

Upholding Fairness and Integrity: Examining Disciplinary Procedures in Guyana's Public Service

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service in upholding fairness and integrity. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 20 personnel staff and two Legal Officers at the Public Service Commission (PSC) through questionnaires and interviews, the research questions focused on the procedures' effectiveness, challenges faced by employees, and potential improvements. Findings indicate that while 59% of staff view the procedures as promoting fairness and integrity, 65.8% reported significant challenges in compliance, and 85.6% agreed on the need for improvements. Statistical analysis, including t-tests, confirmed that the procedures significantly impact fairness and integrity.

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

Introduction

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Guyana, is a Constitutional Agency mandated to appoint public officers and exercise disciplinary control of persons holding or acting in such offices [1]. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the transparency and accountability of public office appointments and disciplinary actions are in keeping with its rules and regulations. The established rules and procedures guided the Commission in executing its duties, with disciplinary proceedings being a crucial aspect of its mandate [2]. However, questions persist on the effectiveness of these procedures, particularly concerning the prompt resolution of matters. This study explores the disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service, with a focus on revealing its fairness and integrity. By exploring the challenges faced in implementing these procedures, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the

functioning of the nation's public service and avenues for improvement.

Background

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of Guyana, mandated by the Constitution, oversees the appointment and exercise disciplinary control of public officers holding or acting in these offices [1]. Established rules and procedures guide the Commission's actions, with Chapter VII of the Public Service Commission Rules outlining the detailed disciplinary procedures for breaches of these rule [1, 2]. However, the effectiveness of these procedures is hindered by procedural errors, lack of training of personnel practitioners, and clarity leading to legal challenges and disruptions in the public administration system [3].

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.

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*, [4] or inadequate response time to charges as in the case of *Salote Daniels vs. the PSC* [5]. 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 [6]. 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.

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. 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.

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 sector.

In light of these challenges, this study aims to explore the disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service, with a focus on revealing its fairness and integrity.

Research Questions

1. How effective are the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules in ensuring fairness and integrity?
2. What challenges do public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules?
3. How can the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules be improved to uphold fairness and integrity?

Objective of the Study

To analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules, identify challenges faced by employees, and recommend strategies for enhancing fairness and integrity within the system.

Purpose/Significance

This study holds substantial importance for everyone working in the public sector in Guyana. It aims:

1. Evaluating the effective of the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules to determine its fairness and integrity.
2. Identify the challenges public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules.
3. To make recommendations to improve the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules to uphold fairness and integrity?

Hypothesis Statement

The disciplinary procedures in the PSC Rules do not always ensure fairness and integrity, creating challenges for employees and requiring improvements.

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

The current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules have no significant impact on upholding fairness and integrity.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁)

The current disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules significantly affect the upholding of fairness and integrity.

Literature Review

Understanding the dynamics of rule-breaking and disciplinary practices within public sector organizations is critical for effective employee management and performance improvement. The following review discusses various studies that have examined pro-social rule-breaking, disciplinary practices, and their effects on employee behavior and organizational performance.

A study by Khan et al, explored the concept of pro-social rule-breaking among grassroots public servants. Traditionally, rule violations in organizations are perceived as self-serving and detrimental to organizational well-being. The said study challenges that notion by introducing the idea that employees sometimes break rules for altruistic, pro-social reasons. Through two surveys involving six hundred (600) grassroots civil servants working in public welfare programs, the researchers uncovered that social and relational factors, such as social support and witnessing coworkers engaging in rule-breaking, significantly influence employees' pro-social rule-breaking behaviors. Interestingly, organizational structure variables, including bureaucratic centralization, formalization, and punishment for rule violations, were found to

suppress employees' willingness to engage in pro-social rule-breaking. The findings suggest that a more nuanced understanding of rule-breaking behavior, particularly one that takes into account organizational and social factors, is necessary to manage rule adherence effectively in public sector organizations [7, 8].

In a study by Mabusela et al., the perceived fairness and consistency of disciplinary practices within the South African Police Service (SAPS) were evaluated. The study employed a quantitative research approach, distributing Likert-scale questionnaires to two hundred eighty-six (286) employees from selected police stations in the Tshwane District. The results revealed a general perception among employees that the disciplinary practices in SAPS were applied inconsistently and unfairly. Interestingly, employees from Sunnyside Police Station held different views compared to their counterparts at Pretoria West and Brooklyn Police Stations, indicating that perceptions of fairness may vary depending on the station's internal management. This study highlighted the need for disciplinary policies that promote uniformity and fairness, which would, in turn, boost employee morale and create a more positive working environment [9].

Al-Haidar, conducted a comparative study on the disciplinary and grievance procedures for public employees in Kuwait and the UK. The study revealed significant disparities between the two countries, especially in the balance of duties and privileges of public employees in Kuwait. Higher-ranked employees in Kuwait faced fewer penalties for rule violations than their 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 found to be more structured, with clear grievance procedures and standardized disciplinary

processes. The study's findings stress the importance of having fair and transparent disciplinary systems to ensure employee morale and organizational integrity in the public sector [10].

In a study by Apalia, the effects of discipline management on employee performance were examined in the County Education Office Human Resource Department in Turkana County. The study aimed to understand the effects of disciplinary procedures, codes of discipline, and disciplinary systems on employee performance. A total of one hundred seventy-one (171) employees participated, and data were collected through questionnaires, which were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics. The study found that effective disciplinary management positively impacted employee performance by fostering teamwork and cohesion within the organization. Employees who felt fairly disciplined were more likely to experience higher levels of motivation, knowledge, and overall performance. The study recommended that organizations adopt transparent and structured disciplinary procedures to maintain discipline and enhance employee performance [11].

Research Gap

The literature reveals several gaps in understanding rule-breaking and disciplinary practices in the public sector. While Khan et al, explores pro-social rule-breaking, this study is limited to grassroots civil servants in welfare programs, leaving other sectors unexplored. Additionally, Mabusela et al, found inconsistencies in the perceived fairness of disciplinary practices within South African police stations, but there's limited research across different public institutions [7, 8]. Studies like Al-Haidar, show political and cultural factors influence disciplinary systems but lack cross-regional exploration, especially in the Caribbean Countries, inclusive of

Guyana [10] Moreover, research like Apalia links discipline to employee performance but is geographically specific, with limited focus on the long-term effects of different disciplinary approaches [11]. Finally, none of the reviewed studies address how remuneration disparities contribute to rule-breaking or dissatisfaction within public sectors. These gaps highlight the need for further research across diverse sectors and regions, particularly in the Caribbean Countries and Guyana., to understand how fairness, culture, politics, and pay affect disciplinary systems and employee behavior [7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

Methodology

The researcher utilized a mixed-methods design for this study, which comprised the following methods:

1. Quantitative Research: the researcher used surveys of public service employees. These surveys had questions that helped to measure the fairness and integrity of the disciplinary procedures in place.

2. Qualitative Research: the researcher conducted interviews with Legal Officers from the PSC to hear their personal experiences with the disciplinary process. This gave a deeper insight into the legal challenges faced and areas where the system needs improvement.

3. Documentary Research: the researcher reviewed official documents, such as public service policies and rulings of disciplinary cases emanating from the Courts, to see how the rules were written and applied.

By combining these three methods, the researcher was in a better position to understand how well the disciplinary system upholds fairness and integrity and where changes needed to be made with the rules and procedures [12].

Population

The population for this study consisted of all personnel and legal staff members of the Public Service Commission (PSC) in Guyana. There are approximately twenty-five (25) personnel staff and two (2) Legal Officers at the Commission. These two groups included individuals who were directly responsible for handling disciplinary matters within the Guyana public sector. Their involvement in these processes makes them key sources of information regarding how fairness and integrity are upheld in disciplinary actions.

Sample Method

To select the participants, the researcher used a purposive sampling method. This method allowed the researcher to intentionally choose individuals who have the most relevant knowledge and experience with the disciplinary procedures. Since the personnel and legal staff are directly involved in these matters, they are the most appropriate participants for the study. Hence the researcher selected all the Personnel staff and the Legal Officers to form the sample population for this study.

Instrumentations

The instruments that were used to collect data for this study were as follows:

1. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on employees' experiences and perceptions of the disciplinary procedures. It includes questions related to fairness, transparency, consistency, and integrity of the disciplinary process and utilizes a Likert scale to measure attitudes and opinions.
2. Interview was used to gather qualitative data and in-depth insights from the staff of the legal department. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to explore legal challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement in the disciplinary procedures.

3. Document Analysis was used to review and analyze existing policies, procedures, and legal case records related to disciplinary actions [13].

Description of The Study Carried Out

This study was designed to explore the disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service, with a focus on revealing its fairness and integrity. It involved an in-depth documentary analysis of existing rules, regulations, and practices related to disciplinary actions within the public service, along with gathering the perspectives of personnel staff from the Public Service Commission. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the legal staff of the Commission to gather their insights.

The questionnaire was checked for validity by two (2) senior Lecturers at the University of Guyana and was then pilot-tested with five staff from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to determine its reliability. The data were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A reliability value of 0.769 was obtained, which indicated that the instrument was reliable [14].

Data from the questionnaires were entered into SPSS, where the mean and standard deviation for each question were calculated, Chi-Square testing and T-testing were also conducted to determine the level of significance in the perceptions of the sample population as it related to some of the specific questions on the questionnaire. These findings were then compared with data collected from the interviews to provide a comprehensive view of the disciplinary processes. The study also delved into the legal framework governing disciplinary procedures and examined the challenges faced by the Commission when cases escalate to the court system in Guyana.

By engaging with both personnel and legal staff, the study aimed to uncover the challenges within the disciplinary process and

identify potential areas for improvement. This multi-pronged approach allowed the researcher to analyze the fairness and integrity surrounding the disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service. The ultimate goal of the research was to enhance these procedures and promote greater transparency and integrity within the public service sector.

Results

The data collected from the personnel data aspect of the questionnaire revealed that the staff were of various age groups, ranging from 18 years old to 55 years of age with 40% of

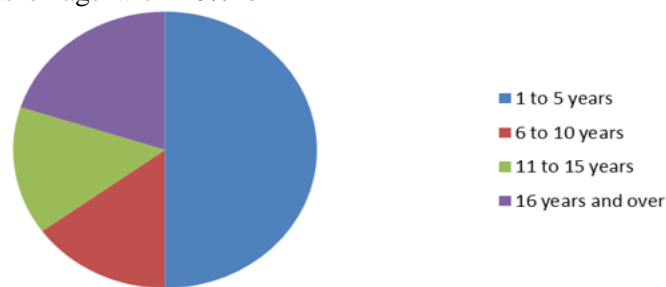


Figure 1. Working Experience in the Personnel Department

The sample populations were asked to rank in order which factors caused them to choose personnel practitioners as their path and the answers varied widely. The data collected shows that 40% of the staff studied Public Management at the University of Guyana and love what they were doing, hence possessed the perquisites qualification and aptitude for the job. Meanwhile 25% of the staff mentioned that they were placed in Personnel to work.

The level of the staff qualifications varied from university degree to high school (CXC) qualifications, with 40% of the staff only had CXC qualifications while 50 % had university diploma and degree.

However, the position of the staff varied from Clerk11 to Principal Personnel Officers

the staff were between the ages 18 to 25 years old while 25% were between 31 to 40 years old. Concerning the gender, 90% of the staff were female, while 10% were male.

Their experiences on the job also varied with 50% of the staff having less than five (5) years' experience, hence the real reason why the disciplinary procedures appeared to be so complex.

Figure 1 shows a pie chart indicating that 50% of the staff had 1 to 5 years' experience working in the personnel department, while only 20% had 16 years and above.

with most of them were Clerk 11, i.e. 55%, while 15% were Personnel Officer 11 and the other category had 10% each.

It is the researcher's view that the personal data (section one) of the questionnaire revealed that most of the staff at the Commission were very young with little or no knowledge of dealing with disciplinary matters.

In answering the first research question which dealt with the effectiveness of the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules in ensuring fairness and integrity, a questionnaire with five questions was administered to the said sample population. The table below shows the data collected.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1

| Questions | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Fairness of disciplinary procedures | 20 | 1 | 4 | 2.80 | 1.19 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|------|------|
| Integrity in the disciplinary procedures | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.20 | 1.15 |
| Consistency of disciplinary procedures | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.00 | 1.17 |
| Free from bias and favoritism | 20 | 1 | 5 | 2.70 | 1.22 |
| Resolve issues in a fair manner | 20 | 1 | 4 | 3.05 | 1.19 |

Table 1 shows that the mean score for this research question ranged from 2.70 to 3.05 which meant that all the staff shared a similar view as to the effectiveness of the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules in ensuring fairness and integrity. The standard deviations for all these questions were very high, which meant that the staff's

perceptions of these questions were scattered. The first question which dealt with the fairness of the disciplinary procedures had a mean score of 2.80 and a high standard deviation of 1.19 which meant that not all the staff were in agreement with this question and their scores were dispersed.

Table 2. Fairness of Disciplinary Procedures

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 4 | 20 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| 2 | 4 | 20 | 20.0 | 40.0 |
| 3 | 4 | 20 | 20.0 | 60.0 |
| 4 | 8 | 40 | 40.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 2 shows only 40% of the staff agreed that the current disciplinary procedures in place were fair to all employees, while 40% of the staff did not agree with this question. However, in an interview with the legal officers, she stated that, "I believe that the disciplinary procedures are extremely fair because it encapsulated all the limbs of natural justice".

The views expressed by the Legal Officer were also shared by Angier, et al, on the 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 [15].

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 [17].

The second question which dealt with, the disciplinary procedure of the public service is conduct with integrity, had a mean score of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 1.15 which indicated that most of the staff agreed with this statement but their scores were scattered.

Table 3. Integrity in the Disciplinary Procedures

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| 2 | 1 | 5 | 5.0 | 20.0 |
| 3 | 6 | 30 | 30.0 | 50.0 |

| | | | | |
|-------|---|----|------|-------|
| 4 | 9 | 45 | 45.0 | 95.0 |
| Total | 1 | 5 | 5.0 | 100.0 |

Table 3 shows that 50% of the staff agreed that the disciplinary process in the public service was conducted with integrity while 20% did not agree and 30 % shared a neutral opinion. Meanwhile, in the interviews, one of the Legal Officer mentioned, ‘I firmly believe that the disciplinary process ensures the highest level of integrity because of the separation of power at each stage.’ However, this is the view of a Legal Officer who studied and Understood the Laws and the procedures to deal with discipline as outlined in Chapter V11 of the Commission’s rules [1, 2]. However, this is not always the case in other parts of the world. According to Van der Bank, et al, in their study titled, “Perceived fairness of the disciplinary procedures in the public sector: an exploratory study”, it was mentioned that employees who were departmentally charged experienced the process as traumatic and unfair, and felt

exposed to a process in which they had no trust. ‘During the in-depth interviews, some of the participants mentioned that they experienced racial discrimination in the application of discipline. “How many people have been dismissed? Statistics, white, brown, black. The majority is black. The majority black, why?” The existing Discipline Regulations are impartial as far as the suggested procedures for the application of discipline are concerned.” [17].

The fourth question of the questionnaire which was based on, ‘I am confident that the disciplinary procedures are free from bias or favoritism’, had a lowest mean of 2.07 and a high standard deviation of 1.22 which meant that most of the staff disagreed with this statement and their perceptions were also dispersed. The data for this question was further subjected to a Chi-square test.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test for Free from Bias and Favoritism

| Q | Sample size | Obs Val | Exp Val | Df | Lev of Sig | Cal Chi Sq val | Crit Val | Remarks |
|---|-------------|---------|---------|----|------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| 4 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 4 | 0.05 | 7.500 | 0.11 | 7.50>0.11 |

The data from Table 4 revealed that the Calculated Chi-Square value was greater than the Critical value (7.50>0.11); hence, it can be concluded that there were some

relationships/associations among the variables in question four. This clearly shows that the disciplinary procedures were not free from bias or favoritism.

Table 5. Summary of Data Collected from Research Question One

| Question | Average Mean | Average Stand Dev | Remarks |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1-5 | 2.95 | 1.18 | 2.95 x 20 = 59% |

Table 5 shows an average mean score and standard deviation scores for the first research question which was based on the effectiveness of the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules in ensuring fairness and integrity. The average mean score for this question was 2.95 which indicated that only 59% of the staff agreed that there were procedures outlined in PSC Rules to ensure

fairness and integrity. The findings to this research question are in keeping with the findings of studies conducted by Laxmikanth, M. which revealed that the disciplinary matters especially within the context of the public service in India faced a range of challenges and issues such as procedural delays, cases can take years to resolve due to administrative bottlenecks, bureaucratic red tape, and a

backlog of cases. These delays can lead to frustration among employees and a lack of timely accountability [18].

The second research question was based on, ‘what challenges do public service employees

face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules’. The data collected from the questionnaire for this question can be seen in the table below.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Research Question Two

| Questions | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| The disciplinary procedures are easy to understand. | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.45 | 1.34 |
| Employees are well informed about their rights. | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.10 | 1.07 |
| Difficult to challenge or appeal disciplinary process. | 20 | 2 | 5 | 3.20 | 1.05 |
| Clear guidelines to deal with the disciplinary process. | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.25 | 1.16 |
| Employees often faced delays with the process. | 20 | 1 | 5 | 3.45 | 1.09 |

Table 6 shows that the mean score for this research question ranged from 3.45 to 3.10 which meant that all the staff shared a similar view as to the challenges public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules. The standard deviations ranged from 1.34 to 1.05 which indicated that the level of perceptions for these questions was very high or scattered.

The question that dealt with the disciplinary procedures was easy to understand for all employees had the highest mean score of 3.45 and the highest standard deviation of 1.34 which meant that most of the staff were in agreement with this question but their scores were dispersed.

Table 7. The Disciplinary Procedure are Easy to Understand

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| 2 | 2 | 10 | 10.0 | 25.0 |
| 3 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 40.0 |
| 4 | 7 | 35 | 35.0 | 75.0 |
| 5 | 5 | 25 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 7 shows 65% of the staff agreed that the disciplinary procedures were easy to understand by all employees, while 25% did not agree and 15% had a neutral opinion. The high standard deviation on this question was a result of the choices made by the staff when answering this question. However, in the interviews with the Legal Officers when asked the said question, they both stated that it is difficult for employees to interpret and apply

the rules directly. This is a direct result of the Commission losing most of the cases in the Courts in Guyana. As in the matter with Benjamin VS Public Service Commission and The Attorney General. The following is a summary of the said case:

‘In 2009, the plaintiff went on twenty-eight (28) days annual leave in September to October. On the day she resumed duty and while conducting interviews for intake of new

students, she observed a grill swinging behind a Louvre window. She claimed that same was reported to her Senior Training Officer, Mr. Brian King. Subsequently, the police were involved, and she provided a statement but faced neither departmental nor criminal charges with offense in relation to the incident. After she had given a statement to the police, she was detained and released on bail. On her release, she resumed work and continued to work for a few months. However, on January 9, 2010, she was issued with a dismissal letter, effective from January 1, 2010.

In the ruling which was handed down by Chief Justice E, Chang on the 23rd August, 2013, the Chief Justice stated that the Public Service Commission dismissed the plaintiff for failure to comply with the Rules and Regulations of the Public Service, but no departmental charge was instituted against her. The absence of a written charge with sufficient particulars, as required by Rule 66 (1) (b) of the Public Service Commission Rules 1998, raises concerns about the fairness of the dismissal. It appears that the Ministry conducted an investigation, but that investigation could not have been conducted by a Disciplinary Tribunal appointed by the Permanent Secretary or the Head of Department under Rule 66 (3) of the said Rules since no written charge was served upon plaintiff. The lack of a Disciplinary Tribunal and the plaintiff not being summoned for a hearing further question the validity of the Commission's decision [19].

In understanding the ruling which was handed down by Chief Justice E, Chang, one must understand what Rule 65 is about. Rule 65 states: *“Where the Police has advised against criminal charges, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department may institute departmental disciplinary proceedings. In doing so, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department may seek the advice of the Solicitor General regarding the precise wording of the charge. Once the charge has been drafted, the Officer shall be served with the charge/s together with particulars of the nature of the allegations. In response to the charge, if the officer admits the allegation, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department shall forward the admission and the relevant documents to the Secretary of the Commission, together with his/her recommendation on the penalty to be imposed. If, however, the officer denies the misconduct or fails to reply to the charge, the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department shall appoint a disciplinary tribunal as soon as possible to investigate and hear the officer’s explanation in his defence.”* [2].

The next question of the questionnaire dealt with employees were well-informed about their rights during the disciplinary process. This question had the lowest mean score of 3.01 and standard deviation of 1.07 which meant that not all of the staff agreed with this question and their scores were dispersed.

Table 8. Employees are Well Informed about their Rights

| No. | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percentage |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| 2 | 10 | 50 | 50.0 | 65.0 |
| 3 | 6 | 30 | 30.0 | 95.0 |
| 4 | 1 | 5 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 8 shows only 35% of the staff agreed that employees were well-informed about their rights during the disciplinary process, while

50% of the staff had a neutral opinion and 15% didn't agree with this question. In the interviews with the Legal Officers, when

asked, “How well do you think employees are informed about their rights during the disciplinary process?” one of the legal officers mentioned that No.71 of the PSC Rules outlines all the rights of the employees at the hearing. The other staff mentioned, ‘Fairly informed, but more action should be taken to ensure sensitization prior to attending a hearing’ [2].

The next question on the questionnaire dealt with, ‘it’s difficult to challenge or appeal the disciplinary decision’. This question garnered a mean score of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 1.05 which meant that most of the staff agreed with this statement and their scores were dispersed. Details of this can be seen in the frequency table below:

Table 9. Difficult to Challenge or Appeal Disciplinary Decision

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 2 | 5 | 25 | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| 3 | 9 | 45 | 45.0 | 70.0 |
| 4 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 85.0 |
| 5 | 3 | 15 | 15.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 9 shows that 25% of the staff disagreed that it’s was difficult to challenge or appeal the disciplinary decision while 30% of the staff agreed with the statement, but what is interesting was 45% of the staff had a neutral opinion, which indicated that they might not know of the procedures for appeal a disciplinary matter.

with the right to file a first appeal to the Commission’.

In the interview with the legal officer, when asked, what difficulties, if any, do employees face when attempting to challenge or appeal disciplinary decisions? She stated, ‘*Generally, the absence of a sitting PSAT or unfamiliarity*

There are clear guidelines for navigating the disciplinary procedures, which was the next question on the questionnaire. This question obtained a mean score of 3.25 and a standard deviation of 1.16 which indicated that not all of the staff were in agreement with this statement and their perceptions were scattered. The data was further subjected to Chi-Square testing to determine the level of significance in the staff perceptions of this question.

Table 10. Chi-Square Test on Clear Guidelines for Navigating the Disciplinary Process

| Q | Sample size | Obs Val | Exp Val | Df | Lev of Sig | Cal Chi Sq val | Crit Val | Remarks |
|---|-------------|---------|---------|----|------------|----------------|----------|------------|
| 4 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 4 | 0.05 | 14.0 | 0.77 | 14.00>0.77 |

From table 10, the data revealed that the Calculated Chi-Square value was greater than the Critical value (14.00>0.77), it further shows that the p-value (0.007) was less than 0.05 suggested that there was a statistically significant association between the perceptions of the staff regarding ‘clear guidelines to deal with disciplinary process’. The point was

further emphasized by the Legal Officer who agreed with the statement.

The final question for this research question was based on, ‘employees often face delays when undergoing disciplinary actions’, had a mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 1.19, which meant that not all the staff agreed with this statement and their scores were dispersed.

Table 11. Employees Often Faced Delay with the Process

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.0 |
| 2 | 2 | 10 | 10.0 | 15.0 |
| 3 | 8 | 40 | 40.0 | 55.0 |
| 4 | 5 | 25 | 25.0 | 80.0 |
| 5 | 4 | 20 | 20.0 | 100.0 |

Table 11 shows that 45% of the staff agreed that employees often faced delay when undergoing disciplinary action, while 40% had

a neutral opinion and 13% did not agree with the statement.

Table 12. Summary of Data Collected from Research Question Two

| Question | Average Mean | Average Stand Dev | Remarks |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 6 - 10 | 3.29 | 1.14 | 3.29 x 20 = 65.8% |

Table 12 shows an average means scores and standard deviations scores for the second research question which was based on, ‘What challenges do public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules.’ The average mean score for this question was 3.29 which

indicated that 65.8 % of the staff agreed that there were challenges public service employees faced in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules.

The data from the five questions were also subjected to T- Test to determine the level of significance in the responses from the staff.

Table 13. One-Sample Test

| Questions | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| The disciplinary procedures are easy to understand. | 11.064 | 19 | .000 | 3.450 | 2.80 | 4.10 |
| Employees are well informed about their rights. | 12.943 | 19 | .000 | 3.100 | 2.60 | 3.60 |
| Difficult to challenge or appeal disciplinary decisions. | 14.236 | 19 | .000 | 3.200 | 2.73 | 3.67 |
| Clear guidelines to deal with the disciplinary process. | 12.485 | 19 | .000 | 3.250 | 2.71 | 3.79 |
| Employees often faced delays with the process. | 14.038 | 19 | .000 | 3.450 | 2.94 | 3.96 |

Table 13 shows the results of one-sample t-tests for five different statements related to the challenges public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules.

The Following is the Interpretation of Results as it Relates to the Specific Questions:

1. The disciplinary procedures are easy to understand: $t(19) = 11.064, p < .001$, with a

mean difference of 3.450. The confidence interval [2.80, 4.10] shows that respondents strongly agree that disciplinary procedures were easy to understand.

2. Employees were well informed about their rights: $t(19) = 12.943, p < .001$, with a mean difference of 3.100. The confidence interval [2.60, 3.60] supports that employee's feel informed about their rights.

3. Difficult to challenge or appeal disciplinary decisions: $t(19) = 14.236, p < .001$, with a mean difference of 3.200, indicating participants agree that challenging disciplinary decisions was difficult.

4. Clear guideline to deal with the disciplinary process: $t(19) = 12.485, p < .001$, with a mean difference of 3.250, suggesting there was a perceived clear guideline.

5. Employees often face delays with the process: $t(19) = 14.038, p < .001$, with a mean difference of 3.450, indicating employees agreed that delays were frequent.

Therefore, in answering the research question on that the challenges public service employees face in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules, it can be

concluded, all statements have significantly positive mean scores, suggesting that respondents generally agreed with the research question that public service employees faced challenges in adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules. The findings to this research questions are similar to the findings of a study conducted by Bhebhe Thomas and Warinda Brighton, which sought to analyses the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures on company performance with particular reference to African Distillers (Pvt) Ltd. The findings revealed that poor communication, lack of continuous training strategies, failure to live by the letter and spirit of the company's code of conduct by both management and employees were identified as factors contributed to indiscipline, which further, led to lack of trust between workers and management [20].

The final research question was based on, 'how can the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules be improved to uphold fairness and integrity'? The data collected from the questionnaire for this question can be seen in the table below.

Table 14. Descriptive Statistics for Research Question Three

| Questions | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Needs for better communication. | 20 | 3 | 5 | 4.25 | .64 |
| Additional Training is needed | 20 | 3 | 5 | 4.40 | .68 |
| Special Training for Tribunal Members | 20 | 3 | 5 | 4.25 | .64 |
| More Transparency is needed | 20 | 3 | 5 | 4.25 | .64 |
| More opportunities to be given to provide feedback on the rules. | 20 | 3 | 5 | 4.25 | .72 |

Table 14 shows that the mean scores for this research question ranged from 4.40 to 4.25 which meant that most of the staff seemed to share a similar view that the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules need to be improved to uphold fairness and integrity. The standard

deviations for these questions were very low, ranging from 0.64 to 0.72, which indicated that the level of staff perceptions for these questions was very clustered. The data also shows that most of these questions (11, 13, 14 and 15) carried the same mean and standard

deviations of 4.24 and 0.64 respectively, which indicated that most of the staff agreed

with these specific questions, and their scores were clustered around the mean.

Table 15. Needs for Better Communication

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 3 | 2 | 10 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 4 | 11 | 55 | 55.0 | 65.0 |
| 5 | 7 | 35 | 35.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 15 shows that 90% of the staff agreed that there was a need for better communication about the disciplinary procedures, while 10% had a neutral opinion. The low standard deviation was a result of the choice made by the staff when answering this question. In the interviews with the Legal Officers when asked, “What improvements do you think are needed in the communication of disciplinary procedures to employees”? she indicated that Personnel practitioners needed more training to become familiar with the disciplinary process.

This was also pointed out from the May 2016 report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Public Service of Guyana.

Recommendation 19 stated, that the Department of the Public Service should undertake an audit of the training and development function at least every five years to assess and evaluate the organization and delivery of training, and to recommend measures for improvement and efficiencies [3].

The next question of the questionnaire dealt with additional training of the disciplinary procedures would benefit public service employees. The mean score for this question was 4.40 while the standard deviation was 0.68 which meant that most of the staff agreed with this question and their perceptions were clustered around the mean score.

Table 16. Additional Training is Needed

| No | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| 3 | 2 | 10 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 4 | 8 | 40 | 40.0 | 50.0 |
| 5 | 10 | 50 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 100.0 | |

Table 16 shows that 90% of the staff agreed that additional training was needed on the disciplinary procedures. Meanwhile, the Legal Officers in their interviews, also shared similar views. One of them mentioned, ‘It would serve the purpose of equipping them with the knowledge required to administer the process’.

Since the mean scores and standard deviation for the five questions to answer this research question which was based on, how can the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules be improved to uphold fairness and integrity, were similar, the average means and standard deviations were calculated to answer the research question.

Table 17. Summary of Data Collected for Research Question Three

| Question | Average Mean | Average Stand Dev | Remarks |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 11-15 | 4.28 | 0.66 | 4.28 x 20 = 85.6% |

Table 17 shows an average mean score and standard deviations score for the final research question which was based on, 'how can the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules be improved to uphold fairness and integrity'. The average mean score for this question was 4.28 which indicated that 85.6 % of the staff

agreed that the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules need to be improved to uphold fairness and integrity and their views were very clustered. The data were then subjected to T-Test to determine the level of significance in the responses from the staff.

Table 18. One-Sample Test

| Questions | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
|--|----------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig (2- tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Needs for better communication. | 29.760 | 19 | .000 | 4.250 | 3.95 | 4.55 |
| Additional Training is needed | 28.914 | 19 | .000 | 4.400 | 4.08 | 4.72 |
| Special Training for Tribunal Members | 29.760 | 19 | .000 | 4.250 | 3.95 | 4.55 |
| More Transparency is needed | 29.760 | 19 | .000 | 4.250 | 3.95 | 4.55 |
| More opportunities to be given to provide feedback on the rules. | 26.533 | 19 | .000 | 4.250 | 3.91 | 4.59 |

Table 18 shows the results of one-sample t-tests for five different statements related to how can the disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules be improved to uphold fairness and integrity.

The Following is the Interpretation of Results as it Relates to the Specific Questions:

Needs for Better Communication:

The data revealed that $t = 29.760$, $p = .000$. The mean difference is 4.250, with a confidence interval between 3.95 and 4.55. which meant that staff strongly agreed that better communication was needed, with an average rating of around 4.25 (between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree").

Additional Training is needed:

The $t = 28.914$, $p = .000$. The mean difference is 4.400, with a confidence interval between 4.08 and 4.72. This meant that there was a significant agreement that additional training was needed, with an average score close to 4.4, indicating most respondents were in agreement or strong agreement.

Special Training for Tribunal Members:

The data indicated that the $t = 29.760$, $p = .000$. The mean difference is 4.250, which was similar to the first question. This meant that the staff strongly agreed that tribunal members needed special training, with an average rating of around 4.25.

More Transparency is Needed

The $t = 29.760$, $p = .000$, while the mean difference is again 4.250, indicating strong agreement.

More Opportunities to Provide Feedback on the Rules

The data revealed that the $t = 26.533$, $p = .000$. The mean difference was also 4.250, with slightly wider confidence intervals (3.91 to 4.59), but still showing strong agreement that more opportunities are needed for feedback.

For all five statements, the results show that staff strongly agree with each statement, as indicated by the high t -values, significant p -values, and mean differences between 4.25 and 4.4. All confidence intervals lie well above 3, showing clear agreement that the

disciplinary procedures in PSC Rules need to be improved to uphold fairness and integrity. The findings of this research question are in keeping with the recommendation made by Apalia in this study in which he recommends that organizations should adopt transparent and structured disciplinary procedures to maintain discipline and enhance employee performance [11].

Hypothesis Testing

The data collected from the questionnaire to answer the three research questions were further subjected to a T-test at 0.05 level of significance, to determine the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis established in this research. Details of the hypothesis testing can be seen in the table below.

Table 19. Hypothesis Testing

| Question | Average Mean | Ave Stan Dev | N | Df | Lev of Sig | Cal T-Val | Crit Val |
|----------|--------------|--------------|----|----|------------|-----------|----------|
| 1-15 | 3.5 | 0.99 | 20 | 19 | 0.05 | 2.26 | 2.093 |

The data in table 19 shows that since the calculated t -value (2.26) is greater than the critical t -value (2.093), the researcher rejects the null hypothesis, which states, 'The current disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules have no significant impact on upholding fairness and integrity.' While accepting the alternative hypothesis which states, 'The current disciplinary procedures outlined in PSC Rules significantly affect the upholding of fairness and integrity.'

Discussion

The study aimed to examine the disciplinary procedures in Guyana's Public Service, specifically focusing on upholding fairness and integrity. The findings, based on the research questions, revealed the following:

1. Effectiveness of current disciplinary procedures: The first research question sought to determine whether the current

disciplinary procedures outlined in the Public Service Commission (PSC) Rules are effective in ensuring fairness and integrity. The average mean score for this question was 2.95, indicating that only 59% of the staff agreed that the procedures in the PSC Rules promote fairness and integrity. This finding is similar to a study conducted by Bell. E. et al, on, public services in the UK: The ongoing challenges of delivery and public accountability [21].

2. Challenges faced by public service employees: The second research question focused on the challenges public service employees encounter when adhering to the disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules. The average mean score for this question was 3.29, suggesting that 65.8% of the staff acknowledged the

existence of challenges in adhering to these disciplinary procedures.

3. Suggestions for improvement: The final research question explored how the disciplinary procedures in the PSC Rules can be improved to better uphold fairness and integrity. The average mean score for this question was 4.28, showing that 85.6% of the staff strongly agreed that improvements are necessary to enhance fairness and integrity. The responses were notably clustered, reflecting a consensus among the staff on this issue.

The data were further analyzed using a t-test to assess the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis. The results revealed that the null hypothesis—which states that the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules have no significant impact on upholding fairness and integrity—was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, which posits that the current disciplinary procedures significantly affect the upholding of fairness and integrity, was accepted.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the disciplinary procedures within Guyana's Public Service, focusing on their effectiveness in upholding fairness and integrity. The researcher set out three research questions as a guide for the collection of primary data. Secondary data was also obtained and interpreted with the primary data. Through an analysis of personnel perceptions, challenges faced by public service employees, and the need for procedural improvements, key insights were revealed.

The findings showed that while a portion of staff believes the current disciplinary procedures outlined in the PSC Rules ensure fairness and integrity, a significant number of personnel highlighted challenges in adhering to these procedures. Additionally, there was a strong consensus that improvements are necessary to better uphold fairness and

integrity within the public service disciplinary framework.

A t-test analysis further validated the results, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that the disciplinary procedures currently in place significantly impact fairness and integrity in the public service.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the need for continuous improvement of the PSC's disciplinary procedures. By addressing the identified challenges and incorporating staff feedback, the Public Service Commission can work towards establishing a more transparent, fair, and effective disciplinary system, which in turn will contribute to greater accountability and integrity within Guyana's public sector. Failure to adhere can result in breakdown in public sector which can result in chaos as seen in the study conducted by Zafarullah, H., & Siddiquee, N. A. Dissecting public sector corruption in Bangladesh: Issues and problems of control [22].

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the researcher is proposing the following recommendations which aim at addressing the procedural deficiencies identified in your study and to improve the overall fairness and efficiency of disciplinary practices within Guyana's Public Service.

1. Enhanced Training for Personnel Officers, a comprehensive training programs for personnel officers across all Ministries, Regions, and Agencies. These training programs should focus on the correct application of the PSC Rules, particularly Chapter VII, to ensure procedural accuracy during disciplinary cases. Specialized workshops on natural justice principles should be offered to ensure officers are fully aware of the need to serve charge sheets and allow adequate response times to charges.

2. The PSC Rules should be revised and simplified to reduce ambiguities. Clear

guidelines and procedural flowcharts should be developed to help personnel officers follow the step by step/ sequences of disciplinary matters.

3. The Ministries/ Regions should establish an independent disciplinary tribunal specifically trained to handle the disciplinary matters.

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