

## ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES' STRIKE ACTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*The present study has investigated the role of academic staff union of universities' (ASUU) strike actions on students' academic activities in AAU, Ekpoma, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the influence of ASUU strike on students' academic activities in a State Public University in Nigeria. The study participants consist of 4,987 undergraduates of the 2023/2024 academic session. A sample of 350 students, representing 20 percent of the entire population was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, which was subjected to a content validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was performed using a split-half method. A Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to calculate the internal consistencies of the items in the instrument, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.78. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyzed the research question and test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that ASUU strike actions has a significant influence on students' academic activities in AAU, Ekpoma. The findings of the study further confirmed that strike actions destabilize the calendar of universities education in Nigeria. The disruption affects the followings, curriculum implementation, quality of lesson delivery, period of graduation, hampered students' performance and quality of education in the country. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that ASUU strike actions has a significant influence on students' academic activities.*

*Keywords: ASUU, Academic Activities, Strike, Students, Students Learning, State Public Universities*

### **Introduction**

Education is undoubtedly the greatest instrument which man has devised for his own progress. It is a salient tool or instrument for societal reconstruction, transformation, growth, sustainable development and the maintenance of good life. However, the dispute between Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Government has in one way or the other affected the goal of Education in Nigeria for over three decades. The persistent ASUU strikes in Nigeria have disrupted school academic activities, left academic activities of universities disjointed and distract the normal learning process (Kazeem & Ige 2015). The instability in school calendar through strike elongate study period and hamper their academic activities (Olusegun, 2019). Despite the importance of stability on school calendar, the incessant strikes action in the country has become worrisome and destabilized the programme of educational sector. Disruptions in academic programmes serve as non-motivational factor to the students, which discourages them from learning.

An effective learning or an enhanced academic performance is achieved by the successful covering of the course outline before the examination (Odubela, 2017). The quality and quantity of students' learning determined their individual study habit (Maliki & Ekpekin-Ekanem, 2016). During

strike actions, some students may engage themselves in unproductive activities such as sexual immorality, cyber scam, pool betting, playing video games, gossips, watching films and reading comic materials for entertainment purposes rather than reading the school notes. These strike actions always lead to disruption of academic calendar and programme, which may expose students to disjointed learning and encourage poor study habit among students (Erasmus, 2022). The idling young youths at home could cause security issues and problems (Arukaino, 2013). The way a stimulus excites or influences on an individual would trigger his/her responses (Isangedighi, 2016). These assertions are indications that students may lose the skill for preparedness and readiness to learn at the time of the strike. Hence, their educational attainment becomes hindered.

The disruption of academic programme occasioned by strike action breeds disappointment, frustration, emotional and psychological trauma, unpreparedness on the part of the students and lack of motivation, which sum up to a non-conducive environment for active learning in Nigerian Universities, a situation that dampens human development (Odubela, 2017). However, dedicated attention has not been given to the impact of strike actions on academic activities of students in Nigerian Universities. Public universities have become ineffective because of strike over the years. The aim of this present study was to examine the influence of ASUU strike on students' academic activities in a State Public University in Nigeria. The question bothering the authors of this present study at this juncture is that does ASUU strike have any influence on students' learning in a State Public University in Nigeria? The outcomes of this study could help the government to develop actions such as organizing meetings and interaction that could help the students in the development of more interests in academic activities. The findings of this study would provide policy makers a reference point in curriculum review as well formulate other educational policies where necessary.

### **Academic Staff Union of Universities**

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is recognized as Union whose primary assignments are instructional delivery, research and public service (Abiodun-Oyebanjo, 2015). The salient role and impact of academic staff in the development of higher institutions cannot be underestimated because they are the implementer of the instruction in education institutions (Ogunode, Jegede & Musa, 2021). Professional skills of academic staff include excellent interpersonal, oral/written communication skills; ability to conduct high quality research which is reflected in the authorship of high quality; publications, or other research outputs, in the areas of computer science; the ability to manage time and work to strict deadlines as well as the ability to teach, and of course, to supervise the academic work of Undergraduates, Masters, and Doctoral students (Ogunode, Jegede, & Musa, 2021).

The Academic Staff Union of Universities was formed in the year 1978. Its predecessor, the Nigerian Association of University Teachers was formed in 1965. ASUU covers all registered academic staff members in all the Public Federal and State Universities in the country. The union has been active in struggles against the military regime during the 1980s. In 1988, the union organized a national strike to obtain fair wages and University Autonomy. As a result, ASUU was proscribed on 7th August, 1988 and all its property seized. It was allowed to resume activities in 1990, but after another strike was again banned on 23rd August, 1992. However, an agreement was reached on 3rd September, 1992 that met several of the union's demands including the right of workers to collective bargaining. ASUU organized further strikes in 1994 and 1996, protesting against the dismissal of University academic staff by the Sani Abacha Military Regime.

### **Strike Actions**

Strike action is a period when no work is done because of disagreement over wage, promotion, hours of work or other conditions of employment (Idogho, 2016). It could be seen as an effort by employees to withhold work so that the employer will make greater concessions at the bargaining table. Strike action is a major bargaining weapon used by the labour union. It is varied from economic strike,

where the employees stop work until the demand for better condition of employment is met, to sit-down strike, where employees strike but remain at work place. Strikes are too often a weapon of first rather than last resort.

Strike is the refusal to work as protest for inadequate service or poor condition (Edinyang & Ubi, 2018). In the education sector, teachers' strike can be compared to students' examination malpractice, corruption and other social vices in the society. Strike is a social ill not different from corruption because it eats into students' time which makes it difficult for students to be fully and properly 'baked' within the designated educational time frame. As a result, graduates or 'products' that are ill-equipped in both character and learning are turned out to the society (Edinyang & Ubi, 2018).

Strike as a temporary stoppage of work aimed at forcing the employers to accept employees demand. It is a collective organized, cessation or slowdown of work by employees, to force acceptance of their demands by the employer. The legality of the strike action requires: approval by the majority of employees by ballot; independent verification to ascertain the majority support the vote; the notice of impending strike must be given to employer in advance; the employer must be provided with the result of the ballot; final notice to embark on the strike must be issued to the employer (Business Dictionary, 2015). Strike is the most visible and controversial form of collective action in the event of a labour dispute (International Labour Organisation, 2016).

Generally, ASUU uses strike as a means to force the Government to respect the demands of the Union. Almost all the past Heads of State and Presidents of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1988 and 2022 have been compelled by the ASUU through strike to meet their demands. Strike action is an endemic problem facing the administration of Public Universities in Nigeria (Ogunode, 2020). Nigerian Public Universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union groups within the system. The actions are frustrating the administration and efforts of Public Universities in Nigeria. The reasons for the strike actions by Union Groups included underfunding of the Public Universities, inadequate supply of infrastructural facilities, and poor implementation of agreements reached with union groups, and poor working conditions. Continuous strike actions in Public Universities has caused disruption in the academic programme, poor quality of education, bad image for universities, poor ranking internationally, and poor patronage of Public Universities in Nigeria.

### **Causes of Strike Actions in Public Universities**

There are many causes of strike actions in Nigerian Public Universities which includes: poor funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, the use of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), inconsistent payment of salaries, poor conditions of Service, political interference in University management, and poor implementation of agreements reached. Poor salaries and unstable payment of earned allowances is among the major reasons public university workers most times go on strikes (Ogunode, Ugochukwu, & Jegede, 2022; Ogunode & Ndayebom, 2022; Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran, 2022). ASUU developed and offered an alternative payment system, known as: The University Transparency Account System (UTAS) to meet the transparency and accountability requirements lacking in IPPIS. Poor conditions of service and lack of autonomy have also contribute to strikes in Nigerian Public Universities (Odim, Annastashia & Solomon, 2018). Another major causes of strike actions by different union groups in the Nigerian higher institutions are the non-implementation of the agreement reached with the government. But till date this agreement has not been honoured by successive Government (Lawan & Ogunode, 2021).

### **Academic Staff Union of Universities Strike Actions and Students Academic Activities**

Strike actions have great implication on academic research in education. Academic research is an integral aspect of education because of its role in revamping and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in education. Once there is incessant strike action, students and researchers may not be motivated to go into academic research. During this period, research students find it difficult to gain access to their

supervisors and to even find students to administer research instruments to. This has a way of negatively affecting the volume of research works and thereby leading to a state of comatose in education research. Incessant strike actions may not be too healthy for the equipment and facilities used in the teaching and learning.

What makes strike a nightmare is its frequency and on that note affects the academic year, which was already disrupted early in the year (Albert, 2015). It is pitiable how students are the scapegoat of the situation and nothing is done to salvage their conditions. Constant or incessant strike interfering with students' learning and education creates a systemic self-destruction mechanism in education and character building. The college cannot condone industrial action that will influence on the quality of our students' education (Crawford, 2018). Families are suffering and sharing in this distress. Mothers and wives are concerned about the present situation and the consequences to our children who will be leaders of tomorrow and the social and economic decline of our beloved country (Fatunde, 1996). It seems that everyone, even the system and society, have their share of the consequences of university strike in the long run. Obviously, when students are poorly educated at university level, they are ill equipped to assume leadership and are exposed to crime and dangerous conditions that will inevitably destroy the system. As a consequence, the system is generating uneducated-graduates within the system capable of self-destruction in the form of social chaos.

An academic institution disrupted with so many strikes cannot produce quality education. The time that is to be spent learn and carrying out research is spent in crisis and conflict, yet strikes take place more than once in every four years. While quoting the verdict of International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Governor of Ekiti State (one of the States in the South-West, Nigeria), recently lamented that a sizeable number of graduates in Nigeria are half-baked and un-employable in a formal employment setting. (Ige, 2018). This is a case of bad system producing a bad product. This however would continue to be the trend in Nigeria's higher education system as long as strikes continue to disrupt academic calendars and activities. Learning activities in Universities has been made irregular as students may have forgotten what they have learnt before the disruption of an academic session upon their resumption to school. Memory is lost if what is being learnt is not reactivated over time. Statistical reports have shown that majority of failures in University are recorded in examinations taken immediately after students return from a long break. The situation witnessed in the University academics has resulted in the turning out of half-baked graduates into the labour market. These half-baked produced cannot live up to expectation in their various chosen professions. However, several undergraduates die in road accidents during the period of the strikes in an attempt to visit friends to vitiate boredom and idleness (Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Iroegbu, 2022).

It is a well-established fact that education is geared towards skill acquisition; and for one to be efficient and proficient in the field of education, there must be functional equipment and facilities on ground. Once there is strike action, the equipment and facilities are abandoned and they are not maintained in line with the guidelines for maintaining equipment and facilities. Most of the facilities begin to wear out or depreciate. Some of these facilities need to be cleaned and oiled from time to time to avoid rusting or depreciation (Ogunode, Akinjobi & Musa, 2022).

### **Academic Staff Union of Universities Strike Actions and School Curricula**

The financial and other costs of university education in Nigeria treats to the future of literacy campaign in the country. Further, the recurrent strike actions by academic unions have discourages both current students and admission seekers. ASUU strike actions have usually affected the students in a number of ways. This includes but not limited to lack of opportunities to make up for lost times and inadequate implementation of curriculum (Adesulu, 2018).

Strike actions render both students and lecturers emotionally and psychologically unstable (Isangedighi, 2017; Ibrahim, 2015). Strike action usually prolongs students' academic years and most of the students end up missing the Federal Government Compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)

programme as a result of over age. ASUU strike usually has a culminating effect on programmes, and other important Bodies not limited to National Youths Service Corps (NYSC), Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC). The academic calendar on the other hand, does not get exhausted, learners become half-baked as a consequence, and in the end there is a mismatch between what the society demands from education and what education supplies to the society. This further has an effect on national development (Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Jegede, 2022).

Strike actions often times bring about disruption in the institution's academic calendar. Once there is strike action, it will give room for calendar adjustment which will inevitably affect the smooth running of Technical education programme in the country (Adesina, 2018). Once there is strike action, institutions/schools are forced to close down and there will be a temporary stoppage of teaching and learning activities in the concerned institutions. This temporary refusal of lecturers to work will in turn result in developing and redesigning new academic calendar in order to make up for the period. Due to this strike action, students may not be able to complete their academic work within the prescribed period as stated in the prospectus. For instance, a 4-year degree course may take more than 4 years due to the strike action as it is currently being experienced in the country. The skills acquired by education graduates are also greatly affected by the incessant strike actions in Nigeria (Edinyang & Ubi, 2018).

## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

The study employed the descriptive survey design to examine the influence of ASUU strike on students' academic activities in a State Public University in Nigeria. This survey design was considered appropriate because of opinions of a large sample was sought for in their natural context in order to solicit for inference.

### ***Participants and Sampling Procedure***

The study participants consist of all the 4,987 undergraduates of the 2023/2024 academic session (Source: The Academic Planning Unit). A sample of 350 students, representing 20 percent of the entire population was used for the study.

### ***Validation and Reliability of Research Instrument***

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection in the present study, which was accorded content validation. The reliability of the questionnaire was carried out using a split-half method. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to calculate the internal consistencies of the items in the instrument, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.78.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were dully administered on the respondents with the help of research assistants who were briefed on the procedure to follow. The questionnaire was filled and retrieved for data analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyzed the research question and test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results**

*Research Question:* Does ASUU strike influence students' learning in AAU, Ekpoma?

**Table 1: Influence of ASUU strike on Students’ Learning in AAU, Ekpoma**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike may affect students’ academic activities	21 (6%)	220 (62.9%)	9 (2.6%)	10(2.9%)
2	Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike could hinder students quality learning	230 (65.7%)	19(5.4%)	2(0.6%)	9(2.6%)
3	Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike may encourage poor study habit among students	2 (0.6%)	240 (68.6%)	10(2.9%)	8(2.3%)
4	Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike can affect conducive environment for active learning	188(53.7%)	60(17.1%)	3(0.9%)	9(2.6%)
5	Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike can affect effective learning process	5 (1.4%)	245(70%)	5(1.4%)	5(1.4%)
6	Incessant strike actions may increase to stress level on lecturers for quality teaching and learning.	42 (12%)	200 (57.1%)	11(3.1%)	7(2%)
7	Incessant strike action may lead to poor education quality.	62 (17.7%)	188(53.7%)	7(2%)	3(0.9%)
8	Incessant strike may hinder motivation for academic research	197 (56.3%)	53 (15.1%)	3(0.9%)	7(2%)

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree,

Table 1 showed that frequencies and percentages of responses on influence of ASUU strike on students learning in AAU, Ekpoma. Result reveals that that respondents were of the opinion that ASUU strike may affect students’ academic activities (94.0%); ASUU strike could hinder students quality learning (87.4%); ASUU strike may encourage poor study habit among students (89.2%); ASUU strike can affect non-conductive environment for active learning (95.2%), ASUU strike can affect effective learning process (94.4%); incessant strike actions may increase to stress level on lecturers for quality teaching and learning (96.2%) and incessant strike may hinder motivation for academic research.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

*Research Hypothesis:* ASUU strike does not significantly influence on students’ learning in AAU, Ekpoma, was tested at 0.05 confidence level of significance.

**Table 2: Linear Regression on the Significant Influence of ASUU Strike on Students’ Learning in AAU, Ekpoma.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	Sig.
ASUU Strike					
	260	3.1707	0.32	259	0.063
Students’ Learning					

One sample t-test applied to find out if ASUU strike has influence on students learning activities in AAU, Ekpoma. As  $P < \alpha$  value of P (0.063) is higher than the level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), so our null hypothesis that ASUU strike has no significant influence on students learning in AAU, Ekpoma is rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that AAU strike has a significant influence on students' learning in AAU, Ekpoma.

### Discussions

The result showed that ASUU strike actions has a significant influence on students' academic activities in AAU, Ekpoma. This finding agreed with the study of Odubela (2017), who stated that an effective learning of students is achieved by successful covering of the course outline timely and before the examination. This is rarely achieved with strike action in place. This is true because disruption in academic programme caused by strike action breeds disappointment, frustration, emotional and psychological trauma, unpreparedness on the part of the students and lack of motivation, which sum up to non-conducive environment for effective academic activities in Nigerian universities; a situation that dampens human development.

### Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that ASUU strike has a significant influence on students' academic activities in AAU, Ekpoma. The study confirmed that strike actions destabilized calendar of universities education in Nigeria. The disruption affected the followings: curriculum implementation, quality of lesson delivery, period of graduation, hampered students' performance and quality of education in the country. Strike actions make planning for universities' academic and nonacademic activities to be very difficult. Everyone must play his or her role by abiding to agreements signed. Educational managers face the challenge of re-planning educational activities, re-preparing the school calendar, reassigning old task to new staff and not achieving certain long term goals due to the prolonged un-accomplishment as a result of the strike.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should ensure that all agreements signed and reached with the ASUU in public universities were implemented as agreed.
2. The ASUU members in public universities should embrace Productive Dialogue rather than employing strikes to resolve issues at stake

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