The Impact of Training and Development on the Performance of the Guyana Police Force

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of training and development programs on the performance of the Guyana Police Force (GPF). "The Role of Training and Development in Fostering Performance in the Guyana Police Force", authored by Suelle Findlay-Williams, the co-author of this article. The study was done utilising survey data drawn from 250 officers in the Guyana Police Force and integrating a cross-section of global research studies across law enforcement, military, corporate, and public service sectors. This paper examines how structured training affects police confidence, decision-making, and overall effectiveness. The results reveal a strong correlation between continuous training and improved professional outcomes, with 95% of officers reporting enhanced public interaction and 93% citing increased productivity. Key findings of this study emphasise the value of scenario-based training, mentorship, emotional regulation, and feedback mechanisms in law enforcement training design. The study concludes with recommendations to refine training delivery, enhance leadership development, and integrate international best practices.

***Keywords:** Guyana Police Force, Law Enforcement Training, Police Performance, Professional Development, Training and Development.*

Introduction

In present-day public administration, law enforcement agencies such as the Guyana Police Force (GPF) play a critical role in ensuring national security, public safety, and social order. The ability of these institutions to fulfil their mandates hinges on the quality and capacity of their human resources. Despite increased government investment in the GPF, data does not exist to clarify the effectiveness of these efforts, particularly in training and development (T&D). This study aims to examine the extent to which training and development interventions influence the performance of officers in the GPF.

Government expenditure on the police force has risen in recent years, signifying political and strategic commitment to institutional strengthening. Yet, there is a scarcity of empirical data evaluating whether such investments have translated into measurable improvements in policing outcomes. Similarly, [23] found limited empirical linkages between investment and actual public sector performance in developing countries. This gap presents an urgent research imperative, especially given the high expectations placed on the police force to manage crime, build community trust, and exercise professional judgment under pressure.

Literature Review

Training and Development (T&D) have long been recognised as essential tools for enhancing organisational effectiveness, particularly in environments that are considered performance sensitive, such as law enforcement. The theoretical grounding for T&D is primarily

rooted in two dominant frameworks, namely the Human Capital Theory and Social Learning Theory, which guide the interpretation and implementation of T&D strategies in public institutions like the Guyana Police Force (GPF).

Theoretical Foundations

Human Capital Theory, first articulated by [3], posits that education and training are investments in human resources that yield returns in the form of improved productivity and economic performance. Within the context of policing, investing in officer education and structured learning enhances cognitive, interpersonal, and operational capabilities, which, in turn, improves public service delivery and institutional effectiveness [2]. The foundational work of the Human Capital Theory continues to shape public policy and institutional design in training frameworks [7]. Furthermore, the Social Learning Theory, developed by [2], suggests that individuals learn behaviours, norms, and skills by observing and modelling others in their environment. In a law enforcement context, this theory supports the incorporation of mentoring, simulations, and scenario-based training as powerful tools for reinforcing desired behaviours and cultivating leadership, communication, and decision-making competencies [4].

In the organisational context, [17] noted that T&D initiatives are vital to retaining skilled employees and fostering a productive workforce, especially in the public sector. Their work further underscores that employee engagement and morale are tightly linked to the availability and quality of continuous learning opportunities. In a similar vein, [13] observed that structured T&D programs, particularly job rotation and mentoring, have a measurable effect on employee performance and adaptability. The findings of [19] suggest that military training evaluations aligned with mission outcomes offer lessons for law enforcement environments.

There is also an argument that the complex psychological demands of law enforcement work require targeted interventions that include emotional regulation, resilience training, and decision-making under stress [5], further supporting a paradigm shift towards training programs that foster community trust, emotional intelligence, and democratic policing values.

In addition, the influential model of learning outcomes outlined by [21] highlights three domains: cognitive, skill-based, and affective, as critical to assessing T&D efficacy. This multi-dimensional approach informs modern program design and evaluation mechanisms that go beyond knowledge acquisition to measure behaviour change and attitude shifts in the workplace.

Specific Evidence from Law Enforcement

Recent empirical studies underscore the transformative potential of T&D in police forces. Findings from [1] synthesised multiple jurisdictions and outlined ten core competencies necessary for effective law enforcement, including stress management, ethical decision-making, and procedural justice. Their narrative review confirms that scenario-based training can reduce use-of-force incidents and improve police-community relationships.

Further, a longitudinal study conducted by [8] on procedural justice training in American police departments found a significant reduction in civilian complaints and use-of-force reports, by 10% and 6.4%, respectively, within two years. These findings highlight how effective training interventions can reshape public perception and internal behaviour patterns within police organisations. Theory driven training was also supported by [22], as it had led to a measurable reduction in civilian complaints and use of force incidents.

Reinforcing the argument for integrating technology-enhanced learning tools into police training programmes, [12] notes that immersive training environments, such as virtual reality simulations, not only enhance tactical responsiveness but also reduce anxiety and improve decision-making accuracy under pressure.

Within the Caribbean context, [9] a comparative study of public institutions found that effective T&D initiatives contribute not only to job proficiency and morale but also to institutional image and policy compliance. The study stressed the importance of aligning training content with strategic objectives and real-world challenges.

Regional and international police training initiatives, as discussed by [10], who studied police forces in Trinidad and Jamaica, found that continuous training significantly reduced public complaints and increased procedural compliance when scenario-based training was employed regularly. Similarly, [15] documented how decentralised community policing training programs in Latin America—particularly in Colombia—improved community engagement and trust. It was observed by [11] that British police training reforms that emphasised diversity, ethics, and procedural justice have contributed to a measurable improvement in police-community relationships. The National College of Policing in the UK mandates annual scenario-based and de-escalation training that could serve as a model for Guyana.

Thus far, the literature strongly supports the assertion that T&D is not a peripheral activity but a strategic imperative for police institutions. Effective training leads to better job performance, increased officer confidence, stronger public engagement, and reduced misconduct. Theoretical models such as Human Capital Theory and Social Learning Theory provide a robust foundation for interpreting the mechanisms through which training produces these outcomes.

Given the challenges of policing in Guyana, including changing crime patterns, public expectations, and technological developments, there is an urgent need to tailor training programs to meet local realities while drawing from international best practices.

On-the-Job vs. Off-the-Job Training in Law Enforcement

Numerous studies demonstrate how on-the-job training (OJT) and off-the-job training (OffJT) present both synergistic and contrasting effects within law enforcement settings that involve complex tasks and critical decision-making responsibilities.

OJT delivers experiential learning through real-time situations that emphasise immediate task performance combined with peer learning and mentoring support. [16] state that OJT develops officers' contextual problem-solving abilities along with their confidence and operational efficiency through direct knowledge application in their working environment. Bandura's Social Learning Theory [2] validates OJT's focus on modeling and observational learning which becomes more prominent when mentoring is included.

OffJT includes structured instructional activities along with simulations and classroom learning and technology-based modules. OffJT enables officers to acquire basic knowledge while being free from the pressures of active duty operations. [20] maintains that OffJT strengthens both cognitive and affective learning domains through its capacity to integrate theoretical knowledge with ethical considerations and policy alignment. According to [17], OffJT leads to substantial professional development when its content matches real-world needs.

However, limitations exist. When poorly supervised on-the-job training (OJT) supports outdated practices [21], off-the-job training (OffJT) becomes detached from real-world application without careful context integration [9, 6] recommends hybrid training methods that

merge OJT's immediate feedback capabilities with OffJT's systematic learning processes to create the most successful law enforcement programs.

The research by [13] demonstrates how training systems must be adaptable to local circumstances in the Caribbean and developing countries. [19] reflect similar thinking by identifying military evaluation models as frameworks that can create adaptive police training.

From a comparative standpoint, both OJT and OffJT training methods are essential, as OJT reinforces behavioural skills through practical application, while OffJT enhances theoretical knowledge along with ethical and psychological readiness. The most effective law enforcement training outcomes arise from a customised blended approach that takes into account rank position, experience level, and task specificity.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the impact of on-the-job training on officer performance.
2. To assess the role of off-the-job training in developing law enforcement competencies.
3. To recommend evidence-based strategies to improve training outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

The study is grounded in Human Capital Theory, which emphasises that productivity is enhanced through investment in people, and Social Learning Theory, which highlights the role of observation, modelling, and mentorship.

Methodology

A quantitative descriptive survey design served as the methodological framework to explore the relationship between training programs and the performance outcomes of the Guyana Police Force (GPF). The study aimed to explore how training programs impact service delivery operations and effectiveness and to recommend research-supported improvements for the GPF's training system.

Research Design

The study used descriptive survey methodology to capture current views and practices about training in the GPF. Through this design, the researcher collected standardised data in a real-world setting and used a structured questionnaire to quantify opinions. The survey tool featured demographic questions and Likert-scale questions that evaluated the perceived effectiveness of training received during work hours and training sessions outside working hours.

Sampling Technique

At the time the GPF was surveyed, it had 5,040 officers distributed among fifteen ranks and thirty-seven departments across the county, which required the use of a non-probability convenience sampling approach. Participants for the study came from officers working in the largest police stations located in Regions 3 and 4, together with those stationed at Police Headquarters located in Georgetown. The research included officers from Brickdam, Cove and John, Providence, Leonora, Parika, and La Grange stations. The survey selected individuals who were available during its timeframe, with priority given to officers who were actively serving when data collection commenced.

Data Collection

Data was obtained through a structured questionnaire, which had undergone validation. The Head of the GPF Training Division and academic experts performed face validation of the instrument, that was then pilot tested with officers. Expert feedback led to adjustments that boosted clarity, resolved inconsistencies and heightened the response accuracy. Although secondary data from global literature established a context for the problem, the research relied heavily on primary data from Guyana due to the limited availability of local studies.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS. The study applied descriptive statistics to summarize characteristics of officers and their training experiences while inferential statistics through regression analysis explored relationships between types of training and performance indicators.

Independent variables:

1. On-the-job training: drills, instruction, mentoring, and case studies.
2. Off-the-job training: The study included lectures together with overseas exchange programmes and both simulated exercises and specialized training as components of off-the-job training.

The dependent variables measured included:

1. Quality of service delivery
2. Adherence to operational procedures

The chosen methodology facilitated a thorough assessment of the role structured training programmes play in enhancing professional skills and boosting organisational outcomes for the Guyana Police Force.

Results

Demographics

The results depicted in Figure 1 illustrate the number of respondents disaggregated by gender of those who participated in the study. Out of 250 respondents, 125 were females and 118 were males, representing 51% and 49% respectively. This indicates that the female population is marginally greater than the male population within the survey population.
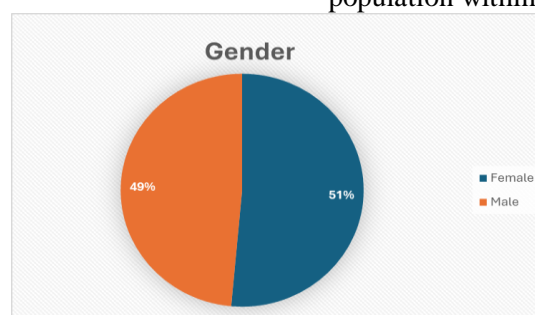
Figure 1. Gender Distribution of Respondents of the Guyana Police Force - Sourced from Survey Data

Figure 2 outlines the age group of all respondents who participated in the study. 64% of respondents are between the ages of 21 and 30 years, representing the largest age group in the study. 21% fell between the ages of 31 and 40 years, constituting the second largest age cohort. Followed by 13% of respondents who were aged 41 to 50 years. A small number of respondents were younger than 20 years old. The graph shows that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 40 years of age.
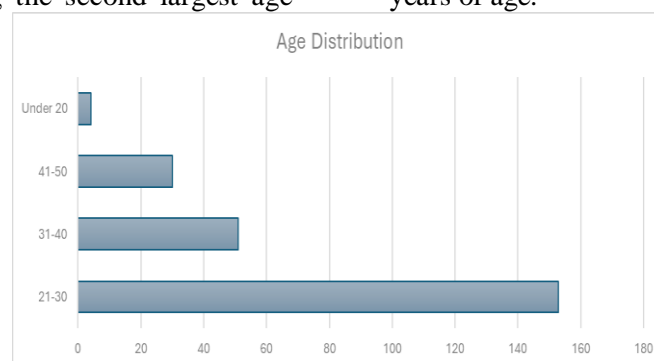
Figure 2. Age Distribution of Respondents— Sourced from Survey Data

In Figure 3, the educational qualifications range from Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (CSEC) to Master's degrees. A significant number of police officers indicated they would have attained a diploma (78 %), followed by a bachelor's degree (51%).
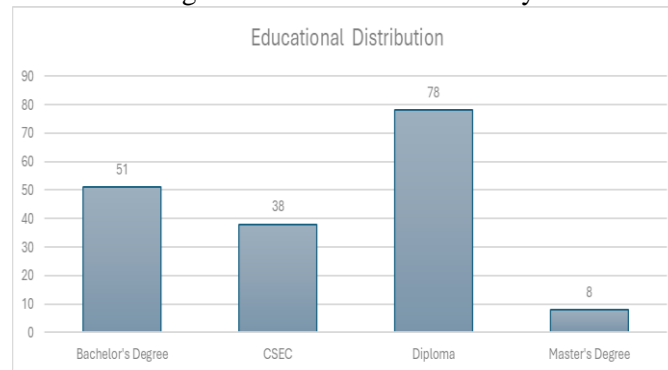
Figure 3. Education Level of Respondents from the Guyana Police Force— Sourced from Survey Data

In Figure 4, the survey indicates that 50% of the respondents were employed in the GPF for 6 to 10 years. This was followed by newer recruits of 0 to 5 years, who made up 17% of all respondents. It also shows that 15% of respondents had worked with the GPF for between 11 and 15 years, and 18% of the respondents possess more than 15 years of experience within the Guyana Police Force.
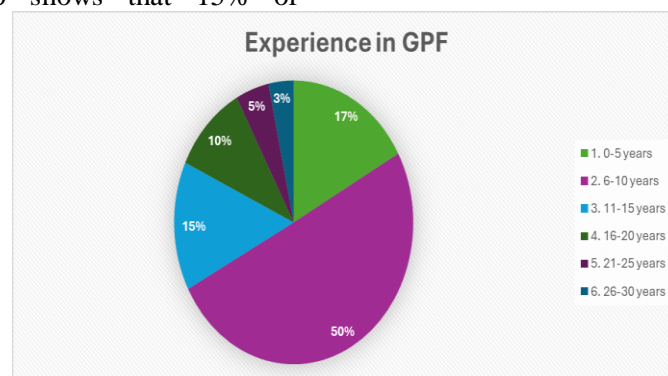
Figure 4. Years of Experience of Respondents from the GPF- Sourced from Survey Data

Figure 5 illustrates the ranks of all respondents who participated in the study. The most prominent rank was constable, comprising 28% of the respondents. 24% were reported as Sergeants, while 22% were Lance Corporals. These ranks account for more than half of the respondents.
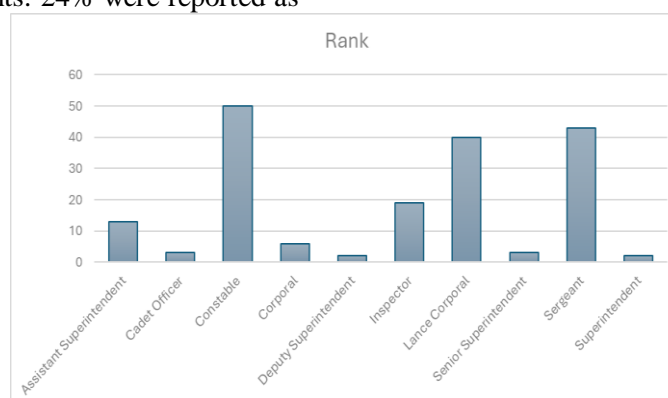

Figure 5. Distribution of Police Officers by Rank—Sources from Survey Data

Training Frequency

The findings indicate that 67% of officers received training in the last year, with firearm and investigative training being the most common. Common training types included firearms (39%), trafficking in persons (19%), and investigative techniques (17%).

Figure 6 illustrates that training was most frequent at the constable and sergeant ranks. This visual also indicates which ranks participated in training and at what frequency. It was observed that all superintendents are primarily engaged in yearly training programmes, while Constables, Inspectors, and Lance Corporals undergo three or more training sessions within a year. The study shows that Cadets participate only in quarterly training.
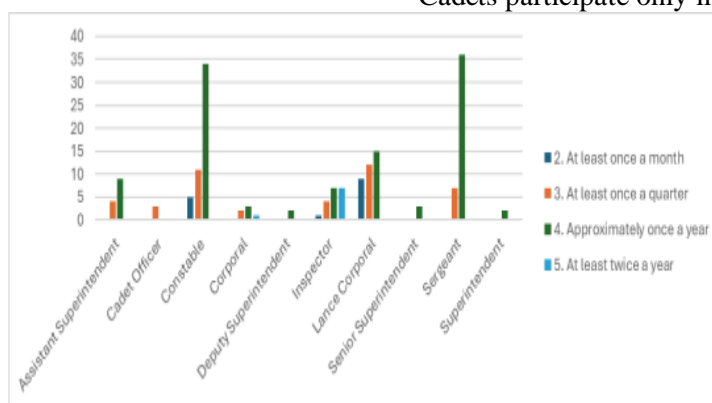
Figure 6. Training Frequency by Rank – Sourced from Survey Data

Perceptions of Officers about Effectiveness of Training

Providing insights into police officers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their training programs across various dimensions, the study indicated that the majority of respondents agreed that their drill skills have been enhanced through the training, with an additional 36% strongly agreeing. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with the drill-focused components of the training program.

A significant number also agreed that induction programs have helped them adapt well to their workstations, which suggests that the induction programs are effective in familiarising officers with their work environments and responsibilities.

A combined 95% of respondents agreed that training has improved their interactions with members of the public. This highlights the positive impact of training on officers' communication and interpersonal skills. This finding aligns with [4], who underscored the importance of developing interpersonal competencies in volatile policies.

In relation to their perceived productivity, 93 % of respondents said that training has improved their productivity, demonstrating the effectiveness of training in equipping officers with the skills and knowledge to perform their duties more efficiently. A combined 93% reported that training has helped to boost their confidence in applying what they know.

The survey also revealed that 89% of officers felt their superiors had shown more confidence in them after completing the police training program, indicating a positive impact on both self-perception and supervisor perception. Officers reported improvements in drill skills, workstation adaptation, public interaction, productivity, and pride in their profession (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Police Officers' Perception of the Impact of Training on Performance – Sourced from Survey Data

Skill Area	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total Agreement (%)
Enhancement of drill skills	36	56	92
Workstation adaptation through induction	31	62	93
Improved public interaction	51	44	95
Improved productivity	54	39	93
Reinforcement of professional pride	46	49	95
Demonstrated confidence from superiors	49	40	89
improvement in peer relationship	55	35	90
Increased confidence in applying knowledge	57	36	93
Improved decision-making in high pressure	58	42	100
On-the-job mentoring impact	61	34	95
Off-the-job training impact	42	53	95

Further, results show that 58% of respondents agreed that training has boosted their pride in being a police officer, with an additional 46% strongly agreeing that training has helped in that regard.

Asked whether training was relevant to their daily duties, 61% of respondents indicated that training is highly relevant, while 64% reported a great deal of improvement in handling routine tasks. The study also found that officers with more than 10 years of service rated training as more relevant than newer recruits.

Meanwhile, findings also indicate that 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that training had improved their ability to respond to high-stakes scenarios. Notably, 77% of officers rated on-the-job training as "very effective", with another 18% considering it "moderately effective". This was further validated by the 100% of respondents who believed the GPF should invest more in on-the-job and off-the-job training, showing overwhelming institutional support for continuous development.

Moreover, officers viewed off-the-job training as equally essential. 88% believed it contributed moderately or greatly to their overall performance, and 95% found the content of these sessions directly relevant to their roles.

Perceived Impact of Training by Years of Experience in the Guyana Police Force

The following results show the variations in how officers across different years of service perceived the impact of training on their performance. Officers who have been on the Force between 0-5 years showed a perceived positive impact at a higher percentage, which indicates that junior officers benefit most directly from training. The study showed that as years go by and as officers gain more experience, the proportion of "Strongly Agree" responses decreased and "Agree" responses remain relatively stable. This finding suggests that the more experienced officers value training, but their perception of its impact changes (Figure 7).
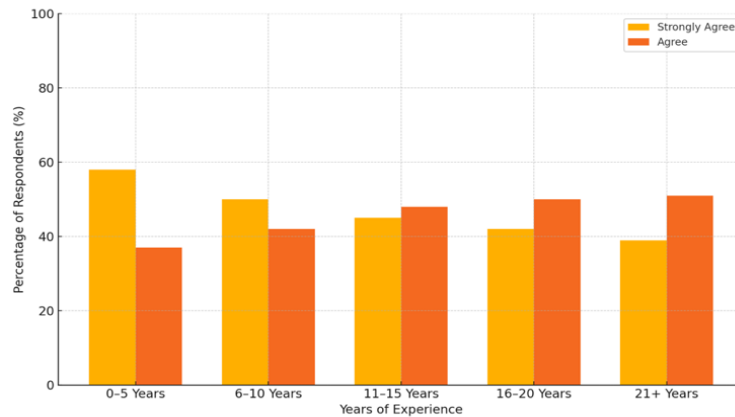
Figure 7. Perceived Training Impact by Years of Experience – Sourced from Survey Data

The following table (Table 2) presents results from the study regarding the perceived impact of training on peer relationships, productivity, and confidence as rated by police officers in the Guyana Police Force. A combined (strongly agree and agree) 90% of officers at the time the study was conducted expressed that training has positively impacted their relationships with their peers, and 93% indicated that it has enhanced their productivity. Additionally, in relation to the impact of training on the supervisors' confidence level in their subordinates, 89% of respondents reported that they noted a positive change in their respective supervisor's confidence in them.

Table 2. Impact of Training on Peer Relationships, Productivity, and Confidence – Sourced from Survey Data

Impact Area	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Not Sure (%)
Peer relationships	55	35	10
Productivity	54	39	7
Confidence from superiors	46	43	11

Discussion

The research aimed to investigate how training and development (T&D) programs influence the performance of the Guyana Police Force (GPF). It specifically sought to begin by evaluating how on-the-job training affects officer performance, then analyse the importance of off-the-job training for law enforcement skills before presenting evidence-based approaches to enhance training outcomes. Analysis of the results, together with current academic literature and theoretical models, demonstrates a strong argument for improving the design and implementation of T&D programs in policing.

On-the-Job Training Impact

Research revealed that officers who received on-the-job training demonstrated substantial performance improvements. According to survey data, 93% of participants reported improved productivity following their training participation. Survey results revealed that all participants experienced better decision-making during high-pressure situations, and 95% reported that they interacted more effectively with the public. The results confirm the main tenet of Human Capital Theory, stating that enhancing employee skills leads to increased productivity and job performance outcomes [3].

Furthermore, the benefits of on-the-job mentoring were strongly affirmed. Mentoring

proved impactful for 95% of survey participants, and 89% experienced improved confidence from their superiors after training. The findings match Social Learning Theory [2] because it identifies modelling and reinforcement together with observation as principal ways through which skills become ingrained.

The findings match the assertions of [16] about job-embedded learning leading to better real-time problem-solving capabilities and the discovery by [18] that scenario-based training boosts officers' interpersonal skills and their ability to de-escalate situations.

Role of Off-the-Job Training

The structured learning experiences of off-the-job training through classroom sessions, simulations and technical workshops showed substantial effectiveness. The survey showed that 95% of participants found off-the-job training beneficial for their performance. This finding is supported by [20], who explained that well-designed training positively impacts employee attitude and workplace proficiency, particularly when aligned with on-the-job relevance. Meanwhile, 88% reported it helped their professional development either greatly or moderately. The research by Said et al. provides evidence for these data points. Research conducted by [17] proves that public institutions benefit from structured training through improved skill proficiency and better understanding of policies.

A study focused on how virtual reality, as an immersive tool, can enhance emotional regulation and decision-making by [14] shows that immersive tools like virtual reality hold significant value because they help individuals manage their emotions and make better decisions during intense situations. The GPF study confirmed that all respondents showed improved crisis response capabilities after completing the training.

The training frequencies were not consistent across different ranks, according to the observations made. The reduced number of training sessions attended by senior officers indicates the necessity of specialised leadership development programs. [5] identifies succession planning and leadership cultivation as vital components for policing organisations that remain underdeveloped within the existing GPF structure.

Integration of Findings with Theoretical Models

The research supports Human Capital Theory and Social Learning Theory as core structural frameworks. Training interventions demonstrate Human Capital Theory through the documented performance enhancement in officers' productivity and decision-making abilities. The critical components of Social Learning Theory manifest through peer mentorship and leadership modelling, together with experiential learning practices throughout organisational ranks.

The connection between length of service and increased value placed on training demonstrates how learning develops over time. Junior officers experience immediate advantages from training, while senior officers understand its enduring strategic importance. The distinction corresponds with [12] separation of immediate training from ongoing development.

The analysis demonstrates that well-planned and executed training and development programs play a vital role in maintaining police professionalism and building public confidence. Situational responsiveness and peer collaboration improve through on-the-job training, while off-the-job training develops officers' theoretical understanding and policy knowledge. Their combined efforts develop an effective police force which demonstrates competence and confidence while being deeply embedded in community principles.

The GPF must implement a multi-level training system, as advocated in global policing reforms [6]. To address current deficiencies,

this training strategy should focus on hands-on learning experiences alongside ongoing mentorship and leadership development. Officers at every rank will gain the necessary skills to handle modern law enforcement challenges.

Recommendations

A review of empirical research and existing literature reveals numerous methods to improve T&D within the Guyana Police Force. A number of recommendations are proposed below:

1. The GPF can adopt best practices from regional and international police training initiatives to enhance contextual alignment. Through their research on police forces in Trinidad and Jamaica, [10] established that ongoing training through scenario-based methods led to lower public complaints and higher procedural adherence. Research by [15] in 2018 showed that Latin American countries like Colombia observed enhanced community engagement and trust through decentralised community policing training programs. British police training reforms focusing on diversity, ethics and procedural justice led to improved police-community relationships within the UK context [11]. The UK's National College of Policing requires officers to complete yearly training sessions that focus on scenario-based exercises and de-escalation techniques, which Guyana could replicate.

2. The GPF should consider supporting the implementation of blended training models. Balanced skill development results from integrating workplace mentoring with technical education outside of work. This methodology is supported by [6, 16, 21], along with the necessity of creating training programs that are both contextual and tailored to the individual.

3. The police force should also consider establishing a formal mentorship structure. Studies such as [2, 6, 14, 16, 21] discuss the significant benefits, which point to the necessity of establishing a formal mentoring framework that includes all ranks and supports leadership development.

4. Senior officer training programs should consider prioritising mental preparedness, ethical leadership, and decision-making, alongside stress management and procedural justice, as essential competencies for effective senior police leadership, which will according to [1] play a key role in fostering an environment that promotes ethical decision-making and resilience in high-pressure situations, ultimately enhancing the integrity and efficacy of law enforcement leadership.

5. Finally, the Force should also consider a greater focus on continuous assessment and feedback, as regular evaluations of training effectiveness, according to recommendations by [8], will improve the alignment between institutional goals and training outcomes.

Conclusion

Structured training programs targeted correctly have been proven to improve both performance and professionalism levels among Guyana Police Force officers. Enhanced productivity and improved decision-making skills, along with greater confidence levels and better community interaction, demonstrate the strong connection to effective training programs. Off-the-job training combined with on-the-job mentoring produces lasting benefits.

The differences in training opportunities among senior officers, combined with the difficulties they experience in applying their training, are a good indication of the requirement for an adaptable and inclusive training system.

To maintain and enhance training effectiveness, the Guyana Police Force should implement a blended strategy that integrates experiential learning with mentorship and

regular evaluations. This model will better prepare the law enforcement institution to handle modern policing requirements and build both public confidence and organisational integrity.

The proper functioning of police depends entirely on their training and developmental programs. This study demonstrates that structured, continuous training with scenarios leads to improved performance and better decision-making skills, as well as increased confidence and professionalism, which aligns with international research findings. For continuous growth to occur, the GPF must focus on mentorship and leadership development, along with building emotional resilience. Through investment in new training technologies and curricula, the Guyana Police Force will develop competent officers who serve their communities effectively.

Conflict of Interest

Acknowledgement

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