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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline, and Accountability (PEEDA) Act 2006, Accountability, Proceedings, School, Hermeneutic Phenomenology	The study aimed to explore accountability proceedings under PEEDA, which acts as a cornerstone of public sector schools in Punjab, Pakistan. This study explores PEEDA Act of 2006 proceedings. The researcher used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach and qualitative method. This study aimed to investigate how disciplinary proceedings were apparent and practiced by Education Department Officers (EDOs). This study was conducted within an interpretive paradigm. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with direct involvement of five (purposively selected) EDOs who executed the Act. A thematic analysis approach was used for data analysis. Five key themes were identified during the initial phase that were examined in order to extract the desired information. The results highlight PEEDA, its proceedings, and practical enforcement, which were determined using limited procedural information. Dogmatic stress and general inadequacies for abuse have significant gaps related to legal intent. Also, it is recommended that future researchers conduct studies to explore other perspectives and their impacts, along with their corrective devices, in the educational system.
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## INTRODUCTION

In the pursuit of transparency, discipline, and effectiveness, educational accountability in Punjab's public school system has gradually been scrutinized. Among key legislative frameworks regulating the conduct of public sector employees, including those in the school education sector, the Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline, and Accountability Act (PEEDA), 2006, stands as a cornerstone. This Act helps educational professionals adhere to ethical and professional standards as vital legal

tool & enables disciplinary measures against such misconduct. PEEDA Act emphasizes procedural fairness for a fair trial to balance efficiency with the constitutional rights. Advancing proceedings to foster administrative justice establishes devices for conducting inquiries and imposing penalties (Hameed, Zaidi & Imran, 2022). However, under Article 10-A of Pakistan's Constitution, concerns have been raised about the settings, and consistent investigations have been avoided, in addition to the decline of the remaining process and rights guaranteed. School discipline plays a substantial role in shaping student outcomes and organizational enactment in educational settings in Punjab. Schools generally maintain suitable discipline in rural areas. Also, female students report higher discipline levels regarding disciplinary practices in secondary schools in Punjab (Ahmad, Qamar & Abbasi, 2021).

Still, the link between disciplinary procedures and academic accomplishments is multifaceted. The research illustrates that organizational or instructive practices can negatively affect employees' behaviour (Sajid, Jamil & Abbas, 2022), students' learning, social development, and emotional well-being over harsh disciplinary practices (Kamran & Kazi, 2024). Besides, formal disciplinary structures disclose varying effectiveness in comparative studies of Punjab's public institutes. For example, the need for consistent and equity-focused implementation of the disciplinary policies is highlighted by differences amid male and female school settings and rural versus urban discipline insights (Cruz, Firestone & Rodl, 2021; Sani, Javed & Fatima, 2023). Additionally, accountability mechanisms often reduce and make it less impactful due to a lack of training and poor employment. Therefore, the need for capacity building and permissible literateness among school administrators is emphasized (Abbas, Tariq & Jamil, 2021; Batool, Arif & Nadeem, 2021). PEEDA remains a critical structure for aligning staff conduct with instructive criteria, regardless of these challenges. Subsequently, schools with vital authorized consultants to act on inadequacies and misbehavior even though they promote fair and translucent disciplinary practices, help bridge the gap between policy and practice.

### Research Objectives

1. To discover insights about use of disciplinary proceedings of educational administrators and teachers conducted under PEEDA Act 2006 in public schools.
2. To inspect how PEEDA Act 2006's implementation influences accountability practices and institutional discipline within Punjab school education system.

### Research Questions

1. How are the role and effectiveness of disciplinary proceedings of educational administrators & teachers perceived under PEEDA Act 2006 in Punjab's public schools?
2. How has the implementation of PEEDA Act 2006 influenced accountability, staff conduct, and discipline beliefs in the Punjab school education system?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline, and Accountability (PEEDA) Act 2006 offers authorized agenda to confirm discipline, competency, and accountability among public sector employees and instructors. Intellectuals debate that the Act is vital for initiation of disciplinary accomplishments

in Pakistan. It is a constitutional right to an impartial trial, where regular explorations are avoided under strict conditions (Hameed, Zaidi & Imran, 2022). The implementation of PEEDA procedures has strengthened and reinforced a culture of accountability measures within Punjab's educational institutions. When conducted fairly, disciplinary measures reinforce ethical practices as well as professional conduct among school staff (Batool, Arif & Nadeem, 2021). However, evidence also shows that inconsistencies in applying PEEDA rules may undermine their legitimacy in educational settings. A comprehensive study of secondary schools in Punjab revealed that discipline is largely intrinsic and is perceived positively by both students and educators. The rural schools and female student populations have higher discipline levels than their urban or male counterparts (Ahmad, Qamar & Abbasi, 2021).

Despite the legal framework, practical challenges persist. Many schools struggle with the effective implementation due to insufficient training and a lack of institutional support (Saif, Muhammad & Safdar, 2021). Moreover, principals in Punjab still face difficulties managing student attendance, infrastructure gaps, and unclear accountability boundaries between management and staff (Batool et al., 2021). Punjab highlights the emotional clang of severe disciplinary methods in the research on child discipline. The punitive punishment is linked to glitches in the learning, remembrance, and behaviour control experienced by 50% of the children (Kamran & Kazi, 2024). These conclusions emphasize requirement of well-adjusted liability by employing peaceful and productive practices with their job satisfaction (Anwer, Jamil, Farooqi, Akram & Mehmood, 2015). However, evading regular examination under PEEDA Act permits corrective actions against government personnel in circumstances of incompetence or misbehavior that are based on documented proof. In this regard, it also raises apprehensions about trial rights under Article 10-A of the Constitution (Hameed et al., 2022). Therefore, a UNICEF study found that approximately 50% of children in Punjab face severe disciplinary actions.

Similarly, it is suggestively related to weakened intellectual and emotional growth, emphasizing the need for policy reforms in disciplinary approaches (Kamran & Kazi, 2024). This suggests that disciplinary culture has developmental implications beyond academic outcomes. Thus, the cross-district case study shows that formal and informal Punjab disciplinary structures affect student flexibility and social skills (Sani, Javed & Fatima, 2023). In Punjab's public secondary schools, this study found that discipline is mainly intrinsic and practical in rural and female school backgrounds. This has implications for execution of PEEDA in diverse settings (Ahmad et al., 2021). The effective leadership shapes teachers' attitudes and school organizational outcomes (Aman, Muhammad & Batool, 2021; Hussain, Abbas & Jamil, 2021; Jamil, Sewani & Muhammad, 2024). It plays a vital role in effectively applying accountability mechanisms, such as the PEEDA. Principals often face infrastructural, training, and student attendance issues that challenge the reliable enforcement of discipline. Despite reform efforts, inconsistencies in accountability flow (delegation, information, and motivation) affect early learning outcomes and weaken school management at provincial level (Ansari et al., 2024).

In universities, older institutions rely more on threats and punitive actions than newer ones, thus, reflecting a traditional disciplinary culture that also permeates school-level practices (Nasreen &

Naz, 2012). There is growing concern over how inconsistently PEEDA Act is being applied, mainly in punitive cases across Punjab's education system. This legal framework to uphold justice requires documentary proof and recorded justifications when bypassing formal inquiries. Unfortunately, in many cases, procedural shortcuts and confusion around legal steps risk violating the constitutional right to a fair trial, specifically Article 10-A (Hameed et al., 2022). The strict and harsh disciplinary methods continue to harm children in Punjab. More than half of students aged 7 to 14 are subjected to severe punishment, negatively affects their learning, behavior, and mental well-being. These findings highlight need to rethink school discipline and move toward non-violent, kind approaches (Kamran & Kazi, 2024; Payne & Welch, 2022). The research has shown that how discipline is handled formally over policies and informally through the school culture can profoundly shape a student's personality. The leadership traits of emotional resilience, social behavior, and confidence are all obstructed.

The research concluded that leaders' growth-oriented and more positive practices are vital (Saqib et al., 2023). The other research findings also acknowledged that leaders play a dynamic role in school administration (Acton, 2021). The educational leaders (EDOs) who adopt the delegation or participative style of leadership are more effective in dealing with cases of accountability under disciplinary rules, running practices and barriers like gaps in infrastructure. Lack of technology and omission of inconsistency are still limiting its scope and success (Batool et al., 2021). The cultural context makes it different since leadership success in context-sensitive disciplines tends to be more positive and stronger, should be perceived in schools. The policies or rules, like PEEDA, by school leaders should be interpreted and enforced on the ground. To ensure system transparency, leaders must enforce these rules (Ahmad et al., 2021). Composed in sum, these arguments paint a profound picture of transparency under PEEDA rules and their effectiveness in practice. This study explores how PEEDA rules improve legal training. Through these rules, equitable implementation of good practices can be enhanced. These rules must be executed and researched to promote school fairness and accountability.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was grounded in the interpretive research paradigm, which emphasizes understanding individuals' subjective meanings and lived experiences in specific social and institutional context (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Interpretivism aligns well with goal of this research, which is to explore how educational officers in the PEEDA Act 2006 perceive and experience disciplinary proceedings under Punjab School Education 2006. This paradigm supports the investigation of varied outlooks, standards, and contextual explanations despite looking for unbiased, measurable truths regarding educational responsibility. This research uses a qualitative research methodology to achieve an ironic understanding of existing experiences (Naseer et al., 2022). This approach is appropriate for investigating how individuals understand complex policies and institutional procedures outlined in the PEEDA Act.

The researcher's role was interpretive, and a hermeneutic phenomenological design was used. The selected participants had lived experiences. Using the PEEDA framework, data were collected via semi-structured interviews with five EDOs directly involved in directing or managing punitive

actions. The transcripts were read repeatedly to develop themes, patterns, and meanings. In the data analysis, a hermeneutic cycle of interpretation was followed. This methodology aimed to report and understand more profound implications of participants' understanding of discipline, impartiality, and answerability. Thus, this study shapes and pursues how to create a thoughtful and contextually grounded disciplinary culture and professional conduct in Punjab's school education system about the PEEDA Act 2006.

Table 1 Participants' profile

Participant	Gender	Age	Designation	Years of EXP	Reason for Selection
ABC-1	Male	45	Executive District Officer (EDO)	20	Direct involvement in PEEDA; extensive administrative experience
ABC-2	Female	42	EDO (School Education)	18	Active role in rural school accountability; known for policy compliance initiatives
ABC-3	Male	50	Senior EDO (Disciplinary Affairs)	25	Oversaw multiple high-profile PEEDA investigations
ABC-4	Male	38	EDO (Urban Cluster Coordination)	14	Represents urban enforcement dynamics; involved in teacher-related cases
ABC-5	Female	40	EDO (Monitoring & Evaluation Unit)	16	Leads monitoring frameworks; provides feedback on PEEDA implementation

The purposively selected participants were selected for the study involving five EDOs from diverse administrative backgrounds across Punjab; presenting diverse educational settings, held positions with administrative authority, had 10+ years of experience in education department, and ensured gender representation having direct experience with disciplinary proceedings under the PEEDA Act 2006.

1. 45-year-old male executive district officer was chosen for suitable administrative expertise & his frontline role in PEEDA-related cases. With 20 years of experience, his insights reflect deep familiarity with the inner workings of disciplinary enforcement.
2. 42-year-old female EDO for school education has spent 18 years promoting school liability in rural areas. Her reputation for policy compliance made her a valuable voice on challenges and improvements in implementing PEEDA standards.
3. 50-year-old male senior EDO specializing in disciplinary affairs, offering seasoned outlook and having numerous case proceedings under PEEDA rules. Having 25 years of experience in service, his selection in this study was based on his lived experiences conducting PEEDA proceedings and his awareness of procedural patterns.
4. 38-year-old male EDO. He was working on urban cluster coordination, and his contribution was notable in PEEDA Act proceedings. Having 14 years of professional services experience, he shed light on how employee misconduct cases arise and are managed by EDOs in high-density school districts.
5. 40-year-old female EDO was purposefully selected. Her area was Monitoring & Evaluation. She has a critical role in evaluating these proceedings with a critical lens. She has 16 years of experience and focuses on reviewing disciplinary rules. Her participation offers researchers structured feedback on PEEDA implementation.



### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using a thematic approach, and the selected five EDOs were interviewed. The data was transcribed and precisely confirmed under the accuracy and truthfulness policy. The participants' descriptions were used for further analysis. The researcher read the transcribed data many times. The purpose of this was to develop a clear understanding and to consider a complete consideration. Subsequent statements were extracted and treated as units of meaning. These were manually coded and clustered into preliminary categories. Unlike thematic analysis, which merely groups content, hermeneutic phenomenology interprets these categories through contextual and philosophical reflection. For instance, codes like bureaucratic pressure, "fear of injustice," or "moral burden of decision-making" were not just taken at face value but interrogated for their embedded meaning within the broader educational and bureaucratic culture of Pakistan. These units were then synthesized into essential themes over interpretive reduction, guided by the question: What is the essence of the experience of administering disciplinary proceedings under the PEEDA Act? In this connection, the emergent themes included: legal awareness and procedural misunderstanding, ambiguity between the justice and expediency, the emotional and moral labor of the disciplinary authority, institutional inconsistencies and political interference and reform aspirations as well as structural fatigue.

Each theme was interrogated considering participant narratives and existing theories on policy implementation, administrative ethics, and procedural justice. The analysis was not conducted in isolation; it was supported by memo-writing, reflexive journaling & member-checking, enhancing trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The hermeneutic circle was central over the process, constantly negotiating between the part (individual excerpts) and the whole (entire transcripts and context). This dynamic allowed for layered interpretations rather than simplistic conclusions. Attention was paid to contradictions, tensions, and silences within the data, reflecting the complexity of disciplinary authority in public education systems globally. Thus, by including unknown participants' quotes, data interpretation was presented with the thick narrative (Geertz, 1973) to reveal their practices' vocal and silent dimensions. These quotes are spots for making the meaning not demonstrative alone but provide the basis for developing the themes through lived experiences and established authority dynamics. Rigorous interpretive analysis thus goes beyond procedural findings. It also engages deeply with the intersection of policy, law, and human agency in shaping educational accountability through punitive frameworks like PEEDA. Consequently, mirroring practices of the international qualitative research are seen in the education, policy, and administrative studies.

## RESULTS OF STUDY

### Theme 1: Legal Awareness & Procedural Misunderstanding

According to the apprehensions of this theme, there is a disparity between the formal provisions of the PEEDA Act and the practical understanding of field officers. Most EDOs were aware of the Act's broad intent towards discipline inefficient or corrupt staff members. They expressed an incomplete understanding of procedural refinements, such as regular inquiries that can be allotted or how to balance evidence with the owed processes. This gap leads to inconsistent execution and reinforces

bureaucratic ambiguity. "We are expected to apply the law strictly, but often, we are unsure when documentary evidence is 'enough' to skip a full inquiry. The law says one thing; department expects another." EDO Participant 3. This reflects a global concern in administrative policy: the disconnect between law and practice, where legal instruments are interpreted inconsistently at the local level (Lipsky, 2010).

### **Theme 2: Ambiguity Between Justice & Expediency**

Several participants reflected on the tension between ensuring justice and meeting institutional efficiency expectations. The PEEDA Act has been praised for enabling swift action, especially in cases of apparent misconduct. However, officers noted that this swiftness sometimes came at the cost of procedural fairness, especially when pressure higher-ups demanded "visible action." "Sometimes we are pushed to 'close file quickly.' There is pressure to act quickly, not always fairly. That is hard when careers are at stake." EDO Participant 1. This theme mirrors global findings on managerialism in the public education, where the administrative efficiency is prioritized over ethical deliberation (Ball, 2003).

### **Theme 3: Emotional & Moral Labor of Disciplinary Authority**

The participants consistently expressed the emotional and ethical strain in handling disciplinary proceedings. While they acknowledged their legal responsibility, burden of deciding on careers, issuing punishments, and defending decisions was described as morally taxing. Officers frequently mentioned feeling caught between the institutional duties and human compassion. "We are not machines, we know when someone is just a poor teacher, not a criminal. But the law does not differentiate much." – EDO Participant 5. This aligns with phenomenological research exploring moral labor of bureaucratic roles, where actors must reconcile formal power with ethical dilemmas (Tracy, 2005).

### **Theme 4: Institutional Inconsistencies & Political Interference**

Similarly, participants expressed concerns regarding institutional double standards and external interference that compromise the objectivity of PEEDA-based proceedings. The disciplinary action was selectively enforced, often influenced by the political affiliations, union backing, or personal networks. This erodes confidence in the fairness of accountability frameworks. "Two teachers can commit the same mistake, one gets suspended, the other gets transferred. It is who you know, not what you did." – EDO Participant 4. In this linking, this theme reflects the broader challenges in governance in developing contexts where patronage politics undermine rule-based accountability (Andrews, 2013).

### **Theme 5: Reform Aspirations & Structural Fatigue**

Despite the challenges, all five participants expressed hope for reform and a strong belief in the value of PEEDA Act if it were implemented consistently and fairly. They called for legal training, institutional safeguards, and depoliticized enforcement of the law. However, they also displayed signs of structural fatigue, feeling overburdened by paperwork, slow responses from central offices, and a lack of feedback on completed cases. "We need a system that supports PEEDA, not just dumps files on our table. So, we can say that it is a good law" EDO Participant 2. This is reflected by global

themes in education reform, where policy success is linked to the systemic rationality, specialized growth, and application capability (Fullan, 2016). These themes illustrate that the PEEDA Act 2006 is not integrally faulty, but its impact rests on intensely explanatory clarity, influential sustenance and ethical execution. Participants' lived experiences and global patterns in public administration and education systems further reveal the varying realities of collision of accountability, law, and human judgment.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to discover the implementation of the PEEDA Act 2006. This study investigated how educational administrators in Punjab recognize or experience disciplinary actions regarding institutional accountability. The research uncovered five key themes using interpretive paradigm and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. The major themes were reform aspirations, the structural weaknesses, legal awareness, procedural misunderstandings, ambiguity between justice and expediency, emotional, moral labour, institutional inconsistencies, and political interference. These findings reveal that PEEDA Act processes are complex and often contradictory regarding the educational quality and teacher satisfaction. The first significant insight is related to execution gap, which had limited procedural understanding despite the legal awareness. In this connection, many administrators expressed uncertainty regarding its procedural nuances, while some were broadly familiar with the goals of the PEEDA Act, such as the proper grounds for dispensing with regular inquiries. This aligns with the previous legal analyses that present the evasion of regular inquiries under PEEDA Act.

It requires strict and clear criteria with written justifications. However, this is often misunderstood or misapplied at the departmental level (Hameed et al., 2022). Globally, this reflects what Lipsky (2010) termed the "street-level bureaucracy" dilemma. Implementers understand intricate dogmas in real-time with partial support or training, resulting in the varying execution. The PEEDA Act is vulnerable to such distortions when used as a tool for bureaucratic efficiency rather than justice, despite its vigorous construction. It defines how participants face institutional pressure to expedite cases, even when procedural thoroughness is warranted, is closely related to the tension between fairness and practicality as it must be balanced with strategies that support and uplift educators. This aligns performance metrics and administrative speed, which are prioritized over due process, with critiques of managerialism in education (Ball, 2003). In such settings, eloquent institutional reform is far away, as well as accountability frameworks risk becoming symbolic while producing compliance theatre. Emotional and moral labour emerged as third theme and firmly existed in the participants' narratives.

Education officers navigated the human impact of their decisions and described the psychological rinsing of originating inquiries and issuing of penalties. This finding emphasizes that bureaucratic roles often require individuals to suppress their personal values to enforce institutional mandates. This reverberates with Tracy (2005) work on the emotional labour in public service. In Pakistani education, such decisions are rarely administrative, which carries ethical and relational values, and where local societies deeply surround schools. The fear of punitive actions has led to decreased job satisfaction and a sense of insecurity among educators. The perception of institutional inconsistency



and political interference was another constant theme in interviews fostering professional growth and accountability. The execution of PEEDA provisions diverges depending on political influence, union affiliations, or internal favoritism, as noted by the numerous participants. This perception is echoed in the broader governance literature. It highlights how accountability laws in developing countries are often compromised by informal power dynamics and “parallel systems of authority” (Andrews, 2013).

Finally, participants conveyed a shared belief in the potential of the PEEDA Act if reforms were introduced accurately, despite their frustrations. They requested standardized training, the digital tracking of inquiries, and personalized accuracy. This optimism is stressed and reflected in the broader educational reform literature. It is also concluded that policy tools alone are insufficient without the institutional capacity and cultural support (Fullan, 2016). This includes legal literacy, organizational coherence, and ethical leadership across all levels of the education system in the context of PEEDA promote a positive and collaborative school environment. Generally, this is illustrated by the finding that the PEEDA Act is only as effective as the system that enforces it. This narrow focus does not account for other critical aspects of teaching effectiveness and can lead to unfair assessments. The judicial framework offers solid foundation for educational accountability. PEEDA Act implementation is shaped by the local interpretations, emotional burdens, structural inconsistencies, issues, trends and challenges that echo the global experiences in the education and governance improvement.

## CONCLUSION

The present study examined perceptions and experiences of educational administrators in Punjab concerning disciplinary actions related to institutional accountability. Employing an interpretive paradigm and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, the research identified five principal themes: reform aspirations, structural weaknesses, legal awareness, procedural misunderstandings, ambiguity amid justice and expediency, emotional and moral labor, institutional inconsistencies, and political interference. The PEEDA Act 2006 serves as foundational framework for educational accountability in Punjab. The findings underscore the proceedings and practical enforcement of PEEDA, which were assessed using limited procedural information. Significant gaps were identified in relation to legal intent, particularly concerning dogmatic stress and general inadequacies for abuse. It is further recommended that future research explore additional perspectives and their impacts, along with corrective measures, within educational system. Accordingly, its development should be informed by ongoing research, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and adaptive policy revision. This should be considered a future direction to transform PEEDA from a reactive disciplinary tool into the proactive mechanism for the institutional development and professional integrity in education.

## Recommendations

1. There is a clear need for capacity-building programs for educational administrators. Future research should explore development and impact of structured training modules on PEEDA procedures, legal interpretations, and ethical decision-making.

2. Such programs should be designed with the help of legal experts, education policymakers, and practitioners to ensure contextual relevance.
3. By employing a comparative lens, advanced studies could be implemented to investigate how punitive strategies are required in different Pakistani provinces or similar developing country settings.
4. To identify best practices and expose systemic weaknesses, offering insights into how legal accountability frameworks function, cross-regional, international studies would help under varying administrative, political, and cultural conditions.
5. Future research should include perspectives from supplementary stakeholders, such as teachers, union representatives, and students, to provide holistic understanding of the effects of such disciplinary proceedings.
6. Simultaneously, this study focused on the administrators who hold critical insights into the perceived legitimacy, fairness, impact on institutional culture & are subjected to disciplinary action or work within the aforementioned environment.
7. These comparisons could be particularly valuable in understanding that how to reduce the politicization of disciplinary processes and ensure fairness across regions in the future. Such tools would be a valuable addition to educational governance for research feasibility and effectiveness.
8. There is an opportunity for digital case tracking, transparency dashboards, and mobile-based training modules to be developed and tested using technological tools and systems for managing disciplinary proceedings.

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