

A word cloud centered around the word "DISCIPLINE" in large black letters on a yellow diagonal banner. Other words include TRAINING, SKILLS, TEAM, LEADERSHIP, COMPETENCE, GOAL, TRUST, RESPECT, VISION, POWER, SUCCESS, TEAMWORK, PEOPLE, COMMERCIAL, DISCIPLINE, ABILITY, MEMBER, LEADER, SOLUTION, COLLABORATION, BUSINESS, PHILOSOPHY, DIRECTING, MISSION, CONDUCT, RISK, GROUP, EMOTIONAL, STRENGTH, MANAGEMENT, COMMITMENT, INNOVATION, and MOTIVATION.



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Intended Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of the session, students shall be able to;

- Define what employee discipline management is.
- Explain why employee discipline is important for a organization.
- Understand a framework of employee discipline management.
- Ascertain rules of employee behavior.
- Know how to conduct discipline inquiry.
- Understand how to determine sanctions and how to implement them.
- Apply informal talk using sandwich and participative approach.

Definitions

“Discipline refers to a condition in the organization when employees conduct themselves in accordance with the organization’s rules and standards of acceptable behavior.”

(Robbins, 1982)

Definitions

“Discipline is the practice of making people obeys strict rules of behavior and of punishing them when they do not obey them.”

(Collins Birmingham University English Language Dictionary, 1987)

Definitions

“Discipline is management action to encourage compliance with organizational standards.”

(Werther and Davis, 1989)

Definitions

“Discipline is a form of training that enforces organizational rules.”

(Mathis and Jackson, 2000).

Definitions

- Based on the above definitions the term “Discipline” involves the following;
 1. A condition where employees conduct themselves in accordance with rules and standards of acceptable behavior.
 2. To make employees obey rules of behavior.
 3. To punish employees when they do not obey rules of behavior.
 4. Managerial action encouraging employees to comply with standards of the organization.
 5. A form of training to enforce organization rules.

Definitions

“EDM is defined as a systematic process of controlling and influencing all employees in the organization to archive and maintain standards of behavior in order to accomplish organizational goals and objectives.”

(Opatha,2009)

Importance of Discipline

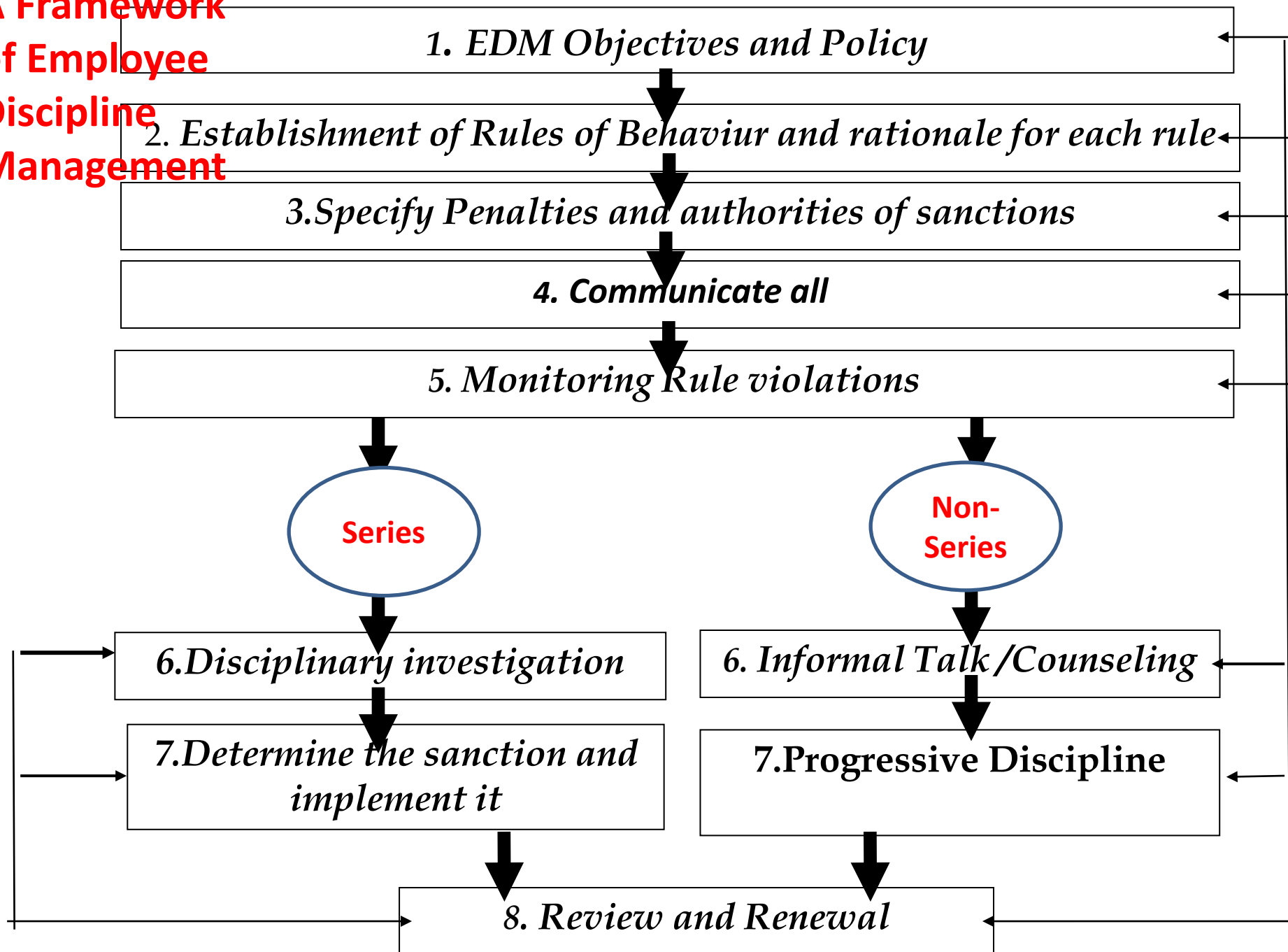
- Proper administrative of discipline results in wiling cooperation and observance of rules, established to achieve organizational goals and objectives.
- Proper employee discipline will lead to the absence of disorders and irregularities in the employees' behavior.
- Disciplined employee cooperative and behave in orderly manner.

Importance of Discipline

- Employee morale and industrial peace are definitely linked with a proper maintenance of discipline.
- Also stresses that if the members of a do not abide by the rules, the organization it self may collapse and chaos, confusion, disobedience, disloyalty and anti social and anti organizational activities develop to the detriment of every one.

- Employee discipline seems to be an essential phenomenon in industry. Therefore proper management of employee discipline is very important.
- It involves regularization of employees' behavior in compliance with established rules in order to achieve desired goals of the organization.
- **The main purpose of employee discipline management is to ensure that employees conforms to norms or standards of behavior at work determined by management as being necessary for the attainment of organizational goals.**

A Framework of Employee Discipline Management



1. EDM Objectives and Disciplinary Policy

- Objectives are an integral part of any EDM programme. EDM should focus on achieving following objectives;
 1. To develop **self control** among all the employees
 2. To encourage employees to meet established **rules of behavior**
 3. To protect the organization from **illegal and harmful actions** of employees
 4. To **protect the life** of an employee from illegal and harmful actions of another employee or a group of other employees

2. Rules of Behaviour

- ***Rules are official instructions in respect of what employees must and are allowed to do and what they are not allowed to do.***
- In an organization, rules serve about the same purpose that laws do in society and disciplining is called for when one of these rules is violated (Dessler, 1984).

2. Rules of Behaviour

- A set of clear rules is an integral part of a fair and just disciplinary system.
- Rules should be established in line with the organizations' goals or objectives and those work rules should become the basis for disciplinary actions when the rules are broken.
- For every disciplinary action, there must be a clear case of violation of a certain rule.

2. Rules of Behaviour

- Rules should directly or indirectly contribute to organizational productivity.
- Rules helps to accomplishment of organization's goals and objectives.
- In other words, violation of a rules should have an indirect or direct impact on the accomplishment of organizations' goals.

2. Rules of Behaviour

- Behaviour rules can be categorized in to two major categories;
 1. Rules directly related to productivity
 2. Rules indirectly related to productivity

Rules directly related to productivity

Examples

- **Times rules:**
 - starting and late time, maximum break and lunch time and absenteeism time
- **Prohibited rules:**
 - no sleeping on the job, no leaving workplace without permission, no drinking on the job, no drugs taking on the job
- **In subordination rules:**
 - refusal to obey supervisors,
- **Rules emphasizing laws:**
 - theft rules, falsification rules
- **Safety rules:**
 - no smoking rules, safety regulations, rules prohibiting dangerous weapon

Rules indirectly related to productivity

Examples

- Prevention of moonlighting,
- Prohibition of gambling,
- Clothing and uniform regulations

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- Penalties or sanctions refer to actions that follow rule violations or infractions.
- Penalties are taken under Corrective Discipline (CD) that is one of the two basic types of employee discipline.

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- “Corrective Discipline is an action that follows a rule infraction seeking to discourage further infractions and ensuring future compliance with standards.”

(Whether and Davis, 1993).

- The objective of CD is that through penalties employees are discouraged to repeat violations of rules and they are encouraged to correct their future behavior.

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- Corrective Discipline penalties (generally called punishments) have to be taken and these are called disciplinary actions in EDM.
- A disciplinary action may be an oral warning or may be a serious one such as termination of employment.

3. Penalties or Sanctions

According to wherther and Davis (1989) there are three objectives of a disciplinary action.

1. To reform the offender
2. To deter others from similar actions
3. To make discipline effective

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- Basically there are two approaches of penalizing an offender.
 1. **Negative approach** whereby the offender is punished with the objectives of retaliation, dismay, shame, or discredit.
 2. Penalizing an offender is the **positive approach** whereby the offender is punished with the objective of reformation.

3. Penalties or Sanctions

Disciplinary actions under positive approach

1. Oral warning
2. Written warning
3. Final written warning
4. Fining
5. Suspension of work for two days without pay
6. Suspension of work four- days without pay
7. Suspension of work for one week without pay

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- 8. Suspension of work for one month without pay
- 9. Stoppage of salary increment
- 10. Stoppage of applying for a promotion
- 11. Transfer to a difficult area/unpleasant work
- 12. Reduction of seniority
- 13. Demotion
- 14. Termination of employment/dismissal

3. Penalties or Sanctions

- It is possible to group grossly acts of misconduct or offences into two broad categories.

1. Serious offences

- e.g. insubordination, making serious damages to the firm, attacking a superior

2. Non serious offences

- e.g. coming to work late, going out without permission, doing personal work while on duty

4. Communication and Monitoring Rule Violations

- This involves transmitting disciplinary information from management to all employees for the purpose of creating right and adequate understanding in respect of employee discipline.
- The following should be communicated to all employees in the organization.

4. Communication and Monitoring Rule Violations

1. EDM objectives
2. Disciplinary policy
3. All the rules
4. Reasons or rationale for all the rules
5. Penalties
6. Levels of management having authority to decide disciplinary actions
 - Through communication employees are encouraged to follow rules so that infractions are prevented.
 - This is called as preventive discipline.

Preventive Discipline

- Preventive Discipline is action taken to encourage employees to follow standards and rules so that infraction does not occur.
- The basic objective is to encourage employees' self-discipline.

Preventive Discipline

- A self-disciplined employee has generally the following characteristics.
 1. Accept the rules, which happen to face.
 2. Respects the rules.
 3. Observes the rules by him/herself willingly.
 4. Needs no another to direct or supervise him/her adhere to rules.
 5. Keeps on adhering to rules continuously.

6. Disciplinary Investigation

- When a serious rule violation is occurred it generally requires an investigation to determine whether there is a clear rule violation in fact.
- This investigation is called ***disciplinary investigation or domestic inquiry*** in EDM.

6. Disciplinary Investigation

- This involves the following steps.
 1. To do a preliminary investigation.
 2. To suspend the service enquiry, if necessary.
 3. To issue a charge sheet.
 4. To obtain letter of explanation and make decisions based on that.
 5. To conduct a formal inquiry.

i. Preliminary Investigation

- When a person is suspected for a rule violation, the organization will have to conduct domestic investigation.
- The top management or the HR Manager must appoint an experienced, qualified officer to do the preliminary investigation.
- The investigation officer has to explore , collect, and record facts in respect of the violation.

ii. Suspension

- Suspensions are needed if one or two or all of the followings/are met.
 1. If the rule violation is serious.
 2. If the suspected employee's presence at work will disturb the on going investigation activities.
 3. If the suspected employee may be threaten to the witnesses.

iii. Charge sheet/ Show cause letter

- A charge sheet will be issued to accused employee by the relevant authority, usually by the HR Manager on behalf of the top management.

iii. Charge sheet/ Show cause letter

- The charge sheet should include following;
 1. Be written.
 2. Be clear and brief.
 3. Describe the rule violation.
 4. Indicate accusations for each rule violation.
 5. Ask an explanation in writing for each rule violation within stipulated period.
 6. Indicate how to whom the letter of explanation should be sent.
 7. Indicate that if the employee fails to send the letter of explanation within the prescribed time , it will assume that he/she has no answer to give and is guilty of all the accusations.

iv. Receipt of Letter of explanation

- Depending on the nature of the letter of explanation sent by the accused the management has to make decisions regarding the continuity of the investigation.
- There are five main possible natures of the letter of explanation.

iv. Receipt of Letter of explanation

1. The accused accepts that he/she is guilty of all charges.
2. The accused denies all the charges with acceptable reasons.
3. The accused denies all the charges with unacceptable reasons.
4. The accused accepts that he/she is guilty of some charges and denies other charges.
5. The accused does not reply.

v. Formal inquiry

- It is very important to appoint a qualified managers in terms of education, experience, honesty, confidence and impartiality as inquiring officers.
- Fixing a date and a place for the inquiry should be done.
- Also the accused should be informed about the inquiry and called for it.
- It is fair to allow the accused to bring a trade union representative, if he/she belongs to recognized trade union.

Formal inquiry

- A notice of inquiry should be sent to the accused by registered post if he/she is on suspension.
- Otherwise having handed over the notice, signature of the accused should be obtained in order to justify that she /he received the notice of inquiry.

7. Sanction Determination and Implementation

- Next step is to determine a sanction/ penalty/ disciplinary action against the employee who was found to be guilty.
- The disciplinary action that is going to be taken against a particular offender should be fair.
- *The degree of disciplinary action should be equal to the degree of offence.*

7. Sanction Determination and Implementation

- When determining a disciplinary action against an offender it is important to consider following factors.
 1. Nature of the offence
 2. Consequence of the offence
 3. Previous offence done by the employee
 4. Whether relevant rule has/have been properly communicated.
 5. Job performance records.
 6. Special contributions made by the employee to the organization such as innovations, creative ideas, cost savings, fire preventions etc.

7. Sanction Determination and Implementation

7. Whether there was any provocation.
8. Whether the offender was physically fit or not.
9. Previous disciplinary actions inflicted.
10. Past disciplinary actions inflicted by other organizations engaged in the same industry for similar rule violations.
11. Employee's length of service with the organization.

6. Informal Talk/ Counselling

- In case of a non-serious offense for the first time, a counseling approach is recommended instead of punitive approach.
- In simple counseling approach involves an informal talk.
- Some example of minor violations/non serious offences may include the following;

6. Informal Talk/ Counselling

1. Late attendance
2. Failure to inform absence
3. Failure to report minor accidents
4. Failure to wear uniforms or safety equipment's while on duty
5. Disturbance to peers
6. Wearing of dirty uniforms on duty
7. Discourtesy to the public
8. Smoking in a prohibited area
9. Failure to maintain an important record

6. Informal Talk/ Counselling

- There are two approaches that managers can use for informal talk
 1. Sandwich approach
 2. Participative/direct approach

Sandwich approach

- This is an approach that does not involve a discussion and it is more one way communication.
- Sandwich approach refers to that a corrective comment is sandwiched between two positive statements in order to make the corrective comment more acceptable (Werther et al. 1985).
- The manager talks about the rules violation with positive comments to the offending employee and he/she listens.

Sandwich approach

- The manager talks about the rules violation with positive comments to the offending employee and he/she listens.

Example

- “Your work is almost perfect (a positive comment), but your recent late returns from lunch disrupts our department work (negative comment). Otherwise your performance is the best in my department (positive comment)”.

Participative/direct approach

- This approach involves the following steps;
 1. Manager informally invites the offending employee to talk about an important thing.
 2. Manager informs the rule violation specially with date, time and place.
 3. Manager listens to response of the offending employee.
 4. Both attempt to find out what is causing the problem of discipline.
 5. Both discuss to find a solution and implement it.

7. Progressive Discipline

- Progressive discipline is a discipline programme, which progresses from the least severe to most severe in terms of disciplinary actions/penalties.
- A system of progressive discipline is a prerequisite to effective EDM.
- The objective of progressive discipline is to give an opportunity to an offender to correct/his/her behavior before more severe penalties are inflicted.

A typical progressive discipline programme is as follows.

Time of violation	Penalty
First	Informal talk
Second	Verbal warning
Third	Written warning with a record in personnel file
Fourth	One week suspensions from work without pay
Fifth	Suspension for one month without pay

8. Review and Renewal

- There may be shortcomings in formulation and implementation of programmes in respect of employee discipline.
- Hence review and renewal is important and by considering following questions you can do review and renewal accordingly;

Reference

Opatha, H. H. D. N. P. (2009). Human Resource Management, Colombo: Author Publication.