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IMPACT OF DISCIPLINE ON WORKERS PERFORMANCE IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: A DISCOURSE OF FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTRE UMUAHIA

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Abstract

The thrust of this study is on the impact of Discipline on workers at Federal Medical Centre Umuahia. The paper relied on the objective to ascertain the impact of Discipline on the Performance of the Nigerian Public Service. And also adopted was the null hypothesis that Discipline does not impact Performance in the Nigerian Public Service. For the study, the survey research design was adopted and data was gathered through primary and secondary sources. The paper adopted the Red–Hot Stove theoretical approach which asserts a comparison between touching a hot stove and experiencing discipline. The paper found out that Discipline, when held constant against the dependent variable of Performance can impact or influence it. The paper therefore concluded that Discipline is considered to be good when employees willingly conform to rules and regulations in the organization and any nation aspiring for greater heights must face this challenge of staff indiscipline. Nigeria cannot be an exception and indiscipline challenges should be seen as events that must be overcome. The paper further recommended among others that there is the need for civil society to be engaged in the disciplinary processes of government/Employers and allow the tracking of how decisions are arrived at and their jeered toward increasing performance.

Keywords: Discipline, Performance, Workers, Public Service

Introduction

Public service is an indispensable instrument through which government implements its policies and programmes (Fenley, 2008). It is through its instrumentality that government policies are translated into services for the people. The public service is made up of the employees of government. They are those responsible for the functioning of government through the



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implementation of government policies. The public service which consists of workers in government ministries, parastatals, and other agencies is further expected to provide continuity in governance, serve as a repository of knowledge and experience of the practices and procedures of governance, and protect the public interest and their main function are essential to help formulate and implement the policies of government and to render related services to the public (National Political Reform Conference, 2005).

Discipline is very essential for a healthy industrial atmosphere and the achievement of organizational goals. Discipline and disciplinary measures are very important organizational dynamics. Its success or failure can be of great effect on other aspects of organizational dynamics i.e. training, motivation, morale, performance, etc. In workplaces including public service, staff indiscipline is expressed in various ways such as absenteeism, lateness, theft, lack of dedication to duty, engaging in corruption, abuse of public property, embezzlement of public funds, and drunkenness, just to mention few (Agba, Ochimana & Abubakar, 2013; Apalia, 2017). Staff indiscipline is one of the retrogressive factors for organizational productivity which continues to motivate interest among researchers and management practitioners (Azabo, Gaitte, Anumaka & Wunti, 2020; Feuerborn, Tyre & King, 2015; Chelliah, 2010).

According to Forman & Merrick (2013), the work of every standard organization be it government or private is guided by specific structures, procedures, and processes, which must be adhered to strictly. However, the organizational structure alone cannot perform wonders, unless the



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individuals who are to carry out these government functions are well-fitted into the jobs, and enabling environment created for people to perform at their maximum.

Generally, in the public service, there are government documents of operations in the form of Government orders (G.O.), Financial Instructions, Policies, Rules, and Regulations that govern the action of those placed in authority. This is to help them manage the complex network of activities of government. As such, no organization can function effectively without discipline (Jeffrey & Ruliyanto, 2017).

Discipline and disciplinary measures in the public sector have for a long time been a subject of discussion among observers, critics and policy analysts that are concerned with discipline among staff is one of the challenges affecting service delivery in the public service in most African countries (Heryanto, 2019), Public organizations over the years is plagued with bribery and corruption (Iqbal, Yusaf, Munawar & Naheed, 2012), attitudinal problem, inefficiency, mismanagement, economic sabotage (Kunto. 2019), nepotism and favoritism (Khaddafi, Raza & Heikal (2015), disrespect for rule of law and order, parochialism and godfatherism (Knight & Latrielle, 2000), among other factors which have militated effective performance on the part of the staff of the institution of the government.

The government and its agencies became thoroughly corrupt and reckless in spending public funds. The impact of official corruption is rampant and retrogressed development ensued. Public and private organizations have struggled to achieve a balanced approach to performance-based management which provides a strategic and comprehensive context for decision-making. This research will intend to answer the question; what is the impact of Discipline on the Performance of the Nigerian Public Service.



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Review of Relevant Literature

Work Discipline

Discipline is an integral part of any organization, be it private or public (Azabo, et. al., 2020; Mursyidi, et. al., 2020. Syukri & Heryanto (2019) asserted that no organization across the world can achieve any meaningful growth and development without a degree of discipline exhibited by its staff. Sekaran & Bougie (2010) claimed that very good disciplinary measures and procedures have to be in place to serve as a control mechanism against any form of indiscipline that may result from staff misconduct. Thus Azabo, et. al., (2020) affirmed that effective discipline is the key to successful operation or even survival of an organization. As Kasim, Rantetampang & Lumbantobing (2016) rightly observed, “the key to the survival of an organization lies in effective operation among the persons engaged in its operation”.

Discipline therefore is a management control tool that no organization takes for granted especially in the workplace. Anastasia, et. al. (2020) adduced that just as reward and incentive packages exist for good and exceptional performances, there also exist penalties and punishments for misconduct and poor performances in organizations. Disciplinary actions come as a result of workers' misconduct. Apart from using positive factors and rewards to motivate workers, extant literature (Azabo, et. al., 2020; Syukri & Heryanto, 2019; Patmawati & Realize, 2018; Kasim, et. al., 2016; Sekaran & Bougei, 2010) established that disciplinary actions like punishments, withholding of reward and other coercive devices are also used against employees who break the rules or get involved in acts of disobedience. Rusilowati & Supratikta, 2019 contended that threatening a worker with disciplinary actions could motivate him to work harder. This is because most



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individuals have in their motivational patterns need to either avoid pain or to try as much as possible to achieve financial and or job security (Mursyidi, et. al., 2020).

Principles of Effective Staff Discipline

The productivity and survival of any organization depend largely on the quality of its employees and how much they can align themselves with the goal and policies of the organization (Mursyidi, et. al., 2020). One of the major problems facing Nigeria's civil service is how to manage the personnel successful government in Nigeria Syukri & Heryanto, 2019 in their research, identify three areas for ensuring effective discipline in an organization. They include hiring practices, managerial training, and thirdly, uniformity of disciplinary policies and procedures.

First, the manager who directly interacts with subordinates should have a say in the hiring process (Azabo, et. al., 2020). This important faction need not necessarily result in an unrelated final decision. However, it should relate to the determination of selection criteria and or the review of potential subordinates before they are selected (Azabo, et. al., 2020; Syukri & Heryanto, 2019).

A second integral part of the organizational disciplinary program is a complete training program. Too often managers get oriented only to the technical aspect of a position and human relations aspect, where the manager spends most of the time, is neglected. Now an inexperienced supervisor should be given a thorough working knowledge of disciplinary standards within the organization as well as an intensive view of the behavioral impacts of any action taken. The inexperienced supervisor should be taught how to correct disciplinary situations without resorting to extreme measures (Anastasia, et. al., 2020; Kunto, 2019).

Finally, the organization must set up viable standards that are equitable to subordinates and can be easily and consistently implemented by the supervisor (Saundry, Jones & Antcliff, 2011).



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According to him, when organizations were viewed by effectiveness concerning the degree of disciplinary infractions are overlooked, it appeared that organizations with ineffective discipline structures tended to look at infractions as they occur (Syukri & Heryanto, 2019; Kasim, et. al., 2016). Organizations with effective disciplinary structures less often deviate from recommended standards and therefore, are more consistent in disciplinary practices. Nearly two-thirds of the organizations with effective disciplinary systems frequently overlooked disciplinary problems when they occurred while only a little more than one-third of the organizations with effective disciplinary systems did likewise.

Disciplinary Action

While applying disciplinary action on staff, it is important to make sure that such actions meted out to the offender are always commensurate to the offense committed (Syukri & Heryanto, 2019). Like earlier said too, it is also worthy of note to mete out the same punishment to the same category of offenders. Another thing in punishing offenders is that the person must be given the chance to be heard. He or she must explain the reason for his or her action before a decision is taken against him or her. Certain mild offenses should also be punished with mild penalties. According to the Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat guidelines on Discipline (2011) outline some measures; oral warning; loss of entitlement; suspension; demotion; termination of appointment, and dismissal.

Flippo (1982) identifies two basic elements in a disciplinary action process. The element is the location of responsibility for the administration of disciplinary action. To Anastasia, et. al. (2020), this responsibility is usually line responsibility because the supervisor is closer to the employee and is therefore in a better position to observe evidence of unsatisfactory behavior or performance



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and effectual necessary correction (Kunto, 2019; Mursyidi, et. al., 2020). According to Azabo, et. al., (2020) and Kunto (2019), the responsibility of discipline is shared among the supervisor, personnel manager, unions, and arbitrators each of whom has a role to play in enforcing discipline. They gave the following general rule for sharing responsibility.

- i. At lower levels of discipline, involving only a warning, the first-line supervisor has final authority (Kasim, et. al., 2016; Azabo, et. al., 2020).
- ii. At the middle level, involving suspension line supervisors and managers have the final authority (Anastasia, et. al., 2020; Saundry, Jones & Antcliff, 2011); while.
- iii. At the top levels, involving discharges, the authority is evenly split between the line managers and personnel managers (Bangdiwala, et. al., 2010; Caillier, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Red–Hot–Stove theoretical model which is credited to Douglas McGregor. Heimann and Hilgart (1977) .He describes the Red–Hot Stove approach thus. The rule draws a comparison between touching a hot stove and experiencing discipline. When one touches a Hot –stove, the reaction is immediate, consistent, impersonal, and without warning. The burn is immediate and with the question of cause and effect. There was a warning since everyone knows what happens if one touches a stove when it is hot. The result is consistent; every time a person touches a hot stove he gets burnt.

One gets burned because of what he/she has done – touching a hot stove, hot because of who he/she is the comparison between a hot stove and discipline is apparent. Discipline should be directed against the act and not against the person following these four basic rules will help the



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superiors reduce the resentment inherent in the disciplinary actions. The Red–Hot–Stove theory of discipline emphasized four basic elements of discipline. They include.

1. Immediacy: According to Heimann and Hilgert (1977), immediacy connotes that as soon as an offense is noticed, speedily as possible while avoiding haste which might lead to unwarranted actions.

2. Advance Warning: This element is required in a disciplinary framework to maintain discipline and have employees accept disciplinary action as fair. Employees must know in advance what is expected of them and what the rules and regulations are. Hackett, ^(1979:82) in an attempt to further clarify the point above, argues that it is not enough to specify what the rules are, but it must ensure that employees and managers are aware of them, understand them, and are aware of the consequence of any breach of them.

3. Consistency: Consistency of discipline means that each time an infraction occurs; appropriate disciplinary action is taken. It also implied that the same disciplinary action is taken for the same offense consistently and at every point in time when an interaction is noticed. Inconsistency of discipline lowers the morale of employees and diminishes their respect for the supervisors.

4. Impersonality: Discipline cannot be easy. Imposed without causing the person being disciplined to feel resentful and aggressive. However, the resentment can be minimized if it is imposed as impersonally as possible because discipline has the least negative effect if the disciplined individual feels that it is only his behavior that is being criticized and not his person.

The major question now is, what the disciplinary framework in the Nigerian public service is:



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looking at the above practiced and ensuring in the Nigerian public service. Just as Beach (1982) identified two approaches to discipline, the negative approach, popularly called the “Big stick” approach, and the positive approach. The former emphasizes the threat of punishment to earning Staff. The approach is usually seen as autocratic since obedience to rules is not willingly done, but any reaction to threat of punishment does not give room or encourage employees to put in their best performance as it diminishes their morale. The latter which he called positive discipline develops a willing adherence to the ruling and regulation of the organization because the employee whether as an individual or group believed in it and as well sees it as a sort of support for his/her growth.

In application, the Red-Hot-Stove theory emphasized how rational discipline could be affected in an organization. For discipline to be rational, the theory draws a comparison between 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, which shows its consistency. Because of this, the study would be guided by the Red-Hot-Stove theory, propounded by McGregor. The theory answers such questions as what are the disciplinary measures on the ground in Federal Medical Centre Umuahia.

Methodology

This paper adopts the Survey research design. This is because it provides clear detailed and vivid information about a situation without any influence; the study population consists of all the staff working in the Federal Medical Centre which gives us a total population of 425 (NBS, 2023). For



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the quantitative method of analysis, a sequential analytical valuation approach will be adopted for the survey study. The sample size for this study using Taro- Yamani at a conventional significant level of 3% which gave us a sample of 111 for the survey.

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

The study examined Staff Discipline and Performance in the Nigerian Public Service using the Index (SI) Performance Indicators (KPIs) to determine performance. The study focused on the study shall be carried out at the Federal medical center Umuahia.

The descriptive statistics showing summary values of the variables of frequency distributions (in tables and pie charts were deployed to show mean, percentage, and standard deviations, correlation to show relationship, and regression to establish the impact of the relation while causality to show how the independent variable causes the dependent variable to behavior. In this study, Staff Discipline serves as the independent variable while the dependent variables are Performance. The analysis is designed to show the nature and characterization of these variables and how they are systematically connected.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE	425	2	14	4042	9.51	1.900
EDUCATION	425	2	8	2170	5.11	2.191
MARITAL	425	2	8	2120	4.99	1.909
JOB-STATUS	425	2	6	1802	4.24	1.489
SEX	425	2	4	1130	2.66	.941
Valid N (listwise)	425					

Source: Field Survey 2023



The frequency distribution shows Age, Education, Marital, Job status, Sex which signifies the descriptive variables for the study the mean value for these Variables is set at 9.51, 5.11, 4.99, 4.24, 2.66 which implied the respondents are greater than the mean calculated. Also, there are diverge in status and this implied that cross-sectional opinions are held and adequately expressed covering all considerations. The independent nature of the variables category indicates that it considers the positions expressed for the study.

Table 2 : Showing workers Attitude

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	1	.2	.2	.2
Undecided	145	27.3	34.1	34.4
Agree	279	52.4	65.6	100.0
Total	425	79.9	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

The workers' Attitude distribution of the respondents has three different categories 1, 145, 425, and a percentage of .2, 27.3, 52.4 representing strongly disagree, Undecided, and Agree, they account for the status of respondents covered in the investigation. The category of respondents who agrees on the issue of worker's attitude had a frequency of 279 with a percentage of 52.5 respectively. Since this is the highest category, it gives us a conclude that staff attitude enhances performance at Federal Medical Centre Umuahia.



Table 3: Showing Disciplinary Impact on Performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	1	.2	.2	.2
	Undecided	145	27.3	34.1	34.4
	Agree	279	52.4	65.6	100.0
	Total	425	79.9	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2023

The Disciplinary Impact on performance distribution of the respondents has three different categories 1, 145, 425, and a percentage of .2, 27.3, 52.4 representing strongly disagree, Undecided, and Agree, they account for the status of respondents covered in the investigation. The category of respondents who agrees on the issue of Disciplinary Impact on performance had a frequency of 279 with a percentage of 52.5 respectively. Since this is the highest category, it gives us a conclusion that Disciplinary Impact on performance in Federal Medical Centre Umuahia.

Table 4 DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	1	.2	.2	.2
	Undecided	145	27.3	34.1	34.4
	Agree	279	52.4	65.6	100.0
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Source: Field Survey 2023



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The Disciplinary measure on performance distribution of the respondents has three different categories 1, 145, 425, and a percentage of .2, 27.3, 52.4 representing strongly disagree, Undecided, and Agree, they account for the status of respondents covered in the investigation. The category of respondents who agrees on the issue of Disciplinary measures on performance had a frequency of 279 with a percentage of 52.5 respectively. Since this is the highest category, it gives us a conclusion that Disciplinary measures Impact performance at Federal Medical Centre Umuahia.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis is a further statistical tool for analyzing correlation variables. Regression in this respect accounts for the degree of influence or impact of one variable on another. That is the amount or degree of influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The regression analysis can explain the Impact of Staff Discipline and Performance. This study of the Staff Discipline and Performance is a multivariate correlation and regression approach analysis, to get a comprehensive, detailed, and procedural approach, the study adopted a gradual and direct approach that is comprehensive and dynamic in dealing with each of the variables concern.

We ran the regression analysis with the independent variables against each of the dependent variables directly to show their direct impact. Regression of Staff Discipline and Performance is thus examined and analyzed below.



Table 5: Regression Table

	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.
Threshold [DISCIPLINEEFFECTONPERFORMANCE = 2]	-39.722	10.658	13.891	1	.000
[DISCIPLINEEFFECTONPERFORMANCE]	-22.735	5.247	18.774	1	.000
[DISCIPLINEEFFECTONPERFORMANCE]	-7.846	4.142	3.587	1	.058

Source: Field Survey 2023

The result of regression coefficients in Table 5 showed that the independent variable Staff Discipline, when held constant against the dependent variable of Performance can impact or influence it by 4.142 (app. 95%) and the relationship is positive and significant. The regression results are consistent with the correlation result previously examined and analyzed.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations.

This study was carried out to examine the impact of Staff Discipline on Performance in the Nigerian Public Service. In carrying out this task, objectives, and hypotheses were formulated. The study applied a well-structured questionnaire to collect data from the study population The survey utilized sequential-stage statistical analyses.



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The various analyses established the following findings.

1. The frequency distribution shows Age, Education, Marital, Job status, Sex which signifies the descriptive variables for the study the mean value for these Variables is set at 9.51, 5.11, 4.99, 4.24, 2.66 this implied the respondents are greater than the mean value. Also, there are diverge in status and this implied that cross-sectional opinions are held and adequately expressed covering all considerations. The independent nature of the variables category indicates that it considers the positions expressed for the study.

2. We ran the regression analysis with the independent variables against each of the dependent variables directly to show their direct impact. Regression of Staff Discipline and Performance The result of regression coefficients in Table 5 shows that the independent variable Discipline, when held constant against the dependent variable of Performance can impact or influence it by 4.142 (app. 95%) and the relationship is positive and significant.

The regression results are consistent with the correlation result previously examined and analyzed.

The analysis of the table contains the remaining part of the frequencies table from Q1-8 which covers direct questions from the questionnaire and analysis bothering on all the variables and the indicators use to analyze the investigation. Every detail in this research counted and they were captured and given attention as they affected the course of the work and the related table drawn from SPSS software. The tables assisted to give the rationale for the decision supporting the descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis. This is the core and foundation of the research work. They are presented clearly and simply to permit easy understanding



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Conclusion

The study on Staff Discipline and Performance in the Nigerian Public Service, The effectiveness and performance of the public service depends on the existence of a systematic and well-established disciplinary procedure. It involves sanctioning erring employee staff and rewarding conforming employees. Discipline is considered to be good when employees willingly conform to rules and regulations in the organization. Any nation aspiring for greater heights must face this challenge of staff indiscipline. Nigeria cannot be an exception and indiscipline challenges should be seen as events that must be overcome.

Recommendations

To attain performance through adequate Staff Discipline measures and Performance in the Nigerian Public Service; the following recommendations are suggested: There is the need to build state-society or government-citizens relationships. From the results derived from the quantitative and qualitative studies carried out, there is empirical evidence to show discontent between the state and society regarding various disciplinary measures in the Nigerian Civil Service. There is a lack of commitment by the government to provide infrastructure and social services for citizens and reciprocally, there is a low lack of trust in the government. There is a need for transparency and accountability in conducting the disciplinary approach. There is a need for civil society to be engaged in the disciplinary processes of government/Employers and allow the tracking of how decisions are arrived at and it's jeered toward increasing performance.



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