

Unraveling the Complexities of Disciplinary Procedures in Guyana's Public Service: Implications for Public Sector Perception: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This study explores the procedural complexities within Guyana's Public Service disciplinary processes, highlighting challenges such as delays, political interference, inadequate training, outdated regulations, and inconsistencies in rule application. These complexities negatively impact legal outcomes, prolong case resolutions, and undermine the integrity of decisions, contributing to public mistrust. Issues of transparency, fairness, and adherence to the rule of law are crucial for maintaining trust, while factors like political interference and corruption erode confidence. Additionally, remuneration disparities exacerbate indiscipline, affecting morale and productivity. Comprehensive reforms, including streamlined processes, enhanced training, improved transparency, and addressing pay disparities, are essential to strengthening the system's effectiveness, integrity, and public trust.

Keywords: Challenges, Disciplinary, Discipline, Procedures, Public Servant, Public Service.

Introduction

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Guyana, as a Constitutional Agency, is responsible for appointing public officers and exercising disciplinary control over individuals in public offices [1]. The Commission's role is essential in upholding transparency and accountability in appointments to public offices and ensuring that disciplinary actions align with established rules and regulations. Disciplinary proceedings form a key component of the Commission's mandate in keeping with Article 200-2002 of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and which guides the Commission in its decisions and actions.

Despite the clear guidelines, concerns persist about the efficacy of these disciplinary procedures, especially regarding the timely resolution of cases as outlined in the Commission's rules. This study embarks on a qualitative analysis to explore the complexities surrounding disciplinary procedures in

Guyana's Public Service. It seeks to understand the broader implications these processes have on public perception and confidence in the sector. By comparing challenges faced by public servants in Guyana with similar situations in other countries, the study aims to offer insights into improving the effectiveness of the Public Service Commission's disciplinary procedures.

Background

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Guyana, mandated by the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana to make appointments and to exercise disciplinary control of public officers holding or acting in these offices [1]. The Commission has its own established rules and procedures to guide the Commission's actions. Chapter VII of the Public Service Commission Rules outline in detail the disciplinary procedures for breaches of these rules [2]. However, the effectiveness of these procedures is hindered by procedural

errors, lack of training of personnel practitioners and clarity which often lead to legal challenges in courts and the disruptions of the public administration system [3]. Similar challenges are encountered in other countries' public sectors, making it necessary for this study to examine those issues and provide recommendations for resolving these challenges within Guyana's Public Service.

Problem

The disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service faced significant challenges and complexities, often leading to legal setbacks for the Public Service Commission. These setbacks are frequently due to procedural errors, resulting in legal challenges at the Public Service Appellate Tribunal (PSAT) and the various courts in Guyana. These setbacks not only pose financial burdens on the government due to compensation payouts but also disrupt the effective functioning of the public administration system and erode the public's trust and confidence in the Public Sector as seen in the recent ruling by Justice Naresh Haraninan in the matter was GPSU vs Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health [4].

For instance, legal rulings often favor defendants due to minor procedural lapses, such as failure to serve a charge sheet as in the case of Kimshaw Todd vs. Public Service Commission or inadequate response time to charges as in the case of Salote Daniels vs. the Public Service Commission [5, 6]. These issues are pervasive across Ministries, Regions, and Agencies within the Public Sector, primarily because of the lack of adequately trained personnel and a shortage of staff in the Personnel Departments across the various Ministries, Regions, and Agencies [3]. Moreover, there is a substantial gap in comprehending and implementing the rules outlined in Chapter VII of the Commission's regulations, leading to missed steps and erroneous proceedings by personnel practitioners. Many Public Officers often mix

up the Public Service Commission Rules with the Public Service Ministry Rules [2, 7].

Courts prioritize strict adherence to the prescribed procedures rather than the severity of the offense committed. Thus, they often rule in favor of defendants due to procedural discrepancies. As a result, the Commission is compelled to reinstate individuals and provide backdated benefits, incurring significant financial and administrative burdens [4, 5, 6].

The researcher routinely receives disciplinary action requests from Ministries, Regions, and Agencies, revealing that the principles of natural justice are frequently overlooked. Public officers are often denied an opportunity to be heard or even served with a charge sheet [8]. This may be due to personnel officers' lack of familiarity with the procedures, or agencies might be shifting responsibility to the Commission, citing its Constitutional function.

Examining these submissions reveals critical gaps and omissions in the disciplinary process, allowing individuals to remain in their roles and continue their detrimental behaviors. In some cases, individuals are placed on extended administrative leave with full pay, even without the Commission's approval as seen with the disappearance of the Covid 19 vaccination books at the Ministry of Health in 2021. This practice is widespread in the public sector, with officers on extended leave often continuing to work in the private sector while receiving their government salary.

However, the issue of indiscipline among employees has been a longstanding concern, posing challenges to the effective functioning of governmental bodies. A critical aspect that warrants thorough investigation is the role played by the disparity in remuneration across various departments. Indiscipline, encompassing absenteeism, low productivity, and workplace misconduct, can often be linked to perceived inequalities in compensation. The unequal distribution of financial rewards within the public sector may foster a sense of inequity,

potentially leading to disgruntlement among employees and this behavior continued to undermined the fabric of the public sector, will little or no action be taken by the personnel department to bring an end to these behaviors [9].

The existing disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service are characterized by intricate processes and ambiguities, making them susceptible to misinterpretation. These complexities have led to confusion among stakeholders and hindered the fair and timely resolution of disciplinary cases. This has resulted in a loss of trust and confidence in the public sectors.

In light of these challenges, this study aims to unravel the complexities of disciplinary procedures in the public sector and they're on the perception of the Public Sector, addressing the pressing issues and concerns outlined above.

Research Questions

1. What are the key procedural complexities associated with disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service?
2. How does the procedural complexities affect the legal outcomes of disciplinary matters in the courts system?
3. To what extent do public perceptions of fairness and equity in the disciplinary procedures impact public trust and confidence in the public sectors?
4. What role does the disparity in remuneration play in the occurrence of indiscipline within different departments of the public sector?

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives which is set out as a guide for this research:

1. To examine the procedural complexities in disciplinary processes within Guyana's Public Service, including their impact on legal outcomes, public trust, and occurrences of indiscipline.

2. To propose recommendations for improving the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of these procedures, addressing remuneration disparities and informing policy changes.

Purpose/Significance

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the complexities inherent in the disciplinary procedures of Guyana's Public Service, focusing on the impact these procedures have on the legal system and public perception. By investigating the procedural intricacies, this research aims to identify gaps that affect fairness, equity, and the overall efficiency of disciplinary actions within the public sector. Through this lens, the study will also explore how remuneration disparities contribute to indiscipline and assess how these factors collectively shape public trust in the government.

This study holds significance for multiple reasons. First, it will provide an exact understanding of how procedural challenges in disciplinary cases affect both internal processes and external legal outcomes, potentially leading to reforms in disciplinary frameworks. Secondly, by evaluating public perceptions of fairness and equity in these procedures, the research aims to offer insights into improving transparency and public confidence in the public service system. Finally, identifying the role of remuneration differences in fostering indiscipline can guide policy adjustments aimed at promoting a more balanced and disciplined public sector workforce. The findings from this study are expected to be instrumental in guiding policymakers, human resource practitioners, and legal professionals in shaping more robust and equitable disciplinary procedures.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of natural justice, often referred to as the principles of natural justice or procedural fairness, is a legal concept that seeks

to ensure fair and just decision-making processes. These principles are not codified laws but are considered fundamental to the concept of justice and are often applied in various legal and administrative settings [36].

Similarly, the right to a fair trial is a fundamental right recognized by Article 144 of the Constitution and Chapter VII of the Public Service Commission Rules [1]. All of these endorse the due process requirements of Article 8 of the American Convention on Human Rights [10]. Therefore, in the context of this study, which deals with disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service and their implications for the perception of the Public Sector, the principles of natural justice and the right to a fair trial are relevant in understanding and evaluating the fairness of the disciplinary process.

However, two fundamental principles of natural justice are particularly crucial:

1. **The Right to a Fair Hearing:** This principle emphasizes that individuals have the right to be heard before a decision affecting their rights or interests is made. It involves giving the person facing disciplinary action an opportunity to present their case, respond to allegations, and provide evidence in their defense [8].

In dealing with any disciplinary matter, the process begins with a preliminary investigation to determine if the allegation has any merit. If it is determined that the allegation has merit, a charge sheet is prepared by the PS, REO/HOD and served on the defendant, giving them 7 days to either admit or deny the allegation. If the defendant admits to the charge, the PS, REO/HOD shall submit their recommendation along with the charge sheet to the Commission. In cases where the officer denies the charges, the PS shall set up a disciplinary tribunal to commence the hearing, thereby ensuring adherence to the principles of natural justice [2].

2. **The Rule against Bias:** This principle requires that decision-makers be impartial and

unbiased, ensuring that decisions are not influenced by personal interests or preconceived notions. To guarantee impartiality, an independent disciplinary tribunal is established in keeping with 66 (3) of the Commission rules [2].

Meanwhile, 66 (4) of the said rules stipulate that members of the tribunal should be at the same level or senior to the defendant, with one member appointed as the Chairman of the tribunal. The Chairman has three days to notify the defendant of their appointment and provide an opportunity for the defendant to respond to the alleged charges within seven days. During the hearing, the Chairman outlines to the defendant that they are allowed to conduct their defense with either a friend, a member of the union, or, with the Chairman's approval, a lawyer. At the conclusion of the hearing, the defendant is given an opportunity to make final closing remarks, and a copy of the proceedings is provided to them. The tribunal report is then examined by the Commission Members to determine if the charge was established, before the penalty is implemented. If the officer is found guilty, they have seven days to file an appeal to the Commission for a review or 180 days from the date the decision is made to appeal at PSAT [2].

Literature Review

Disciplinary procedures within public service organizations play a pivotal role in upholding organizational integrity, ensuring accountability, and preserving public trust. Adherence to the rules set forth by Public Service Commissions is crucial for guaranteeing fairness, transparency, and alignment with established principles. This literature review delves into existing research concerning the procedural intricacies associated with disciplinary measures in various countries, drawing comparisons to the context of Guyana. Emphasis is placed on studies relevant to the research questions,

highlighting the complexities embedded in the disciplinary rules governing public servants.

Perceptions of Fairness and Effectiveness of Disciplinary Procedures

Several studies have explored public service employees' perceptions of disciplinary procedures and their effectiveness in ensuring fairness and integrity.

Owela, examined disciplinary procedures within the Kenya Civil Service and employees' perceptions toward them. Despite structured procedures being in place, poor employee discipline persisted, leading to diminished service quality and public confidence. The study, utilizing a mixed-methods approach with 114 employees across three ministries, found a lack of awareness and negative attitudes toward the procedures. Civil servants viewed disciplinary measures primarily as punitive rather than corrective. Factors contributing to these perceptions included insufficient sensitization about the rules, inconsistent application of disciplinary measures, and a bureaucratic, rigid process leading to delays, fostering corruption and bias. The study emphasized the need for periodic reviews of procedures to align with evolving needs and to ensure they serve both corrective and preventive functions [11].

Similarly, Mabusela et al, evaluated the perceived fairness and consistency of disciplinary practices within the South African Police Service (SAPS). Using a quantitative approach with Likert-scale questionnaires distributed to 286 employees across selected police stations, the study revealed a general perception of inconsistent and unfair application of disciplinary practices. Employees from different stations held varying views, indicating that perceptions of fairness may depend on internal management practices. The study highlighted the necessity for disciplinary policies that promote uniformity and fairness to boost employee morale and foster a positive working environment [12].

Mokgolo and Dikotla, examine the management of disciplinary cases within the South African public service, highlighting the weaknesses in the implementation of discipline management practices. The study, based on a survey of 751 senior managers across national and provincial departments, found that disciplinary processes often lack consistency, fairness, and objectivity. This has resulted in employees feeling deprived of organizational justice and undermined the overall effectiveness of discipline management.

The authors argue that the inconsistent application of sanctions and poor adherence to progressive discipline methods contribute to ongoing misconduct and a toxic work environment. To address these issues, they recommend the adoption of team-based, progressive discipline approaches to foster fairness, accountability, and professionalism in public service. These strategies would help improve the ethical climate and enhance employee performance in government departments [13, 37].

In the public sector, Pratamayudha, found that perceived fairness of disciplinary procedures is positively correlated with public trust and confidence in the government. Positive perceptions of fairness lead to greater acceptance of agency decisions, better compliance with regulations, and more cooperative behavior when dealing with government agents [14] Tyler (2019) further asserted that procedural fairness positively impacts individuals' perceptions of treatment by governmental authorities, leading to increased feelings of legitimacy of public institutions and higher levels of trust in political systems [15].

Challenges in Implementing Disciplinary Procedures

Disciplinary procedures are often hindered by various challenges that compromise their effectiveness. Khan et al, explored the concept of pro-social rule-breaking among grassroots

public servants. Traditionally, rule violations are seen as detrimental, but this study introduced the idea that employees sometimes break rules for altruistic reasons. Surveys involving 600 civil servants revealed that social and relational factors, such as social support and witnessing coworkers engaging in rule-breaking, significantly influence pro-social rule-breaking behaviors. Organizational structure variables, including bureaucratic centralization, formalization, and punishment for rule violations, were found to suppress employees' willingness to engage in such behaviors. The findings suggest a need for a nuanced understanding of rule-breaking, considering organizational and social factors to manage rule adherence effectively [35].

Al-Haidar, conducted a comparative study on the disciplinary and grievance procedures for public employees in Kuwait and the UK. Significant disparities were found between the two countries, especially in the balance of duties and privileges of public employees in Kuwait. Higher-ranked employees faced fewer penalties for rule violations than lower-ranked counterparts, creating an imbalance in disciplinary actions. The study emphasized the need for an independent administrative court in Kuwait to handle disciplinary cases more fairly. In contrast, the UK's system was more structured, with clear grievance procedures and standardized disciplinary processes. The findings stress the importance of fair and transparent disciplinary systems to ensure employee morale and organizational integrity [16].

Examined the public sector in Bangladesh, revealing it was riddled with corruption of various dimensions [17]. Factors such as bribery, rent-seeking, misappropriation of funds, excessive lobbying, delays in service provision, and irresponsible conduct adversely affected organizational performance. Institutional mechanisms to combat malfeasance were ineffective due to non-committed political leadership, a complacent

bureaucracy, weak accountability structures, and unproductive legislative efforts. The study underscored the critical need for effective disciplinary procedures and strong institutional frameworks to combat corruption and inefficiency [17].

Impact of Disciplinary Procedures on Employee Behavior and Performance

Effective disciplinary management is essential for guiding employee behavior and enhancing performance. Apalia, examined the effects of discipline management on employee performance in the County Education Office Human Resource Department in Turkana County. Involving 171 employees, the study found that effective disciplinary procedures positively impacted performance by fostering teamwork and cohesion. Employees who felt fairly disciplined exhibited higher levels of motivation and overall performance. The study recommended adopting transparent and structured disciplinary procedures to maintain discipline and enhance performance [18].

Udom, in "Discipline Action and Procedures at the Workplace: The Role of HR Manager," emphasized that discipline is essential for aligning employee behavior with organizational objectives. Management's role is to develop and enforce disciplinary measures to ensure compliance with rules and regulations. Grounded in Skinner's (1974) behavioral theory, the study explored the nature of discipline, causes leading to disciplinary action, and the importance of structured procedures. Findings underscored that discipline must be applied consistently and fairly, while allowing flexibility when necessary. Properly implemented procedures enhance compliance and positively impact performance [19].

Thomas and Brighton, 2019 analyzed the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures on company performance at African Distillers (Pvt) Ltd. The study revealed that while employees were aware of disciplinary procedures and understood their purpose in

transforming behavior to promote productivity, there was a strong link between poor management style and increased disciplinary cases. Contributing factors included poor communication, lack of continuous training, and failure by management and employees to adhere to the company's code of conduct. This led to a lack of trust between workers and management, highlighting the need for effective disciplinary procedures and sound management practices [20].

Employee Experiences and Perceptions of Disciplinary Procedures

Employee experiences during disciplinary processes significantly impact their perceptions of fairness and trust in the organization.

Strümpher et al, found that employees who were departmentally charged experienced the process as traumatic and unfair, feeling exposed to a process in which they had no trust. Some participants mentioned experiencing discrimination in the application of discipline, suggesting that disciplinary regulations, while impartial in theory, were not always applied fairly in practice [21].

In Bangladesh, Habib et al, highlighted that the public sector was adversely affected by various forms of corruption and misconduct, with disciplinary mechanisms rendered ineffective by weak accountability structures and uncommitted leadership. This led to a loss of public trust and confidence in governmental institutions [17].

It should be noted that organizational factors such as remuneration disparities can also impact employee discipline.

A BBC report, outlined that disparity in remuneration between different departments of the public sector can significantly impact the occurrence of indiscipline. The gap between public and private sector pay has been a contentious issue, affecting employee morale and potentially leading to increased instances of indiscipline due to dissatisfaction. The report indicated that such disparities contribute to

emotional distress among employees, which can manifest as indiscipline [22].

In a study which entitle, ‘Effects of Disciplinary Management on Employee Performance’ was set out to investigate the impact of disciplinary management on employee performance in the County Education Office of Turkana County, Kenya. It examined the effects of the code of discipline, disciplinary procedures, discipline systems, and disciplinary actions on performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected from 171 employees, analyzed using SPSS, and tested for significance through regression analysis. The findings indicated that effective disciplinary management led to improved teamwork, cohesion, and promotion of employees, significantly enhancing performance. However, the study also recommended addressing complex disciplinary regimes that hinder employee productivity. This research provides critical insights into how disciplinary policies can both positively and negatively affect employee performance [23].

The Effectiveness and Consistency of Disciplinary Actions and Procedures within a South African Organization (2019)

This study explored how employees perceived the fairness and consistency of disciplinary actions in a South African organization. A combination of closed-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews revealed that employees believed disciplinary procedures were applied inconsistently, leading to unequal treatment for similar infractions. The study recommended improved training for leaders on disciplinary processes to ensure fairness and consistency. Addressing this gap would not only improve employee morale but also foster a more cohesive and motivated workforce. The findings underscore the importance of transparent and consistent disciplinary systems to maintain a positive organizational culture [21].

Several studies and articles highlight the need for reforms in the disciplinary procedures in Guyana's public sector, particularly regarding fairness, efficiency, and due process. A key issue raised is that the current system often experiences delays, affecting the timely resolution of cases [3].

Gaps in Literature Review

The literature review reveals several key gaps in understanding disciplinary procedures in the public sector, particularly in the context of Guyana.

Most studies focus on regions like Kenya, South Africa, and Kuwait, with little research specific to Guyana or similar developing countries. This leaves a gap in understanding how disciplinary procedures function in Guyana's public service. The existing research tends to focus on specific sectors like the police or education, without providing a broad view of the entire public service. A more comprehensive analysis across all sectors is needed. Comparative studies between countries are limited. Insights into how similar nations manage disciplinary issues could benefit Guyana's approach. Meanwhile few studies explore the connection between pay differences and disciplinary issues. Further research is needed to understand how pay disparities affect employee discipline and morale in Guyana Public Sectors. Cultural factors influencing perceptions of fairness and discipline are often overlooked, especially in Caribbean contexts and Guyana. Most research focuses on short-term effects, lacking insight into the long-term consequences of disciplinary procedures on employee trust and public sector efficiency. By addressing these gaps could lead to more effective disciplinary systems in Guyana.

Methodology

The study adopted a documentation research approach utilizing secondary data to investigate the challenges various countries, including South Africa, Bangladesh, India, the United

Kingdom, Kuwait, Turkana, Caribbean Nations, and Guyana, face in adhering to established disciplinary procedures within their public sectors. This comparative analysis provides insight into the common challenges, as well as country-specific hurdles, encountered when implementing disciplinary actions in the public service.

Population

The population for this study comprises public servants across these countries, offering a broad perspective on how different governance structures, legal frameworks, and cultural expectations influence the effectiveness of disciplinary measures. By gathering and analyzing data from reputable secondary sources, including government reports, academic studies, policy briefs, and legal documents, the research aims to establish patterns and discrepancies in disciplinary practices that affect public servants' behavior and organizational management.

The study aims to draw lessons from these comparative contexts, offering recommendations that could potentially improve the disciplinary processes in Guyana's public sector. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses in other countries' disciplinary frameworks, the study seeks to propose measures that can enhance fairness, transparency, and accountability within the Guyanese public service. Additionally, the research highlights how disparities in remuneration and the lack of cohesive legal frameworks can lead to indiscipline and inefficiency, suggesting potential reforms to address these issues.

Instrumentations

This research employed documentation analysis as the primary method to examine disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service, drawing on existing policies, procedures, tribunal reports, and legal case records. Guided by Levy et al, the study

systematically reviewed these documents to identify procedural complexities such as inconsistencies, delays, and fairness issues, and their impact on legal outcomes and public trust. By analyzing historical and structural contexts, this method provided a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of challenges faced by personnel practitioners and suggest valuable recommendations [24].

Results

In answering the first research question, "What are the key procedural complexities associated with disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service?", the researcher uncovered a variety of challenges that affect both public perception and the integrity of the sector. Through the literature review and the documentary research, the study examined the procedural difficulties associated with disciplinary actions in various countries, including South Africa, India, the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean, with a focus on Guyana. A key issue identified was the prevalence of procedural delays, which often frustrate employees and hinder timely accountability. In Guyana, as in India, political interference emerged as a major obstacle, undermining the fairness and impartiality of disciplinary proceedings [25]. This interference contradicts the principles of McGregor's "Red Hot Stove Rule," which emphasizes swift, consistent, and impartial disciplinary actions as essential for maintaining employee discipline. Additionally, lengthy appeals processes in both India and Guyana prolong the resolution of cases, creating uncertainty for employees [26].

In India, political interference and trade union influence were found to further complicate disciplinary procedures, sometimes preventing impartial decision-making [27, 28]. Similarly, in Guyana, despite formal agreements between the Public Service Ministry and the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU), there is a lack of clarity and adherence to constitutional mandates that grant

disciplinary control to the Public Service Commission [9]. Political directives to halt proceedings further compound these issues. The study also identified parallels with the United Kingdom, where complex legal frameworks and the influence of trade unions can hinder the implementation of disciplinary actions, contributing to lengthy legal battles [16].

Case studies from Guyana, such as the GPSU's legal victory concerning striking nurses at the Linden Hospital Complex, underscore the need for adherence to due process and constitutional mandates. This case highlighted the consequences of failing to follow proper procedures and the importance of improving training and regulation for personnel practitioners responsible for handling disciplinary matters [4]. A lack of training and awareness among these personnel often leads to procedural errors, inconsistencies, and legal setbacks. Another significant challenge identified was the breach of confidentiality, especially in high-profile cases, which can damage the reputations of both individuals and organizations involved [37].

While the United Kingdom addresses the complexity of certain cases by employing third-party investigations to ensure impartiality, Guyana relies on disciplinary tribunals composed of qualified individuals. However, managing the independence of these tribunals can be challenging, raising concerns about bias. Furthermore, Caribbean countries, including Guyana, face similar difficulties in their public sectors, particularly regarding procedural delays [29]. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and backlogs are exacerbated by the temporary suspension of disciplinary actions when commissions expire, leading to an accumulation of unresolved cases. Inconsistencies in the application of disciplinary procedures across different government agencies and ministries also contribute to perceptions of unfairness and favoritism among public officers.

In Guyana, public officers such as teachers face unique challenges due to the varying approaches to disciplinary procedures by different entities, which do not always align with constitutional mandates. Addressing these challenges requires streamlining processes, improving training and awareness, and promoting consistency and fairness in the application of disciplinary procedures across all sectors of the public service.

In addressing the second research question, "To what extent do public perceptions of fairness and equity in disciplinary procedures impact public trust and confidence in the public sectors?" the findings revealed that public perceptions of fairness and equity play a significant role in shaping public trust and confidence in the public sector. Key factors influencing these perceptions include transparency, adherence to the rule of law, consistency, and impartiality in how disciplinary procedures are conducted. This is shown in the study conducted in Bangladesh by Habib et al, where weak accountability structures and uncommitted leadership led to a loss of public trust and confidence in governmental institutions [17].

Transparency is crucial, as clear communication on the outcomes of disciplinary actions can help mitigate skepticism and prevent misinformation. When the public perceives that the disciplinary process is open, fair, and adheres to legal standards, it strengthens trust in the institutions overseeing these procedures. In contrast, corruption and political interference are major threats to public confidence. Instances of political meddling in disciplinary actions severely undermine trust, emphasizing the need for ongoing efforts to combat these issues [30].

Studies have shown that when disciplinary procedures are perceived as fair, they positively influence public trust and confidence in government institutions. Procedural fairness not only improves how individuals feel they are treated by government authorities but also

reinforces the legitimacy of political systems and institutions. This alignment between fairness in disciplinary matters and public trust underscores the importance of maintaining justice and impartiality in the process [14].

Moreover, fair disciplinary procedures contribute to a stable workforce, reducing turnover and improving productivity. However, challenges such as racial discrimination, inconsistent application of rules, and poor management practices can damage the trust between workers and management, reducing the effectiveness of these procedures. Therefore, disciplinary actions must be handled with fairness and transparency to sustain both internal workforce morale and public trust in the public sector [31].

In response to the final research question, "What role does the disparity in remuneration play in the occurrence of indiscipline within different departments of the public sector?" the findings revealed that disparities in remuneration significantly contribute to issues of indiscipline across the sector. These wage gaps negatively affect employee morale, promote unethical behavior, and lead to dissatisfaction and conflict among staff. [32, 33].

One of the key impacts of remuneration disparities is the decline in employee morale and motivation as shown in the BBC report in 2023. Lower-paid workers often feel undervalued and demotivated, which can lead to decreased productivity and heightened job dissatisfaction. As a result, these employees may resort to unethical practices, such as absenteeism, bribery, or other forms of misconduct, to supplement their income, further undermining discipline and organizational integrity [22].

The research also highlighted how remuneration disparities create internal conflicts and resentment among employees. This tension often manifests in protests, strikes, or a lack of cooperation, which can disrupt the smooth functioning of public sector

organizations. Additionally, the unequal pay structure contributes to brain drain, as skilled and experienced employees seek better opportunities elsewhere, causing the public sector to lose valuable talent and institutional knowledge [30, 31].

The impact of indiscipline driven by pay disparities extends beyond the workforce and affects public service delivery. The decline in service quality and efficiency frustrates those relying on public services, which can lead to further corruption as individuals turn to bribery to receive faster or better service.

To address these challenges, establishing a fair and transparent pay structure is crucial for maintaining discipline within the public sector. A more equitable system would not only improve employee morale but also foster a positive work environment, leading to enhanced service delivery. Comprehensive measures are needed to rectify these disparities, combat corruption, and ensure equitable treatment of all employees, which would ultimately strengthen the effectiveness and integrity of the public sector.

Discussion

Procedural Complexities in Disciplinary Procedures

The findings related to the first research question reveal significant procedural complexities within Guyana's Public Service disciplinary processes, with implications for the sector's overall integrity and public perception. The delays, political interference, and inconsistencies in applying disciplinary procedures were not unique to Guyana; they echo challenges faced by other nations such as India, the United Kingdom, and South Africa.

The presence of political interference, as evidenced in both Guyana and India, raises concerns about the fairness and impartiality of disciplinary actions. Drawing from McGregor's "Red Hot Stove Rule," which emphasizes the need for swift, consistent, and impartial disciplinary actions, the observed interference

undermines these principles and erodes public trust in the process. In this context, Guyana's challenge lies in ensuring that disciplinary procedures are insulated from political influence to maintain integrity and accountability [25].

Additionally, the backlog of cases and delays in resolving disciplinary matters especially during the time when the Commission's file expired in Guyana, further complicate the public sector's ability to uphold disciplinary measures. This finding aligns with previous studies that suggest procedural delays not only disrupt organizational efficiency but also reduce the effectiveness of disciplinary actions. To address these procedural complexities, the public sector needs to improve procedural clarity, training, and adherence to constitutional mandates, ensuring that personnel practitioners are well-versed in the legal frameworks governing disciplinary actions [27, 28].

Public Perceptions of Fairness and Trust in the Public Sector

The second research question highlighted the critical link between public perceptions of fairness and the level of trust and confidence in the public sector. The findings emphasize that transparency, adherence to the rule of law, and consistency in disciplinary actions are fundamental to maintaining public trust. When the public perceives that disciplinary actions are carried out fairly, it fosters greater confidence in governmental institutions [12, 14].

This is consistent with previous research that suggests procedural fairness strengthens public perceptions of legitimacy and authority, thereby improving trust in government institutions. In Guyana, however, the presence of political interference and lack of procedural consistency may contribute to public skepticism, weakening the public's confidence in the public sector.

Transparency in communicating disciplinary outcomes is particularly important, as

misinformation or lack of information can lead to public distrust. Ensuring that the disciplinary process is not only fair but also perceived as fair requires consistent communication and demonstration of impartiality. Additionally, corruption remains a significant concern, as it undermines the very principles of fairness and justice, requiring continuous efforts to combat this issue [12, 30, 37].

Role of Remuneration Disparities in Indiscipline

The third research question sheds light on the role of remuneration disparities in fostering indiscipline within the public sector. The findings indicate that wage disparities lead to decreased morale, dissatisfaction, and unethical behavior, all of which contribute to indiscipline. Lower-paid workers, feeling undervalued, are more likely to engage in misconduct such as absenteeism or bribery to compensate for their financial shortcomings [30].

This is in line with research that links fair compensation to higher levels of employee motivation and organizational commitment. The disparities in pay not only foster resentment among employees but also create internal conflicts and disruptions, as seen in protests and strikes. Moreover, the brain drain resulting from skilled employees leaving for better opportunities elsewhere compounds the problem by depleting the public sector of essential talent and institutional knowledge [34].

Remuneration disparities also have broader implications for service delivery. As employee morale and discipline decline, so too does the quality of public services. This deterioration can lead to further corruption, as individuals seeking better or faster services resort to bribery, perpetuating a cycle of misconduct and inefficiency, as seen in the study conducted by Zafarullah, et al. [30].

To mitigate the negative effects of remuneration disparities, a fair and transparent

pay structure is crucial. Establishing equitable remuneration policies not only promotes a positive work environment but also enhances public service delivery, ensuring that the public sector operates efficiently and fairly.

Implications For Policy and Practice

The research highlights several areas for improvement within Guyana's public sector, particularly regarding disciplinary procedures, public trust, and remuneration. The findings suggested that addressing procedural delays, political interference, and pay disparities can significantly improve both internal discipline and public confidence in the sector. Policymakers must prioritize transparency, fairness, and consistency in all aspects of public sector management to foster a more accountable and trustworthy environment.

In particular, efforts to depoliticize disciplinary actions and establish equitable remuneration policies will be key to promoting a stable and motivated workforce. Further training for personnel practitioners is also essential to ensure that they are equipped to handle disciplinary cases impartially and in accordance with constitutional mandates. By addressing these critical issues, the public sector can enhance its integrity, improve service delivery, and restore public trust.

Conclusion

The research into disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service reveals several key procedural complexities that significantly affect the sector's integrity and public trust. These complexities, including procedural delays, political interference, and inconsistencies in the application of disciplinary measures, are not unique to Guyana but are echoed in countries such as India and South Africa. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that emphasizes the need for timely, fair, and impartial processes in handling disciplinary actions.

Public perceptions of fairness and equity in disciplinary procedures play a critical role in shaping trust in public sector institutions. The study found that transparency, consistency, and communication are vital in fostering public confidence. Corruption and political interference, on the other hand, severely erode this trust, making it imperative for reforms that prioritize adherence to constitutional mandates and the rule of law.

Additionally, the issue of remuneration disparities was identified as a major factor contributing to indiscipline in the public sector. These disparities not only lower employee morale and productivity but also foster unethical behavior and internal conflicts. The resulting loss of talent through brain drain further weakens the sector's capacity to deliver quality services.

In sum, the challenges surrounding disciplinary procedures, public trust, and remuneration disparities highlight the need for structural reforms to promote fairness, accountability, and efficiency within Guyana's Public Service.

Recommendations

The researcher is making the following recommendations based on the findings of this study:

The government should implement reforms to reduce procedural delays in handling disciplinary matters. This can be achieved by improving administrative processes, introducing time-bound resolutions, and providing necessary resources to address backlogs. Clear guidelines must be established and communicated to personnel practitioners to ensure consistency in applying disciplinary actions across all departments.

Efforts should be made to insulate disciplinary procedures from political

sinterference. This can be done by strengthening the independence of the Public Service Commission and ensuring its adherence to Article 226 of the Constitution of the Republic of Guyana [2].

Personnel practitioners and other staff involved in disciplinary cases should receive adequate training on preparation of charge sheets in keeping with the table of offences and penalties, conducting hearing and preparation of tribunal reports. This will avoid or reduce procedural errors and inconsistencies in the disciplinary procedures.

A comprehensive review of the remuneration structure within the public sector should be conducted to ensure equitable pay across all departments. Pay reforms should focus on establishing a transparent and fair compensation system to prevent morale issues and foster discipline.

By implementing these recommendations, Guyana's Public Service can address the key issues of procedural fairness, public trust, and remuneration disparities, ultimately improving the effectiveness and credibility of the Guyana Public Sector.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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