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**LEVERAGING PUNISHMENT FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN THE NIGERIAN NAVY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The research examines how punishment in the Navy is used as a tool to institute discipline, order, compliance, and operational efficiency. Discipline remains at the core of military structure; therefore, punishment remains both a means of correction and deterrence against infractions. The research examines the types of punishments applied in the Nigerian Navy, their legal provisions, and their efficiency and effectiveness in behavior modification among personnel, and looks at how a balance is struck between enforcing discipline on one hand and maintaining morale and human rights on the other hand in the armed forces. Adopting a doctrinal approach, reviews of relevant military laws, including the Armed Forces Act, alongside case studies of disciplinary actions, the research findings reveal that punishment is necessary to ensure discipline, but fair and consistent for effectiveness, negating negative results such as resentment or loss of confidence in the leadership. This study concludes with a call for the disciplinary process to be improved: better training in the art of administering discipline for naval officers, transparency of its punishment system, rehabilitation programs, together with punitive actions.

**Keywords:** Nigerian Navy, Punishment, Discipline, Military

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**INTRODUCTION**

Discipline is paramount in every armed force and particularly in the Nigerian Navy, as a means of ensuring effectiveness and operational cohesion. The unique characteristics of maritime security and military operations demand that there be an assurance of a strong disciplinary framework. However, punishment meant

for enforcement will not only correct the undesirable actions but also instill standards and values within naval personnel (Martin, 2010). It is one of those areas that call for balance between accountability and the need to ensure a positive culture within the organization. Punishment in the Navy can only be effective if there are clear and

transparent policies spelling out acceptable behaviors and the consequences for the same. A well-defined code of conduct will make all personnel aware of what is expected from them and what the consequences of violations are. The Navy will engender perceptions of fairness and build trust among members if transparency and consistency in the application of discipline are promoted. The punishments, on the other hand, could be graduated from reprimands for minor offenses right up to court-martial for the more serious offenses (Antai, 2024). In that respect, the graduated approach not only holds people accountable but also acts to deter misconduct.

Besides that, due process gives personnel the right to appeal against maltreatment; it also fosters a culture of fairness among men. Finally, punishment, though necessary in disciplining, should be combined with measures such as training, mentorship, and positive reinforcement as prevention. The Nigerian Navy, through discipline and morality, would be able to create an environment that enhances its operational preparedness and builds a force that is united and committed. This is, however, a holistic approach toward disciplinary measures, and such will be serving to address the issue of misconduct while cultivating a professional military ethos that is needed for the accomplishment of the Navy's mission. In leveraging punishment to effectively enforce discipline in the Nigerian Navy, a careful balance is made through accountability, fairness, and promotion of a positive organizational culture (Kiras, 2013).

### **Punishment for Effective Enforcement of Discipline in The Nigerian Navy**

Punishment is one of the key factors in the effective enforcement of discipline within the Nigerian Navy, serving both as a corrective measure and deterrent against misconduct. A military environment basically demands teamwork, precision, and adherence to protocols; a lot of importance is always attached to maintaining order through well-defined consequences. When personnel are aware that failure to conform to set standards will be followed by due punishment, it therefore consolidates in the mind of every individual the gravity of their job and roles Adebayo v. Nigerian Navy (2015) is a judgment on appeal by a Naval rating for demotion against misconduct. It further held that the Navy acted within its rights in imposing disciplinary penalties as this is what service needs to maintain discipline. Such clarity goes a long way toward fostering an environment of responsibility wherein each and every member is enlightened regarding the requirements that lie on them (Antai, 2024). While meting out punishment it is very essential that the Nigerian Navy apply a formal and structured platform upon which clear cut offenses could be identified that would lead to punishment.

The platform should include a clearly articulated code of conduct inculcated among all personnel. By so doing, the Navy would have ensured that the rules are well-documented and that possible sanctions are also clearly stated and periodically reviewed

to ensure the rules are applied fairly and transparently. Consistency should be ensured in the application of such rules; like-for-like offenses attract similar punishment to avoid the perception of nepotism and favoritism, which can seriously damage morale and cohesion. Punishment types should be graduated in proportion to the severity of the offenses (Edet et al, 2022). Minor offenses might get the punishment of verbal reprimands or duties, while severe violations of conduct might meet reprimands of demotion or even court-martial. This gradual scale in methodology means that it will be relevant to the circumstances and the severity of the behaviour-reinforcing accountability as the name of the game. Also, the introduction of due process for personnel who would want to appeal against their punishments will help inculcate a sense of fairness and respect among them, which can eventually lead to strengthening the trust within the ranks. The Nigerian Navy should focus equally on prevention in addressing indiscipline (Fletcher, 2015).

Training courses on the need for ethical behavior, the provision of mentors for junior personnel, and the publishing of good practice all combine to create a high sense of responsibility and professionalism in individuals. The generation of a good organizational culture based on discipline will benefit the Navy as operational efficiency will be improved while the requirement for punitive measures reduced. In the case of *Nigerian Navy v. Onyekachi* (2018), a sailor was accused of drug abuse.

The court upheld disciplinary actions of the Navy ranging from dismissal pointing out that the Navy was determined to ensure a drug-free environment [8]. In this matter, it is evident that discipline is achieved in a balanced manner as it ensures not only punishment but also develops an integrated and dedicated force. Also, in the case of *Nigerian Navy v. Eze* (2010), it entailed the dismissal of a naval officer for insubordination. The court confirmed the summary dismissal on grounds of maintenance of discipline and authority of commanding officers.

### **Understanding Discipline in the Military Setting**

Discipline is a strong backbone of military effectiveness and cohesion; thus, it forms the backbone of operations for any military organization and, as such, extends to the Nigerian Navy (*Seaman Abbas v. Nigerian Navy*, 2023). In a military context, discipline encompasses adherence to rules, protocols, and standards that govern behavior and actions (Martin, 2010). This structure is vital in ensuring that personnel are cohesive and that established rules and procedures are adhered to as best practices during critical situations, which often need to be resolved expeditiously and right (Antai et al, 2024). A disciplined force can meet the challenge, be operationally ready, and successfully complete operational missions (Smith, 2018).

In *Ibrahim v. Nigerian Navy* (2021) a sailor challenged a punishment imposed on him for an offence described as AWOL. The finding of the presiding tribunal upheld the

disciplinary powers of the Navy, and the higher judgment further upheld the standards of the Navy. Discipline does not merely mean enforcement; it builds an atmosphere of responsibility and professionalism amongst the members. In the military, one becomes responsible not just for oneself but also for comrades and the task at hand. Such a sense of shared responsibility nurtures trust amongst the members and becomes the linchpin for effective cooperation during operations. Where discipline becomes part of the culture, personnel are more apt to take their responsibilities seriously and work cohesively in pursuit of shared goals, an essential ingredient in maintaining morale and unit cohesion. The most important aspect of all, discipline instills authority and respect throughout the military hierarchy. Clear differentiation of rank and role, further bolstered by an expectation to follow procedure, means that orders can be given and acted upon with confidence. Respect for the chain of command is a critical factor in effective leadership and operational success, inasmuch as decisions made at higher levels are efficiently and effectively carried out at all levels. In this way, discipline shapes not only individual behavior but also the general structure and function of the military organization (Nigerian Navy, 2016).

Discipline plays one final role in how the military is perceived by the public at large. A well-disciplined force evidences professionalism and dedication, which may lift the reputation of the military in the eyes of people and government stakeholders.

This good image is very significant when it comes to garnering support and resources for the different operations and missions of the military (NATO, 2018). A developed multi-faceted understanding of discipline in military contexts will help in the building of a resilient and effective force that is ready to meet present and future challenges. Discipline forms the basis for orderliness, efficiency, and following protocols within military organizations. The Nigerian Navy is an operationally complex and high-stakes organization where discipline is heretofore paramount, particularly to ensure that personnel are at all times prepared for missions; instill trust and cooperation among members; and command the best level of public trust (Kisubi et al, 2024).

### **Providing a Clear Policy and Instructions**

A clear policy and instruction-set helps in the proper management of the system in place within the Nigerian Navy, thus offering a structured framework wherein the behaviors and operations of personnel are guided. A set code of conduct usually stands as a reference point where expected behaviors are told to whom the standards must always be kept (Aidonojie et al, 2024). This clarity not only helps mitigate misunderstandings but also cultivates a culture of accountability, where the personnel are clearly aware of what their actions will entail. The Navy can ensure, through codified expectations, that there is cohesiveness in the environment, which everyone knows what they can and cannot

do according to operational procedures (Adetunji, 2019).

Inclusive consultation and participation by various stakeholders within the Navy—from leadership down to enlisted—are part of such policy formulation. The involvement of a wide range of perspectives ensures relevance, realism, and reflection of the peculiar challenges faced in naval operations. This is also one sure way of making sure that personnel buy into the standards set and, therefore, adherence to the same is better. The guidelines could further be inculcated through regular training and briefings to ensure that members are up-to-date with any reviewed or changed codes. It is also important to include compliance monitoring mechanisms and violation management. There should be clear reporting procedures on misconduct, investigation, and punitive action. This openness reinforces the perception of the gravitas of the directives and reassures staff that there is consistency and fairness in enforcement. By implementing such measures, trust within the Navy membership can be fostered, thereby giving a sense in which membership is comfortable identifying issues knowing that some sort of retribution will not result (Olawale, 2020).

Finally, there must be periodic reassessment of how well these policies and directives are serving to make particular adaptations necessary in these ever-changing times of operation. Because the Navy continues to face new challenges—ranging from technological advancements and shifts in

maritime security to changing international dynamics—so, too, must its policies be adapted with relevance. Regular consultation and solicitation of feedback from the personnel will ensure that inadequacies, if any, are found out and the directions remain pertinent to the task at hand of the in Nigerian Navy v. Olatunji (2022) An officer was dismissed based on an act of negligence that led to a maritime accident. The court held in favour of the Navy, bringing out the responsibility and discipline inherent in naval operations. The Proactive Approach: This approach tends to enhance not just discipline and operational readiness but also continuous improvement and a commitment to the well-being of Navy personnel. Effective punishment requires underpinning with effective policies, whereby:

- 1) Code of Conduct: A comprehensive code setting forth what is expected of each individual regarding his or her behavior, including the associated consequences for not adhering to those expectations. The first two of these parts would be a well-defined code of conduct with a commitment to transparency, if punitive measures are to serve effectively in the Nigerian Navy. The code of conduct is the base document which delineates the expected behaviors and values of the personnel in the military group, hence giving clear indications of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. This clarity then helps to eliminate ambiguity, ensuring that every

member is certain of what is expected of them. In cases of violations, the code should clearly outline the necessary consequences. This therefore forms an important requirement in building the tenet that accountability is inherent to military service (Antai, 2025).

- 2) Clarity: Every personnel should be fully aware of the set rules and the basis of each such rule. This may involve regular briefings and orientations. Transparency in the enforcement of such is equally important. This includes clear communication regarding the code of conduct and one that is fair and open when addressing violations. When personnel know that disciplinary actions are applied consistently and impartially, it fosters trust in the leadership and system as a whole.
- 3) Transparency allows the perception of favor or bias, which can degrade morale and cohesiveness in the ranks. The Navy can publicly show misconduct and punishment in action to reinforce discipline's significance, yet exhibit its commitment towards fairness and justice.

In addition, allowing responses or feedback from personnel regarding the code and its enforcement is one good way to improve the guidelines as well as the effectiveness of the disciplinary process. When people feel that their voices have been heard in creating standards, they are much more likely to follow and live up to them (Antai, 2025). Another positive effect of this approach is that valued and respected individuals lead to

a much-needed Navy with much greater unity and sense of purpose. The bottom line is that a sound code of conduct, with clearly spelled-out mechanisms for enforcement, is basic for the effective application of punishment in the Nigerian Navy (Nigerian Navy, 2020). This way, it not only clears up expectations but builds trust and accountability that, in turn, consolidate readiness for operations and ethical standards in the Navy. Thus, by signing up to these tenets, the Navy can create that atmosphere where discipline would not only be enforced but also commanded with respect and followed through by all its personnel (Majekodunmi, 2024).

### **Types of Punishment**

Types of punishment which may be imposed for an offense, in view of its severity:

#### **Minor Offenses**

The minor offenses in the Nigerian Navy include a variety of acts considered not to be serious, yet which could affect good order and efficiency in the Service. Examples of these may include lateness, poor personal turnout, or failure to wear one's uniform correctly. These might seem minor in their own right, but when they accumulate, they are bound to have a structural negative effect on discipline and unity among the troops. The prompt detection of minor offenses undergirds the entire success of Navy missions and instills an air of accountability in its personnel (Olawale, 2020). The encouraged response or line of action toward minor offenses is correction rather than punishment. Other options

range from verbal warnings to extra work and even compulsorily attending training sessions, which will help in fortifying the codes of behavior that are expected. In this way, one could see immediate correction without necessarily harming the individual's career or low morale. The Navy can actually enable personnel to reflect on their behaviors in terms of understanding the set boundary and take responsibility and commitment through education and rehabilitation (Johnson, 2017).

Efficient punishment of minor offenses is what creates a disciplined, cohesive force. When personnel realize that slight infractions are taken care of uniformly, this concept of behaviors adding to the mission and success of the Navy is once again reassured. This proactive stance not only stems the potentials for minor issues to escalate into major ones but goes a long way to produce a professional service where every member is made to live by the standards of conduct expected within the service (Antai, 2024).

### **Moderate Offenses**

Moderate offenses in the Nigerian Navy are actions more majorly damaging to discipline and operational effectiveness, which, however, do not reach the seriousness of serious breaches. These can include, but are not limited to, insubordination, unauthorized absences, and failure to follow a direct order. This can disrupt the chain of command and unit cohesion, making such offenses something the Navy needs to take very seriously. In these matters, the Navy

will impress upon them the concept of adhering to protocol and the need for mutual respect between personnel (Umo, 2025). Levels of Disciplinary Actions: The Nigerian Navy applies levels of disciplinary actions on moderate offenses, which are proportionate to the offence committed. The punishments can range from formal reprimands, loss of privileges, or temporary reduction in rank. The measures thus act as deterrents to the offending individual and a warning to others about the need for observing discipline. It aims at behavioral correction without being overly punitive, hence allowing personnel to learn from their mistakes while still being held accountable. In closing, effective handling of moderate offenses is critical to maintaining a professional military culture. If personnel perceive that the Navy takes such infractions seriously, it reinforces a commitment to discipline and operational readiness on the part of everyone. This proactive approach helps in two ways: it keeps the ranks in order, and it aids the members to be more mindful and make positive choices in their lives. This type of accountability helps the Navy to reinforce its performance and effectiveness in every sphere and create more bonding among the units (Anifowose, 2024).

### **Severe Offenses**

Severe offenses in the Nigerian Navy are serious forms of misconduct that threaten substantially to cause an immediate material



and appreciable risk to discipline, operational integrity, and safety of personnel. This includes but is not limited to any act or conduct viewed to be insubordination, fraud, narcotics, or other types of drug abuse, and disruptive acts against good order and operational security. These activities have grave consequences, not only on the individuals concerned but also on the overall efficiency and morale of the unit as a whole. Such offenses must be considered and dealt with in a prompt and unequivocal way in order to preserve integrity among the Navy and ensure that such steps are not lightly taken by anybody (Wakili, 2025). More severe offenses could be disposed of under more serious disciplinary actions, such as court-martial or even a reduction in rank or dismissal from the services. These also made quite a significant factor deterring from committing misbehavior and proving that the Navy was determined to enforce its code of conduct. Due process should be observed as this is an essential way of ensuring that personnel are given adequate chance of arguing their case and proving their innocence. With serious offenses dealt in an open and stringent manner, accountability and rule of law will be further enhanced in the ranks of the Navy (Abdulkareem, 2018).

Handling severe offenses effectively also helps in the general culture of discipline within the Nigerian Navy. When personnel see that serious offenses are punished with fairness and consistency, it sets off a message of commitment by the Navy to high moral standards. It would therefore help

nurture an atmosphere of respect and trust, and subsequently people would be more careful in living up to the values and expectations associated with service in the military. By putting the onus on accountability for serious offenses, the Navy is improving operational readiness and building a professional ethos that is essential to their success in arduous maritime environments.

### **Proportionality and Fairness of Offences and Punishment in the Nigerian Navy**

Proportionality and fairness in the enforcement of offenses and punishment are cardinal to ensuring discipline within the Nigerian Navy. The principle of proportionality ensures that the consequences for misconduct are commensurate with the severity of the offense. That is very important in developing perceptions of justice in personnel, which will deter negative impressions about retribution and leniency, respectively, from intruding into morale and trust in leadership. When the punishment fits the crime, it supports the belief that the Navy holds people accountable but also considers the particular circumstances of each incident (Ekpenisi, 2024).

Of equal importance to the appropriateness of the type of punishment is fairness in the administration of discipline. Second, clear rules should be laid down that categorically spell out the nature of offenses and the punishments associated with them. The personnel should, therefore, always know what is expected of them and the punitive



measures that they will attract whenever they deviate from the set guidelines. In essence, this adds to transparency in the ranks. Third, fair process entails giving personnel adequate chance for appeal or even protesting charges, especially in cases where one's reputation is at stake. This openness shall help build trust in the leadership and encourage deeper regard for standards because they believe that their interest is a concern (Ibekwe, 2019).

The Nigerian Navy, in awarding its punishment, shall be taking into consideration the environment and motive that could have been the reason for any offense committed. The history of the particular individual, the conditions that surrounded the infraction, and the outcome on the unit. This approach to discipline holistically allows for responses tailored not only to be just in their outcome but also constructive, enabling rehabilitation where appropriate. The broadening of this context for response can enable the Navy to show interest in the development and growth of its personnel, rather than merely punitive measures alone (Okafor, 2020). It creates greater proportionality and equity regarding offenses committed, while there is an overall enhanced effectiveness within this system in general performance. It engenders respect and responsibility among personnel when they perceive that disciplinary measures are imposed rather equitably and fairly. This in turn will create an environment where people will abide by the standards set up by the Navy and, in the process, generate esprit de corps amongst members (Akanke,

2022). The navy should be assured, therefore, that it has not only forced discipline but welcomed it as part of its functional ethic through the maintenance of these precepts. Punishment should fit the offense. Principles of sentencing include the following:

- 1) Consistency: Give similar offenses similar punishments to avoid the perception of play or bias.
- 2) Due Process: Allow procedures for appeals or reviews to give personnel the opportunity to contest their punishments if they perceive that they were being dealt with unfairly.

Prevention mechanisms are necessary in minimizing occurrences of offenses in the Nigerian Navy, as they deal with instilling a culture of discipline and responsibility before incidents happen. Among the most crucial ones is broad-based training and education that highlights the essence of good conduct, military laws, and known risks for breaching them (Carter, 2016). It can prevent violations when the Navy personnel have acquired sufficient knowledge and ability to behave appropriately under challenging circumstances. A more profound indelible inclination towards the above-mentioned principles may be achieved by frequent workshops, briefings, and simulations, so that all members are aware of the standards expected of them (Aidonojie et al, 2024).

Mentorship and leadership development also play important roles in deterring offenses. This can include having experienced personnel work with more

junior sailors through mentorship, such as by advising and supporting junior members and modeling behaviors expected of all personnel. This type of relationship provides for free-flowing information and allows for the junior members to seek advice on how to conduct themselves with complicated or ethical, tough situations. The Navy would, through this approach have helped to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership from its personnel as well as reminded them that standards are everyone's responsibility (Omoigui, 2020). Besides, a robust feedback and reporting mechanism assists at the beginning of intervention. Secure channels through which personnel may report or seek advice without reprisal serve to engender a proactivity within discipline. This can enable early interventions before they develop into more serious offenses. When sailors are empowered to speak out, it reinforces accountability and strengthens trust among the ranks (Thompson, 2018).

Finally, some good conduct might be highlighted and rewarded in order to prevent misbehavior. Acknowledging good conduct and performance reinforces the standards that the Navy wants to uphold, encouraging others to emulate them. By instituting a recognition system for those individuals or teams reflecting an unusually outstanding discipline and devotion to duty, it will create a culture of good behavior recognized and valued. This holistic approach to prevention can greatly enhance discipline and overall effectiveness in the Nigerian Navy (Chan, 2019). Generally, a

culture of discipline in the Nigerian Navy is crucial for the cohesion and effectiveness of a military structure. It is predicated on the belief that there is an appreciation that discipline is not only a matter of observing the rules and regulations but also one of mutual respect for Navy values and mission. The Navy can instill pride and a sense of responsibility among all members such that discipline is perceived as an integral part of professionalism. This must start right from the top, where senior leadership has to model the behaviors they demand from their juniors: demonstrating integrity, accountability, and commitment to duty in daily life and actions (Amnesty International, 2017).

Education and training form a very important aspect in developing the culture of discipline. The Navy should regularly undertake training programs that emphasize ethical behavior, teamwork, and adherence to protocol. Such sessions should not only cover the rules and regulations but also explain behind military service principles like respect, honor, and loyalty. Navy personnel may be made to instill discipline among them by making them understand through discussion the importance of discipline in its relation to mission performance (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The member may therefore internalize values and appreciate his or her place in maintaining a disciplined force. Recognized and rewarded disciplined behaviour is also one of the best ways to reinforce a culture of discipline. Public recognition by the Navy of an individual or group for exemplary behavior sends a strong

message about discipline being valued. Recognition may be in the form of commendation, awards, or other less formal acknowledgments at meetings (Aidonojie, 2024). This in turn conditions others to also aspire for the same level of standard and through this a snowballing effect may take place which demonstrates collective commitment to uphold the values and protocols of the Navy. A culture of discipline can only be consistently maintained through fostered open lines of communication and the establishment of means by which feedback may be given. Personnel need to be comfortable discussing challenges that concern them and seeking clarification from superiors or peers. Creating an environment where people are free to raise concerns and report problems without the fear of retribution only will further inculcate more trust and accountability in the ranks. Moreover, leadership should be open to feedback on how the current policies and processes are working. Thus, such an approach will give a chance not only to detect weaknesses but also provide an opportunity for personnel to contribute to the creation of a more disciplined and professional environment, enhancement of the Nigerian Navy's effectiveness as a whole. Valuing Discipline: To be instituted, it is necessary that the leadership models the required behaviors from subordinates. It means compliance with the rules and accountability (Antai, 2024).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of punishment in the Nigerian Navy are indispensable to ensure that effectiveness is accorded to all actions with fairness to the disciplinary actions. This institutionalized assessment of the punishments awarded and the results accomplished enables the Navy to recognize patterns, resolve inconsistencies, and adequately refine its discipline framework. It would also involve defining particular relevant metrics with respect to the number of offenses committed, the type and number of punishments given, and their consequences on individual behavior and unit cohesion. A regular periodic collection of data and analysis can be used to gain valuable insights into how well the current system is working, with a view to aiding future decisions and policies (Aidonojie, 2024). Secondly, periodic reviews of disciplinary cases enable the leadership to ensure that punishments are being executed proportionately and consistently. Further, such reviews must scrutinize the circumstances of the offense, the context within which the incident occurred, and the responses on the part of leadership. By such processes, through an analysis of cases representative of diverse scenarios, the Navy was able to ascertain patterns or anomalies that may seem biased or arbitrary exercise of discipline. Fairness and responsibility in the disciplinary procedure will be demonstrated by transparency, which will help in gaining confidence and boosting morale among personnel (Aidonojie et al, 2024).

It also makes for more effective monitoring when personnel are involved in the evaluation processes. It is possible that obtaining feedback from sailors about their experience of the disciplinary system may lead to insights which leadership themselves would not have considered. A participatory approach is one where it's not only ownership by the personnel developed, but also a sense of responsibility taken over the process. By engaging people at every level, the Navy could create a more inclusive atmosphere in which concerns and suggestions are not only highly valued but also lead to a robust and effective disciplinary system (Antai et al, 2024).

In turn, the insights gained from such monitoring and evaluation should feed into continuous training and education. The operational effectiveness of various punishments on changing behaviors, as well as how changing dynamics within a unit work or fail, can provide constructive guidance in the development of positive, effective training programs aimed at motivating reasons for offenses. This is a step in a feedback loop whereby the Navy can remain sensitive to the needs of its personnel while sustaining a culture of discipline. This would enable the Nigerian Navy to strike a balance between attaining operational readiness and maintaining its threshold of behavior through constant evaluation and recalibration of its strategy in relation to punishment. The regular reviews will contribute to the improvement of disciplinary measures, feedback

mechanisms, laying down channels for personnel to give their suggestions as to the disciplinary process and its improvement, reviewing outcomes, analyzing efficiency of punishment methods by the effects on behavior and morale.

### **Engagement and punishment of human rights in the Nigerian Navy**

Human rights engagement within the scope of punishment in the Navy is important in ensuring that punitive measures are managed in a way that does not demean and violate the dignity and rights of personnel. Fairness, openness, and accountability are cardinal principles guiding the Navy as a military institution in addressing misconduct. This shall consist of setting standards in accordance with international standards on human rights with respect to the observance of personnel's rights in the course of disciplinary procedures. With greater awareness of these rights, the Navy is determined not only to pursue an environment of respect but also to stem abuses that come about either out of lack of control or out of misunderstandings as to what is due process (Antai et al, 2024).

Secondly, locating a human rights approach within the disciplinary framework can provide a more holistic model of punishment. Where personnel perceive that disciplinary procedures are conducted in a fair and impartial manner, there is increased confidence in the leadership and prevailing culture. This confidence is key to maintaining morale and unit cohesion, as personnel are more likely to adhere to the standards of the

Navy if they perceive that their rights have been upheld. The Nigerian Navy should foster an atmosphere in which members are not only held to account but are assured of their dignity and welfare through due process and adherence to human rights principles in its disciplinary processes. This would be in furtherance of an even more professional force that is equally efficient (Izevbuwa et al, 2024).

### **Effects of Discipline enforcement on the Nigerian Navy**

Discipline is needed in every establishment for it to function efficiently and the Nigerian Navy is not left out. These effects include the following

#### **Operational Efficiency**

Perhaps the most immediate effects of enforcing discipline in the Nigerian Navy are felt in terms of operational efficiency. The business of the military is essentially quite exacting, with demands for precision, obedience to orders, and a coordinated manner of executing tasks that are inherently multifaceted, whether in maritime security, territorial defense, or even counter-piracy operations. It ensures personnel work in unison, follow set protocols, and timely respond to directives. Procedures can be assured since, in an environment where mistakes might come with catastrophic outcomes, such as loss of lives and national security breaches, discipline is demanded (Ogu et al, 2024). The chain of command is crucial in military functions; however, discipline needs to be

maintained for the chain of command to work effectively. All ranks understand the roles they have to play: respect for authority ensures that orders are followed down the chain from superiors to the lowest level of subordinates. Where discipline collapses, the chain collapses, and that results in chaos, insubordination, and possible failure in performance of duties. Most naval operations demand quick responses, even to events involving a split second, as is common in pirate attacks, prevention of oil theft, and other emergency rescues at high seas. Discipline makes personnel respond without any hesitation-by training and set procedures-rather than personal whims and delays. Effective leadership in the Nigerian Navy is deeply intertwined with enforcement of discipline. The military leaders are to make vital decisions, lead by example, and keep the welfare of their juniors in the best state (Okpong & Antai, 2024).

Discipline enhances the credibility and authority of leaders in a manner that the environment set up portrays an arena where their directives are carried out without question. Discipline instills respect for leadership; thus, respect for the hierarchy is a prevalent feature in the Nigerian Navy. Subordinates are trained to take orders from superiors as a matter of respect for expertise and experience. This forms the basis of strengthening the general command structure of the institution in ensuring cohesion in naval missions. Disciplinary enforcement further enhances the aspect of accountability among leaders. Officers are

made responsible for ensuring that their units observe discipline. Loss of discipline in such respect reflects on the leadership qualities of the officer and may attract penalties. This, in essence, encourages the leaders to ensure a high level of discipline, thereby ensuring their subordinates also do the same (Antai et al, 2025).

### **Morale and Welfare of Personnel**

Because of this, the welfare and morale of personnel in the Nigerian Navy are closely linked with enforcing discipline. While discipline seems to be quite strict, especially in military contexts, what it does is bring an environment of fairness, predictability, and professionalism. Thus, the more confident sailors, marines, and officers who know the rules and the aftermath that would result from their actions will feel more secure and pleased with their job. Discipline instills a sense of security among personnel. Where the rules are consistently observed, members of the Navy know they are protected from arbitrary or unjust dealing. They will be judged based on established standards, and this fosters a feeling of fairness and predictability. Any military entity requires team cohesion (Antai et al, 2025). Discipline makes the personnel of any organization work as a team in solving problems or achieving certain goals. This is important in naval operations, which may be so complex that individual and combined inputs are required to achieve success. The institution of discipline ensures that the level of conflict among the members is reduced and that the group has one objective in

mind. Discipline, if incorporated along with recognition and rewards, could serve as a means of motivating personnel. After the disciplined behavior is recognized and rewarded, the sailors and officers would be motivated by the increase in morale to maintain the standards.

### **Punishment and Deterrence**

Discipline imposition normally involves punishments for broken conduct. Punishment in the Navy starts with reprimands to heavier types of punishment, which are demotion, court-martial, and even dismissal. These are usually not only instituted to correct behavior but also as deterrents to other personnel (Antai et al, 2025). The punitive measures within the Nigerian Navy are levied to rectify these unacceptable behaviours amongst its members. It ensures that when one does something against the rules, the punishment given to him teaches him not to repeat the same mistake. This helps rehabilitate an individual to bring him on track for acceptable behaviour. The presence of stringent disciplinary measures would deter possible misconduct. Knowledge of infractions attracting severe punishment will prevent personnel misbehaviors likely to compromise the operations of the Navy or bring its name into disrepute (Nigerian Military Officers Association, 2021).

### **Training and Professional Development**

Another related important area where enforcement of discipline plays a key role in the Nigerian Navy involves the training and

professional development of personnel. Being highly specialized and technical in nature, the Navy enforces serious training in all aspects, including navigation, combat, engineering, and communication. In fact, it is because of discipline that these programs tend to be successful (Amnesty International, 2017). The presence of discipline ensures that the training is focused and effective. For example, personnel must adhere to schedules, follow instructions, participate in drills, among other activities. The kind of environment fostered is one that attracts professionalism for developing skills that both recruits and seasoned personnel alike must have in order to perform their functions effectively. Work discipline fosters a culture of continuous improvement. The personnel are held at the highest standards and must work consistently to improve on set performances. This drive for excellence at work will ensure that the Nigerian Navy is always a force to be reckoned with in both traditional and emerging maritime threats.

### **Impact on National Security**

The Nigerian Navy is significant in ensuring the security of the nation due to modern threats like piracy, oil theft, and smuggling in the Gulf of Guinea. Discipline within the Navy directly impacts how Nigeria enforces her interests through her waters. There is maritime security, where waters in Nigeria are very vital to the economy due to the presence of oil infrastructures within them. In this setting, the ability for strict discipline to be enforced allows the Nigerian Navy to patrol and secure such waters more

effectively. This makes sure that personnel follow through with commands and function in a competent manner that allows the Navy to mobilize sufficiently against threats like piracy and illegal bunkering (Antai et al, 2025). Apart from protecting economic interests, the Nigerian Navy is an integral part of national defence on the whole. The role of enforcers of discipline is to make sure that personnel are ready to fend off any external threat to the country and thus contribute to the stability and security of Nigeria in general.

It is befitting to note that the case of Seaman Abbas tends to represent a serious example of how leveraging punishment can affect discipline enforcement within the Nigerian Navy [10]. This case tends to show in detail the challenges and complications associated with the administration of justice within a culture of accountability and fairness. Seaman Abbas's incident called into question respect for established procedures and the implication of such on unit cohesion and operational readiness. His case has much to reveal about punishment in the greater framework within the Navy and how such affects the actual disciplinary ends. The nature of the offense committed by Seaman Abbas has to be looked into. Whether the misconduct was related to the contravention of set protocols or standards of ethics, then the Navy's disciplinary response would have to accord with the seriousness of the offense, while keeping within the principles of proportionality and fairness. A well-defined disciplinary framework would guide



appropriate sanctions; the punishment should be guided by and be in proportion to the severity of the infraction. This approach will ensure that not only will Seaman Abbas' behavior be corrected, but it also serves as a deterrent for other personnel who might consider repeating similar actions (Martin, 2010).

Most important, the handling of Seaman Abbas's case allows the reinforcement of transparency and due process in the disciplinary system. Transparency regarding what is expected from personnel, procedures involved, and consequences of misconduct has to be clearly communicated to maintain trust in an organization. If the Navy can explain why the action was taken against Seaman Abbas, then that will further instill a sense of fairness and accountability down through the ranks. This is critical in ensuring a culture where staff know about the importance of meeting standards but also consequences of their actions (Smith, 2018). In sum, the case of Seaman Abbas reflects that punishment in the Nigerian Navy is basically used as an important means of enforcing discipline. Where thoughtfully and consistently used, punishment can be used not only to deal with individual acts of misconduct but also to enhance general commitment to operational integrity and professionalism. Continuing to take steps to prevent the problems, maintaining open lines of communication, and fairness in the disciplinary process will all enable the Navy to build a disciplined, cohesive force that is better equipped to perform its mission.

### **Challenges in Discipline Enforcement**

While the many positives attend to this, discipline in the Nigerian Navy does not come without its own challenges; a number of factors that include corruption, general shortage of resources, and pressures from outside forces could weaken the actual enforcement of discipline. At times, corruption within the ranks weakens the effectiveness of discipline enforcement (Human Rights Watch, 2020). When punitive measures are not uniformly applied, or personnel can get away with their offenses by paying bribes or through favoritism, that lowers overall discipline in the Navy. In the end, the order may collapse, morale goes down, and operational efficiency is affected negatively. Sometimes, the Nigerian Navy operates with very meager resources, which make the enforcement of discipline even more difficult (Amnesty International, 2017). For instance, inadequacy or underfunding of training, equipment, or welfare programs can lead to disgruntled personnel and increase their chances of indiscipline. Political pressures and even social pressures interfere with the working of discipline inside the Navy. This interference compromises the system's integrity in those cases where some of the disciplinary matters are susceptible to outside pressures that dent the very authority and command structure (Antai et al, 2025).

### **Findings**

From the above discussion, the paper made the following findings:

- 1) Paper developed that the formation and implementation of clear policies and guidelines will ensure that all personnel know what to expect when certain conduct is exhibited. This, in turn, would help build transparency and no reason to mistrust the ranks.
- 2) Positive use of proportionality in punishment maintains morale and encourages standards to be upheld. The fairness of the disciplinary process cannot be overemphasized for it helps avoid perceptions of bias and favoritism.
- 3) This paper also finds out that training, mentorship, and positive reinforcement are effective strategies that prevent offenses at the forefront. A proactive approach enhances discipline and fosters a culture of accountability.
- 4) It is finally observed that the integration of human rights principles into the disciplinary framework ensures personnel are accorded dignity and respect, a factor which really cements trust in the leadership and the overall disciplinary process.

### Conclusion

Thus, punishment to ensure effective discipline in the Nigerian Navy is a complex balancing in ensuring accountability and fairness on one side with the encouragement of a positive organizational culture [51]. A guided disciplinary framework that will emphasize clear codes of conduct, proportionality in punishment, and observance of human rights would definitely be imperative to the Navy's quest

for operational effectiveness with the trust of its personnel. Workably effective punishment for discipline in the Nigerian Navy requires a system that is clear, fair, and a manifestation of concern for a positive organizational culture. Emphasizing reactive and proactive strategies will allow the Navy to enhance discipline without violating an atmosphere of trust and respect among its personnel. Ultimately, an effective disciplinary system lays the groundwork not only for correcting undesirable behaviors and maintaining a culture of professionalism and mutual respect but also crucially contributes to Navy success in mission performance. The findings are summarized below.

### Recommendations

From the above findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- 1) The institution should create elaborate training packages that stress morality, good behavior, and its significance, and sanctions for breach of conduct. It can be done by regular workshops and simulations to instill these values in the personnel.
- 2) There must be a proper system of mentorship whereby seniors will lead their junior fellow members. This will help in the free flow of information and standards are upheld through good role modelling.
- 3) It also recommends that "confidential channels" be established so that personnel may provide their opinions regarding the disciplinary process, on

concerns, and report fears of reprisal. The above shall increase transparency and accountability within the ranks. Conduct disciplinary framework tests to find rooms for improvement. This deals with

punishment administered and whether it is effective in bringing behavioral and moral changes, keeping the system attentive to the needs of personnel

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