WORKPLACE DISCIPLINE AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Employees are the life-blood of an organization. It is expected that their conduct must be in tandem with the rules and policies of their organization if such an organization want to be effective in the accomplishment of its goal and objectives. The study examined the relationship between workplace discipline and organizational effectiveness: a conceptual review. It was discovered that unfair management practices, lack of adequate supervision of employees and nepotism pertaining to critical issues are the major causes of indiscipline among employees in Nigeria organizations. Also, the study revealed that the commonly workplace disciplinary measures used to address indiscipline are preventive, corrective and progressive. The paper identified that proper disciplinary measures increases effectiveness of organizations in the attainment of its goals and been time cautious in achieving them. Furthermore, it was found that the enforcement of sanctions and penalties on violators, responsive and sound leadership and giving attention to employees' needs and grievances are the most effective ways of maintaining discipline in the organization which help in achieving effectiveness and efficiency in the actualization of its goal and objectives in service delivery and business success. Based on this, the study recommended that Management should attend swiftly to the yearnings and grievances of its workforce in other to achieve set goals. Management should try as much as possible to create opportunities that would meet the needs of their employees. This would go a long way to spur oneness and adherence of rules and requirements.

Keywords: *Workplace, Discipline, Workplace discipline, Organizational effectiveness, Goal attainment, Timeliness, Preventive, Corrective, Progressive Measures.*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the complexities and stiff competition that has characterized today's dynamic and ever-evolving business world, organizations as result-oriented entities ideally designed to actualize pre-determined goals and objectives are adopting diverse strategies to ensure organizational survival. To survive, an organization must be effective in every sense of the word as an effective organization is defined by its ability to actualize its goals and objectives. Organizations that are ineffective are often characterized with inability to accomplish set goals, inability to acquire resources required for the production process leading to poor performance and job dissatisfaction which results in lack of employee commitment (Tamunomiebi & Worgu, 2021).

Organizations are constituted by individuals and groups of individuals who work collaboratively and interdependently to ensure organizational targets are met. There is a sort of daily interaction among individuals and groups of individuals in order to carry out their job responsibilities and contribute their quota to the organization. Individuals, having different interests, ambitions, orientations, and focus are employed in the organization, and most likely would result in conflict due to the divergence in interests. Due to the conflicting interests of employees and the possessive

attitude of employee or employees, there is a tendency for behavioral attitudes to deviate from the established rules and regulations of the organizations (Idris & Alegbeleye, 2015). A reasonable

level of predictable behavior is expected from employees for the accomplishment of organizational

objectives. However, one of the ways ensuring order and compliance with established rules in the workplace is discipline. The lack of adequate disciplinary measures in an organization spurs ineffectiveness and ineptitude on the part of such

organization (Nwosu & Ugwuerua, 2015). Effective discipline enables an organization to accomplish its goals cost-effectively (Onah, 2009). There have been so many complaints that organizations has been under-performing, and lack of discipline has been attributed among the causal factors. Employee's indiscipline is entrenched in the most organizations and the conventional function of policy implementation has been negatively affected. Discipline is an approach used by management to modify undesirable performance and behavior through the use of a corrective action process. At the onset of any employee performance or conduct issues, supervisors are strongly encouraged to contact Employee Relations staff for assistance. Discipline in the workplace is the means by which supervisory personnel correct behavioral deficiencies and ensure adherence to established rules. In the simplest term, discipline refers to the orderly behavior exhibited by individuals or group of individuals. Knight(2014) therefore defines discipline as a pattern of behavior which can be traced back from a particular training.

This behavior is portrayed by a person in order to demonstrate his personal traits. An employee, for example reflects a particular behaviour in a workplace situation and his behavior contributes towards attaining his or her goal at the organization. Dumisan, (2002) define discipline as a system of rules and mechanism for ensuring that disciplinary codes are followed. This implies that every organization has its rules and regulation "dos and don'ts".Observance of these sets of rules in itself is discipline. In the view of Odeyemi (2001), 'Discipline also refers to punitive actions or measures taken by an organization against erring worker, it is punishment for wrong doing by an employee. Discipline has some purpose which includes correcting the erred employee, re-directing of staff to the set objectives and to prevent future occurrence of such misdeed by either the affected staff or the prospective victim. It serves as a preventive and deterrent measure against diversion of attention and goals. Disciplinary measures are

guided by basic principle so as to accomplish its desired purposes in an organization. Odiom(2001) observed that that 'a fair degree of predictable behavior is needed from individual(s) for the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. One of the means in ensuring decorum, progress and effectiveness in organization is discipline. Where there are no proper disciplinary procedures for erring officers there will be a dislocation of effective organizational functionality

According to Ani (2011), the majority of the organizations in Nigeria have a conception that indiscipline is domicile for certain people or organization. An undisciplined organization is an ineffective organization. This supports the assertion of Agba and Abubakar (2013) that employees would dissipate their best efforts to the organization when things are properly put in place. According to Schein (2008), human behavior is determined by some needs and motives. As a result of the unpredictability of man's behavior, it is pretty difficult to identify the driving force that makes men behave in certain ways. Management experts recognized discipline as a potent tool that could be deployed to address the ineffectiveness of most organizations in Nigeria. Organization in Nigeria especially the Public parastatals are known for gross misconduct such as unexcused absence, fraud, dishonesty, discrimination, falsification of records, vandalization of properties, sexual harassment, insubordination, lateness, truancy and absenteeism amongst others (Onah, 2009).

Most Public organizations in Nigeria is known for inefficiency, bribery, corruption, misconduct, discrimination, nepotism, non-compliance with the code of conduct, lack of respect for law and order, indiscipline, fraud, and many other ills. Despite the establishment of anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to curtail deviant behaviors in public organizations, indiscipline, misconduct, and corruption remain pervasive in Nigerian, there is still issues of indiscipline exhibited by employees in the discharge of their responsibilities to the organization which are manifested in various forms through fraud, discrimination, nepotism, insubordination, nonchalant work attitude, theft, falsification of records, leaving without permission, favoritism, Scholars have studied in attempt to finding the impact of workplace discipline on the effectiveness of the organization ((Onah, 2009, Nwosu & Ugwuerua, 2015:, Agba & Abubakar, 2013). For Onah (2009), he investigated the impact of discipline on the performance of organization, Nwosu & Ugwuerua, (2015), examined the relationship between employee discipline and survival while Agba & Abubakar (2013), empirically investigated the relationship between staff discipline and organizational growth. Despite the various research work done on the study variables, none utilized the dimensions and measures used in this paper, thereby creating a vacuum in literature which this paper intend to fill by empirically examining the conceptual review on the relationship between workplace discipline and organizational effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of the study is predicated on the Hot-Red-Stove theory of Douglas McGregor (1960). The theory focus on illustrations of how disciplinary actions are implemented without generating resentment. This theory draws an analogy between touching a hot stove, and undergoing discipline. When you touch a hot stove, your discipline is immediate, with warning, consistent and impersonal. The theory emphasized on how rational discipline could be affected in an organization. For discipline to be rational, the theory draws a comparison between a touching a hot red stove and experiencing discipline. The reaction is immediate, consistent, impersonal and without warning. The burn is immediate and the redness of the stove is a warning indicating danger. Also, as many times as the stove is touched the same burn is experienced, that shows its consistency.

In view of this, the theory is relevant to the study in the sense that the behavior and conduct of the employees in the organization is guided by the rules and regulations of the organizations which the Red-Hot-stove theory postulate. When an employee default the rules and regulations of the organization, it means the Red-Hot-Stove has been touched. When such act is committed, it means immediate disciplinary action is taken. When the Red-Hot-Stove is touched, the reaction is immediate, consistent, impersonal and without warning. Douglas McGregor (1960). This method of discipline lead to increase on effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Workplace Discipline

There is no universally acceptable definition of discipline. Some scholars perceive discipline as a form of punishment which brings about fear and disdain when a person is involved in inappropriate acts. On the other hand, some scholars view discipline as the behavior of good conduct and adherence to established rules and regulations (Idris & Alegbeleye, 2015). Discipline in the workplace is the means by which supervisory personnel correct behavioral deficiencies and ensure adherence to established rules. In the simplest term, discipline refers to the orderly behavior exhibited by individuals or group of individuals. Discipline equally refers to the behavior that is in line with established rules and regulations. In management parlance, employee discipline implies that employees adhere to the rules and regulations established by an organization for appropriate behavior (Onah, 2009). Knight (2014) viewed discipline as a form of behavior traceable to a particular training.

According to Dumisan (2012), discipline refers to observance and total compliance to the rules and regulations of a society, community or organization. Calhoon (2008) defines discipline as a catalyst that propels individuals or groups of individuals to comply with the rules and regulations which are imperative for the smooth running of an organization. Similarly, Schultz (1994) described discipline as a force that restricts individuals or groups of individuals from embarking on activities that are contradictory to the policies of an organization. Discipline could as well refer to the implementation of punitive measures for violating the rules and regulations of an organization (Ajila & Omotayo, 2012). Discipline could also be actions undertaken to prevent employees from violating the rules of an organization. According to Bedeian (2007), discipline is punitive action enforced on an employee that erred against the stated rules of an organization.

Bedeian (2007) added that workplace discipline is pertinent to the enhancement of employee performance in particular and organizational performance in general, and without staff discipline, job performance of employees may not be satisfactory to the organization. Putting these definitions together, discipline could be defined as the demonstration of acceptable behavior by the employees that are in line with the rules and regulations of an organization. Staff discipline is a management tool utilized by organizations to achieve organizational objectives. The importance of staff discipline is to prevent and/or correct anomalies and digression from stated procedures and policies of an organization. The effectiveness of an organization is predicated on staff discipline, which involves total observance to the established processes, policies and procedures of an organization.

Workplace Indiscipline

The concept of indiscipline has also been explained by many social science scholars. According to Osezua, Abah and Gberevbie (2009), indiscipline, refers to conditions of disorderliness in which members of an organization conduct themselves without respect to the rules and regulations and subordinating their needs and desires to the overall needs of the organization. According to Ochai (1984), staff indiscipline is manifested in many ways, such as habitual lateness to work, truancy, and lack of commitment to work: loafing, buck-passing or refusing to take responsibility. It

also includes bribery and corruption, tribalism and nepotism, misuse of organizational property, drunkenness, embezzlement or misappropriation of funds and many others. Therefore, any act of unethical practices, misbehaving, disobedient to the norms and ethics of the organization and corrupt practices is an act of indiscipline. In this case, when employees of an organization deviate from the acceptable norms and ethical standards governing the organization, we say that there is an act of indiscipline. Organizations that want to achieve high growth, high performance and organizational stability must maintain discipline in the system

Characteristics of Workplace Discipline

(Workplace Discipline) According to Calhoon (2008), employee discipline has three peculiar characteristics. Firstly, employee discipline is an act of self-control. Employee discipline refers to the personal efforts at self-control to adhere to the stated procedures and regulations of an organization in order to ensure that organizational goals are accomplished. Secondly, employee discipline is a negative approach. This implies that discipline motivates individuals to embark on certain activities, and on the other hand, it equally discourages people from carrying out some activities. Lastly, employee discipline is a punitive approach. This connotes that discipline brings about punishment on employees if they disregard or err against the established rules and regulations of an organization. Punishments are given to erred employees not to change past and unacceptable behaviors, but to prevent them from emerging in the nearest future.

Objectives of Workplace Discipline

Nwosu & Ugwuerua (2015) averred that the purpose of discipline particularly in an organization is to curtail misconduct among employees, correct erred employees and to prevent such misbehaviors from reoccurring in the future. According to Apalia (2017), the objectives of employee discipline are:

▪ To ensure employees adhere to the code of conduct and standards of performance of an

organization. Employees are disciplined after failing to produce desired outcomes. The failure could be associated either to the responsibilities carried out by an employee or neglect of rules and procedures deemed necessary for appropriate work behavior.

▪ To maintain respect between subordinates and superiors. Poorly-administered discipline could de-motivate employees or caused misunderstanding between employees. On the other hand, a well-administered discipline would enhance employee behavior, minimize acts of misconduct and foster a cordial relationship between employees and their employers.

▪ To boost the morale of employees for improved job productivity and efficiency. Although, discipline should be enforced for poor performance, however, Nwosu & Ugwuerua (2015) stressed that discipline for poor performance should be exempted for employees that are still being trained on the job. It is wrong for employees to discipline for outcomes beyond their capacities (Beidan, 2007).

Dimensions of Workplace Discipline

Discipline is of various types, and the types depend on the functions it performs. The commonest types of discipline in a work environment are preventive, corrective and progressive discipline.

a) **Preventive Discipline:** This type of discipline is enforced to prevent employees from violating the rules and regulations of an organization (Dumisan,2002). The essence of preventive discipline is to dissuade employees from undertaking activities contradictory to the policies and procedures of an organization. It is regarded as preventive when organization design and put in place programmes or measures that discourage or dissuade organizational members from coming late, absenteeism, redundancy, disobedience to superior officer, insubordination among others. Preventive discipline is meant to prevent

violation or deviation (Amah, 2010). Therefore, it is usually stated expressly without ambiguity in simple terms for the high and the low in the organization to understand the message. For example "Loitering during work hours is prohibited. Gabriel&Zeb-Obipi,(2019) opined that preventive discipline focused at educating employees together with the aim of bringing them together with expected behavior and cooperation to work within the organization.

b) **Corrective Discipline:** This type of discipline is enforced to punish employees that violated the rules and regulations of an organization. Idris and Alegbeleye (2015) noted the essence of corrective discipline is to impose sanctions on erred employees and discourage future reemergence of unacceptable behaviors among other employees. Corrective discipline is usually used as a deterrent for employees planning to engage in such unacceptable behaviors. The difference between preventive and corrective discipline is that the tool of the former is a threat while that of the latter is punishment. This form of discipline is an act against violators and nonconformist. It emanates as a result of organizational member flagrant disobedience to what the management frowns at in their rules and regulations or violating standards. While preventive discipline is preemptive in nature, corrective discipline is serves two purposes which are (i) to reform or discourage further violation by sanctioning the violator and (ii) to prevent future or forestall future reoccurrence of the undesirable behavior among other employees (to serve as a deterrent). The tool of corrective discipline is penalty or sanction while the preventive discipline can be regarded as threat.

c) **Progressive Discipline:** This kind of discipline involves the imposition of heavy sanctions on misbehaviors that are consistently committed. As an employee keep committing the same offense, the sanctions become heavier. It is a disciplinary system that employs the use of higher or stronger penalties for offences that are repeatedly committed. The penalty graduated from the minor to the major. As the offender repeats the same offence, the subsequent penalty increases in severity until it gets to the most severe. The number of times an employee can commit an offence and the number of level and nature of reprimand vary from one organization to the other. Most organizations do spell out what constitutes indiscipline and the procedure for penalizing erring employee. However, it should be noted that managers manage the number of times discipline is inflicted on employees by their supervisors. This is because there are instances where these are maliciously done (Dumisanl, 2002).

Causes of Workplace Indiscipline

The causes of indiscipline among employees are divergent across organizations but could range from poor remuneration to poor leadership and to lack of effective communication between employers and employees (Onah, 2009). However, the notable causes of indiscipline in the workplace are:

i. **Inappropriate management practices:** At times, management embark on unjust and inappropriate acts such as poor compensation package for staff, lack of mechanisms to ensure proper work-life balance, poor attention to employees' demands and grievances, late payment of wages and salaries and favoritism in promotional policies. The result of these inappropriate management practices is indiscipline.

ii. **The inadequacy of effective leadership and deficient supervision**: Ineffective leadership could lead to indiscipline if managers lack the capacity to inspire and control employee behaviors to acceptable standards. Furthermore, ineffective supervision would create an avenue for employees to misbehave as there is no mechanism propelling them to adhere to stated rules. Deficient supervision spurs indiscipline.

iii. **Violation of employee rights:** Every employee regardless the position is entitled to certain rights such as respect, freedom of expression, freedom to contribute their quota to the progress of the organization, right for personal growth and right to fair and just treatment. In a situation where these rights are infringed, it would result in job dissatisfaction among employees, eventually culminating to indiscipline.

iv. **Communication gap**: For communication to be effective, it must freely flow from subordinates to superiors and vice-versa. Managers must acknowledge the inputs of their staff to understand their feelings and disseminate information to lower-level employees.

The gap in communication between managers and employees could generate indiscipline.

v. Previously Undiscovered Recruiting Error (PURE)

Organizational Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the capability of producing a desired result or the ability to produce desired output. When something is deemed effective, it means it has an intended or expected outcome, or produces a deep, vivid impression (Armstrong, 2010). Similarly, Erlendsson (2002) sees effectiveness as the extent to which objectives are met in the organization ('doing the right things'). However, organization effectiveness is the extend to which an organization accomplishes its stipulated goals and objectives (Armstrong, 2010). Organizational effectiveness equally implies that there is little or no deviation between the actual and expected performance. Employees are the life-blood of any organization and accomplishment of organizational goals without the involvement of employees is impossible. This, therefore, necessitates the reason why management should build a cordial relationship with its employees. The effectiveness of an organization is at the mercy of employee effectiveness. Organizational efficiency and organizational effectiveness are used interchangeably in literature; however, both concepts are different. According to Fred (2012), organizational efficiency refers to the judicious use of organizational resources to maximize productivity and profitability. Organizational efficiency is applied to the internal modus operandi of a firm. On the other hand, organizational effectiveness is associated with the human aspects of activities within the organization. Effectiveness is the capacity of employees to meet their set-targets within a stipulated time period. Organizational effectiveness are achieved through goal attainment and timeliness in creating the needed goals and objectives of the organization.

Factor that determine Organizational Effectiveness in Attaining disciplinary Actions

Obisi, Samuel, and Elegbede (2013) pointed out that there are four factors that determine the effectiveness of organizations in disciplinary actions, and they include: a) Proper selection of employees: This involves that the selection and recruitment policy adopted by an organization sets the pace for its performance. Selection of employees should be predicated on soft skills such as honesty, diligence, maturity, and integrity. The characteristics of employees determine internal discipline in an organization. b) An adequate system of motivation: This involves the use of disciplinary measures to maintain acceptable behaviors and stimulate job performance among employees. Employees who are disciplined and obedient to the rules of an organization should be compensated for good conduct. This goes a long way to boost the effectiveness of employees, consequently organizational effectiveness. c) Necessary rules and regulation: This connotes that rules must be excessive in an organization. A rule should be discarded once it has achieved its purpose. Organizational rules should be subjected to periodical review. An organization cannot be effective if it continues to subject employees to too many rules. d) Awareness of rules enforcement: There is a tendency for employees to abide with

established rules if they know they would receive sanctions for violating such rules.

Empirical Review

The findings of prior studies on the subject matter are varying. This is because the conceptualization of discipline varies from one organization to another. Patrick (2015) examined the relationship between workplace discipline and organizational productivity of 15 manufacturing firms in the South-south zone of Nigeria. The results indicated a positive and significant relationship between workplace discipline and organizational productivity of selected manufacturing firms. Wedega (2012) provided an empirical assessment of the effect of disciplinary procedures on employee punctuality and performance at AngloGold Ashanti, Obuasi Mine, Ghana. The findings showed that the perception of employees towards disciplinary procedure is for positive transformation and results in enhanced employee job performance.

Heru and Heru (2018) investigated the influence of communication and work discipline on employee performance with empirical evidence from DwiArsa Persada Foundation in Indonesia. The result showed that communication and work discipline significantly predicted employee performance. Marsela (2017) examined the perceived influence of disciplinary action on employee

performance in Baringo County Government in Kenya. The findings revealed that disciplinary actions that robustly drive employee performance include verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension without compensation, suspension awaiting investigation and dismissal.

Ignatius and Ruliyanto (2017) examined competence, training and work discipline as predictors of employee performance in Krakatua Argo Logistics Limited, Indonesia. The findings indicated that the individual effect of competence, training and work discipline is significant on employee performance. Competence emerged as the most

influential variable with a contribution of 54.2% followed by training 20.3% and work discipline - 16.2%. A similar study was carried out by Warris (2015), the result showed that the individual effect of competence, training, and discipline is significant on employee performance. Job discipline emerged as the most influential predictor of employee performance followed by competence and training. Cerdaryana, Luddin, and Yetti (2018) examined the influence of work discipline, career development and job satisfaction on employee performance of the Ministry of Research and Technology in Indonesia. The findings revealed that work discipline, career development, and job satisfaction are significantly predicted employee performance.

Ajila and Omotayo (2012) examined the attitudes of workers towards disciplinary actions in business organizations using International Breweries Plc, Nigeria as a case study. The results revealed that is no significant difference between the employees' attitude towards disciplinary actions on the basis of gender and marital status. Also, attitude towards disciplinary actions varies across job levels. Onah (2009) investigated staff to control and discipline in the University system using the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The findings showed that proper leadership is the most effective way of maintaining control and discipline in ESUT. Also, the enforcement of rules and appropriate supervision are potent measures for promoting discipline in ESUT. Idris and Alegbeleye (2015) assessed the importance of discipline on the organizational effectiveness of the Nigerian Customs Service. Their findings showed that indiscipline has an impact on staff performance and organizational effectiveness. Also, it was found that openness in disciplinary measures can duly tackle indiscipline among employees in the customs service.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the empirical review of literature on the study variables from scholars, it is proponent to state that employee discipline or discipline in the workplace

promotes organizational effectiveness. The study concludes that an organization cannot be effective towards achieving its predetermined goals if employees are not in compliance with the laid down rules and policies.

In line with the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

▪ Management should attend swiftly to the yearnings and grievances of its staff. Management
   should try as much as possible to create opportunities that would meet the needs of their
   staff. This would go a long way to spur oneness and adherence of rules and requirements.

▪ Employees, especially those at the junior position, should be adequately monitored. Moreover, the management of organization should ensure that credible and qualified personnel are admitted to the service.

▪ Sanctions should be imposed on employees found violating the established rules. However, sanctions should follow a sequential path from oral reprimand, to query letter, suspension, and dismissal. Sanctions should be imposed fairly and justly.

▪ Critical matters relating to transfer, promotion, placement, etc, should follow due process. Issues like these should be handled with merit and unbiasedness.

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The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. **ISSN** 2312-9492 (Online) 2414-8970 (Print). www.strategicjournals.com