

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNAL DISCIPLINARY
SYSTEM USED IN REDRESSING EMPLOYEE
INDISCIPLINE IN THE DELTA BEVERAGES TRANSPORT
SERVICES

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Abstract

The authors seek to analyse the internal disciplinary system used in redressing employee indiscipline at the workplace and Delta Beverages Transport Services was used as a case using data from October 2010 to February 2012. Discipline is one of the most expensive responsibilities of management. The disciplinary system at this organisation had simply run amok. As employee problems increased, supervisors took more action, harsher supervisory action led to increased misbehaviour. Instead of producing more results, more discipline simple generated more violations. The researcher used descriptive research design. A sample size of 60 respondents was chosen from a total population of 140 subjects. The study seeks to establish the effectiveness of penalties in fostering behaviour modification. Through the use of self administered questionnaires, face to face interviews, and electronically administered questionnaires the study found out that penalties were not excellently effective in changing

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behaviour. The data from the survey was presented using frequency tables and bar graphs. The study also established that the internal disciplinary system was ineffective since it was established to offer little in terms of consistency, impersonality, and taking immediate disciplinary action. From the findings, the study asserted that the effectiveness of penalties in modifying behaviour is not satisfactory; it also asserted that statistically, the effectiveness of the disciplinary system is not related to the effectiveness of penalties in changing the defaulters' unwanted behaviour. The study strongly recommends that the organisation has to change its traditional mindset from one of punishing people for wrong doing to one of resolving people problems. The organisation should also use the 'positive discipline approach' that advocates for discipline without the use of punishment.

Key words: man-hour, management, employee, workers committee, management liaison committee

Background / Introduction

One of the most expensive responsibilities of Management is discipline. Not only does it cost in terms of the stressful effect on everyone involved, it also costs in terms of loss of productivity, poor staff morale, and potential crippling costs of tribunal cases going against you. Delta Beverages Transport Services (DBTS), formerly Delta Distribution formed in April 1985 has 26 workshops across the nation with a total headcount of 496 employees. In the first 9 months of 2011 the company had dismissed 16 employees on grounds of indiscipline. The offences committed included negligence, theft, substandard performance, away without official leave (AWOL), and non-compliance to procedures. Managers and supervisors issued verbal warnings, first recorded warnings, final written warnings, disciplinary suspensions, and held disciplinary hearings in the hope of producing solved problems and improved performance but in vain.

The disciplinary hearing is the grand set piece of the disciplinary process at DBTS. Following is a table showing the number of hearings held for 12 months starting from October 2010 to September 2011.

Table below shows summary of disciplinary hearings by month, type of staff and gender

PERIOD	TYPE OF STAFF						TOTAL
	TECHNICAL		ADMINISTRATION		MANAGEMENT		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1st six months							
October 2010	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Novembr 2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Decemer 2010	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
January 2011	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
February 2011	0	-	-	-	-	-	0
March 2011	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	4	0	0	0	0	0	<u>4</u>
2nd six months							
April 2011	4	-	-	-	1	-	5
May 2011	4	-	1	-	-	-	5
June 2011	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
July 2011	5	-	1	3	-	-	9
August 2011	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
September 2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	21	0	2	3	1	0	<u>27</u>

Delta HR Department

Key: M = Male, F = Female

As shown in table above, disciplinary hearings significantly rose in the last six month (April 2011 – September 2011) to a record of 27 as compared to 4 hearings held in the first six months ending March 2011. In the first six months, all the 4 cases were involving male technical staff only. In the second six months 21 male technical staff, 1 male administration staff, 3 female administration staff, and 1 male management employee had their indiscipline cases redressed using disciplinary hearings. Disciplinary hearings rose by almost seven fold in the second six months. Each disciplinary hearing was attended by a quorum of six members including the accused, the accused’s personal representative, and a witness(s). The 6 member quorum was made up of the hearing chairman, management representative, human resources representative, and 3 workers committee representatives either from the works council or the management liaison committee depending on the grade of the employee to be represented. The secretary will be taking minutes of the hearing proceedings.

All these members will be withdrawn from their various departments and had to stop work at their workstations to come and redress indiscipline. This therefore resulted in the company losing more than 976 man-hours; an industrial unit of production equal to the work one person can produce in an hour. Each of the 16 dismissal cases sailed through all the 3 stages of the internal hearing levels because employees would have appealed after being aggrieved by the determination of the proceeding levels. The stationery expenses for photocopying and printing case files totaled to approximately \$1,380 - 00. Out of the 16 dismissal cases, 9 cases went to the labour court, with that the company incurred approximately \$24, 300 – 00 in professional and legal representation fees only.

Research objectives

The researchers seeks to;

- Establish the nature of offence that was mostly committed.
- Find out whether employees understand workplace rules and the expected behaviours.
- Assess the effectiveness of penalties on defaulters towards promoting expected behaviours.
- Determine the causes of indiscipline at DBTS.

Statement of Hypothesis

The researchers seeks to test the following claims;

- **H₀**: There is no relationship between ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system and poor communication.
H₁: Ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system is dependent on poor communication.
- **H₀**: Success of a disciplinary system is independent of the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour.
H₁: Success of a disciplinary system is dependent on the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour

The Significance of internal disciplinary system

Delta Beverages Transport Services shall benefit as the paper shall provide recommendations based on the research findings. The findings of the research will also give both employees and management at DBTS an objective insight into the actual causes of indiscipline

Most literature on discipline largely relates to Asia and Europe therefore the current study will endeavour to bridge the information gap by focusing on discipline at work in Zimbabwe, in particular, the transport services sector. The study will also serve as valuable reference for other players in the transport services industry

Garner (2012) illustrated that, like the aims of social laws, there can be a number of different aims in workplace discipline. These include:

- a) Conformance to rules
- b) Correcting behaviour that does not confirm to rules
- c) Re-asserting authority
- d) Setting by example
- e) Punishing wrong doing.

These aims will vary according to the organisation, the needs of the business, and the particular circumstances of someone's' behaviour. Rollinson *et al* (1995) suggests that the aim of discipline is to correct future behaviour rather than taking retribution for a rule transgression. Although this is clear enough in theory, it is somewhat harder to achieve in practice. Dessler (2004) added that the purpose of discipline is to encourage employees to behave sensibly at work (sensibly being defined as adhering to rules and regulations).

A number of management writers have argued that unquestioning conformance to rules and procedures are counterproductive to good people management. Chris Argyris a psychologist at Harvard Business School, gave the following statement about conformance to rules:

“Organisations actually encourage immature behaviour in their employees. What most organisations require is passive subordination, conformance and obedience; what individuals require as individuals is challenge, rule breaking and innovation. Indeed in times of innovation in products and services, organisation may need a culture of non-conformance and rule breaking in order to make the most of business opportunities. The challenge to management is to find out the right balance between rules and

conformance on the one hand and giving people freedom to express themselves on the other” Argyris (2011).

Conformance takes many kinds: laws of the land, rules and standards of work, targets, guidelines, and norms and culture.

Research methodology

The authors used descriptive research design. According to Robson (2002), the objective of descriptive research is to portray an accurate profile of events, situations or persons. The design was structured to allow for the use of archival sources for the collection of qualitative and historical data, and for the use of interviews to solicit perspectives, viewpoints and perceptions.

A case study strategy was also employed in this research project. Robson (2002) defines a case study as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence. The researchers chose the case study strategy because they wished to gain a deep rich understanding of why a disciplinary system that is designed to abate employee indiscipline was actually promoting it. It also helped to generate answers to research questions.

Written questionnaires were also administered in different ways. Some were sent electronically with clear instructions on how to answer the questions and asking for responses through the same means. The authors also used interviews for the purposes of primary data collection.

The targeted population was 140 employees comprising of 40 management employees, 10 management liaison committee representatives, 10 workers committee representatives, and 80 employees.

Data presentation and analysis

From the questionnaires issued, the following results were obtained:

Establishing the causes of indiscipline

The researchers asked respondents to indicate what was causing indiscipline in the organisation, and the responses are tabulated in table below:

Causes of indiscipline	Employees		Management		Total	
	<i>Frequency of response</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>	<i>Frequency of response</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>	<i>Frequency of response</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Lack of code of conduct	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deferring grievance settlement	11	33	5	29	16	32
Boredom	19	58	17	100	36	72
Victimisation	13	39	1	6	14	28
Criminal behaviour	9	27	9	53	18	36
Dishonesty	27	82	17	100	44	88
Frustration	21	64	11	65	32	64
Inadequate attention to personal problems	33	100	7	41	40	80
Varying disciplinary measures	29	88	1	6	30	60
Lack of a well defined code of conduct	2	6	0	0	2	4

Table above indicates that 33 out of 33 of employee respondents believe that indiscipline is caused by the management's inadequate attention to personal problems; this is only supported by 7 out of 17 management respondents who share the same sentiments. On another end, all the 17 managers are of the view that employee indiscipline is caused by dishonesty and boredom whilst 27 employees and 19 employees think likewise respectively. Dishonesty, as a cause of indiscipline has an overall of 88%. Follow up interviews on management also revealed that dishonesty and boredom were the major causes of employee indiscipline at DBTS. An overall percentage of 88% comprising of 27 employees and 17 managers is the highest overall causes of indiscipline. This is supported by Gerald Mar (1996) who studied workplace dishonesty in depth and classified people as 'hawks', 'vultures', and 'donkeys' according to how much they steal or whether they act as individuals or syndicates. The conclusions of his study

revealed that workplaces offer easy opportunities for people to become dishonesty. Thus dishonesty is the major cause of indiscipline at DBTS.

Management's inadequate attention to personal problems is the other cause that has the second highest overall percentage. All 33 employees and only 7 managers indicated that it is one of the causes of indiscipline. This is in line with Fochault's argument that in order to maintain effective discipline, understanding of the personal problems and individual difficulties of employees is necessary because actions or reactions of individuals are the direct outcome of their attitudes.

The table above also clearly indicates that indiscipline is caused by both individual attributes (such as boredom, dishonesty, frustration, and criminal behaviour) and management attributes (such as varying disciplinary measures, victimisation, and deferring grievance settlement). To that end, in a related study Garner (2012) highlighted that there is no one simple reason or cause that prompts individuals to break rules, misbehave or fail to conform to standards.

Respondent's length of service

Respondents were asked to indicate their length of service with the company and the results are as follows;

Table below shows the length of service that respondents had with the organisation.

Length of service	Employees		Management	
	Frequency	Percentage%	Frequency	Percentage%
<1 year	2	6	0	0
1-5 years	9	27	11	65
6-10 years	13	40	1	6
11-20 years	7	21	5	29
>20 years	2	6	0	0
Total	33	100	17	100

13 out of 33 of employee respondents indicated that they were employed by the organisation for a period of 6 – 10 years, 9 of 33 also revealed that they were employed for more than one

year but not more than 6 years whilst 7 of 33 employees stated that they were with the company for 11 – 20 years, with 6% of the employees employed for less than 1 year and the other 6% were employed for more than 20 years. Generally, the majority of employees have been with the company for more than one year which means that they have quite an experience with the internal disciplinary system. The majority of management, 11 respondents, have been with the company for a period of 1 – 5 years, with 5 out of 17 (29%) being employed for a period of 11 – 20 years. 6% of management respondents revealed that they have been with the company for 6 – 10years. Therefore, both respondents have the knowledge and experience with the internal disciplinary system considering their length of service.

Hypothesis testing

The researchers carried further tests of these results using hypothesis tests to find out whether there is an association between the ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system and poor communication.

H₀: there is no relationship between ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system and poor communication.

H₁: Ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system is associated with poor communication.

Contingency table

Rating	Employees	Management	Total
Ineffectiveness of disciplinary system is associated with poor communication	29	12	41
Ineffectiveness of disciplinary system is not associated with poor communication	4	5	9
Total	33	17	50

$$E = \frac{\text{Raw total} * \text{Column total}}{\text{Total}}$$

Grand total (sample)

Calculation of the expected frequency (E)

Expected frequency			
Rating	Employees	Management	Total
Ineffectiveness of disciplinary system is associated with poor communication.	41*33/50=27.06	41*17/50=13.94	41
Ineffectiveness of disciplinary system is not associated with poor communication.	9*33/50=5.94	9*17/50=3.06	9
Total	33	17	50

Calculation of χ^2

$$\chi^2_{cal} = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

where: O= the observed frequency of any value
E= the expected frequency of any value

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
29	27.06	1.94	3.7636	0.13908
4	5.94	(1.94)	3.7636	0.6336
12	13.94	(1.94)	3.7636	0.26999
5	3.06	1.94	3.7636	1.22993
Total				2.27261

$$\chi^2_{cal} = 2.27261$$

Calculation of degrees of freedom

$$df = (Rows - 1) (Column - 1)$$

$$df = (2 - 1) (2 - 1)$$

$$df = 1.$$

At 5% level of significance, the cutoff point of χ^2 for 1 degree of freedom from the χ^2 tables is 3.841.

Since χ^2 cal (2.27261) is less than χ^2 (3.841), we accept null hypothesis and conclude that statistically, there is no significant relationship between ineffectiveness of a disciplinary system and poor communication.

Hypothesis testing

The researchers carried further tests of these results using hypothesis tests to find out whether there is an association between the successes of a disciplinary system and the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour.

H_0 : Success of a disciplinary system is independent on the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour.

H_1 : Success of a disciplinary system is dependent on the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour.

Contingency table

Effectiveness of penalties	Employees	Management	Total
Below average	8	0	8
Average	17	2	19
Satisfactory	4	2	6
Highly satisfactory	3	9	12
Excellent	1	4	5
Total	33	17	50

Calculating expected frequency (E)

$$E = \frac{\text{Raw total} * \text{Column total}}{\text{Grand total (sample)}}$$

Expected frequency			
Rating	Employees	Management	Total
Below average	8*33/50=5.28	8*17/50=2.72	8
Average	19*33/50=12.54	19*17/50=6.46	19
Satisfactory	6*33/50=3.96	6*17/50=2.04	6
Highly Satisfactory	12*33/50=7.92	12*17/50=4.08	12
Excellent	5*33/50=3.3	5*17/50=1.7	5
Total	33	17	50

Calculation of χ^2

$$\chi^2 \text{ cal} = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

where: O= the observed frequency of any value

E= the expected frequency of any value

O	E	O - E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
8	5.28	2.72	7.3984	1.40121
17	12.54	4.46	19.8916	1.58625
4	3.96	0.04	0.0016	0.0004
3	7.92	(4.92)	24.2064	3.05636
1	3.3	(2.3)	5.29	1.60303
0	2.72	(2.72)	7.3984	2.72
2	6.46	(4.46)	19.8916	3.0792
2	2.04	(0.04)	0.0016	0.00078
9	4.08	4.92	24.2064	5.93294
4	1.7	2.3	5.29	3.11176

$$\chi^2 \text{ cal} = \underline{\underline{22.4919}}$$

Calculation of degrees of freedom;

$$df = (\text{Rows}-1) (\text{Colimn}-1)$$

$$df = (5-1) (2-1)$$

df = 4.

At 5% level of significance, the cutoff point of χ^2 for 4 degrees of freedom from the χ^2 tables is 9.488.

Since χ^2 cal (22.4919) is greater than χ^2 (9.488), we reject null hypothesis and conclude that statistically, there is a significant relationship between success of a disciplinary system and the effectiveness of penalties in fostering acceptable behaviour.

Recommendations to DBTS.

- The authors recommend that managers and supervisors should ensure at all cost that new and existing employees know and understand the rules that regulate the workplace. Apart from giving employees a copy of rules upon engagement, they should orally explain the rules to them during the induction period. More so, employees should not only acknowledge receipt of the rules but have to confirm that they understand the rules after being given some considerable time to study the rules.
- The researchers strongly recommend that the organisation has to change its traditional mindset from one of punishing people for wrong doing to one of resolving people problems before they become serious. Instead of perpetuating problems through discipline, managers and supervisors should prevent them happening in the first place. For instance employees should be empowered and involved so that they have more say in what they do.
- The authors recommend that these line managers should be adequately schooled with all the relevant and necessary information pertaining to administering discipline that works. Line managers have to be taught about their disciplinary responsibilities. Senior managers should also support their subordinate's in order for the disciplinary system to work effectively.
- It is recommended that detailed, effective two way communication of disciplinary rules should be done to and from all parties involved in order to instil a sense of common interest and shared goals. To this point, the communication must be done using the most

appropriate media and channels. Communication tools that clearly explain and allow flow of feedback and ideas should be used at all times.

- The researchers suggest that, instead of trying to mend and modify the current disciplinary approach being used (corrective approach), the organisation should adopt a 'positive approach'/the discipline without punishment approach. This positive approach is non punitive, and one of its greatest advantages, is that it shifts the responsibility for performance management from the supervisor to the employee. Employees are enticed into adherence to standards of conduct rather than drive the employee into conformity through punishment. Employees are asked to live up to a standard, which is subtle, made the condition of employment. The dignities of both parties are preserved, but the demand that everyone adhere to the organization's standards is reinforced. Punitive tactics will not produce employees who are committed to the goals of the organisation.

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