EFFECT OF ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES STRIKE ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING OF UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education is necessity for the proper development of both individuals in particular and the nation at large. However, recurring strikes of ASUU has not being without detrimental effects and consequences whether to the students or to the union members themselves. This study examined the effect of ASUU strikes on the psychosocial well-being of university students in Nigeria.A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and the target population were undergraduate students of University of Lagos. A simple random sampling was used to select 396 students as respondents for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was employed as the research instrument. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The result showed that the respondents disagree that ASUU strike has an effect on the emotional well-being of students (average mean 2.45 and SD=1.015). They also disagreed that the ASUU strike had an effect on their mental status (average mean 2.32 and SD=1.02). It was also found that the respondents agreed that ASUU strike had an effect on their social actualization (average mean 2.60 and SD=.95) and also affected their personal growth as students (average mean 2.64 and SD=.97). The study recommended that there is need for ASUU to find alternative method of registering their grievances and expectations from the government. There is also the need for government to put the well-being of affected students into consideration in their negotiation with ASUU, in order to avoid future occurrence of strikes.

Keywords: ASUU, Strikes, Psychosocial, Well-being, Undergraduates

Introduction

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was established in1978 to succeed the National Association of University Teachers (NAUT). Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was established to look after the interests of academic staff in Nigerian federal and state universities. Specifically, according to the constitution of ASUU, some of the objectives of the Union include

"to regulate the relation between academic staff and employers and to establish and maintain just and proper conditions of service for its members (ASUU Constitution, 1978). However, one major bane to its existence has been the frequent occurrences of strikes.

The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 defined strikes broadly as "suspension or cessation of work by a group of persons employed in any industry, acting in combination or a concerted refusal or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are or have been so employed to continue to work or accept employment". According to Chijioke (2013) strike is an "organized work stoppage by a body of workers to enforce compliance with demands made on an employer or a group of employers." In the context of ASUU's strike, Ugar (2018) defined it as "outright stoppage of work by all academic staff of public universities (who are members of ASUU) in the country."

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) engages in strikes against the government for different reasons, causes and demands. For instance, in 1988, the Union went on strike in order to fight for fair wages and ensure university autonomy. However, the 1988 strike led to the proscription of the Union which was only allowed to resume activity in 1990. Afterwards, the Union also went on strike again in 1994 and 1996 in order to protest against the unfair dismissal of some of its member by the then Sanni Abacha military regime (Ogbette et al. 2017). More so, ever since the return of democratic government in Nigeria in 1999, the Union has continued to perpetually engage in strikes (Ogbette et al. 2017). From 1999, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has gone on strikes sixteen (16) times vis a vis 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2022. Ogbette et al. (2017) pointed out that some of the causes of industrial dispute between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the government involves "low wages and conditions of service, poor and erraticfunding, rising student population and weak institutional autonomy." The rationale for the recurring strikes has also been attributed to the failure and refusal of government to uphold and honour signed agreement between both parties.

While the reasons for the strikes maybe understandable, the consequences of such strikes however have become a major concern to different stakeholders namely parents, lecturers, government and students. Ogbette et al. (2017) submitted that "while some view

government nonchalant attitude and lack of commitment to the welfare of the education sector as the cause, others blame ASUU on their radicalism, confrontational approach and insatiable demand." Regardless of who deserved the blame for the persistence of strikes in Nigerian education sector, the fact remains that incessant strikes affect Nigerian students in different ways bordering on their academic, physical, psychological and social well-being.

According to Burn (2016) psychosocial well-being refers to "inter and and intra-personal levels of positive functioning that include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth" (p.1). Other authors like Alejandro et al. (2016) perceived psychological well-being as the absent of negative psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression, suicidal impulses, irrational anger, e.t.c. and the presence of positive psychological conditions such as happiness, positive mental state, healthy relationship, self-actualization, e.t.c. Dunaeva (2018) defined social well-being as "people's appraisal of their social relationships, conditions and functioning in social community".

Ogunode and Adanna (2022) observed that "prolonged graduation, academic performance, social vices, learning loss, unstablelearning programme, increment in learning cost, foreign education, mental health challenges, waning interest in educational system, brain drain, waste of accommodation rent are the impact of strike actions on the public universities students in Nigeria". Ibrahim (2015) opined that apart from not been able to meet up with time lost to strikes, strikes also have impact on students emotionally and psychologically. Ugar (2018) also noted that "while other students begin their second degree or master's degree at age22, some Nigerian students [in public universities] are not sure of obtaining a first degree even at age 30 due to incessant strike actions and lack of proper funding of the universities to be able to admit a large number of students." Daily Trust (2022) also noted that the on-going strike has led to different mental challenges such as depression, anxiety, idleness, boredom among students.

Education is necessary for the proper development of individuals in particular and nations in general. Literature on ASUU strikes showed that many studies have been conducted to determine the effects of ASUU strikes at different levels. Ibrahim (2015) examined the effect of ASUU strike on the quality of tertiary education in

Nigeria. The results from the study revealed that ASUU strike has negative effects on the education quality of undergraduate students in the country. Ntiasagwe (2020) examined the effect of ASUU strikes on Imo State University's undergraduate students from 2012-2017 using a phenomenology research design. The results from the study showed that ASUU strike has negative impact on application of the university curricula; this resulted in students taking longer than the typical 4 years to earn a bachelor's degree, often taking 6 or 7 years.Amos, Dayt and Power (2018) examined how strikes affect students' academic activities and their emotions. The results were analyzed separately for first-year undergraduates, other undergraduates, and graduate or professional school students.

Although there was significant individual variation in responses, on average, the strike had slightly adverse effects on academics and emotions but significant negative impacts on students' views of the university.Aremu, Salako and Adedina (2015) examined the effected of ASUU incessant striked on students' academic performance in University of Lagos, Nigeria. The research revealed that strike action disrupts academic calendar which bestowed on students psyche cost, disheartenment and unable to speedily regenerate themselves towards academic exercises at the resumption. Consequently, poor academic performance in the post-strike semester.

While some of the previous studies have examined the negatives and positives of ASUU strikes; some studies focused on academic staff perception of it (Okeke et al. 2021), while others considered its effect on the well-being of the Union's members and its implications on quality of education (Yohanna & Diggah, 2022). More so, review of available literature also showed that when concerned about the students, majority of the studies on ASUU strike focused primarily on its effect on their academic performance (Egwu, 2021). Despite the available ample studies on ASUU strikes, however, no study exists that specifically focus on how ASUU strike affects students' psychosocial well-being in the Nigerian context. Many studies conducted to examine factors affecting students' psychosocial well-being, Morales-Roddriguez et al. (2020); Yoon and Hur, (2021) did not examine the impact of ASUU strikes on psychosocial well-being of students. It is this gap this study filled by examining the effect of ASUU strike on the psychosocial well-being of university students in Nigeria.

The study examined the following objectives**: t**he effect of ASUU strike on the emotional well-being of undergraduate students; **t**he effect of ASUU strike on the mental state of undergraduate students; the effect of ASUU strike on the social actualization of undergraduate students; and **t**he effect of ASUU strike on the personal growth of undergraduate students

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

The Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) was first proposed by Richard Lazarus and his colleagues in 1960s as a development from their earlier studies on stress. Cognitive appraisal theory is a psychological theory that suggests that an individual's subjective experience of stress is not determined solely by the objective features of a stressor (ASUU Strikes), but rather by how that stressor is cognitively appraised. In other words, it is not the stressor itself that determines whether it is experienced as stressful, but rather how the individual perceives and interprets the stressor (Jiyeon et al. 2016).

According to the proponents, the Cognitive Appraisal Theory has two major components: the primary appraisal and the secondary appraisal. The primary appraisal entails the students' appraisal of the severity of the stressor (ASUU strike) and its potential harms and negative effects. The secondary appraisal entails students' assessment of their ability to deal with the stressor, considering resources available to them. The way students appraise the strike can have important consequences for their psychosocial well-being. For example, if students perceive the strike as highly threatening and feel that they lack adequate resources for coping, they may experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, frustration, and helplessness. On the other hand, if students perceive the strike as less threatening and feel that they have adequate coping resources, they may be better able to adapt to the situation and maintain their psychosocial well-being.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study.Undergraduate students in University of Lagos (UNILAG) constituted the population of this study. According to data gotten from the Student Affair Unit, the University has about 35,426 of the year 2019/2020 undergraduate students in 12 faculties. Using the

taro Yamane formula, 396 undergraduate students constituted the sample size for this study.

For distribution of questionnaire in proportion to the population of each faculty, Bowley's proportionate allocation formula was adopted.

Faculty	**Total Students' No**	**Proportional Distribution**
Arts	3,828	3828 x 396/35436= 42.78 ≈**43**
Basic Medical Science	397	397 x 396/35436= 4.43 ≈**4**
Clinical Science	1,819	1819 x 396/35436= 20.32 ≈**20**
Dental Science	181	181 x 396/35436= 2.02 ≈**2**
Education	7,046	7046 x 396/35436= 78.73 ≈**79**
Engineering	3,770	3770 x 396/35436= 42.13 ≈**42**
Environmental Science	1,466	1466 x 396/35436= 16.38 ≈**16**
Law	1,929	1929 x 396/35436= 21.55 ≈**22**
Management Science	4,468	4468 x 396/35436= 49.9 ≈**50**
Pharmacy	713	713 x 396/35436= 7.96 ≈**8**
Science	5,863	5863 x 396/35436=65.5 ≈**66**
Social Science	3,956	3956 x 396/35436=44.2 ≈**44**
TOTAL	**35,436**	**396**

Procedure

A self-structure questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument for this study.To make the questionnaire valid, it was subjected to experts' opinion. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted. To conduct the pilot test, 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 undergraduate students in University of Ibadan. The reliability of the

instrument was tested with Cronbach's alpha coefficients and returned a coefficient of 0.75.Copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered to selected undergraduate students of the University of Lagos. A face-to-face method of data administration was employed in to achieve a high response rate. The questionnaires were administered when students are in active academic session. When there is need for it, items on the questionnaire were explained to the students who had difficulty understanding them in order to ensure that all questionnaires are properly and duly filled.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software was use for entering of the collected data and analysis of the collected data. The collected data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Research Objective one: To determine the effect of ASUU strike on the emotional well-being of undergraduate students

TABLE 1:Measures of the effect of ASUU Strike on the Emotional Well-Being of Students

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**	
	F(%)	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
The ASUU strike made me feel optimistic about my future	37 (9.3%)	150 (37.9%)	95 (24.0%)	114 (28.8%)	2.28	.98
The ASUU strike made me feel bad about myself	88 (22.2%)	151 (38.1%)	60 (15.2%)	97 (24.5%)	2.58	1.09
Because of the ASUU strike, I distance myself from others	37 (9.3%)	178 (44.9%)	65 (16.4%)	116 (29.3%)	2.34	1.00
I experienced sadness throughout the ASUU strike period	58 (14.6%)	169 (42.7%)	56 (14.1%)	113 (28.5%)	2.43	1.05

I was idle and felt useless during the ASUU strike period	59 (14.9%)	147 (37.1%)	84 (21.2%)	106 (26.8%)	2.40	1.04
ASUU strike made me feel free and opportune to develop myself	71 (17.9%)	206 (52.0%)	58 (14.6%)	61 (15.4%)	2.72	.93
Average Mean					2.45	1.11

Source: Field work 2023

Table 1 aims to see the Measures of the effect of ASUU Strike on the Emotional Well-Being of Students. From the table it can be deduced that the respondents disagree that the ASUU strike made them feel optimistic about their future (mean=2.28, SD=.98), they agree that the ASUU strike made them feel bad about themselves (mean=2.58, SD=1.09), the respondents disagree that because of the ASUU strike, they distance themselves from others (mean=2.34, SD=1.00), they also disagree that they experienced sadness throughout ASUU strike period (mean=2.43, SD=1.05), disagree also that they were idle and felt useless during the ASUU period (mean=2.40,SD=1.04), and agreed that ASUU strike made the feel free and opportune to develop themselves (mean= 2.72, SD=0.93).

The average mean 2.45 and SD=1.11 shows the respondents disagree that ASUU strike has an effect on the emotional well-being of students.

Research Objective two: Measures on effect of ASUU strike on the mental state of undergraduate students

Table 2: Measures of the effect of ASUU Strike onthe Mental State of Students

VARIABLE N=396	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**	
	F(%)	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
The ASUU strike made me highly depressed	54 (13.6%)	159 (40.2%)	60 (15.2%)	123 (31.1%)	(2.36)	(1.06)
The strike affected my self-esteem negatively	54 (13.6%)	143 (36.1%)	74 (18.7%)	125 (31.6%)	(2.32)	(1.06)
I developed unnecessary anxiety due to the ASUU strike	45 (11.4%)	207 (52.3%)	54 (13.6%)	90 (22.7%)	(2.52)	(.97)

I constantly experienced feelings of loneliness	64 (16.2%)	183 (46.2%)	53 (13.4%)	96 (24.2%)	(2.54)	(1.03)
I was mostly in a positive mental state of mind during the ASUU strike	29 (7.3%)	162 (40.9%)	65 (16.4%)	140 (35.4%)	(2.20)	(1.01)
The ASUU strike made me feel good mentally	29 (7.3%)	104 (26.3%)	95 (24.0%)	168 (42.4%)	(1.98)	(.99)
AVERAGE MEAN					2.32	1.02

Source: Field work 2023

The table 2 seeks to provide information on the effect of ASUU Strike on the Mental State of Students. The respondents disagree that that ASUU strike made them highly depressed (mean=2.36, SD=1.06), they disagree likewise that the strike affected their self-esteem negatively (mean=2.32, SD=1.06), they agree that they developed unnecessary anxiety due to ASUU strike (mean=2.52, SD=.97), they agreed also that they constantly experienced feelings of loneliness(mean=2.54, SD=1.03), they disagree that they were mostly in a positive mental state of kind during the ASUU strike (mean=2.20, SD=1.01), they disagree also that the ASUU strike made the feel good mentally (mean=1.98, SD=.99).The average mean 2.32 and SD=1.02 shows the respondents disagreed that the respondents that the ASUU strike had an effect on their mental status.

Research Objective three: To determine the effect of ASUU strike on the social actualization of undergraduate students

Table 3: **Measures of the effect of ASUU Strike on Social Actualization of Students**

VARIABLE **N=396**	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**	
	F(%)	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
The ASUU strike made me feel like society is not improving for someone like me	93 (23.5%)	223 (56.3%)	26 (6.6%)	54 (13.6%)	2.90	.92
The strike also made me feel like law and governmental institutions are not making my life better	146 (36.9%)	196 (49.5%)	34 (8.6%)	20 (5.1%)	3.18	.79
The ASUU strikes affected my social relationship negatively	73 (18.4%)	186 (47.0%)	39 (9.8%)	98 (24.7%)	2.59	1.05
The strike also made me feel like I am contributing nothing to my environment	64 (16.2%)	185 (46.7%)	52 (13.1%)	95 (24.0%)	2.55	1.03
I feel more connected to other people during the ASUU strike	25 (6.3%)	136 (34.3%)	91 (23.0%)	144 (36.4%)	2.11	.98
The ASUU strike enabled me to develop positive relationships	27 (6.8%)	179 (45.2%)	67 (16.9%)	123 (31.1%)	2.28	.98
Average Mean					2.60	.95

Source: Field work 2023

From the table 3 above it can be deduced that the respondents agreed that ASUU strike made the feel like the society is not improving for someone like them (mean=2.90, SD=.92), they agreed also that the strike also made them feel like law and governmental institutions are not making life better (mean=3.18, SD=.79), they agreed likewise that ASUU strike affected their social relationship

negatively (mean=2.59, SD=1.05), they agreed also that the strike also made them feel like they are contributing nothing to their environment (mean=2.55, SD=1.03), they however disagree that they feel more connected to other people during the ASUU strike (mean=2.11,SD=.98) and disagreed also that the ASUU strike enabled them to develop positive relationships (mean=2.28, SD=.98). The average mean 2.60 and SD=.95 indicates that the respondents agreed that ASUU strike had an effect on their social actualization.

Research Objective four: TO evaluate the effect of ASUU strike on the personal growth of undergraduate students

Table 4:Measures of the effect of ASUU Strike on Personal Growth of Student

VARIABLE N=396	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Total**	
	F(%)	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**F(%)**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
During the ASUU strike, my personal growth was stalled	48 (12.1%)	177 (44.7%)	45 (11.4%)	126 (31.8%)	(2.37)	(1.06)
The ASUU strike had negative impact on my growth personally	72 (18.2%)	146 (36.9%)	63 (15.9%)	115 (29.0%)	(2.44)	(1.09)
The Strike encouraged me to learn and develop more skills	78 (19.7%)	243 (61.4%)	31 (7.8%)	44 (11.1%)	(2.90)	(.84)
The ASUU strike enabled me to develop in other aspects of my life	87 (22.0%)	218 (55.1%)	39 (9.8%)	52 (13.1%)	(2.86)	(.91)
AVERAGE MEAN					2.64	.97

Source: Field work 2023

The table 4 seeks to measure the effects of ASUU strike on personal growth of students. The respondents disagree that during ASIUU strike their personal growth was stalled (mean=2.37, SD=1.06), they disagreed also that the ASUU strike had negative impact on their personal growth (mean=2.44, SD=1.09), they agreed that the strike encourages them to learn and develop more skills and they agreed that the ASUU strike enable them to develop in other aspects of their life (mean=2.86, SD=91).

The average mean 2.64 and SD=.97 indicates that the respondents agree that ASUU strike has an effect on the personal growth of the students.

Discussion of the Findings

In line with the first objective of the study which seeks to determine the effect of ASUU strike on the emotional well-being of students, the results from the descriptive analysis showed that majority of the respondents disagreed that ASUU strikes has any effect on their emotional well-being. This finding correspond to the study of Wickens (2011) which found that strikes had no effect on the emotion, behavior and cognitive of the students. This finding contradicts that of Ibrahim (2015) who concluded that ASUU strikes have negative impacts on students' academic and psychological wellness.From the cognitive appraisal theory used for this study, the way students appraise the strike can have important consequences for their psychosocial well-being. For example, if students perceive the strike as highly threatening and feel that they lack adequate resources for coping, they may experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, frustration, and helplessness. On the other hand, if students perceive the strike as less threatening and feel that they have adequate coping resources, they may be better able to adapt to the situation and maintain their psychosocial well-being. These explains the reason some of the undergraduates used for this study disagreed with be affected emotionally and mentally by the ASUU strike.

The second objective of the study was to determine the effect of ASUU strike on the mental health of students. The findings showed that majority of the students disagreed that the ASUU strike had any effect on their mental health during the strike period. A study by Sydney-Agbor et al. (2018) on the mental well-being among students in Eastern Nigeria however showed that academic stress, which may include strikes, have negative influence on students' mental well-being.

For the third objective, the results indicated that ASUU strikes have effect on the social actualization of students during the strike period. A study by Adeyanju et al. (2021) confirmed that incessant strikes can have negative effects such as program disruptions, loss of productive time, and over-extension of study programs, on the students which can consequently impacted their social actualization negatively.

For the fourth objective, the results indicated that ASUU strikes had effects on the personal growth of students during the striking period. The findings is supported by the study of Ntiasagwe (2020) on effect of ASUU strikes on Imo State University's undergraduate students from 2012-2017. Ntiasagwe found that ASUU strikes resulted in students taking longer than the typical 4 years to earn a bachelor's degree, often taking 6 or 7 years to complete their 4-years programs. Consequently, many students may consider this a stalling of their personal growth because the earlier they are done with their programs the faster they can move to their next stage of personal development.

Conclusions

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is known with incessant strikes right from its inception to the present time. While it is quite understandable the reason(s) the Union embark on strike incessantly, the effects of such strikes on the psychosocial well-being and academic performance of affected students cannot likewise be ignored. While many studies exist on the effects that ASUU strikes have on the students' academic performance, however its effects on their psychosocial wellbeing have not received the same level of attention among researchers. Evidences from this study have shown that ASUU strikes have significant relationship with the psychosocial well-being of the undergraduate students used for this study. Specifically, the results showed that ASUU strikes affect the personal growth and social actualization of undergraduate students whom are always at the losing end of the tussle between the Union and the government.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are thus recommended:

There is need for ASUU to find alternative method of registering their grievances and expectations from the government which will not necessarily affect the academic activities of the students and thus their psychological wellness

There is also the need for government to put the well-being of affected students into consideration in their negotiation with ASUU in order to avoid future occurrence of strikes by ASUU, there is need for the government to ensure that they hold onto their end of

the agreements and ensure that ASUU's demands are met in a democratic and diplomatic approach.

Apart from the fact that ASUU's incessant strikes affected academic activities and the wellbeing of student, such disruptions in education sector also have detrimental impact on the overall economic growth and human capital development of the country.

As such, there is need therefore for government to formulate effective policies that will see to the smooth running of Nigerian universities where necessary financial demands are met and essential infrastructure are provided.

It is also recommended that initiatives and non-governmental organizations should be created that will see to helping students whose psychosocial wellbeing have been negatively affected in one way or the other by their experiences of ASUU's strikes.

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