ABSTRACT

Discipline is the key element to building and maintaining order in the work force, yet discipline is essentially negative if not handled properly. "This confusion arises in part because discipline as a condition and discipline as an action are not always clearly distinguished". With human beings, discipline is not instinctive because they are “unable to work together unless they accept rules of discipline of their own making or have such rules imposed upon them by the power of absolute government”. Therefore, the manner of enforcement raises the questions of how, for what, and by who will react in turn upon the morale of the organization for discipline is essential to productivity. The atmosphere in which any organization depends upon to achieve the company’s goals is not maintained to minimum standards, will require disciplinary action. In this sense, disciplinary action is applied against the individual because he/she is failing to do what is expected of him/her. Such action may range from a warning to the extreme penalty of expulsion from the organization. In the light of this background, this paper discusses the concept of discipline, types of discipline, principles & procedure for disciplinary action to make the human resources more and more conducive to enhance their performance to help accomplish their individual as well as organizational goals.

KEYWORDS: Disciplinary action, productivity, organization atmosphere, principles & procedure for discipline.
INTRODUCTION

Maintenance of discipline is a prerequisite to the attainment of maximum productivity, not only of the firm but also for the entire nation. It is only because of this that. After all everything is a matter of realization! No amount of pressure can succeed in the long run unless one is committed to improve or learn. True discipline is educational because it changes the very attitude of the workers towards their work and workplace. It must, therefore, be understood that discipline must be developed from within. Employee performance and behavior is expected to contribute toward the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives. When an employee's performance or behavior is unsatisfactory, corrective action must be taken. Corrective action will follow the process of progressive discipline when the situation is a result of inappropriate behavior or unsatisfactory performance when the employee has the ability to perform at an acceptable level but chooses not to do so. Many managers believe the word discipline has to do with punishment. Actually, it doesn't. Discipline pertains to improving employee performance through a process of assisting the employee (at least at first) to learn so he or she can perform more effectively.

In simple words, Discipline means orderliness or the absence of disorder, chaos & confusion in human behavior and action. It occurs when employee behave in an orderly and responsible manner.

According to Richard D. Calhoon, “Discipline may be considered as the force that prompts individuals or groups to observe rule, regulations, standards and procedures deemed necessary for an organization.”

TYPES OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline is viewed from two angles/dimensions:

1. **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE**: Positive Discipline implies discipline without punishment. The main aim is to ensure and encourage self-discipline among the employees. The employees in this case identify the group objectives as their own objectives and strive hard to achieve them. The employees follow and adhere to the rules and regulations not due to the fear of punishment but due to the inherent desire to harmonize in achieving organizational goals. Employees exercise self-control to meet these goals.

   According to Spiegel, “Positive discipline does not replace reason but applies reason to the achievement of a common objective. Positive Discipline does not restrict the individual freedom but enables him to have a greater degree of self-expression in striving to achieve the group objective, which he identifies as his own.”

   It means that positive Discipline is not that ideal that it can’t be achieved. It also does not imply that an individual’s freedom is restricted. Rather it provides better chances to an individual for expressing himself.

2. **NEGATIVE DISCIPLINE**: Employees adhere to rules and regulations in fear of punishment which may be in form of fines, penalties, demotions or transfers. In this case,
the employees do not perceive organizational goals as their own goals. The action taken by the management to ensure desired standard of behaviour/code of conduct from the employees in an organization is called negative discipline. The fear of punishment prevents the employees from going off-track.

This is an unfavorable state that subjects the employees to frustration, and consequently results in low morale. There is another drawback related to negative discipline. An employee goes astray in his behavior whenever there is a slightest possibility of escaping the punishment or when he believes that his action will go unnoticed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUND DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM (RED HOT STOVE RULE)

Discipline should be imposed without generating resentment. Mc Gregor propounded the “red hot stove rule” which says that a sound and effective disciplinary system in an organization should have the following characteristics-

1. IMMEDIATE- Just as when you touch a red hot stove, the burn is immediate, similarly the penalty for violation should be immediate/ immediate disciplinary action must be taken for violation of rules.

2. CONSISTENT- Just as a red hot stove burns everyone in same manner; likewise, there should be high consistency in a sound disciplinary system.

3. IMPERSONAL- Just as a person is burned because he touches the red hot stove and not because of any personal feelings, likewise, impersonality should be maintained by refraining from personal or subjective feelings.

4. PRIOR WARNING AND NOTICE- Just as an individual has a warning when he moves closer to the stove that he would be burned on touching it, likewise, a sound disciplinary system should give advance warning to the employees as to the implications of not conforming to the standards of behaviour/code of conduct in an organization.

IN SHORT, A SOUND DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM PRESUPPOSES

1. ACQUAINTANCE/KNOWLEDGE OF RULES- The employees should be well aware of the desired code of conduct/ standards of behaviour in the organization. This code of discipline should be published in employee handbook.

2. TIMELY ACTION- Timely enquiry should be conducted for breaking the code of conduct in an organization. The more later the enquiry is made, the more forgetful one becomes and the more he feels that punishment is not deserved.

3. FAIR AND JUST ACTION- There should be same punishment for same offence/ misconduct. There should be no favouritism. Discipline should be uniformly enforced always.
4. **POSITIVE APPROACH**- The disciplinary system should be preventive and not punitive. Concentrate on preventing misconduct and not on imposing penalties. The employees should not only be explained the reason for actions taken against them but also how such fines and penalties can be avoided in future.

**OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

1. To discuss the inevitability of Discipline in today’s world.
2. To explain the sustainable principles for disciplinary action.
3. To discuss the procedures of disciplinary action to accomplish individual as well as organizational goal.
4. To bring out a basic necessity of integrating Disciplinary Action to enhance employees performance.

**METHODOLOGY**

Information has been sourced from books, articles, various websites. This research paper is based on secondary data for finalization of views and opinions.

**JUST CAUSE AND ITS AFFECT ON DISCIPLINE**

In reviewing whether or not management was correct in its choice to discipline, arbitrators have looked at a number of factors. These factors must be taken into account by management when deciding to use discipline:

1. Did the employee clearly understand the rule or policy that was violated?
   
   For example, were the work rules or policy provided to the employee prior to the violation. It is management responsibility to prove that the employee knew the rule or policy.

2. Was the rule or policy consistently and fairly enforced by management?
   
   For example, did management have a history of ignoring the departmental policy on wearing safety equipment, but singled out an employee for discipline anyway.

3. Did the employee know that violating the rule or policy could lead to discipline?

4. The seriousness of the offense in terms of violating company rules of conduct or company obligations.
   
   For example, being a few minutes late for a shift would not be viewed as being as serious an offense as striking another employee or stealing University property.
5. The long service of the employee.

6. The previous good (or bad) work record of the employee.

7. Provocation.

Was the employee pushed into acting rudely or violently as a result of management or a customer’s actions. This is a very common defense for employees involved in insubordination.

8. Did the employee admit to the misconduct and apologize for their behavior?

Arbitrators will often rule harshly against employees who are deceptive during an investigation and who show no remorse for their actions.

**PRINCIPLES FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Despite best efforts, acts of indiscipline occur and it becomes necessary to take a disciplinary action. While taking disciplinary action, the following Principles of natural justice should be followed:

1. The employee charged should be given an opportunity to present witness of his own choice on whom he relies.

2. The employee should be given the right to cross examine management’s evidence.

3. The evidence of management should be taken in the presence of the employee.

4. No material should be used against the employee without giving him an opportunity to explain.

5. The enquiry against the employee should be fair & impartial.

6. The punishment award should not be out of proportion to the misconduct committed.

7. Disciplinary action should be taken in private so as not to hurt the ego & social status of the employee.

8. Disciplinary action should be taken by the immediate boss of the employee.

9. Disciplinary action should be consistent for all.

10. The superior’s behavior towards the employee should remain as it was before taking the disciplinary action.
PROCEDURE FOR TAKING DISCIPLINARY ACTION

1. **PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION:** First of all a preliminary inquiry should be held to find out whether a prima facie case of misconduct exists.

2. **ISSUE OF A CHARGE-SHEET:** Once the prima facie case of misconduct is established, the management should proceed to issue a charge sheet to the employee. Charge sheet is merely a notice of the charge & provides the employee an opportunity to explain his misconduct. Therefore, charge sheet is generally known as a show cause notice. In the charge sheet, each charge should be clearly specified. There should be a separate charge for each allegation and charge should not relate to any matter which has already been decided upon.

3. **SUSPENSION PENDING INQUIRY:** In case the charge is grave a suspension order may be given to the employee along with the charge sheet. According to the industrial Employment (Standing Orders Act 1946), the suspended worker is to be paid a subsistence allowance equal to one-half of his wages for the first ninety days of suspension and three-fourths of the wages for the remaining period of suspension if the delays in the completion of disciplinary proceedings are not due to the worker’s conduct.

4. **NOTICE OF ENQUIRY:** In case the worker admits the charge, in his reply to the charge sheet, without any qualification, the employer can go ahead in awarding the punishment without further inquiry. But if the worker does not admit the charge and the charge merits major penalty, the employer must hold enquiry to investigate into the charge. Proper & sufficient advance notice should be given to the worker indicating the date, time and venue of the enquiry so that the worker may prepare his case.

5. **CONDUCT OF ENQUIRY:** The enquiry should be conducted by an impartial and responsible officer. He should proceed in a proper manner and examine witnesses. Fair opportunity should be given to the worker to cross-examine the management witnesses.

6. **RECORDING THE FINDINGS:** On the conclusion of the enquiry, the enquiry officer should record the finding and the reasons thereof. As far as possible he should refrain from recommending punishment and leave it to the decision of the appropriate authority.

7. **AWARDING PUNISHMENT:** The management should decide the punishment on the basis of the enquiry, past records of the worker and gravity of the misconduct. Warning, Fine, withholding increments, demotion, suspension & termination are the types of punishment that may be used.

8. **COMMUNICATING PUNISHMENT:** The punishment awarded to the worker should be communicated to him quickly. The letter of communication should contain reference to the charge sheet, the enquiry and the findings. The date from which the punishment is to be effective should also be mentioned.

9. **FOLLOW-UP:** After taking disciplinary action, it is necessary to see whether the action had the desired effect on the employee.
FINDINGS

1. The main Reason behind to start Discipline to have perfect output.
2. Principles of Disciplinary action are able to manage effectively the resources.
3. Some of the employees are not able to understand the principles of discipline.
4. Policies may not be consistently and fairly enforced by management.
5. There is no effective implementation of Disciplinary action as employees don’t know the seriousness of violating the rules.
6. There is confusion between positive & negative disciplinary action: when to use, how to use.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Improvement in implementation of policies of disciplinary action
2. On all, equal disciplinary action must be taken.
4. Rules must be mentioned in clear terms & words so that better understanding can be made.
5. Initiative for implementing Disciplinary action must be from everyone from the organization.

CONCLUSION

Discipline works everywhere. It is the key-note of the worldly order. The term means that all our actions should be done in perfect accordance with certain principle or rules laid down for guiding us in the right path. Sir Smith has rightly said “Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.” Therefore, to be successful, Disciplinary Action must be planned thoroughly. The aspirations and attitudes of workers must be examined closely.

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