

Incessant Industrial Disharmony and Employees' Distress in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: A Coping Strategy for University Lecturers

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Abstract

Industrial disharmonies are perennial event that occupies historic position in the organization and a recurring decimal in Nigeria. The inability of government to fulfill its agreements particularly with Academic Staff Union of University led to the frequent strikes in spite of their contribution to educational development. However, proclamation of “no work no pay” has frustrated lecturers particularly that majority rely on salary for survival. It is against this background that this study adopts qualitative method using interview and content analysis to assess the effect of industrial disharmony on the lecturers and to as well explore coping strategies to sustain the lecturers during the industrial strikes. The analysis demonstrates that incessant strike has exposed the lecturers to untold financial hardship, emotional distress, and professional stagnation. The study reveals that the financial hardship is as a result of lecturers’ refusal to plan, save for emergency funds, high expenses, debt, focus on short-term needs over long-term security, wrong assumption that salaries will always be consistent, underfunding of the system, poor salary and proliferation of politically motivated universities contributed immensely to lecturer hardships. In order to cope with the hardships during the industrial strike, this study recommend that lecturers should diversify income streams such as consultancy services, engage in local and international research collaborations to expand professional networks and create potentially opportunities; develop entrepreneurial skills in others disciplines like farming, business, build an emergency fund, (saving); engage in online communities and networking, foster a support network; open to new opportunities and challenges among others.

Keywords: Industrial disharmony, Employee distress, Tertiary institution, Coping strategy

Introduction

In today's competitive world, the workforce is regarded as an essential component of performance and productivity in public and private organizations. Organizations across the globe rely on employees, leveraging their diversity and local expertise to gain a competitive edge vis-à-vis rising living standard and boosting the wellbeing of the society. Hence, the success or failure of any organization is a function of its employees. Positioning the status and roles of employees in an organization, Richard Branson acknowledged that client do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients (Singh, 2017).

This proposition advocates for the adoption of motivational techniques to encourage and retain employees in an organization.

Studies reveal that mutual relationship between employer and employees are pre-condition to happiness, loyalty, and productivity and a healthy industrial harmony in the organization (Yusuf, Habeeb & Kazeem, 2017). By and large, industrial harmony is considered paramount for employees' success at work and other aspects of life; as it promotes synergy which is critical to task accomplishment and stability in life. Conversely, inefficient management styles, lack of leadership skills, exclusionism, neglect of power sharing mechanism as well as strained relationship between employer and employee cum the non-implementation of collective bargaining agreements are likely to instigate industrial disharmony in an organization or country at large.

Industrial disharmony involving labour force is a global phenomenon that results in collective work stoppages. At the beginning of the 20th century, United States, unorganized workers were responsible for one-third of the industrial unrest. According to the International Labor Organization, 65.3 million working days were lost in 52 countries due to industrial unrest in 1986. In 1986, there were 14,200 industrial disharmonies, a decrease from 15,500 the year before. The number of workers affected by the industrial unrest increased from an average of 810 in 1985 to 827 in 2016 (Aseniero, 1986).

In the wake of the 21st century, the strike incidence and propensity have become unprecedented in view of the current democratic system of governance. Nigeria, for instance is under industrial chaos and crisis since the attainment of political independence in 1960. Statistics shows that from independence to contemporary times, there have been series of industrial conflicts and strikes in the Nigerian industrial sector. Between the periods, 1999 to 2002, though the incidence of strike was visibly infrequent, it witnessed about 153 work stoppages, and had a very high number (19,674,052) of man-days lost. From 2003 to 2006 the country witnessed about 502 trade disputes, 1422 work stoppages involving about 1,638,335 workers, resulting to 12,353,391 man-days lost. For the year 2007, the National Bureau for Statistics estimated a total of 79 work stoppages (Wokoma, 2011).

According to research, the current strike by ASUU is the 16th since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999. These strikes have shut down academic activities at public universities for a total of more than four years over a period of 23 years, which is long enough to finish a four-year degree program. Some strikes have lasted only a few weeks, while others have lasted for several months (Raliyat et al, 2022).

Tertiary institutions, particularly, universities play an important role in the growth of human capital, research, and technological innovation. Investment in higher education is an essential part of every country's effort to develop. Today's nations rely more and more on the knowledge, concepts, and competencies that university-based research produces (Cuesta-Claros *et al*, 2022). However, decades, Nigerian public universities have been encountering challenges of poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, obsolete educational system, dilapidated structures and equipment, brain drain and successive governments have not been able to proffer solutions to these problems. Studies show that Nigerian government is not doing enough, by world standards, to fund her children's education which consequently prompted industrial action by tertiary institutions-based workers' unions (Nnama-Okechukwu *et al*, 2022).

Barely, all the academic and non-academic unions such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU), and Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) among others actively participated in the strike (Wey-Amaewhule *et al*, 2022). ASUU demands that the government fulfill an agreement it reached with it in 2009 on how to save the nation's universities from collapse (Chukwudi, 2021). The union is adamant that strikes would be avoided if the federal government held up its side of the bargain, not least a long overdue implementation of the terms of a 2009 agreement on conditions of service and funding of the universities. ASUU wants the system “revitalized” through massive funding and continues to stress the importance of “genuine university autonomy and academic freedom (Chukwudi, 2021).”

On the other hand, the government is proposing a piecemeal selective approach, claiming that there are other competing items for the limited funds available. This has caused serious altercations between the government and ASUU, resulting in persistent industrial strike actions. The industrial disharmonies by the Academic Staff Union of Universities has perpetually disrupted the academic calendar and ultimately knock the intellectual capacity of the student, poor quality education, prolonged academic calendar and graduation, resorts to criminal activities like cyber-crime, gambling, fraudulent acts, brain-drain among the lecturers *et cetera*.

In addition, incessant strikes have also subjected untold hardship to business owners of the host communities, state and nations at large. Today, the effect of the strike is taking a new dimension as the Federal Government invoked the no-work no-pay rule in March, 2022. According to section 43 (1) – (14) of the Trade Dispute Act, an employer has the right to withhold salaries of an employee for work not done. The proclamation aimed at discouraging industrial actions by workers. Considering the poor economic status of lecturers and weak saving capacity, the policy has subjected lecturers to untold distress and psychological trauma thereby compelling a number of lecturers to solicit for financial support from friends and relations, begging, resignation and ultimately suicide. In order to mitigate these challenges, this study intends to explore coping strategies for university lecturers selected universities in North-Central Nigeria. The universities include Federal University, Minna, University of Abuja, Federal University Lafia, Nassarawa State University, Keffi and Federal University, Lokoja respectively.

Literature Review

Industrial Disharmony

Industrial disharmony often arises as a result of barriers in communication between the management and staff of an institution, In a situation where there exists conflict between workers' unions, distrust is sure to be evident, and this, in turn, hinders the performance and commitment to the duty of the employees (Ukonu & Emerole, 2016). Muhammad (2014) supported this, that industrial disharmony occurred whenever the clash of interests exists in worker-management interactions. Industrial disharmony could be expressed in different terms such as trade dispute, strike action, industrial dispute, and industrial unrest.

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. When workers collectively cease to work in a particular industry, they are said to be on strike. Strike is the extreme form of industrial dispute. It is resorted to by the workers'

unions after failure of other strategies (Isa & Ezekiel, 2022). Collective bargaining, lobbying, strike-threat/ultimatum and protest among other non-strike measures are often exhausted by the ASUU before embarking on industrial actions.

Collective bargaining means group negotiations between the employer and the employee on issues relating to their work condition. (Azubuike & Konya, 2020). Odhong and Omolo (2014) noted that collective bargaining provides an important channel and framework used to determine employment terms and conditions. Adewole & Adebola (2010) opined that regular eruption of industrial conflicts between employers and employees in general could be well managed via collective negotiation and consultation with the workers representatives.

Non-implementation of agreement, enrolment into Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), revitalization fund, wage increase, Earned Academic Allowance (EAA) are parts of the academic union's demand that lead to the ongoing strike (Ogunode & Audu, 2022; Ogunode & Ndayebom, 2022). Professor Munzali Jibril led committee was set by the FG to review the 2009 ASUU-FGN agreement. The report of the Committee was not implemented, and Prof. Nimi Briggs-led Committee's recommendation to resolve the ongoing strike was also thrown away by the government. Previous and ongoing strikes are reactions by the academic Union to the distressful work conditions.

Industrial disharmony has become a focal concept in industrial relations system. Igbaji (2009) is of the view that the threat of strike and other forms of industrial disharmony may not be absolutely prevented, but it can be managed to bring down the conflicts that often come from it, if the management is well equipped with the right human resources. In recent times, tertiary institutions which include universities, polytechnics and colleges of education had been locked up for an indefinite period due to industrial disharmony and some students got pregnant or derailed by engaging in all manner of vices like internet fraud or scam as a result of unresolved industrial dispute bothering on minimum wage, poor funding of tertiary institutions and inability of the government to implement collective agreements freely signed with staff unions of these tertiary institutions.

The roles of government in enhancing industrial peace in the universities in Nigeria have received a wide attention in the literature of industrial relations. This is amplified by the findings of Osamwonyi & Ugiagbe (2013) which confirmed that many organizations (including tertiary institutions) in Nigeria suffer from many avoidable industrial challenges caused by government nonchalant attitude towards resolving industrial disputes in addition to ineffective and inefficient management styles of the management of these tertiary institutions. As a result of the above, productivity is seriously affected because of frequent industrial conflicts caused by strained relationship between the management of these institutions and labour unions; information mismanagement has been seen as a culprit in cases of industrial disharmony in tertiary institutions.

Udejah (2001) found that effective communication in tertiary institutions enhances industrial harmony and hampers the development of rumours, gossips and falsehood, which will not be of any benefit to the growth of these institutions. These, in turn, have the potential to generate conflict within the institution. Thus, conflicts between groups can be an indication of a lack of effective communication and positive interaction. On the other hand, effective and timely communication has the potential of quick detection of internal strains between the management

of these tertiary institutions and the house unions, which will in turn serve as a catalyst for conflict prevention and increased productivity.

Industrial peace, which can be regarded as an antonym of industrial disharmony, is not the absence of disagreement, but it is when there is an understanding between employers and employees that permits the system to achieve the set goals. Industrial peace enhances labour productivity and in turn improves performance in industrial sector, achieving economic growth and enhancing living standards and quality of life. Further, industrial peace creates a peaceful working environment conducive to tolerance, dialogue and other alternative means of resolving industrial or labour disputes in Nigeria (such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, conciliation and litigation or court adjudication). This creates a high level of employee satisfaction. Suggestively, the imperatives of industrial peace are the most potent panacea in a developing economy like Nigeria, for a productive system and sustainable human development. Albert and Yahaya (2013) lend credence to this view, that the pattern of industrial relations in Nigeria has been conflictual in nature with disruptive consequences and significant work stoppages. Several reasons have been put forward to explain constant conflicts between the management of tertiary institutions and the unions.

ASUU and Incessant Strike

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 (Isa & Ezekiel, 2022; Josephine & Ogechukwu, 2020).

Similarly, in 2009 the ASUU also embarked on six months old strike demanding for a revised salary structure and better working conditions. In 2010, the academic staff union of universities in the south east states of Nigeria embarked on five months strike over the non-implementation of the 2009 FG-ASUU agreement. On June, 2013, ASUU also embarked on national strike which lasted up to eight to nine months on the ground that the 2009 FG-ASUU agreement and revitalization of universities with 1.3 trillion naira over a period of six years has not being fulfilled as earlier promised (Josephine & Ogechukwu, 2020).

In the sequence of ASUU's endless struggle, Ebenezer (2022), laments that following a breakdown of negotiations with the Nigerian Federal Government, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) embarked on a four-week "comprehensive and total strike." ASUU had pleaded its case with various pressure groups and interested parties in the education sector before deciding that the most effective way to get the government's attention. It is evident that the Federal government lacks political will to prioritize education. Over times, it has steadily been making inadequate budgetary provision for education. Ebenezer (2022) affirmed that measly 5.6 percent, the budget for education in 2021 is the lowest in a decade. The UNESCO recommendation, based on an agreement by member states, is fifteen to twenty percent of public expenditure.

No work, no pay and Coping Strategy

Coping skills include a range of actions and adaptations in response to stressful experiences, which can be critical for determining pathways of resilience and vulnerability in children and adolescents (Alex, 2021). Coping strategies are behavioral and cognitive tactics used to manage crises, conditions, and demands that are appraised as distressing. An important development in coping research was the creation of Robert Folkman and Susan Lazarus' Ways of Coping scale. This scale was devised to assess the extent to which one uses one of two general types of coping. Problem-focused coping is directed at problem solving or taking action to change the source of the stress. Emotion-focused coping, in contrast, focuses on reducing or managing the emotional distress that result from the crisis. Some emotion-focused coping strategies include wishful thinking, distancing, avoidance, and positive reappraisal. The effectiveness of any particular coping strategy varies according to the situation, and there is not one generally accepted way for older adults to cope with stress. Moreover, most crises warrant both types of coping (Pudrovska, 2007).

Given the current prominence of transactional views, coping is often defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Coping strategy is a psychological concept that explains how, for instance, individuals or groups respond to a distressed situation in order to mitigate its effect or overcome it. "No work, no pay" policy by the government is a pauperizing policy to intimidate backpedal of industrial action embarked upon by the ASUU. It is traumatizing and distressful for one to be denied its major source of income for six consecutive months. As earlier established, this is one of the gaps that this research work intends to fill.

Shimawua (2020) studied the impact of industrial unions strike on the performance of public Universities in Abuja, Nigeria. With the purpose of interrogating the impact of industrial unions strike on the performance of public universities in Nigeria, the study maintained that Nigeria universities which were designed to be a fulcrum for national development have been entrapped by continuous industrial actions leading to poor standard and products of public Universities. The study was a qualitative study. It depended on the secondary data which were analysed based on content analysis. It employed Marxian conflict theory which sees conflict as not only inherent in the society but also a necessary tool for change.

The analysis of data uncovered that the major underlining reasons for incessant ASUU strike in the University include lack of enlightenment and education of some union leaders, poor communication, meddling with the Union affairs by Management and Government, frequent trade disputes, under funding of the Universities and insufficient teaching facilities as well as political factors. The study further uncovered that ASUU strikes have grossly undermined performance and activities as well as loss of productivity in the economic sector of Nigeria. The study, therefore, among others called for adequate training of the Management and leaders' representatives to enable them appreciate the workings of industrial relations, continuous holding of meetings and interactive sessions for all the stakeholders involved in the educational sector, and lastly sensitivity to the needs and demands of ASUU by government.

Ardo, Ubandawaki and Ardo (2020) in their work focused on examining influence of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strikes on academic performance of students in Usman Danfodio University during 2013/2014 academic session. The study used survey methodological approach which was made possible through administration of questionnaire. It adopted Tyler's

rational planning approach which among others argued that ASUU industrial action cannot come and go without leaving any aftermath effects on the educational performance and learning standard of students of the Universities. The data collected were analysed through frequency ratio, and t-test analysis of variance was employed in the test of hypotheses, hence the paper established that the disruptions of academic session by Staff Union industrial actions have significant undesirable negative impact on academic success of the students.

The paper equally proved that the industrial action embarked upon by ASUU in 2013/2014 session in Usman Danfodio University Sokoto had negative impact on the performance of the student as there was increase in the failure rate of students. The study recommended engagement of students in tutorial class or self-study during the strike, the use of alternative dispute management method by ASUU rather than strike, regular dialogue between the representative leaders of ASUU and government and honouring the agreement with ASUU by the government without undue politicisation. The study is apt and it provides a background for deeper understanding of the implication of ASUU strike on the University students and how the University could manage the situation without losing much.

Ogunyemi (2020) addressing the leadership of the ASUU and the Chief of Staff (COS) to the President, on Tuesday 3rd November, 2020 at the 'Aso' Rock Villa, Abuja summarized that the reasons why ASUU went on strike include: non funding for revitalization, nonpayment of earned academic allowances, withheld salaries of some ASUU members as well as the introduction of IPPIS by government which was and is not compatible with the university system, due to the extant laws. According to him, the UTAS was developed by the Union as directed by government. Rather than the government to facilitate the speedy deployment of Omeje and Ogbu (2019) carried out a research on the impact of Labour Union strikes on public institutions with focus on Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Ebonyi State University 2016/2017 strike with the purpose of determining the place of Labour Union strikes on public institutions in Ebonyi state.

The paper was anchored on Class theory and structural functionalism theory of trade Unionism as a basis to appreciate how strike affects the performance of University students. The study adopted a descriptive survey method which allowed the administration of questionnaire. The data were presented using simple frequency tables on a four point Likert scale as the hypotheses were tested with chi square. The findings of the study disclosed that strike action always disrupt the academic calendar of the University, alter the normal skill acquisition process among students of the university, reduces the morale of both teachers and students leading to poor performance in teaching and learning. The study recommended compliance with the resolution of bargaining by the stakeholders and parties to collective bargaining to avert strikes. The paper provided a blueprint that is necessary to resolve the incessant ASUU strikes in Nigeria. At the same time, the paper's periodization is very small to make a valid generalization.

Alabi (2019) examined students' perceptions of the impact of Academic Staff Union of Universities industrial actions on the development of Nigerian public Universities with emphasis on University of Ibadan. Worried by the numerous strikes ASUU had embarked upon in Nigeria which interrupted and disrupted teaching and learning process in the universities, the study maintained that industrial actions were usually a product of disagreement between the government and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and anchored its analysis on social conflict theory of Lewis Coser. Cronbach Alpha Reliability method was employed in the

analysis of data as the findings indicated that ASUU incessant strikes had moderate functional impact ($x=2.89$) on the university development. The study equally proved that ASUU industrial actions had high dysfunctional impacts ($x=3.41$) on the university development by disrupting academic calendar, extending the stay of the students in the Universities as well as destroying the reputation of the university system.

The study recommended among others continuous meetings and interactive session for the stakeholders in the university system; ensuring modesty in making demands by ASUU as well as partnering and collaborating with ASUU by government at all levels. Ogasawara (2018) investigated the coping ability of urban working-class Japanese households during the interwar period. The results show that income shock had least impact on children's education, house rent, transportation, and utilities (e.g. communication). Households coped by using precautionary savings, loans from microfinance, informal gifts from people, and prioritized expenses such as rentals, food, utilities, and transportation.

Research Gap

Preceding studies on industrial harmony predominantly were skewed to Healthcare professionals (Abubakar, 2021). Few studies on industrial disharmony focused on single institution (Wobodo, 2019) and to some extent private institution (Izidor, 2015). Other studies dwelled on the impact of incessant strikes on the students and their associated solutions (Kelvin, 2015; Chinwuba, 2022). However, there are dearth of study on industrial disharmony and employees' distress using mixed methods that suggests coping strategies to curtail the distress for the university lecturers. Consequently, these establish plausible and reliable gaps for further studies for additional macro analysis on the research topic.

Over the years ASUU's struggles have immensely contributed to socio-economic, political and cultural development of Nigeria and Nigerians. Effort to kill this spirit through no work no pay policy will not only affect the education sector, but all facets of the economy. It is our expectation that the findings (proposed coping strategies) will strengthen the target unit of analysis with a view fight for their rights and the right of Nigerian citizens.

Theoretical Frame Work

The paper adopts resilience theory to explain how university lecturers will cope with economic distress as a result of policy no work no pay adopted by the government. Resilience is Latin word '*resilire*' which denotes jump back (Klein, Nicholls, & Thomalla, 2003) or the capacity to recuperate swiftly from difficulties. In 19th century, Robert Mallet proposed the use the concept as a means of appraising the ability of materials to survive or resist severe conditions. Resilience is the ability to navigate and negotiate for resources to absorb shocks and adapt to challenges. It has to do with adjustment of today's welfare for better tomorrow. Social resilience was entrenched in a new paradigm based in system philosophy that was predestined to surmount the separation of social from natural sciences, and create a new intellectual basis for responding to the societal challenges of the modern world (Alinovi, D'Errico, Mane, & Romano, 2010; Berkes, Folke, & Colding, 2000). Resilience thinking is a significant frameworks and approaches that can be used to understand and manage complex social-economic scenarios (Béné, Headey, Haddad, & Von Grebmer, 2016; Trujilo, 2011).

In areas where issues of shocks, vulnerability and risks are serious such as humanitarian support, tragedy and risk reduction, climatic change adaptation, or social protection, the growing influence of the concept of resilience is also evident (Moser, Norton, Stein, & Georgieva, 2010; Stein & Moser, 2014). Resilience is framework t is a swift response to the sensitivity that increased volatility in socio-economic challenge of poor payment or non-payment to the workforce (Mitchell et al., 2014; Sellberg, Wilkinson, & Peterson, 2015).

Resilience approach is pertinent because various types of shocks that affect households or societies are on the increase and affecting groups of Households or even entire communities where the public workers belongs(Heltberg, 2007; Lew, Ng, Ni, & Wu, 2016; Sagala, Yamin, Pratama, & Rianawati, 2016). In situations where the vulnerability of individuals is intensified by their social-economic dependence on others that seem to be affected by the similar tragedies and shocks, in such circumstances adoption of resilience philosophy becomes relevant.

Methodology

The study is cross-sectional in nature, and it purposively selected informants from Federal University, Minna, University of Abuja, Federal University Lafia, Nassarawa State University, Keffi and Federal University, Lokoja respectively. There are several debates concerning what sample size for qualitative research. Morse (1994) suggested approximately 30 – 50 participants. For grounded theory, Morse (1994) suggested 30 – 50 interviews, while Creswell (1998) suggested only 20 – 30. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends 5 – 25 and Morse (1994) suggests at least six. These recommendations can help a researcher estimate participants they will need, but ultimately, the required number of participants for the current study is thirty (30). By implication, six (6) lecturers were chosen representing the selected universities in the North Central geo-political zone. A pseudonym was used throughout this study, with names of informants preserved to maintain confidentiality of the interviewees and also respect their anonymity.

Discussion of the Finding

The world over, lecturers in tertiary institutions have contributed immensely in the aspects of knowledge dissemination, inspiring critical thinking, advancing knowledge in their fields, driving innovation, and solving real-world problem, community engagements among several others. However, the Nigerian lecturers have been relegated to poor working conditions and poor pay, which has led to incessant strikes. The findings of this study reveal rich and insights of effects of strikes on lecturers and explored strategies to mitigate the phenomenon. The discussion delved into the emergent themes and patterns, highlighting the participants' perspectives and experiences of university lecturers during the strike. The findings are presented in a way that honors the participants' voices, while also identifying areas for future research and practical implications. The discussion contextualizes the findings within the existing literature, highlighting the contributions and limitations of this study, and concluding with recommendations for future research and practice.

Demographic Data of Interviewees

The study analyzed the opinions of lecturers in the six (6) tertiary institutions for the interview. Pseudonyms were used throughout this study, with actual names of informants preserved. Hence, the interviewees were represented in the study as “informants” based on the weight of

undertaking made to sternly maintain high degree of privacy of the interviewees and also respect their anonymity. For the sake of emphasis, lengthy and extensive responses by the informants were italicized and brief/short explanations were distinguished from the main discussion with quotation marks (APA, 2001). It is pertinent to point out that report of two or more informants with related idea are subsumed to circumvent repetition.

Does the industrial strike affect university lecturers in North-central Nigeria?

Responding to the above, informant share their different opinion:

You should understand that not only the lecturers, the northern states are civil service states. They mainly depend on salary for survival. A side the fact that salaries are insufficient, they are often delayed or inconsistent, leading to financial uncertainty. ...my brother, over-reliance on salaries hinders entrepreneurship and innovation, limiting economic growth. Now, on the effect of strike on the lecturers, the prolonged strikes caused financial hardship to us and our families.

Upholding the above, one of the lecturers affirmed that:

In my opinion, the strikes disrupt academic calendars, resulting in delayed research, publications, and promotions. ...Note that we are also parents with children pursuing their education in these universities, the strike affect our children too.

The strike is a major factor for brain drain in my institution. Statistics shows that, approximately 70% of young lecturers have left Nigeria for opportunities in other countries. The mass resignation of academic workers in our universities continues to weaken Nigerian higher institutions. By implication, frequent strikes drive lecturers to seek better opportunities abroad, leading to a brain drain.

During the telephone interview, another lecturer reveals that:

Strikes create uncertainty, making lecturers feel insecure about their jobs and future. In the same vein repeated strikes lead to demoralization, causing lecturers to feel undervalued and unappreciated. Strikes hinder research collaborations, grant applications, and innovation, limiting lecturers' contributions to their fields.

Corroborating the above, another lecturer reveals that:

...the strike delayed career progression....strikes delays my promotions, career advancement, and professional development

opportunities. This has consequently led to my psychological stress. Idleness stress, anxiety, and has seriously affect my mental health and well-being. In fact we lost about two senior professors and about three (3) have been hospitalized.

...you should know that yourself that the non-payment will affect my life saving. ... of course, strikes has affected my savings and limited access to resources, training, and professional development opportunities. Strikes disrupt our academic progress, causing delays in graduation and limiting the students' opportunities.

Contrary to the above, another lecturer observed that the effect of strike in the tertiary institution is all encompassing; she lamented that:

... the strike has caused economic downturn in the host communities, with local businesses suffering losses due to the absence of students and lecturers. Many businesses forced to close or operate at reduced capacity....many workers in the education and service sectors being laid off or forced to take unpaid leave. Above all, the strike reduced government revenue with the absence of students and lecturers leading to a decline in tax revenues and other sources of income.

You may not agree with me, but the strike has had a negative impact on local businesses, with many struggling to survive due to the absence of students and lecturers. It has indeed reduced access to education for students in the host communities, with many being forced to stay at home or seek alternative educational arrangements.

During the interview, the researcher asked whether the hardship encountered by lecturers was as a result of their laziness: in response, one of the lecturers responded that:

That's a rather harsh statement! While it's true that some lecturers might be more proactive in seeking alternative income streams, it's not entirely fair to label those who struggle as "lazy." The reality is that many lecturers are dedicated professionals who are passionate about teaching and research, but may not have the skills, resources, or opportunities to easily pivot to other income sources.

Moreover, the strike is often a last resort for lecturers who are fighting for better working conditions, fair compensation, and a decent standard of living. It's important to recognize the systemic issues that lead to strikes and address the root causes, rather than blaming individual lecturers for the consequences.

Let's try to approach this with empathy and understanding, rather than stigmatizing those who are already facing challenges.

What are the factors responsible for the hardship of lecturers during the industrial strike in North-central Nigeria?

Most interviewees shared common view on hardship encountered by university lecturers during the strike: For instance, a lecturer lament that:

A very astute observation! Yes, many lecturers often do not prioritize financial planning and saving for emergency funds, which can lead to significant financial distress when unexpected events like strikes occur. This lack of planning can result from inadequate financial literacy, high expenses and debt, focus on short-term needs over long-term security, wrong assumption that salaries will always be consistent, lack of access to financial resources and advice are common factors that contributed to lecturers hardship during the strike.

Corroborating the above, a lecturer observed that underfunding of the system and the failure of the government to implement an agreement it reached with the Academic Staff Union of Universities in 2009. Poor salary and proliferation of politically motivated universities contributed immensely to lecturer hardships

Note that when strikes happen, many lecturers are caught off guard, struggling to make ends meet and facing financial hardship. It's essential for lecturers to prioritize financial planning by building an emergency fund, diversifying income streams, investing in retirement plans, managing debt developing a financial safety net.

By taking proactive steps, lecturers can better prepare for unexpected events like strikes, reducing financial stress and ensuring a more stable future.

Coping strategies to sustains university lecturers in North-central Nigeria

What strategies do you think lecturers can adopt to cope with the financial challenges posed by strikes and unpaid salaries?

In response, a lecturer suggests that lecturers can mitigate financial problems posed by strikes and unpaid salaries by diversifying income streams such as consultancy services. According to the informant:

These consultancy services leverage the expertise and skills of lecturers in Humanities and Social Sciences, enabling them to earn a living and maintain our professional relevance during strikes. Lecturers in Humanities and Social Sciences can offer consultancy services like research and writing services to organizations, businesses, and individuals. Provide policy analysis and development services to government agencies, NGOs, and private organizations.

In addition, offering training and facilitation services in areas like communication, leadership, and conflict resolution is an avenue to support lecturers when our salary was stopped. In the same vein, developing curricula for schools, organizations, and businesses vis-à-vis editing and proofreading services for academic papers, reports, and other documents

Furthermore:

I was able to overcome the policy of no work no pay through collaboration. Partnering with external organizations provides me with access to new grant opportunities within and outside Nigeria. It also facilitates access to specialized equipment, expertise, or resources as well as enhancing research quality and impact.sir, I must confess, joint projects help to generate additional income through grants, contracts, or consulting opportunities. Sir, collaborative partnerships offers emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation and stress during the strike...it as well provides opportunities for skill development, training, and mentorship respectively. Collaborations can expand professional networks, potentially leading to new opportunities or resources.

By implication, collaborative projects boost lecturers' reputation, recognition, and academic prestige. To this end, collaboration serves as a coping strategy that addresses financial, emotional, and professional challenges, ultimately enhancing resilience of lecturers during the financial challenges posed by strikes.

Generally speaking, lecturer can cope during the strikes if they provide community outreach services to organizations, businesses, and government agencies. Similarly they could offer social media management services to organizations, businesses, and individuals as well as create content for organizations, businesses, and individuals, including blog posts, articles, and social media posts.

How can lecturers build resilience and maintain their professional integrity during prolonged strikes and financial uncertainty?

In response, one of the informants opines that lecturers can build resilience and maintain professional integrity during prolonged strikes and financial uncertainty by engaging in online courses, workshops, or conferences to enhance skills and knowledge. Adopting these strategies, lecturers can build resilience, maintain professional integrity, and navigate the challenges of prolonged strikes and financial uncertainty with dignity and determination. Again, prioritizing teaching, mentoring, and student support to maintain a sense of purpose and fulfillment could also help to build resilience during the strike

Conclusion

This paper examined the effect of industrial disharmony on the lecturers in the six (6) selected tertiary institutions, north central Nigeria. The analysis demonstrates that incessant strike has exposed the lecturers to untold financial hardship, emotional distress, and professional stagnation. The study reveals that the financial hardship is as a result of lecturers' refusal to plan, save for emergency funds, high expenses, debt, focus on short-term needs over long-term security, wrong assumption that salaries will always be consistent, underfunding of the system, poor salary and proliferation of politically motivated universities contributed immensely to lecturer hardships. In order to cope with the hardships during the industrial strike, this study recommend that lecturers should diversify income streams such as consultancy services, engage in local and international research collaborations to expand professional networks and create potentially opportunities; develop entrepreneurial skills in others disciplines like farming, business, build an emergency fund, (saving); engage in online communities and networking, foster a support network; open to new opportunities and challenges among others. This study has methodological and scope shortcomings as it generated data through content analysis-literature and interview which might be insufficient to make generalization. Therefore, future study on the subject matter should adopt mixed method for sufficient information

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