

**EFFECT OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES AND SANCTIONS ON CIVIL SERVANTS  
PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED MINISTRIES IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the Effect of Disciplinary Procedures and Sanctions on Civil Servants' performance in selected Ministries in Niger State. The main objective of the study is to evaluate the level of awareness of disciplinary procedure, the effect of enforcement of disciplinary procedure, on civil servants' performance and the challenges and way forward for improve enforcement of disciplinary procedure in Niger State civil service. A documentary research method was adopted to elicit information. The population of study was all the 18067 staff from five ministries (Niger State Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, Agric and Natural Resources and Niger State Civil Service Commission. Findings from the study showed that prudence played significant role in the apportionment of disciplinary measures and penalties against some offenders as spelt out in Public Service Rules. The conclusion is that the level of awareness on job expected conducts influences the behaviour of civil servants, sanctions have been enforced to ensure efficiency and competence, copies of regulations and code of conduct are issued to all the Civil servants once recruited, orientation and sensitization are given to civil servants on the rules and regulations in Niger State Civil Service. Among the recommendations suggested are; the Niger State Civil Service Commission should conduct orientation courses for officers nominated into the disciplinary panel to intimate them of appropriate disciplinary procedures as well as the necessity of adherence to ethics so as to save government from litigation that may result from wrong decisions taken on erring staff.*

**Key Words:** *Disciplinary procedure, Sanction, Indiscipline, Civil Servant, Performance.*

**Introduction**

Human resource is indispensable to the realization of organizational goals and objectives. Organizations, whether public or private are structurally designed in a way as to pave way for the accomplishment of certain ideals through efficient and effective utilization of the available manpower that occupies different positions in the organization. Organizations are social entities made up of groups of people and individuals who are interdependent, and work together to achieve predetermined goals and objectives. Therefore, these workers interact with one another on a daily basis to fulfill their job-roles and to contribute effectively to their organizations in particular and the nation in general.

Moreover, individuals enter the workplace with their own unique abilities, attitudes, values and perceptions, and this in itself can be a source of conflict in any organization (Knight & Ukpere,

2014). Similarly, in a formal organization or establishment, with potential conflicting interests, and acquisitive minds, the behavioral attitudes of such people are deviation from the ethos, rules and regulations of the organization. Needless to say, a fair degree of predictable behavior is needed from individuals for the achievement of overall organizational goal (Knight & Ukpere, 2014). Where there are no proper disciplinary procedures for erring officers there will be a dislocation of effective organizational functionality (Agba and Abubakar, 2013).

Discipline is “orderliness as opposed to confusion”. It refers to a state of affairs wherein there is orderliness and employees conduct themselves according to laid down rules and regulations. A disciplinary procedure aims to promote fairness and procedural justice in dealing with employee discipline. The advantages of a consistent disciplinary procedure for an organization are in threefold: first, it contributes to the stability of the workforce; second, labour turnover is minimized; and third, it promotes productivity (Nel, Van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono & Werner, 2017).

Disciplinary action is usually initiated by management in response to unsatisfactory work performance or unacceptable behaviour on the part of the workers. However, a proper procedure must be followed when exercising discipline. The Labour Relations Act's codification of unfair dismissal and Code of Good Practice relating to dismissal is regarded as the basis for policy statements on disciplinary procedures (Finnemore, 2016). A disciplinary code endorses the concept of corrective or progressive discipline, which regards the purpose of discipline as a means for employees to know and understand what standards are required of them (Nel et al., 2017). However, despite the laudable provisions of disciplinary codes which are in line with the public service rules and other extant rules, disciplinary measures are sometimes implemented inconsistently. It is on this premise that this paper seeks the investigation of the effect of disciplinary procedures and sanctions on Civil Servants' Performance in Niger State civil service.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The Nigeria Civil Service is beleaguered with bribery and corruption, attitudinal problem, inefficiency, economic sabotage, nepotism and favoritism, disrespect for law and order, parochialism and others (Ibrahim, 2003; Ribadu, 2006; Epele, 2006; Taylor, 2010). The Niger State Civil Service as a subset of the public service is not immune either. This accounts for the insufficiency and ineffectiveness in leadership and staff supervision and control because some civil servants have godfathers or political backings that support indiscipline and promote mediocrity instead of meritocracy. This has also resulted to lack of commitment of personnel to the goals and objectives of the service (Odekunle, 1986). The negative consequences of these deviant characteristics that have permeated the public service necessitated the enactment of the anti-corruption laws and anti-graft agencies by President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration to eradicate or reduce the rate of corruption, indiscipline and other vices in our national life. But despite all these, the problem of indiscipline in public and private organizations in Nigeria including Niger State Service has persisted. The problems of absenteeism, carefree attitude to work, lateness to office, leaving the office before the closing

hours, lack of dedication, stealing of government properties, insubordination, loitering and animosity have remained unabated. It is against this background that this study assesses the effect of disciplinary procedures and sanctions on the performance of Civil Servants in Niger State Civil Service.

### Research Questions

From the foregoing statement of the research problem, the following research questions are pertinent to be answered:

1. What is the level of awareness of civil servants on disciplinary procedures in Niger State Civil Service?
2. How has enforcement of disciplinary procedures affected the performance of civil servants in Niger State Civil Service?
3. What are the challenges facing the enforcement of disciplinary procedure in Niger State Civil Service?
4. What could be done to improve the enforcement of disciplinary procedure in Niger State Civil Service?

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess Disciplinary Procedure and Sanctions on Civil Servant Performance in Niger State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Know the level of awareness of civil servants on disciplinary procedures in Niger State Civil Service;
2. Find out the effect of the enforcement of disciplinary procedures on the performance of civil servants in Niger State Civil Service;
3. Identify the challenges of the enforcement of disciplinary procedure in Niger State Civil Service; and
4. Recommend ways to improve the enforcement of disciplinary procedure in Niger State Civil Service?

### Statement of Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated in a null form:

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between disciplinary procedures and civil servants' performance in Niger state civil service. **Hi:** There is significant relationship between disciplinary procedures and civil servants' performance in Niger state civil service.

### Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

#### Concept of Discipline

Divergent views exist with regards to the definition of discipline. Accordingly, Hasibuan (2013)

and Vonai (2013) perceived discipline to include control, regulate, loyalty, moral, dutiful and company conscience. This implies that every organization has its rules and regulations “dos and don'ts”. Observance of these sets of rules in itself is discipline. But in the view of Ajumogobia (2007), discipline in the work place or organization does not mean strict and technical observance of rules and regulations for the survival of the organizational system. This definition makes one to wonder on what are those other things that constitute discipline in the work place, since it is said to go beyond strict and technical observance or rules and regulations. This implies that rather than the strict application of procedures, discipline is a situation where workers are expected to cooperate and behave in a normal and orderly way, as any reasonable person would expect an employee to do. Since the goal of every organization or establishment is to enhance workers' satisfaction that would lead to higher productivity and profitability there must be sets of rules and regulations that would govern the conduct of people at work.

#### **Concept of Indiscipline**

Indiscipline is the direct opposite of discipline. It posits a situation in which the rules are broken frequently and attitudes do not conform to acceptable norms. When this is the situation in any organization then there is a disciplinary problem. The features of indiscipline among employees include frequent lateness to work, dereliction of duties, sexual molestation, and other acts that fall under misconduct and gross misconduct.

Any act contrary to the fundamental requirements in an organization (public) constitutes indiscipline and this can manifest through acts like engaging in political activities, engaging in private business without clearance from government, disclosure of official top secret and absence from duty without leave permission among others. **Indiscipline could be caused by economic, socio-cultural and socio-political factors.**

#### **Concept of Civil Service**

The civil service comprises all servants of the State other than holders of political or judicial offices who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remunerations are paid wholly and directly out of the money voted by the parliament (Adebayo, 1981). It is part of the machinery of the executive branch of the government and exists to put into effect government policies (Adebayo, 1981).

#### **Indiscipline in the Civil Service**

Below are a few of the more common disciplinary offenses and some requiring factors supervisors need to consider when taking disciplinary action includes: lateness to work, excessive absenteeism, tiredness, habitual poor performance, discourtesy to the public or co-workers, insubordination, off-duty conduct and corruption (Halachmi 2000; Lewin, 2008; Mukoro, 2003).

#### **Concept of Disciplinary Procedure**

Some scholars see corrective discipline as a sophisticated form of punishment. They advocate the use of discipline to change behavior. They present different hypothesis in which there is elaboration on the administration of disciplinary actions. Wheeler (1976) supports this

argument by underlining a distinction between punishment which he views as authoritarian discipline and based on fear, and corrective discipline, which attempts to instill "self-discipline" in the employee. By doing this he denies that the purpose of corrective discipline is punishment.

### **Disciplinary Procedures in the Civil Service**

Dealing with disciplinary procedures and increase in employees performance in public Service are two of the most frustrating and stressful issues that management has to face. Similarly, union representatives are too often involved in the time-consuming task of defending individual employees who have been disciplined, at the expense of providing other services to all the membership (Goga, 2014). This study reviewed the disciplinary procedural process which aims to increase employees' performance in Nigeria Civil Service and outlined several strategies that will allow management, union representatives and employees to handle these problems more effectively.

There are different approaches to disciplinary procedures. These include, the traditional approach (also referred to as the progressive approach) and the modern approach (also referred to as the corrective approach).

### **Traditional Approach/Progressive Approach to Discipline**

Progressive discipline process has been in the system for quite sometimes. Imel, (2011); Alexander (2000); and Asherman (1982), are some of the advocates of progressive approach to discipline. Progressive Disciplinary procedure is a serious major corrective disciplinary action taken in accordance with the collective bargaining agreements between supervisor and employee to address repeated unacceptable behaviour and problem of job performance. It is a common practice for the supervisor to prove to the authority that it has used a progressive approach before upholding suspensions and dismissals in disciplinary procedure. The progressive disciplinary procedure has its own advantage because it makes employees who are aware of disciplinary action in any offence committed and the punishment administered to be very careful not to commit such offence. The major principle of progressive disciplinary procedure is that employees may learn to change their behaviour and correct any misconduct through the proper application of progressive disciplinary processes (Alexander 2000).

Channov & Dobrobaba, (2020) assert that progressive disciplinary procedure as a system finds ways to increase the punishment of an erring employee on the discipline offences made known to him/her in advance and also imposes more punishment with increasing severity for repeated infringement. Channov & Dobrobaba, (2020), sees this style of disciplinary procedure as authoritarian and paternalistic. According to Asher (1983), these aspects of progressive disciplinary procedure remain permanent in the minds of employees. Similarly, Asherman (1982) opined that, if employee's behaviour and job performance failed to improve, a supervisor may take more serious disciplinary action against such employee. Therefore, the employee's fear of stiffer sanctions may be enough reason for motivating him/her strongly toward positive change. The series of steps in progressive disciplinary procedures include; **counselling**, verbal or oral warning, written warning, reprimand, surcharge, loss of pay or reduction in annual salary, withholding or deferment of increment,

demotion or reduction in rank, termination, discharge from service or compulsory retirement, dismissal from service (Awodele & Ikeoluwapo, 2015). If all previous steps of the disciplinary process have been unsuccessful, the employee's employment may be terminated (Ezeani 2006).

#### **Modern Approach: Corrective Approach to Discipline**

The concept of corrective disciplinary procedure dictates that, employees are not considered as objects but as subjects which may bring about radical changes in an organization, particularly increase in job performance. Awodele & Ikeoluwapo (2015) posited that in correcting individual instances of misconduct, it is important that the penalty be the minimum, necessary to bring about the desired change. All penalties must be consistent with the facts and circumstances surrounding the misconduct. Addressing issues of misconduct are the most challenging and difficult aspects of supervision. Dealing effectively with disciplinary problems requires a good understanding of the discipline processes and skills in handling a variety of human relations problems. In case of corrective disciplinary procedure, both parties, that is, the employee and the supervisor share the responsibility for resolving any disciplinary and job performance problem. The fact that a problem has occurred in an organization does not indicate that the employee is the problem and therefore, has to be disciplined. Rather, it should be seen as a challenge confronting both the employee and the supervisor.

#### **Concept of Sanction**

According to Idris and Alegbeleye, (2015)., a sanction is any action (disciplinary in nature) initiated in response to unacceptable performance or behaviour. Sanctions are meant to correct violations, improve performance, avoid recurrence, and at the same time protect the interests of the employer. Sanctions or discipline is the shaping of employees' behaviour to motivate them to act in a particular way in order to ensure the achievement of the set organizational goals. Once employees clearly understand what their required behaviour is, and what the results of their continued misconducts are, then the purpose of the disciplinary sanction will have been achieved (Kashoza, 2017). It is for this reason that most institutions draw up codes of conduct which consider certain behaviour as unwarranted and which states that should an employee omit or commit such an act he/she will be guilty of misconduct. These codes of conduct help organizations maintain discipline in their working relationships with their employees. Undesirable behaviour will therefore, have been eliminated by an action which has unpleasant consequences, but which has educational value at the same time (Kashoza, 2017).

#### **Concept of Performance**

Performance is a concept that is difficult to be accorded a single sentence definition. According to Daft (2009), performance is the organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources in an efficient and effective manner. Similarly, Richardo and Wade (2010) defined performance as the ability of the organization to achieve its goals and objectives. Also, it is looked upon in two different ways. First, it is the ability or skills of the individuals to perform their job and second, it refers to individual motivation to use his ability or skills in actual performance of the job. To this end, the outcome of the work, positive, negative, complete or

incomplete hangs on the performance. Hence performance may posit the output or result achieved by members of staff, ministry or organization against the standard target.

#### **Relationship between Discipline and Employee**

Beauty & Thomas (2021) define organizational performance as the organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources in an efficient and effective manner. While discipline is necessary in many occasions, Beauty & Thomas (2021) argued that Effective disciplinary procedure is an essential communication tool from management to reform employees from unacceptable employee behaviour or unacceptable employee performance. What needs to be done by management is to strategically evolve mechanisms to improve the relationship between disciplinary procedures and employee punctuality and performance.

The code of discipline affect and increases employees' knowledge, broadened employees' perspective, extended the application of knowledge to work and has led to promotion of employees. Disciplinary procedures if logically enforced could enhance employees satisfaction, improves organizational performance. It also, employee discipline helps in controlling employee's behavior by ensuring there is teamwork and cohesion in the organization. This reduced time and resources wastage which reflected positively to the organization.

Successfully managing the balance between discipline and high performance is a combination of supervisor and employee personalities, workplace situations, pressures, as well as effective management techniques and strategies. Very few supervisors find it easy to address performance and discipline since poor performers requires a unique skill set, a combination of conflict resolution techniques, an ability to empathize, high levels of emotional intelligence and an understanding of the impact of the legislation. It should be noted that most employers only appreciate the challenges of managing performance and discipline once they have been subjected to reinstatement or compensation order by the bargaining council. The starting point for management seeking to properly address discipline and performance issues is to gain appreciation of satisfactory requirement (Donohoe, 2020).

#### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Empirical Review of literature in this case revealed a broad research stream that addresses related issues of disciplinary measures as applied in different work settings with different methodologies and focus.

Irman, Raden, & Tedi (2023) conducted a study on the Impact of Organizational Culture and Discipline on Employee Performance: A Study of Cooperative Members. The study aims to find out and re-analyze the relationship between organizational culture and discipline in predicting and influencing employee performance in cooperatives. The sample of this study was 34 respondents selected using the total sampling technique. Finding from the study showed that organizational culture and discipline have a positive effect on employee performance both individually and simultaneously. Conclusion is that the contribution of the influence of organizational culture on employee performance is more dominant than the influence of discipline. Recommendation is that it is important for cooperative management to evaluate

employee performance regularly and scheduled so that improvements can be made gradually and continuously, strengthening understanding of organizational culture and disciplinary action as part of the evaluation.

Also, Beauty and Thomas (2021) conducted a survey on Disciplinary Procedures, Employee Punctuality and Employee Performance at Ndola City Council (Zambia). The purpose of the survey was to assess the effect of disciplinary procedures on employee punctuality and performance at Ndola City Council. The survey questions were: What is the relationship between disciplinary procedures, employee punctuality and performance? How have the institution's disciplinary procedures influenced employees on their punctuality? In what ways have the institution's disciplinary procedures influence employees' performance? Four hypotheses, i.e., disciplinary procedures positively affect employee performance; disciplinary procedures positively affect employee punctuality; employee punctuality positively affects employee performance; disciplinary procedures and employee performance was moderated by employee punctuality were tested. The hypothesis, disciplinary procedures positively affect employee performance was supported. It was concluded that factors including organizational culture, public institutional entity, and delayed payment of employees' motivational remunerations could possibly affect employee performance, hence punctuality not being a moderator. The main recommendation was that management should review issues related to organizational culture in relation to punctuality to improve performance.

#### **Theoretical Framework (Reinforcement Theory)**

The theory adopted for this study is the reinforcement theory. It is unarguably true that, Skinner is one of the renowned behaviouralist that derived the Reinforcement Theory (1953) which is one of the oldest theories (behavioural) to explain behavior and why workers do what they do. The theory may also be known as 'Behaviorism', or 'Operant Conditioning'. Reinforcement theory has been used in many areas of study including motivating employees in the workplace to ensure staff discipline and dedication to duties among others.

However, the Reinforcement theory was propounded by B.F. Skinner (1953) who formulated the principles of classical conditioning. Under these principles, if a behavioural response to a particular stimulus is rewarded, that response is more likely to be repeated. But if it is not rewarded or punished, that response is less likely to be repeated. Skinner also advocates that behaviour is a function of its consequences. Consequently, behaviours that result in desirable consequences are more likely to be repeated while behaviours that result in undesirable consequences are less likely to be repeated. In other words, peoples' behavioural choices are guided by what they anticipate its outcome to be. Be that as it may, this reward has to be timely. In other words, time is an important factor in the Reinforcement theory.

#### **Methodology**

A survey design was adopted for the study and a structured questionnaire was used to collect primary and secondary data from a sample of 399 respondents which was determined from a population of 18067 using Taro Yamane (1976) sample size determination formula. The population of the study comprised staff of Niger State Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Justice and Niger State Civil Service Commission.



Respondents were selected using stratified and purposive sampling. Analyses were made using correlational coefficient, Chi-square, simple percentages, tables and a five-point Likert scale.

### Test of Hypothesis

$H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between disciplinary procedure and Civil Servant performance in Niger State Civil Service.  $H_1$ : There is significant relationship between disciplinary procedure and Civil Servant performance in Niger State Civil Service.

### Results and discussions

**Table 1: Correlational Analysis indicating relationship between disciplinary procedure and civil servants' performance in Niger State Civil Service**

Correlations		Disciplinary	Staff performance
Disciplinary Measures	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.889**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	313	313
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	.889**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	313	313

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 above revealed that there is strong relationship between the disciplinary procedure and civil servant performance in Niger State civil service. Since the correlation coefficient is 0.889. This implies that effective use of counselling and oral warning in correcting minor offences will help the erring staff to develop self-discipline and to ensure that the rules are complied with.

**Table 2: Reported Cases of Acts of Indiscipline in Niger State Civil Service**

S/N	Indiscipline Cases	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Bribery and corruption	10	9	10	10	107
2	Abuse of office	31	41	10	28	87
3	Insubordination	122	13	16	14	14
4	Truancy and absenteeism	37	40	42	49	49
5	Falsification of result and record	8	3	52	44	10
6	Leaking of official government secret	8	3	4	2	2
7	Engaging in trade activities in the office	26	40	48	21	21
8	Gross misconduct	8	6	12	22	22
9	Harassment	2	5	2	2	1
10	Partisan Politicking	10	15	2	5	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>320</b>

Source: Niger State CSC's Disciplinary Committee's Report, 20 23

Analysis from the above table clearly indicate that disciplinary cases do occur in Niger State Civil Service but the most frequent ones include; bribery and corruption, abuse of office, truancy and absenteeism and engaging in trade activity in office as well as gross misconduct among other vices.

### Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed that lack of adequate information on staff job expectation as being responsible for non-accomplishing task within a stipulated time, with an inconsistent result of lower quality and regular complaints from superior's officers, thus, leading to low staff performance. This study corroborates the study of Zhao & Kuo (2015) who opined on the proper use of communication as communication is very imperative in providing adequate and reliable information to both management and subordinate staff of the organization.

Also, poor enforcement of disciplinary procedures affected the performance of civil servants in Niger State Civil Service since despite the level of enforcement of the disciplinary procedures and sanctions by the Niger state civil service commission, rate of staff indiscipline has persisted hence, the need for stronger disciplinary actions and sanctions.

**Disciplinary** measures and procedures are meant to be enforced or implemented against the commitment of the acts of misconduct or gross misconduct. Over the years, the Niger State Civil Service commission has taken a lot of disciplinary measure to curb the menace of indiscipline among members of staff in the commission.

Finally, regulations governing staff conducts are enforced in the ministries when both minor and major offences are committed, also, counselling and oral warning are regularly used to correct minor offences such as late coming, absenteeism, negligence of duty. More than often times, warning or reprimand is always used when offenses such as incessant late coming, absenteeism, negligence of duty are constantly done repeatedly without any valid reason.

### Conclusion

This study assessed the effect of disciplinary procedures and sanctions on Civil Servants' performance in Niger State Civil Service. It covered the period between 2018 and 2022. From the data collected and analyzed, the regulations governing staff conditions of service and conducts of the civil service have made it clear, the various acts regarded as misconduct and gross misconduct as well as the procedures to be followed in case of violation. The level of awareness on job expected conducts influences the kind of behaviour exhibited by Civil Servants in carrying out their duties. Also, sanctions have been enforced on a specific ground to ensure efficiency and competence of civil servants. The Niger State Civil Service has made the copy of regulations and code of conduct available and handy to all the Civil servants at the point of their appointment, organized orientation and sensitization exercise for proper clarity and guidance on the existing regulations in Niger State Civil Service.

The Niger State Civil Service has taken a lot of disciplinary measures and sections to curb the menace of indiscipline among members of staff in the service but despites the efforts of Niger State government, the rate of staff indiscipline still persists hence, the need for strong disciplinary actions and sanctions.

**Recommendations** based on the findings and the conclusion of the study, it is recommended that:

1. A conscious effort by managers in public sector organizations should be made to re-orientate staff towards fostering unity in spite of workers' diverse ethnic origins.
2. Also, on the socio-political factor/problem (i.e god-father's, patronage system or in-house fighting), the study recommend that merit should be the major criterion for

appointments, promotions, transfers and discipline of staff as it is done in private sector organizations, if increased productivity is to be achieved in the public sector.

3. The power to discipline junior civil servants should be given to the line managers (Head of Service, Heads, of departments and others of appropriate status) in the ministries that supervises subordinate employees so as to deter the junior officers from flouting the authority of their superior officers.
4. Managements and supervisors should be made to undergo some short-term courses in management to enable them to know and appreciate the need for diverse staff motivation and discipline and how to apply them appropriately.

#### Limitations and guides for further studies

This study covered the effect of disciplinary procedures and sanctions on the performance of civil servant in Niger State Civil Service out of the 36 States and Federal Civil Service in Nigeria, hence, its limited generalization. It is also limited by its inability to cover more than five years and more cases that affects the performance of civil servants. The above identified limitation would necessitate further studies in the following areas:

- i. **A critical examination of the causes of indiscipline among civil servants in Niger State civil services.**
- ii. **An analysis of the strategies for the prevention of indiscipline among civil servants in Niger State civil services.**
- iii. **Assessment of the best sanctions and disciplinary procedures applicable for behavioural modification in the Niger State Civil Service.**

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