

CURATIVE DISCIPLINE AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ATMOSPHERE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING COMPANIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explored the relationship between curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere of electrical engineering companies in South-South Region, Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey research design, the study employed a positivist approach where the questionnaire was utilized as the major instrument. The theoretical framework was drawn from employment relation theory. The primary data were collected using two hundred and twenty five (225) employees drawn from the sample size of one hundred and forty four (144) was generated using the taro Yamane formula while Bowley's proportional allocation technique was used for the individual company sample size. For data collection 144 copies of the questionnaire were distributed depicting 100%. The sample subjects were obtained using the simple random sampling technique. The unit of analysis for the study are individual organizational members. Data were collected from a sample of 139 employees from 10 electrical engineering companies operating in South South Region, Nigeria. A total of 139 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, depicting 96% response rate. A total of 131 copies were used, depicting 90%. For primary data analysis, the study applied mean, mode and standard deviation to test the variables. The Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypothesized associations, using SPSS version 25. The study found that in electrical engineering companies there is a strong but positive relationship between curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere. Based on the findings, it was recommended that: organizations should help employees understand the need for discipline and know why they should align with the work rules and standards of their organizations.

Keywords: Curative Discipline, Industrial Relation Atmosphere

INTRODUCTION

The necessity of good industrial relations atmosphere in industrial sector, both public and private, regardless of size and complexity, cannot be overemphasized. Organizations the world over are increasingly being exposed to various adverse industrial relations atmosphere. Employees themselves have to work under work climates that are constantly engulfed with inherent and endemic conflicts of employment relations, which are not properly managed by organizational managers. As plant activities progress, it will be necessary that the industrial relations atmosphere is also made as congenial as possible by making statutory provisions that can foster good industrial relations at work. Consequent upon this, it still is necessary that organizations regularly appraise the level of industrial relations that exist in their organizations and also device multiple methods to effectively manage employee behaviours that will sustain a stable industrial relations atmosphere.

Although, there has been justifications as to discover and understand the meaning of industrial relations atmosphere in the past, scholars in the field of industrial relations still maintain their stand as to what constitutes the right meaning for the construct. Industrial relations atmosphere, which represents a system of labour-management relations through which interests and differences are adjusted on a continuous basis, thus attracts strong implication for the organization. Industrial relations atmosphere in simple terms, refer to the industrial

climate in which the workforce and their managers operate and it requires full co-operation of all the actors in the industrial relations system (management, union and the government) to make this a reality. According to Dastmalchian, Blyton and Adamson (1989), industrial relations atmosphere, which most often is interchanged as industrial relations climate, is a subset of organizational climate that pertains to the norms and attitudes reflecting union-management relationships in an organization. Arguing in the same line, Payne and Pugh (1976) claim that the concept of industrial relations atmosphere can be interchanged with industrial relations climate because the concept of industrial climate has variables, which supposedly have a reasonable capacity to convey the general psychological atmosphere of an organization, and consequently can influence the satisfaction, motivation and behavior patterns of individuals in the workplace. This view emphasizes the role of industrial relations atmosphere not only as an important concept, but also as an outcome of various policies, rules and structures implemented by organizational decision makers, and which consequently leads to the enhancement of, or deterioration of organizational performance with several positive and negative parameters.

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were examined in this study:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between curative discipline and adversarial industrial relations atmosphere of electrical engineering companies in south-south, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between curative discipline and harmonious industrial relations atmosphere of electrical engineering companies in south-south, Nigeria.

Employment Relations Theory

Employment relation is the study of the regulation of the employment relationship between employer and employee, both collectively and individually, and the determination of substantive and procedural issues at industrial, organizational and workplace levels (Rose, 2008). According to Kaufman (2010), industrial relations is viewed as the process of rule making for the workplace (Dunlop, 1958); job regulation (Flanders, 1965); social regulation of production (Cox, 1971); the employment relationship as structured antagonism (Edwards, 2005); social regulation of market forces (Hyman, 1995); process of capitalist production and accumulation and the derived political and social class relations Caire (1996) as cited in Kaufman, 2010); conflict of interests and pluralist forms of workplace governance (Kochan, 1998); class mobilization and social justice (Kelly, 1998); the advancement of efficiency, equity, and voice in the employment relationship (Budd, 2004); collective representation and social dialogue (European Industrial Relations Observatory, 2002). According to Bain and Clegg (1974), a traditional approach to employment and industrial relations has been to regard it as the study of the rules governing employment, and the ways in which the rules are changed, interpreted and administered.

These theoretical articulations by these theorists of reinforcement and interactional justice provides the foundation for an understanding of the status of the predictor variable (discipline) in the labour movement; while the theorist of employment relations provide the foundation for the status of the criterion variable (industrial relations atmosphere). Their formulations can in some way inspire us to develop models that can as well enrich the reservoir of knowledge and literature on this study on workplace discipline and industrial relations atmosphere or even related studies that fall within the circumference of industrial relations. A discussion around these three theories are crucial as they form the basis for increasing recognition of the concepts of the predictor variable and criterion, justifying the need for the state of discipline and industrial relations atmosphere at this point in time in our own circumstance. They also have the ability to help the researcher confront peculiar problems in the course of the implementation or

management of workplace discipline. The study helps us see reasons for the isolation or differentiation of the peculiar parameters of the dimensions and measures of both variables in this study. We do therefore, resume discourse around relevant literature covering the study variables and guiding this study along this logic. The broad subject headings are: i) workplace discipline; ii) industrial relations atmosphere; iii) dimensions of work discipline; iv) measures of industrial relations atmosphere; v) nexus between workplace discipline and industrial relations atmosphere; vi) work rules.

Curative Discipline

Curative discipline is the second disciplinary approach used by managers in workplaces. It is hinged to the educative theory of punishment which stresses on the educative function of punishment in relation to workers. In Ewing (1929) view as cited in Johnnie and Nwasike (2002), punishment serves to instill good behaviour in workers by fear of the consequences of acting wrongly and because of the emphatic condemnation of a manager or supervisor whose authority they respect. Consequently, this implies that the basic rationale for punishment is to restore management authority of the rule lost by its violation. This theory is basically concerned about the role of punishment in work organization or in the development of discipline is not to make the guilty pay for his act through the pain he suffers, nor even to intimidate possible violators of the law; it is rather to register unequivocally an organizations vigorous disapproval of the violation of its norm as well as to restore the managerial authority of the particular rule that has been broken (Johnnie and Nwasike, 2002). Penalties are one measure for dealing with specific offences. Penalties are a major example of corrective disciplinary procedure. The objectives of penalties are to reform offenders, deter would – be offenders and maintain the integrity of the organization. According to Venkata Ratnam (2013), this is a milder approach of disciplinary procedure. The corrective approach is a humanistic approach (Venkata Ratnam, 2013). It is founded on establishing healthy interpersonal relationships between the leader and the workers. The offending employees are treated as human beings and their total personality and behavior are taken into consideration. An attempt is made to probe deeper into the causes leading to deviant behavior. Corrective mechanisms involve being considerate to the employees and helping them to get over their personal difficulty by change of assignments, shifts irresponsible actions are avoided as much as possible. The approach is geared towards building good subordinate leadership relationships. The leader is sympathetic towards the erring employee.

Basically, corrective disciplinary procedures are aimed at: i) reformatory processes or discourage further violation by sanctioning the violator and ii) they help to prevent or forestall future recurrence of the undesirable behavior among other employees (to serve as a deterrent). The tool for corrective discipline is penalty (sometimes used synonymously with sanction). Scholars have argued that there is good reason to believe that different models can be used interchangeably in a single industrial institution or setting. Part of this could be due to the tenant that corrective disciplinary procedure is about the most widespread in use in most organizations in Nigeria, hence, the most formal mode of disciplinary action in the workplace. However, we stand to reason that the plight of users of this mode of discipline is to avoid reoccurrence of deviant or undesirable behaviors.

Correspondingly, corrective disciplinary procedure is an approach that appreciates employees and nurtures them. This implies that as an approach, corrective disciplinary procedure offers a useful framework for organizing employees and the work they do. Hence, there are numerous business cases for a corrective disciplinary procedure in organizations. Venkata

Ratnam (2013) is of the view that corrective disciplinary procedure enhances the image or reputation and the credibility of the organization. Corrective disciplinary procedure also helps to reduce repercussions that are harmful to the social make up and plans of the society. It enables resolution of disciplinary risk. Invariably, penalties for minor offences are aimed at educating and counseling employees, and given them opportunity to learn and adjust.

Bittel and Newstorm (1990) advocated a behavior modification perspective to discipline. This approach involves a step-by-step procedure to be followed in practicing positive, corrective discipline. According to Bittel and Newstorm (1990) this approach is based upon proven assumptions about what makes people most likely to respond constructively to criticism and request for improvement. Based on this view, they suggest six steps to follow to achieve positive corrective discipline thus: i) state the performance or disciplinary problem; ii) Ask the employee for his or her view of the problem; iii) ask the employee for a solution to the problem; v) give the employee an oral or written warning; vi) Set up a date for a review.

Curative Discipline and Industrial Relations Atmosphere

Workplace discipline management is argued in Singh *et al.*, (1990) as the means of securing consistent behaviour in accordance with the accepted norms of behaviour and it is essential to a democratic way of life. In other words proper administration of discipline is essential, especially in a corrective manner to attract the willingness, cooperation and observance of the rules in other to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization. Curative discipline also has the tendency to disrupt a harmonious industrial relations atmosphere when it is delayed (Venkata Ratnam, 2013). The absence of industrial relations in the workplace can lead to industrial conflicts, distorted corporate image, dysfunctional industrial processes and failure of organizations to continue to exist or improve upon their productivity (Nwaeke, 2017).

Ahiauзу (2004), citing (Hyman 1975, 1978; Shalev 1980; Allen, 1972) viewed industrial relations as essentially occurring within a dynamic conflict situation which is permanent and unalterable, so long as the structure of society remains unaltered.

According to Nwaeke (2017), to achieve a coherent order, the parties in industrial relations can create the enabling industrial relations atmosphere through collective bargaining; this will eliminate the existence of social challenges and the climatic change that is talked about, arising from poor or lack of industrial relations practice. Metrics of a harmonious industrial relations atmosphere as suggested by Ahiauзу (1999) include among others, industrial peace, industrial harmony, corporate equity and fairness, growth and development, performance efficiency, effectiveness and Productivity.

Nwaeke (2017) is of the view that the interactions of the actors change perspectives, which may lead to frictions and at other times, facilitate compromise and agreement thereby leading to healthy industrial relations in the management of concerned organizations. Research suggest that high –involvement work practices can equally develop positive attitudes and beliefs associated with employee participation, and that these practices can generate discretionary behavioural behaviours that improve performance Koran (2006) in (Bamson and Lebura, 2018). Literature on Curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere has continued to broaden our horizon on the relationship that discipline has with industrial relations atmosphere. Whincup, 1978; Anthony, 1977; Thomason 1984; Hackett (1989) according to Johnnie and Nwasike, (2002, 188) seem to capture that:

“the work behavior of workers and managers alike should be regulated to minimize wasteful conflict, therefore the most efficient way to ensure success of this is to provide a framework of work rules. The work rules exist to ensure predictability of behavior, and to equally protect each employee from himself and other employees. As a result work rules must be written, publicized to the employees, and enforced by managers”.

It is therefore pertinent to point that workplace discipline is an action taken against an employee when the employee has violated a rule or when the employee’s performance has deteriorated to the point where corrective action is needed (Johnnie and Nwasike (2002). From the foregoing therefore, we may reason that it will be wise that when a manager must take action against an erring employee on the job for violating work rule or reasons of decline in performance, the organization’s disciplinary procedure is used to resolve the problem. Similarly, when an employee has a complaint against the organization or its management, the grievance procedure is usually used to resolve such issues. It has been noted that some firms have very formal disciplinary procedures, while others have less formal and others do not even have any in existence in their organization. Consequently, it is only plausible to justify the essence of workplace discipline as being capable of creating the enabling industrial relationship which is characterized by intentions that tend towards correcting the offender. It is therefore not only a reactive measure but has the tendency of resulting in the industrial relations atmosphere that is much desired. This effort can be manifest through organizational plans to carry out on-the job training and re-orientation programs that will be organized in the organization. We therefore hypothesize that:

Research Design

This study adopted is a cross-sectional research design.

Population of the Study

The population of the study was made up of 225 staff of 10 Electrical Engineering companies who are registered with the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) in south-south Nigeria. The population excludes casual workers who are not listed in the nominal roll of the firms or updated gazetted publications of the said firms. The population was restricted to only Electrical Engineering companies in the organized private sector to ease accessibility. The study therefore adopted the 2019 directory of the manufacturers Association of Nigeria (M A N) which is the latest version available.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The simple random sampling method was also adopted to arrive at the study subjects. This is a good and fair representation of the 225 employees that have been identified as our population.

Methods of Data Analyses

The data generated through the quantitative instrument was first of all cleaned after which the items were coded and entered into the data editor of the SPSS. Frequencies, as well as descriptive such as the measures of central tendency (i.e. mean scores) and dispersion (i.e. standard deviation) were computed for the primary analysis, which focused on the study demographics and univariate analysis respectively. At the secondary level of analysis, inferential statistics such as Pearson r correlation coefficients and Regression coefficients including the p-values were calculated for purposes of answering the research questions and testing the research hypotheses. Correlation analyses using the Pearson r correlation were interpreted

based on Guilford's (1956) scale giving in Irving (2005, p.16), thus: (a) < .20) = slight correlation, almost negligible; (b) .20 to .40 = low correlation, definite but small relationship; (c) .40 to .70 = moderate correlation, substantial relationship; (.70 to .90 = high correlation, marked relationship; and (e) < .90 = very high correlation, very dependable relationship. According to (Irving 2005, p.16) the Guilford scale provides "a consistent means for interpreting the statistical correlations" and these interpretations should be evaluated in the light of the significance levels, which is set at p value of $p < 0.05$ (one tailed). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) according to (Irving 2005, p.16) give guidelines for accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses as follows: (1) an r value of < .20 is the benchmark for accepting the null hypotheses.

Curative discipline and measures of industrial relation atmosphere

		Curative Discipline	Adversarial Industrial Relation Atmosphere	Harmonious Industrial Relation Atmosphere
Curative Discipline	Pearson Correlation	1	-.147	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.095	.000
	N	131	131	131
Adversarial Industrial Relation Atmosphere	Pearson Correlation	-.147	1	-.283**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.095		.001
	N	131	131	131
Harmonious Industrial Relation Atmosphere	Pearson Correlation	.800**	-.283**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	
	N	131	131	131

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2020

In addressing research question 3, the result on relationship between curative discipline and adversarial industrial relations atmosphere becomes the focus. Based on the data presented on table above, where $R = -0.147$, the results indicate that curative discipline has an inverse and slight correlation with adversarial industrial relations atmosphere. This potends that, the more the curative discipline tactics is applied in these organizaiton, the less the adversarial industrial relations atmosphere. This however indicates an almost negligible relationship between the curative discipline tactics and adversarial industrial relations atmosohere.

In addressing research question 4, the result on relationship between curative discipline and harmonious industrial relations atmosphere becomes the focus Based on the data presented on table above, where $r = 0.800$, the results indicate that curative discipline has a direct and high correlation with harmonious industrial relations. This further indicates a marked positive relationship between the curative discipline and harmonious industrial relations atmosphere. Therefore the more the curative discipline tactics is applied the more harmonious will be the industrial relations atmoshpere and other idices or metrics of harmonous industrial relations atmosphere.

The test for the relationship between curative discipline and the measures of industrial relation atmosphere was reflected in two hypothetical statements:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between curative discipline and adversarial industrial relations atmosphere in electrical engineering companies south-south, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between curative discipline and harmonious industrial relations atmosphere in electrical engineering companies south-south, Nigeria.

Table above on curative discipline and adversarial industrial relations atmosphere showed that the probability value (pv) = 0.095 which is >0.05, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is no significant relationship between curative discipline and adversarial industrial relations atmosphere. This shows that the curative discipline has a significant negative influence on the industrial relations atmosphere.

Table above also, on the above hypothesis showed that the probability value (pv) = 0.000 which is <0.05, hence from the decision rule, null hypothesis is rejected indicating that there is a significant relationship between curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere. This shows that curative discipline used in organization has a significant positive influence on workplace discipline.

Curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere

Workers of the electrical engineering companies as we have found in this study, express extreme optimism towards the withholding of increments of minor offenders as a reformatory process aimed at discouraging further violations. As a disciplinary tool, curative discipline is aimed at correction not necessarily punishment. It is taken after a rule is broken. To apply curative discipline as a long term fulfillment of workplace discipline, then corrective measures need to be put in place at all times by these companies. Findings from the study explain the high level of acceptance that is expressly demonstrated by organizational members in electrical engineering companies that managers withhold increments of minor offenders. For as argued by Singh et al (1990) the means of securing consistent behaviour in accordance with accepted norms of behaviour is through curative discipline. In other words, even though the intention behind curative discipline is for corrective purposes, if delayed, can disrupt an existing harmonious industrial relations atmosphere. When discipline is administered with a corrective intention and is timely, it certainly will attract a willingness, cooperation and an observance of workrules by workers. Which creates an acceptable industrial relations atmosphere. However, delayed curative discipline has the tendency of ruining or disrupting proper and timely industrial relations atmosphere. And it is this absence of industrial relations that leads to conflict or failure of organizations to continue to exist. The administration of curative disciplinary measures, has the tendency of halting or mitigating inappropriate behaviours in organizations. Erring workers are corrected with this measure. That is to say that repeated misconduct or deviations from the rules is the basis for curative discipline. Thus as a result of repeated minor offences, offending workers are demoted to a lower grade. This is confirmed in the study findings as workers highly affirm that this characteristic is prevalent in electrical engineering industries in south south, Nigeria. The inverse but slight correlation between curative discipline and industrial relations atmosphere, thus indicates that perhaps because of the increased evidences of the application of curative discipline in these organizations, there are drastic drops in adversarial industrial relations atmosphere; so, issues of industrial disputes and conflicts are beginning to reduce. However, whenever the curative discipline metrics are reduced, there is an observed rise in adversarial industrial relations atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

1. As electrical engineering companies in south south Nigeria apply curative mechanism in the administration of discipline, the less Adversarial industrial relation atmosphere is significantly increased.
2. As electrical engineering companies in south south Nigeria apply curative mechanism in the administration of discipline, the more harmonious industrial relation atmosphere is significantly increased.

3. Industrial relations atmosphere does not increase proportionately to the degree to which curative discipline in electrical engineering organizations are applied in the administration of discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the implications arising from the study outcomes, the following recommendations are made:

1. Managers should align with such rules to improve the industrial relations atmosphere.
2. Efforts should be made by organizations and their managers in the electrical engineering companies to adopt curative discipline approach to discourage workers from further violations of the work rules and standards through the withholding of increments of offenders.
3. Efforts should be made by organizations and their managers in electrical engineering firms to apply progressive disciplinary techniques in a way that they first describe the actions taken against violators of work rules and ensuring that they follow the disciplinary procedures consistently without bias. Emphasis should be placed on work rules and discipline, instead of punishment to strengthen bonds of relationship among organizational members and their managers. Offending organizational members should therefore be warned verbally.

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