Exploring Human Resource Practitioners' Experiences of Using the Public Employee Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) in Managing Employee Performance in the Public Service

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Abstract— The Public Employee Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS) was introduced in Tanzania to strengthen employee performance management across the public service. Despite wide implementation, limited attention has been given to how Human Resource (HR) practitioners experience the system within everyday institutional contexts. This study examined practitioner experiences across five dimensions: system usability, organisational support, user competence and training, technical challenges, and effectiveness in supporting the full performance management cycle. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model and the Job Demands–Resources Theory, a qualitative interpretivist design was employed, using semi-structured interviews with twenty-five purposively selected HR professionals. Findings reveal that usability is undermined by slow responses, complex navigation, and inconsistent functionality. Organisational support is weakened by limited leadership involvement, poor coordination, and inadequate technical assistance. User competence is compromised by insufficient practical training, while technical challenges stem from weak infrastructure and unreliable connectivity. Although PEPMIS enhances documentation and transparency, its effectiveness is undermined by a misalignment between system demands and institutional capacity. The study concludes that effective digital performance management requires stronger organisational commitment, improved infrastructure, and sustained user capacity development.

Keywords: Human Resource Practitioners' Experiences; PEPMIS; Employee Performance; Public Service.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become central to public administration reform, with governments adopting digital performance management systems to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability (Dunleavy et al., 2023; Heeks et al., 2022; Scholta et al., 2024). Countries such as Estonia and Finland demonstrate how integrated digital human resource platforms can improve real-time monitoring and reporting accuracy (Toots, 2023). In Asia, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, and Japan have advanced appraisal systems that support data-driven decision making (Kim & Lee, 2022; Abdullah, 2023; Janssen et al., 2023). However, a growing debate questions whether digitalisation automatically produces performance gains or merely digitises existing bureaucratic inefficiencies (Heeks et al., 2022; Dunleavy et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024). Evidence from African countries including Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, and South Africa shows persistent challenges related to usability, infrastructure readiness, and user capability (Agyekum, 2022; Ngwenya, 2023; Asare et al., 2023; Manda et al., 2023). This raises a broader debate between technological optimism, which assumes digital tools inherently enhance governance, and institutional realism, which argues that outcomes depend on organisational capacity and contextual alignment (Heeks et al., 2022; Dunleavy et al., 2023).

In Tanzania, the Public Employee Performance Management Information System was introduced to standardise performance agreements, midyear reviews, and annual appraisals across ministries, agencies, and local government authorities. Despite nationwide rollout, many institutions report inconsistent utilisation, limited functionality use, and delays in performance reporting (Kombo et al., 2023; Mtebe & Raphael, 2022; Scholta et al., 2024; Ngwasa & Kipangula, 2025a). This situation reflects an unresolved debate over whether system presence equates to system effectiveness. Existing studies in Africa largely emphasise technological barriers while offering limited insight into how HR practitioners experience system usability in routine work (Agyekum, 2022; Asare et al., 2023; Manda et al., 2023). Research from Malaysia and South Africa highlights the importance of organisational support during digital reform, yet little is known about how such support is experienced within Tanzanian institutions (Abdullah, 2023; Ngwenya, 2023). Similarly, training and competence are recognised as essential for adoption, but debate persists over whether digital underperformance stems from individual skill deficits or structural organisational constraints (Venkatesh et al., 2020; Heeks et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2022; Ng'wasa & Kipangula, 2025). Technical and operational challenges such as unreliable connectivity are documented regionally, yet their cumulative impact on practitioner workflow in Tanzania remains underexplored (Manda et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024; Ngwasa & Kipangula, 2025b).

To address these debates, this study is guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory. TAM explains how

perceived usefulness and ease of use shape technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2020), yet it is increasingly debated for assuming stable system conditions and rational evalu ation under persistent technical instability (Heeks et al., 2022; Janssen et al., 2023). The JD-R Theory explains how organisational resources buffer job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2021), but debate persists regarding whether public institutions can realistically mobilise sufficient resources in resource-constrained environments (Dunleavy et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024). By integrating these frameworks, the study moves beyond adoption metrics to examine how usability, organisational support, competence, technical constraints, and workflow alignment interact in practice. Without such evidence, policymakers risk overestimating digital reform success while underestimating hidden workload intensification, declining system credibility, and gradual disengagement among HR practitioners.

Objective of the Study

To examine HR practitioners' experiences and use of PEPMIS in public sector institutions, focusing on usability, organisational support, competence, technical challenges, and system effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study combines the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory because neither alone fully explains HR practitioners' experiences with PEPMIS. TAM explains perceptions of usefulness and ease of use but does not capture organisational and workload conditions, while JD-R explains how job demands and resources shape work experiences but not how users judge system usability or acceptability. Together, the two theories provide a more comprehensive explanation of practitioners' interactions with PEPMIS.

Theoretical Literature Review

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model, developed by Davis (1989), explains digital system acceptance through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which shape attitudes, behavioural intentions, and actual utilisation (Venkatesh et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2022; Janssen et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024). TAM assumes stable system conditions and rational user evaluation; however, this assumption is strongly debated in digitally constrained public sector environments where instability, slow processing, and administrative pressure actively shape perception formation (Heeks et al., 2022; Kombo et al., 2023; Dunleavy et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence from Ghana, Kenya, and Malaysia shows that systems initially accepted at rollout later attract negative evaluations due to freezing, peak period congestion, and unreliable reporting (Agyekum, 2022; Asare et al., 2023; Abdullah, 2023; Manda et al., 2023). This exposes a critical debate between adoption-focused interpretations of TAM that treat acceptance as an early-stage cognitive outcome and longitudinal process perspectives that emphasise evolving perceptions under sustained exposure and operational strain (Venkatesh et al., 2020; Dunleavy et al., 2023). The risk of privileging early adoption metrics is overestimating long-term system credibility while overlooking declining motivation and hidden resistance. While TAM's strength lies in explaining cognitive evaluations of usability and value, its weakness lies in underestimating emotional strain, coping behaviour, and institutional pressures that reshape perceptions over time (Diefenbach & Anders, 2022; Kroll & Moynihan, 2023). This study applies TAM to examine how repeated interaction with PEPMIS across performance agreements, midyear reviews, and annual appraisals reshapes perceived usefulness and ease of use, and integrates it with JD-R theory to capture the emotional and structural dimensions of sustained digital system engagement in resource-constrained public institutions.

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory

The JD-R Theory, developed by Bakker and Demerouti in the early 2000s, explains employee performance and wellbeing as outcomes of the balance between job demands (such as workload and procedural complexity) and job resources (such as leadership, autonomy, and infrastructure) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2021; Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). A central assumption is that organisations can mobilise resources to buffer rising demands; however, this assumption is increasingly debated in digitally mediated public sector environments where fiscal constraints, bureaucratic rigidity, and fragmented accountability limit adaptive capacity (Heeks et al., 2022; Dunleavy et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from African public institutions shows that unstable digital systems generate workload intensification, repeated task execution, hidden overtime, and stress (Mtebe & Raphael, 2022; Manda et al., 2023; Asare et al., 2023), raising debate over whether digital tools function as enabling resources or as mechanisms of surveillance and control that increase pressure and reduce discretion (Diefenbach & Anders, 2022; Kroll & Moynihan, 2023; Scholta et al., 2024).

While the theory's strength lies in linking workload and wellbeing, its weakness lies in underestimating structural constraints and cumulative emotional strain when demands rise without corresponding resources (Dwivedi et al., 2022). This study extends JD-R to the PEPMIS context by demonstrating how digital performance systems

intensify demands, destabilise the demand–resource balance, and shape sustained system use in resource-constrained public institutions.

Empirical Literature Review

Empirical research consistently documents usability problems in digital performance management systems, yet a deeper debate persists over whether dominant research designs misrepresent the nature of digital dysfunction itself (Kim & Lee, 2022; Agyekum, 2022; Mensah, 2020; Ngwenya, 2023). Large-scale quantitative studies prioritise statistical relationships between system instability and reduced acceptance. For example, Kim and Lee (2022) used a cross-sectional survey of 301 civil servants in Malaysia and concluded that unstable systems significantly reduce perceived ease of use. Similarly, Agyekum (2022), through a mixed-methods study of 238 public servants, identified slow speed and freezing as key barriers. While these findings reinforce the argument that technical instability undermines adoption, scholars increasingly question whether such designs can explain how usability problems restructure appraisal routines in practice (Mensah, 2020; Ngwenya, 2023; Abdullah, 2023). Critics argue that reducing complex workflow disruptions to Likert scale indicators produces methodological narrowing that risks confusing measurable dissatisfaction with lived organisational breakdown (Mensah, 2020; Ngwenya, 2023).

This has generated a sharper theoretical confrontation between positivist, variable-based explanations that treat usability as an independent predictor and process-oriented interpretations that conceptualise usability as an unfolding organisational condition (Kim & Lee, 2022; Agyekum, 2022; Ngwenya, 2023; Abdullah, 2023). Even qualitative studies often remain perception-centred without tracing cumulative effects across appraisal stages. The risk is analytical reductionism, where symptoms are catalogued but operational consequences such as deadline compression, administrative overload, and data distortion remain insufficiently theorised (Mensah, 2020). The present study addresses this concern by analysing usability as a longitudinal workflow phenomenon rather than a static technical defect.

A similarly intense debate surrounds organisational support and institutional embedding. Quantitative evidence from South Africa and Kenya reports low managerial engagement and weak coordination (Kim & Lee, 2022; Agyekum, 2022), reinforcing arguments that digital reforms lack sustained institutional backing. Yet scholars dispute whether leadership absence represents a simple implementation gap or reflects deeper governance logics embedded in public sector reform trajectories (Abdullah, 2023; Mensah, 2020; Ngwenya, 2023). Survey research frequently operationalises organisational support as a measurable construct, but critics contend that this masks variations in leadership responsiveness across reporting cycles (Abdullah, 2023). This tension reflects a stronger conceptual divide between

institutional input models that treat support as a fixed organisational resource and dynamic resource models that view support as temporally contingent and workload-sensitive (Kim & Lee, 2022; Abdullah, 2023; Ndahani, 2024). The risk is temporal flattening, where cyclical strain and peak period pressure are obscured by cross-sectional measurement. By tracing how delayed assistance and weak coordination accumulate strain over time, the present study reframes organisational support as a time-sensitive institutional variable rather than a static attribute.

Debates are equally pronounced in the competence literature. Mixed-methods and survey studies in Uganda, Ghana, and South Korea demonstrate that training improves system acceptance (Agyekum, 2022; Mensah, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2022; Ngwenya, 2023). However, these approaches often treat competence as an individual-level variable, overlooking departmental asymmetries and informal hierarchies (Abdullah, 2023). Emerging scholarship argues that uneven digital literacy produces internal dependency structures where a small group of skilled officers becomes indispensable (Ngwenya, 2023; Mensah, 2020). This exposes a fundamental debate between skill deficit frameworks that locate failure in individual inadequacy and structural capacity frameworks that interpret competence disparities as organisational inequality and resource imbalance (Mensah, 2020; Agyekum, 2022; Abdullah, 2023). The risk of privileging the former is policy misdirection, where additional training is prescribed without addressing uneven workload distribution, institutional design flaws, or support deficits. Existing empirical designs rarely explore how competence differences alter confidence, time allocation, or decision-making authority across performance stages (Kim & Lee, 2022; Ngwenya, 2023). The present study strengthens the structural argument by demonstrating how uneven competence reshapes workflow continuity and performance documentation across the appraisal cycle.

Technical and operational research reflects comparable tensions. Large surveys in Nigeria and Ethiopia attribute dysfunction primarily to infrastructure deficits such as connectivity and system errors (Toots, 2023; Agyekum, 2022), reinforcing arguments that hardware and network capacity are foundational barriers. While these findings underscore material constraints, critics warn against infrastructure determinism, where hardware limitations are treated as sufficient explanation while behavioural adaptation and institutional coping mechanisms remain underexamined (Ngwenya, 2023; Abdullah, 2023). A parallel debate concerns system effectiveness and workflow alignment.

Survey evidence from South Africa and Ghana identifies incomplete reporting and underused monitoring tools (Kim & Lee, 2022; Agyekum, 2022; Mensah, 2020), while Abdullah (2023) highlights workflow misalignment but does not trace cumulative workload consequences. This reveals a broader conceptual divide between transitional friction narratives that interpret digital weakness as temporary implementation

difficulty and structural misalignment perspectives that view system architecture as fundamentally disconnected from institutional routines (Abdullah, 2023; Ngwenya, 2023). The risk of fragmented approaches is explanatory isolation, where usability, support, competence, and infrastructure are analysed independently rather than as interacting forces. By integrating in-depth qualitative evidence across all stages of the performance management cycle, the present study responds to these collective debates and demonstrates how interacting constraints progressively reshape administrative burden, accountability structures, and institutional workflow over time.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist philosophy to examine how HR practitioners experience and interpret PEPMIS within public sector institutions. Interpretivism is appropriate where the aim is to understand socially constructed meanings and lived experiences rather than measure objective variables (Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Bryman, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Because the study focused on perceptions, interpretations, and contextual realities of system use, a qualitative approach enabled in-depth exploration of subjective experiences that quantitative methods would not adequately capture.

The population comprised HR practitioners in ministries, public agencies, and local government authorities who directly use PEPMIS. Purposive sampling was employed to select information-rich participants with sustained system experience (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). A total of 25 participants were interviewed, with sample size guided by data saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes emerge (Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allow flexibility while maintaining focus on key research objectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). An interview guide ensured consistency across sessions conducted face-to-face and online.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework, involving familiarisation, coding, categorisation, and theme development (see also Nowell et al., 2017; Bryman, 2016). Research quality was strengthened through credibility and dependability procedures, including alignment of interview questions with research objectives, inclusion of participants from diverse public institutions, and a transparent coding process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021; Saunders et al., 2019). These procedures ensured methodological rigour while remaining faithful to practitioners' lived experiences within the Tanzanian public service context.

Ethical standards were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews, participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of participant codes and removal of

identifiable details, while data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. These measures upheld participants' rights and aligned with established qualitative research ethics principles (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: System Usability

When asked about the ease of navigating PEPMIS during performance tasks, all participants interviewed in November 2025 reported persistent usability constraints linked to system speed and responsiveness. HR1 described severe slowdowns during peak appraisal periods: "When everyone is using it, the system almost stops moving and even a simple task takes forever." HR2 added that prolonged page loading disrupts workflow and intensifies deadline pressure. HR3 and HR4 reported frequent page freezing and partial loading, while HR5 explained that minor tasks become prolonged due to delays. These accounts indicate that the system lacks sufficient processing capacity to handle high user traffic, directly affecting timely appraisal completion and increasing administrative burden. The consistency of responses suggests that slow performance is not episodic but systemic.

Regarding navigation between performance agreements, midyear reviews, and annual appraisals, participants highlighted significant design problems. HR1 reported unclear icons and menus; HR3 observed that the system does not follow the logical sequence of the institutional performance cycle; HR4 noted unexpected redirection to the home page; and HR5 explained that search and filter tools often return outdated or incorrect results. When asked about system stability and functionality, respondents described data loss and instability. HR2 recounted losing entries during freezing, HR3 noted that saved entries sometimes disappear, HR4 described a system shutdown during midyear reviews, and HR5 stated, "You enter new data but the system still shows old information."

Analytically, these findings reveal both technical and design weaknesses that undermine reliability and user confidence. Through the Technology Acceptance Model, slow speed, unstable functionality, and unclear navigation reduce perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. From the Job Demands–Resources perspective, repeated data entry, extra time spent navigating, and uncertainty about data accuracy increase job demands without corresponding technological resources. Unless system capacity, stability, and user-centred design are improved, PEPMIS will continue to limit efficiency, data reliability, and effective performance management in public institutions.

Theme 2: Organisational Support

When asked about the level of organisational support available for working effectively with PEPMIS, all participants reported significant institutional gaps. HR6

explained that support ended after initial rollout: "Once the training ended, there was no follow-up or refresher support." HR7 noted that management assumes the system operates smoothly and rarely checks on user difficulties. HR8 highlighted poor communication about system updates, remarking, "We just find out things have changed when we are already inside the system." HR9 described delayed technical responses, while HR10 observed, "Everyone does their best, but there is no structured support system." These accounts indicate fragmented and inconsistent organisational backing that does not match the operational demands of digital performance management.

Participants described leadership engagement as limited and largely reactive. Attention increases mainly near deadlines, and follow-up meetings to address persistent system problems are rare. Resources were equally problematic: inconsistent access to reliable computers and internet, overstretched technical units, absence of practical internal guidelines, and weak departmental coordination were repeatedly cited.

From the JD-R perspective, inadequate training, technical assistance, and leadership involvement represent a shortage of essential resources, while digital system requirements increase job demands. From the TAM perspective, weak organisational support reduces perceived usefulness and ease of use, thereby limiting effective adoption. Strengthening leadership involvement, communication mechanisms, technical responsiveness, and coordinated support structures is therefore critical for PEPMIS to function as a reliable performance management tool in the public service.

Theme 3: Training

Regarding initial competence and training, all participants reported inadequate preparation. HR11 explained that the introductory training was brief and largely theoretical: "The training only showed us screenshots, not real system work." HR12 similarly observed, "We were taught concepts, not how to actually use PEPMIS," indicating the absence of hands-on practice. HR13 noted that sessions focused on general HR concepts rather than system-specific instructions. HR14 reported that officers were expected to begin system use immediately despite varying competence levels, and HR15 emphasised differences in digital literacy that were not considered during training. These responses demonstrate that initial competence building was neither practical nor tailored to user needs.

When asked about ongoing training or refresher opportunities, participants consistently reported the absence of structured follow-up support. HR11 noted that no refresher sessions were provided after rollout; HR12 explained that system updates occur without corresponding user training; HR13 indicated that refresher requests are often delayed due to limited budgets; HR14 observed that officers rely on a few

experienced colleagues for guidance; and HR15 stated, "You learn from colleagues because formal training is simply not there." In response to how competence influences performance management tasks, participants linked limited competence to reduced confidence, errors, delays, and dependency. HR15 remarked, "You are always afraid of making a mistake that cannot be reversed."

Through TAM, inadequate training reduces perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness because users lack confidence in navigating system features. From the JD-R perspective, insufficient training increases job demands by forcing independent learning and error correction without adequate organisational support. Sustained, practical, and role-based training is therefore essential for improving user competence and strengthening effective PEPMIS utilisation.

Theme 4: Technical and Operational Challenges

When asked about technical challenges, all respondents reported persistent barriers. HR16 highlighted unstable internet connectivity: "The system goes off and on depending on the internet, and you can never be sure it will stay stable long enough to finish a task." HR17 pointed to outdated office equipment that cannot support smooth system operation. HR18 noted long loading times for documents and attachments, delaying appraisal preparation. HR19 described frequent error messages during uploads that require re-entering information, while HR20 observed that system stability fluctuates by time of day, with afternoons being particularly unstable. These accounts demonstrate that technical instability is systemic, directly interrupting workflow continuity and task completion.

Operationally, participants described additional bottlenecks. HR16 reported prolonged loading between system sections, HR17 mentioned unexpected automatic logouts leading to loss of progress, and HR18 emphasised that multi-step navigation becomes time-consuming when system responsiveness is inconsistent. HR19 noted the system's inability to handle large uploads, while HR20 explained that entries often fail to save correctly, requiring repetition of tasks. These weaknesses were linked to extended working hours, reduced report accuracy, reluctance to use certain features, and increased reliance on manual workarounds. As HR16 concluded, "You spend more time fighting with the system than actually managing performance."

Through TAM, persistent technical faults reduce perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness because users cannot rely on the system for consistent task completion. From the JD-R perspective, repeated troubleshooting and manual compensation increase job demands without adequate technological resources. Unless infrastructure reliability, system optimisation, and technical support mechanisms are strengthened, PEPMIS will continue to operate below its intended effectiveness.

Theme 5: System Effectiveness in Supporting the Performance Management Cycle

When asked how effective PEPMIS is in supporting the overall performance management cycle, responses reflected operational concerns more than positive assessments. HR21 acknowledged the system's structural intention but stated, "The idea of the system is good, but the way it works makes the process harder, not easier." HR22 observed that although formats are standardised, tracking performance targets is difficult due to poor navigation. HR23 described PEPMIS as "more helpful as a storage tool than as a performance management tool," noting continued reliance on manual analysis. HR24 emphasised misalignment between system structure and departmental workflows, resulting in task duplication. HR25 explained that end-of-year appraisals become particularly problematic because the system slows down during peak demand. Collectively, these responses indicate that while PEPMIS provides foundational documentation support, it does not function effectively across the full performance management cycle.

Participants consistently reported weak support for continuous monitoring. HR21 noted that monitoring features exist but are rarely used effectively. HR22 stated that supervisors prefer manual tracking because the system does not present progress in a clear or visual format. HR23 remarked, "You cannot see progress at a glance," signalling the absence of dashboard features or summary views. HR24 identified data synchronisation problems across reporting levels, while HR25 explained that supervisors revert to physical files when the system becomes slow or unstable. Reporting was identified as one of the weakest areas. HR21 reported slow and sometimes failed report generation, HR22 observed incomplete data fields, and HR23 stated, "The reports are rarely complete, so we still sit down to compile our own versions." HR24 highlighted recurring formatting problems, and HR25 confirmed reduced reliability during peak reporting periods.

From a TAM perspective, limited reliability and usability reduce perceived usefulness and ease of use. From a JD-R perspective, system instability increases job demands by requiring manual workarounds without providing sufficient technological resources. Unless reporting accuracy, monitoring visibility, and workflow alignment are improved, the system's contribution to strengthening performance management will remain constrained.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that PEPMIS is constrained by serious usability limitations, including slow speed, system freezing, unclear navigation, and unreliable data saving. In line with the Technology Acceptance Model, low perceived ease of use reduces behavioural intention and actual system utilisation (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2022). The experiences of HR1 to HR5 and HR16 to HR20 therefore support TAM's central proposition that technological instability discourages adoption.

Empirical evidence from Kenya, Ghana, and Rwanda similarly identifies technical disruptions and complex interfaces as barriers to digital performance systems (Agyekum, 2022; Ngwenya, 2023; Manda et al., 2023). However, whereas much of the literature attributes underperformance mainly to infrastructure deficits, this study extends the debate by identifying predictable appraisal peak congestion as a system design and capacity planning weakness, aligning with digital governance scholarship that emphasises implementation gaps rather than purely technical failure (Heeks et al., 2022; Scholta et al., 2024).

The findings on weak organisational support further reinforce the JD-R Theory, which argues that increased job demands must be balanced with adequate organisational resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2021). Respondents reported minimal leadership engagement and slow technical assistance, confirming JD-R predictions and agreeing with studies from Malaysia and South Africa (Abdullah, 2023; Kim & Lee, 2022). Yet, contrary to reform assumptions that formal mandates ensure institutional adaptation, the absence of clearly designated PEPMIS focal persons reveals a governance vacuum, supporting African e-government critiques of institutional fragmentation (Heeks et al., 2022).

Training, competence, and infrastructural constraints further deepen this comparative analysis. Consistent with TAM, limited practical training reduces perceived usefulness and ease of use (Venkatesh et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2022), and respondents described short, largely theoretical training without refresher mechanisms, echoing findings from Uganda and Ghana (Agyekum, 2022; Asare et al., 2023). However, this study advances prior research by identifying intra-departmental digital literacy inequalities that create dependence on a few skilled officers, reframing competence gaps as structural bottlenecks rather than individual weaknesses (Manda et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024). Similarly, unstable connectivity and outdated hardware confirm infrastructure-related barriers documented in Nigeria and Ethiopia (Toots, 2023), yet the identification of adaptive coping strategies such as shifting tasks to off-peak hours adds nuance consistent with implementation theory perspectives on street-level adaptation (Heeks et al., 2022).

Finally, while reporting and monitoring weaknesses align with evidence from South Africa and Malaysia that digital systems often fail to replace manual processes (Kim & Lee, 2022; Abdullah, 2023; Janssen et al., 2023), this study departs from transitional explanations by demonstrating structural misalignment between PEPMIS workflows and Tanzania's established performance management cycle. In agreement with contemporary digital reform scholarship, the findings suggest that beyond technical stabilisation, meaningful effectiveness requires systemic redesign aligned with institutional routines (Dunleavy et al., 2023; Scholta et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Public Employee Performance Management Information System is not effectively supporting performance management in the Tanzanian public service. It is constrained by slow speed, system instability, weak navigation, limited organisational support, insufficient training, and unreliable infrastructure. These weaknesses disrupt appraisal processes and undermine monitoring, progress tracking, and reliable reporting. As a result, the system's intended benefits remain unrealised due to deficiencies in design, infrastructure, training, and institutional support.

Recommendations

In response to the findings, PEPMIS improvement should prioritise system stability, institutional coordination, user competence, and infrastructure reliability. The President's Office – Public Service Management and Good Governance should strengthen server capacity and system architecture to address slow speed and freezing during peak appraisal periods, while developers should redesign the interface to better align with the actual performance management cycle and improve reporting functions. Institutional leaders should appoint dedicated PEPMIS focal persons and ensure timely technical support. HR departments should implement continuous, practical training with refresher sessions, and the Government should invest in reliable connectivity, updated hardware, and regular system evaluations to ensure improvements reflect user experiences and institutional realities.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited to 25 HR practitioners in selected Tanzanian public institutions; therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to all public sector contexts. Future research could employ mixed-methods designs to quantify the prevalence of the identified challenges across a larger sample and to explore how sectoral differences influence PEPMIS utilisation. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in tracking how perceptions of usability and support evolve after system upgrades or policy interventions. Finally, comparative studies across East African countries could illuminate how different institutional and infrastructural conditions shape the effectiveness of digital performance management systems.

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