

Impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' (Asuu) Dispute on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) Dispute on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The importance of this topic is that if ASUU strike is duly utilised, it might yield the following possible outcomes: boost the productivity of staff, provision of standardised infrastructural facilities, establishment of standard universities across Nigeria, improved staff welfare, swift remittance of research grants to the various benefitting bodies, swift remittance of academic earned allowance, increase in salaries and increase in education budgetary allocation and change of academic staff union of universities' payment platform, among others. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was 1,775 academic staff. The Sample size for the study was 326 academic staff. This size was determined by using Taro Yamen Formula for Sample size determination. Multi-stage sampling was used to select the sample at different stages. The instrument used was IASUUDMPUQ Questionnaire. This was used to collect data from the respondents comprising academic lecturers, particularly in the area of university autonomy, funding, and working conditions. A four-point scale was used to answer the research questions. T-test statistic was used to test hypotheses 1 – 3 at significant level of 0.05. The major findings of the study revealed that the universities' ability to employ their staff improves their administrative effectiveness. Universities' ability to determine their own content of courses ensures smooth instructional delivery, and universities' ability to select areas of research based on the school's original blueprint enhances school administration. Also, the findings revealed that ASUU's ability to enforce government to pay salaries of university employees influences the administration of public universities. ASUU's ability to enforce government to improve academic research and development enhances universities' administration, and ASUU's ability to enforce government to purchase instructional resources for classrooms influences the administration of public universities. The findings further revealed that non-payment of earned allowances to academic staff hampers

effective administration of public universities, non-provision of working equipment/teaching, research, and community service to academic staff negatively affects the administration of public universities, and non-payment of backlog of salary after strike actions affects academic staff empowerment negatively. Based on the findings of the study, further researches proposed include Impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' Dispute on the Management of Private Universities in North Central Nigeria and Influence of Academic Staff Union of Universities' Dispute on the Administration of Public Universities in South Eastern Nigeria.

Keywords: University Autonomy, Funding, Conditions of Service, and Management of Public Universities.

Introduction

Nigeria's ability to realise her vision of becoming one of the largest twenty economies in the world by the year 2023 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform her population into highly skilled and competent citizens capable of competing globally. The education sector is consequently special to the actualisation of the current national and global policy objectives. Nigeria wants to use education as a tool for fostering developments of all Nigeria's citizens to their full potential in the promotion of a strong, democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible, and indissoluble sovereign.

Dispute refers to workers' refusal to work as protest for inadequate service or poor conditions of service (Edinyang & Ubi, 2013). Amadi and Precious (2015) state that strike is an aspect of industrial conflict used by workers to express their grievances. It is a collective, organised, cessation, or shutdown of work by employees to force acceptance of their demands by the employers. According to Badekale et al (2016), the causes of industrial dispute in Nigerian universities with the staff unions include factors related to university autonomy, poor funding, poor working conditions, proliferation of universities when the existing ones are not adequately taken care of. Other factors are deterioration of academic facilities and failure on the part of the Government to renegotiate the 2009 to attainable terms. This journal will however focus on university autonomy, poor funding, and poor working conditions.

University autonomy refers to the right of universities to govern themselves without external control (Mukoro, 2013). It therefore denotes self-governance or independence and academic freedom of universities to pursue their work within the limit of the law establishing them. University autonomy here refers to the freedom to employ their own staff, admit their students, determine the balance between teaching and research, establish and maintain their own standard without any external interference. In the researcher's opinion, autonomy allows the university to stand as an independent legal structure without undue interference from Government and its respective agencies. Closely related to the problem of autonomy is the issue of funding.

Funding is a system of apportioning available capital belonging to an Organisation for meeting a need (Matthew, 2016). Funding refers to a form of financial support that is given for the achievement of a project (Odoziobodo, 2015). Funding therefore is the provision of financial resources in order to meet a need, project, or programme. Arikewuyo (2010) reported that since the advent of democracy in 1999, funding of education dropped from 11.12% to 1.18% in 2003. Ololube (2016) reported that unlike Nigeria, which spends an average of 1.1% of its GDP on education, other countries like Ghana spends 3.6%, Kenya

(6.2%), and Zimbabwe (9.5%). The effect of poor funding is evidenced in the brain drain, a phenomenon that has seriously depleted universities in Nigeria. The country has lost most of its experienced academics to even smaller African countries, such as Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, to mention a few. Poor funding has a multiplier effect on the working conditions of staff.

Working condition refers to the working environment and aspects of an employer's terms and conditions of employment. This covers such matters as the organisation or work and work activities relating to training, skills, and employability, health, safety and wellbeing, working time, and work life balance.

The National President of ASUU, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, on 14th February 2022, while announcing the strike at the University of Lagos, accused the Federal Government for failing to implement the Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Action signed between the Union and the Government. Government's poor commitment to the payment of academic earned allowance, the continuous use of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), and refusal to adopt the University Transparency and Accountability Solution, and proliferation of the universities in the country (Ubom & Joshua, 2022). Analysis by Ubom and Joshua revealed that while ASUU embarked on strike sixteen (16) times since 1999, the Union continually blamed its decision on the failure of the Federal Government to meet its demands.

Management on the other hand is the guidance or direction of human and material resources for the attainment of organisational goals (Olayemi, 2019). Olayemi defines Management as the coordination of all the processes of planning, organising, directing, and controlling in order to attain organisational goals. University management, according to Onuseluogu et al (2017) behoves around the Vice Chancellor, University Librarians, Bursar, and the Registrar. Ogbonnaya (2009) submits that educational management is being concerned with the planning and formulation of educational policies or programmes with a view to achieving educational goals.

It has been observed by relevant stakeholders such as educationists, students, and the general public that Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute may be impacting either positively or negatively on the management of federal universities in North Central Nigeria in the area of university autonomy, funding, working conditions, among others. It is against this background that the researchers investigated impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

In Nigeria, trade unions such as ASUU usually embark on various actions over agitation for improvement of their welfare, teaching and research facilities, and university autonomy. However, the incessant ASUU strike actions in the country have become worrisome. It is on record that from 1988 to 2022, the national body of the Union had embarked on sixteen (16) major strike actions. Besides these, local chapters also do organise their branch strike actions from time-to-time.

Failure of the Federal Government to always implement previously signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has often led to strike actions, which has disrupted the activities of public universities for decades. The persistent ASUU strikes in Nigeria have disrupted academic activities of universities thereby resulting to closure of universities for a period of time. The researchers examined the impact of ASUU strike on university autonomy, funding, and working conditions on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The problem of this study is therefore put in a question form as: What is the impact

of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria?

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) dispute on management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on universities' autonomy in public universities
2. ascertain impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities
3. examine impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities

The following research questions are raised to guide the study.

1. What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on autonomy in public universities?
2. What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities?
3. What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities?

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact universities' autonomy in management of public universities
2. Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact funding of public universities
3. Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact on their condition of service in public universities

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design. The area of the study comprised of Benue, Nasarawa, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in North Central Nigeria. The total population of the study is one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five (1,775) academic staff in public universities in North Central Nigeria. The population comprised eight hundred and thirty-four (834) academic staff from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, four hundred and twenty-nine (429) academic staff from Federal University of Lafia, and five hundred and twelve (512) academic staff from University of Abuja. The choice of this category of staff as population of the study is that they are better informed as ASUU members to give valid information on the study. The sample size for the study comprises three hundred and twenty-six (326) academic staff. This size was determined by using Taro Yamen formula. Multistage sampling was used to select the sample at different stages. First, purposive sampling was used to select the three (3) States including the FCT in North Central Nigeria, Benue, and Nasarawa. Proportionate stratified random sampling was adopted to select the number of academic staff from each federal universities – one hundred and fifty-three (153) from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, seventy-nine (79) from Nasarawa State University, Keffi, ninety-four (94)

from University of Abuja, making a total of three hundred and twenty-six (326). Simple random sampling was used to select the number of respondents from each of the respective universities.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled, "Impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) Dispute on Management of Public Universities in North Central Nigeria (IASUUDMPUQ)" developed by the researcher. The instrument comprised three sections: university autonomy, funding, and working conditions. The instrument was based on four-point rating scale of Very High Impact (VHI), High Impact (HI), Low Impact (LI), and Very Low Impact (VLI).

The instrument was face-validated by one expert in Measurement and Evaluation and two experts in Educational Administration and Planning from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State. The completed questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. An overall cluster reliability of 0.86 was established for the items of the instrument. Mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation was used in answering the research questions. Any Mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as determinant and vice versa. Chi-square goodness of fit-test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 Alpha level of significance.

Any computed significant level above .05, the null hypothesis was not rejected, which is an indication of no significance. On the other hand, when the significant level is below .05, the null hypothesis of significance was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on autonomy in public universities?

To answer this research question, responses on the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on autonomy in public universities were collected and analyzed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on autonomy in public universities

S/N	Item Statement	VHI	HI	LI	VLI	Mean	SD	Dec.
1	Universities' ability to admit their students enhances administration of public universities	110	156	40	20	3.24	.97	High Impact
2	Universities' ability to determine their own content of course(s) ensures smooth instructional delivery	91	175	20	40	3.29	1.02	High Impact
3	Universities' ability to teach, based on prescribed curriculum contents, influences students' academic performance	101	142	51	32	3.12	.90	High Impact
4	Universities' ability to employ their staff improves their administrative effectiveness	104	182	30	10	3.35	1.05	High Impact
5	Universities' ability to select areas of research based on the school's original blueprint enhances school administration	82	173	21	50	3.26	.99	High Impact
Cluster Mean and SD						3.25	.98	High Impact

Analysis of data as presented in Table 1 shows the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on autonomy in public universities with corresponding Standard Deviation values. Data presented on Table 1 revealed that, the respondents rated high impact on all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) with mean scores ranging from 3.12 – 3.35 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. The table also revealed close Standard Deviation values ranging from .90 – 1.05 which showed that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses. The grand mean of all the items was revealed to be 3.25 and SD= .98. With this grand mean, it can be deduced from this finding that universities' ability to employ their staff improves their administrative effectiveness, universities' ability to determine their own content of course(s) ensures smooth instructional delivery and universities' ability to select areas of research based on the schools original blueprint enhances school administration. This implies that university autonomy to a very high extent impact positively on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities?

To answer this research question, responses on the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities were collected and analyzed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities

S/N	Item Statement	VHI	HI	LI	VLI	\bar{X}	SD	Dec.
6	ASUU's ability to enforce government to pay salaries of university employees influences the administration of public universities	222	50	36	18	3.58	1.06	High Impact
7	ASUU's ability to enforce government to purchase instructional resources for classrooms influences the administration of public universities	80	165	40	41	3.26	.98	High Impact
8	ASUU's ability to enforce government to furnish staff offices improves the administration of public universities	98	146	52	30	3.14	.92	High Impact
9	ASUU's ability to enforce government to improve academic research and development enhances universities administration	90	179	40	17	3.31	1.04	High Impact
10	ASUU's inability to enforce government to procure equipment for classrooms hinders the administration of public universities	133	147	38	08	3.15	.93	High Impact
Cluster Mean and SD						3.28	.98	High Impact

Analysis of data as presented in Table 2 shows the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on funding of public universities with corresponding Standard Deviation values. Data presented on Table 2 revealed that the respondents rated high impact on all the items (6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) with mean scores ranging from 3.14 – 3.58 which are above the benchmark of 2.50, The table also revealed close Standard Deviation values ranging from .92 – 1.06 which showed that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses. The grand mean of all the items was revealed to be 3.28 and SD= .98. With this grand mean, it can be deduced from this finding that ASUU's ability to enforce government to pay salaries of university employees influences the administration of public universities, ASUU's ability to enforce government to improve academic research and development enhances universities administration and ASUU's ability to enforce government to purchase instructional resources for classrooms influences the administration of public universities. This finding implied that funding to a high extent impact positively on the management of public universities.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities?

To answer this research question, responses on the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities were collected and analyzed as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities

S/N	Item Statement	VHI	HI	LI	VLI	Mean	SD	Dec.
11	Non-payment of earned allowances to academic staff hampers effective administration of public universities	202	88	22	14	3.50	1.05	High Impact
12	Non-payment of backlog of salary after strike actions affects academic staff empowerment negatively	178	59	45	44	3.30	1.03	High Impact
13	Withholding staff training allowances impedes speedy administration of public universities	111	160	41	14	3.24	.97	High Impact
14	Non-payment of promotion arrears affect academic staff empowerment negatively	176	86	40	24	3.29	1.01	High Impact
15	Non-provision of working equipment (teaching, research and community service) to academic staff negatively affects the administration of public universities	108	182	13	23	3.35	1.05	High Impact
Cluster Mean and SD						3.33	1.02	High Impact

Analysis of data as presented in Table 3 shows the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute on their condition of service in public universities with corresponding Standard Deviation values. Data presented on Table 3 revealed that the respondents rated high impact on all the items (11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) with mean scores ranging from 3.24 – 3.50 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. The table also revealed close Standard Deviation values ranging from .97–1.05, which showed that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses. The grand mean of all the items was revealed to be 3.33 and SD= 1.02. With this grand mean, it can be deduced from this finding that non-payment of earned allowances to academic staff hampers effective administration of public universities, non-provision of working equipment (teaching, research and community service) to academic staff negatively affects the administration of public universities and non-payment of backlog of salary after strike actions affects academic staff empowerment negatively. This finding revealed that prompt payment of earned allowances, provision of working equipment for teaching, research and community service and payments of backlog salaries enhances the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact universities' autonomy in management of public universities.

Table 4

Chi-Square test of significance on Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact universities' autonomy in management of public universities

Variables	N	Df	\bar{X}	Sig	Alpha Level	Remark
University autonomy						
	326	3	234.567	.000	.05	Significant
Management						

Df = Degree of Freedom; = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value

Table 4 shows the Chi-square calculated value of 234.567, degree of freedom df =3 and a sig (P-value=0.00) which is less than the alpha value ($\alpha=.05$). Since $P<.05$, the result is significant, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This implied that, universities' autonomy has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact funding of public universities.

Table 5

Chi-Square test of significance on Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact funding of public universities

Variables	N	Df	\bar{X}	Sig	Alpha Level	Remark
Funding						
	326	3	241.946	.000	.05	Significant
Management						

Df = Degree of Freedom; = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value

Table 5 shows the Chi-square calculated value of 241.946, degree of freedom df =3 and a sig (P-value=0.00) which is less than the alpha value ($\alpha=.05$). Since $P<.05$, the result is significant, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This implied that, funding has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact on their condition of service in public universities.

Table 6

Chi-Square test of significance of Academic Staff Union of Universities' dispute does not significantly impact on their condition of service in public universities

Variables	N	Df	\bar{X}	Sig	Alpha Level	Remark
Conditions of service						
	326	3	249.032	.000	.05	Significant
Management						

Df = Degree of Freedom; x = Chi-Square Calculated Value; Sig = P-Value

Table 6 shows the Chi-square calculated value of 249.032, degree of freedom $df = 3$, and a sig (P-value=0.00) which is less than the alpha value ($\alpha = .05$). Since $P < .05$, the result is significant, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This implied that, enhanced academic staff condition of service has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria.

Based on the analysis of data, the following findings are made

- i.* Universities' ability to employ their staff improves their administrative effectiveness, universities' ability to determine their own content of course(s) ensures smooth instructional delivery and universities' ability to select areas of research based on the schools original blueprint enhances school administration.
- ii.* ASUU's ability to enforce government to pay salaries of university employees influences the administration of public universities, ASUU's ability to enforce government to improve academic research and development enhances universities administration and ASUU's ability to enforce government to purchase instructional resources for classrooms influences the administration of public universities.
- iii.* Non-payment of earned allowances to academic staff hampers effective administration of public universities, non-provision of working equipment (teaching, research and community service) to academic staff negatively affects the administration of public universities and non-payment of backlog of salary after strike actions affects academic staff empowerment negatively.

Discussions

The first findings of the study revealed that universities autonomy to a high extent impact the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The major findings were that, universities' ability to employ their staff improves their administrative effectiveness, universities' ability to determine their own content of course(s) ensures smooth instructional delivery and universities' ability to select areas of research based on the schools original blueprint enhances school administration. Similarly, a test of hypothesis revealed universities' autonomy has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This finding corroborate with that of Yawe et al (2019) whose findings revealed that strike actions by Academic Staff Union of Universities have perceived positive impact in the areas of universities' autonomy and funding in North East geo-political Zone, Nigeria. The findings also corroborate with that of Abiodun-Oyebanji (2015) whose findings showed that interference with university autonomy is responsible for strike actions by academic staff of Nigerian universities.

The second findings of this study revealed that funding to a high extent impact positively on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The major findings were that, ASUU's ability to enforce government to pay salaries of university employees influences the administration of public universities, ASUU's ability to enforce government to improve academic research and development enhances universities administration and ASUU's ability to enforce government to purchase instructional resources for classrooms influences the administration of public universities. Similarly, a test of hypothesis revealed that funding has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This finding corroborates with that of Tumba et al (2020) whose findings revealed that;

disruptions of academic session by staff union industrial actions due to inadequate funding has significant undesirable negative impact on academic success of the students. This finding corroborates with that of Yawe et al (2019) whose findings showed that strike actions by Academic Staff Union of Universities have perceived positive impact in the areas of funding in North East geo-political Zone, Nigeria. These findings further agree with that of Ada et al (2019) whose findings showed that funding patterns and cost-sharing in public universities need improvement in order to ensure the provision of quality education for global competitiveness.

The third finding of this study revealed that staff condition of service to a great extent impact positively on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. The major findings were that, non-payment of earned allowances to academic staff hampers effective administration of public universities, non-provision of working equipment (teaching, research and community service) to academic staff negatively affects the administration of public universities and non-payment of backlog of salary after strike actions affects academic staff empowerment negatively. Similarly, a test of hypothesis revealed that enhanced academic staff condition of service has positive significant impact on the management of public universities in North Central Nigeria. This finding corroborates with that of Tumba et al (2020) whose findings revealed that the disruptions of academic session by staff union industrial actions due to dehumanizing staff conditions of service have significant undesirable negative impact on academic success of the students. The finding corroborates with that of Olayemi (2019) whose findings showed that, training, promotion, incentive, job recognition and job security jointly contributed to service delivery in Nigerian universities. The finding further corroborates with that of Adeyanju et al (2018) whose findings revealed that incessant ASUU strikes in Nigeria public universities have been designed to maintain the integrity of university education and the need to provide global standard quality education especially through improvement of academic staff condition of service, and Adavbiele (2015) who revealed that leadership problem is one of the issues that affect the condition of service in public institutions. Adavbiele also revealed that poor motivation of the staff in the aspect of salary, promotion, training programme, leave allowance, and job security reduces their performance in their workplace.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that past incessant strike actions by Academic Staff Union of Universities have perceived positive significant impact on university autonomy, funding, and staff condition of service in public universities in North Central Nigeria. It can therefore be concluded that, institutionalization of strike as a means to gain government attention be sustained as it has greatly improved university autonomy, funding, and academic staff condition of service in the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

- i.* Federal and State Governments should grant full autonomy to universities under them in order to dissuade ASUU from further strike actions. This recommendation is appropriate because the denial of universities' autonomy has been one of the major causes of ASUU's strike.

- ii. Federal and State Governments should ensure that public universities are adequately and promptly funded, as this would forestall ASUU from further strike actions. If this is implemented, it will lead to provision of standardised infrastructural facilities, improved welfare and it will enhance the productivity of staff.
- iii. Strike actions by ASUU should be designed to provide global standard quality education through improvement in the aspect of salary, promotion, training programme, leave allowance, and job security in public universities in Nigeria. If this is implemented, it will enhance students' academic standard, drastically reduce brain drain, and stabilise the university system across the country.

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