

## Investigating the Effects of Staff Unions Industrial Action on Students' Academic Performance in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Strikes over the last decade have been the bane of educational planning and development in Nigeria's public university system. This has affected teaching, learning, and research in Nigerian universities. One area incessant industrial action affects the most is the academic performance of students. This study investigates how industrial action impacts academic performance at Taraba State University, Jalingo, in Nigeria. The study applied a cross-sectional survey design to collect primary data from the staff and students using 320 questionnaires (120 staff and 200 students). The Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) was used as the theoretical framework for the study. The finding of the study revealed that industrial actions by the university disrupted the academic calendar and undermined the quality of teaching, learning, and general level of academic performance with implications for the social, economic, and psychological stability of the students. The study recommended among other things that the state government should address concerns that affect the stability of the academic system to enable uninterrupted teaching and learning of the students at Taraba State University, Jalingo.

**Keywords:** Staff Unions, Industrial Action, Students' Academic Performance, Taraba State University.

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently, the education system, especially at the tertiary level in Nigeria, has witnessed incessant closures due to industrial action. The incessant closure of educational institutions impacts students' learning effectiveness in an unprecedented way. Tertiary education has suffered tremendous setbacks as a result of industrial actions in Nigeria. The consequences of industrial actions in Nigeria's tertiary institutions include the disruption of academic programmes, leading to undeserved extension of the years of graduation, and poor academic performance.

The activities of the labor unions in Nigerian universities brought changes in the politics of labor unions in tertiary institutions through organized labor agitations. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), and National Association of Academic Technologies (NAAT) are the recognized bodies that struggle for the welfare of their members in the Nigerian universities (Agbu & Jonathan, 2018).

The counteraction of the academic staff unions to action and inaction of the government is not self-centered. This was motivated by the quest to resuscitate the falling standard of education in Nigeria. The specific evidence of this fact is the agitation by ASUU and NASU between 2013 and 2014, which included the demand for the improvement and provision of educational infrastructure in our dilapidated tertiary institutions and the need to fulfill the 26% budgetary allocation to education as prescribed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The essence of the industrial action is to revive Nigeria's education system to be competitive as it was in the 1970s and 1980s.

According to (Tenebe, 2018), global knowledge production systems today involve a vast range of entities, including universities, public laboratories, research centers, think tanks, the private sector, and the military [industrial] complex. However, universities remain the prime source of knowledge and innovation. The teaching and non-teaching staff and students in tertiary institutions contribute to national development immeasurably. Conversely, national

development becomes deleteriously affected when these institutions are closed.

Due to industrial actions by the workers in tertiary education institutions in Nigeria, many Nigerian graduates are ill-equipped in both character and learning. The majority of these graduates are without the requisite knowledge and skills to solve diverse emerging societal problems in Nigeria. This situation necessitates the need to investigate how industrial actions impact the academic performance of students in Nigeria, using Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State, as a case study.

### Statement of the Problem

The climate of unstable industrial relations in tertiary education institutions in Nigeria since 1999 has resulted in the loss of working hours, disruption of the academic calendar, and rushed academic programme to make up for the lost hours after the suspension of industrial action. The proliferation of studies concerned with identifying constructs that promote academic success is likely connected to the overall assessment scholarship and increasing interest in the impact of strikes on students learning and development.

Academic and non-Academic Staff Unions have resulted in the use of strikes as the last resort to balance the power between their members, the university management, and the government. This is enforced when collective bargaining and consultation fail to produce the desirable results. The effect of industrial action has been devastating in the Nigerian university system. It has contributed to watering down the quality of education offered to Nigerian students. With industrial action, students' academic performance is adversely affected as a result of the crippling of the educational system. These resulted in producing half-baked students and graduates who are unemployable and who lack the basic skills necessary to survive in dynamic environments like Nigeria and the rest of the world. Public universities in Nigeria have been closed sixteen times and have lost at least cumulatively four academic sessions since 1999 (The Cable, November 23, 2020).

Recently, ASUU President Professor Emmanuel Osadeke noted that Nigeria lose over N1.6 trillion per annum as tuition for overseas education (Tribune, April 27, 2022). The channeling of the monies spent on overseas education has contributed to a dwindled funding and deterioration of the education sector in the country. Consequently, it explains partly some of the reasons for the industrial actions by the tertiary education sector in Nigeria. Historically, all industrial actions in Nigeria have been toward revitalizing and revolutionizing the education sector to create enabling environment for effective teaching and learning in the tertiary education system in Nigeria.

Taraba State University, Jalingo, in Nigeria has progressively witnessed an increase in academic programmes, academic and non-academic staff, students' enrollments, and the number of graduates. Yet, it has experienced several industrial actions since its establishment in 2008. (Yahaya, 2015; Tenebe, 2022; Mohammed, 2018). ASUU, SSANU, and NASU are the unions that have engaged in industrial actions in Taraba State University, which have impacted the smooth running of the academic activities in the university. In this context, the study provides the following questions:

- i. What are the causes of staff unions' industrial action at Taraba State University?
- ii. How does strike affect students' learning effectiveness and academic performance?
- iii. What are the factors that determine students' academic performance?
- iv. Are there other ways of achieving staff union demands apart from strike action?

### Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the causes of staff unions' industrial actions in Taraba State University
- ii. To investigate how strikes affect students' learning effectiveness and academic performance
- iii. To assess the effects factors that determine students' academic performance
- iv. To find out other ways of achieving staff union demands apart from strike action

### Description of the Study Area

Taraba State University is located in the southern part of the northeast geopolitical region of Nigeria. The university is situated in Jalingo, the headquarters of Taraba State. The Taraba State University Campus has a land area of 1084 hectares (10,840,000m<sup>2</sup>), with a 22km perimeter fence. It has a population of over thirteen thousand students in all programmes (Taraba State University Websites, 2022); (Jacob *et al*, 2018).

Taraba State University has three main campuses, which include the Main Campus (located at the former College of Education, Jalingo, otherwise known as Advanced Teachers College), Preliminary Studies Campus (located at the former Taraba State Polytechnic), and the Colleges of Basic Studies in Gembu and Takum Local Government Areas, respectively (Taraba State University, 2020).

### Historical Background and Development of Taraba State University

The establishment of the Taraba State University, Jalingo, was conceived by Rev. Jolly T. Nyame, the then former Executive Governor of Taraba State in 2005. In 2007, late Dr. Danbaba D. Suntai, also a former Executive Governor of Taraba State, actualized the Rev. Jolly Nyame's intention by

appointing a Technical Committee composed of eminent scholars and top administrators. The Committee chaired by Prof. Michael Noku submitted its report in October, 2007 implemented by the Suntai's government on January 24, 2008 (Talla, 2018; Agbu, 2016; TSU Prospectus, 2012-2017). This led to the enactment of Law No. 4 of February 2008 by the Taraba State House of Assembly, establishing Taraba State University, Jalingo.

Taraba State University began the 2008/2009 academic session with the School of General and Preliminary Studies (SPGS) with 582 registered students (Oruonye *et al.*, 2018). In the 2009/2010 academic session, the foundation for the degree programmes was laid. The university registered 456 students into different programmes in the four faculties (Arts and Social Sciences, Education, Agriculture, and Sciences) of the new university. The university has witnessed significant growth since 2008. At the beginning of the 2011/2012 academic session, the academic staff strength was over 100 while undergraduate students' enrolment was about 2300 (Taraba State University Website, 2021). (Oruonye *et al.*, 2018) revealed that the demand for admission into the Taraba State University rose from 784 at its inception in 2009 to 7,000 in 2017. The University continues to expand in physical facilities, academic programmes, staff, and students. Presently, according to the records obtained from Taraba State University's Establishment Unit, the number of academic and non-academic staff stood at 806 and 1,123 as of 2021 (TSU, 2021).

Since its establishment in 2008, Taraba State University, Jalingo, in Nigeria has had three substantive Vice-Chancellors and two other Acting Vice-Chancellors. Late Dr. Ahmed Usman Jalingo was the pioneer Vice-Chancellor from 2008 to 2010. Prof. Michael Noku served as the university's Acting Vice-Chancellor until January 2012. Prof. Mohammed Sani Yahaya was elected as the university's second Vice-Chancellor up to October 2016 and handed over to Dr. Catharine Musa Ashasim who served as Acting Vice-Chancellor to February 28, 2017. Professor Vincent Ado Tenebe became the Vice-Chancellor of the university from the 1st of March 2017 to March 2022 (Taraba State University Maiden Bulletin, 2012; Taraba State University Website, 2021). Prof. Sunday Paul Bako is the current Vice-Chancellor of Taraba State University, Jalingo, in Nigeria.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a cross-sectional research design (Simkus, 2021). It is cross-sectional in the sense that it focuses on major variables of higher education's teaching and learning environments at Taraba State University between 2018 and 2020. A cross-section of

the staff and student population was examined to elicit data for this study.

Data were generated using primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source of data was a cross-sectional survey carried out at the university using questionnaires. 320 questionnaires with 12 items were distributed to staff (120) and students (200), representing 37.5% and 62.5%, respectively. The essence was to elicit longitudinal and vertical responses from the staff and students on the effects of industrial action on the academic performance of students. The purposive sample technique was used to generate a sample population from the 10 faculties and 70 departments in the university. The secondary sources used for this study include the Taraba State University Academic Brief, University Research Bulletin, the Taraba State University at 10; History, Development, Challenges, and Prospects, Convocation Publications, Information and Communication Technology Units, Directorate of Examinations, and other publications, including journals.

The method of data analysis used for this study was based on the descriptive method of data analysis. Data were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables, bar charts, and line graphs. This was followed by the analytical description of the data collected from the field study between August 2021 and January 2022.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Strike or Industrial Action

According to the International Labour Organization (2001), strike action is one of the fundamental means available to workers and their organizations to promote their economic and social interests. It is the most visible and controversial form of collective action in the event of a labor dispute. It is often seen as the last resort of workers' organizations in pursuit of their demands. A strike is a very powerful weapon used by trade unions and other labor associations to get their demands accepted. It generally involves the quitting of work by a group of workers for the purpose of putting pressure on their employer so that their demands are accepted. When workers collectively cease to work in a particular industry, they are said to be on strike (ILO, 2001).

The right to strike is affirmed by the 1957 "Resolution concerning the Abolition of Anti-Trade Union Legislation in the States Members of the International Labour Organization" and the 1970 "Resolution concerning Trade Union Rights and Their Relation to Civil Liberties", as well as in numerous resolutions of the ILO's regional conferences and industrial committees, and by other international bodies (ILO, 2000). The right to strike is recognized by the

ILO's supervisory bodies as *an intrinsic corollary of the right to organize protected by Convention No. 87*, deriving from the right of workers' organizations to formulate their programmes of activities to further and defend the economic and social interests of their members. However, the right to strike is not absolute. It may be subject to certain legal conditions or restrictions, and may even be prohibited in exceptional circumstances (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87), Article 3; General Survey on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, para. 151).

The right to strike is also recognized in international and regional instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1966 (Article 8(1)(d)), the Inter-American Charter of Social Guarantees of 1948 (Article 27), the European Social Charter of 1961 (Article 6(4)), and the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1988 (Article 8(1)(b)).

A strike usually takes place in response to employee grievances. Historically, strikes became important during the industrial revolution when mass labor became common in factories and mines. In most countries, they were quickly made illegal, as factory owners had far more political power than workers. Most Western countries partially legalized striking in the late 19th or early 20th centuries (Aleksander, 2009).

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) grew out of the Nigerian Association of University Teachers (NAUT). The NAUT was formed in 1965, covering academic staff in the Universities of Ibadan, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife, and University of Lagos. The NAUT's orientation was mainly for improvement in the conditions of service and the socio-economic and political well-being of the country. Throughout the military period, ASUU waged its struggles all around:

1. The survival of the university system with three components: the conditions of service (salary and non-salary), funding, and university autonomy/academic freedom; the defense of the right to education;
2. Broad national issues such as anti-military struggles, the struggle against military rule, the struggle against privatization, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), and the World Bank's attempt to take over the universities; for example, the World Bank's 120 million Dollars (US) loan under Babangida's military rule and the Nigerian Universities Innovation Project (NUSIP) during Obasanjo's regime; the struggle against the re-colonization of Nigeria and debt peonage. The military dictatorship has eroded deeply the basic freedoms of

society. Academic freedom and university autonomy were casualties of the military dictatorship. ASUUs' orientation became radical, more concerned with broad national issues and stood firmly against oppressive, undemocratic policies of the country (Jega, 2017; 1994).

Ayeni and Kolawole (2014) explored the incessant conflicts and strikes and their effect on the achievement of goals of business education in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The finding of the study shows that the incessant strikes contributed immensely to the challenges confronting tertiary institutions in the state. It was also revealed that incessant strikes contributed to the mass failure on the part of the students and concluded that the study showed that personnel policies have not been effective in preventing conflict and strike behaviors because management is not sincere and committed to matters that concern the staff.

The disruption occurs when academic activities are substantially interrupted or impeded as a result of strike action (York University, 1996). According to (Kazeem *et al*, 2010), disruption in academic programmes resulting from a strike leads to the closure of schools, sometimes, indefinitely. During a strike no academic activity takes place. After the strike the opportunity to make up for lost time becomes difficult. This view is corroborated by (Olukunle, 2011) that a strike not only disrupts the academic program but also leads to an undeserved extension of the academic calendar. In this way, students become affected emotionally and psychologically due to longer stay in school to complete their academic programmes (Isangedighi, 2007; Iheanacho, 2002). News of a planned strike by either ASUU, SSANU, or NASU demoralizes the students, especially the potential graduates. With strikes, students are not likely to complete tertiary education as planned, thereby affecting their motivational and developmental levels negatively. Motivation is the superhighway to learning (Thompson, 1990). This is usually suppressed by the disruption in academic programs arising from strike action. Motivation is essential in teaching and learning effectiveness.

Iheanacho (2002) opined that motivation is compared with self-determined behavior. It entails becoming curious in order to investigate school-related issues on the spur of the moment. This explains why non-motivated students have no urge or interest in learning.

Disruptions in academic programs serve as a non-motivational factor for the students. It discourages them from learning. It is, therefore, not surprising that during strike actions, most students are seen involved in social vices such as sexual immorality, cyber-scams,



pool betting, unnecessary gossip, watching of films, and reading comic books to entertain themselves.

Maliki and Ekpekin-Ekanem (2011) are of the view that "the quality and quantity of students' learning is determined by individual study habits. Disruption in academic programmers because of strike action results in poor study habits among university students. Students in a strike-free academic period are more organized in their studies. They interact effectively with their fellow students and consult regularly with their teachers. They also study with a high-level understanding because of the full attention they give to the learning process.

Every individual is "a thinking and feeling-filled entity" who learns through sense excitations and responses (Isangedighi, 2011). He believed that the way a stimulus impacts an individual's senses triggers responses. With the disruption of the learning process as a result of strike action, the learning ability of the students is negatively affected. The poor performance of the students academically becomes possible due to a lack of preparedness and readiness to learn during the strike. Students may for examination malpractice to accomplish their academic goals.

### Students' Academic Performance

The measurement of students' academic performance is an issue that deeply concerns students, parents, lecturers, and authorities. Defining academics is value-laden because of the complexity of its definition. Academic performance is sometimes known as academic achievement, school performance, or academic success. It has been agreed that academic performance or students' achievement should be used in the university system. Academic performance from a humanistic approach is "the product given by the students and it is usually expressed through school grading". This is the end result of the student after having been taught in the class. This is determined by an assessment test of the understanding of students on the taught course or subject (Martinez, 2007). It involves meeting the goals, targets, and objectives set out for students to attend the programmer or course. Academic performance is expressed through grades drawn from the students' assessment of a particular subject or course (Caballero *et al*, 2007).

Beghetto (2004) argued that student motivation provides perhaps the greatest contribution to students' academic success. The student becomes satisfied when he is motivated to produce requisite results. Satisfaction is an outcome of a variable that provides a measurement for contextual elements or components necessary for the learning environment and prerequisites for academic success. The overwhelming majority of students are disenchanted with the lack of motivation. Many disenchanted students feel first-

degree completion is the final point of their educational journey (Pascarella *et al*, 2005).

Jacobi (1991) noted that academic success is roughly defined as degree completion. It is referred to as academic achievement. The links between mentoring and undergraduate academic success require a dynamics mentoring relationship and dynamics of undergraduate student achievement. (Fraser *et al*, 1987) revealed that psychosocial characteristics of classroom learning environments demonstrate incremental validity in predicting student achievement.

To (Walberg, 1981) academic achievement can be gleaned from the psychological characteristics of individual students and their immediate psychological environments. The student's psychological characteristics influence the educational outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal) (Reynolds *et al*, 1992). Academic performance is the measurement of student psychological characteristics or achievements across various academic subjects within a given learning environment. Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution attends their short-term or long-term educational goals.

### Theoretical Framework of Analysis

This study is anchored on two theoretical frameworks. the theories are Inputs-Environment-Outcome model of measuring student academic performance and Marxist theory on trade union and labor politics.

### Inputs-Environment-Outcome

This theory was propounded by (Astin, 1991). It was further expanded by (Pascarella *et al*, 2005). The origins of the model come from Astin's examination of a graduate programmers' ability to produce PhDs. Astin questioned to what extent a programme's outputs were a condition of the quality of its inputs. Early explorations convinced Astin that accurate assessment required correcting student inputs, the educational environment students experienced, and student outcomes, or results.

In their clarification of Astin's model by (Pascarella *et al*, 2005), they extrapolated the simplistic view of the model such that college outcomes are viewed as functions of three sets of elements;

1. **Inputs:** The demographic characteristics, family background, and academic and social experiences that students bring to a college are referred to as inputs.
2. **Environment:** Stands for the full range of people, programs, policies, cultures, and experiences that students encounter in college, whether on or off-campus; and
3. **Outcomes:** This Means student characteristics, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors as they exhibit them even after college.

The I-E-O model serves as a theoretical framework for this study because it provides us with a way to clearly identify academic success as an outcome. It creates a focused definition of academic success unclouded by aspects more accurately defined as inputs or environment. This preliminary framework of analysis on academic success includes academic achievement, knowledge, skills, competencies acquisition, and persistence and retention.

In this study, we have adopted three criteria to measure the students' academic performance as it relates to the I-O-E and the topic under study. These criteria are as follows: grade point average/cumulative grade point average (faculty samples for the 2019 and 2020 academic sessions), number of strikes undertaken by staff unions over time, teacher/student ratio, and adherence to the academic calendar.

### **The Marxist Theory of Trade Union and Labor Politics Model**

The second perspective is the Marxian labor politics model used in the interpretation of industrial disharmony. In his 1853 article published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, titled "*The Labour Movement in Britain*," Marx discussed the patterns he saw emerging and the actions that workers needed to take in order to accomplish their goals. He immediately made his position on workers' strikes very clear, saying:

On the contrary, I am convinced that the alternative rise and fall of wages, and the resulting constant conflicts between masters and men, are, in the current organization of industry, the indispensable means of maintaining the spirit of the laboring classes, uniting them into one great association against the encroachments of the ruling class, and preventing them from becoming apathetic, thoughtless, more or less well-fed instruments of production (Marx, 1853).

Marx believed that strikes unified the working class, that they were a manifestation of class struggle and directly undermined elite members of society. Marx continues on to say that the results of the strikes were irrelevant and that it was the nature of the protest [strike] that was important. Through strikes and other class protests, workers won a moral and political victory against the capitalist/ruling class and the government. Understanding Marx's view on strikes helps to show how important strikes were/are, not only in bringing about economic change but in defining the class struggles that, at times, characterized industrial British society. Capitalists constantly tend to reduce wages to their physical minimum and to extend the working day to its physical maximum, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction.

This is a fundamental Marxist perspective thesis with reference to the class nature of trade unions, posing that trade unions are class organizations. Hence, Marx and Engels' early writings on trade unions are viewed as working-class organizations at a time of revolutionary mobilization. We find this perspective in "*The Condition of the Working Class in England*", written by Engels in 1845; in "*The Communist Manifesto*," published in 1848; and in several International Workers' Association manuscripts.

Employers of labor, according to Marx, will expropriate "surplus value" by exploiting the workers who work long hours, days, and years under the capitalist system. This development takes many forms in alienation that would arouse the consciousness of the workers in their place of work to create a labor movement for working-class emancipation. The history of the previously existing society is the history of class struggle, which was made possible through the examination of dialectical and historical materialism in the evolution of all societies, particularly after the industrial revolution (Marx, 1848; 1853; Heywood, 2007).

In the closing part of the *Communist Manifesto* 1848, Marx and Engels reiterated the condition of workers: "*The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!*"

This is the sad reality for workers in Nigeria, particularly university lecturers, who have been the only voice challenging government policies in general that are detrimental to their immediate welfare in terms of wages and other benefits since 1978. The Federal Government in Nigeria, whether under military or civilian administration, has one goal, to liberalize university education to the disadvantage of the citizens, which ASUU always seeks to defend and question. This is what informed the synergy between ASUU and other labor unions to form an alliance to pressurize the governments at all levels in Nigeria to do the needful for workers' welfare to avoid industrial action.

There is no one model that can explain the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learners; the I-O-E provides a better explanation for the understanding of students' academic performance. The Marxian theory of labor politics is a subset of classical Marxism that explains the relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as it exists in contemporary industrial society relations. These two perspectives, despite their weaknesses, better explain the condition of the typical Nigerian worker, especially those in tertiary institutions or universities, as it relates to industrial relations.

## RESULT AND DATA PRESENTATION

The data generated from different sources for this research is presented below and analyzed systematically.

**Table 1: What are the causes of staff industrial action in Taraba State University?**

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Poor application of collective bargaining	73	24%
2	Low wages and bad condition of service	118	39%
3	Inadequate funding of education sector by government	64	21%
4	Introduction of IPPIS by the Federal government	45	15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Drawn from the responses, 39% believed that low wages and the poor condition of services were responsible for incessant strikes, while 24% agreed that poor application of collective bargaining strongly affects industrial harmony. Likewise, 21% of

respondents believed that inadequate funding of the education sector by the government and 15% considered the introduction of IPPIS by the Federal Government to complicate the already tense industrial harmony in the Nigerian University system.

**Table 2: How does strike affect students' learning effectiveness and academic performance?**

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
5	Disruption of academic calendar	90	30%
6	Non-coverage of curriculum content	98	32%
7	It encourages exams malpractice	67	22%
8	It encourages brain drain in the universities	45	15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The results have shown that 32% of the respondents believed that strikes cause non-coverage of curriculum content and 30% agreed that strikes disrupt the academic calendar. Similarly, 22% of respondents believed that strikes encourage malpractice while 15%

believed strikes encourage brain drain in Nigerian universities. Hence, incessant strikes have affected the learning effectiveness and academic performance of students.

**Table 3: What are the effects of strikes on students' academic performance?**

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
9	Strike demotivates students from learning	80	26%
10	Strike has effects on students' grades and academic achievements	92	30%
11	Strike has effects on quality of graduates produced by universities	76	25%
12	Strike affects education planning and development	52	17%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The responses have shown that 30% of the respondents believed that strikes have an effect on student's grades and academic achievements, and 26% agreed that strikes demotivate students from learning.

Moreover, 25% of the respondents believed that strikes have effects on the quality of graduates produced by Nigerian universities, and 17% believed strikes affect education planning and development in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Are there other ways of achieving staff union demands apart from strike action?**

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
13	Use of other critical stakeholders in society	96	32%
14	Use of private arbitration	88	29%
15	Use of prayers and other spiritual means	62	20%
16	Exploiting other types of strikes apart from the total, indefinite and comprehensive	54	18%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

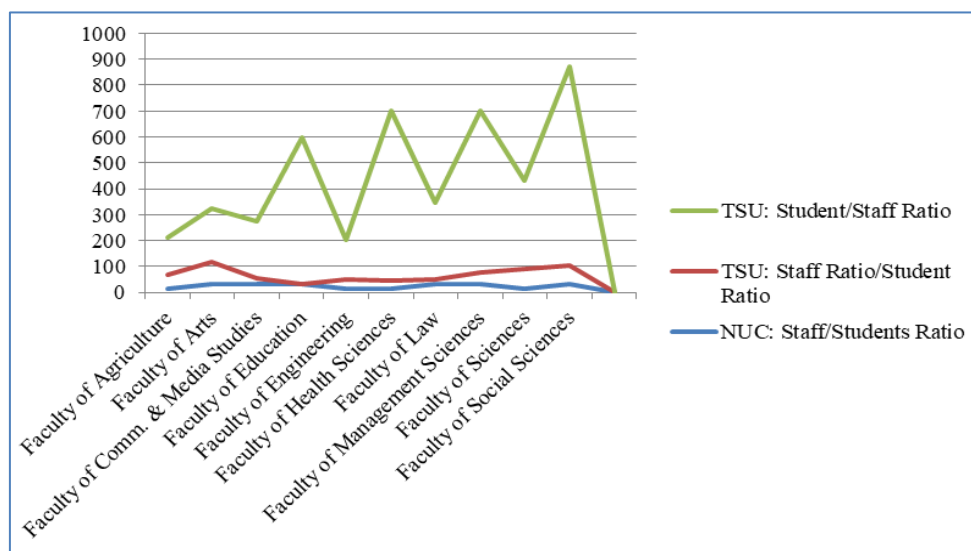
Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Drawn from the respondents, 32% believed that the use of other critical stakeholders (traditional,

religious, and opinion leaders) in society can help in resolving union industrial actions with the government

at all levels. In contrast, 29% of the respondents consider the use of private arbitration in industrial dispute resolution between labor unions and governments. Moreover, 20% of the respondents agreed

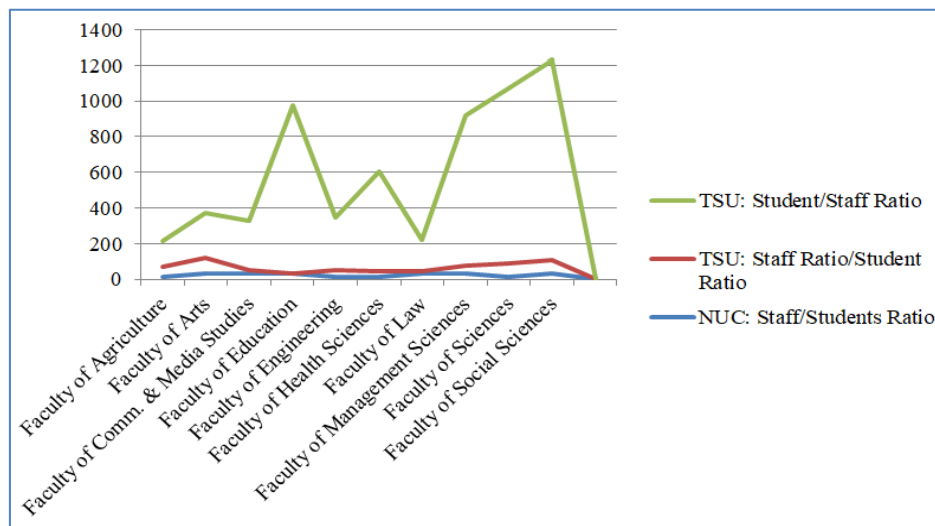
that the use of prayers and other spiritual means can help prevent strikes, and 18% considered the use of other means of achieving industrial harmony apart from the total, indefinite and comprehensive strikes.



**Figure 1: Taraba State University Students/Staff Ratio by Faculties 2018/2019**  
 Source: Field Survey, 2021

The staff/students ratio above clearly indicates that most of the faculties do not have enough staff strength to deliver qualitative and effective teaching and learning content to the students as required by NUC guidelines for universities. However, in the faculties of

Communication and Media Studies and Law, the staff-to-student ratios were adequate. Nevertheless, these are new faculties at Taraba State University. The data is for 2018/2019 academic staff and admitted students in Taraba State University.



**Figure 2: Taraba State University Students/Staff Ratio by Faculties 2019/2020**  
 Source: Survey, 2021.

The required staff/students ratio approved by National Universities Commission for Nigerian universities is; faculty of Arts is 30:1, Education: 30:1, Law: 30:1, SMS: 30:1, Agriculture: 15:1, Science: 20:1, Engineering: 15:1, Medicine: 10:1, Pharmacy: 15:1.

Nonetheless, the staff/students ratio serves as a strong variable that affects learning condition and comprehension for students. The data is for the staff/student ratio for 2019/2020.



**Table 5: Record of Academic Staff Industrial Actions in the Past Decade in TSU**

S/N	Union	Type of Strike	Period	Year
1	ASUU	National	Oct-Dec. 2010 to January 2011	2010/2011
2	ASUU	National	August 2012	2012
3	ASUU	National	June to Dec. 2013	2013
4	ASUU	Local	Aug. to Sep. 2017	2017
5	ASUU	Local	November 2018	2018
6	ASUU	Local	April 2019	2019
7	ASUU	National	March 2020	2020
8	ASUU	Local	February 2021	2021

Source: ASUU TSU, 2021

The industrial disharmony between the Taraba State University management and ASUU was not without challenges. These problems arise from both national and local industrial disagreements. The record above has shown that there were more national strikes than local strikes in TSU. However, it is believed the local problems are more pressing than the national

issues in TSU. These issues are still the basis of industrial disharmony; staff pension and gratuity; funding; earned academic allowances; construction of perimeter fences, and promotion areas; payment of outstanding arrears of salaries; among others. The data presented reveal only the period when Taraba State University was established in 2008.

**Table 6: Record of SSANU Strike in Taraba State University**

S/N	Union	Types of Strike	Periods	Year
1	SSANU	JAC National	1/1/2017-20/1/2017	2017
2	SSANU	JAC National	17/2/2017	2017
3	SSANU	JAC National	11/9/2017-25/9/2017	2017
4	SSANU	JAC National	27/9/2018-2/10/2018	2018
5	SSANU	JAC National	19/8/2019-23/8/2019	2019
6	SSANU	JAC National	5/10/2020-19/10/2020	2020
7	SSANU	JAC National	19/2/2021	2021
8	SSANU	JAC Local	6/10/2021-8/11/2021	2021

Source: SSANU TSU, 2021.

In the case of SSANU, the industrial disharmony with University Management was motivated by unresolved national issues and agreements on the full implementation of the 2009 FGN/Non-teaching Staff Union's agreements nationwide and the payment of all accrued arrears. Moreover, the issue of

inconsistencies of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) in the payment of salaries, non-payment of arrears of EAA, non-payment of minimum wage, staff pension, and increased funding for Taraba State University Hence, there were nine strikes, but only one was a local strike.

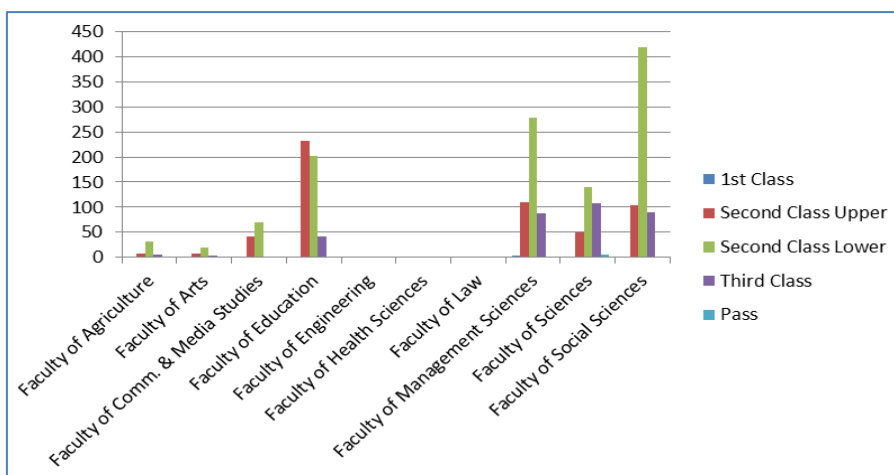
**Table 7: Record of NASU Strike in Taraba State University**

S/N	Union	Types of Strike	Periods	Year
1	NASU	JAC National	13/1/2017-26/1/2017	2017
2	NASU	JAC National	17/2/2017	2017
3	NASU	JAC National	27/9/2018-02/10/2018	2018
4	NASU	JAC National	19/8/2019-23/8/2019	2019
5	NASU	JAC National	5/10/2020-19/10/2020	2020
6	NASU	JAC National	19/2/2021	2021
7	NASU	JAC National	6/10/2021-8/11/2021	2021

Source: NASU TSU, 2021

Data from NASU has shown that the industrial disharmony with University Management was motivated by unresolved national issues and agreements on the full implementation of the 2009 FGN/Non-teaching Staff Union's agreements nationwide and the payment of all accrued arrears. Additionally, the refusal of the Federal Government to suspend the use of the

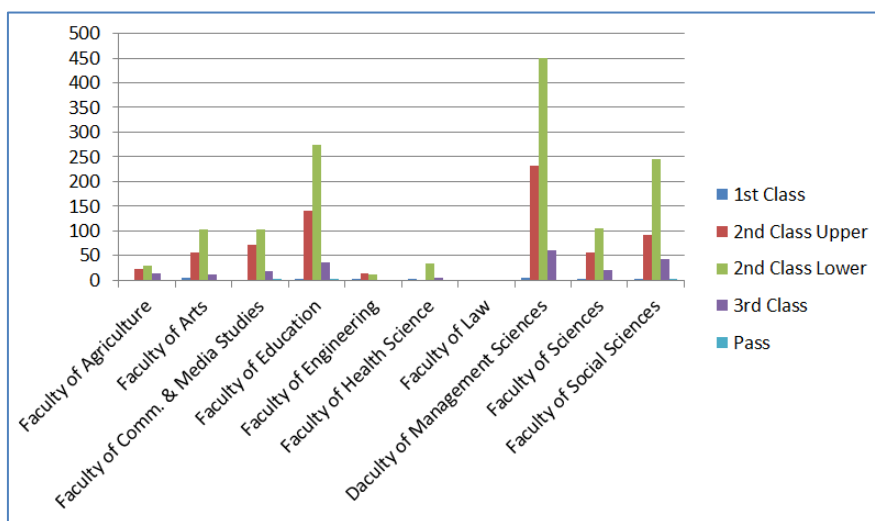
Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) in the payment of salaries, non-payment of arrears of EAA, usurpation of the headship of the department of non-teaching units, non-payment of minimum wage, staff pension, and lack of funding for Taraba State University.



**Figure 3: Academic Performance of Students for 2018/2019 Taraba State University**  
 Source: Author’s compilation, 2021.

The data shows the academic performance of students in various faculties by a session under study in line with their Cumulative Grand Point Average (CGPA) who graduated. The performance is largely

rated above average with the level of class of degrees obtained. However, the faculties of Engineering, Law, and Health Sciences did not have the results for students that graduated.



**Figure 4: Academic Performance of Students for 2019/2020 Taraba State University**  
 Source: Author’s compilation, 2021.

The result shows students’ academic performance in the ten faculties at the Taraba State University except for the Faculty of Law which did not graduate set of students. The result is rated above average level of performance.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Instead of being minimal, the strike has recently worsened due to the inability of the government at both the federal and state levels to adequately address the demands of university labor unions. There are three major unions at Taraba State University: ASUU, NASU, and SSANU. These unions operate independently and have both local and national levels of leadership. The staff industrial action

embarked upon by these unions affects students’ academic performance negatively.

Drawing from the data presented for ASUU in the last decade, there were a total of eight strikes, of which four were local and four national. In its notice of resumption of the total, comprehensive and indefinite strikes against the University management, the ASUU-TSU branch (2019) identified the following as the Union’s demands: the implementation of Law No.4 of 2008 establishing the University on funding sources; the implementation and payment of the Earned Academic Allowances (EAA) that accumulated from 2013 to 2018, the construction of perimeter fence, lack of staff pension, and gratuity, ejection of non-university staff occupying the university quarters, promotion

arrears; payment of outstanding arrears of salaries; and the lack of full payment of staff monthly emolument among others. ASUU-TSU demands that the various MoUs and MoAs signed by the University Management and the State Government be fully implemented.

At the national level, the issues in contention with the Federal Government are: the non-implementation and renegotiation of the 2009 agreement; university autonomy; composition of visitation panel; revitalization of universities; payments of EAA; payment of salary shortfall; use of IPPIS controversy; adoption of University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS); and full implementation of the 2020 ASUU/FGN Memorandum of Action.

The SSANU challenges the lack of nationwide implementation of the 2009 FGN/Non-teaching Staff Union agreements and payment of all accrued arrears; inconsistencies in salary payment with IPPIS; non-payment of EAA; usurpation of non-teaching unit headship; non-payment of retired benefits; staff pension and gratuity; and non-issuance of APER forms for promotion in 2020/2021. The SSANU-TSU has embarked on a total of eight strikes in the last decade with one local and seven national, representing 12% and 88% respectively.

The NASU in TSU has not undertaken any local strikes, unlike ASUU and SSANU. Most of the grievances and demands of the labor unions are similar in their respective jurisdictions but were attended to by the university management and the government differently.

The disagreement or lack of understanding between the government and the academic community often results in a deadlock that usually disrupts the academic calendar. As the saying goes, when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. The grasses in this case are the students who bear the brunt of the disagreement between labor unions, university management, and the government.

The findings reveal that incessant strikes dwindle the academic performance of students. As learning is suspended for a long period and the students' reading abilities fall, even the knowledge acquired during the learning period is even forgotten by some students. This according to (Eckson, 2017) turns some students into certificate seekers rather than knowledge seekers. As corroborated by (Egwu, 2018) strike action destroys our tertiary educational system and prevents it from attaining its targeted goals and objectives. The condition affects working conditions in terms of hours of work, discipline, content delivery by teachers, motivation, and measurement.

The result of this study found that there are many effects of strikes on students' academic

performance which include the distortion of the academic calendar, non-coverage of the curriculum, poor student performance, and the encouragement of malpractice because students want to pass or achieve their goal by any means possible. Similarly, (Babawale, 2006), stated that students perform poorly in exams and engage in exam malpractice because of ineffective teaching and learning as a result of strikes, this is one of the main reasons why Nigerian graduates are dubbed "half-baked." Moreover, it has also brought economic effects of increasing the cost of education in terms of up-keep of students, payment of rents, transportation, and food items, among others.

Another major finding of the study is the non-implementation of the funding for Taraba State University that was stipulated in its establishment Law No. 4 earmarked 5% statutory State allocation, 5% deduction from Local Government monthly allocation, 2% contribution from contracts awarded by the State Government, and 2% from hoteliers in the State to be given to the University. Unfortunately, the deductions and allocations have not been forthcoming to the university.

## CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate the effects of staff industrial action on students' academic performance in Nigerian universities, with a focus on Taraba State University. There are many ways strikes affect educational planning and development and undermine students' academic performance and achievement in the country.

The labor unions believed that the only language understood by the authorities was industrial action. To achieve industrial harmony with labor unions in universities, the government at all levels must increase salaries; renegotiate and implement the 2009 agreement; pay all outstanding EAA; accept and deploy UTAS; funding; revitalization; and composition of the Nigerian university system's visitation panel. At the Taraba State University, issues in contention are staff pension and gratuity; funding as provided in Law No. 4 of 2008 establishing the University; payment of EAA; perimeter fencing; payment of promotion arrears; and full implementation of all MoUs and MoAs respectively. Unfortunately, another disturbing effect of the strikes is the brain drain. Nigeria's finest brains move overseas to look for greener pastures to work.

Consequently, there are three major effects of strikes on students. First, the strike has implications for the academic system. This has to do with the disruption of the academic calendar, poor students' academic performance in examinations, encouraging exam malpractice, and the production of half-baked graduates, which undermines the quality of graduates from the Nigerian university system. Secondly, economic effects are concerned with making education

costly for both parents and students. The extension of semesters and academic sessions means additional budget and cost in terms of food, rent, and other needs. Third, the social effect has to do with forcing students to engage in social vices such as youth restiveness, prostitution, political thuggery, and internet fraud (yahoo-yahoo), among others. This is not to say that students do not engage in worthwhile activities, but the vast majority of them remain idle during strikes. Fourthly, the career effect has to do with the delay and extension of the expected year of graduation of students.

In Nigeria, a strike is counted as part of a student's duration of programmes with the addition of one or two years arising from industrial action. It is evident from this study that the National University Commission's Benchmark of Academic Standard (NUC BMAS) is not met as required by Taraba State University and most of the Public Universities in Nigeria in regard to the Staff-to-Student ratio.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Governments at all levels should increase salaries and improve the general welfare and condition of the services of both teaching and non-teaching staff at public universities in order to achieve lasting industrial harmony.
2. There should be a logical and objective application of the principle of collective bargaining to avert industrial disharmony between the government, university management, and unions in the universities.
3. The Federal Government should deploy the UTAS payment solution developed by ASUU in order to respect university autonomy and peculiarity. More so, this would indicate government readiness in the promotion of local content technology.
4. Employment of more qualified staff to meet the manpower needs of the universities in Nigeria that suffers from inadequate staffing strength.

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