**STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTION OF CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASUU STRIKE AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGEIRA: 1999-2022**

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**ABSTRACT**

*One of the ways workers expressed their displeasure to respective employer is through industrial action or strike as it is commonly called. This study investigated the causes and consequences of Academic Staff Union of Universities strike among public universities in Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised all the 91 public universities in Nigeria, the sample of the study was 400 stakeholders, comprising of lectures, students, parents, transporters, marketers, across all the public universities in the nation, who were selected using multistage sampling procedure of purposive and simple random sampling at their respective public universities. 400 respondents were sampled from twelve (12) universities where 33 respondents were selected from each university. ​The instrument for the collection of data for this study was a self-designed questionnaire titled “Stakeholders’ Perception of Prevalence, Causes and Consequences of ASUU Strike among Public Universities in Nigeria: 1999-2022 (SPCCASPUN)”. The questionnaire was in 5 points Likert’s scale, containing 24 items, validated via experts/professionals with the reliability of 0.87 obtained, using split-half method while the data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics of mean rating, percentage and t-test. Findings of the study revealed amongst others that poor budgetary allocation to education sector, failure of the federal government to honor their long-term agreement, staff bonuses, politicization of ASUU strike, revitalization of universities, etcetera are causes of ASUU strike while loss of interest in school to increased social vices, rush of academic programs, missing out on NYSC and other job opportunities, loss of sponsorship, among others are seen as the consequences. It was concluded that both government and ASUU should come to terms and resolve the issue once and for all to avoid future reoccurrence.*

**Keywords: Stakeholders, Perception, ASUU Strike, Public Universities, Nigeria.**

**Introduction**

Strike actions are seen as part of workers’ ways of expressing their displeasures. This could be due to poor payment, nonpayment, conditions of service or other misunderstandings between the employer and the employees. This could be done in different ways like displaying of placards, closing down of work places, going to work without working, amongst others. According to Santos (2014), strike can be defined as the cessation of work by a body of person employed and acting in combination or collective refusal or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of person employed to continue to work for an employer in consequence of a dispute, done as a means of completing their employer or any person or body or person employed, or to any person or anybody employed to accept terms of employment of and physical condition of work. Strike according to Chijioke (2013) is an organized work stoppage by a body of workers to enforce compliance with demands made on an employer or a group of employers. The aim is presumed to be calling on the employers’ attention towards the issue of concern. All over the world, developed and developing, workers in organizations exert their right of strike action. It is called industrial action in some parts of the world. The aim is not usually to delay or deny effectiveness in the system but to ensure effectiveness through remuneration, infrastructure, or other conditions of service. This system has been paying in several organisations in Nigeria, including the educational sector at all levels. This explains why all sectors, educational sector inclusive has unions who are saddled with such responsibility (Santos, (2014).

According to Luckson (2022), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was formed in 1978, to succeed the defunct Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT) which was formed in 1965 covering academic staff in the first generation universities: University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife and University of Lagos. The union saddled with the responsibility of fighting for the welfare of the academic staff of all universities in Nigeria. In the 1980s, the union was active in its struggles against the military regime. In 1988, the union organized a National industrial action to obtain fair wages and university autonomy. As a result, the ASUU was proscribed on August 7, 1988 and all its property seized. It was allowed to resume in 1990, but after another industrial action, it was again banned on August 23, 1992. However, an agreement was reached on September 3, 1992 that met several of the union's demands including the right of workers to collective bargaining. The ASUU organized further industrial actions in 1994 and 1996, protesting against the dismissal of staff by the Sani Abacha military regime. After the return to democracy in 1999 with the Nigerian Fourth Republic, the union continued to be ‘militant’ in demanding the rights of university workers against opposition by the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Presently, the union has members all over the federal and state universities of the nation. They have been employing the same strike action strategy to display their grievances since the return of democracy in 1999 till date and there can be said to have been results but their activities have not completely yielded a positive result hence their continuous, persistent and prevalent strike. PulseNg (2018) reported that ASUU have been on strike for a cumulative period of 3 years (36 months) between 1999 and 2018. That excludes the 6 months of strike in 2020 and 8 months strike in 2022. Accordingly, between 1999 and 2022, it can be said that ASUU have been on strike for 49 months (4 years 1 month). What is not clear is the reasons for these incessant and constant strike actions that are believed to have bedeviled the tertiary education sector. This present strike has sparked more concerns than ever before, leading to Bauchi state university female students threatening to protest half-naked (Luckson, 2022). Also, the federal government of Nigeria has shown its non-readiness by taking the ASUU to court on 9th September, 2022, awaiting hearing on 12th September 2022. The end result is that, ASUU were threatened to resume work but till date, the government is insistent on “no work no pay policy” that has left the union and its workers unpaid for the months which they were on strike. The government later withdrew the case and called for out of court settlement.

Below is a timeline of ASUU strike between the year 1999-2022; (i) 1999 after the end of the military era in 1999, Nigerians ushered in democracy and a government that promised to be people oriented. But it didn't take long for Nigerian students to experience a disruption in their academic pursuit. Few months after the Obasanjo-Atiku administration was sworn-in, ASUU embarked on a nationwide strike and it lasted for five months, (ii) 2001, in 2001, ASUU declared another strike demanding the reinstatement of 49 lecturers sacked at the University of Ilorin. The industrial action was aggravated when the then President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo described Nigerian university lecturers as "a bunch of lazy and ungrateful people" The strike was called off after three months, (iii) 2002 having had an agreement with the Federal Government during the previous strike, the union was forced to embark on another industrial action on Sunday, December 29, 2002, after the Obasanjo administration failed to implement the agreement. The strike lasted for only two weeks, (iv) 2003 in 2003, Nigerian university undergraduates had to stay at home again for six months as ASUU embarked on another industrial action due to the non-implementation of previous agreements, which covers poor university funding and disparity in salary and retirement age, (v) 2005 Nigerian university students again experienced another disruption in their academic calendars as universities lecturers went on another industrial action. According to the Guardian, the lecturers went on strike for just two weeks, (vi) 2006 in April 2006 academic activities were paralysed in all public universities across the country when ASUU declared a 3-day warning strike. It eventually lasted for one week. (vii) 2007 the 2006 industrial action was followed by another on March 26, 2007. The strike lasted for three months. The reasons for the strike were pretty much the same reasons for the previous strike. (viii) 2008 in a bid to press home its demands, ASUU went on strike for one week in 2008. The demands included an improved salary scheme and reinstatement of 49 lecturers who were dismissed at the University of Ilorin. (ix) 2009 in 2009, lecturers in public universities across the country embarked on an industrial action that lasted for four months. The strike which started in June was called off in October. Before the strike was called off, the Federal Government and the union had an agreement. The 2009 ASUU/FG agreement would later become the reason for subsequent industrial action. (x) 2010 the year 2010 also saw another setback for Nigerian university undergraduates in their academics as ASUU embarked on another indefinite strike that lasted for over five months. The strike started on 22 July 2010 and was called off in January 2011, (xi) 2011 since the government failed to honour its 2009 agreement to adequately fund universities in the country and implement the 70-year retirement age limit for ASUU members, the union again paralyzed academic activities nationwide in December 2011. The strike lasted for 59 days and was called off in 2012, (xii) 2013 again, the government's failure to review the retirement age for professors from 65 to 70; approve funding to revitalize the university system; increase the budgetary allocations to the education sector by 26% among other demands led to another industrial action. The strike was embarked upon on July 1, 2013, called off on Tuesday, December 17, 2013. It lasted for five months, 15 days, (xiii) another strike in 2014 lasted for five months (xiv) 2017 On August 17, 2017, ASUU again declared an indefinite strike over unresolved and contentious issues with the Federal Government. The strike was called off in September, (xv) 2018, due to the Federal Government's failure to meet its demands, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) declared an indefinite nationwide strike. The union announced the strike on Sunday, November 4, 2018, after their National Executive Council meeting held at the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, the strike lasted for three days (xvi) 2020, between March 2020 and November 2020, there was another strike action, despite the corona virus pandemic, (xvii) 2022, on 14th February, 2022, ASUU embarked on a 4 weeks warning strike, extended it to 2 months and later seemed to be the longest strike the union has ever embarked on since time immemorial, lasting for a period of eight (8) months, starting from February 14th to October 14th.

The bone of contention is, what is the major issue with ASUU or what has been ASUU’s struggle or quest and why has the present strike action sustained itself to this extent. Several stakeholders are left wondering whether it is as a result of accumulated deception by the federal government or the greed from within cabals from both the federal government and ASUU. Whichever, way, these prevalent and or incessant strikes have not totally gone well with the students, lecturers and the entire university community. Some of the acclaimed causes of ASUU strike include, staff bonuses, revitalization of universities, introduction of treasury single account (TSA), poor budgetary allocation to education sector, failure by the government to honour 2009 and 2013 agreement. Chukwudi and Idowu (2021) lamented that, university education has recorded incessant industrial action of Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) orchestrated largely due to a collapse of agreements between her and its employer, the federal or state governments in Nigeria, threatening the breeding of the needed manpower (Adamu & Nwogu, 2014).

Strike actions are detrimental to any society. Nigeria as a country should do well now as soon as possible to avoid the two (2) among several other dangerous cases of strike actions from occurring (Ardo, Ubandawaki, & Ardo, 2020): First, the Sierra Leone experience where youths joined the terrorist group due to the absent of quality education and Second, the ISIS recruitment records which reports shows 300 young members between 2013 and 2014 were students at the period of recruitment which are a major source of help for assigned domestic chores like cooking or as armed-fighters with some trafficked, kidnapped, and recruited forcibly while few others joined voluntarily on the bases of perception of divisiveness, exclusion, frustration, grievances, cultural threats, family or friends’ network. Furthermore, some of the observed effects of ASUU strike include loss of interest in continuing program***,*** lack of interest in Nigeria education system, hardship on both parents and students, poor academic performance/achievements, inequality, immorality and crime, unemployment, disruption of school calendar, (Chijioke, 2013; Ardo, Ubandawaki, & Ardo, 2020; Taiwo, 2022).

The effect of these repeated closures of schools and academic programs on students’ learning effectiveness can better be imagined than described (Chukwudi & Idowu, 2021) as tertiary education in Nigeria has thus suffered tremendous setbacks as a result of industrial actions by both the academic (ASUU) and the nonacademic staff. This has always subjected the students to pitiable conditions, disrupting academic programs, giving students’ undeserved extension in their study years, poor students’ concentration on academic programs and poor lecturer-student relationships amongst others (Adamu & Nwogo, 2014). Consequently, students’ academic performance has comparatively become so low while various forms of examination malpractice are on the increase. Others include abandoning of academic programs, loss of sponsorship, death, accidents, among others (Ardo, Ubandawaki, & Ardo, 2020). Taiwo (2022) noted the effects of ASUU strike to include spending extra or more years, poor employment pattern where age is an important consideration for entry-level jobs, dropping out or abandoning of school for jobs, illegal businesses like cyber-crime, gambling, fraudulent acts, etc, loss of over N1.5 trillion per annum to overseas studies, including neighbouring West African countries like Benin Republic, Ghana, Togo, among others who are not or were not on par with Nigeria.

Accordingly, this study is aimed at examining the prevalence of ASUU strike among public universities in Nigeria, specifically considering the causes and consequences.

**Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive survey method. To Daramola (2006), descriptive research survey is the systematic attempt to describe the characteristics of a given population or areas of interest factually. It looks a at phenomenon critically and describes it the way it is without any addition or reduction. That is, it avails the researchers the opportunity to determine and report phenomena the way they are, without altering the whole or any of it. Accordingly, the researcher feels the survey type of research is the most suitable for this study as it availed the researcher the full opportunity to describe the concept of *“Stakeholders’ Perception of Causes and Consequences of ASUU Strike among Public Universities in Nigeria: 1999-2022”* The population of the study comprised all the public universities in Nigeria. The sample of the study was 400 stakeholders, comprising of lectures, students, parents, transporters, marketers, across all the public universities in the nation, who were selected using multistage sampling procedure of purposive and simple random sampling to select the stakeholders at their respective public universities. Accordingly, 400 respondent (stakeholders) were sampled from twelve (12) universities: University of Ilorin, Federal University of Technology Minna, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Federal University of Nigeria Nsukka, Usman Danfodio University Sokoto, Federal University Ndufu-Alike, University of Maiduguri, University of Calabar, University of Benin, Federal University Kashere-Gombe, University of Lagos and University of Ibadan, where 33 respondents were selected from each university. **​**The instrument for the collection of data for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire titled *“Stakeholders’ Perception Causes and Consequences of ASUU Strike among Public Universities in Nigeria: 1999-2022 (SPCCASPUN)”*. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents physically and via google-form to gather the needed information from them. The questionnaire was in 5 points Likert’s scale of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Not Sure responses. The questionnaire contained twenty four (24) items on Stakeholders’ Perception of Prevalence, Causes and Consequences of ASUU Strike among Public Universities in Nigeria. The instrument was validated via experts/professionals in the field of measurement and evaluation, department of social sciences education, university of Ilorin, while the reliability of 0.87 was obtained, using split-half method. **​**The data collected for this study was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean rating and simple percentage.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Level** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Gender | Male | 257 | 64.5 |
|  | Female | 142 | 35.5 |
|  | **Total** | **399** | **100.0** |
| Age | 18-27yrs | 158 | 39.6 |
|  | 28-37yrs | 129 | 32.2 |
|  | 38-47yrs | 96 | 24.2 |
|  | 48 and above | 16 | 4.0 |
|  | **Total** | **399** | **100.0** |
| Occupation | Drivers/business men | 101 | 25.3 |
|  | Students | 111 | 27.8 |
|  | Farmers | 38 | 9.5 |
|  | Lecturers | 85 | 21.3 |
|  | Fishermen | 26 | 6.5 |
|  | Others | 38 | 9.5 |
|  | **Total** | **399** | **100.0** |
| Highest Edu. Qualification | Nill | 44 | 11.0 |
|  | Primary | 71 | 17.8 |
|  | SSCE | 94 | 23.6 |
|  | OND/NCE | 78 | 19.5 |
|  | HND/Degree/above | 112 | 28.1 |
|  | **Total** | **399** | **100.0** |
| Marital Status | Single | 159 | 39.9 |
|  | Married | 178 | 44.6 |
|  | Divorced | 26 | 6.5 |
|  | Separated | 36 | 9.0 |
|  | **Total** | **399** | **100.0** |

Table 1 above shows the demographic characteristics of respondents who participated in the study. The respondents whose opinions were sampled included students, businessmen/drivers, lecturers, farmers, fishermen and others whom all form part of the university community. From the above 257 respondents and 142 respondents, representing 64.5% and 35.5% respectively are male and female respectively, 158 (39.6%) and 129 (32.2%), 96 (24.2%) and 16 (4.0%) are aged between 18-27, 28-37, 38-47 and 48 above respectively, signifying that majority of them are of school and viable working age who are always working within the university either directly or indirectly. It was also shown that 11 (27.8%) are students, 101 (25.35%) are students and traders while 85 (21.3%) are lecturers while the remaining are fishermen, farmers and other occupations who have their children or wards in the universities or may themselves be in the university. Also, 112, 94, 78 and 71 of the respondents, representing 28.1, 23.6, 19.5 and 17.8% respectively are either parents or students who are aiming to further their education. And lastly, majority of the respondents are married 178 (44.6) and single 159 (39.9), meaning they are likely to be parents and students who the strike may affect negatively

**Table 2: Rank Order of the causes of ASUU Strike**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Item/Statement on Causes of ASUU Strike** | **Mean** | **Ranking** |
| 1 | Poor budgetary allocation to educational sector | 3.74 | 1st\* |
| 2 | Constant changes in ASUU leadership | 2.49 | 8th |
| 3 | Lack of funds from the government | 2.36 | 13th |
| 4 | Introduction of treasury single account (TSA) | 2.49 | 8th |
| 5 | Proliferation of private universities | 2.49 | 8th |
| 6 | Failure of the government to honour their agreements | 3.66 | 2nd\* |
| 7 | Greed from ASUU leaders/members | 2.32 | 14th |
| 8 | Revitalization of Universities | 3.59 | 5th\* |
| 9 | Staff bonuses | 3.64 | 3rd\* |
| 10 | Politicization of ASUU/strike | 3.63 | 4th\* |
| 11 | Unrealistic demands by ASUU | 2.37 | 12th |
| 12 | Poor negotiation/disregard for education sector | 3.54 | 6th\* |
| 13 | Accomplishing Boko Haram Agenda (Education is a Crime) | 2.45 | 11th |
| 14 | Misplacement of Priorities by the government | 3.54 | 6th\* |

**Key:** 2.50 – 4.0 = Cause; 0.01 – 2.49 = Not a Cause

*Source: Field Study, 2022*

Table 2 above shows rank ordering of the causes of ASUU strike among public universities in Nigeria. It is evident that poor budgetary allocation to education sector is the prime cause of the strike, followed by failure of the federal government to honor their long-term agreement, staff bonuses, politicization of ASUU strike, revitalization of universities, and misplacement of priorities by the government or disregard for educational sector. Accordingly, other reasons like accomplishing Boko-Haram ambition, unrealistic demands by ASUU, lack of funds from the federal government and greed from ASUU leaders/members as seen above are not regarded as main causes of the incessant ASUU strike in public universities by to the respondents.

**Table 3: Rank Order of the consequences of ASUU strike**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Item/Statement on Consequences of ASUU Strike** | **Mean** | **Ranking** |
| 1 | Loss of interest in school to join illegal businesses like cyber-crime, gambling, fraudulent acts | 3.87 | 1st\* |
| 2 | Hardship on both parents and students | 2.63 | 9th\* |
| 3 | Rush of academic activities/calendar | 2.59 | 11th\* |
| 4 | Loss of sponsor/sponsorship | 3.35 | 6th\* |
| 5 | Poor employment pattern where age is an important consideration for entry-level jobs | 3.27 | 7th\* |
| 6 | Drop out of school due to increased cost | 2.81 | 8th\* |
| 7 | Additional/extra or undeserved extension of study years | 2.61 | 10th\* |
| 8 | Death/loss of lives in accidents other activities | 2.55 | 12th\* |
| 9 | Increased social vices like armed robbery, kidnapping, etc | 3.73 | 2nd\* |
| 10 | Delayed marriage/early marriage | 2.47 | 14th |
| 11 | Missing out on job and other opportunities | 2.44 | 13th\* |
| 12 | Missing out on NYSC service year | 3.42 | 5th\* |
| 13 | Cancellation of academic sessions | 3.69 | 3rd\* |
| 14 | Poor academic performance/achievements leading to half-baked graduates | 3.49 | 4th\* |

**Key:** 2.50 – 4.0 = Consequence; 0.01 – 2.49 = Not a Consequence

*Source: Field Study, 2022*

Table 3 above shows that, only delayed marriage is not consequence of ASUU strike, with all other 13 items agreed by the respondents to be consequences, ranging from loss of interest in school to increased social vices, rush of academic programs, missing out on NYSC and other job opportunities, loss of sponsorship, among others as seen in the above table.

**Discussion**

Findings of the study revealed among others that: poor budgetary allocation to education sector is the prime cause of the strike, followed by failure of the federal government to honor it long-term agreement, staff bonuses, politicization of ASUU strike, revitalization of universities, and misplacement of priorities by the government or disregard for educational sector (Odim, Iwang and Solomon, 2018). Accordingly, other reasons like accomplishing Boko-Haram ambition, unrealistic demands by ASUU, lack of funds from the federal government and greed from ASUU leaders/members as seen above are not regarded as main causes of the incessant ASUU strike in public universities. This is in tandem with the findings of Chijioke (2013) and Chukwudi and Idowu (2021) who lamented the collapse of tertiary education sector due to failure of the government to fulfill her promises with her employees. Ardo et al (2020) sees failure from the side of the government as a reason from the incessant strikes in public universities in Nigeria.

Another finding of the study revealed that, only delayed marriage is not consequence of ASUU strike, with all other 13 items agreed by the respondents to be consequences, ranging from loss of interest in school to increased social vices, rush of academic programs, missing out on NYSC and other job opportunities, loss of sponsorship, among others. This finding corroborates the findings of Santos, (2014), Ardo, Ubandawaki, & Ardo, (2020) Luckson (2022) and Taiwo (2022) who in separate studies observed that ASUU strike has grave consequences on the growth and development of the nation as well as the personal wellbeing of individuals in all sector of the economy and wellbeing of the country.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded among others that parents, students, and other stakeholders as well as well-meaning Nigerians are all concerned about the incessant ASUU strike in public universities and the hardship it has been melting on the general public. No sector of the Nigerian economy would claim not to be affected by these incessant strikes, especially the just concluded one that lasted for 8 months between February 14th and October 14th where the academic staff are yet to be settled by the federal government for the eight (8) months salaries they were owed during the striking period. It is better for the government and ASUU to come to terms and resolve once and for all pending issues with a view to avoid future reoccurrence and allow the public university students to have a suitable learning atmosphere, devoid of strike as does their counterparts in private owned universities..

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Government should meet the demands of ASUU that they’ve enter into agreement with over the years..
2. Students, parents and well-meaning Nigerians should also join forces in fighting for the course and betterment of university education in Nigeria
3. The consequences of ASUU strike are grave, not only to the lecturers or the students as such be avoided by all means by both the government and the lecturers.

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