COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INCESSANT STRIKE BY ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES ON STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: SELECTED UNIVERSITIES AS A FOCAL POINT

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Abstract

This paper presents an Analysis of Incessant Strikes by Academic and Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities on students Academic Performance in Nigerian Universities: Selected Universities in Nigeria As A Focal Point. The history of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)'s strike can be traced back to 1978, the period of the beginning of the decline in the oil boom, when the country faced the consequences of the failure by its rulers to use the oil wealth to generate production and a social welfare system. This time around, it takes a different dimension in the history of strikes in Nigeria with all the unions jointly embarking on strike just to drive home their numerous demands for better conditions of services and revitalization of Universities. Military dictatorship had eroded deeply the basic freedoms in the society. Academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of military dictatorship. The funding of education, and some of universities, became poorer. The factors required a changed orientation of the unions. Comparative Analysis of strikes by Academic and Non-Academic Staff Unions in Universities with particular reference to the selected Universities in Nigeria were brought to the fore while the objectives of the study are well spelt out. Hypotheses were postulated and the Group Theory was used to explicate the works. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. From the primary sources, the survey method, that is, the use of questionnaire designed and adopted. Data obtained from this method were analyzed with the aid of Simple Percentage. Thereafter, the five researchable hypotheses were tested and accepted while the null hypotheses were rejected. The implication is that there was relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made that adequate measures should be put in place by government and all the stakeholders of Academic and Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities etc to check incessant strike in the educational system; and conclusively that government owned Universities should emulate private school owners by avoiding strikes and intensify efforts to convince ASUU on the evils of strikes to see that students would have enough time to study so that they can be able to face challenges

in the Labour Market. This paper painstakingly appraises several of these issues and concludes that all stakeholders in the Education sector and federal polity should thread softly, be objective, rational, altruistic and magnanimous in order not to make the existence of true federalism (social, political, educational and economic cohesive existence of the people, peace and tranquility) a fleeting illusion and a mirage.

Keywords: Nigerian Universities, Labour Unions, Incessant Strikes, Students, Academic Performance.

Introduction

Nigeria sovereign nation, more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the neglect of education for Nigerian citizens in nation building, as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, political assassinations, religious conflicts and federalism coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal acts (Uhunmwuangho and Epelle, 2011). The situation is worsened by the increasing number of unemployed Nigerians some of whom are ready recruits for criminal activities (Nigerian Tribune, 2002). The above statement from an editorial comment by a national daily in Nigeria indeed epitomises the central focus of this paper, the aim of which is to analyze the importance of education to democratic sustainability in Edo State in particular and Nigeria in general.

The history of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)'s strike can be traced back to 1978, the period of the beginning of the decline in the oil boom, when the country faced the consequences of the failure by its rulers to use the oil wealth to generate production and a social welfare system. Military dictatorship had eroded deeply the basic freedoms in the society. Academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of military dictatorship. The funding of education, and some of universities, became poorer. The factors required a changed orientation of the staff unions, from 1980. Asia's orientation became radical, more concerned with broad national issues, and stood firmly against oppressive, undemocratic policies of the country (UNIBEN Strategic Plan , 2010).

However, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and the Non Academic Staff Union (NASU) has directed its members in public universities to continue with the ongoing industrial action. JAC in a circular to branch chairmen of SSANU and NASU signed by National President of SSANU, Mohammed Ibrahim and General Secretary of NASU, Peters Adeyemi, dated April 8th, 2022, directed members to continue with the warning for another two weeks. Recall that the two non-teaching staff in the Nigerian University System (NUS) on Monday, March 2022, directed its members to commence two weeks warning strike in the first instance. JAC said the decision to extend the warning strike to another two weeks is the non-invitation of the Federal Government to its leadership to a meeting since members embarked on industrial action (Gbenga, 2022). Another reason for the extension of the strike to two weeks, JAC said is the statement credited to the Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Chris Ngige, that the Federal Government would implement the "no work, no pay to non-teaching staff.

AS public universities in the country remain closed, the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, has told the Federal Government to respect the Collective Bargaining Agreements it signed with

unions in tertiary institutions and other sectors. It also lamented that majority of the affected students in the ongoing strike embarked upon by the four university-based unions are children from poor homes whose parents cannot afford to pay the outrageous fees charged by private universities. The labour movement also demanded that government ensures the swift and safe return of all abductees in the Abuja-Kaduna bound train attack and also payment of compensation for all those killed and injured in the attack (Gbenga, 2022).

The general economic downturn of the 1980s resulted in instability and financial inadequacy for the Nigerian educational system. Crisis between 1979-1999 led to several work stoppages. Regular occurrences include unpaid teachers' salaries, the degeneration of educational facilities and infrastructure at all levels and the attendant common place strikes across all tiers of Nigeria education system. Poor financial investment has generally been seen as the plague of Nigerian education system so much so that budgeting allocation has been very low compared to other sectors. The effect of the poor funding on students, apart from fear of increase in tuition fee or its introduction in federal university is that they are mostly ill equipped for self-employment and or entrepreneurship in a context where limited jobs exist to absorb them in the nation. The poor quality of many Nigerian university graduates has accelerated. As a result, there is high unemployment amongst graduates especially in fields such as engineering. There is also concern about the lack of recognition of Nigerian degrees by overseas universities (UNESCO, 2010).

The above statement led to incessant closures in academic institution in Nigeria, the effect of these repeated closures of schools and academic programmes on students' learning effectiveness can better be imagined than described. Tertiary education in Nigeria has thus suffered tremendous setbacks as a result of strikes by both the ASUU and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (SSANU). This has always subjected the students to pitiable conditions, disrupting academic programs, giving students' undeserved extension in their study years, poor students' concentration, performance on academic programmes and poor lecturer-student relationships amongst others. Consequently, students' academic performance has comparatively become so low while various forms of examination malpractice are on the increase (Ebi, 2017).

University worldwide is regarded as the citadel of learning, the fountain of intellectual development and a ground for the production of leaders of tomorrow. According to Fafunwa (1999) a university fulfills, one major function, it is a knowledge and value provider, in other words, a university progresses when it is able to provide knowledge and value and when it is not properly managed by the administrators and staff, it then fails in its function of providing knowledge for service and value. Accordingly this explains why merit has been the watchword in the university system, an institution in which a student must first be certified worthy in character and learning before being admitted into the Honours' Degree.

Statement of the Problem

It is not difficult to see that our country is brimming with frustrated young men and women. The more desperate among them form cult, kidnapping and armed robbery groups and take it out on the society. Sadly, their victims are not in a position to make things better for them. You are looking at the unacceptable face of a monumental national scandal. There are so many

institutions but very few opportunities for the training of our leaders of tomorrow. The problem is that the big people do not see this as a major national scandal. The majority of students in most of the higher institutions in the West African sub-region are Nigerians. These are the young men and women whose parents can afford to parcel them off every year to more educationally salubrious institutions of higher learning. If they do not do that, their children and wards would remain here and be subjected to the yearly trauma of taking JAMB and IJMB (Guardian, 2017).

We have neglected education at the peril of our nation. We may continue to pretend that all is well. But a nation that lives a lie lives to regret it in the long term. Millions of Nigerian university students especially those attending public citadels of higher learning are celebrating Easter outside the precincts of their campuses not by reason of choice but because our country cut short their hopes. The inability of the government to deliver on commitments it reached with our university workers both academic and non-academic has ensured that the streak of instability battering and buffeting our tertiary education system remains unresolved (Gbenga, 2022).

It is even most tragic that majority of the affected students are children from poor homes whose parents cannot afford to pay the outrageous fees charged by private universities. Tragically, while students from poor homes are held back by frustrating cycles of strike actions, the children of the rich and powerful are in private campuses learning. There is no sadder premiere of the Social Apartheid in our society than the intermittent and protracted strike actions in our public universities.

In 2017, the National Universities Commission (NUC) released list of approved Nigerian universities which shows that Nigeria has 152 Universities distributed as follows:

S/No.	Universities	Number
1.	Federal Universities	40
2.	State Universities	44
3.	Private Universities	68
	TOTAL	152

TABLE ONE: Number of Universities in Nigeria

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Furthermore, the Federal Government through the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the establishment of 12 new private universities across the country on April, 6, 2022. The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed made this known to Newsmen recently. He listed the benefiting States to include: Niger, Kano, Gombe, Delta, Abia, Anambra and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Gbennga, 2022). Moreover, there are concerns on whether it is a good move by the Federal Government since the Academic Staff and other staff unions of universities are on strike since February 14, 2022.

The authors of this paper is willing to bet that since the Commission released these details, more universities must have been approved by the Executive Council of the Federation, thus shooting up the numbers. Anyone looking at these numbers would be proud to be a Nigerian.

Our country is not, God be praised, big for nothing. It has put its wealth where its heart is – Universities wise. It has more Universities than the universities in all the countries in the West African sub-region combined. However, in sheer numbers, our country has eclipsed all African countries in the establishment of universities. It means, obviously, that Nigeria turns out more university graduates every year than do all African countries, north and south of the Sahara put together (Ajetomobi and Ayanwale, 2015).

Unfortunately, the numbers do not tell the full facts about university education in our country. The facts of our situation are less impressive. And it is a source of cold shame, not of warm pride. Take case number one. The university teachers, under the aegis of their union, ASUU, are back in the trenches, fighting an old battle over their welfare, poor staffing and a learning and teaching environment that is anything but conducive to teaching, research and learning. They labour under difficult conditions. Of the 152 universities, only a handful, according to the experts, do really qualify to be the citadels of learning. It is no secret that when the commission visits the universities to accredit courses, the university authorities hire and handsomely pay qualified men and women from overseas universities to present themselves as staff of the universities. They leave immediately the NUC Accreditation Panel leaves (Ita, 2017).

Consequently, we have not shown the courage to admit that our education is in serious crisis. Instead, we choose to pretend that all is well. We are jolted out of this ill-advised complacency only when the university teachers, the men and women who are saddled with the burden of teaching and researching in a difficult environment, drop their chalks and stay home, leaving their students to an uncertain fate. The failure by the Federal Government to negotiate seriously on the conditions in the universities led to the 1992 strike declared by NEC on May 14, 1992 and suspended after one week because of an Industrial Arbitration Panel (AIP) order for immediate suspension of the strike. Although the IAP ordered both sides to the negotiating table, Government did not resume negotiation. ASUU resume its strike immediately on July 20, 1993. ASUU was banned for a second time on August 23, 1992. ASUU had the support of the public, the professional organizations, NANS, etc. When all the tactics to break the strike failed the Federal Government had to devise a way of negotiating with a banned union. This took place between the Federal Governments Team led by Owelle Chikelu, the Minister of Establishment and Management Services, and representatives of ASNU (Academic Staff of Nigerian Universities) (Baike, 2017)

The incessant industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and all these industrial unions has inadvertently affected the academics of university students; it usually poses a lot of challenges to their study duration, performance in examinations and their final grading. The students are kept away from school for a long time; most of them are completely cut off from academics as conditions at home may not favour productive and rigorous academic exercise. The students and their parents become frustrated because of long expectation of school resumption that is far from sight. Some of the students while at home doing nothing get engaged in other things other than academics. In some cases they are easy recruits for criminal activities, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and rape and on the other hand encourage cultism. This has made them a problem to the society peace and order in

Nigeria. It is against this background that the following hypothetical questions needs to be answered (UNIBEN Convocation Speech, 2011).

- 1. What is the concept of ASUU in academic administration in Nigeria?
- 2. What are the causes of frequent ASUU strike in Nigerian Universities?
- 3. Who are the most affected whenever there is strike in Nigeria universities?

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives are:

- 1. To ascertain if inadequate funding hinders effective University administration in Nigeria.
- 2. To examine whether strikes has influence on reading habits of students in Nigerian Universities.
- 3. To investigate the impact of incessant strike on academic performance of students in Nigerian Universities.
- 4 To ascertain the problems associated with the implementation of agreement between ASUU, SSANU and Federal Government.
- 5. To examine whether strike have direct influence on students' overall academic performance.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

- 1. There is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and University administration in Nigeria.
- 2. There is no significant relationship between strike and reading habits of students in Nigerian Universities.
- 3. There is no significant relationship between the impact of incessant strike and academic performance of students in Nigerian Universities.
- 4. There is no significant relationship between the problems associated with the implementation of ASUU, SSANU agreement and the Federal Government,
- 5. There is no significant relationship between direct influence and overall academic performance.

Theoretical Exposition

The particular theories that can sufficiently act as a guide for the analysis of issues in this paper are Pluralist and Unitarianism theories. Each theory offers a particular perception of workplace relations and will therefore interpret such events as workplace conflict, the role of unions, strike or industrial action and job regulation differently.

(a) Pluralist Theory

Pluralist theory tends to see conflict as inherent in workplaces. In pluralism, the organization is perceived as being made up of powerful and divergent sub-groups, each with its own legitimate loyalties and with their own set of objectives. In particular, the two predominant sub-groups in the pluralist perspective are the management and trade unions (Moja, 2017). Consequently, the role of management would lean less towards enforcing and controlling and more toward persuasion and co-ordination. Trade unions are deemed as legitimate representatives of employees; conflict is dealt by collective bargaining and is viewed not

necessarily as a bad thing and, if managed, could in fact be channeled towards evolution and positive change. The theory of pluralism is a by-product of the concern of bourgeois oriented social scientists for "democratic" and "stable" political institutions in the face of the threats posed to the continued survival of capitalist democracies (parliamentary or military dictatorship) by the pressures of the struggles of the deprived working masses. The Pluralist doctrine is therefore a political theory which seeks to redress the shortcomings of a capitalist political order with a view to prevent its overthrow and safeguard the status-quo, (Natufe, 2006).

(b) Unitarianism Theory

In Unitarianism theory, the organization is perceived as an integrated and harmonious whole with the ideal of "one happy family", where management and other members of staff all share a common purpose, emphasizing mutual cooperation. Furthermore, unitarianism has a paternalistic approach where it demands loyalty of all employees, being predominantly managerial in its emphasis and application, (Morgan, 2018). Conflict is perceived the pathological result of agitators, interpersonal friction and communication breakdown. The unitary approach posits the least amount of conflict. The unitary approach sees no conflict except as a pathological condition. This approach does not accept that there is any intrinsic conflict involving industry, labour and society. It sees industrial actions as a harmonious means of organizing society under normal circumstances. Unitary theory disputes that there is a meaningful role for conflict in the workplace. Unitarianism posit that management should set the rules and workers should cooperate in complying with the rules. Conflict is seen as disruptive. Managers and workers share a common interest and there is no need for "third party" interventions, (Ekong, 2011).

The goal of the Unitarianism is to domesticate the whole of the social unit under his control (Hinchcliffe, 2012). The unitarist ruler alone can determine how society is to be organized, what the goals should be and what changes are desirable. Sectarian agitations/activity by workers, students, peasants, professionals, market women, etc., can only dissipate the national will and energy.

Literature Review

Several scholars have written on the Analysis of Strike on the Academic Performance of Students in Universities in Nigeria. However, we shall review few of them as follows:

(a) Negative Influence of Strikes

By allowing the university teachers to embark on an indefinite strikes before opening any serious dialogue with their union, an erroneous impression is created that the government is impervious to dialogue and negotiations and that the only language it understands is strongarm tactics – militancy in the Niger Delta or paralyzing Industrial Action by ASUU and other organized labour. Therefore a major lesson from the strikes is the yawning absence of any institutionalized mechanism for industrial arbitration in the country (Guardian, 2017). During the period of strikes, students, as a result of their idleness and frustration, engage in deviant behavior like robbery, arson, rape, touting and constitute nuisance to the society. When they are apprehended, their academics are abruptly truncated. In the years past, the country had been made to suffer immense loss of brains to other countries. It is still happening, as a result

of their search for greener pastures. With this marginal loss, few remaining ones are inadequate to build up the academic performance of the students.

Learning 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 labor market. These half-baked produced cannot live up to expectation in their various chosen professions. However, several undergraduate students die in road accidents during the period of the strikes in an attempt to visit friends to vitiate boredom and idleness. There are however two seemingly positive effects (Adesina and Awosusi, 2015)..

(b) Positive Influence of Strikes

Strikes when moderately implemented are indicative of the positive human rights posture of government and that as a democracy; we give allowance for the labour law which empowers workers to express their grievances through strikes. It would appear that the major gains of the Nigerian university system in terms of improved conditions of service for staff and improvement in the physical conditions for teaching, learning and research have been attained as dividends of strikes. There is no university system in the world that has no strike history. However, in Nigeria it is at the extreme, with strikes lingering for months. In North America, Europe and Asia where the top-ranking universities are found, strikes last for a few hours or maximum of one day (Morgan, 2018).

However, this paper seeks to seek lasting solution to incessant strikes which have hampered good and perfect academic excellent in Nigerian Universities and academic performance by going further to examine the influence of strikes as a whole have on both reading, learning, memory and general performance of students in Nigerian Universities.

Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive survey method. The method was based on selected Unions in University of Benin in Edo State and University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The scope of the study is therefore restricted to only Two Unions of both University e.g. Academic and Non-Academic staff members which are the focal point. The population of the study consist of 1,054 respondents, base on two categories (Academic and Non-Academic) staff (see table one below). Out of this number, nine hundred and seventy one of them met our criteria and therefore form our sample size as can be seen in table one below:

S/No	Universities	Category of	No. of Returned	No. of Not	Total No. of
		Respondents	Questionnaires	Returned/Invalid	Sampled
				Questionnaires	Respondents
1.	University	Academic	420	31	
	of Benin	Non-	180	09	640
		Academic			
2.	University	Academic	230	26	
	of Ibadan	Non-	141	17	414
		Academic			
TOTAL			971	83	1,054

Source: Field Survey 2022

Both Primary and Secondary sources of data were explored in trying to generate data for this study The specific information required for the study was poor students academic performance, effect of strike on students academic performance, funding of higher educational institutions in Nigeria, poor reading habits of students among others. The questionnaire formed the main instrument used in generating primary data, while documented information on prints that are relevant to this study, constituted the secondary sources of data. To compliment the information received through the questionnaire, respondents were also interviewed. As the research is based on attitude and opinions, the statistical tools employed in analyzing responses include, tables and simple percentages. Out of the one thousand and fifty four copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, nine hundred and seventy one studied were duly completed and returned in a useable form. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Of all the nine hundred and seventy one respondents, eighty (47%) of them are married; fifty (29%) are single while twenty one (13%) are divorced and the remaining nineteen (11%) are either widow or widowers. Thirty (18%) of them are within the age bracket of 18 – 25, Fifty (29%) are between the age bracket of 26-35; while eighty (47%) are within the age bracket of 36-4+5 and the remaining forty six years and above are ten (6%).

TABLE 3: Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and University administration in Nigeria

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	670	65
No	301	35
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 3 above shows that 670 (65%) of the total respondents agreed that inadequate funding of Universities hinders poor academic performance of students conversely responsible for the dwindling academic activities in Nigeria.

Therefore, the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and University administration in Edo State is accepted.

TABLE 4: Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between strike and reading habits of students in Nigerian Universities.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	715	62
No	256	38
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 4 shows that 715 (62%) of the respondents agreed that strike and reading habits of students is responsible for students poor academic performance while 256 (38%) were not satisfied or disagreed.

TABLE 5: Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between the impact of incessant strike and academic performance of students in Nigerian Universities.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	740	71
No	230	29
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 5 shows that 740 (71%) of the respondents agreed that the impact of incessant strike contributed immensely to poor academic performance of students while 230 (29%) disagreed with the opinion.

Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between the impact of incessant strike and academic performance of students is accepted.

Findings based on Hypotheses

Based on the analysis of the hypotheses, all the research hypotheses were positive which implies that

(Hr) 1-3 were accepted.

More so, the study revealed that incessant strike in tertiary institution impacted positively on poor academic performance of students. However, the desire of every university student is to complete his or her academic programmes without any hitch, but as it turns out in contemporary Nigeria society, ASUU strikes have placed limitations on this aspiration, apart from the fact that the strikes elongate the study duration of university students, the performance of students in academic activities are hampered, so much so that good and brilliant students end up graduating with poor grades.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusively, this paper revealed that the epileptic academic calendar in Nigerian Universities, particularly University of Benin and University of Ibadan which are the focal points; is responsible for poor academic records as per the attestation in the hypothesis and findings of this paper,

Consequently, avoidable conflict between the government and ASUU must not be allowed to jeopardize the academics and future of Nigerian students. Education in Nigeria must be given its pride of place; the government must strive hard to meet the United Nation's minimum standard. Nigerian Universities cannot be locked up permanently and think ASUU/Non-Academic staff and government will move about comfortably.

Arising from the result of the analysis and the conclusion made there from, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- (a) Adequate measures should be put on ground by government and the Academic and Non Academic Staff Union of Universities and other stakeholders to check incessant strike in the educational system.
- (b) Academic and other Non-Academic staff of Universities should ensure that a cordial relationship exists between them and their employer.
- (c) Government owned Universities should emulated private school owners by avoiding strikes and intensify efforts to convince ASUU on the evils of strikes to see that students would have enough time to study so that they can be able to face challenges in the Labour Market.
- (d) There should be a strong forum put in place where the stakeholders (ASUU, SSANU, the Federal government, and management) meet and collaborate to identify and solve their concerns, instead of conducting strike action (Gbenga, 2022).
- (e) Nigerian universities and the education industry should receive increased funding from the Federal Government regularly.
- (f) The Federal Government should respect commitments and agreements.

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