

# Employee Discipline As a Critical Human Resource Management Challenge for Organizational Growth

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## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to provide a comprehension of employee discipline as a critical human resource management challenge for organizational growth. Discipline has its unique significance for good labour relations and employee productivity. The paper x-rays as its objective what discipline is its various aspects and steps involved in the disciplinary process and how to deal with discipline. It narrated the components of employee discipline - positive, negative and progressive. It also looked at human resource management challenge components such as policy formulation, background screening and fairness. The paper dealt with major causes of employee indiscipline and how to reduce the effects of indiscipline. The paper further highlighted the components of organizational growth-profit maximization, market share and customer satisfaction and how employee discipline helps to achieve positive results. It was concluded that violation of rules, regulations, procedure and norms are considered as misconduct, any act which is inconsistent with the fulfillment of the expressed or implied conditions of service. It was further recommended that management should have open communication with all employees and listen to their needs and concerns, also there should be a connect among co-workers, managers and human resource department through an easy and intuitive human resource portal among others.

**Keywords:** Employee Discipline, Organizational Growth, Human Resource Management

## I. INTRODUCTION

The disciplinary procedure is a process to follow when an employer wants/needs to address an employee's behaviour. It may be that an

employer is concerned about their general conduct, absence, their work for example. It allows an employer, to explain clearly what improvement is needed and provides an opportunity for the employee to give their side of the situation.

Discipline is the backbone of healthy industrial relations. The promotion and maintenance of employee discipline is essential for smooth functioning of an organization. Employee morale and industrial peace are definitely linked with a proper maintenance of discipline. Disciplinary action can also help the employee to become more effective. The actions of one person can affect others in the group.

## Theoretical Background

This paper is anchored on Theory X and Y by McGregor (1960). Both of these perspectives on how individuals look at human behaviour at work and in organisational life are quite different from one another. People have a natural aversion to labour and will go to great lengths to avoid it whenever it is feasible. To get people to meet organisational goals, they must be forced, controlled, told what to do, or threatened with punishment.

On the other hand, according to Theory Y, working is just as natural as other activities like playing and resting. If people feel committed to the goals, they will take responsibility for their own actions and decisions. A person's level of dedication to their goals can be directly correlated to the benefits that come with successfully completing those goals. People eventually come to recognise and actively pursue their share of responsibility. The population as a whole possesses a high level of creative ability, as well as

inventiveness and imagination.

This theoretical examination establishes a connection between employee performance and disciplinary actions. In order to train individuals to perform at a high level inside a company, discipline should be enforced on them without provoking animosity.

### Employee Discipline

Dessler (2001) defines discipline as a process that involves correcting or punishing a subordinate as a result of the subordinate breaking a rule of conduct in the workplace. A state that should be regarded as discipline inside an organisation is one in which employees are clear about what is expected of them in accordance with the rules, practices, and policies of the company, as well as what the repercussions are for breaches of those expectations. According to Calhoun, "Discipline is the force that prompts individuals or groups to observe rules, regulations, standards and procedures deemed necessary for an organization."

**Positive Discipline:** This means a sense of duty to observe the rules and regulations. It can be achieved when management applies the principles of positive motivation along with appropriate leadership.

**Negative Discipline:** This type of discipline is often referred to as corrective or punitive discipline. In accordance with it, workers are subjected to sanctions or punishments in order to ensure that they comply with laws and regulations. The goal is to make sure that employees do not break any of the rules and regulations that are in place. Techniques such as fines, reprimands, demotions, layoffs, transfers, and so on are included in the category of negative disciplinary action. The use of punitive methods of discipline demands constant monitoring, which wastes a lot of important time. In the sense that discipline is seen negatively, disciplinary action is synonymous with punishment. Additionally, punishment is the root source of both hatred and resentment. However, if discipline is solely thought of in terms of control and punishment, it will be impossible to achieve the results that are desired.

**Progressive Discipline:** The idea of progressive discipline maintains that punishments should be proportional to the severity of the offence. If the incorrect behaviour in question is of a very minor character and has not occurred in the past, a verbal warning can be adequate. If the infraction calls for a written warning, it must be sent in accordance with the protocol that has been

established.

### Important Principles for Maintenance of Employee Discipline

Disciplinary measures have serious repercussions on employees; they should therefore, be based on certain principles so that they may be fair just and acceptable to employees or their unions.

- i. As far as is possible, all the rules should be formed in cooperation or collaboration with the representatives of employees,
- ii. All the rules should be appraised at frequent or regular intervals to ensure that they are and continue to be, appropriate, sensible and useful,
- iii. Rules should be uniformly enforced if they are to be effective. They must be applied without exception.
- iv. Penalties for any violation of any rule should be clearly stated in advance.
- v. Extreme caution should be exercised to ensure that infringements are not encouraged,
- vi. In the event that a certain regulation is broken on a reasonably regular basis, the events that transpired leading up to the violation(s) in question need to be thoroughly researched and analysed in order to identify the cause (or causes) of such breaches.
- vii. In the employee handbook, there should be an explicit reference of the mechanisms for appealing or reviewing any disciplinary measures that have been taken against the employee.

### Factors to Consider in Discipline

When all the employees follow the rules and regulations of the company, the question of indiscipline does not arise. Some employees fail to accept the norms of responsible-employee behavior, thus calling for disciplinary action.

**To be fair and equitable the following factors need to be analyzed:**

1. **Seriousness of the Problem:** The manager is responsible for determining how serious the insubordination is. As an illustration, sexual harassment is a more significant problem than being late.
2. **Duration of the Problem:** It is essential to get an idea of how long this issue has been going on and how frequently it reappears. An offence committed for the first time may have a lesser penalty than successive offences committed over a longer period of time.

3. **Nature of the Problem:** The pattern of the problem calls for more attention. It must be known whether it is a part of emerging problem or a continual problem. Continual problem is a serious one.
4. **External Influence:** Sometimes a disciplinary problem may arise which is external to the employee. For example, an employee may fail to appear for an important meeting or performance appraisal due to some accident.
5. **Degree of Familiarity:** When compared to an organisation in which the norms of conduct are either informal or hazy, the one in which the employees are held to formal written rules that regulate their behaviour is more justified in firmly enforcing the disciplinary action that has been taken.
6. **Disciplinary Practices:** There must be well laid out procedure in assessing disciplinary problems. Equitable treatment must take into consideration the previous actions taken against the employees for similar type of disciplinary violations.
7. **Management Support:** When the affected employee takes the issue to higher authorities, the manager must be having adequate reasons/data to defend his actions. The disciplinary action is not likely to carry weight if the violators believe that they can challenge the manager's decisions.

#### **Douglas McGregor's Concept of "Red Hot Stove Rule"**

There is no manager who can be successful who does not have the consistent support of their subordinates. However, disciplinary action taken against a dishonest worker is unpleasant and causes the employee to feel hatred toward the company. As a result, there is an issue that has to be answered on how to apply discipline without leading to feelings of animosity. This is made feasible by a principle developed by Douglas McGregor that is referred to as the "Red Hot Stove Rule." This principle draws parallels between touching a hot stove and being subjected to punishment.

According to the Red-Hot Stove rule, disciplinary action should have the following consequences:

- (i) **Burns Immediately:** If a person is going to be subjected to disciplinary action, it is important that it take place right away so that the person may comprehend the rationale for it. People have a propensity, as time goes on, to persuade

themselves that they are not to blame for whatever has happened.

- (ii) **Provides 'Warning':** It is essential to offer early notice that punishment will follow inappropriate behaviour in order to ensure compliance. You get a warning from the stove's heat that you'll get burned if you touch it if you get any closer to it as you approach it.
- (iii) **Gives Consistent Punishment:** In addition, disciplinary action should be consistent, meaning that every person who does the same offence should receive the same punishment for it. When someone touches a hot stove, they will suffer the same kind of burns as everyone else.
- (iv) **Burns Impersonally:** Discipline should never be taken on a personal level. When using this method, there are no favourites among the candidates.

#### **Causes of Employee Indiscipline: Organizational, Individual and Environmental Factors**

The important causes of indiscipline are analyzed under three heads:

##### **Organizational Factors**

- i. It is possible for a business to wind up recruiting workers that question every choice that is made by the management if the hiring process does not include an evaluation of the characteristics of potential employees, such as attitude, compliance, tolerance, and inquisitiveness. This might lead to a lack of discipline.
- ii. The absence of a code of conduct for employees has the ability to confuse them, which can then plant the seeds for misconduct.
- iii. When an employee is employed for a position for which he does not have the necessary ability or attitude, it is inevitable that he will develop negative sentiments against his employer. He may find the job uninteresting and do everything to evade responsibility.
- iv. Ineffective leadership characterised by authoritarianism and incompetency, and distrustful relations with employees fuel indiscipline among the employees.
- v. Indiscriminate use of penal provisions triggers reactionary group indiscipline,
- vi. Favouritism and nepotism practiced by supervisors vitiate discipline.
- vii. Divisive policies pursued by management and instituting unofficial spy network spoils the

work atmosphere thereby engendering indiscipline.

- viii. Biased performance evaluation on considerations of caste, creed, colour, gender, religion and region promotes ill-feeling and a sense of injustice among employees which culminate in indiscipline.
- ix. Absence of grievance redressal mechanism frustrates employees thereby breeding indiscipline among them.

**Individual Factors:** Employees in a company will behave in a variety of ways because to the individual variances that stem from their education, experience, values, attitudes, beliefs, intelligence, and personality, among other factors. Therefore, some individuals conform to rules and standards of behaviour in much wider context than others.

Individual features that lead to indiscipline behaviour are as follows:

- i. Individuals with non-conformist values tend to engage in indiscipline behaviour.
- ii. Every individual perceives reward and punishment differently and react to it accordingly. When the reward is not commensurate with his expectation, he may feel frustrated and indulge in indiscipline.
- iii. Work ethics might vary greatly from person to person. Those who have strong ethical values are more likely to be devoted to and immersed in their work, whereas those whose ethical values are poor tend to feel alienated from their work and engage in bad behaviour.

**Environmental Factors:** As a result of the fact that an organisation is also one of the members that make up a society, the discipline that is practised by the society can be seen in organisations. The lack of discipline in families, educational institutions, political systems, religious organisations, and the disintegration of social control mechanisms, amongst other factors, throws a negative shadow on the environment of the organisation.

### Concepts of Organizational Growth

Organizational growth however, means different things to different organization. There are many parameters an organization may use to measure its growth. Because making a profit is the ultimate objective of most businesses, the majority of them will evaluate their expansion based on factors like as their net profit, revenue, and other financial data. For the purpose of evaluating their development, other people could utilise one or more of the following criteria:

revenues, staff count, physical expansion, successful product line, or increasing market share are examples of success metrics. This study will dwell on profit maximization, market share and customer satisfaction as the parameters to determine growth in an organization.

**Profit Maximization:** This is the process or the approach by which profits Earning Per Share (EPS) is increased. In simple words, all the decisions whether investment or financing are focused on maximizing the profits to optimum levels.

**Market Share:** It is the percentage of a market accounted for by a specific entity or organization. A company's market share is the proportion of a market that it takes in over the course of a given period of time. It is calculated by taking the organization's sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the firm over the same period. It provides an idea of how large, powerful or important an organization is within its particular sector.

**Customer satisfaction:** This is a statistic that indicates how satisfied consumers are with the products, services, and capabilities of a certain business. Information on customer satisfaction, such as polls and ratings, can assist a company in determining the most effective means by which its product or services might be enhanced or altered. When a customer's needs are met, they develop faith in the company's product or service and become loyal patrons. These devoted clients provide businesses with recurring sales and account for a significant portion of overall income. Existing consumers who are happy with the brand believe that they can confidently recommend it to their friends and family because of the positive experiences they have had with it.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Employee discipline is the orderly conduct by an employee in an expected manner. It is the force or fear of a force that deters individuals or group from doing things that are detrimental to the accomplishment of organizational growth.

In order to fulfil their organisational goals, every company seeks to ensure that the behaviour of its employees is consistent with the prescribed system. In a nutshell, discipline refers to the orderly behaviour of an employee in an anticipated way. Employees who are well-disciplined are those who are willing to follow the rules of the organisation and the directions of their bosses. It is considered misconduct to violate rules, regulations, procedures, and norms, which means to do anything that is in conflict with the fulfilment of the stated and implied

conditions of service or that is directly linked to the general relationship between the employer and the employee and has a direct impact on the happiness or comfort of men at work or that has a material impact on the smooth and efficient operation of the organisation concerned.

Every company's purpose is to have its personnel follow the defined procedure in order to achieve their objectives. Therefore, enforcement of disciplinary measures will enhance organizational growth and its effects reduced to the barest minimum.

### Recommendations

Discipline is important to business success and each employer wants to maintain discipline at workplace. To enable this,

- i. All employees' demands and concerns should be heard by management, which is why they should maintain an open channel of contact with them.
- ii. Employees should be treated with respect and decency by their managers, who should also work to resolve any problems they encounter.
- iii. It is imperative that management utilises human resource technology that allows employees to access and download the employee handbook.
- iv. The HR portal should be simple and user-friendly for employees to communicate with coworkers, supervisors, and the HR department. Employees should be able to post their questions on the company's intranet portal.

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