human resource management. However, the implementation of these reforms was constrained by institutional capacity gaps, corruption, nepotism, and political interference, which contributed to the recruitment of inadequate qualified personnel. Consequently, the Government subsequently shifted some recruitment functions back towards centralization as a means of strengthening meritocracy, standardization and control over public service recruitment. Despite subsequent reforms aimed at decentralizing recruitment and selection empirical studies (Kalufya et al., 2018; Mudalige, 2019; Ahmed et al., 2019; Malekano, 2021; Kessy, 2023) indicate that recruitment at the local government level continues to face challenges, including corruption, nepotism, high recruitment costs, delays in decision making and limited institutional autonomy. Moreover, the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) continues to play a significant role in recruiting and deploying staff to Local Government Authorities across different regions of Tanzania. Thus. Although recruitment functions have formally been decentralized, important, centralized rules, procedures and oversight mechanisms remain in operation leaving LGAs with limited autonomy to determine and recruit the number and type of staff required to meet their local needs (Kessy, 2023).

More recently, the Government has adopted the electronic recruitment system through the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat as a mechanism for improving efficiency, transparency, and standardization in public service recruitment. However, the introduction of these reforms has not completely resolved the tension between the need for localized recruitment, which allows LGAs to respond to their specific human resource needs and the continued reliance on centralized control to promote meritocracy, standardization and protection against corruption. This situation raises an important question concerning why centralized recruitment practices and institutional arrangements continue to persist despite successive reforms intended to decentralize recruitment and selection. Therefore, understanding the influence of Historical institutional arrangements on the current performance of decentralized recruitment and selection is essential for explaining the persistence of this tension in Tanzania's local government system.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the nature of decentralized recruitment and selection in Chamwino district council and Dodoma City Council in Tanzania.
- ii. To explore the institutional reform measures taken by government to improve recruitment and selection process in Chamwino District council and Dodoma City Council in Tanzania.
- iii. To explore the influence of path dependence in the performance of decentralized recruitment and selection in Chamwino District council and Dodoma City Council.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Historical Institutionalism Theory and Path dependence

Historical Institutionalism is an institutional theory perspective which postulates that the change in policy regimes or governance systems may influence the change of institutions overtime. Historical Institutionalism stands those institutions are basically path-dependent: a choice made four decades ago can still influence our lifestyles today. The underlying reasons are that it provides a backdrop against which issues arising from the here and now can be painstakingly worked through (Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 2014). Apart from that, the theory assumes that institution arrangements are not neutral technical tools but durable configurations of rules, practices and vested interests that generate momentum. Once a set of rules and routines is established it shapes actors' expectations, investment decisions, and strategies in ways that make reversal or wholesales replacement difficult. This suggests that institutions are living histories rather than neutral machines as they carry memories, habits, and interests that shape how new policies are received and used. Once a set of routines and power relations is in place, it creates momentum in which small decisions at critical moments tend to push the system along a path that becomes increasingly difficult to reverse (Pierson, 2000). From this perspective, change is rarely a clean break as it is usually gradual, contested and shaped by the distribution of authority embedded in existing institution.

One of these factors is history and contingency. Path dependence emphasizes that past events and choices have a persistent influence on present and future outcomes. Contingent Events: A path is initiated by a specific, often random or non-purposive, event or set of conditions. These initial conditions can seem insignificant but have long-lasting consequences. Self-Reinforcing Mechanisms. Positive Feedback Loops: Once a path is established, mechanisms reinforce it, making development along that specific trajectory increasingly entrenched (Pierson, 2000). Increasing Returns: As more people or organizations adopt a certain technology or practice, the benefits of that choice increase, further solidifying its position. Irreversible Investments: Significant, unrecoverable investments in particular



technologies, skills, or infrastructure make it costly to change course. Coordination Costs: It becomes difficult to shift from a path when it requires coordinating efforts across many different actors who are already invested in the current system (Pierson, 2000). Technological Interrelatedness: Systems often become path-dependent when different technologies and processes are deeply intertwined, making it hard to change one element without disrupting others. Lock-In Resistance to Change: The combination of historical events and self-reinforcing mechanisms leads to a state of "lock-in," where the system becomes resistant to change and difficult to displace (Susanne et al., 2022).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Nature of recruitment and selection process in local government authority in Tanzania

Over the years, the governments in different countries across the globe have decentralized their recruitment and selection functions to subnational governments. Contrary to the expectation, the performance of the decentralized system has often failed to meet the standard and expectation set in the policy paper and government guidelines (Lameck, 2015). For example, although recruitment and selection in countries such as Uganda and Ghana are formally decentralized to local government, significant elements of central control remain. In these arrangements, the district officers are empowered to appoint their own health officials but with tight control by national level government (Kalufya et al., 2018; Mrutu & Ngowi, 2016; Yiga & Wandiba, 2017; Kessy, 2023). In Tanzania, a study by Kinemo et al. (2015) shows that the recruitment and selection function was decentralized in name by the policy paper but most of the important functions remains highly centralized. This involvement of different ministries creates delays in decision making of human resources matters. Scholars like Kessy (2023), Mrutu and Ngowi (2016) have observed that partial decentralization can strengthen or undermine public service efficiency, depending on how responsibilities are shared. While decentralization enhances responsiveness and context-awareness, centralized oversight can reinforce standardization, equity, and control especially in systems previously plagued by clientelism. Although the district health managers had theoretical local autonomy, this eventually became funneled into tight decision-making avenues as embedded fiscal and administrative controls from the central level with donor funding modalities (Aku Kwamie et al., 2016).

Kalufya et al. (2018) shows that the management of HR in a decentralized context has a significant relationship with both transparency and accountability. Moreover, findings reveal that political support, technology and culture moderate the relationship between Management of HR in a decentralized context and public sector governance.

2.2.2 Historical Institutionalism and Continuity Change

Historical institutionalism provides a useful lens for understanding both continuity and change in recruitment and selection practices within Tanzania's local government authorities (LGAs). From this perspective, institutional practices are shaped by historical trajectories in which established rules, organizational routines, and administrative cultures influence subsequent reforms (Mrutu & Ngowi, 2016). Institutional cultures that have developed over time can make existing practices appear natural and appropriate, while resource dependencies, established budgetary arrangements and accustomed methods of work can constrain the adoption of alternative institutional arrangements (Ahmed et al., 2019). Similarly, training and professional socialization may reinforce established ways of working by encouraging public officials to reproduce familiar administrative practices (Kessy, 2023). These factors help explain why institutional arrangements may persist even when formal reforms seek to alter them.

At the same time, historical institutionalism recognizes that institutions are not static. Change can occur when governments introduce new policies, laws, organizational structures, technologies and administrative procedures in response to changing political and institutional circumstances. In Tanzania, reforms aimed at decentralizing recruitment and selection have sought to shift some responsibilities from central government institutions towards LGAs. The introduction of new legal and procedural arrangements, including changes in recruitment procedures and the use of electronic recruitment systems, represent an important departure from earlier centralized practices. These reforms have contributed to greater standardization, transparency, documentation, and formal opportunities for LGAs to participate in recruitment and selection. However, the coexistence of new arrangements with historically established practices demonstrates that institutional change does not necessarily imply complete institutional transformation. Rather, change may occur alongside significant elements of continuity. In Tanzania, although LGAs have increasingly been involved in identifying staffing needs, preparing vacancies and participating in interviews, important recruitment and selection functions remain strongly influenced or controlled by central institutions. This reflects a pattern in which new decentralized procedures are layered onto, rather than completely replacing, established centralized arrangements. Consequently, the formal appearance of decentralization may coexist with the persistence of centralized authority in key stages of the recruitment process.

Evidence from Tanzania and other African countries illustrates this tension between continuity and change. Studies of recruitment and public-sector management in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Ghana indicate that reforms have created formal structure for greater local participation, while central institutions continue to exercise substantial



control over local recruitment decisions (Kalufya et al., 2018; Mrutu & Ngowi, 2016; Yiga & Wandiba, 2017; Kessy, 2023). Thus, recruitment may be described as decentralized in formal or procedural terms, while substantive decision-making authority remains concentrated at the centre. This suggests that the historical legacy of centralized recruitment continues to shape the implementation of decentralization reforms.

From a historical perspective, therefore, the Tanzanian case demonstrates continuity through change. The recruitment system has changed in its procedures, technologies and formal allocation of responsibilities, but important elements of the previous centralized institutional path have remained embedded in the new system. The result is neither complete continuity nor complete transformation, but an institutional arrangement in which new decentralized practices coexist with persistent centralized controls. This provides a basis for examining whether current recruitment reforms represent substantive decentralization or primarily a procedure modification of a historical centralized recruitment regime.

2.2.3 Evidence of Path Dependence in Decentralized Recruitment and Selection

Despite the adoption of decentralization reforms intended to enhance local government autonomy, evidence from Tanzania and other African countries suggest that recruitment and selection remain influenced by centralized institutional practices and informal mechanisms. In Tanzania for example, Kinemo et al, (2015), in their study of human resource management in Chamwino District Council and Dodoma Municipal Council, found that the two Local Government Authorities (LGAs) had limited autonomy over recruitment and selection, as the function was largely performed by the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat. The LGAs were mainly involved in identifying staff needs and proposing budgets while approval of staffing requirements involved the Ministry responsible for public service and the respective sector ministries. The involvement of multiple central government institutions was found to contribute to delays in decision-making on human resource matters. These findings suggest the persistence of centralized recruitment arrangements despite the formal decentralization of human resource management functions. Similarly, Kalufya et al. (2018) found that decentralized human resource management has significant relationship with transparency and accountability in the public sector. Their findings further indicated that political support, technology and organizational culture moderate this relationship. This suggests that the effectiveness of decentralized recruitment and selection is not determined solely by formal institutional arrangements but also by the broader political, technological and organizational environment within these reforms operate.

However, formal decentralization does not necessarily eliminate informal practices that have been developed under previous institutional arrangements. Lameck (2015) found that actors involved in recruitment and selection in Tanzania often deviated from formal rules because their decisions were influenced by informal network. Networks involving local politicians and public officials were reportedly used to favor relatives and associates in recruitment decisions. Such practices demonstrate how informal institutions can persist alongside formal reforms and continue to shape recruitment outcomes, thereby limiting the realization of merit-based and transparent recruitment. Similar concerns have been reported in other contexts. Ahmed et al., (2019) observed that the dominance of government as the main employer in Zanzibar raised concerns among stakeholders regarding the quality and fairness of recruitment practices. In Uganda, Yiga and Wandiba (2017), in their study of Kiboga District, found a significant relationship between recruitment and selection processes and local government performance. Their findings suggest that improvements in recruitment practices can contribute to improved local government performance.

Taken together, these studies and findings indicate that decentralization of recruitment and selection does not necessarily translate into substantive local autonomy. Instead, centralized decision-making structures, bureaucratic procedures, informal networks and political influences may persist alongside formal decentralization reforms. For path dependence perspective, such persistence suggests that existing institutional arrangements and practices can constrain the direction and effectiveness of subsequent reforms. Consequently, the formal transfer of recruitment responsibilities to local governments may coexist with continued central oversight and established informal practices, thereby producing a form of decentralization in which local autonomy remains partial and uneven.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study used a qualitative case-study design combining in-depth, semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions (FGD's), and systematic documentary review to capture how recruitment and selection processes unfold in practice in Chamwino District and Dodoma City. The two Councils were purposively selected because they were among the local government authorities earmarked for the implementation of the recruitment and selection reforms, including the reintroduction of recruitment boards at the local government level.



3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative comparative case -study design to examine how decentralized recruitment and selection reforms are implemented in practice at the local government level. The design enabled an in-depth exploration of institutional processes, experiences and practices in Chamwino District Council and Dodoma City Council, which were purposively selected because they were among the councils earmarked for implementing recruitment and selection reforms, including the reintroduction of local recruitment boards. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions (FGDs) and systematic documentary review, allowing the study to compare the two cases and triangulate participants' accounts with relevant policies, regulations, procedures and official documents

3.3 Population and Study Area

Dodoma City Council is one of the local government authorities upgraded into a city in 2018. The city administers Tanzania's national capital, serving as a central hub for the country's government operations and politically it is led by the mayor and administratively by Municipal Director. The city has a population of 765,179 and it employs over 2,700 public servants across 13 core administrative departments. On the other hand, Chamwino District Council is one of the seven administrative districts in the Dodoma Region with a recorded population of 486,176 people as of the 2022 census. It is one of the seven administrative districts in Tanzania's Dodoma Region which employs hundreds of civil servants across various departments (such as health, education, and livestock). It is located in central Tanzania near the nation's capital but also it serves as a rapidly growing local government unit operating under the President's Office of Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG). It is responsible for providing public services, enforcing district by-laws, and spearheading development initiatives across the district Administratively, the district is headed by District Executive Director and spans several core administrative and specialized departments (URT, 2022a).

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The study employed purposive sampling to identify participants who had direct involvement in recruitment and selection processes and possessed relevant contextual knowledge. The participants were drawn from key categories, including the Chief of Administration and Human Resource Management, Chairpersons of employment boards, principal human resources officers, council representatives and employees from the Administration and Human Resource Management, Community Development and ICT units. Participant selection was guided by their relevance to the study, availability, accessibility and willingness to participate.

A total of 23 participants from Chamwino District Council and Dodoma City Council participated in the study through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Of these, 10 participants were interviewed individually, comprising CHO1, CH02, HR1, HR2, J1, J2, C1, D1 and CP. The remaining 13 participants participated in three FGDs with each group consisting of four to five participants. The first FGD, coded Group 1, comprised five employees from Administration and Human Resource Management Department at Chamwino District Council: HR3, HR4, HR5, HR6 and HR7. The second FGD, coded Group 2, comprised four employees from the Administration and Human Resources Management Department at Chamwino District Council: HR8, HR9, HR 10 and HR11. The third FGD, coded Group 3, comprised four participants drawn from the ICT and Community Development units: ICT01, CD1, CD2 and CD3. The sample size was determined by the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection continued until participants' responses became repetitive and no substantially new information were emerging. The final sample of 23 participants was therefore considered adequate to provide sufficiently rich and diverse information for the study.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and systematic documentary review. interviews and FGDs were conducted with 23 participants, comprising local government Human Resources Officers, members of employment boards and employees from relevant departments. The FGDs consisted of 4-5 participants drawn from HR, ICT and Community Development departments and focused on their shared experiences, perceptions and challenges regarding the implementation of decentralized recruitment and selection. Interview and FGD guide were used to ensure consistency while allowing participants to provide detailed responses to matters understudied. Primary field data were triangulated with relevant legal, policy and administrative documents, including Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) report, quarterly and annual report, and minutes of local government employment and recruitment board meetings.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic approach. Interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) data, together with documentary materials were transcribed, anonymized and systematically coded to identify recurring themes, patterns and counterexamples. Initial codes were clustered into higher-order themes such as transparency gains, authority gaps, digital inclusion, informal practices and institutional continuity. The emerging themes were continuously



reviewed and refined throughout the analysis process.

Findings derived from participant accounts were systematically cross-checked against relevant official documents, including delegation notices, standard operating procedures, public service regulations, and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) materials. The process has helped to minimize misinterpretation and provide a basis for assessing the relationship between formal institutional rules and recruitment and selection practices as experienced in everyday local government settings

Triangulation across interviews, FGD's and documentary evidence strengthened credibility of the analytical interpretations by enabling them to compare different sources of evidence, identify areas of convergence and divergence and develop a more comprehensive understanding of institutional change and the persistence of established recruitment and selection practices.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Directorate of Research and Publication of Mzumbe University in July 2025, following the review and approval of the data collection instruments. Subsequently, the research approval was presented to the relevant local government authorities in the study areas for further authorization. Following a review of the research objectives, data collection instruments and proposed procedures, Chamwino District Council and Dodoma City Council granted permission to conduct the study. The study adhered to ethical principles throughout the research process, particularly with regard to data collection, data management and use, confidentiality and publication of the research findings. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of the information provided. The information collected was used solely for academic purposes and was handled in accordance with the ethical requirements of the University and relevant research guidelines.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 The Composition of Local Government Recruitment Board

The respondent HR2 presented,

"The local government Employment Board is made up of a chairperson, the District Administrative Secretary (DAS), a council representative, a PSRS representative, the DHRO as secretary, and a regional office representative. This way, the board combines community representation, professional guidance, and proper administrative oversight" (Respondent HR2, 20TH May 2025).

In the same response to the issue of composition of the employment boards, respondent CHO2 stresses,

"Previously, the councilors were the one interviewing and selecting new recruits as a result their performance was questionable due to favoritism and corruption with lack of expertism. The new employment boards have taken into consideration professional expertism of the people included in the composition". (Respondent CHO2, 19TH May 2025).

When respondents were asked about the power structure and role play by starting with the question of who controls the process of recruitment and selection within the local government. Respondents had different views. Despite improvements in board composition, a key issue identified in the field is the limited autonomy of local governments in executing recruitment processes. While LGAs can identify vacancies and facilitate interviews, critical tasks such as shortlisting, exam preparation, and result validation are managed by PSRS. Interestingly, views from respondents that the PSRS retain full control over recruitment to avoid backsliding into favoritism and corruption. This tension illustrates the complex dynamics between decentralization and accountability in public administration. Scholars such as Kessy (2023), Mrutu and Ngowi (2016) have observed that partial decentralization can either strengthen or undermine public service efficiency, depending on how responsibilities are shared. While decentralization enhances responsiveness and context-awareness, centralized oversight can reinforce standardization, equity, and control especially in systems previously plagued by clientelism, Ibrahim (2024). Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for recruitment.

In this theme, intentionally, the researcher was to discover information on how the facilitation of the new standard operating procedure (SOP) plays in the recruitment and selection process Respondent CHO1 was able to comment

"Recruitment and selection in local government follows the standard operating procedures in the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat Rules of Operation 2021, which set out the authorities and limits for local government in hiring". (Respondent CHO1, 19TH May 2025).

The comments from interview CHO1 supporting that the SOP that govern recruitment and selection in the local



government is provided in the public service recruitment secretariat rule of operation 2021. The 2021 PSRS reforms constitute a deliberate institutional effort to centralize recruitment under a dedicated secretariat, thereby standardizing processes across regions and reducing local-level arbitrariness. These results supported by a Study by Yiga and Wandiba (2017) in Uganda conducting Correlation Analysis on recruitment process and procedure with local government performance in Kiboga district, Uganda. The results show that there is positive relationship between recruitment process and standard procedure and local government performance in Kiboga district, Uganda ($r=0.677$) The results show that as recruitment process and procedures increases, local government performance also increases and the reverse is true in kiboga district, Uganda.

However, this centralization introduces a complex dynamic: while it bolsters uniformity and reduces corruption risks, it simultaneously constrains local government autonomy whereby LGAs are relegated mainly to conducting oral interviews, with key functions like candidate shortlisting, question preparation, and final placement managed by the secretariat. This tension is consistent with Mdee and Mushi (2021), who demonstrate the divergence between formal accountability arrangements and the actual distribution of responsibility in Tanzania's local governance system also Lameck (2015) found that despite reforms intended to empower local government authorities to recruit and manage their personnel, central government continued to retain substantial authority over recruitment.

4.1.2 Recruitment and Selection in the Two Local Governments

This theme encapsulates the shift in the ways in which decentralized recruitment and selection process has been undertaken following the implementation of delegation of Functions and Powers of The Secretariat to Conduct Recruitment Process. Respondent CHOI was able to comment showing the way recruitment is applied in local government, that recruitment and selection is now more structured, transparent and accountable.

"Our recruitment is guided by the 2021 PSRS rules, which are there to make the process structured, fair and transparent. We advertise jobs in the same standard way for everyone, interviews are run by professionals, and results are shared openly. Every candidate is expected to have at least a diploma, with the same clear pass marks for all. And once we finish, the whole process is monitored and reported back to PSRS within 30 days" (Respondent CH01, 19TH May 2025).

In addition, Respondent CHO1 was able to add to what was said by respondent CHO2 by commenting that.

"In our local government, recruitment is something we do together with PSRS and the Employment Boards for purpose of maintaining fairness and transparency. Every year we look at where we have gaps, get the needed approval, and then advertise the jobs openly on the secretariat's website. Candidates first sit for written and oral interviews, which are scored fairly using clear guidelines. In the end, those succeed are posted to their stations, given proper induction" (Respondent CHO2, 19TH May 2025).

Similarly, FGD's 2 supported the change in rules by adding that the recruitment strategies implemented provided that, the candidate seeking the job needs to the use of Ajira portal to lodge an employment application. That now, the Ajira Portal websites facilitate recruitment and selection in the local government. One of the Respondent FGD's 2 commented.

"Recruitment today is no longer like the old manual system. Now, every local government has its own PSRS online account where we review applications and shortlist candidates for interview. This new approach has made the process quicker, more transparent, and much easier for everyone to follow" (Respondent FGDs 2, 03RD June 2025).

Audit reports by the National Audit Office of Tanzania. (2022, 2023 and 2024) revealed the same with this study: have acknowledged the Secretariat's effective role in minimizing informal requests ("kimemo") and favoritism, thereby improving transparency and fairness. Also, similar evidence from Tanzania shows that adoption of the Ajira Portal has contributed to the modernization of public-sector recruitment, although challenges related to users' knowledge and access remain (Kisinja & Tuzza, 2023). However, these operational gains, though, did not lead to equivalent changes in the substantive authority of local government. This finding is consistent with Lameck (2015), who observed that despite decentralization reforms, significant recruitment authority remained at the central level, limiting the autonomy of local government authorities. In the present context, key statutory powers approving long lists, endorsing test content, supervising examinations, and the legal power to overturn any delegated recruitment move are still all concentrated in central institutions under the Public Service Act of 2002 and PSRS Rules. This arrangement allows central political actors to interfere with or overrule local recommendations. In practice, LGAs often do centrally prepared steps but also transfer some control back to the employer; digitization, while also increased procedural traceability, has not of itself handed over the gatekeeping levers that make final decisions causing continuity of the central government dominating recruitment and selection at the LGA.



4.1.3 Change in Recruitment and Selection Policies and Procedures

This theme expresses the changes in recruitment policies and implementation of new procedures to the decentralized recruitment and selection in the local government.

Respondent FGD's 2 revealed and commented that

"Since adopting the system, the number of applicants has jumped from 30-40 to over 500. For example, in July 2025, we recruited 6 drivers, 4 Record assistants, and 4 office secretaries. We did this by advertising on the Ajira portal, selecting the candidates through the system, and publishing the results online" (Respondent FGDs 2, 19TH May 2025)

In reflecting on the reliability of the data the comment given by C2 was not an end to the said argument as he also continued cementing,

"Nowadays, it's difficult to show favoritism to any applicant because all the marks given must be agreed upon by the board members or at least not differ greatly from each other. This ensures fairness and prevents any one member from influencing the outcome unfairly" (Respondent C2, 2RD June 2025 02:50 PM).

When respondent was asked are the new procedure simpler than previous procedure. One among the discussants revealing, one of respondents in FGDs 1 was able comment

"Using the system has made recruitment much easier because all applicants' documents are safely stored online, unlike before when papers could get lost and applications and short-listing candidates for interviews. The secretariat prepares the questions for both written and oral exams. Our main role is simply to support PSRS during the written interview" (FGD's "1", 4TH June 2026).

The results are in line with the study by Kisinza and Tuzza, (2023) who revealed that, the introduction of standardized marking schemes, training on recruitment procedures, and the use of digital platforms like the Ajira Portal highlighted how technological innovations and capacity-building perceived usefulness, ease and credible improved recruitment and selection in local government. While, challenges such as the reforms fell short of distributing the pivotal levers of recruitment remained for example, the rights holder to make up long lists, content of tests, supervision of location and assignment of marking duties lay mostly within central bodies such as the Public Service Recruitment Committee's Secretariat (PSRS), and control over payroll budgets for hiring continued from one central. The result is a formal but incomplete decentralization in which LGAs carry out many procedural steps, yet with neither power to take final decisions nor adequate financial resources for persuading others. This quasi-decentralization is rather harsh. Path dependence: entrepreneurs point out that past institutional arrangements generate self-reinforcing trajectories long-established legal architectures, budgetary controls, personnel career structures, and administrative routines all produce increasing returns for central control. These legacies are long-lasting investments (skills, anticipations, oversight mechanisms) that render it costly and unlikely for radical departures to be taken. In the Tanzania case, reform is a little change laid on top of an entrenched centralized system as it has changed tools and procedures for recruitment but not the real underlying structures of incentives or veto points to decide outcomes. These ways of maintaining political identity and power mean that translated into tangible change, their function is to produce more than just a natural structural background for bureaucratic action. Where LGA lacks HR capacity or legal status, central backgrounding is justified in terms of quality control and risk avoidance; ancillary factors include fear of lawsuits, objections from interest groups, or tarnishing one's reputation internationally. The overall result is that operators on the ground are laid low spiritually. They know how to implement systems, but not how any of these processes contribute to them; Local accountability thus comes under the greatest strain while lasting vulnerabilities persist in one form or another due largely to patronage and its peculiarities. As a result, procedural modernization improved the speed, granularity, and auditability of outcomes but did not in any sense dismantle institutional relationships which define who ultimately decide what gets done.

4.1.4 The Position of Local Government in Recruitment and Selection

This them expresses the role, authority, and responsibilities that local government authorities (LGAs) hold in managing the hiring process for vacant posts at public service within their jurisdiction.

Respondent CHO1 presented,

"Every January, we look at the vacant posts in our local government and prepare the budget for new staff. Next, we request an employment permit from the Permanent Secretary at the President's Office. Once it's approved, we send the recruitment permit with the required qualifications to PSRS, who then advertise the jobs online. After the Secretariat schedules the interviews, we get the venue ready for the written exams and inform the Employment Board to handle the oral interview and final selection" (Respondent CHO1,



19TH May 2025)

Respondent CHO1 continue adding

“Before the Secretariat was involved, local government advertised job posts and received applications directly at the director’s office after getting the employment permit. Now, with the collaboration between PSRS and Employment Boards, all applications are submitted through the Ajira portal. We access the system through our accounts and select candidates from there” (Respondent CHO1, 19TH May 2025).

The comment given by respondent CHO1 was not an end to the proclaimed comment as from one FDG 2 also cemented,

“Now, with the system, every local government has its own account, we go in, shortlist the qualified candidates we need, and then the Secretariat takes over for the written exams. The Secretariat conducted that part. Our role is to prepare the venue for the written examination only”. (FGD’s2, 4TH June 2025)

Looking at these steps, you see that the local government is the initiator of the process which involves establishing vacant posts, preparing budget for the new recruits in the financial year, seeking employment permits, and preparing advertisements. While other things like preparation of both interview questions and answers is been done by the secretariate and allocation of new recruits is been done by the secretariate.

This viewpoint resonates with findings from studies that caution against premature decentralization without sufficient institutional capacity and accountability mechanisms (Kalufya et al., 2018; Kessy,2023). Even though, the PSRS dominant role, in this sense, is justified as a safeguard to ensure meritocracy, fairness, and transparency in recruitment processes which is critical goals aligned with Tanzania’s broader public sector reform agenda aimed at improving service delivery and good governance. Two more interacting obstacles further curtailed the reform's sway. Firstly, LGAs have neither the technical HR capacity nor any testing expertise to design, defend, and legally justify such complex recruitment decisions; this situation effectively hands these powers back to the central regions, for they are always required in one form or another. Second, sociotechnical and institutional conflicts restricted data access, uneven digital literacy, and risk-averse central management all can directly shape the overall impact of e-recruitment on local autonomy. From a sociotechnical perspective, recent studies have pointed out that while technology may increase transparency it does nothing to change incentive systems or allow command of budgets, the entrenched administrative routines which support Centre-level control. The nature of institutional changes regarding recruitment and selection process

To establish the level of awareness, the researcher made the use of The National Employment policy of 2008, level of adjustment of the qualifications and the president SAMIA SULUHU HASSAN 4R’s philosophy, 2022 which is a cohesive National Agenda aimed as a guiding framework she introduced to steered Tanzania through political, social and economic transformation.

4.1.4 Established Organization for Recruitment and Selection in Local Government

This them encapsulates the recognized formal structure or body that is experienced by participants within local government which is officially set up to handle hiring process for staff within local government authorities.

The respondent CHO1 presented,

“In Chamwino District, the recruitment and selection processes are handled by our Employment Board which has clear authority to recruit and promote employees within the district. Most recently, in the 2024-2025 budget year, we carried out recruitment for several positions, for example, six posts for drivers, four for Office Management Secretaries grade II, and four posts for Office Records Management Assistant grade II, all through the board”. (Respondent CHO1, 19TH May 2025)

Nevertheless, respondent CHO2 stresses the employment board as,

“Local government employment boards were reshuffled so that now we have a board formed by a panel with professional representation, and it operates free from interference from the council. Once the board has made its decision in a meeting, that’s final” (Respondent CHO2, 19TH May 2025)

The reshuffle of the employment board has brought introduction of professional expertism to the Employment board as a catalyst for effective recruitment compared to the previous board which complies of only people within LGA, PSRS, we did not include. This study is consistent with international best practices, which suggest that assessors should have the expertise necessary to evaluate candidates objectively and effectively.

Empirical studies by Kinemo et al. (2015); Mrutu and Ngowi, (2016) and Lameck, (2015) revealed that centrally recruited staff often had poor job fit and higher attrition rates, largely due to a lack of understanding of local contexts.



By contrast, decentralized recruitment allows for more accurate matching of candidates with the roles they are intended to fill. Furthermore, a study by Kalufya et al. (2018) underscore that decentralization alone is not sufficient it must be accompanied by political support, devolve the control autonomy on decisions making to some HRM practices to local government authorities, digitalize government, professionalization, procedural transparency, and accountability mechanisms, all of which are present in the Chamwino district and Dodoma City council model.

4.1.5 Compliance Mechanism for Fair Hiring Practices

In this theme, intentionally, the researcher was to discover information on how local government institutions ensure merit-based selection in their recruitment processes by focusing on evaluating whether recruitment processes in local government aligned legal standards, ethical norms and governmental policies. In response to this, respondent CHO2 was able to comment,

“Following the implementation of laws and guidelines such as The Public Service (Delegation of Functions and Powers of the Secretariat to Conduct Recruitment Process) of 2019 and Public Service Recruitment Secretariat Rule of Operation (2021) to govern recruitment and selection within local government. Whereby the DHRO as a secretary of the board and member from secretariate (PSRS) as the members of the board within local government are responsible given mandate by the law and guideline to ensure compliance with these policies and procedures”. (Respondent CHO2, 19 TH May 2025).

When recruitment procedures are followed systematically, they can enhance fairness, transparency and compliance with legal requirements. Participants in this study, however, indicated that historically, recruitment within LGAs was affected by councilor’s influence, favoritism and other forms of local interference which contributed to exclusionary practices and inefficiencies. These accounts are consistent with broader findings in the Controller and Auditor General’s reports, which have repeatedly documented weaknesses in human resource management, internal controls and compliance within local government authorities (National Audit Office of Tanzania [NAOT], 2022). The persistence of these institutional weakness helps explain the continued reliance on centralized recruitment controls and provides an important context for understanding the limited substantive autonomy of LGAs in the current recruitment and selection system. The formalized recruitment procedures including the use of the Ajira Portal for vacancy advertisements, establishment of recruitment committees comprising PSRS members, and detailed interview processes represent a significant shift towards embedding meritocracy and transparency. This hybrid governance model, combining centralized oversight with local involvement from DHRO and Board Chairperson, allows some retention of local contextual knowledge while enforcing national recruitment standards, consistent with HI’s view of institutional layering whereby, centralized monitoring and enforcement mechanisms further strengthen the integrity of the recruitment process. The PSRS maintains a strong presence throughout all stages, from employment permit issuance to participation in interview panels and approval of final recruitment decisions. The Secretariat’s power to mandate re-interviews in cases of non-compliance ensures adherence to procedural justice, transparency, and efficiency. This reflects institutional displacement, where centralized rules replace prior informal local discretion, thereby reducing opportunities for favoritism while ensuring accountability. These mechanisms align with broader governance reforms designed to combat corruption and enhance institutional integrity, as emphasized in NAOT (2022). Moreover, significant theme emerging from the findings is the tension between enforcing national meritocratic standards and preserving local representation. While centralized recruitment procedures promote equality and fairness, they also limit local discretion, raising concerns that community-specific employment needs and local knowledge may be overlooked. This dilemma echoes wider debates in decentralization and governance that stress the importance of maintaining some degree of local autonomy to ensure social legitimacy and responsiveness (Kessy, 2023).

Together, these perspectives illustrate how deeply embedded historical patterns continue to guide organizational behavior while shaping not only what institutions do but also how they imagine what is possible. These findings align closely with theoretical perspectives on path dependence and historical institutionalism, which argue that early institutional choices shape future possibilities by creating self-reinforcing patterns (Helen, 1999)

4.1.6 Clear Delegation of Hiring Authority

In this theme, the researcher asked the respondent on the delegation of hiring authority and how does this delegation affect the speed and efficiency of hiring decisions in the public service. Respondent CHO2 was in the position to comment

“In local government, recruitment is handled jointly by PSRS and the Employment Board. Every year, we identify vacancies, plan the budget, and request an employment permit from the President’s Office. Once it’s approved, PSRS advertises the job, shortlists candidates through the Ajira Portal, and manages the written interview, PSRS assigns the successful recruits, and we complete the process with induction and reporting” (Respondent CHO2, 19 TH May 2025).



Comments from respondent CHO2 revealed that recruitment and selection functions within local government have been operated by a joint between local government and secretariate (PSRS). The Secretariat's representatives at oral interviews possess significant influence to assign scores and determine successful candidates, leaving local employment boards with limited substantive authority. This phenomenon aligns with Thelen's (2014) assertion that institutional change often occurs through displacement rather than layering, where new institutions override old ones, creating tensions over authority and legitimacy. Interestingly, this tension is acknowledged in the field data, with respondents from FGD's indicating that local government departments feel "less involved" in recruitment than during previous, more decentralized systems. One FGD participant noted that their role has shifted primarily to logistical support such as providing venues, further underscoring the symbolic nature of local participation under the current regime. This disempowerment of local actors highlights a core dilemma in decentralization and governance reforms documented in contemporary research across Tanzania and Africa: the tension between centralization aimed at improving meritocracy and the need for local autonomy to maintain legitimacy and responsiveness (Kalufya et al., 2018).

Kessy (2023) stated that lack of clear delegation of authority where local governments have responsibility, but not decisive control poses risks to the long-term sustainability and perceived legitimacy of the recruitment system. Historical Institutionalism highlights how such tensions, if unresolved, can provoke institutional friction, resistance, and eventual reform. The audit reports caution that while centralized control enhances fairness and transparency, it may simultaneously erode local government ownership and community trust, potentially undermining the broader goals of decentralization and inclusive governance (Deogratus & Tefurukwa, 2024). This tension resonates with the institutional trade-off identified by Thelen (2014): balancing national meritocratic standards against the need for local contextual knowledge and representation.

4.1.7 History and Contingency Factors

In this theme, intentionally, the researcher aimed to explore how historical developments and contingent events have influenced the institutional trajectory of the organization. Specifically, to uncover the ways in which past decisions, structure, and unplanned occurrences have shaped current practices and constrained possible alternatives. The intention was to explore the manifestation of path dependence within the organization context, focusing on how early institutional choices have continued to influence subsequent actions and decisions making processes. Respondent CHO1 was in the position to comment

"The way we run things now still follows what was put in place in 1990. Yet, control of staffing continues to reside with national ministries, undermining the intended outcomes of the reform. It's almost impossible to change because everyone is used to that system" (Respondent CHO 1, 19TH May 2025)

The findings show that history continues to cast a long shadow over the organizations' present-day operations. Participants frequently emphasized that many of the rules, routines, and administrative practices in use today have rooted directly from choices made during the institutions' early years.

Again, respondent HR2 was able to comment

"Quit contrary to what delegation means, local government should lead the process and the secretariate should be supervising our work to see if things follow the procedure. But now it is like local government, we are supervising the process because everything needed like list of applicants and documents and placement of new recruits are prepared and done by PSRS. There are no checks and balances" (Respondent HR2, 7th May 2025).

This reflection captures the sense of institutional inertia that has taken root, where established routines have become self-reinforcing and difficult to challenge (Thelen & Longstreth, 1992). Over time, these inherited structures have created a form of stability that simultaneously limits flexibility and innovation. At the same time, participants pointed to moments when change briefly seemed possible. The policy reform period of 2019 – 2022, for example, was described as a "critical juncture" failed to provide a window of opportunity that disrupted long-standing patterns. As respondent HR1 recalled,

"When the reforms came in, everyone thought it would be a fresh start, but after a few months, things went back to the old ways" (Respondent HR1, 19TH May 2025).

These accounts suggest that while unexpected or contingent events can challenge the status quo, their lasting effects are often muted by the strength of existing institutional arrangements. Many respondents attributed this persistence to the power of organizational culture, resource dependencies, and entrenched training system as said by Kessy, 2023: Ahmed et al., 2019 that you can't just replace a system that people have been trained in for years; it's part



of our organizational DNA.

Both results are in alignment with historical institutionalism and path dependence, which posit the idea that early institutional trajectories close off possibilities for later actions. A self-reinforcing pattern (Pierson 2000; Thelen 1999) appears to be seen here. Which of course is the pattern in this study: there were multiple causes. Institutional cultures that had been in place for a long time made the familiar seem natural and right, while resource dependencies, budget allocations and methods of work, among other things, make it simply impossible to do anything else (Kessy, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2019). Further, training and professional socialization ensured that staff would continue to reproduce traditional practices. These are, in sum, the types of factors (gravity, rigidity, and pressure) contributing to the inertia of structure so powerfully reported by our respondents. Yet the study also shows that people are not entirely prisoners of institutions. Phases like the 2019–2022 reform phase temporarily disturbed such habits, providing new room for maneuver. As the data demonstrate, however, such disruptive moments were generally short-lived and followed by a reversion to established patterning, a dynamic that Pierson (2000) and Thelen (1999) term "reactive sequences," as attempts to reform instead primarily work to shore up already existing pathways.

The implications, therefore, draw a Janus-faced picture of the significance history has for organizations. On the one hand, it constrains: past choices predict boundaries of what is possible (or legitimate). On the other hand, it stabilizes: such inherited routines supply order and predictability, and thereby a shared framework of meaning, by which program offices can negotiate the uncertainties they encounter. In that sense, history serves as an anchor and a compass, tethering organizations to their true nature while helping them chart a course. Finally, this study highlights that institutional change requires confronting the weight of history: habits enshrined in routines, resources locked into physical plant and systems, attitudes stuck in concrete. Having a sense of how continuity and contingency interact is crucial to grasping why, when change does happen, it so frequently occurs within rather than outside the boundaries of the past.

4.1.8 Self-reinforcing Mechanism

The results suggest that strong loops are a source of robustness for routines in the study organizations. It has always been this way because these are practices and structures that have accumulated over time; they make sense based on the nature of the activity or need from which their own legitimacy and sociality unravel such that it can be performed again. Respondent CHO2 explains:

"So, once it becomes normal, and it is not unusual, then that's just the default position and people stop thinking about anything else other than this is how you live your life" (Respondent CHO2, 19 TH May 2025)

These are insights into institutional dynamics that we can describe as "Path Dependency: Pervasiveness" (Pierson, 2000). Respondents keep on identified several spheres in which Path Dependence was highly prevalent. The modalities of administration, the funding models and patterns, and methods of communication have become so institutionalized that few, if any, alternatives to this model are even considered. As participant from FGD's 1 stated:

"You suggest an alternative, but it's basically thumbs down: 'That's not how we do things,' and that will be the end of it" (Respondent FGD's1, 2RD June 2025).

Further, data indicates that feedback loops are not just the result of social momentum. They are not a sprouting of human hearts, but a product of the institutional rewards and social norms that foster them. This wouldn't make sense: by adhering to stock processes, employees demonstrate the stability of a workhorse as they adhere to company beliefs, while on the other hand, deviating from these systems makes them become Mavericks. Thus, in the long run, this results in a feedback loop of conformity rewarded and innovation effectively punished.

"Even when I try to sway pieces, sooner or later I end up realizing that the smoothest route is following what truth was getting down with" (Respondent^{HR} 1, 19 TH May 2025).

There is surprising evidence that self-reinforcing feedback works as an invisible in a way that stabilizes routine while closing off avenues to transformative change. The discoveries shed light on how reinforcing dynamics even more brilliantly help solve what keeps institutional arrangements alive for so long at all. Such mechanisms are highlighted by historical institutionalism, and its theoretical mediating considerations also engender their own reproductive logic. In as much as this is true, existing patterns of activity can appear familiar and rational to organizational participants (Pierson, 2000). Once practice becomes entrenched, writes Pierson (2000), it produces "increasing returns": The more widely it's adopted, the more efficient it gets; the harder it is to dismantle or circumvent.

In the current article, three linked modes of self-reinforcement surfaced. The first is cognitive inertia, in which people develop an attachment to established ways of doing things, and come to regard it as a given that "this is the only way" things should be done. Eventually, this will shape how issues are framed and what solutions appear to be possible.



The second is normative enhancement, in which the culture of an organization reinforces conformity regardless of whether someone marches to his or her own drummer. So, the people who fit into tradition get rewarded, and the ones who don't get pushed away. As respondent CHO2 commented

"We are required to implement the recruitment requirements by following the procedure outlined by PSRS. Since Secretariate (PSRS) has power to revoke the decision made by the employment board" (Respondent CHO2, 19TH May 2025)

The third is material underpinning: Money, resources, and technology are all biased toward the current state of things. So, the alternatives become either too expensive or moot with that backdrop. Together, these mechanisms generate what Bell (2013) calls institutional layering: new measures are slapped on top of existing institutions rather than altogether supplanting them. That's why reforms that are well-intentioned don't fundamentally alter things. Such efforts only serve to reinforce the earlier pattern rather than to overcome it. Notwithstanding, it's also important to remember that self-reinforcement has a potentially positive side. It supplies stability and predictability, leaving institutional memory which can be advantage for both organizations' effectiveness and trust. The difficulty arises when these mechanisms obstruct adaptive reform in response to changing external demands particularly those driven by political interference, which ultimately fosters corruption. The evidence tentatively suggests that these obstacles are not simply fixed by the implementation of new policies or structures. It means changing the cognitive, normative, and material conditions that make up the existing order.

In short, positive feedback mechanisms provide the invisible infrastructure of continuity within organizations. They ensure that practices align with collective norms and incentivize rewards to reinforce conformity. And they replicate them from one group of actors to the next across generations. The combination of historical events and self-reinforcing mechanisms leads to a state of "lock-in," where the system becomes resistant to change and difficult to displace. Similarly, a study by Rugeiyamu and Msendo (2025) revealed that existing theory of decentralization is not properly working in Africa

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that effective recruitment and selection in local government cannot depend solely on procedural tools such as the SOP and Ajira Portal. A system of comprehensive institutional reform is needed instead. However, clearly defined legal mandates, transparent recruitment policies, stakeholder participation, and well-trained personnel are all important ingredients of a system that operates fairly and efficiently. There is a need for the Government to cement the ambit application of Historical Institutionalism theory that demand clear legal mandate and specific decentralized regulatory frameworks to run the processes and procedures in recruitment and selection. This is in line with the study of added that the prospects of decentralization require policy and legislation changes and proper implementation, granting local authorities' autonomy to administer development based on their priorities and capacitating local authorities to be accountable, responsive, and implement inclusive development

Trying to get away from its past centralized bureaucratic system, decentralization has simply produced another great, centralized system. It is inefficient, corrupt, and full of favoritism when pushed without genuine institutional reform. On the other hand, any system of recruitment and selection that is built upon sound institutional foundations offers procedures that are more transparent and inclusive than anything else people have imagined up to this point. From the study, one stopping point becomes the influence of path dependency, including historical bureaucratic procedures, purely manual recruitment processes, and deeply rooted patronage systems. This continuity slows down reform and makes technical interventions largely pointless.

Inertia perpetuates these inheritances. For change to be effective, new legal and institutional frameworks must be created that will act as levers of deliberate change to stop past practices in their tracks, establishing norms where meritocracy and professionalism hold sway. Moreover, doing so calls for a series of definite steps to be taken in practice. The government should first create a performance-based review mechanism for service delivery officials and a rotation system that does not turn the positions into permanent citadels of power. Then, by reinforcing its human resources staff with greater investments and continued training, an organization can establish checks on the quality of its administrative staff hiring and their fairness. Thirdly, one way of increasing transparency and at the same time bringing conformity to rules, severely reducing opportunities for manipulation, is to make use of digital monitoring tools which are linked with the Ajira Portal.

Finally, citizen oversight boards, along with stakeholder consultations, must become a regular feature of the recruitment process. This method brings results that better serve community needs and sets a check on local governance exercised by the people. If measures can be taken to give institutional boards of recruitment greater strength, then both the results and the legitimation of these processes will be sustainable in the long run. This ensures that, unlike



"technological fixes," which might well provide temporary success, staff are kept on for their ability rather than sacked, turnover is reduced and continuity maintained within organizations.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study and conclusion, the following recommendation needs to be put forth: first, strengthen the legal and institutional framework for decentralized recruitment, The President's Office-Public Service Management and Good Governance (PO-PSM & GG), in collaboration with the Public Service Recruitment Secretariat (PSRS) should review the existing laws, regulations, guidelines and recruitment procedures to clearly define the respective roles and decision-making powers of PSRS and local government authorities (LGAs). The review should particularly address the current imbalance where LGAs participate in the implementation of recruitment but retain limited substantive authority over key decisions. Clear functional boundaries should be established for vacancy identification, shortlisting, preparation and approval of assessment tools. Examinations, interviews, selection and final appointment. This would strengthen accountability, reduce duplication and delays and ensure that decentralization is accompanied by corresponding decision-making authority.

Second, strengthen the substantive recruitment autonomy of LGAs while retaining appropriate central oversight. The findings indicate that procedural decentralization has not been matched by equivalent transfer of authority to local governments. The PSRS should therefore shift progressively from direct control of operational recruitment functions towards a regulatory, quality-assurance and oversight role. LGAs that demonstrate adequate capacity and compliance should be granted greater authority to conduct recruitment and selection, subject to standardized national guidelines, periodic audits and post-recruitment reviews. This would preserve national standards while allowing council to respond more effectively to their specific staffing and labour-market needs.

Declaration of Interest

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